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NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY 2023-2028 AND DEFENCE POLICY AND STRATEGY STATEMENT 2023

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Introduction

New Zealand is a small island nation situated off the south-eastern coast of Australia and in the south-western Pacific Ocean. New Zealand consists of 700 small islands in addition to two main landmasses called North Island and South Island. The country is situated within the Pacific Ring of Fire and is consequently prone to natural disasters like earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Historically, it was in the 11th and 12th century that Polynesian tribes settled in New Zealand and developed their distinct Māori culture. In 1769, Captain James Cook, a British explorer, entered New Zealand and became the first European to do so. Through a series of historical events, in 1841, New Zealand became a British colony. In the coming years, there was continuous alteration between the Māori tribe and the British government and large amounts of tribal lands were confiscated. New Zealand gained statutory independence in 1947.

Today, the demographics of New Zealand consist of majority of the population being of European descent and Māori making up the largest minority population, followed by Asians and Pasifika. As a result of this historical background and current demographic trends, the culture and society of New Zealand is majorly shaped by the Māori and British settlers. The official languages of New Zealand also reflect this diversity; English, Māori and New Zealand Sign Language. The official documents of New Zealand are in both English and Māori languages and ‘New Zealand Government’ is also known as ‘Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa’.

History of New Zealand’s Foreign Policy

In June 1945, New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser played an important role in the UN Charter negotiations in the San Francisco Conference. He advocated for adequate representation of small states and their right to participate as equals. Fraser was in strong opposition to the veto power of the permanent members of the UN Security Council; however, his efforts proved in vain. He sponsored, with greater success, the concept of trusteeship, or international oversight of the administration of colonies, which subsequently played an important part in decolonization.¹

¹ Green, M. (2012, Jun 20). Foreign Policy and Diplomatic Representation – Diplomacy 1945-1960. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/foreign-policy-and-diplomatic-representation/page-4>.

New Zealand followed the strategy of ‘Alliance Diplomacy’ between the 1950s and 1970s. While New Zealand’s post- War governments emphasized collective security through the UN, they also felt the need for robust bilateral security arrangements.² New Zealand’s foreign policy was, to a very great extent, consumed by fears of military aggression and threats from South-East Asia. By 1967, New Zealand had posts in India, Indonesia, Hong Kong and South Vietnam, performing a range of political, security, economic, aid and consular functions.³

During the 1970s, many countries across the Pacific Ocean were securing their independence. Resultantly, New Zealand established postings in many of these newly independent islands. New Zealand’s posts in the Pacific islands primarily provided aid and grants for political development. Some of the fundamental factors that influence a country’s foreign policy include geographical location, resource endowments, economy, history and size of a country. In line with these factors, New Zealand’s foreign policy is conscious of the country’s size and geographical location.

In 1980, New Zealand’s Prime Minister Robert Muldoon made a statement which summed up New Zealand’s foreign policy approach; ‘our foreign policy is trade.’ However, central to New Zealand’s strategy is its dedication to addressing climate change and promoting sustainability in the Indo-Pacific.⁴ Its proactive stance on climate action and environmental protection resonates strongly, especially considering the vulnerability of the Pacific Island nations.⁵

History of New Zealand’s Security Strategy

During the 60s and the 70s, the concept of security was largely overlooked in New Zealand’s foreign policy imaginations. The aspects of security were missing from the foreign policy orientations of New Zealand. On the heels of a publicly unpopular contribution to the Vietnam War, greater public intolerance of particularly French nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean, and a changed international outlook (from what Dalby refers to as “bipolar geopolitics” to “anti-geopolitics”), the 1972 Kirk government initiated a drastic reversal of New Zealand’s security

² Green, M. (2012, Jun 20). Foreign Policy and Diplomatic Representation – Alliance diplomacy, 1950s to 1970s. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/foreign-policy-and-diplomatic-representation/page-5>.

³ Id.

⁴Tan, A.C. (2023, Sep 14). Better Late than Never: South Korea and New Zealand in the South Pacific. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/better-late-than-never-south-korea-and-new-zealand-in-the-south-pacific/>

⁵ Id.

policy.⁶ In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, New Zealand once again re-negotiated the terms of its relationship with the USA and signed the Wellington Declaration of 2010 and Washington Declaration of 2012, both of which focus on strengthening security and defence relations between the two countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

While the COVID-19 pandemic and trade war between USA and China have not changed New Zealand's basic policy towards China, they have forced New Zealand to attempt to diversify trade and diplomatic relations.⁷ The Defence Assessment of 2021 demonstrated that Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's government regards strategic competition between China and the United States as a threat to New Zealand's security.⁸ As a result of this, New Zealand has started to recognize China as a major security threat and is attempting to decrease its economic reliance on it.

