The Hague Journal of Diplomacy 16 (2020) 1-29



**Small States in the UN Security Council: Austria’s Quest to Maintain Status**

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Received: 22 April 2020; revised: 8 October 2020; accepted: 7 November 2020

# Summary

This article offers a case study on why small states seek membership on the UN Security Council (UNSC). It examines the intension of a small state, Austria, to seek membership on the Council for the 2009-2010 term, the campaign strategy and the domestic debate on the candidacy. The analysis indicates that Austria’s former status as an empire and successful transformation in the post-war period influenced its can- didacy and campaign strategy. Also, Austria’s ideational commitment to the UN cause was the foundation for its successful UNSC campaign. Austria’s small size was not a hindrance in its campaign: on the contrary, as a small state Austria gained prestige for its competence and contributions to the UN. A UNSC seat for Austria was not a ques- tion of a small state seeking status; rather, it was a quest for remaining relevant and maintaining status in a changing world system.

# Keywords

UN Security Council – non-permanent seat – small states – Austria – United Nations – status – European Union – Vienna

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# 1 Introduction1

This article provides an analysis of why small states bid to become part of the UN Security Council (UNSC) with a case study on Austria. It examines the main motivations behind Austria’s choice to run for a seat on the UNSC for the term 2009-2010, what strategies it used in its campaign and why it was success- ful in its undertaking.

The year 2005 was a special one indeed in Austria, for not only was it the 50th anniversary of Austrian independence reached by the signing of the State Treaty in 1955 but it also marked a half-century of Austria’s membership in the United Nations. This was also the year that the decision on Austria’s candi- dacy for the UNSC officially became a part of the government agenda. Austria, with just over 8 million inhabitants, had already played an active role within the UN, with over 50,000 Austrians working on peacekeeping operations all over the world, and the capital of Vienna being one of the UNs’ four headquar- ters, accommodating representations for a wide array of organisations and institutions.

What is it in a small state’s character that drives it to seek membership, and thereby influence, in the most important international body in the world? In the case of Austria, it is *small state* characterised by its history as a powerful empire ruling over vast territories and great variety of peoples, a struggling post-war nation with an economy in ruins and an unstable political situation and a new and promising neutral republic.

Admittedly, the UNSC was not unfamiliar territory for Austria as the coun- try had already served twice on the Council, first in 1973-1974 and then again in 1991-1992. But this time would be different as Austria was up against two other candidates, Iceland and Turkey, in the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), and therefore needed to campaign for a seat on the Council for the first time. To analyse and understand Austria’s incentives to seek mem- bership on the UNSC, this article looks at the case from a small state aspect, the small state literature and a newly developed theoretical framework which takes small states’ characteristics into account in explaining their behaviour in international organisations.

Austria is a typical small state, according to the small state literature. Austria’s number of inhabitants, size of territory, gross domestic product and limited military capacity (the four most common variables used to define

1 This article is a part of a research project titled ‘The Quest for Power in International Politics’, which examines campaigns of small states for non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council and funded by the Swedish Research Council.

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size of states), compared to its larger European neighbouring states and the 1X permanent members of the UNSC, make the country an ideal case to study a 2

small state’s bid to get a seat on the Security Council.2 Most studies in inter- 3

national relations categorise small states as having a population below 10 or 4

15 million.3 Forty-two states with a population of 10 million and fewer were 5

elected to the UNSC from 1991 to 2010 (only four of these states had less than 6

1. million inhabitants).4 Austria is also perceived as a small state by most 7

domestic and international actors which is another important criterion in 8

assessing the size of states.5 These criteria always take a comparative element 9

into account. For instance, Austria is considered small in comparison with its 10

larger neighbouring states Germany and Italy; however, Austria is seen as a 11

similar in size in comparison with Switzerland and as a large state in com- 12

parison with Liechtenstein. Furthermore, there is a growing literature on how 13

special characteristics of small states’ public administration (including their 14

foreign service) and positive image influence their behaviour in international 15

organisations.6 Recently, studies have shed a light on small states’ status- 16

seeking behaviour in the international system but most studies on status do 17

not include small states in their analysis.7 18

Adam Lupel and Lauri Malksoo’s recent report on small states on the UNSC 19

concludes that there is a shortage of research on small states and the UNSC,8 20

and claimed that the exceptions are a study on the mean of influence of small 21

states in the Security Council from 2012 and a speech on small states on the 22

Council from 2008.9 23

The 2012 detailed study on small states’ power potential on the UNSC 24

argued that administrative competence and a positive image of the state in 25

the international system were the key to small states’ success on the Council.10 26

Prioritisation, ability to delegate and robust identification of issues that are 27

manageable have been important features in making Ireland’s membership 28

on the Council successful.11 In general, the excess workload on the Council is 29

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1. Archer and Nugent 2002, 2-5. 31
2. For instance, see an extensive literature overview in Thorhallsson 2018, 18-27. 32

4 Thorhallsson 2012, 136-140.

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1. Thorhallsson 2006, 24-25.

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1. Bartmann 2012.
2. On small states and status, for example, see De Carvalho and Neumann 2015; Wohlforth et 35

al. 2018. For instance, studies on status that do not include small states: Paul, Larson and 36

Wohlforth 2014; Larson and Shevchenko 2010. 37

1. Lupel and Malksoo 2019, 3.

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1. See Thorhallsson 2012; Keating 2008.
2. Thorhallsson 2012. 39
3. Gillissen 2006, 37; Kolby 2003.

