Foreign Affairs, Defence and Veterans

National’s foreign affairs and defence policy is grounded in the interests and values of New Zealanders. We believe that everything we do on the global stage should serve our national interests and uphold our core values.

National is committed to expanding international opportunities for New Zealanders and businesses while protecting human rights, promoting inclusivity, and advancing democracy, freedom, and security. We support an independent foreign policy that enhances our security, grows trade partnerships in line with our values, and asserts our beliefs alongside our traditional partners.

National supports a strong, combat-ready, interoperable Defence Force able to keep New Zealand safe, protect our Exclusive Economic Zone, and fulfil our global security and humanitarian responsibilities while representing the values of freedom and democracy we hold dear.

The commitment and sacrifices made by New Zealand’s brave servicemen and women deserve not just gratitude, but tangible support. Sadly, many veterans feel undervalued and overlooked. National is committed to honouring the sacrifice and service of veterans while ensuring they receive the care, recognition, and support they deserve.

Foreign affairs

Uncertain times

The unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia has marked a significant shift in geopolitics threatening a return to a power-based system of international relations rather than one based on rules and norms.

It is crucial to acknowledge the broad support for Ukraine from Europe, the US, and like-minded nations, including New Zealand. Russia’s efforts to garner support from its partner nations have yielded mixed results, with few expressing outright support.

This reaffirms the enduring value of the rules-based system, and the protection of each country’s sovereignty, from which New Zealand has benefitted.

New Zealand’s influence

New Zealand must speak up and be clear about the values we live by. We must be bold in our defence of New Zealand’s interests, and vigilant in the protection of the values of democracy, freedom, and security.

National will build trust with New Zealanders that our foreign interactions are in their interest and will maintain confidence in the international community as a reliable proponent of our shared values.

New Zealand is a member of most multinational organisations, and we are a founding member of many. National will continue New Zealand’s history of constructive engagement, working to uphold our values and rules-based system.
New opportunities

National will look to strengthen relationships around the world while striving to optimise those we already have. We firmly believe Australia is New Zealand's most important partner. There is no other relationship which is more comprehensive. The Closer Economic Relations (CER) agreement is now 40 years old. The Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997 is 26 years old. Both of these significant arrangements between our countries need updating and possibly enhancing. National will seek to further that work.

New Zealand has a unique relationship with Pacific nations, with a rich history and deep present-day connection. National will work to enhance those relationships with a focus on trade, education and people movement.

National will continue to affirm the special relationship New Zealand has with the United Kingdom. Our shared history and culture continue to underpin our very strong bond. The British Sovereign is our head of state.

The United States and New Zealand have always shared values and enjoy enduring friendship. National will affirm the long and positive history between our two countries.

China is already a major world power and is the number one trading partner for 143 countries. China's future influence on the world means the rules-based system of engagement between sovereign nations is of vital importance, and we will continue to promote that.

As home to the world's largest population, India is a country with which we have many historical shared experiences. We will work to further develop this relationship while prioritising a Free Trade Agreement that would strengthen links with one of the world's fastest growing economies.

National Will

- Affirm Australia as New Zealand's only formal ally and work to enhance the CER Agreement and Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997.
- Continue our strong relationship with Australia and other Five Eyes partners, the United States, Canada and the UK.
- Work with like-minded nations to improve opportunities with our Pacific neighbours, with a focus on trade, education, and security.
- Improve New Zealand's diplomatic presence in India in recognition of our shared history, values, and India's growing influence in the world.
- Prioritise securing a Free Trade Agreement with India, as one of the world's fastest growing economies.
- Ensure our foreign aid budget is deployed effectively and in places where New Zealand can make the greatest contribution to humanitarian and economic development efforts.
- Continue supporting Ukraine's efforts to repel the Russian invasion and contribute to global efforts to secure a peaceful resolution to this conflict.
- Revaluate the merits and value of maintaining diplomatic relations with Russia.
- Consistently seek value for money in foreign affairs spending.
Defence

National will maintain a strong, highly-trained, combat-ready Defence Force to keep New Zealand safe while promoting our interests and values overseas.

