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New Zealand

The United States and New Zealand work together closely in bilateral, regional, and global contexts to address common interests in the areas of defense, foreign affairs, and trade. Bilateral and multilateral military-to-military exercises involving the two countries, such as the 23 nation RIMPAC naval exercise, have increased in number since the signing of the Wellington Declaration of 2010 and the Washington Declaration of 2012. These declarations marked turning points in bilateral relations after differences over nuclear policy in the 1980s prompted the United States to suspend its alliance commitments to New Zealand (see below). The renewed strength of the bilateral relationship was also demonstrated by the November 2016 visit of the *USS Sampson*, the first U.S. warship visit to New Zealand in more than 30 years. This strengthening of the relationship has been building since New Zealand's commitment of military forces to Afghanistan in 2003. In the view of many observers, this return to close cooperation puts to rest past differences over nuclear policy.

Background

New Zealand and the United States have common historical roots as settler societies of the British Empire. New Zealand, also known to New Zealanders as Aotearoa or “the land of the long white cloud,” was first settled by the Polynesian-Maori people around the tenth century. Dutch navigator Abel Tasman discovered the western coast of New Zealand in 1642, but it was English Captain James Cook who, over three expeditions in 1769, 1773, and 1777, circumnavigated and mapped the islands. The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, between the British Crown and indigenous Maori Chiefs, serves as the basis for relations between the Maori and European communities. The British Monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, is the constitutional head of state of New Zealand. Her representative, the Governor General, acts on the advice of the New Zealand Prime Minister's Cabinet. In 1893, New Zealand gave all women the right to vote. New Zealand attained Dominion Status in 1907 and gained full political independence from Britain under the 1947 Statute of Westminster Adoption Act.

Politics and Elections

New Zealand is a unicameral, mixed-member-proportional (MMP), parliamentary democracy. MMP was introduced in New Zealand in 1996. Under MMP, Members of Parliament come from both single-member electorates and from party lists leading to a parliament where a party's share of the seats roughly mirrors its share of the overall party vote. New Zealand does not have a state or provincial level of government. The current government is a coalition of the Labour Party, led by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and the New Zealand First Party, led by Winston Peters. This coalition has a confidence and supply agreement with the Green Party and has been in power since October 2017.

The opposition center-right National Party is led by Simon Bridges. The next election is due by November 2020.

Figure 1. New Zealand in Brief

<p>Government: A constitutional monarchy with approximately 120-seat unicameral parliament.</p> <p>Head of State: Queen Elizabeth II represented by Governor-General Dame Patricia Lee Reddy</p> <p>Head of Government: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern</p> <p>Natural resources: natural gas, iron ore, sand, coal, timber, hydropower, gold, limestone</p> <p>Natural hazards: earthquakes</p> <p>Terrain: Mountainous and plains [41% pasture, 31% forest].</p> <p>Area: About the size of Colorado</p> <p>Population: 4.5 million with 0.8% growth rate (2018)</p> <p>Ethnic groups: European 71%, Maori 14%, Asian 11%, Pacific Islander 8% (2013) [could identify with more than one group]</p> <p>Exports: <u>Products</u> Dairy, meat, wood, fruit, oil, wine. <u>Markets</u> China 22.4%, Australia 16.4%, U.S. 9.9%, Japan 6.1%. (2017)</p> <p>GDP: <u>Per capita</u> \$39,000 ppp. <u>Sectors</u> Ag. 5.7%, industry 21.5%, services 72.8% with 3% growth (2017 est.)</p>	
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Source: CIA World Factbook and the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Christchurch Massacre

A 28-year-old Australian man, who has been described as a white supremacist, attacked the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand, on March 15, 2019. Fifty-one people were killed in the attacks. Following the attacks, Prime Minister Ardern reportedly told President Trump that the best way to show support in the wake of the attacks would be to have “sympathy and love for all Muslim communities.”

Defense and Foreign Policy

In part because New Zealand is a small nation, New Zealand officials place much emphasis on multilateral processes and institutions. They also place emphasis on regional economic institutions, and Australia and the United States figure prominently in New Zealand's national security affairs. New Zealand's commitment of regular troops and other assistance in support of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamiyan Province, Afghanistan, in 2003 demonstrated, according to some observers, New Zealand's value not only in political and diplomatic terms but also as a military partner in the field. New Zealand also demonstrated such support through its deployment of military trainers in Iraq.

