

## **From protest to politics: the effectiveness of civil society in shaping the nuclear-free policy in Aotearoa New Zealand**

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### **Abstract**

*Anti-nuclear civil society activism starting with peace advocacy is considered to be a process consisting of strategic actions and civic engagement in the decision-making process. This research examines what made civil society in Aotearoa New Zealand successful between the mid-1960s and 1980s with a particular focus on their action repertoire through a goal-oriented approach. This study highlights the importance of civil society engagement in activism while identifying the relationship between maximized tactics, strategies and political environment in the anti-nuclear struggle in New Zealand.*

*To gain an accurate analysis of success in New Zealand's anti-nuclear debate, this research focuses on the extent to which anti-nuclear actors have been able to achieve their objectives and the degree to which influential activities have effectively been involved in the process. The results reveal that the political actors and civil society actively participating in the policy-shaping process and their involvement signified strong anti-nuclear advocacy under the peace and security narratives.*

**Keywords:** anti-nuclear activism, mobilization, advocacy, civil society, New Zealand

### **Introduction**

Since it is a geographically small and isolated island, New Zealand had never played a major role in the world's nuclear debate until the 1960s. The nuclear issue has played an important role in New Zealand's domestic politics since then due to the social and political forces that have contributed to shaping the anti-nuclear stance. Anti-nuclearism rendered New Zealand a disarmament champion on the world stage by the mid- 1980s through organizing and coordinating actively, sustaining efficient campaigns, and engaging in the policy-forming process. Why does New Zealand, a nation that has never sought to possess nuclear weapons or never been a particular target for a nuclear attack, have such a strong anti-nuclear movement? And what are the influential elements of the mobilization that lead to the desired policy outcome?

The anti-nuclear movement in New Zealand is a well suited case to study the effects of strategies and engagement (as an intertwined term with 'participation'). Numerous documents, articles, and books on New Zealand's nuclear-free policy, mainly written by peace activists and politicians especially

after the movement dissipated, provide a rich source of information. It is all relevant to the recent social movement history and contributes to our understanding of what civil society can achieve and what makes them effective in policy transformation. The contribution of this research to the current state of knowledge in the field is based on providing a historical understanding of a civil society mobilization and also ‘real politics’ on a national stage. The case of New Zealand provides a solid insight for it. Additionally, there is a need to scrutinize successful civil societies in history and particular recent events that are influential for the successful civil society mobilizations, since they enable us to develop a much deeper evaluation for today’s civil societies and nuclear debate.

### **Theoretical framework and literature review**

Social movements are seen as collective actions based on solidarity, active response to conflicts, and going beyond the limits of the system available (Melucci 1985). The socio-political aspect of it has been discussed in literature especially in relation to the state-society relations. The discussions on the open/closed and weak/strong relations models are centered on the adoption of assimilative strategies towards the demands of movements, paying careful attention to protest, and seeking to build constructive public policies accordingly (Kitschelt 1986).

In the past few decades, the integration of social movement approaches with theoretical frameworks focused on resource and process-centered analysis has gained momentum, contributing to a better understanding of collective action as well as policy structure and mechanisms. Considering these approaches together suggests that available resources facilitate the achievement of social goals through mobilizing actors and boosting the productivity of movement efforts, thus gaining political influence and bringing about political change in an effective way (Caren 2010). This article brings together social movement theories centered on resource mobilization with consideration of the political opportunity structure.

In social movements, the concept of resource utilization and mobilization focuses on a number of factors: the capacities of supporters from the public, media, state agencies, tactical-goal orientation, available networks and materials, and mass communication techniques. All of these are critical for movement constituents and determine the characteristics, stability, and future of a movement. They also help the movement to grow out of its rudimentary period, maintain its organizational structure, and increase its power through utilizing and improvement of the available resources over the course of mobilization. Proponents of resource mobilization theory focus on how different actors bargain and compromise when there is a need for policy-shaping or creation. At the center of the analysis is the ability of movement members to acquire financial, human and material resources and mobilizing toward the movement goals through these resources.

The theory of political opportunity structure provides an understanding of the

existing political conditions, settings, and actions that determine a social movement's characteristics and trajectory. It claims that the failure or success of movements is dependent upon the government's position and the nature of the political status-quo (strong, open-minded, democratic, or vice versa). In other words, if the government is weak and/or has a repressive approach, a movement is most likely to fail. Alternatively, if the government is supportive and political circumstances are convenient in moving further, a social movement might grow and flourish and reach the desired outcome thanks to the political efficacy. Furthermore, the political structure provides favorable conditions for the movement where challengers or movement actors can express their demands appropriately for a common purpose and thus cooperate with politicians in line with this purpose.

McCarthy and Zald (1977) support the idea that effective challenger groups require not only organizational resources but also support from people familiar with legal and political processes and allies in the political system. Resources can attract third-party supporters for their own benefits. For Burnstein and Linton (2002), the link between resources, political structure, and preferences affects desired outcomes of a movement. These researchers also claim that the success of organizations and interest groups depends on both the resources they deploy and the context of a majoritarian struggle for influence (Burnstein and Linton 2002). In other words, the characteristics of the state and third parties influence not only the availability but also the utility of a movement's resources. Burnstein and Linton point out that an organization's resources and its influence on governmental bodies (in terms of their responsiveness and reflectiveness toward the contested issue) affect each other and also the outcome of the movement. When considering the case of New Zealand, it is worth mentioning that the resources for peace works are provided by volunteers who have initially mobilized themselves with limited resources. And their motivation led to the establishment of peace organizations and collaboration among themselves.

