

**THE EVOLUTION OF NUCLEAR-FREE
NEW ZEALAND:
IDEAS AND FOREIGN POLICY CHANGE**

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ABSTRACT

This article is motivated by a puzzle: why did the New Zealand government choose to pass an anti-nuclear policy in 1984 that ran counter to the interests of its allies and resulted in the abrogation of its only security alliance? Exploring the reasons behind this puzzle prompts another question: if Australia was subject to the same anti-nuclear forces at the same time, what explains its lack of change? Using insights gleaned from constructivist understandings of foreign policy change, this article attributes New Zealand's policy change to the influence of new ideas in the policymaking framework. By comparing the two cases, it attempts to identify scope conditions under which new ideas about security are more likely to impact. This article speaks to broader themes in international relations about the conditions under which dramatic changes in foreign policies are possible, the conditions under which states choose policies that directly challenge their allies, and the ramifications these can have for their subsequent foreign policy trajectories.

THE PUZZLE

Reflecting similar foundations, political systems and geographic proximity, New Zealand and Australia have traditionally exhibited almost identical foreign policy orientations. Reliance on Great Britain for their national security saw both countries contribute troops to World Wars One and Two. After 1945 the gradual replacement of Great Britain with the US as the preponderant power in the region elicited similar reactions: both countries joined ANZUS in 1951, the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954, and both demonstrated their desire for the continued presence of a friendly great power in the region by showing the flag in Korea and Vietnam (McKinnon 1993; McGibbon 1999). Both countries' foreign policy in this period reflected a privileging of traditional security concerns and the view that alliance relationships were the best means to obtain this security (Rolfe 1997: 3). Both Australian and New Zealand policymakers frequently alluded to ANZUS as the "keystone of our defense" (ibid: 12; Jackson and Lamare 1988: 167).

Nowadays, however, New Zealand and Australian foreign policy could not be more different. Australia continues to privilege traditional security concerns and the ANZUS alliance, and actively cooperated in the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq (Beeson 2003). It maintains “joint facilities” with the US and is investing billions of dollars in developing weapons systems designed to fight large-scale conventional wars. Australian foreign policy has been described as – and lamented for – being dominated by a doctrine of “orthodox realism”, which creates disincentives for assertiveness and independence (Cheeseman 1993; Cheeseman & Bruce 1996).

New Zealand, on the other hand, has undergone a reorientation away from both the US and Great Britain and towards greater “independence” in foreign policy (McKinnon 1993; Clements 1988; Clements 1993; Jackson and Lamare 1988; Alley 1999). This has been manifest in a preference for UN-mandated action, which limited New Zealand’s contributions to the Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq to logistical support, peace-keeping forces, and engineers, respectively (McCraw 2001: 30). New Zealand government officials – including the Prime Minister – have been unafraid to express their opposition to and criticism of US policies (Braddock 2003a). Moreover, their governments’ lack of concern with maintaining adequate defense capabilities was reflected in a recent large-scale cut in defense force capabilities (Bradford 2001).

What explains the opposite trajectories of New Zealand and Australian foreign policy? The point of departure is said to begin in 1984, when a newly-elected Labour Government declared New Zealand nuclear-free and imposed a ban on the entry of nuclear-powered and armed warships to New Zealand ports. Despite warnings from US officials (Alley 1993: 301) and pressure from the Australian and British governments (Clements 1988: 133; McGibbon 1999: 124), New Zealand policymakers went ahead with the ban and denied entry to the *USS Buchanan* in 1985. The US responded by cutting intelligence and military ties, suspending joint military exercises, and limiting New Zealand’s access in the State Department (McKinnon 1993: 283). Despite this, the government pushed ahead and to the consternation of its allies in Washington passed the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Bill in 1987 (McGibbon 1999: 125). The US government retaliated further by suspending its

obligations to New Zealand under ANZUS and downgrading New Zealand's status to "friend" rather than ally (Jennings 1988: 46; McKinnon 1999: 164).

In their explanations of the change, observers point to the influence of the anti-nuclear movement in redefining what constituted the largest threat to New Zealand (McKinnon 1999: 155). This movement fed off overseas events and the larger transnational arms control movement of which it was part, widening its support base throughout the 1970s and early 1980s to include academic groups, professional organizations, and eventually three of the four political parties competing in the 1984 election (Clements 1988). What is interesting, however, is the parallel development of the anti-nuclear movement in Australian politics. Exactly the *same* calls for an anti-nuclear policy had been made by Australian peace activists in the years up until 1984 and debate had been equally vigorous (Dalby 1996: 113; McKinnon 1999: 156). Moreover, the Australian Labour Party had been elected the previous year on a promise to review the status of the ANZUS alliance. The review, however, ended up a victory for ANZUS traditionalists and reaffirmed Australia's commitment to the alliance.

The sudden and rapid departure of New Zealand from the trajectory shared by the two countries is the central research question with which this article is concerned. Substantively, it represents a puzzle because it cannot be linked to New Zealand's material interests. The list of benefits New Zealand had accrued from ANZUS is long; the costs it paid were meager. The tangible benefits included security (New Zealand was never threatened in the period); military training (large elements of the New Zealand Armed Forces participated regularly in US-sponsored exercises); the supply and joint development of sophisticated weapons system technology; and the sharing of intelligence about overall US strategy and security in the region. Losing the ability to train with US troops proved extremely costly for the New Zealand Armed Forces, the costs of which have increased over time (Rolfe 1997; Jennings 1988; Thakur 1989).

On the face of it, material interests cannot explain why policymakers initiated the change in the first place, and why they have stuck with it. What can? As will be made clearer in the next section, existing theories of international relations do not provide an adequate explanation for why New Zealand chose to pass such a controversial policy. Theories based on structural neo-realism (Waltz 1979) cannot explain why New Zealand

would risk jeopardizing its security interests by threatening its chief guarantor. Regime theories (Krasner 1985; Grieco 1990), which attribute a constraining effect to international norms via their enforcement in international institutions or their embodiment by a hegemonic power, cannot explain why a small state would adhere to a policy that ran counter to the wishes of its patron. Liberal theories (Moravcsik 1997) that draw attention to domestic politics are unable to explain why the anti-nuclear movement became such a salient political issue in the first place.

Theories based on constructivism (Wendt 1992; Katzenstein 1996) offer the most compelling argument for the change in New Zealand foreign policy: it was caused by the influence of a global anti-nuclear norm, promoted by a coalition of transnational actors, which had the effect of redefining New Zealand's interests. Ultimately, however, this explanation is also lacking. Does the policy really reflect the adoption of a global "norm" when no other country had adopted such a policy? Constructivists have yet to adequately specify the *conditions* under which international norms will or will not impact (arguments based on domestic political structure and/or state identity have been under-theorized) and the *mechanisms* by which they have their impact (Checkel 1998; 2001). As it currently stands, constructivism has a hard time explaining *why* the norm resonated in New Zealand and not in Australia.

The general difficulty of applying IR theories to foreign policy has given rise to a series of models of foreign policymaking and foreign policy change (see Holsti 1982; Hermann 1990; Carlsnaes 1993; Goldmann 1988). While these models are able to identify numerous international and domestic factors that affect the formulation of foreign policy, a lot of theorizing has not been accompanied by much empirical testing. Most of the models, which were developed on the basis of one country or one particular policy, have not been generalized across countries, issue areas or time periods (Garrison 2003). They have been unable to specify *which* of the causal mechanisms they identify are most important, and *how* and *why* change occurs when it does (Gustavsson 1999).

In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, I argue that foreign policy is made on the basis of ideas held by policymakers: ideas about what is in their nation's best interests and ideas about what type of action this requires. Understanding foreign policy change requires explication of how new ideas enter the policymaking framework. While

constructivists have taught us that ideas matter, they have so far been unable to say *when* and *under what circumstances*. By comparing the two cases – one in which ideas had an impact on foreign policy and the other in which they did not – this article attempts to move constructivism forward from vague understandings of the differential impacts of international norms to a more concrete understanding of how their impact depends upon the domestic political structure – namely, who is in power – and elements of the domestic political discourse – namely, the existence of an identity debate.

In doing so, this article answers calls by scholars to conduct more comparative case studies of foreign policy change to assess the influence of different explanatory variables in different political contexts (Garrison 2003). It also attempts to expand upon research that attributes a causal effect to the role of ideas in foreign economic policy (Goldstein & Keohane 1993) by considering the causal effect of other, non-economic ideas.