In July, 2018, New Zealand's Strategic Defence Policy Statement pinpointed its 'Indo-Pacific partners reinforcing the rules-based order' as being Australia, India, Japan and USA.⁹ This official document also explains in great detail the threats posed by China, such as Maritime Silk Road push into the Indian Ocean, militarization of the South China Sea and the push into Pacific Islands.¹⁰ Over shared concerns about China, New Zealand began seeking out cooperation and collaboration with the four powers of the QUAD.

New Zealand's diplomatic approach, often marked by a willingness to mediate and facilitate dialogue, positions the country as a trusted interlocutor among larger powers and smaller nations, fostering an environment of cooperation and shared responsibility.¹¹ With a focus on Pacific Island nations, New Zealand plays a significant role in promoting regional resilience against environmental challenges and socioeconomic disparities.¹² Through aid programs, development initiatives, and capacity-building efforts, New Zealand reinforces its commitment to equitable

⁶ Iati, I. & Patman, R.G. (Eds.) (2017). *New Zealand and the World: Past, Present and Future*. World Scientific.

⁷ Peng, L. (2022, Jan 28). New Zealand's Subtly Shifting Foreign Policy. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/new-zealands-subtly-shifting-foreign-policy/>.

⁸ Id.

⁹ Scott, D. (2020, Mar 17). New Zealand Picks Up on the Indo-Pacific. *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, 502. https://www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/apb502_0.pdf.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Tan, A.C. (2023, Sep 14). Better Late than Never: South Korea and New Zealand in the South Pacific. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/better-late-than-never-south-korea-and-new-zealand-in-the-south-pacific/>.

¹² Id.

growth and stability in the region.¹³

New Zealand’s National Security Strategy 2023-2028 Document and Defence Policy and Strategy Statement 2023

Official documents on the national defense strategy of New Zealand start with a remembrance of the victims and survivors of the 2019 Christchurch Mosque shootings that claimed 51 lives. The foreword, authored by Chris Hipkins, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, highlights how much of New Zealand’s policies, politics and strategies have changed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. He also mentions the need for close collaboration with other Pacific nations, Australia and other partners to build a resilient and secure ecosystem. The National Security Strategy 2023-2028 is a first-of-its-kind document. It promotes a focused and integrated approach, emphasizing the prevention of threats through early action.

The document seeks to reflect New Zealand’s unique geography, demographics, history and values as a basis for navigation of an increasingly disrupted world. The document envisions a secure and resilient New Zealand and a free, open and democratic society for future generations. Some areas of focus include:

- People, land and waters
- Independence and freedom of action
- Democracy and social fabric
- National economic security
- Physical and digital connections to the world
- Peaceful and resilient Pacific
- Rules-based international system in the Indo-Pacific and beyond
- Partnership networks in and out of New Zealand

¹³ Id.

The efforts of the New Zealand government to secure themselves against external threats include extended focus on three specific outcomes- acting early to prevent national security threats; working together to foster collective understanding and action against such threats; and leading an integrated approach. The Program of Action ascribes a timeline of two years in order to work on these priorities.

Part I of National Security Strategy 2023-2028

The security outlook of New Zealand starts with a highlight of current threats and issues. These include climate change, innovation of disruptive technology, frequent wars between nations and sections of society, dependence on cooperative landscape etc. A rules-based international system is fundamental to the security of New Zealand. Strategic competition emerges out of the dynamic between those countries seeking to challenge and reshape aspects of the current rules-based order and those that seek to uphold it. With the intensification of strategic competition, New Zealand stands to face increased unpredictability in an increasingly contested international landscape.

Presently, there are some issues that can force geopolitical change. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the war between Israel and Hamas, and China's increased aggression can play a significant role in altering geographies. New Zealand also places emphasis on the wider Indo-Pacific region and believes that even small conflicts can have unpredictable consequences on global supply chains and trade. Furthermore, as the Indo-Pacific as a whole is heads towards fragmentation, New Zealand remains committed to working closely with a range of partners to preserve an open, inclusive, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

The section on the Security Outlook of the defence strategy document also highlights transboundary and internal challenges like terrorism, espionage, challenges to democracy, among others. The principles guiding the defence strategy of New Zealand include 'fostering improvement', 'being ethical and fair' and 'acting with insight and understanding'.

The Program of Action sets out two major system-level initiatives and government actions over the next two years. These include the establishment of New Zealand's National Centre for Research Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism as well as increased

investment in intelligence agencies that undertake critical work in preventing and countering terrorism. The Government has also enhanced its capacity to help protect New Zealand's information infrastructure from cyber-attacks and commissioned new projects to address emerging national security issues like disinformation.