Gaventa and Barrett (2010) centered their arguments on outcomes; for them, citizen participation in every sphere of society in the presence of a responsive state produces positive effects. In this regard, democratic openness in the political context plays an important role. According to their cross-national case study, the presence of strong democracies characterized by high experience of positive engagements and interactions between citizen and state and shorter histories of democratic participation affect the outcome to a greater degree. To demonstrate this, they looked at the characteristics and democratic quality of political regimes (with a particular focus on the quality of governance, political participation, and political culture) for 20 countries, including New Zealand. They found that engagement can make positive differences through the practice of citizen participation (through local associations, social movements, campaigns, and formal participatory government spaces) and responsive as well as accountable states.

Elsie Locke (1992), a political activist and peace campaigner, wrote a book

called *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand* focusing on the proud history of New Zealand peace movement combined with the origins and activities of the New Zealand Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It is also equally important to mention that Marie Leadbeater (2013) provided one of the most comprehensive books available, *Peace, Power & Politics: How New Zealand Became Nuclear Free*, on the peace-related activities carried out in New Zealand with its historical dimension. Additionally, former Prime Minister David Lange is also the author of a major book called *Nuclear Free: The New Zealand Way*. Lange offers a view on the events leading up to the Labour Party's decision to declare the country a nuclear-free zone and of the events that consolidated anti-nuclear stance in New Zealand, thanks to the 1987 legislation. The legislation is based on the prohibition of any nuclear weapon or other explosive devices capable of releasing nuclear energy in all the land, territory, and inland waters within the territorial limits of New Zealand. Manufacturing, acquiring, possessing, or having control over any nuclear explosive device and weapons of mass destruction was also strictly forbidden.<sup>1</sup>

Prof. Kevin P. Clement's book (1988), *Back from the Brink: The Creation of a Nuclear-free New Zealand*, focuses on the implications of New Zealand's stance and its repercussions on the new policy written through the viewpoint as a sociology lecturer and pacifist. Clement's book helps us to understand the determinants of movement outcomes arguing for the presence of both strong organizations and a sympathetic political context. According to him, successful mobilization typically requires mediation by supportive actors in political institutions. In other words, in addition to the plurality of organizations and associations, the presence of sympathetic regimes and state bureaucracies made it easier to negotiate and attain the desired policy outcomes. On the one hand, as a response to Clement's claims, a critical approach is made by Dr. Ramesh Thakur (1989) in *Creation of the Nuclear-Free New Zealand Myth: Brinkmanship without a Brink*. Dr. Thakur discusses whether or not the Labour Party genuinely reflected the people's democratic preferences over the policy choice.

It is also important to acknowledge New Zealand oriented research produced since the 1980s. In particular, Tom Newnham (1986), a political activist, documented the waterborne protests against nuclear vessel visits in and around the coast of New Zealand, in his book, *Peace Squadron*. Likewise, in *Making Waves: The Greenpeace New Zealand Story*, Michael Szabo (1990) looked at the history and development of Greenpeace New Zealand, which is considered a well-established international anti-nuclear organization. In *Standing Upright Here: New Zealand in the Nuclear Age 1945-1990*, M. Templeton (2006), a former New Zealand Foreign Service officer, told the story of nuclear tests and technologies and their repercussions in New Zealand society. Rebecca Priestly (2012), in *Mad on Radium: New Zealand in the Atomic Age*, looked at the

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<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Legislation, New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act 1987, <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1987/0086/latest/DLM115116.html>

history of New Zealanders' engagement with the nuclear issue as well as the nuclear-free identity. These resources provide a detailed history and evolvement of the nuclear issue in New Zealand.

There are also some relevant dissertations with a particular focus on the denuclearization process of New Zealand. Dr. Eleanor N. Hodges (1990) focused on the New Zealand's peace movement, the anti-nuclear actions of the Labour Government and also the success of peace activism between the 1970s -1990s with a particular focus on nuclear conflicts and deterrence. In her dissertation completed in 1990, *David and Goliath in the ocean of peace: Case studies of "nuclearism," "nuclear allergy" and "the kiwi disease"*, she elaborates the post-nuclear situation in New Zealand following the passing of the Nuclear Free Zone legislation in 1987. For anti-nuclear and peace activism, an important source is provided by Dr. Catherine F. Dewes (1999) in her dissertation, *The World Court Project: The Evolution and Impact of an Effective Citizens' Movement*. As a long-time member of the international peace movement and educator, her dissertation explores the ways in which the World Court Project influenced the process of government decision making, both nationally and within the UN, using New Zealand as a case study. It also focuses on empowering stories with ordinary people struggling to have their voices heard as well as working closely with the government.