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seen as a hindrance for small states to deliver in the Council.12 Nevertheless, Sweden’s emphasis on decisive knowledge in particular fields and Norway’s close co-operation with universities, research institutes and non-governmental organisations contributed to their success in the UNSC.13 The Nordic states’ ability to establish themselves as international norm setters in the fields of human rights, development assistance, women’s rights, humanitarian efforts and environmental protection, and their diplomatic meditator skills in mili- tary conflicts have given them a decisive voice on the UNSC.14

Benjamin De Carvalho and Iver B. Neumann argue that small states with a positive image and moral authority are overrepresented among candidates and members of the UNSC. In addition, they claim that the small states which belong to the WEOG are a unique bloc of states compared to other regional groups.15 They tend to be fairly small, rich and democratic such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark. A fierce compe- tition takes place within the group about which is most successful in spreading its moral capital and spending money on UN peace operations.16 This is espe- cially interesting in the light of this study; that is, the Austria candidacy and campaign for a seat on the UNSC. Austria may not be a typical small state in the UN but it is a good representative of the small states in the WEOG. A detailed case study on Austria, within a theoretical framework which takes account of characteristics of small states, provides a new insight into how small states within the WEOG approach membership on the Security Council.17

There is a growing literature on non-permanent members on the Council such as the volume edited by Nico Schrijver and Niels Blokker.18 However, they mainly deal with the power potential of non-permanent members on the Council; that is, after they have been elected to it—for exceptions see, for exam- ple, the discussions in Ann-Marie Ekengren and Ursula Möller’s contribution.19 Besides, there is a considerable literature on the financial benefits about mem- bership on the UNSC. However, it seems inclusive and does not apply to WEOG countries such as Austria.20

1. Keating 2008.
2. Rydberg 1998; Buhaug and Voldhagen 2001.
3. Kolby 2003; Ingebritsen 2002; Ulriksen 2006.
4. De Carvalho and Neumann 2015, 12-13.
5. See also Ekengren and Möller 2020.
6. De Carvalho and Neumann 2015, 13.
7. Schrijver and Blokker 2020.
8. Ekengren and Möller 2020.
9. For example, see Vreeland and Dreher 2014; Bashir and Lim 2013; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2010.

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For a long time, scholars have criticised lack of theoretical frameworks 1X in taking into account characteristics associated with small states and their 2

behaviour in international organisations.21 This is nowhere more evident than 3

in studies on the role of small states on the UNSC. Most existing studies on 4

small states on the Security Council do not place them within the small state 5

literature.22 Small states are analysed according to the traditional interna- 6

tional relations literature which most often deals with states in the interna- 7

tional system as similar social units.23 These studies are in danger of missing 8

an important variable the size of states in explaining states’ behaviour in the 9

international system. 10

Lack of theoretical frameworks and analytical articles on small states in 11

the UN have led to a gap in the international relations literature. For exam- 12

ple, Ian Hurd24 deals with status in an article on symbolic legitimacy and 13

Vincent Pouliot25 makes a single point about status being explicit in the UNSC. 14

However, there is little literature that actually builds on that analytically, and 15

most discussions of status and the UNSC simply note that prestige is of impor- 16

tance in the Council without providing analysis. Scholars have not had access 17

to theoretical frameworks, which incorporate the small state literature, to anal- 18

yse the behaviour of small states in the Security Council. Nevertheless, a newly 19

developed theoretical framework put forward in a volume edited by Ekengren 20

and Möller on small states and the UNSC entitled *The Quest for Power in* 21

*International Politics*,26 provides a much-needed platform to study small states 22

in the context of the UNSC. To the authors’ knowledge, Ekengren and Möller’s 23

theoretical framework is the only concrete framework explicitly presented to 24

study small states in the UNSC. The framework is still under development, and 25

applying this case study of Austria within it not only can help us better under- 26

stand the role of Austria in the UNSC but also can demonstrate the merits of 27

the framework and set up the opportunity for others to do more theoretical 28

development. The theoretical framework takes account of implications related 29

to a state’s size and suggests that states venture into a UNSC candidacy because 30

a seat on the Council can provide them with opportunities to shape decisions, 31

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1. Neumann and Gstöhl 2006. 34
2. For instance, see Wouters, Drieskens and Biscop 2009; Malone 2000; Langmore and 35

Farrall 2016; Kuziemko and Werker 2006; Gillissen 2006; Tahzib-Lie and Rosing 2019; 36

Schrijver and Blokker 2020. 37

1. Waltz 1979.

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24 Hurd 2002.

25 Pouliot 2014. 39

26 Ekengren and Möller 2021a.

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improve networks, and work on their status (see Table 1 below).27 Therefore, to further examine Austria’s motivations to seek a UNSC seat, this article places the candidacy and campaign into the framework. Table 1 indicates why small states seek membership of the UNSC and how they may benefit from a seat on the Council according to the theoretical framework.

Ekengren and Möller28 claim that UN Member States seek a seat on the UNSC to shape decisions and influence the political and legal order of which they are a part. Consequently, small- and middle-sized states are more inclined to focus on improving the multilateral order to limit the reach and influence of bigger states, as shown in Table 1.

According to Ekengren and Möller,29 a term on the UNSC creates opportu- nities for states to expand their diplomatic and political network (see Table 1 above). Regular access to the Permanent Five could also make a state more interesting to other states which, in turn, could pave the way for further net- working outside the UNSC.

Table 1 also demonstrates Ekengren and Möller’s30 claim that a state’s ambi- tion to secure a seat on the UNSC is connected to its ambition to improve or maintain status, all depending on size. According to the theory of status- seeking, small- and medium-sized states are mainly concerned with achieving

Table 1 Reasons for a candidacy and expectations of a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council

**To shape decisions To expand network To work on status**

1. – Guard a state’s national
2. security

* Access to the Permanent Five
* Seek status
* Maintain status

1. – Promote specific principles – Establish other types of
2. and values

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contacts

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*Source:* Adapted from Ann-Marie Ekengren and Ulrika Möller, eds., *The Quest for Power in In- ternational Politics: The Campaigns by and Selection of Non-Permanent Members to the United Nations Security Council* (forthcoming 2021a).