Substantively, the importance of this research should not be underestimated. While the New Zealand case does represent an anomaly for international relations theory, it is an anomaly whose explication will improve our understanding of the conditions under which first-order changes in the nature of a country's foreign policy orientation occur, even in the *absence* of an exogenous shock. For the United States, understanding the conditions under which its allies might adopt policies that threaten or undermine its global strategy is extremely important. As the recent pressure on New Zealand to change its policy shows, the US cares a great deal about policies adopted by minor powers. Despite its status as the only remaining superpower, its vulnerability to unconventional forms of attack means that it still relies heavily on the symbolic support of countries like New Zealand for the legitimization function they perform.

THE FOURTH LABOUR GOVERNMENT AND THE NUCLEAR-FREE POLICY

So, what happened in New Zealand? On July 14, 1984 New Zealand elected its fourth Labour Government under the leadership of Prime Minister David Lange. Immediately after assuming office, the government announced that a key part of its campaign platform, the nuclear-free policy, would be put into effect (Lange 1990). This

policy was designed to keep New Zealand free of all things nuclear, and in practice meant prohibiting the entry of nuclear-armed and powered warships to New Zealand ports. It was a policy with a long history – Labour Party members had begun agitating for the policy in the mid 1970s. By 1984 it received support from a wide cross-section of society, and was also supported by three out of the four political parties contesting the 1984 election (Clements 1988: 123; see also Pugh 1989; 116). It had also played a role in the calling of the election – the threat of defections from the ruling National party over the nuclear ship ban issue prompted the Prime Minister to call the election six months early.

At the time New Zealand, along with Australia and the US, was a member of the tripartite alliance known as ANZUS. The ANZUS Treaty was signed on September 1, 1951, seven days before the conclusion of the US-Japan security and peace treaties. Against the background of post-World War Two insecurity in Northeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand understood the treaty as a guarantee of security against the possibility of a resurgent Japan or aggressive China (Kamimura 2004: 2; see also Hayden 1996: 434-454). While it did not compel New Zealand to accept ship visits, the US had made it clear on several occasions – most significantly in a meeting between Secretary of State George Shultz and the new Prime Minister David Lange on July 16, just two days after the election – that New Zealand’s obligations as an ally was that it would accept its ships, and from time to time they might be nuclear-armed (Lange 1990: 57). The United States viewed a ship ban by New Zealand as absolutely intolerable. In their view, New Zealand was part of the Western alliance, whose security was underpinned by the deterrence provided by nuclear weapons. The alliance simply had to remain united otherwise its credibility would be undermined (Alley 1987: 203).

The problem was that while it was fairly easy to tell whether a ship was nuclear-powered – one could look up manuals like *Jane’s Fighting Ships*, which is exactly what New Zealand did – the United States had a policy of “neither confirm nor deny” with regard to the existence of nuclear weapons, which it refused to compromise for New Zealand. Six months after the election, in January 1985, the US sent its usual request for a ship visit. The ship chosen – the *USS Buchanan* – was a conventionally-powered missile destroyer, selected on the grounds that it was unlikely to be carrying nuclear weapons. “Unlikely” however, was not enough for the New Zealand Government and the

Cabinet voted unanimously to deny the visit (see Lange 1990; Alley 1987; Bassett 2003; Wilson 1989). The US retaliation was immediate and harsh: it cancelled a series of naval exercises the two countries had planned, announced that it would limit all flows of intelligence to New Zealand, and “postponed” the scheduled meeting of the ANZUS Council in July (Pugh 1989: 132). In 1986, the US government declared that it could no longer fulfill its alliance obligations under the ANZUS treaty. Undeterred, the New Zealand government enacted its nuclear-free policy into law with the passage of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Bill in 1987 (Lamare 1991). This led to the US formally suspending its defense commitments to New Zealand under ANZUS, and created a political rift between the two countries which has not yet – over twenty years later – healed (Swindells 2005; Braddock 2003b).

Before we consider what the relevant theories of international relations say about this, it is interesting to compare New Zealand with Australia. Not only does Australia have similar historical foundations, a similar tradition of privileging traditional security concerns, and the same alliance relationship with the United States as New Zealand, it also had two other important elements: a vibrant anti-nuclear movement and a Labour Party elected in 1983. In Australia, the peace and anti-nuclear movement had been galvanized in response to Reaganism and INF debacle in Europe and experienced a similar rapid growth in public support in the early 1980s. Like New Zealand, support for the movement spread to church groups, professional associations, and academic institutions. The issues were almost exactly the same: the need to curb the escalating arms race; the need to end French nuclear testing in the Pacific; the goal of creating a nuclear-free Pacific; the promotion of an independent and non-aligned foreign policy, and criticism of Australia’s role in supporting the US’ nuclear strategies (Summy 1986: 46; Pugh 1989: 118-125). Like New Zealand, ship visits became a focal issue, and in 1983 the *HMS Invincible* was refused permission to stop briefly for drydock repairs in Sydney harbor because the British would neither confirm nor deny the existence of nuclear weapons on board (Albinski 1987: 36).

More importantly, however, this concern was also reflected at the level of government. Like the New Zealand Labour Party, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was elected in 1983 after a long period of conservative governance. Moreover, pressure from

the left-wing of the party had resulted in a promise by the leadership – Prime Minister Bob Hawke – that after the election a “review” of the status of the ANZUS alliance would be conducted (Hawke 1994: 214). Many in the left-wing of the Party were in favor of its abrogation or at least the banning of nuclear powered and armed ships. However, the “review”, conducted at the 1983 ANZUS Council Meeting in Washington ended up merely a means by which the meaning of ANZUS to each respective country could be clarified (Albinski 1987: 32). The Council acknowledged that ANZUS was “not an alliance of unlimited coverage”, and reflected the divergent interests of its different members (ibid; Levine and Harris 1994). The ALP were reaffirmed its commitment to the alliance and in doing so were able to silence the anti-nuclear cause.

As Albinski has noted, however, despite its commitment to ANZUS the ALP government went on to do a great many things in the name of nuclear disarmament, to the extent that it has “become one of the very few Western and aligned nations to be taken seriously on arms control issues by a wide spectrum of non-aligned states” (Albinski 1987: 35). These measures include being the initiator of the proposal for the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone at the South Pacific Forum in 1983, appointing a special ambassador for disarmament and funding a Peace Research Center at Australian National University, assuming an active role on the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean and promoting the convention of a conference on an arms limitation zone in the Indian Ocean (Albinski 1987: 34-5).

Given that both countries had strong anti-nuclear movements, campaigning on the same issues *and* a Labor Party in power with Party members that shared these concerns, what explains the success in one country and not the other? In the next section I consider and reject most of the available explanations, and put forward one of my own.

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

What other explanations can we marshal to explain this policy change? This section highlights the extent to which the actions taken by New Zealand are in fact inexplicable in terms of all the dominant theories of international relations. While each theory provides a ready explanation of why the Australian government did not choose an

anti-nuclear policy, they are all ill-equipped to explain the New Zealand decision. They can be summarized and disposed of as follows:

First, neo-realism postulates that states are power-seeking and security-conscious because of the anarchical nature of the international system. In this environment, great powers try to balance against one another and smaller states seek to align with the great powers (Waltz 1979; see also Mearsheimer 1995). For neo-realists, a state's foreign policy is primarily shaped by its position in the international system and by its relative material power capabilities. They would thus attribute New Zealand's decision to leave the ANZUS alliance as the result of a significant reduction in Soviet threat and/or a gain in New Zealand military capabilities. Given that neither of these occurred, the explanatory power of neo-realism is limited.

Second, neo-institutionalist approaches assume that international anarchy can be positively influenced by the provision of information and rules in the form of institutions and regimes set up to address common problems (Krasner 1983; see also Keohane 1993; Axelrod and Keohane 1993). Security institutions such as alliances often develop rationales for their existence that are unrelated to security concerns; the alliance becomes a device by which cooperation can be achieved in a wide variety of issue areas, including trade and cultural exchange (Deutsch 1957; Adler and Barnett 1996). Empirical evidence for this has been provided by Gowa and Mansfield (1993), who argue that free trade agreements are much more likely within, rather than across, political-military alliances. They find that alliances formed in bipolar systems are more likely to evolve into free-trade coalitions than those formed under multi-polar conditions. Considered together, these arguments are unable to explain why New Zealand would choose to leave an alliance it was benefiting from in material terms and would likely benefit from even more in the future (witness the free trade deal signed between Australia and the United States in 2004).