One of the up-to-date dissertations is written by Dr. Lyndon Burford (2016) based on the deep analysis of national identity associated with the anti-nuclear stance. Burford's doctoral dissertation examines the role of 'national identity' as a driver for nuclear disarmament advocacy by Canada and New Zealand. He discusses the history of contemporary New Zealand to illustrate the emergence of a point of view centered on the illegality of nuclear weapons and opposition to nuclear testing. This history, in his view, led the public to internalize a merging of national anti-nuclear identity, which he characterizes as 'a New Zealand nuclear taboo' (Bulford 2016; 106).

The Peace Foundation<sup>2</sup> and the university library archives based in Auckland provide most of the documents relevant to this paper. Significant websites also dedicated to the de-nuclearization stories and narratives of New Zealand include 'disarmsecure.org' as part of the Disarmament & Security Centre<sup>3</sup> initiated by a passionate activist Dr. Kate Dewes and Robert Green and 'nuclearfreeNew Zealand.org'<sup>4</sup> with the aim of providing information related to the history of nuclear weapons activities in the Pacific, and their impact on indigenous Pacific peoples and highlighting events to celebrate New Zealand's 30 years of nuclear freedom. New Zealand History<sup>5</sup> provides many original documents on historical events, politics, and government.

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<sup>2</sup>The Peace Foundation: <http://www.peace.net.New Zealand/>

<sup>3</sup> Disarmament and Security Center: <http://www.disarmsecure.org/about-us>

<sup>4</sup> Nuclear Free Peacemakers: <https://www.nuclearfree.org.New Zealand/>

<sup>5</sup>New Zealand History: <https://New Zealandhistory.govt.New Zealand/>

## **Methodology**

In the civil society part, this study examines the dynamics of civil society in New Zealand, considering the resources they used and the openness of the state that led the movement to become a ‘nuclear-free zone’. Basing the dynamics of civil society in the center, this study started from the observation that considerable primary materials on the nuclear issue of New Zealand by human rights and peace activists have been produced, mostly by those who witnessed the movement in situ. They shed light on “why New Zealand became a nuclear free zone” but do not propose a systematic approach to “what particular elements made the anti-nuclear struggle an efficient one?”

This article accordingly is not a study questioning why people participated in the movement. Rather, it focuses on the process and motivating factors influencing the mobilizing dynamics and vitality of the movement. Referring to the dynamism, I would not underestimate the structural factors and conditions that provide a space to facilitate the process in New Zealand, such as small size and isolated position in the South-West Pacific, as well as a population of less than three and a half million people between the 1970s and 1980s. Besides, the time frame for this research has been chosen in accordance with the acceleration of activities during the mobilization.

In addition, the ‘national identity factor’ based on anti-nuclearism is exclusive in this research. An anti-nuclear national identity in New Zealand emerged together with the movement’s achievement and continuously has played an important role. This study claims that it is not the main factor influencing the mobilization itself, but is an important element pertaining to the nuclear debate in New Zealand. This paper focuses on anti-nuclear activism in New Zealand that can be traced back to the 2nd World War with a moral and emotional stance under the global peace and international security narratives. With regards to this, it would be accurate to say that ‘peace activism’ was transformed into ‘anti-nuclear’ or ‘anti-nuclear peace activism’ due to the nuclear threat in the 1960s.

The empirical data for this study consist of a range of sources: semi-structured interviews with peace activists in and outside New Zealand over two years, the archive of the University of Auckland, the Peace Foundation, and Disarmament and Security Center, and the documents that are based on relevant events, newspaper articles, internet sites, and statements. This research also makes use of the scholarly work of researchers who have studied the nuclear history of New Zealand. A supplementary source of background information is provided by wide-ranging discussions on the political history of New Zealand with people who actively took part in the movement and also scholars who documented the process in the past decades.

While it was not possible to include all of the many campaigns, demonstrations, educational tools, activities, groups, committees, sub-formations, and individuals involved in the movement, I chose to focus on the remarkable and high-impact ones for this study. The multiple additional sources used, such as

documents, archival investigation, and regular consultation with the other people involved in the process were taken into account to ensure the accuracy and verification of this sample. Additionally, the limitation of this research is based on the inaccessibility of material used a few decades earlier. I do value the inputs from each interviewee who did their best to recall the mobilization process including the campaigns and to provide accurate information.

## **Nuclear spark**

The devastating effects of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were very relevant to New Zealand people mobilising the campaigns. The realisation that a nuclear war could be over in a day, in which millions of people would die instantly, millions more would die slowly and most of the planet would be contaminated with radiation poisoning, motivated people with fear to prevent such an atrocity by marching in their millions in street protests. However, it was to no avail. No amount of education about the horrors of Hiroshima is sufficient to change political policies that support nuclear weapons ‘as defence / deterrence’, even in Japan.<sup>6</sup>

The ANZUS Treaty was signed in 1951 as a collective security agreement between the US, Australia, and New Zealand to co-operate on military matters and ensure regional stability in the Pacific Ocean region (Catalinac 2010). The ANZUS Treaty together with involvement in the Korean and Vietnam War created repercussions for the majority of New Zealand citizens who would prefer greater autonomy in foreign policy not relying on the US guarantee under the defense ties. Being tied into America's plans or being under its nuclear umbrella was not acceptable. They hoped that New Zealand could establish a more independent peacemaking defence and foreign policy. Thus, a vocal and well-organized anti-militarist movement was created challenging the New Zealand government following the US into participation in the war. Regarding this, the Peacemaking Association produced and circulated many articles which explained the importance of withdrawal from ANZUS.