New Zealand has also increased investment in critical defence capabilities, including upgrading the ANZAC frigates and introducing the P8-A Poseidon fleet. New Zealand also seeks to establish a Pacific National Security and Intelligence Coordinator for information sharing and publish updated National Security Intelligence Priorities.

New Zealand's closest partner and only formal ally is Australia. New Zealand has strong bilateral relationships with Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as they share a deep history and liberal democratic values. Through intelligence sharing as part of the Five Eyes and broader defence and security cooperation with these partners, New Zealand receives access to information, tools, and capabilities that have a legitimate impact in keeping them secure. New Zealand's wider region is the Indo-Pacific, locating New Zealand in a larger ecosystem of nations and regions that include East Asia, the Pacific, the Indian sub-continent, and the Pacific Rim. New Zealand has a long history of security cooperation and engagement in the Indo-Pacific. It remains committed to ASEAN centrality and working together with partners to preserve an open, inclusive, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

Part II of National Security Strategy 2023-2028

The twelve core national security issues that most directly impact New Zealand's national security interests, and the focus of its security strategies are:

- Strategic competition and challenges to the rules-based international system
- Emerging, critical and sensitive technologies
- Disinformation
- Foreign interference and espionage
- Terrorism and violent extremism
- Transnational organized crime

- Economic security
- Pacific resilience and security
- Maritime security
- Border security
- Cyber security
- Space security

For many of these issues, the international national security community has established robust policies and strategies. This overarching National Security Strategy complements these policies and strategies and will help update them over time. There are other issues which can be termed as ‘connected’ issues. These may not have a direct impact on national security but can have an indirect impact because of their magnitude and scale. Some examples of these connected issues include climate change, biosecurity and human health, social instability, inequality, debt etc.

For New Zealand, addressing strategic competition and challenges to the rules-based international system include relying on all tools of statecraft and working closely with international partners. New Zealand’s approach to building readiness and resilience at home is addressed through several policy areas, such as work to counter foreign interference, which can be exacerbated by strategic competition. Internationally, the government supports international institutions, systems, and international law, rules, and principles that reinforce their values and interests—such as the promotion of the rights and obligations enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and broader regimes.

The Government has set its sights on a long-term, strategic view to ensure New Zealand is prepared and responsive in assessing and managing emerging, sensitive, and critical technologies. Its approach is focused on enabling New Zealand and New Zealanders to maximise the benefits of technological innovation, while managing any threats and disruptions it might bring. The Government is seeking to support a whole-of-society approach to build understanding and resilience against the harms of disinformation. This is led primarily by those outside government in recognition of the need to maintain openness and uphold the right to freedom of expression.

The Countering Foreign Interference Work Programme focuses on managing risks to democratic

institutions and civil and political rights, to economic prosperity (especially protecting critical infrastructure and sensitive technology) and building resilience to economic coercion. New Zealand's Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy focuses on bringing the nation together to protect all New Zealanders, with prevention as a priority. New Zealand's approach to preventing and countering all forms of terrorism and violent extremism is based on the Treaty of Waitangi, human rights, open government norms, and the principle of proportionality.

The New Zealand Transnational Organised Crime Strategy 2020-2025 provides the framework for a coordinated response to prevent and disrupt TNOC that includes government, private sector, communities, and international partners. The Strategy coordinates a range of initiatives aimed at bringing stakeholders together, increasing our understanding and awareness of TNOC, and aligning priorities to disrupt TNOC threats impacting New Zealand. New Zealand's economic security depends on the actions of individuals and businesses across New Zealand. Central and local government can support this through building the community's awareness of, and capability to manage the problem.

At the core of New Zealand's Pacific Resilience Approach is partnership. How New Zealand works with Pacific partners continues to be as important as what they do. The national security community will continue to listen to and reflect on what their Pacific partners are telling them of their experiences, share their own challenges and perspectives, coordinate across issues and work together to build shared resilience to the pressures their region faces. New Zealand's Maritime Security Strategy articulates how New Zealand delivers maritime security for their nation and region. This requires that the right people, processes, policies, systems, and laws are in place to prevent and reduce harm from threats. The Government has allocated funding to build this capability.

In January 2021, the New Zealand government established the Border Executive Board to strengthen existing collaboration of border agencies and to develop a Border Sector Strategy. Border security is supported by the Transnational Organised Crime Strategy and the Maritime Security Strategy. Within New Zealand, managing border security relies on agencies working together. Initiatives such as the Joint Border Analytics Team and the interagency Integrated Targeting and Operations Centre bring staff together from all border agencies to share information

and expertise, identify and target risks to their borders, and disrupt and reduce threats.