Various explanations for alliance formation and disintegration prove similarly inadequate. According to Reiter (1994), minor powers choose alliances based on previous successful allied experiences during wartime; this provides no explanation for New Zealand's sudden choice of non-alignment. Christenson and Snyder (1990) argue that when the offense is dominant, states will quickly commit themselves to their allies. In the

face of growing Soviet offensive power, this cannot explain why New Zealand did the opposite. Morrow (1993) argues that states leave alliances only when they perceive the costs of “internal balancing” to be lesser than the domestic costs of being allied; in this case, however, the New Zealand government did not take any independent measures to strengthen its military capabilities following its loss of membership in ANZUS.

In her study of nuclear postures of regional powers, Solingen (1994) provides evidence that ruling coalitions pursuing economic liberalization are more likely to embrace regional nuclear regimes – defined as nuclear-weapons-free-zones – than their inward-looking, nationalist counterparts. This would appear to apply to New Zealand, as the Labour Government had just initiated a program of extensive economic liberalization. The rationale behind this, however, is that domestic coalitions favoring economic liberalization are dependent upon the global economy and on the political support of major powers, which leads them to encourage the state to adopt nuclear postures such as disarmament that will not antagonize these major powers (ibid.: 139). Somewhat counter-intuitively, this argument would therefore predict that the powerful coalitions behind New Zealand’s economic liberalization would pressure the state *not* to adopt the anti-nuclear policy, given its potential to antagonize the United States. Even if this pressure existed, it was unable to stop the government from going ahead with the policy.

More broadly, liberal theories postulate that different domestic political structures will cause different foreign and security policy preferences. Moravcsik (1997) has synthesized different strands of liberal theory to argue that state behavior is a reflection of the preferences of a subset of society, which are translated into state preferences at the international level. While this provides a convincing explanation – the change was clearly the result of societal pressure and changing elite preferences – it is insufficient. It is unable to provide an explanation for the *origins* of the new ideas, how and why they were able to redefine people’s preferences. The empirical work confirms that the *transnational* anti-nuclear movement was instrumental in disseminating ideas about nuclear weapons to New Zealand and Australia-based movements (McKinnon 1993; McKinnon 1999: 153; Clements 1988; Clements 1993; McGibbon 1999). Without an examination of how outside ideas, promoted by transnational actors, were transmitted into domestic demands

for an anti-nuclear policy, theories based on domestic politics miss an important part of the puzzle.

An explanation for the policy change that incorporates this element is the constructivist argument on the impact of global norms. Constructivists in this issue area have demonstrated how international norms can have an effect on state policy independent of material interests by reshaping actors' interests, self-understandings and behavior (Katzenstein 1996; Lumsdaine 1993; Klotz 1995; Price 1995; Nadelman 1990; Finnemore 1993). Constructivists allude to the important role played by "transnational advocacy networks" that work between and within states to frame issues, set agendas and mobilize publics (Klotz 1995; Keck and Sikkink 1998). A key insight developed by Finnemore (1996) is the idea of teaching: transnational actors are able to "teach" states both the problem and the solution.

However, constructivist explanations as they currently stand provide almost no help in explaining the variance in outcomes. Constructivists argue that states adopt progressive international norms such as human rights due to peer pressure, reputational concerns, and the desire for international legitimacy (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Price 1998; Catalinac & Chan 2005). First, the contested nature of the anti-nuclear norm, which had not been adopted or institutionalized by any other state, makes it difficult to argue that concerns for reputation and legitimacy motivated New Zealand policymakers (see Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996: 50 for definition of a norm). Second, it is extremely difficult to argue that New Zealand was suffering from what Gurowitz (1999) would call an "insecure" international identity, which might compel it to adopt an international norm. In any case, up until 1984 New Zealand and Australia both exhibited extremely similar "international identities", which limits the explanatory power of this variable.

Finally, the literature on ideas and international political change also has hypotheses for when outside ideas will impact upon foreign policy. In his study of how ideas held by transnational actors influenced Soviet foreign policymakers, Checkel (1997) argues that changes in the external environment, policy failure, and fluctuating elite preferences were *necessary* conditions to create room for new ideas. This echoes findings from nearly all the work on the independent impact of ideas: policymakers are

motivated to look elsewhere *only* when the current policy is not working; when there are an “accumulation of anomalies” (Hall 1993: 280). New ideas are then chosen based on their dual capacity to explain the problem currently facing policymakers and provide a solution.

The capacity of this argument to explain the outcomes is also limited. Had international structural conditions changed enough to constitute a *crisis* in New Zealand foreign policy? The renewed superpower tensions of the early 1980s did not differ qualitatively from previous periods of tension and arms racing. Indeed, nothing in particular had happened to indicate to New Zealand policymakers that their policies were wrong and needed changing – the alliance relationship had not changed shape and was still serving New Zealand’s needs the way it had been designed to do. These new ideas became salient in the *absence* of an exogenous shock. It almost seems as if the *ideas* about nuclear weapons caused the crisis in New Zealand foreign policy. Checkel’s framework does not allow for the intrinsic nature of the idea to have any independent causal power. We need a better understanding of how and why certain ideas have an impact at a particular time.

From the above analysis it is clear that constructivist understandings of how new ideas promoted by norm entrepreneurs reconstitute state interests provides us with the best leverage over this problem. Clearly, New Zealand’s interests changed in the absence of an exogenous shock. However, constructivists have provided no satisfactory criteria for determining which norm will matter, under which conditions. In the face of conflicting ideas, we have no way of knowing whether foreign policy decision makers will be guided by expectations of behavior addressed to them by their international, or domestic, environments (Kowert and Legro 1996: 497; Checkel 1998). Why did New Zealand policymakers pay attention to this idea and Australian policymakers ignore it? This article attempts to build on constructivist explanations of political change by attempting to identify scope conditions under which these new ideas took hold.

EXPLAINING NUCLEAR-FREE NEW ZEALAND

METHODS

In order to understand how and why this policy was adopted in New Zealand, I conducted a series of interviews with thirteen members of the Fourth Labour Government, including the Deputy Prime Minister and five other Cabinet Ministers; and an interview with the then-President of the Party.¹ These were supplemented by interviews with three members of the opposition who were vocal on the issue, and five influential members of the civil service, including the then-Defense Secretary, Head of the Prime Minister's Advisory Council, and two former Secretary's of Foreign Affairs. Respondents were asked to pinpoint the ideas behind the policy, the sources of these ideas, the roots of public support for the policy, and to discuss generally how it came to be adopted by the Labour Party.

To compensate for the response bias that might occur given the passage of time, I compared statements made in the interviews to statements the elected representatives had made in parliamentary debates. The desire to keep New Zealand nuclear-free had been the subject of four private members' bills during the previous period of National Party dominance, all of which did not pass. Three of these (in 1976, 1982 and 1984) were sponsored by Labour MP Richard Prebble (whom I interviewed) and sought to keep nuclear weapons (and variously, nuclear power), out of New Zealand. The fourth, in 1983, had the same goals and was sponsored by an independent member of parliament. These debates provided ample material from which I was able to gauge the rationales behind the policy.

In addition, I conducted discourse analysis of other relevant material. In order to understand public attitudes towards threat and security, I used survey data that asked about threat perception and attitudes towards ANZUS. I also considered the 1956 and 1978 Defense Reviews, and read the official report on disarmament and arms control submitted to parliament in 1985 by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Select Committee, which was set up to investigate public attitudes. I was also able to make use of the excellent secondary work that has been written on this topic by New Zealand political

¹ Unfortunately, the Prime Minister of the Fourth Labour Government, Mr David Lange, who was also Foreign Minister and played an instrumental role in the original articulation of the policy, passed away in the course of my fieldwork, before I was able to interview him. While the majority of the respondents were chosen because of their direct involvement in the issue, I also selected several Labour Members of Parliament who were not particularly involved in the issue.

scientists, as well as work by key individuals who were involved in the policy. This included an autobiographical work on the nuclear-free policy written by the then-Prime Minister David Lange and work written by civil servants involved in the policymaking process.

