



New Zealand

Congress has taken an interest in how the United States and New Zealand work together 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 2016 visit of the USS *Sampson*, the first U.S. warship to visit New Zealand in more than 30 years. More recently, the Arleigh Burke-class Destroyer USS *Howard* visited Wellington in 2021. This strengthening of relations has been building since New Zealand's commitment of military forces to Afghanistan in 2003. New Zealand is a member of the Five Eyes intelligence group along with the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Many believe this return to close cooperation has put 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. New Zealand attained Dominion Status in 1907 and gained full political independence from Britain under the 1947 Statute of Westminster Adoption Act. In 1893, New Zealand became the first self-governing country to grant all women the right to vote.

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 in which a party's share of the seats roughly mirrors its share of the overall vote. New Zealand does not have a state or provincial level

of government. The current government, first elected in 2017 and reelected in October 2020, is led by Prime

<p>Government: A constitutional monarchy with approximately 120-seat unicameral parliament.</p> <p>Head of State: Queen Elizabeth II represented by Governor-General Cindy Kiro</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: 5 million with 1.6% growth rate (2019)</p> <p>Ethnic groups: European 70.2%, Maori 16.5%, Asian 15.1%, Pacific 8.1%. (2018) [Many identify with more than one group.]</p> <p>Exports: <u>Products</u> Dairy, meat, wood, fruit. <u>Markets</u> China 27.9%, Australia 13.6%, U.S. 10.9%, Japan 5.9%. (2020)</p> <p>GDP: Per capita \$51,468 ppp with 2.8% growth (2022 est.)</p>	
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Minister Jacinda Ardern of the Labour Party. Ardern's government, with 65 of 120 seats in parliament, is the first to rule in its own right since the institution of MMP. The opposition center-right National Party is led by Chris Luxon. Ardern achieved high approval ratings as a result of her government's effective handling of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic as well as her earlier handling of the Christchurch massacre. In 2019, a 28-year-old Australian described as a white supremacist attacked the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch and killed 51 people. Following the attacks, parliament passed legislation outlawing military style semi-automatic weapons and assault rifles.

Climate Change

In 2019, the Ardern government passed the Zero Carbon Act with cross-party support and committed New Zealand to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050. Methane from agriculture and waste, which represents over 40% of New Zealand's emissions, was exempt from the zero emissions goal, but has a separate reduction target of 24%-47% below 2017 levels by 2050. In December 2020, New Zealand declared a climate emergency and committed the government to become carbon neutral by 2025. New Zealand has a renewable electricity target of 100% by 2035.

Defense and Foreign Policy

In part because New Zealand is a small nation, officials place much emphasis on multilateral processes and regional economic institutions, and Australia and the United States figure prominently in New Zealand's security affairs. New Zealand's commitment of regular troops and other assistance in support of the Provincial Reconstruction Team

in Bamiyan Province, Afghanistan, from 2003 to 2013 demonstrated, according to some observers, New Zealand's value as a diplomatic and military partner to the United States. New Zealand also demonstrated such support through its deployment of military trainers in Iraq. New Zealand's 2021 Defence Assessment views strategic competition and climate change as New Zealand's two principle challenges and prioritizes a focus on the Pacific. It also views China's rise as the major driver of increasing strategic competition in the region. In its 2018 Strategic Defense Policy Statement, which one report called "more bold and frank in terms of the Government's foreign policy position ... than anything a New Zealand government has released in recent years," the New Zealand government 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 neighboring states and with the United States."

In late February, the Adern government condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and joined international partners in imposing export controls on trade with Russia and travel bans on Russian officials, as well as offering humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.

Bilateral Relations with the United States

The gradual return of close 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, along with Australia, 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 a conflict between 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. ships.

The Wellington Declaration of 2010 was a key turning point in United States-New Zealand relations. In the Declaration, the United States and New Zealand agreed to emphasize the importance of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, rather than let differences over nuclear policy define the relationship. The 2012 Washington Declaration further opened the way for enhanced strategic dialogue and cooperation. This momentum has been sustained by subsequent U.S. and New Zealand administrations. In 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 origins 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 ties.

New Zealand has played a key role in promoting peace, stability, economic development, and the environment in the South Pacific, including in Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. New Zealand worked with Australia and South Pacific nations on the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)-Plus, a free trade accord, which came into force in December 2020. New Zealand provides disaster assistance to the region and supports the Pacific Islands Forum, the region's principal multilateral organization. New Zealand has also has set aside 15% of its Exclusive Economic Zone for the Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary.

New Zealand has a trade-dependent economy and is a supporter of free and open trade. China is New Zealand's largest trade partner. New Zealand has a Closer Economic Relationship agreement with Australia, a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China, and is a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group among other trade relationships. New Zealand ratified the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement in November 2021 and signed an FTA with the United Kingdom in February 2022.

Relations with China

A key challenge for New Zealand is balancing concerns over China's growing influence with its role as New Zealand's largest export destination. New Zealand's goods exports to China quadrupled since the signing of a bilateral FTA in 2008. In 2015, New Zealand became a founding member of the China-led Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In 2017, New Zealand signed a memorandum of understanding with China on China's Belt and Road Initiative. More recently, diplomatic relations between New Zealand and China have become somewhat strained, in part due to rising concerns about Chinese influence in New Zealand and the region. New Zealand concerns about the human rights situations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang have also complicated relations. A Royal New Zealand Navy frigate joined the United Kingdom's carrier strike group, centered on the HMS Queen Elizabeth, as it sailed through the South China Sea in October 2021.

Congressional Interest

Congress has focused on New Zealand's role as a like-minded democracy, regional trade partner, and ally. Congressional interest is also demonstrated through the Congressional Friends of New Zealand Caucus. Proposed legislation has emphasized the United States' and New Zealand's shared values of democracy, respect for human rights, adherence to the rule of law and a shared commitment to free and fair trade and the international rules-based trading system. Some Members of Congress have also recognized New Zealand's role as a key partner of the United States in Oceania and urged coordination with New Zealand as a regional ally and partner.

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