The continuation of French testing in the mid-1960s was also the last straw, and resonated as a political crisis. After World War II, the frequent nuclear testing of the US, along with its French and British allies in the Pacific region and Australia (317 nuclear weapons in total between 1945 – 1995) elevated this attention. Academics and church people (e.g. the Quakers) gathered, and local campaigns organized immediate actions calling for the termination of nuclear tests - more generally for disarmament. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament New Zealand (CND New Zealand) was formed in 1959 with the purpose of stopping nuclear testing and eliminating nuclear weapons in general.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, the campaign focused on the flow of information on the danger of nuclear-related activities and their potential effects on the

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<sup>6</sup>Laurie Ross, e-mail interview, March 2019.

<sup>7</sup>Laurie Ross, interview, July 2018

atmosphere, environment, and human health. It also actively called for withdrawal from ANZUS. What is also important is that after its formation CND Auckland presented the 'No Bombs South of the Line' petition and received more than 80,000 signatures for the New Zealand Parliament intending to discuss further the establishment of a nuclear free zone in the southern hemisphere. Since the 1893 petition for demanding votes for women, CND Auckland's this attempt is regarded as New Zealand's biggest petition<sup>8</sup>. The campaign could be deemed successful in getting considerable attention from the people thanks to enormous participation in televised marches, activist campaigns, pamphlets, and popular artistic events such as street theatres, public galleries, and movie screenings.<sup>9</sup>

The mid-1960s were the most crucial time for protesting the nuclear testing in French Polynesia. There were a high number of atmospheric tests carried out by France on the French Polynesian atolls (more than 40 atmospheric tests concentrated on Mururoa and Fangataufa between 1966 - 1974) leading to nationwide protests.<sup>10</sup> When the anti-war movement together with anti-nuclear dissidents gained momentum across the country, the Labour Party declared that they would withdraw New Zealand troops from Vietnam if elected (Smith 2005). Consequently, this drew a benign picture for the people of New Zealand and affected the 1972 election with the victory of the Labour Party. However, the link between anti-nuclear and peace activists persisted because of the continuation of French nuclear testing in the Pacific atolls.

The Labour Party received significant support by favoring a nuclear-free status for New Zealand, and promoted a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ). Following the death of the Labour Party's popular leader N. Kirk in 1974, Bill Rowling from the Labour Party took over as the 30<sup>th</sup> Prime minister by the 1975 General Election. Subsequently, the conservative National Party led by Robert Muldoon was re-elected and ruled New Zealand between November 1975 - July 1984. Pro-US and The ANZUS approaches as well as the acceptance of the US and UK's nuclear warship visits sparked a backlash for the people.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Anti-nuclear movement in New Zealand, Peace Organizations, <https://New Zealand-antinuclearmovement.weebly.com/peace-organisations.html>

<sup>9</sup> Anti-nuclear Protest in New Zealand, accessed 12 June 2018, <http://antinukeNewZealand.weebly.com/>

<sup>10</sup> New Zealand History, HMNZS Otago sails for Mururoa test zone (1973), <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/hmnzs-otago-sails-for-mururoa-test-zone>

<sup>11</sup> Lyndon Burford, interview, April 2018.

## **Civil society in New Zealand: contestation and consensus**

As a multicultural and pluralistic country, civic actors in New Zealand in the anti-nuclear movement include a variety of faith-based organizations, sports groups, students, pacifists, Māori (or tangata whenua – people of the land), women’s groups, business networks and associations, and also occupational groups based on doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. These civil society actors have been concerned about peace issues since New Zealand’s involvement in the aforementioned major wars. Among these, the Vietnam War was a milestone in the coordination of protests and demonstrations. Individual actors in civil society (to use E. Locke’s term, “peace people”) consisted of people unified to protest the war and call for the soldiers to return home.

The dynamics of civil society in New Zealand are based on having broad and effective tools, strategies, and public engagement in the decision-making process, which is entrenched in the nature of New Zealand politics. In that sense, a focus on the forms of actions of the anti-nuclear consensus would help us to understand the sprouting process over the course of mobilization. These actions have been described as “a small nation’s continuous heady attempt toward the aligned superpowers so as to limit their nuclear options” (Clements 1988).

### **a. Elements of protest activism**

In organizations and networks, the components of the anti-nuclear movement are diverse throughout the country. Among the most significant ones are Christian pacifists, outspoken academics, scientists, students, women, environmentalists, church members, and indigenous people. The groups embodied under ‘peaceful purposes’ as a national coalition include (but are not limited to) the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament New Zealand, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Peace Squadron, Greenpeace, The Peace Media, Peace Council, The Society of Friends (Quakers), Peace Movement Aotearoa, the Disarmament and Security Centre, Women for Peace, Just Defence and the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement in here as well as Maori Women’s Welfare League, United Nations Association of New Zealand (UNA New Zealand), Progressive Youth Movement, New Zealand Nuclear Free Peacemakers, The Foundation for Peace Studies, Friends of the Earth (FoE), Environmental Defense Society (EDS), Ecology Action, and many other occupational groups.<sup>12</sup> Most of them evolved after the mid-1970s and some of their names have been transformed. All the components of the movement played a notable role in shaping the demand: a nuclear-free New Zealand and the rejection of warfare ideology. They also created space for newcomer groups, organizations, and associations.