For Australia, in order to understand why the policy was *not* adopted I conducted two interviews with the then-Prime Minister Bob Hawke, and his Foreign Minister Bill Hayden. I also read their autobiographies and statements made by them and fellow Labor Party members in the Australian parliament. To understand Australian attitudes towards threat perception I used survey data. I also read secondary literature on the anti-nuclear and peace movement in Australia and anti-nuclear politics in general.

FINDINGS

As I will outline in detail below, there were three major findings. The first is that the issue of *security* was the topic of debate in New Zealand. In contrast to Australia, the issue of what constituted the biggest threat to New Zealand, whether there *was* an identifiable threat to New Zealand, and what were the appropriate measures the government should take to confront this threat were all topics up for debate. The preferences of the New Zealand government were by no means well-defined, and were in a state of flux. Australians, on the other hand, had a much more commonly-agreed upon definition of what constituted a threat and what security measures that threat required. No one was able to mount a serious challenge to this.

Secondly, there was ongoing debate in New Zealand over its *international identity* and its appropriate role in the world. Labour Party politicians were advocating one thing (and they had been for some time) and National Party politicians were advocating another, but together it constituted a debate. While states often undergo self-scrutiny, this was much less marked in Australia. There was a basic consensus about the strategic situation Australia faced and the capabilities required to meet that threat, issues of identity were decoupled from Australia's security strategy. The third finding was the importance of the election of a Labor Party in New Zealand. Without the Labour Party in power, the policy

would have had no chance of being passed.² Together, these three findings point the way to identifying scope conditions.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

First, rationales for the nuclear-free policy provided by the interviewees in New Zealand can be grouped into two categories. The first was the *security rationale*, which was that the banning of nuclear ships would make New Zealand safer. In the words of one respondent, “My view was that every time a ship came to New Zealand, we were at risk. The ships all carried nuclear materials and it was reasonable to believe that the Russians probably tracked them. Just because we were friends with the US didn’t seem to me that we should volunteer to be on the line”.³ Another put it plainly: “at the height of the Cold War we felt that [having nuclear ships] made us a nuclear target”.⁴ Many respondents stated clearly that the threat of nuclear weapons was much greater than any kind of threat to New Zealand’s territorial integrity.⁵ Moreover, all respondents were convinced that this concern was held by the public. Explicit mention of this kind of security rationale was made by 10 of the 15 proponents of the policy whom I interviewed.⁶

According to the respondents, by 1984 the danger of nuclear weapons was preeminent in the public’s mind, overwhelming the previous preoccupation with the need to contain the Soviet threat. Two key factors were suggested to account for this change. First, many respondents mentioned French nuclear testing in the South Pacific, which not only inflamed the New Zealand public but contributed to a “deep-seated antagonism

² All the bureaucratic agencies in New Zealand which were involved in foreign policy were opposed to the anti-nuclear policy, therefore their influence was irrelevant.

³ Richard Prebble (Cabinet Minister in Fourth Labour Government and sponsor of the original private member bill in 1976, as well as in 1982 and 1984). Interviewed in New Zealand on July 5, 2005.

⁴ Mike Moore (Cabinet Minister in Fourth Labour Government, Prime Minister in 1990). Interviewed in New Zealand on August 11, 2005.

⁵ Richard Northey (Member of the Fourth Labour Government). Interviewed in New Zealand on August 11, 2005.

⁶ Marilyn Waring, an opposition Member of Parliament in 1984, was included in the group of “proponents” as it was her threat of defection over the nuclear-free bill that arguably prompted the calling of an election.

towards nuclear weapons as a weapon of war”.⁷ Beginning at Mururoa Atoll in 1966, this had immediately elicited vigorous opposition from not only the public – among them agricultural interests, environmentalists and committed pacifists – but also both the New Zealand and Australian conservative governments (Pugh 1989: 104). Once the New Zealand and Australian Labor Parties were elected in 1972 the opposition had intensified, with the two governments co-sponsoring a resolution in 1972 at the UN General Assembly that called for the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban treaty, and taking France to the International Court of Justice (Kamimura 2004: 5; Pugh 1989: 104). In 1973 the New Zealand Government – under charismatic Prime Minister Norman Kirk – dispatched a frigate to the testing zone with a Cabinet Minister aboard. (see Jackson and Lamare 1988: 165). Several respondents argued that it was this event that “focused the public’s attention on banning nuclear weapons and power”.⁸

Second, most respondents discussed how the *escalation of the arms race* and the doctrines of nuclear deterrence and mutually-assured destruction were instrumental in redefining people’s perceptions of threat. “The world was on the brink of a nuclear holocaust.... [expelling nuclear weapons from New Zealand]... reflected concern about the escalating Cold War tensions”.⁹ Many discussed the “constant stream of publicity” about the horrors of Hiroshima, the reality of nuclear warfare between the superpowers, what this would entail for New Zealand, and how close the Cuban missile crisis had got.¹⁰ In the words of one respondent, who described fatalistic tendencies among schoolchildren: “the Cold War got into everyone’s bones.... people were working it out”.¹¹

⁷ Jim Bolger (Deputy Leader of the Opposition in 1984 and Prime Minister 1990 – 1997). Interviewed in New Zealand on July 26, 2005.

⁸ This point was made by Margaret Wilson (President of the Labour Party in 1984, interviewed in New Zealand on August 1, 2005); and John Henderson (Director of Prime Ministerial Advisory Group in 1985, interviewed in New Zealand on July 13, 2005).

⁹ Ken Shirley (Member of the Fourth Labour Government). Interviewed in New Zealand on July 5, 2005. Another example is: “The main fear was a nuclear holocaust..... I had real concerns about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the doctrine of mutually-assured destruction. Most people shared my concern. We all watched the Cuban missile crisis”.

¹⁰ Several respondents cited particular events that focused attention on the realities of nuclear weapons for New Zealanders. These included the movie *War Games*, which toured New Zealand to large audiences, and visitors to New Zealand like Dr. Helen Caldicott. Details of these events can be found in Gregory (1984) and Hughes and Mills (1984).

¹¹ Jim Anderton, (Member of the Fourth Labour Government and former President of the Party). Interviewed in New Zealand on August 1, 2005.

One area, however, where public and elite preferences were not in tandem, and were indeed incongruous, was over New Zealand's membership in its ANZUS alliance. By and large, New Zealanders were not ready to give this up in 1984, even though they wanted New Zealand to be nuclear-free. Support for ANZUS was almost as high as support for a nuclear-free policy. While public support for ANZUS was mentioned in passing by several respondents,¹² almost all proponents of the policy were of the view that ANZUS was essentially irrelevant to New Zealand's security. The Deputy Prime Minister at the time, for example, said to me "I didn't think ANZUS was something that you needed to die in a ditch in preservation of. It was a desirable policy for New Zealand, but it wasn't one that should be supported at all costs".¹³ Others made claims that ANZUS was a complication in the relationship, that it somehow "hindered" New Zealand's independence.¹⁴

While the public was in favor of the nuclear-free policy *and* ANZUS, the government was in favor of the nuclear-free policy and indifferent towards ANZUS, the opposition National Party was vehemently opposed to the nuclear-free policy and extremely supportive of ANZUS. It was, in the words of one respondent "the "cornerstone" of New Zealand foreign policy."¹⁵ It was made clear to me during the course of the interviews that the Secretary of Defense and the two Secretaries of Foreign Affairs whom I interviewed were of the same view as the opposition. They were absolutely aghast at the nuclear-free policy and the consequences they knew it would have for ANZUS. One described the Labour Government "unrealistic on foreign policy."¹⁶ These competing views indicate the extent to which New Zealand preferences with regard to security policy were by no means fixed and clearly-defined. They were in a state of flux. What is most interesting, however, is the movement of the Labour Party away from ANZUS, and towards the view that alliances didn't matter. What made this

¹² Richard Prebble.

¹³ Sir Geoffrey Palmer (Deputy Prime Minister, Fourth Labour Government, later Prime Minister 1989-90). Interviewed in New Zealand on July 6, 2005.

¹⁴ David Caygill (Minister in the Fourth Labour Government). Interviewed in New Zealand on July 26, 2005.

¹⁵ Jim McLay (Leader of the Opposition in 1984). Interviewed in New Zealand on August 8, 2005.

¹⁶ Denis McLean (Secretary of Defense, 1984). McLean clearly stated: "for the Defense Department, ANZUS was extremely important. Not necessarily for broad strategic reasons, but it was immensely important politically. It gave little New Zealand two days in town with the big movers and shakers, every year. [It was an] enormous foreign policy trump card. We had the opportunity to put our views forward."

change occur? Was it due to changes in threat perception about the dangers of nuclear weapons, or was there something else?