1. Ekengren and Möller forthcoming 2021a, forthcoming 2021b.
2. Ekengren and Möller forthcoming 2021a.
3. Ekengren and Möller forthcoming 2021a.
4. Ekengren and Möller forthcoming 2021a.

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status31 and taking on noticeable tasks or excelling on certain issues to enhance their prominence.32 Accordingly, they are less concerned with practical ben- efits and physical security. For instance, Peter Viggo Jakobsen, Jens Ringsmose and Håkon Lunde Saxi argue that Norwegian and Danish military contribu- tions are a result of the pursuit of prestige and are not related to a sense of inse- curity or an attempt to maintain national security. Their military engagements are an attempt to strengthen their standing with policy-makers in Washington, DC.33 According to Ekengren and Möller,34 a small state might have hopes that a non-permanent seat could improve its current status within the UN, whilst a bigger state would consider it as a way to confirm and maintain an already established status.

When it comes to the campaigning for a UNSC seat, Ekengren and Möller35 introduce three campaign logics as methods for states to secure a positive outcome in the elections: 1) demonstrating contributions, 2) claiming com- petence and 3) proving ideational commitment (see Table 2 below).36 The present analysis investigates the extent to which Austria showed signs of utilis- ing these logics during the campaign period, which of the logics proved most important for Austria and how the logics were combined differently in the campaign. Table 2 shows the theoretical framework’s identification of logics that small states adopt to succeed in their attempt to get a seat on the UNSC.

This article is divided into three parts, in addition to an introduction and concluding remarks. First, it examines which variables motivated Austria’s decision to become a candidate, as it appeared in public discourse at the time, official reports and recent interviews. Next, it analyses the campaign’s core messages. After that, it evaluates the campaign strategy.

The article draws on extensive research on discussions and speeches by politicians in the Austrian national parliament and the UN General Assembly, Austrian media coverage, news and reports from the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the UN, promotional material from the campaign and, finally, interviews with Austrian government officials and policy-makers.

1. De Carvalho and Neumann 2015, 16.
2. Wohlforth et al. 2018.
3. Jackobsen, Ringsmose and Saxi 2018.
4. Ekengren and Möller forthcoming 2021a.
5. Ekengren and Möller forthcoming 2021a.
6. Ekengren and Möller forthcoming 2021a, forthcoming 2021b.

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Table 2 The three logics for campaigning for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council

1. **Demonstrating**
2. **contributions**

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**Claiming competence Proving ideational**

**commitment**

1. Focus on previous and
2. current contributions
3. to the UN and the
4. multilateral order, for
5. example,
6. – A good historical
7. reputation
8. – A good UN track record
9. – A specific cultural/social
10. capital
11. – Access to networks

Focus on current skills and expertise in leadership, for example, by

* Displaying competence in regard to promoted values
* Displaying resourcefulness when dealing with common challenges raised by the campaign

Focus on the campaign’s consistent and trustworthy message, for example, by

* Promoting specific issues
* Defining certain global challenges
* Displaying commitment to certain values and principles

1. or economic and/or – Proving domestic support – Showing political
2. military resources which – Promoting prominent dedication to the
3. could be put at UN
4. disposal

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politicians, diplomats and experts

candidacy and promoted campaign messages

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*Source:* Adapted from Ann-Marie Ekengren and Ulrika Möller, eds., *The Quest for Power in In- ternational Politics: The Campaigns by and Selection of Non-Permanent Members to the United Nations Security Council* (forthcoming 2021a).

# 2 Candidacy Motivations

Although concrete reasons for Austria’s third run for a seat on the UNSC were not specifically accounted for by Austrian authorities, it is possible to identify four driving forces motivating the decision.

First, during Austria’s 50 years of UN membership, Austrian authorities had put great emphasis on being a devoted and reliable Member State, as well as an active member of the international community, one that had not hesitated to take the initiative if needed. Austria has a long history of interna- tional work and co-operation, and is known for mediation skills and dedica- tion to international law, peacekeeping efforts and development co-operation. In addition, the capital of Vienna, home to one of the UN’s headquarters, has developed itself into a centre of competence for issues related to safety and

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security, focussing especially on nuclear safety, disarmament, combatting drugs, crime and human trafficking, and promotion of industrial develop- ment and the application of outer space technologies.37 Introducing Austrian expertise, vision and overall foreign policy in these matters to the world was therefore considered a worthy task, and a seat on the UNSC was a means to an end.38 More decisively, in 2008 Peter Jankowitsch (ÖVP), former Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the UNSC during Austria’s first period on the Council, claimed that because of Austria’s limited resources and strong emphasis on the European Union (EU), the country barely existed to a large part of the world. According to Jankowitsch, the UNSC was the best platform for states to present their profile and demonstrate what they stood for. At that time, Austria had few embassies in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and, conse- quently, in Jankowitsch’s opinion the UNSC was the ideal place to showcase Austria’s effectiveness in the international system.39 In addition, the Austrian government, perhaps on account of its identity as a reliable Member State, saw the candidacy as a service to the UN and the international community,40 which also reflects in Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik’s referral to the candi- dacy as an act of respect for diversity and in recognition of the need for unity.41 Ultimately, seeking membership on the most important institution of the UN was, for Austria, an essential part of taking responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security—a way to prove that states like Austria could have an impact on the work of the Security Council, no matter their size.42

Second, regarding security on a national and regional level, it is fair to say that Austria’s small state status, limited military capabilities and declared neu- trality can all help explain the country’s dedication to the functioning of a mul- tilateral system, the rule of law and the general progression of international law. These matters reflect the country’s foreign policy and its work within the UN, and when combined seem to have strengthened Austrian leaders’ belief that the country should on a regular basis warm a seat on the UNSC: ‘A small state is not a military power. But involvement in multilateral structures is the best security guarantee for countries like Austria, who are not part of any mili- tary alliances. Therefore, it makes sense that we want to be represented on the Security Council every 20 years or so’.43

37 Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten n.d. 38 News 2005.