New Zealand released a Strategic Defence Policy Statement in July 2018 that one report called “more bold and frank in terms of the Government's foreign policy position, and its singling out of countries, than anything a New Zealand

government has released in recent years.” The Policy Statement observes that “As Pacific island countries’ relationships with non-traditional partners continue to develop, traditional partners such as New Zealand and Australia will be challenged to maintain influence.” Specifically, the Policy Statement notes that “China’s more confident assertion of its interests has at times raised tensions with neighbouring states and with the United States.” The statement drew objections from China but was defended by New Zealand First Party leader Peters.

Bilateral Relations with the United States

The gradual return of close security cooperation between the United States and New Zealand since 2003 has helped forge a new security partnership between the two countries. The two nations have fought together in many wars and conflicts and established the Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) alliance in 1951. During the mid-1980s the United States suspended its alliance commitments to New Zealand as a result of differences over nuclear policy, stemming from New Zealand legislation that made it nuclear free and the United States’ policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons on U.S. Navy ships.

The Wellington Declaration of 2010 was a key turning point in United States-New Zealand relations. After 2010, the United States and New Zealand agreed to emphasize common interests and values, including the importance of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, rather than let differences over nuclear policy define the relationship. The Wellington Declaration established in a public way a new strategic partnership. It stated that “our shared democratic values and common interests” will guide the two nations’ collective action. The agreement pointed to the need to address regional and global challenges including enhanced dialogue on regional security, practical cooperation in the Pacific, Foreign Ministers meetings, political-military discussions, and cooperation on climate change, nuclear proliferation, and international extremism.

The 2012 Washington Declaration on Defense Cooperation further opened the way for enhanced strategic dialogue and defense cooperation. This positive momentum has been sustained by subsequent developments. In July 2018, New Zealand announced the purchase of four Boeing P-8A Poseidon aircraft.

Regional Relations

New Zealand enjoys very close relations with Australia, its neighbor across the Tasman Sea. These trans-Tasman ties are based in the two nations’ common origin as British colonies. These ties were strengthened as the two nations fought together in the Australian New Zealand Army Corp (ANZAC) in places like Gallipoli in World War I. This relationship evolved into what is known as the ANZAC spirit of close defense cooperation. The close economic, people-to-people, and cultural ties, as well as a shared love of rugby, cricket, and other sport, further reinforce bilateral relations between these two states.

New Zealand has played a key role in promoting peace, stability, development, and the environment in the South Pacific. It played a key role in promoting security in Timor-Leste, Bougainville, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. New Zealand is working with Australia and other nations in the South Pacific on the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)-Plus. New Zealand also provides disaster assistance to the region as it did to Fiji following the February 2016 Cyclone Winston. New Zealand supports the Pacific Island’s Forum and sustainable economic development, including for sustainable fisheries in the South Pacific. New Zealand has protested Japan’s decision to resume whaling in the Southern Ocean, and has set aside 15% of New Zealand’s Exclusive Economic Zone for the Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary.

In February 2018 Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern’s government announced a reset of New Zealand’s policy toward the Pacific that is driven in part by a view that “the Pacific has become an increasingly contested strategic space, under which New Zealand has to work harder to maintain our positive influence.” In discussing the Pacific reset, Foreign Minister Winston Peters called for a reenergized approach and stated, “There has never been a time since 1945 when Australia and New Zealand need to work together more closely in the Pacific.”

Relations with China

Trade is at the core of New Zealand’s relationship with China. New Zealand’s goods exports to China quadrupled since the signing of a bilateral Free Trade Agreement between the two countries in 2008. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited New Zealand in March 2017 reportedly to discuss strengthening trade through the FTA upgrade and the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative which is now known as the Belt and Road Initiative. On March 27, 2017, New Zealand signed a memorandum of understanding with China on China’s OBOR initiative. In 2015, New Zealand became a founding member of the China-led Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

Diplomatic relations between New Zealand and China have become strained over the past year, in part due to rising concerns about Chinese influence in New Zealand and its region. In November 2018 New Zealand’s Government Communications Security Bureau stopped a New Zealand telecommunications provider from using Huawei equipment. Prime Minister Ardern made her first official visit to China in April 2019. During the visit the two nations agreed to move forward with negotiations to upgrade their bilateral free trade agreement which went into effect in 2008. A key challenge for New Zealand will be to balance growing concerns over China’s influence in the South Pacific and in New Zealand with China’s role as New Zealand’s largest export destination.

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