This brings me to the second main rationale given for the anti-nuclear policy. I refer to this as the *identity rationale*, namely that New Zealand should ban nuclear ships for identity reasons. A total of 13 out of the 15 proponents whom I interviewed mentioned the identity rationale, with almost all of them privileging it over the security rationale.¹⁷ Most of the respondents described a felt need for an *independent foreign policy*, for New Zealand to make its own decisions in international affairs.¹⁸ One respondent put it eloquently: “it was important to us that we were not merely an echo of somebody else’s voice. We speak with our own voice and we do what we believe is appropriate to our interests and values”.¹⁹ Another described it as “part of New Zealand setting its own course in foreign affairs and not having our foreign policy dictated to us”.²⁰ The nuclear-free policy was also described as an example of New Zealand self-expression, “of us casting off the shackles, liberating our foreign policy”.²¹

Implicit in this was the realization that New Zealand, by virtue of its geographical isolation from the main power centers and its lack of nuclear capability, was not under threat and therefore *could* and *should* take a strong stand on this issue. Respondents argued that the threat of nuclear arms to the very survival of the planet in fact *compelled* small states to take action to discourage their proliferation.²² Many emphasized how the geographical remoteness and sense of isolation felt by New Zealanders contributed to a desire to “be different and take a stance on issues that no one else did”.²³ The head of CND in New Zealand confirmed to me in an interview that its campaign strategies were

¹⁷ This is despite my explicitly not asking questions about identity.

¹⁸ For example: “I think you can say it was a hunger for an independent foreign policy. The Labour Party felt that way. We wanted a foreign policy based on our position in the world and our own integrity”. Margaret Shields (Minister, Fourth Labour Government). Interviewed in New Zealand on August 16, 2005.

¹⁹ Phil Goff (Member, Fourth Labour Government). Interviewed in New Zealand on July 19, 2005.

²⁰ David Caygill.

²¹ Peter Dunne (Member, Fourth Labour Government). Interviewed in New Zealand on July 15, 2005. Also, Palmer stated: “this country has changed profoundly since WW2... we are asserting our own sense of national identity and the nuclear issue became a big part of that. Before, NZ didn’t have an independent foreign policy”.

²² For example, Caygill stated: “....that it was entirely responsible for other nations to discourage that. Those who could hardly compete in that race themselves could take an alternative stance”.

²³ Sir Geoffrey Palmer.

also designed to reflect this emerging identity. They urged New Zealanders to “be proud that it can take an independent stance on contributing to world peace”.²⁴

In effect, this shows how the security rationale – nuclear weapons are a threat – became linked to the identity rationale – we need to be independent, in the form of “we should take a strong, independent stance and reject nuclear weapons”. It is possible that the need for an independent identity attached itself to the issue of nuclear weapons; *or* that the need to rid the country of nuclear weapons provided the impetus for a reconsideration of New Zealand’s identity.²⁵

We can examine this issue further by considering how understandings of state identity held by New Zealand leaders has evolved over time. Political scientists have described New Zealand as a country in which “conservative pragmatism is highly valued”, a country in which “paranoia about communism” has “traditionally borne little relationship to the distance from any significant group of Russians or communists” (Pugh 1989: 100). Indeed, respondents described New Zealand’s past foreign policy orientation as one of heavy reliance on the great power of the day, which became the United States in place of Great Britain in the post-war period.

In the interviews respondents pinpointed two events that acted to alter this sense of comfortable dependence. The first was the Vietnam War, to which both New Zealand and Australia committed troops under conservative governments. In the words of one respondent: “we looked at Vietnam and said do we really want to be there? Is it a good idea to tie ourselves so closely to the foreign policy of another country....where we’ll have to make decisions against our better judgment?”²⁶ Indeed, the experience of Vietnam mounted the first serious challenge to the consensus that existed on a domestic level over the desirability of close ties to the US (Kamimura 2004: 3). The second was the entry of Britain into the European Common Market, which was described by some respondents as a “cutting off of the apron strings” and by others, as a “betrayal”, and then the withdrawal of their forces from “East of Suez” in the late 1960s.²⁷

²⁴ Richard Northey.

²⁵ This is akin to the coupling of streams in John W. Kingdon’s work on agenda setting, and mirrors the way solutions look for problems.

²⁶ Phil Goff.

²⁷ Margaret Wilson; Phil Goff; Michael Moore.

Not only did both these events trigger a desire for a more “independent” foreign policy suited to New Zealand needs and interests, in the search for what *was* a uniquely New Zealand foreign policy, respondents alluded to the realization that New Zealand’s identity lay not with Europe but with the South Pacific: “we’re not a European country, we’re in the South Pacific!”²⁸ In the words of some respondents, this realization explains why French nuclear testing so inflamed public opinion – because of the negative consequences for the health and welfare of our friends in *our* region, “*our* backyard”.²⁹ Overall, respondents argued that throughout the 1960s and 1970s there was a growing sense of New Zealand as an independent sovereign country, a country that wanted to reach its own conclusions and speak with its own voice.

While this growing need for “independence” in foreign policy explains why Labour politicians felt no need for the ANZUS alliance, it is important for our purposes to note that this belief was not bipartisan. There was, in effect, a dispute over the proper identity for New Zealand, which mirrored the dispute over security. The different understandings of New Zealand’s identity held by the different parties were alluded to in my interviews. The former Secretary of Defense lamented how New Zealanders had always been able to express their identity in “*collective* terms...as a fundamental unit of something much larger”. Exactly when this gave way to the idea that New Zealand should “be different and spark off new thinking about the world” was not clear to him.³⁰ Indeed, many respondents suggested that this notion of “independent New Zealand” became widely held in the early 1980s, and was misread by the conservative Prime Minister at the time, Robert Muldoon. Members of his National party who were in government at the time confirmed to me in interviews that he misread the electorate on this issue. Having built his support base around what “middle New Zealand” wanted, he perceived this to mean “beating down the left-wing, trendy causes like anti-nuclearism”.³¹ By the early 1980s, however, the nature of middle New Zealand had changed. Anti-nuclearism had become mainstream public opinion.

²⁸ Ken Shirley; Richard Northey.

²⁹ Richard Northey.

³⁰ Denis McLean

³¹ As an example of Muldoon’s declining ability to read his electorate, Peter Dunne remembers the former head of the Labour Party in an earlier election campaign appealing for the need to “build a new society”; the Prime Minister replied “what’s wrong with the old one we’ve got?”

There was a consensus amongst my interviewees that the nuclear-free policy soon acquired a “sacred cow” status in New Zealand politics. Public support for the policy continued to increase despite reprimands from the United States and the suspension of its membership in ANZUS. Political scientists showed evidence that support for the nuclear-free policy was the main factor that aided the reelection of Labour in 1987 (Vowles 1990). The main event that solidified the policy, however, was the reversal of the conservative party’s stance on the issue just prior to the 1990 election (see Alves 1991: 1064). After winning the election, the new Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, commissioned a parliamentary Select Committee to investigate the danger of hosting a nuclear-powered ship. Despite the committee’s report confirming that it was indeed safe for New Zealand, Bolger confirmed to me in an interview that the public just didn’t want to know, he “couldn’t even get a *debate* in New Zealand on this”. Hence to this day it has remained, not just untouched but untouchable.

Given that the nuclear-free policy has become something New Zealanders are extremely proud of, I reasoned that this might have influenced the responses of my interviewees. My hypothesis that identity change was a causal factor in the passage of the policy therefore needed to be subject to greater analysis. I therefore decided to analyze the parliamentary debates to uncover the main rationales given for the policy at the time. I chose to analyze the debates over the private members’ bills submitted in 1976, 1982, 1983 and 1984.³² I omitted the debates over the actual 1986 legislation, because this came after the policy was implemented (with the denial of the Buchanan), and I reasoned that arguments may have been biased due to the US reaction.