1. Machreich 2008a.
2. Government Official B, interviewed by the second author, 22 June 2018.
3. Plassnik 2006.
4. Government Official C, interviewed by the second author, 17 September 2018.
5. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2007b.

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Third, Vienna’s significance as a UN location was a frequent and reappear- ing theme in all of Austria’s interactions with the UN from announcement of its candidacy until elections. As a matter of fact, it seems that proving the city’s competences and usefulness as a UN headquarters became intertwined with the country’s campaign activities. In a speech in March 2011 on Austria’s results during its membership on the UNSC, Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger (ÖVP) explained that Vienna was in constant competition with other UN head- quarters (New York, Geneva and Nairobi) and could not, at the time of the can- didacy, be entirely sure of the UN’s commitment to sustain the city as one of its headquarters locations.44 It can be argued that losing its headquarters posi- tion could have had damaging consequences for Austria, as accommodating UN headquarters had high lucrative advantages. During a Federal Council (the upper house of the Austrian parliament) meeting in May 1997, whose discus- sions revolved around Vienna as a UN location, Deputy Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel of the conservative Austrian Peoples Party (ÖVP), reminded members of the UN’s economic significance for Austria, stating that it ultimately left bil- lions in the country.45 Clearly, a lot was at stake and as a response to that it seems Austria’s campaign strategy was to illuminate its own competences in the hopes of securing UN presence in the country’s capital. As an example of this strategy, Foreign Minister Plassnik announced Austria’s support for creat- ing a new International Renewable Energy Agency, suggesting Vienna as suit- able location to host such an agency, as well as proposing the creation of a new regime to place all enrichment facilities under the control of the Vienna-based the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).46 To demonstrate Vienna’s usefulness even more, the Austrian government put great emphasis on the good work that was already being done there. For those purposes, the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention and IAEA were frequently men- tioned to stress Vienna’s importance for global security, whilst the city was referred to as a security centre due to its focus on issues concerning nuclear safety, disarmament and the fight against drugs and crime.47

Fourth, Austrian authorities often brought attention to the country’s leading role in enhancing EU’s co-operation with the UN in the fields of peacekeeping, development aid, EU-Africa relations and women’s rights, as well as support- ing its EU partners by advocating for an increased weight of the EU in the

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1. Parlament 2011.
2. Parlament 1997.

46 Plassnik 2007, 2008.

47 Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2006a; Plassnik 2005, 2006.

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work of the UN. When asked in May 2005 by her fellow ÖVP partner, Federal Council MP Harald Himmer, about the EU’s chances of obtaining a seat on the UNSC, Plassnik replied that a mutual seat on the Security Council for the EU as a whole certainly was a long-term goal, and in her opinion it was a logical con- clusion for the EU to have a mutual voice on the UN’s decision-making level to thereby intensify the common grounds on which they operated.48 It there- fore appears that matters of the EU played a role in Austria’s UNSC campaign. As further example of this, the main point of departure in one of Plassnik’s addresses in the UN General Assembly was the EU’s ‘United in Diversity’ slo- gan, thereby emphasising the role of the EU in building peace in the European continent, how well it fitted with the Austrian emphasis on the dialogue of cultures and religions and how that slogan should also be the guiding principle in the work of the UN.49 Based on this, it can be argued that showing commit- ment was a way in which Austria could win the support of its EU partners, as well as establish itself as a regional power, on a global level, and an expert in the field of security, which in return would strengthen its own status within the UN.

Put in a theoretical context, it seems that Austria’s candidacy motivations were driven by a mixture of aspirations to shape decisions and expand its net- work, two of Ekengren and Möller’s50 suggestions as states’ reasons to seek a non-permanent seat. The third reason for small states to seek membership has to do with their status-seeking behaviour in the international system. Nevertheless, Austria’s aspiration for membership was more of an attempt to maintain status. Austria had already established itself as an active prestigious UN Member State, as discussed in greater detail below.

Ambitions to introduce Austrian foreign policy values and display dedica- tion to the strengthening of a multilateral system in the hopes of guarantee- ing Austria’s national security are all variables that fall under a state’s wish to shape decisions to influence the political and legal order to which it belongs. Austria’s efforts to prove Vienna’s competence as a UN location to secure the UN’s ongoing presence in the country, all while attempting to increase the EU’s weight as a whole within the UN to win support of its EU partners and estab- lish themselves as a regional power, are further examples of a state’s efforts to expand its network and maintain status on regional and international levels.

The country’s size played a role as well, as it was important for Austria to demonstrate that it was capable of having an impact on world politics, despite

1. Parlament 2005.
2. Plassnik 2006.
3. Ekengren and Möller 2021a.

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the its small state status. And precisely because of Austria’s small size and military weakness, supporting multilateralism and the rule of law through the UNSC was a rational part of the country’s security policy. Austria built its can- didacy decision on incentives related to its emphasis on being a reliable active member of the international community in maintaining peace and security, and on safeguarding its own position at the international level.