The diverse components of the movement are essential. The pacifist stance of churches (the Christian Pacifist Society, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Christians

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<sup>12</sup>Laurie Ross, interview, July 2018.

for Peace, PAX Christi, the Christian Peace Network, Quakers, etc.) contributed to the movement as pacifist grassroots groups. The visible and strong role of women in New Zealand can be traced back to the country's suffrage legacy. New Zealand became the first country in the world in which all women had the right to vote in parliamentary elections in the late 19th century.<sup>13</sup> Since then, women have actively taken part in all spheres of political life such as forming women's political organizations (Else 1993). In the case of anti-nuclear mobilization, they participated in local and international peace organizations, with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom especially supportive of their involvement. They were also very active in marches.<sup>14</sup>

Along with destroying Pacific communities by testing, other small components interlinked this issue as part of social justice and racism. Indigenous people, Māori groups, and pacific peacemakers formed "the Pacific People's Anti-nuclear Action Committee" and the "Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific."<sup>15</sup> Through the nationwide nuclear issue, they created their own opportunities to receive attention to particular issues that concerned them, such as decolonization, liberation from the colonial power, land rights, and a nuclear-free Pacific.

Most of the aforementioned groups had their own committees. Apart from them, there were some minor ones. These are, included but not limited to, The Peace Ad Committee, The New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee, the Committee Against Foreign Military Activities in New Zealand, They focused on campaign strategies, public education, political policy petitions for the New Zealand parliament (such as "No Bombs South of the Line"), lobbying, the production and distribution of fact sheets from authoritative sources, popular merchandise for promotion, and advertising such as financing badges, stickers, leaflets, etc.<sup>16</sup>

The groups, organizations, associations, committees, and individual activists sprang into action heterogeneously, but with a dominant message. No doubt today, socio-political movements enjoy social media where they reach a larger audience. Considering that there were limited communication facilities, New Zealand's mobilization attracted tremendous attention to the nuclear issue from the local to the national level by reaching people through phone calls and newsletter writing. Interestingly, local peace and anti-nuclear groups with limited financial resources accessed their local MPs and posted letters to the New Zealand Parliament in Wellington. Thanks to effective management, the groups' representatives met regularly for forums and events, and to widen their

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<sup>13</sup>New Zealand History, Women and the vote, <https://NewZealandhistory.govt.nz/NewZealand/>

<sup>14</sup>The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) - The Oldest Women's Peace Organisation in the World meets in Christchurch, <http://voicesagainstawar.nz/>

<sup>15</sup>Disarmament Security Center, Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, <http://www.disarmsecure.org/>

<sup>16</sup>Kate Dewes, interview, July 2018.

coordination and networks.<sup>17</sup> Mobilization activities and resources were financially supported by like-minded individuals engaged in the movement and by donations such as the media toolkit including local newspapers financed by the writers and editors.

On the subject of consciousness-raising activities and expert knowledge, the existence of organizations and the relative ease of networking were not enough. A second important element of civil society effectiveness lay in the choice of activities intended to bring public attention to endemic issues. Those who mobilize are required to do their utmost to spread materials (such as the circulation of pamphlets, flyers, etc.) to raise awareness. These activities mainly include conference and seminar series and expert-knowledge sharing. In the New Zealand case, an enormous number of pamphlets, booklets, posters, and public speaking events were created to draw attention to the nuclear issue in the country.<sup>18</sup> For example, Peace Movement Aotearoa, The Peace Foundation, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament New Zealand, Nuclear Free Zone Committee, and Greenpeace were the major producers of public events and education materials during the 1980s.

Dr. Helen Caldicott, an expert in the field and a popular name worldwide in the nuclear freeze campaign, was invited by the groups for a talk. Her visit created a domino effect by getting a great deal of media attention and encouraged the movement. After Dr. Caldicott's visit, 40 peace groups were organized in Auckland alone to oppose nuclear warships (Leadbeater 2013). Not only Dr. Caldicott, but also some professional scientist groups (e.g. International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War New Zealand (IPPNW New Zealand), Scientists Against Nuclear Arms (SANA), Engineers for Social Responsibility, among others) emerged to produce materials and cooperate with activists. Activists distributed vast quantities of literature on the danger of nuclear weapons, and provided expertise and knowledge benefiting the movement with scientific justification against radiation and nuclear-centered issues.

University students and professors also mobilized around the issue of nuclear energy. Professors in various fields (science, medicine, economics, etc.) met the chair of the Royal Commission to give presentations and talk about other options using their knowledge and evidence. For example, after the submission of professors to the Royal Committee, they reported to the government on what needed to be done appropriately. Expert knowledge was particularly useful in the case of nuclear energy. Substantial portions of the efforts and evidence were effective in convincing the committee and government that New Zealand had no need for nuclear energy. The organization "Friends of the Earth" helped in the circulation of books, such as physician Walter Patterson, who toured in person to discuss the issue.<sup>19</sup> For the case of nuclear arms, IPPNW New Zealand and

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<sup>17</sup>Laurie Ross, interview, July 2018.