I collected all the rationales given for the policy in each debate. In the same way as above, I grouped the arguments into two main categories: security-based and identity-based. While security rationales were easy to recognize, identity arguments were

³² These are variously entitled: Nuclear Free Zone (New Zealand) Bill in 1976, sponsored by Labour MP Richard Prebble; Nuclear Free Zone (New Zealand) Bill in 1982, also sponsored by Richard Prebble; 1983 Prohibition of Nuclear Vessels and Weapons Bill, sponsored by independent Bruce Beetham; and 1984 Nuclear Free New Zealand Bill, sponsored again by Richard Prebble. All but the 1982 bill prohibit both nuclear weapons and ships being brought into New Zealand. The 1982 Bill targets nuclear weapons only.

sometimes difficult for the reason discussed in the previous section – they were often implicitly linked to security rationales (for example, the dangers posed by nuclear weapons compels New Zealand to take a stand and support global nuclear disarmament). It was also difficult to interpret statements about ANZUS: the proponents argued vehemently that the bill would not affect the status of the alliance. While they may have believed this at the time, almost all my interviewees confirmed that the consequences the policy might have for ANZUS was by no means uppermost in their minds. My guess is that their indifference to ANZUS caused them not to think seriously about the consequences.

The aggregated results are shown in Table One. Several points are immediately obvious. First, both identity and security rationales were invoked by those arguing in favor of the policy, however over time the identity-based arguments became the most commonly employed. This is surprising given that what is usually credited with sparking anti-nuclear protest in other countries is the threat posed by the escalation in Cold War tensions that occurred in the early 1980s. In New Zealand it seems as if this “threat” had the effect of galvanizing Members around the cause, but not because of the threat, but because the actions it encouraged fit New Zealand’s emerging identity. Reflecting my findings in the interviews, these rationales included both the “independent” strand: “the essence of the bill is.... New Zealand telling the world that it is committed to ensuring prosperity, peace and security for its people, we are telling the world the way we want to live” (Lange, *NZPD* 1982); and the strand that says because of New Zealand’s size and position it should take a stand on global nuclear disarmament. Interestingly, however, proponents were also arguing that the bill would “bring the country to the forefront of the international campaign for nuclear disarmament”, enabling New Zealand to “show the world that we take these things seriously” (Clark, *NZPD* 1983). This reflects a desire for New Zealand to be seen as different and to attract attention for that.

So far, I have established that the rationales provided in the interviews are congruous with those originally articulated in the parliamentary debates. We have evidence that identity rationales played just as an important, if not more important, role in the adoption of the policy. In order to assess this further, I also reviewed the rationales put forward by the conservatives for non-adoption of the policy. Refer to Table Two for the rationales

upon which they opposed the bill. Interestingly, while security concerns were uppermost in the minds of those who opposed the policy throughout the period, Members from 1982 onwards were framing their arguments in such a way that recognized a role for New Zealand in pursuing global disarmament, but emphasized that going “nuclear-free” was not the right strategy. They argued that while New Zealand had a role to play in removing the threat of nuclear war, “any policy designed to achieve that end must operate in a real world, and take account of the realities of politics and diplomacy” (McLay, *NZPD* 1984).

The fact that conservative politicians were recognizing and supporting this “role” for New Zealand as championing the cause of nuclear disarmament provides further evidence that this new identity – formed by a combination of concern over French nuclear testing, the Vietnam war, and the dangers of nuclear proliferation, and also the need to chart a new path in the world – existed, at least in the minds of Labour Party politicians. Just because the conservatives recognized this, however, did not mean that they were ready and willing to take the action the Labour Party demanded.

SURVEY DATA

The above analysis of the interviews and debates established that the nuclear-free policy was adopted for both security and identity reasons. It also showed that both these issues were subject to a significant amount of debate. This section uses secondary research and survey data to show that this debate was not confined to politicians, but was recognized by the civil service and had spilled over to the level of the public. The perception of threat was undergoing change, and people were divided as to what the appropriate measures should be to contain this threat. There was also no longer a consensus over what New Zealand should be doing in the world.

TABLE ONE: RATIONALES PROVIDED BY THOSE ARGUING IN FAVOR OF THE NUCLEAR-FREE POLICY IN THE NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT IN 1976 1982, 1983 AND 1984.

RATIONALES PROVIDED BY PROPONENTS	NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE (NEW ZEALAND) BILL 1976 N = 43	NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE (NEW ZEALAND) BILL 1982 N = 35	PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR VESSELS AND WEAPONS BILL 1983 N = 37	NUCLEAR-FREE NEW ZEALAND BILL 1984 N = 22
<p>SECURITY RATIONALES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will keep New Zealand safe from nuclear weapons • Will keep New Zealand safe from nuclear accidents • No strategic reason why we need ship visits 	21 (49%)	9 (26%)	11 (30%)	4 (18%)
<p>IDENTITY RATIONALES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should take a stance in support of peace and disarmament • Should pursue an independent foreign policy • Allows New Zealand to lead the world/ be an example to other nations • Allows us to show solidarity with the South Pacific 	12 (28%)	14 (40%)	16 (43%)	11 (50%)
<p>OTHER RATIONALES :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public don't want nuclear weapons • Will not threaten New Zealand's membership in ANZUS 	4 (9%) 6 (14%)	5 (14%) 7 (20%)	4 (11%) 6 (16%)	5 (23%) 2 (9%)

TABLE TWO: RATIONALES PROVIDED BY THOSE ARGUING AGAINST THE NUCLEAR-FREE POLICY IN THE NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT IN 1976 1982, 1983 AND 1984

RATIONALES PROVIDED BY OPPONENTS	NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE (NEW ZEALAND) BILL 1976 N = 25	NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE (NEW ZEALAND) BILL 1982 N = 33	PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR VESSELS AND WEAPONS BILL 1983 N = 19	NUCLEAR-FREE NEW ZEALAND BILL 1984 N = 22
<p>SECURITY RATIONALES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will threaten ANZUS • Nuclear ships are not dangerous • Will threaten the safety of New Zealand <i>vis a vis</i> the Soviet Union • Nuclear power might be a good thing for New Zealand • Nuclear deterrence is a good strategy 	22 (88%)	25 (76%)	14 (74%)	15 (68%)
<p>IDENTITY RATIONALES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Zealand should stand with its allies • While New Zealand should pursue nuclear disarmament, there are better methods 	2 (8%) 0	3 (9%) 5 (15%)	1 (5%) 4 (21%)	1 (5%) 5 (23%)
<p>OTHER RATIONALES :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public don't support the bill 	1 (4%)	0	0	1 (5%)

First, government documents reveal that perceptions of threat had changed over the course of the post-war period. Whereas at the end of the Second World War the ANZUS Treaty had been negotiated by Australia and New Zealand in order to contain the possibility of a resurgent Japan, by 1957 the New Zealand government's Defense Review stated "the threat arises today from the world-wide activities of the Communist bloc" and prescribed the need for New Zealand to guarantee its security through collective defence arrangements (Rolfe 1993: 5-6). By the late 1970s, however, this had changed drastically, with the 1978 Defense Review identifying an *absence* of serious regional threats to New Zealand's security. It called for a focus on "the part of the world in which we belong, the South Pacific", and for armed forces to be more independently able to "secure a range of national interests close to home" (Huntley 1996: 3).

Political scientists have noted that this perceived absence of direct threat became a staple of New Zealand security debates from the late 1970s. They argue that a combination of factors – including the cutting of New Zealand's main security and economic ties with Great Britain, the experience of the Vietnam War and the Guam Doctrine, which expressed a new expectation that Pacific allies would provide for themselves in regional conflicts – meant that New Zealand's regional isolation came to be seen as a "source of protection" rather than a source of vulnerability (Huntley 1996: 3).

In place of direct regional threats, however, New Zealanders became increasingly concerned with the risks posed by the possibility of nuclear war between the superpowers (Jackson and Lamare 1988: 161-163). Political scientists attribute this to apprehensions about nuclear weapons testing in the South Pacific, which translated into an overarching concern about the prospect of global nuclear war, and the emergence of "nuclear winter" theories in the early 1980s that showed how New Zealand would be affected in the event of nuclear war in the Northern Hemisphere (Huntley 1996: 3). At a societal level, this concern was manifest in the spread of the anti-nuclear cause beyond the peace movement to encompass professional organizations such as International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, and Scientists against Nuclear Arms. This added legitimacy and credibility to the cause, and made it difficult for critics to dismiss the cause as left-wing or radical (Clements 1988: 118; see also Pugh). The concern was also manifest in the creation of nuclear weapons-free zones around the country, which was the result of

anti-nuclear groups pressuring local governments to declare themselves “nuclear-free”. By 1984, 65 percent of New Zealanders lived in these areas (ibid 116; Ross 1983). In my interviews, respondents mentioned their awareness of these zones as evidence of the growing public concern.