Since the publication of New Zealand's Cyber Security Strategy, 2019, the government has undertaken a range of measures to influence the cyber security environment and enhance New Zealand cyber security capability. The bulk of cyber security capacity development and efforts occurs outside government, with individuals and private organisations working to protect their data, networked devices, and infrastructure. Government work is currently focused on strengthening the cyber resilience of critical infrastructure; improving cyber incident reporting, access to information, and support available to New Zealand organisations and individuals; lifting collaboration between government and industry; and developing a strong and capable cyber workforce. New Zealand needs to ensure it has the right cyber capabilities and tools to be able to advance its national security interests.

Defence Policy and Strategy Statement, 2023

This policy statement provides guidance to the Ministry of Defence as well as the Defence forces of New Zealand. The statement builds upon Defence Assessment 2021 which identified two significant and compounding challenges with the greatest impact on New Zealand's defence interests over the medium-to-long term: strategic competition and the impacts of climate change. The primary goal of the policy and strategy document is to contribute to the promotion and protection of New Zealand's four key interests:

- Secure, sovereign and resilient New Zealand
- Secure, stable and resilient region
- Collective security through a strong network of partners
- Strong and effective international rules-based system

Defence forces will act early and deliberately to shape New Zealand's security environment, focusing in particular on supporting security in and for the Pacific. This proactive approach means that the weight of the Defence effort needs to shift to more actively shaping New Zealand's security environment in order to prevent conflict and activities that threaten their interests. This also reflects the importance placed in Australia. The Pacific is also where New Zealand can often have the

greatest material impact: Pacific stability, security and resilience are connected to, and directly impact, their own security.

The three main objectives of this policy document are:

- Promoting and protecting New Zealand’s defence interests in the region, particularly in the Pacific.
- Contributing globally to collective security efforts that promote and protect New Zealand’s interests and values, and
- Responding to events in New Zealand and globally whenever required

The strategy to promote and protect their interests in a more pro-active and deliberate manner is expressed through three interrelated themes:

- Understand the Defence has increased awareness of strategic and operating environments.
- Partner the defence improves and enhances its partnerships within and beyond New Zealand to support collective security approaches to shared challenges, and maximise interoperability with security partners, and
- Act the Defence is more ready and able to promote and protect New Zealand’s interests by shaping their security environment with a credible, combat-capable, deployable force able to operate across the spectrum of operations (from humanitarian assistance through to combat).

New Zealand’s security is deeply connected with Australia. Australia is their only formal ally, and they work together in the Pacific region as well as the wider Indo-Pacific region because of their shared interests. New Zealand also has strong cultural and historical ties with the Pacific-island countries. The Defence supports New Zealand’s overall involvement with Pacific regional architectures. This includes the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) as the premier regional organisation, alongside more specific arrangements such as the South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting (SPDMM), the Defence Secretaries’ Dialogue, Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), and Pacific Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group (Pacific Quads).

The United States is a crucial defence partner for New Zealand, with defence engagement deepening over the past decade since the signing of the Wellington and Washington declarations in 2010 and 2012. New Zealand's relationships with Australia, the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada are part of the overall Five Eyes partnership, a critical grouping of countries that share fundamental values and interests. Defence derives enormous benefit from this partnership, including access to intelligence and defence capabilities, information technologies and military developments that would otherwise be unachievable. It is in New Zealand's interest to contribute to the effectiveness of this partnership.

New Zealand's relationships with Asia involve both strong bilateral partnerships, including with Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, India, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia, as well as multinational security mechanisms such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) and the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA – involving Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom). New Zealand has strong and active defence relationships with European states, conducted both bilaterally and through multilateral groupings, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union. These defence links are built on long-standing shared values and interests.

Way Forward

The world today is contending with a range of complex and disruptive security challenges. In order to thrive, New Zealand must remember their history and culture. Their participation in the international order started with advocating for equality of voices in international for a for smaller states. They also advocated against veto power for five permanent members of the UNSC. New Zealand's first National Security Strategy lays out a vision to help them navigate this dynamic security environment. It reinforces the need for them to be clear-eyed on risks, prepared for change, and to put in place the right capability to be effective. The National Security Strategy embeds this approach for the long term. It underscores the need to raise awareness of national security issues and lays a foundation for all parts of New Zealand's society to work together to lift their resilience.

The way forward for New Zealand is close collaboration with internal entities like citizens, communities like the Māori, academia, media, private sector etc., and external partners like

Australia, USA, UK, Canada, Indo-Pacific, multilateral organizations like UN and EU etc. The Defence Policy and Strategy Statement 2023 will guide defence planning, operations, engagements, and investment in order to ensure that the defence is fit-for-purpose in an increasingly challenging and complex world.

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