<sup>18</sup>Laurie Ross, interview, April 2019.

<sup>19</sup>National Library Archive, Wellington, New Zealand, accessed 12 July 2018.

SANA provided ‘Fact Sheets’ used by the anti-nuclear groups with a large distribution among others in the 1980s and thus increased the credibility of the opposition.

Attention to peace education is also crucial to see how schools and teachers organized under a tenacious anti-nuclear stance. Most of the schools were involved in the process with a supportive teacher (e.g. Epsom Girls Grammar School was part of a Peace Group). They cooperated with other high schools through a network called “Youth Peace.” Importantly, Alyn Ware established the Mobile Peace Van in the 1980s travelling the schools to lead classes in peace and disarmament education.<sup>20</sup> They reached many schools. The project helped school children understand the disastrous effects of nuclear weapons. The schools set up peace education stalls, attended demonstrations, raised funds, and organized a tour in France for presentations as well as urging France to stop nuclear testing in the Pacific. The educational materials and texts were also diversified in the meantime. Interestingly, Greenpeace published extensively in the 1970s and 1980s about the effects of nuclear radiation in the Pacific. Together with the bombing of the Greenpeace flagship Rainbow Warrior, Greenpeace produced many articles against French nuclear testing. It also went beyond its role as an environmental organization, contributing to the anti-nuclear claims to a greater extent.

The high level of national and regional coordination of anti-nuclear activists noted above made it possible to mount effective campaigns. One of the well-known campaigns was Peace Squadron, which lobbied and confronted visiting nuclear warships between 1976 and 1984 with the usage of small and privately-owned vessels in blockading the New Zealand harbors to prevent nuclear warships from entering. They took immediate action when a nuclear warship or submarine came into New Zealand waters.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, they presented radical acts of protest such as civil disobedience. The head of the campaign was George Armstrong, whose high-profile actions produced media attention and generated public interest with the focus on stopping nuclear ship visits. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament New Zealand (CND New Zealand), was a major player in supporting activists and providing materials and finance for actions. The members reached the government by fax, open letters and petitions, and extensive lobbying with the New Zealand government.

The members of the campaign carefully monitored the process. Larry Ross and the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee organized the first New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Campaign Tour throughout the country in 1982 for the broad dissemination of materials detailing nuclear danger. The campaign sought to advance its policy goal by mobilizing the mainstream general public to lobby the New Zealand government for their preferred policy option. The campaign leaders provided a national strategy and a template for autonomous Peace Groups to become effective in this work. The strategy was rooted in the 1978

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<sup>20</sup>Alyn Ware, interview, April 2018.

<sup>21</sup>The Peace Squadrons, <http://www.disarmsecure.org/>

United Nations Resolutions on the value of states becoming Nuclear Free Zone regions, as a valuable contribution toward international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.<sup>22</sup> Thanks to the campaign by also the efforts of Peace Movement Aotearoa, many workplaces, schools, homes (even boats), councils and cities declared themselves as officially nuclear-free zones. By the election of 1984, over 66% of the population lived in locally declared nuclear-free zones (Dewes 1999).

One of the biggest campaigns was Campaign Half Million. Rather than being led by peace activists, it was launched by environmental groups that were opposing the nuclear power (Greenpeace, Friends of Earth, etc.). Although they targeted a half-million signature, their petition received more than 333,000 which is a remarkable achievement (one of the largest petitions ever) for a small country in terms of its population, and it was thanks to the help of the Values Party and well-coordinated volunteers (Leadbeater 2013).

Demonstrations, marches, and rallies were a popular tool to attract attention and show dedication to a cause, especially when noisily marching with banners to the parliament in the capital city of Wellington. Internationally important days (such as Hiroshima Day, Mother's Day, etc.) and national holidays (Christmas holiday, Anzac Day, etc.) were also appropriate due to the availability of people and their willingness to take to the streets aggressively. Protest marches and rallies with massive participation were organized mainly by the leaders of CND New Zealand and also by Greenpeace. Among the best known was the giant human Peace Symbol created in front of the Auckland Museum in 1983.<sup>23</sup> Mass attention was increased by the intensity of the demonstrations regardless of the race, gender, or age of the people involved. The same year, the Waiheke March for Disarmament organized by the Waiheke Peace Group with 400 women and children was notable among many others. While marching, they collected letters after visiting each town and delivered them to the parliament.

## **b. Political engagement**

Pro-left-wing parties and leftist politics have a tendency to support ecological, anti-nuclear, and peace movements due to both ideologically and socially shared structures (Giugni 2014). Over time, there was a convergence on this issue of parties whose origins lay in the environmental movement with more traditional parties of the left for whom anti-militarism was the starting point. Over the 1970s, New Zealand Values Party (the first environmental political party in the world) and the Social Credit League (now the Democratic Party) declared themselves as anti-nuclear parties with the participation of the New Zealand Party later. The position of the Labour Party was already clear with the anti-

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<sup>22</sup>Laurie Ross, interview, July 2018.

<sup>23</sup>Nuclear Free Peacemakers, Auckland Museum Domain Peace Symbol, <https://www.nuclearfreepeacemakers.org.New Zealand/>

nuclear stance and opposition to the ANZUS alliance.