Reflecting this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began issuing a yearly publication entitled “Disarmament and Arms Control”, which was designed to report on New Zealand’s progress towards nuclear disarmament. In 1982 the conservative National Government established a Disarmament and Arms Control Select Committee – later assimilated into the Foreign Affairs and Defence Select Committee – to hear public submissions on the issues raised by these reports. In 1985 the committee made its report to parliament, in which it contained the following words: “the lasting impression left on the committee by the public submissions was the depth of concern, felt by those individuals and groups who appeared before it, about the danger to world security posed by the arms race” (*Foreign Affairs and Defense Select Committee* 1985: 8). It proposed concrete measures for the New Zealand Government to pursue, including the prompt adoption of a Nuclear-free New Zealand Bill and other action on the international stage (ibid: 20-30). The rationale provided for the bill reflected those already given in the interviews, namely, it would reduce the chances of New Zealand being involved in a nuclear exchange – hence make New Zealand safer – and it would also provide an extremely valuable example to other countries.

The first major public opinion poll that dealt with threat perception in New Zealand was commissioned by the government as part of the Defense Committee of Enquiry in 1986. In response to the question of which threats do you consider to be “a present worry” an overwhelmingly high proportion of respondents – 48 percent – replied “nuclear war”. Other threats included terrorist attacks on New Zealand (reflecting public outrage over the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior by covert French agents the previous year), conventional world war, and fisheries poaching. “Armed invasion of New Zealand” was in fifth place, given precedence by a mere 11 percent of the population (*Defense Committee of Enquiry* 1986: 11-16). Only 18 percent thought that an armed invasion of New Zealand was likely in the next fifteen years, which was the lowest figure out of the six options offered, and 80 percent thought it unlikely (*Defense Committee of*

Enquiry 1986; see also Campbell 1989: 84).³³ Indeed, New Zealander's antipathy towards nuclear weapons has been established for some time. As early as 1978 only 13 percent thought that a nuclear deterrent was the best way to keep the peace, while 31 percent thought that it "will not preserve the peace" (Campbell 1989: 98).

Given that poll data on threat perception is unavailable prior to 1986 we have to rely on polls that asked about public attitudes to nuclear ship visits. These show a clear shift of opinion from 1978 to 1985. While in 1978 61.5 percent of respondents favored the berthing of nuclear ships in New Zealand ports, by 1985 the same level were opposed to such visits, and the level of support had dropped to 30 percent. By 1984, when the Lange government was elected, support had fallen to 30 percent while opposition had risen to 57 percent (ibid: 21). Moreover, political scientists analyzing these results have shown that public opinion is anti-nuclear rather than anti-American, with a 1985 poll confirming that 90 percent of the public would welcome these ships if they were neither nuclear-powered nor nuclear-armed (ibid).

Thus, this overview of official documents and survey data provide evidence that the public had also undergone – in the words of one observer – a "metamorphosis" in threat perception (Huntley 1996: 4). What can we discern on the popular level with regard to our second variable: identity change?

We have already noted how difficult it is to separate the two – changes in policymakers' perceptions of an appropriate identity for New Zealand has been directly related to the type of threat they perceive. On the public level, the need to reduce the perceived nuclear threat has created expectations that New Zealand would assume an active role promoting global nuclear disarmament. In 1971, 82 percent of respondents called for the New Zealand government to oppose French nuclear testing, and in 1978 71 percent agreed with the proposition that New Zealand should seek to establish a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific (Campbell 1989: 100-101). In response to questions about the proper foreign and defense policies that should be pursued by New Zealand, 73

³³ Campbell (1989) presents a collection of public opinion data that has been carried out by various polling companies in both New Zealand and Australia. These include the Heylen Research Centre, the National Research Bureau, McNair Anderson and Associates and data collected for Levine and Spoonley (1979). These are used widely by political scientists studying this dispute. Unless otherwise stated, data in this section are from Campbell (1989).

percent of voters agreed in 1978 that New Zealand “should support initiatives to bring about a general and complete disarmament for all nations” (Levine and Spoonley 1980).

However, promotion of this role for New Zealand had not yet replaced affinity for the ANZUS alliance. There was overwhelming evidence that people remained strongly in favor of ANZUS. A 1978 poll found that 61 percent of voters felt that New Zealand’s membership in ANZUS should be either maintained or strengthened, and since then the level of support for ANZUS has rarely dropped below 60 percent (Campbell 1989: 87).

There is evidence, however, of an independent streak in New Zealand public opinion with regard to ANZUS. When asked in 1986 what actions New Zealand should take to prevent nuclear war occurring, a full 58 percent *rejected* the notion of working for nuclear disarmament while supporting “our western allies and their nuclear capability”. Of this 58 percent, 38 percent favored rejecting nuclear weapons but maintaining an alliance based on conventional defense and 20 percent favored New Zealand withdrawing from all military alliances and “vigorously” promoting nuclear disarmament (ibid: 98). While it is clear that New Zealanders wanted an alliance, they wanted a certain type of alliance. When presented with a list of defense options for New Zealand, ranging from unarmed neutrality to a full nuclear alliance with the United States and Australia, 42 percent (the largest figure) supported the Lange Government’s stated position of being allied with the United States and Australia but with New Zealand “separate from all nuclear aspects” (ibid: 87). Thus, while the public were committed to the ANZUS alliance, this commitment was qualified. As Campbell notes, this qualified commitment means that in the face of a greater concern – such as the threat of nuclear war – the modification of the alliance is possible. This is, arguably, exactly what happened.

COMPARISON WITH AUSTRALIA

In this section I present evidence that while Australia shared many commonalities with New Zealand in 1984, it lacked the two crucial conditions that facilitated New Zealand’s policy change. The first condition is non-fixed security concerns. In contrast to New Zealand, Australians have had remarkably stable security policy preferences throughout the period of the Cold War, and arguably these have continued since its end.

The second condition is an identity debate conducive to radical foreign policy realignment. These two conditions are similarly linked in the Australian case: the presence of a heightened threat perception meant that only certain *kinds* of independence were considered – something which came to be called “self-reliance” – and others were ruled out. This section draws on interviews with former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke (1983-1991) and former Foreign Minister Bill Hayden (1983-1988), as well as public opinion polls, government documents, and secondary research to make the argument.

First, my interviews revealed the reason why the nuclear-free policy wasn't adopted by the Hawke Labor Government in Australia in 1983: it was an unwise, foolish policy that would have threatened Australia's security interests. Both individuals agreed on this point and the magnitude of their responses was surprising. Hawke was of the opinion that adopting such a policy in the face of the “real threat of Soviet hegemonic power” – something he mentioned twice – was simply ludicrous. It was ludicrous *because* it put the country's relationship with the US in jeopardy. For Australia, he argued, ANZUS was extremely important: “in the 1980s there was a very real threat of Soviet hegemonic power. Australian people weren't foolish, we realized that this was a fact of life, and the defense and security relationship with the US was important”. Hawke implied that Australia's foreign policy was formulated on a more realistic analysis of the world situation. He was firmly of the opinion that allies cannot and should not adopt policies that ban the ships of their allies from visiting: “you can't have an alliance relationship in defense against the Soviet threat and say that you can't bring your ships into our ports, it's illogical!”

These responses highlight the centrality of the alliance to Australia's security interests. It prompts the question: what explains the completely different outlook on national security held by Australian leaders? My interview with Bill Hayden was especially illuminating in this regard. Hayden identified several factors that contribute to markedly different attitudes towards threat in Australia. The first is the simple fact that Australia was bombed by the Japanese during the Second World War. This was also mentioned by several of my New Zealand respondents as a factor differentiating the two countries. New Zealand's Secretary of Defense Denis McLean, for example, who is also

a scholar of Australian and New Zealand history, argued “Australians have a much more real appreciation of their defense policy. The Japanese did it for them, by attacking them over 80 times during the Second World War” (see also McLean 2003).

The second and perhaps more important factor, however, is difference in size and geography. Hayden mentioned that Australia’s proximity to Asia, especially Indonesia – “we’ve always been worried about the ‘hordes to the North’” – generates fear, which is compounded by an awareness that while “we’re not very big, population wise, we’re a big area to cover”. It is this perception of fear, in his opinion, that has always compelled Australia to tie itself to a “powerful sponsor”. Interestingly, Hayden discussed how the further north one travels in Australia, the more concerned about security people are: “people are very conscious of their vulnerabilities, and Australia’s inadequacy.”