# 3 Campaign Messages

When looking into the Austrian candidacy, four key campaign themes stand out, which all show signs of successful implementation of Ekengren and Möller’s51 three campaign logics. These were matters close to Austria’s heart, foreign policy principles and issues which it had developed through the years and allocated time and resources to, on both the UN and EU levels.52

First, the main emphasis for Austria’s campaign was the strengthening of a rules-based international system and the rule of law, the latter described by its Foreign Minister as the *backbone* of Austria’s candidacy and the key for an envi- ronment of trust within world societies.53 With its long history of promoting international law, this message and main focal point of the Austrian campaign represented the country’s vision and previous work on the UN and EU levels. In addition, Austria presented itself as a dedicated supporter for multilateral co-operation and showed willingness to apply multilateral solutions to global challenges.54 The focus on the rule of law was demonstrated with numerous initiatives and events. The Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and New York University (NYU) launched a special initiative to support the UN in its efforts to strengthen the rule of law which was concluded with a publication on the subject.55 Austrian authorities also co-ordinated the ‘Group of Friends of the Rule of Law’ in New York, an informal network of around 50 UN Member States from all regional groups that meets to discuss various issues related to the strengthening of UN rule of law activities. And the Austrian UN delegation in collaboration with NYU also organised a special discussion panel on matters of the Security Council and the rule of law.56

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1. Ekengren and Möller 2021a.
2. Government Official B interviewed by the second author, 22 June 2018. 53 Plassnik 2005, 2006.
3. Plassnik 2008.
4. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2008a.
5. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2018.

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Second, Austria had through the years actively engaged in the UN’s human rights bodies and presented this important matter as one of key focal points of the campaign. The importance of civilian protection in armed conflict was emphasised, especially that of women and children, and attention was brought to Austria’s part in the EU’s implementation of UNSC Resolution 1612 on the Protection of Children and Armed Conflict, as well as UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.57 With that said, special attention was given to the role of women in relation to peace and security matters. The importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment was underlined amongst others by Plassnik and Ambassador Gerhard Pfanzelter at various UN sessions, along with the protection of women’s rights and women’s involvement in all levels of political life.58 The Austrian government made a special point about how it showed leadership within the EU during its EU Presidency in 2006 by making it a priority to recruit and deploy women in EU peace missions. This can be regarded as part of Austria’s strategy to ‘put principle into practice’; for exam- ple, including women in mediation, peace operations and reconciliation work, and in the meantime demonstrating that Austria too could show leadership when it came to gender equality and female empowerment.59 The Austrian government also showed commitment to the dialogue of religions, cultures and civilisations, by organising and participating in numerous conferences on the matter such as the first-ever conference of European Islamic leaders held in Austria in 2003,60 and a conference of European imams in Vienna hosted by the Austrian government together with the Islamic community in Austria.61 Third, Vienna, the EU’s only UN headquarters, was portrayed as a centre of competence for issues related to safety and security, focussing especially on disarmament and proliferation, nuclear safety, and the fight against terrorism, drugs, and human trafficking, and it was in this context repeatedly referred to as a security centre.62 Accordingly, the Austrian government regularly stressed the significance of the Vienna headquarters for global security and highlighted the good institutional work that was being done there.63 Special attention was drawn to disarmament and non-proliferation, with civilian protection in armed conflict in the foreground. In those efforts, Austrian authorities worked

1. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten n.d.
2. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2005b.
3. Plassnik 2006.
4. Ferrero-Waldner 2003b.
5. Winkler 2007.
6. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2005a, 2006a, 2006b.
7. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2006a*.*

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hard at promoting an international legally binding ban on cluster munitions during the campaign period, successfully leading by example through passing national legislation in 2007, thereby agreeing to a complete ban of the weap- ons. A year later Austria signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions which prohibits the use, transfer and stockpiling of cluster bombs, thus reducing col- lateral damage to civilians in wartime.64

Fourth, Austria’s contributions to international peacekeeping missions and development aid were emphasised, highlighting the numbers of Austrians who had rendered their services in crisis areas under the UN flag and thereby contributed to peace and security in unsafe and war-torn areas.65 When it comes to reaching a positive UNSC election outcome, research has shown that proving dedication to development by introducing a country’s contributions is essential.66 In accordance with other UNSC candidates, Austria repeatedly put forward its relatively high Official Development Assistance (ODA) levels with promises of increased contributions in the future,67 and underscored the country’s involvement as a decision-maker and financial contributor within the EU as the provider of more than half of all development aid in the UN. Finally, Austria’s numerous development aid projects and programmes were highlighted in this regard, each time giving concrete examples of Austria’s con- tributions, which especially focussed on combatting poverty, ensuring peace and security and protecting the environment.68

Contextualised with Ekengren and Möller’s69 theoretical framework, Austria’s campaign bears clear indication of two logics; that is, the country’s attempts to demonstrate its contributions and prove ideational commitment to the UN. Austria’s comprehensive support to the UN and the country’s active engagement in shaping UN work became an overall theme during the campaign period. Austrian authorities demonstrated the country’s strength and abilities in fields directly related to the work of the UN—and the UNSC specifically—with concrete examples, thereby feeding into the country’s repu- tation of being a reliable and resourceful UN participant. Furthermore, Austria repeatedly led by example and focused on putting principle into practice dur- ing the campaign period by showcasing its expert knowledge and providing financial resources and ideological know-how in UN matters. In all of this rests the factor of the third campaign logic—to claim competence—as Austria’s

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1. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2007e.
2. Ferrero-Waldner 2004; Parlament 2006.
3. Ekengren and Möller 2020; Ekengren, Hjorten and Möller 2018.
4. Ferrero-Waldner 2003a, 2004; Plassnik 2005.
5. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten n.d.
6. Ekengren and Möller 2021a.

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campaign messages and goals could not have been successfully put forward and reached without the country’s active political leadership, domestic sup- port and diplomatic skills.

# 4 Campaign Strategy

When looking into the strategies Austria used to seek a UNSC seat, four themes emerge which are examined below in connection with the three campaign logics of demonstrating contributions, claiming competence and proving ide- ational commitment, as discussed in the Introduction.