Additionally, there are two important names from the Labour Party associated with the support of the movement and responded to the majority needs: PM Norman Kirk in the 1970s and PM David Lange in the 1980s. The Labour Party scored a victory in the election of 1972, elevating Norman Kirk to the position of Prime Minister for the following three years. As an enthusiastic party leader, he was against French nuclear testing and supportive of New Zealand's stance on the nuclear-free path. After his sudden death, the Labour Party was defeated by the National Party in the elections until 1984.<sup>24</sup> There is also another important name for New Zealand's nuclear history. Helen Clark (the 37th Prime Minister of New Zealand from 1999 to 2008), as chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Select Committee (1984–87), played a leading role in the adoption of a nuclear-weapon free policy. She was also an important name in the development of the Labour Party policy on the nuclear port ban in the 1980s.

A pro-US party victory under R. Muldoon's leadership was reflected in a policy transformation. It created a catalyst in the revival of mobilization due to two major issues; proactive acceptance of nuclear powered and nuclear capable US ships, and the continuation of French nuclear tests. Organizations (e.g. Greenpeace and Peace Media Organization) and political parties (e.g. Labour Party and New Zealand Values Party) helped to reshape the mobilization from being a small and largely conscience-based anti-nuclear sentiment to a strong and organized social movement with determination.

Furthermore, anti-nuclear groups and campaigners tried various channels in the 1970s and 1980s to convince parliamentarians and policy-makers. They were as follows:

- Petitions devised by committees and used by civil society groups to show majority support to the parliament;
- Lobbying members of parliament in their electorate offices declaring Nuclear Free Zones as part of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Campaign;
- Media channels for keeping influential political representatives and decision-makers informed of the unity in diversity of public thinking;
- Local Council Nuclear Free Zones Deputations to local government bodies and other major organizations to establish policy;
- The invitation of authoritative respected overseas experts to raise moral confidence and empowerment of politicians to “do the right thing” in the face of apathy, despair, or pressure to maintain the status quo of power structures.

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<sup>24</sup>Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, Nuclear-free 1980s, <https://teara.govt.nz/new-zealand/>

Needless to say, political elites and policy-makers can and do play an important role in protecting and strengthening spaces for citizens to exercise their voices and can support the enabling conditions for citizen engagement through promoting the value of broad social movements, supporting the strong sentiments of engagement within the state, and monitoring state reprisals for increased citizen voice (Gaventa and Barrett 2010). The lack of shared values, mutual support, and alliance building with politicians was influential for the majority preference in the next election where the value-oriented collective effort favored the Labour Party approaches over those of the National Party.

Due to persistent public pressure, the nuclear issue became a hot-button election issue forcing each political party to adopt a policy arrangement. By 1984, the impact of the aforementioned activities was reflected in the program of the opposition parties. The Labour Party promised that they would ban the entry of nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered ships into New Zealand ports. In the 1984 snap election, 3 of 4 parties (Labour, the New Zealand Party, and Social Credit) took a clear anti-nuclear stand, and together gained 63.4% of the total votes to defeat the National Party (Lamare 1991).

The Labour Party was particularly sensitive to public preferences and also wanted to secure a political image and votes. They promised to write the policy into law as part of its 1984 election manifesto (White 1998). Thanks to the victory of the Labour Party in 1984, David Lange stood up for his country in the outside world and championed its nuclear-free policy at the United Nations disarmament conference for arms control saying that, “When the opportunity is given to any country to pursue a serious and balanced measure of arms control, then that country has a duty to all of us to undertake that measure” (Lange 1990). The same year, the Labour Party introduced the nuclear-free bill.

The desired election result and consequent incidents such as the refusal of the US Buchanan ship and the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior in 1985 helped to implement a strict policy option in legislation. The Rainbow Warrior incidence is the sinking of a Greenpeace ship in July 1985 by the French secret service agents to confront French nuclear testing in the Moruroa Atoll.<sup>25</sup> This incident became big international news worldwide that favoured the brave New Zealand nuclear-free stance. Following this, New Zealand was suspended from ANZUS in 1986. The peace movement already wanted the New Zealand government to withdraw from the ANZUS, however, the US had hoped to humiliate New Zealand into submission.<sup>26</sup> It would be claimed that the US punished New Zealand for rejecting its nuclear weapons and ships. Therefore, this suspension from ANZUS was appeared to be demoting or penalizing New Zealand.

Consequently, the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act was passed in 1987. The consequent incidences led New Zealand to

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<sup>25</sup>The bombing of the Rainbow Warrior, Greenpeace, accessed 16 August 2018, <https://www.greenpeace.org/aotearoa/about/our-history/bombing-of-the-rainbow-warrior/>

<sup>26</sup> Laurie Ross, e-mail interview, June 2021.

become a nuclear-free country.<sup>27</sup> This decision not only helped the country to be an independent nation but also projected a positive image on international anti-nuclear societies (Clements 1988). After the Rainbow Warrior incident, the government announced initiatives for peaceful development, peace education, environmental protection in the South Pacific, and protection of human rights, which were used for conferences, publications, speaking tours, and campaigns (Leadbeater 2013).