While this confirms that security concerns were uppermost in the minds of the two leaders in charge of foreign policy during the 1980s, and a robust alliance was seen as the best way to meet these security concerns, we need to consider whether the public shared these concerns. If not, then the difference in policy outcomes could be attributable solely to the personalities of these two leaders. Political scientists comparing the two countries have provided evidence that yes, despite the many similarities of history, culture, shared membership in the Commonwealth, and alliance behavior, there are significant differences in how each country views the world (Campbell 1989: 17). In contrast to New Zealand, the results of public opinion polls confirm that in Australia a domestic consensus existed over security concerns and national identity that anti-nuclearism was unable to penetrate.

Most importantly, poll data confirms that the Australian public does not share New Zealanders’ perception of invulnerability. Instead, Australians have always been *extremely* worried about their security. This heightened perception of threat and “obsession” with national security concerns has been the subject of much work in Australian political science and foreign policy (see for example Renouf 1979; Horner 1992; Campbell 1989; Cheeseman 1996). Campbell argues that “Australia’s preoccupation with threats is the foundation on which all other security attitudes and policies are constructed” (1989: 7).

We have already seen, for example, that in 1986 only 18 percent of New Zealanders thought an armed invasion of New Zealand was likely. While it is difficult to directly compare the results of polls when questions are phrased differently, a 1986 poll taken in Australia showed that 40 percent of respondents thought that Australia would face a military threat in the next ten years, and a clear majority of Australians throughout the early to mid 1980s perceived of a “threat” to Australia’s security (ibid: 47). These trends have stayed relatively stable over time, adapting slightly to world events. In 1967, 52 percent of people agreed with the claim that there were countries that threatened Australia’s security. This figure grew to 58 percent in 1975, reached a high of 63 percent in 1980 (following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), then declined to 51 percent in 1982 and 57 percent in 1983 (Campbell 1989: 45). A similar poll that asked the question “do you think Australia will or will not be threatened from outside its borders in the next fifteen years”, demonstrated a similar upward incline from 42 percent in 1971 to 51 percent in 1979, reaching a high of 64 percent in 1980 (ibid: 46).

This pervasive perception of insecurity is also manifest in attitudes towards defense spending and nuclear weapons. Australians have repeatedly expressed the view that the defense forces should be increased in size and that the government should pay more attention to defense issues. Whereas in New Zealand in 1984 47 percent of respondents agreed that the level of defense spending should be decreased, a 1983 poll taken in Australia showed that 66 percent wanted “a lot more spent on defense” (Campbell 1989: 20). In Australia *all* questions on defense spending have shown majorities in favor of an increase: in 1978, for example, 58 percent of Australians felt that the government didn’t spend enough on defense (ibid).

With regard to nuclear weapons, opinion polls up to 1987 have consistently shown that the majority of people consider Australia’s connection to Americas nuclear deterrent as contributing to Australia’s defense (Pugh 1989: 120). While we have already noted a relatively longstanding antipathy towards nuclear weapons in New Zealand, in Australia polls revealed that in 1957, 1971 and 1980 more than 60 percent approved of Australia being defended by nuclear weapons (Campbell 1989: 22). A 1982 poll even showed a majority in favor of basing of nuclear weapons in Australia (Pugh 1989: 120).

Similarly, the public have shown majority support for visits by ships carrying nuclear weapons.

I argue that this heightened threat perception – which has remained relatively constant during the post-war period – has had two consequences for Australian understandings of its identity in the international arena. One, it has reinforced the necessity of Australia being a solid member of the Western alliance, with ANZUS being seen as a means of ameliorating this insecurity; and two, it has precluded the development of a separate, more independent identity for Australia. Campbell argues that while an unstable threat perception in New Zealand produced a *qualified* commitment to ANZUS, heightened threat perception in Australia had the result of making Australian policymakers and the public much more dependent on the alliance (Campbell 1989). Hayden referred to ANZUS as an “article of faith”, saying “any politician that sought to challenge it would be dicing with the devil and would lose”. Survey data taken in Australia from 1951 onwards confirms this, producing clear majorities in favor of the alliance (ibid: 57-62). Even at the height of anti-nuclear protests in 1983 and 1984, over 70 percent of Australians regarded the US alliance as important to Australia’s security and thought the US could be trusted if Australia were threatened (Pugh 1989: 120).

Despite the centrality of ANZUS, however, the Australian people are also in favor of nuclear disarmament and have compelled their governments to take action to this end. All action taken, however, has been within the constraints of the alliance. In his memoirs, Hawke states that the twin goals of his government were “recommitting Australia to our major defense alliance”, and playing “a significant part in the causes of peace and disarmament”, which he saw were the “ultimate objectives of the alliance” (Hawke 1994: 217). In other words, while accepting components of the US’ nuclear strategy such as ship visits – and even the hosting of joint facilities – Australian policymakers have assumed an active role promoting both global and regional disarmament. Hayden confirmed to me in the interviews that measures such as appointing the Ambassador for Disarmament in 1983 and funding the United Nations’ International Year of Peace celebrations were steps the government took to assuage domestic political support for an anti-nuclearism that might endanger the alliance (see also Hawke 1994: 218-220). The

government also advanced the argument that it had more leverage on the United States inside rather than outside of ANZUS (Kamimura 2004: 8).

In Australia, therefore, the same debates over security and identity simply did not exist. Australians had a relatively stable threat perception, which in turn constrained its ability to pursue a more unique, independent identity. While the public approved of a role for Australia in pursuing global and regional nuclear disarmament on the world stage, this was by no means supposed to conflict with its security and defense relationship with the US. While anti-nuclear activism had limited successes, it was unable to mount a successful challenge to this consensus.

CONCLUSION

Attempting to explicate conditions under which governments adopt policies that are radically different from their traditional foreign policy orientations is extremely difficult. It is even more difficult to understand such changes when they occur in the absence of an exogenous shock. Despite this difficulty, however, the very fact that New Zealand could choose a policy that caused its only security alliance to suffer, at a time when most theories of international relations would have predicted the polar opposite, indicates that scholars should pay more attention to circumstances under which such policy changes are likely. We should focus more attention on how domestic-level changes can influence the way the international system is perceived, and how this, in turn, can impact upon states' foreign policies.

This article attempts to explain the evolution of nuclear-free New Zealand by comparing it with Australia, a country that is similar enough to make a focused comparison possible. Australia has similar foundations, a similar culture, almost exactly the same history of war involvement, and the same alliance relationship as New Zealand. More importantly, it also had a Labor Party come to power in 1983, alongside – and somewhat ensconced in – a vociferous anti-nuclear movement. Using elite interviews, parliamentary debates, government documents and public opinion polls I was able to identify two conditions which existed in New Zealand prior to the change that did not exist in Australia. These were an ill-defined and unstable perception of threat, and a

changing understanding of the appropriate identity for New Zealand. In contrast, a basic consensus existed in Australia over both security and identity. To these two conditions, however, I must add a third, which is the existence of a Labor or left-wing party in power. With a conservative party it is extremely unlikely that the other two factors could have changed enough to compel the government to act. We need all three conditions.

Even though this study might be criticized for the vagueness with which the first two conditions have been defined, I wish to counter such criticism by reinstating my purpose, which is to forward an understanding of the *conditions* under which state leaders pursue policies that contradict their traditional orientations. I argue that if these two crucial issues – security and identity – are in flux, and a non-conservative government is in power, then changes are possible. Just as it is in the interests of the United States to recognize that security concerns are by no means fixed, and issues like identity are relevant in the formulation of a states’ foreign policy, it is also important for scholars of international relations.

I have attempted to build on constructivist understandings of foreign policy change by providing evidence that security interests are not externally determined and that they can be changed by the injection of new ideas into the policymaking framework. I have also confirmed that these ideas need to resonate with a states’ identity in order to reconstitute its interests. However, I have widened the scope of *relevant* identity-related factors that scholars should pay attention to. Whereas constructivists point to a desire for international legitimacy as a motivator to adopt international norms, I have shown that a simple desire for more independence and self-assertion in foreign policy can also cause leaders to reach out and embrace new norms. This indicates an exciting new research project in international relations: trying to understand how and when this desire for “greater independence” might choose states to adopt new norms that others have not.

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