First, standing out as a strategy or a characteristic is the overall political commitment towards the candidacy, both among government parties and the opposition. Austria had two governments from the time the decision to seek candidacy on the UNSC was announced in 2005 until the election in the UN General Assembly in 2008. The first was a coalition government between the conservative Austrian Peoples Party (ÖVP) and two right-wing popu- list parties, Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) (2003-2007). The second was a short-term coalition govern- ment between the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and ÖVP (2007- 2008). During this time, Ursula Plassnik (ÖVP) played an important role, as she served as Minister of Foreign Affairs for both governments throughout the entire campaign, thereby also serving to some degree as a spokesperson or face of the candidacy.70 ‘At the time, all government parties agreed that this was a priority. Nobody disagreed with the idea, no-one protested. People were gener- ally pleased with the idea’.71 During the announcement of Austria’s candidacy, Federal Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel said that all efforts would be made to achieve Austria’s goal of a UNSC seat.72 As a result, the candidacy was handled as top priority, ‘not only a top priority of the Ministry [of Foreign Affairs] but also a top priority of the government. For example, every minister that travelled would see this as a part of his agenda’.73 Furthermore, the opposition parties were also invited to support the campaign. ‘Some parties (like the green party) supported it actively but no party opposed the candidature’.74 Also, in light of the importance of the matter, Peter Jankowitsch (ÖVP), former Minister of

1. Bundeskanzleramt n.d.
2. Government Official B, interviewed by the second author, 22 June 2018. 72 News 2005.
3. Government Official B, interviewed by the second author, 22 June 2018.
4. Government Official C, interviewed by the second author, 17 September 2018.

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Foreign Affairs and President of the UNSC during Austria’s first period on the Council, as mentioned above, and Herbert Scheibner, Chairman of the FPÖ parliamentary group and member of the National Council (the lower house of the Austrian parliament), were named as special emissaries of the campaign.75 In addition, the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed Georg Lennkh as Special Envoy for Africa during the candidacy years.76

The Austrian government activated its diplomatic network around the world and its strategy was to be in direct contact with other states and conduct face-to-face talks.77 As is the reality of world politics, state relations undeni- ably vary between countries and the Austrian government soon realised that it needed to focus on countries where its diplomatic presence was of the weaker kind. ‘You have to focus on places where your diplomatic relations are thin- ner. In our case we had to focus on Africa, it is impossible to win without sup- port from Africa. Also the Caribbean states and the Pacific islands’.78 At that time, the African states represented 53 votes in the election for non-permanent seats on the UNSC and 44 states were also members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Association of Caribbean States, so clearly the stakes were high and the importance of working with a group of countries that could impact the voting was evident. To strengthen the relations with these regions, certain actions were taken. For example, a special Africa division was established within the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A conference on peace and security in West Africa was held in collaboration with Burkina Faso’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an event which provided input to the Lisbon Summit in 2007 where the Joint EU-Africa Strategy, which the Austrian govern- ment promoted during its EU Chairmanship, was adopted.79 A Memorandum of Understanding on CARICOM80-Austrian Co-operation was signed with the purpose of supporting countries in the Caribbean region when dealing with the effects of climate change.81 And numerous meetings were held with UN

75 News 2005.

1. Parlament 2007.
2. Government Official A, interviewed by the second author, 19 June 2018.
3. Government Official B, interviewed by the second author, 22 June 2018.
4. Plassnik 2007; Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten

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2007d.

1. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) consists of fifteen Caribbean states, most of which are members of AOSIS.
2. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2008e; CARICOM 2008.

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state groupings,82 in an effort to make it clear from each regional context what the advantages of Austria’s membership on the UNSC would be.83

When it came to collecting support, it was a firm policy in Austria not to engage in vote purchasing.84 Instead, the Austrian authorities made a tacti- cal decision to always attempt to make reciprocity agreements first, meaning that Austria promised certain states their support in other UN elections in exchange for their UNSC vote.85 Furthermore, Austria ‘developed a system of retreats, where we invited people to Austria, to Alpbach. We did not directly request people’s votes but tried to focus on mutual interests. So the focus was not on the campaigning, we did not even mention that we were campaign- ing, but tried instead to highlight our profile, amongst others our peacekeep- ing work and the rule of law’.86 In the case of the small island states, it seems that they were well aware of their weight in the UNSC elections and had grown accustomed to some sort of a reward in return for their vote. So, despite its no vote-purchasing policy, the Austrian government apparently did have some concrete offers for the small island states such as a promise to help establish a representative office at the UN headquarters in Vienna, support for digital res- titution in which cultural assets were to be archived electronically and scholar- ships for students from the region to study in Austria.87 What can be perceived as a sign of confidence, the Austrian government decided early against asking for support throughout the entire election process, as it assumed that Austria would already be elected in the first round, and therefore mainly focused its promise-making on that round.88

Second, the Austrian strategy was invariably to demonstrate how Austria had led by example in all its UN-related work, both within the UN and the EU, and also independently. This was done by consistently providing concrete examples of Austria’s current and future contributions to UN work, often in direct relations to Austria’s campaign messages (e.g. multilateralism, peace- keeping, human rights, disarmament and proliferation). This can be related to another candidacy strategy which aimed at expanding the country’s activities within the UN, thereby supporting even further Austria’s profile as the active UN member it was and possibly winning the country votes towards a seat on

1. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2008b.
2. *DerStandard* 2008a.
3. Machreich 2008b.
4. Government Official B, interviewed by the second author, 22 June 2018; Machreich 2008a.
5. Government Official B, interviewed by the second author, 22 June 2018.
6. *DerStandard* 2008b.
7. Government Official B, interviewed by the second author, 22 June 2018.