Taking all of these elements together, the 1987 anti-nuclear legislation represents the culmination of efforts by the New Zealand peace and anti-nuclear movement, the New Zealand Labour Party, the New Zealand Social Credit League (now the New Zealand Democrats), and the New Zealand Values Party.<sup>28</sup> Particularly, the nature of democratically accountable and open government (which is the essence of participatory democracy) and inclusiveness provided by the Labour Party was significant for the creation and also the continuation of the nuclear-free zone.

## Conclusion

For the case of New Zealand, a strong and effective civil society activism was related to the pooling of resources and the political structure as the main determinants of the success that brought about the wanted change. Several distinct tools and resources (e.g. labour, expertise, support of the media) provided favorable conditions for the advocacy, motivation, and determination of New Zealanders. All these events were embodied in conscious-raising activities, campaigns, demonstrations, and other forms of actions leading to a peaceful nuclear-free nation with strong domestic legislation.

The organizational strategies through institutional channels had a clear impact. Well-established networking scaled up the movement while maintaining its deliberative manner, even though the peace group members were funding themselves with limited financial resources. Multi-actor dynamics (with the sense of DIY) and interactive essence of collective commitment from local to national level embodied the notion of ‘power-to-people’. New Zealand is a country where it is easy to connect and mobilize; behind the extraordinary backing for a nuclear-free nation can be seen as commitment and a combination of knowledge and awareness for resisting nuclear-centric ideologies.

Although there was a political blockage due to the reign of the National Party and France’s nuclear testing persistence, the policy goal was clearly defined and prioritized. All the actions toward nuclear tension were formulated, solidified, disseminated, justified, and backed by the people inside and outside of politics. It resulted in the victory with the legislation that pleased the majority. The parallel between the disarmament campaigns and the Labour Party’s anti-

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<sup>27</sup> New Zealand History, Nuclear-free New Zealand: Nuclear-free legislation <https://NewZealandhistory.govt.nz/politics/nuclear-free-new-zealand/nuclear-free-zone>

<sup>28</sup> NEW ZEALAND on Screen, accessed 16 August 2018, <https://www.nzonscreen.com/>

nuclear stance popularized and facilitated the process of anti-nuclear struggle that gained recognition and had legal status in the end. The opposition Labour Party, was vocal and sympathetic to the public tension. Following the Labour Party's victory in the 1972 New Zealand General Election, the party received support from the peace movement members (Clements 1988). The party included the nuclear discourses on the party agenda. On every occasion, they emphasized their opposition to the entry of nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered ships into the territory. Their openness to the people and receptiveness to political demands made them more approachable by civil society actors. It facilitated the process of lobbying on the local and national levels. Thus, they received a substantial membership in the 1970s.

As the findings indicate that although there are multiple pathways of conditions leading to desired policy outcomes based on anti-nuclear claims, the viability of the anti-nuclear mobilizations and socio-political movements are based on the convergence of the strong, diverse, and united civil society with a genuine political environment in which strong leadership and a responsive political environment are well-combined and integrated.

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### **Supplementary resources**

Disarmament & Security Center, Christchurch:  
[http://www.disarmsecure.org/publications/papers/papers\\_by\\_subject.php](http://www.disarmsecure.org/publications/papers/papers_by_subject.php)

Greenpeace Aotearoa New Zealand: <https://www.greenpeace.org/new-zealand/about/our-history/>

Nuclear Free Peacemakers: <http://www.nuclearfreepeacemakers.org.New Zealand/history/page01.html>

The Peace Foundation, Auckland: <http://www.peace.net.New Zealand/history-of-the-peace-foundation>

New Zealand History: <https://New Zealandhistory.govt.New Zealand/world-court-issues-injunction-against-french-nuclear-testing-in-the-pacific>

New Zealand Legislation: <http://www.legislation.govt.New Zealand/act/public/1987/0086/10.0/DLM115116.html>

New Zealand on Screen: <https://www.New Zealandonscreen.com/collection/nuclear-free-new-zealand>

30 Years Nuclear Free New Zealand: <http://www.nuclearfreeNew Zealand30.org.New Zealand/further-reading>

## **Interviews**

Alyn Ware (Peace educator and nuclear disarmament consultant), April 2018

K. Dewes (Director of the Disarmament and Security Centre), June 2018

Laurie Ross (Peace Activist), July 2018

Lyndon Burford (Scholar from the Univ. of Auckland), April 2018

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**Ms. Pinar Temocin** was trained in Philosophy in Turkey and Germany and Comparative Politics and Public Policy in France. She was a visiting research student at Seoul National University, and a graduate fellow of The Nuclear Nonproliferation Education Research Center, The Korean Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, South Korea. She did research at The Peace Foundation, Aotearoa/New Zealand, while studying at the University of Auckland as an exchange student in 2018. She interned and carried out projects in several research institutes and non-profit organizations across the globe on international politics, sustainable community development, and nuclear-free advocacy. She is currently a doctoral student at Hiroshima University, Japan, majoring in Peace Studies and Development Science. For her doctoral studies, she focuses on the environmental civil society organizations in post-Fukushima Japan. Email: [pnrtemocin AT hotmail.com](mailto:pnrtemocin AT hotmail.com)