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the UNSC.89 Austrian leaders drew attention to the country’s contributions to peacekeeping, and the fact that Austria had a long-standing tradition of being an active participant in peacekeeping operations, as well as being one of the largest EU troop contributors in that field.90 According to Gottfried Kneifel (ÖVP), President of the Federal Council, it was indeed because of this fact that Austria was entitled to a seat on the UNSC.91 To confirm that notion, Plassnik stated that participation in international peacekeeping missions not only was a sign of Austrian solidarity but also was deeply embedded in Austria’s self- image,92 thereby providing the campaign with proof of the country’s solid ide- ational commitment. Furthermore, Austria’s Official Development Assistance levels were drawn forward with promises of increased contributions in the future. In fact, Austria increased its ODA significantly during the candidacy years, starting with an immense leap in 2005 when ODA levels increased by 127 per cent from the year before, due to a sharp increase in debt relief.93 In light of the importance of acquiring votes from African and Caribbean states and the Pacific islands, it was also especially stressed that during Austria’s Presidency of the EU, an agreement was reached on providing approximately 24 billion euros in assistance to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries between 2008 and 2013.94

Third, it is possible to detect a change in political discourse on Austria’s size, especially when looking at the way Austrian leaders expressed them- selves before and after the UNSC elections. Austria is typically described as a small state, both on the EU and worldwide level, and at the onset of the campaign period one can find direct references made by the Austrian govern- ment according to that description. As an example of this, State Secretary Hans Winkler said that ‘as a small state, we have an interest in the functioning of the multilateral system’,95 and Jankowitch spoke both of small states like Austria holding principles for international law in high regard, and the country’s potential for establishing itself as a representative for small Member States of the UN if elected to the UNSC.96 As the elections drew nearer, references to Austria’s size were modified by categorising small- and medium-sized states together. This was a deliberate strategic move which allowed Austrian

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1. Parlament 2007.
2. Ferrero-Waldner 2004.
3. Parlament 2006.
4. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2007c.
5. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2006, 4; 2009, 12.
6. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten n.d.
7. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2007b.
8. Machreich 2008a.

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authorities to cater to a wider group of countries in its pursuit of support. In that manner during Federal Council debates, Plassnik talked about the impor- tance of small- and medium-sized states like Austria obtaining a seat on the UNSC, thereby grouping small and medium states together, and in a similar manner on another occasion when describing Austria’s competences she said: ‘Small and medium-sized states have special qualifications for creating confi- dence and addressing problems. We know how to listen and, as an EU member state, how to act as a mediator in larger contexts’.97 Shortly before the elec- tions, however, there was another change in discourse as Plassnik was quoted as saying that Austria is ‘seen by many partners in the UN as a reliable repre- sentative of medium-sized countries: large enough to perform all tasks in the UN s most powerful body independently and with care, yet small enough to enjoy a lot of sympathy among countries in the weight class of less than 10 mil- lion inhabitants’, thereby placing Austria in another and bigger size category.98 After the elections, Plassnik ultimately confirmed her views on Austria’s size in an interview when she said: ‘If we do not want to leave the shaping of the world to the big ones, middle-sized states like Austria must be prepared to assume concrete responsibility’.99

Fourth, the Austrian government’s strategy was to highlight the country’s good personal and working relationship with high-ranking UN personnel such as former Secretary-General Kofi Annan and then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.100 This can be seen in Austria’s campaign brochure, which was richly decorated with photographs not only of Austria’s activities worldwide and the UN headquarters but also with photographs of Annan and Ban. In fact, readers can find an address by Annan about the UN and Austria’s close relationship, where he praises Austria’s contributions to the UN. Moreover, Plassnik empha- sised the close relationship between Austria and Ban on the announcement of Ban’s first formal visit in February 2007, when she talked of the bond Ban had with Austria as South Korea’s former Ambassador to the country, stating that his visit to Vienna so soon after taking office confirmed Vienna’s importance as the only UN headquarters within the EU.101 Evidently, Ban himself was fond of Austria and needed little convincing of the country’s significance to the UN if his comment in an interview is considered, during which he apparently said that he hoped Austria would get elected for a non-permanent seat on the

1. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2008b.
2. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2008d.
3. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2008f.
4. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2007a, 2008c*.*
5. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2007a.

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UNSC, a comment that evoked much disapproval by Iceland and Turkey, other candidates in the WEOG.102 Many more meetings would follow with the new Secretary-General, ranging from formal ones to events on the lighter note such as the reopening of the renovated Viennese cafe in the UN headquarters build- ing in New York, which Plassnik attended alongside Ban.103

After identifying and examining these four strategies or characteristic themes, it becomes evident that they are especially marked by two campaign logics according to Ekengren and Möller’s104 theoretical framework; that is, Austria’s strategy to demonstrate contributions and more notably to claim competence. Clear examples of the logic of claiming competence involve the broad cross-party consensus on the candidacy, the frequent showcasing of a good relationship with prominent UN individuals, and the intentional change in discourse on the country’s size from small to medium to be perceived in a certain way by a larger group of states. This, along with Austria’s ability to dem- onstrate contributions in all its previous UN-related work, behind which rests the underlying proof of the country’s ideational commitment towards UN matters, contributed to a successful international campaign and confirmed its capability of delivering good work on the UNSC yet again.

# 5 Conclusion

In October 2008 Austria was elected for a non-permanent seat on the UNSC for the 2009-2010 term, as the representative of the WEOG. Austria received 133 out of 192 votes already in the first round, thereby securing the two-thirds majority vote it needed to acquire membership on the Council.105 Turkey also obtained the required two-thirds majority vote when it won 151 votes, thereby securing its seat on the UNSC, while Iceland lost with 87 votes.106

Austria’s smallness, in terms of the traditional variables identified by the small state literature, did not stand it its way for a successful campaign. Austria had already proven itself, at home and abroad, to be an efficient international actor, indicating the importance of how small states are perceived by domestic and international actors. Domestically, the Austrian political elite stood united and confident about the country’s ability to succeed in all its international

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1. *DerStandard* 2008c.
2. Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten 2008c.
3. Ekengren and Möller 2021a.
4. *DerStandard* 2008d. 106 UN 2008.

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endeavours, and internationally the candidacy enjoyed broad support. During the campaign period Austria benefitted from its diplomatic network, devel- oped over decades and centuries, and was able to extend it even further with new relations in Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean. Austria’s experiences in being a member on the Council two times before and its expertise in numer- ous hard and soft security-related fields of work on the UNSC also proved to be valuable assets. Austria’s small public administration, including its Foreign Service, compared with larger public administrations was not a hindrance in the campaign to be elected to the Security Council.

In terms of the candidacy, this analysis shows that Austria’s motivations to run for a non-permanent seat on the UNSC were numerous and can be explained in a historical context (i.e., its former empire heritage), its long his- tory of international work and co-operation, and its former successes at the UN and on the UNSC. But it was also subject to security and economic inter- ests, reflecting on its dedication to the functioning of a multilateral system and its willingness to illuminate its competences in the hopes of securing a UN presence in Vienna. This study concludes, though, that the Austrian candi- dacy and campaign indicate an attempt by an active small member of the UN to maintain its status and remain relevant in the international system. This contradicts Ekengren and Möller’s107 theoretical framework which claims that small states seek membership on the UNSC to improve their status within the UN, while larger states consider a seat on the Security Council to confirm and maintain an established status. Austria had already established itself as a pres- tigious state within the UN system and strategically used its acquired status in the campaign to be elected to the Council. Austria’s attempt to maintain its status with its UNSC candidacy demonstrates a similar behaviour in the inter- national system as has been identified by other European states of similar size such as Norway,108 Denmark,109 the Netherlands and Switzerland.110 Their aim is to maintain their standings in the eyes of policy-makers in the world.

Otherwise, Austria’s motivations are in accordance with Ekengren and Möller’s111 suggestions on why states decide to seek a seat on the UNSC and thus take a risk by venturing into this resource-consuming and uncertain journey. In terms of the campaign strategy, Austria’s campaign messages were chosen from its area of expertise. These were issues where its experience and expert

* 1. Ekengren and Möller forthcoming 2021a.
  2. De Carvalho and Neumann 2015; Jakobsen, Ringsmose and Saxi 2018.
  3. Jakobsen, Ringsmose and Saxi 2018.
  4. Wohlforth et al. 2018.
  5. Ekengren and Möller forthcoming 2021a.

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knowledge were useful (e.g., peacekeeping, mediation, human rights and the promotion of international law); where it could show leadership and demon- strate good results (e.g., when it came to gender equality and female empow- erment, along with civil protection, disarmament and non-proliferation); and where it could show commitment and apply multilateral solutions for current and future world challenges, (e.g. climate change, terrorism and the dialogue of religions, cultures and civilisations). These messages were spread and illu- minated, all while Austrian authorities strived to demonstrate Vienna’s benefi- cial and indispensable role as an active UN headquarters and security centre.

Austria’s size became a sizeable matter during the campaigning years. As a state that fell under the small state category according to the small state litera- ture, and was up until then referred to as such in political discourse, Austria gradually but consistently over the campaigning years went from being talked about as a small state by its leaders to a small- and medium-sized state, and eventually ended up being referred to as a medium-sized state. This was a stra- tegic move done in an attempt for Austria to appeal to a larger selection of countries in its quest for support in the elections. Contextualised with Austria’s history, there is also a remote possibility that the small state status simply did not fit a former empire in the thick of establishing itself as a world-class centre of competence and a credible, effective member of the international system.

This study found that the campaign logic on ideational commitment within the theoretical framework was the foundation for Austria’s successful UNSC campaign as it marks the basis for the other two logics (demonstrating con- tributions and claiming competence), even though Ekengren and Möller’s112 do not address it as such. In that manner, the three logics are intertwined as Austria could not have demonstrated its contributions and competence with- out solid proof of its ideational commitment and an everlasting willingness to engage actively in UN work. Austria’s main campaign commitment—the rule of law and the strengthening of a rules-based international system—remains one of the UN’s main principles and, therefore, a highly relevant topic for all UN members. Furthermore, one of the Austrian campaign’s greatest advan- tages was that it was ideationally based in both traditional working fields of the UNSC (i.e., hard security and defence matters), as well as in the so-called ‘soft security issues’ (i.e., gender equality, poverty eradication, climate change and sustainable development), which strengthened Austria’s image of compe- tency and facilitated networking with different state groupings.

When it came to demonstrating contributions, Austria had a wide selec- tion of qualities, strengths and assets which it could draw attention to in

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its campaign. Austria’s ability to build on its own experiences and expertise directly related to the work of the UNSC gave boost to its image as an accom- plished, reliable and overall ‘good’ UN Member State which, in turn, appealed to both small- and medium-sized states within the UN, thereby extending the country’s diplomatic network around the world.

Austria demonstrated its competence by drawing attention to its good repu- tation and skills within the UN, and its long UN history and active peacekeep- ing participation in war-torn areas where skilful diplomacy was needed, all the while emphasising the importance of various UN institutions hosted in Vienna. Austria was furthermore well equipped to claim competence when it came to proving skills in leadership as not only did it successfully engage domestic political actors in the campaign and secure domestic consensus on the matter but it also managed to promote the support and involvement of UN Secretaries-General in the campaign.

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