Capability

Recent times have witnessed high attrition rates among uniformed personnel, primarily due to prolonged duties guarding Covid-managed isolation facilities. National supports the recent one-off funding boost for military salaries but recognises the need for ongoing attention to recruitment and retention, particularly in military trades.

National is committed to working closely with Defence Force leadership to explore innovative methods of attracting more New Zealanders to military service, emphasising the acquisition of valuable military trades, people skills, and leadership abilities that equip them for various roles in life.

For the New Zealand Defence Force do its job to the fullest potential of its personnel, it must have available equipment, ships, planes, vessels, vehicles and appropriate weaponry to the most reasonably affordable standard. National supports the current Defence Procurement Plan and recognises both the medium, and longer-term intentions of the Plan.

National will commit to the regular reviews, updates, and where appropriate, inclusions to the Plan.

Engagement

National strongly supports our defence cooperation with our only formal ally, Australia. Together we have a clear role in looking to provide security not only in our home countries but also across the Pacific.

New Zealand has one of the largest areas of maritime responsibility on the globe. To protect both the economic and security needs of New Zealand, as well as the interests of our Pacific neighbours, we need to work cooperatively with our Five Eyes and other like-minded partners.

To meet New Zealand’s international search and rescue obligations, we need the capability of the P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, currently being commissioned which were planned under the previous National Government.

The Five Eyes security pact with Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada has endured now more than 50 years. National strongly supports New Zealand’s commitment to this security pact.

Beyond Five Eyes in an ever-changing world, New Zealand must be open to working with other countries who share our values. National will make interoperability with the Five Eyes partners and other like-minded partners across all platforms a priority in future new purchases and upgrades.

Defence personnel join the military in the service of New Zealand and the values we share with others. This is routinely demonstrated through New Zealand’s engagement in practical diplomacy and peace through missions like the training of troops in Iraq in the fight against ISIS, in peacekeeping on the Sinai Peninsula, peacekeeping in South Sudan, and peacekeeping in the Korean demilitarised zone and, more recently, the deployment of New Zealand troops to the United Kingdom to support the training of Ukrainian troops for their continued fight against Russian aggression.

National will continue to ensure New Zealand plays an appropriate part in deployments promoting peace and stability alongside our international partners.
**New Challenges**

As the world and New Zealand adjusts or adapts to climate change, so too will the New Zealand Defence Force. This may include a more regular call for military assistance both here and throughout the Pacific at times of natural disaster.

National will facilitate a discussion with Emergency Management New Zealand and the New Zealand Defence Force as to how future responses may be deployed.

It would be our expectation that a clearer role for reservists’ personnel could be found, particularly reservists who have specialist skills. Both the New Zealand Defence Force and Emergency Management New Zealand have the expertise needed to best form policies for future reaction at times of natural disaster.

**Honouring and supporting our veterans**

Sadly, many returning veterans feel undervalued and overlooked. The commitment and sacrifice made by New Zealand’s servicemen and women deserves gratitude and tangible support.

According to a recent survey by Veterans Affairs New Zealand (VANZ), 92 per cent of respondents believe that New Zealand has a moral duty to support its service members and their families. However, only 37 per cent feel that New Zealand is living up to this obligation.

Compounding this concern is the troubling trend of increasing wait times for support through VANZ, leaving those in need without timely assistance.

In response, National will take a range of steps to show our genuine appreciation for veterans and acknowledge their service and sacrifice on behalf of New Zealanders. Our aim will be to foster a deeper sense of recognition, inclusivity, and support for veterans.

1. **Armed Forces Covenant**: In partnership with veterans, we will create a New Zealand Armed Forces Covenant, mirroring those in Australia, Canada, and the UK. This covenant will formally recognise veterans’ service and outline our duty to support them.

2. **Definition of a veteran**: National will review the definition of veteran to ensure it is appropriate for modern service and establish a voluntary register to identify veterans, ensuring they receive the resources and support they deserve.

3. **Support processing target**: To expedite support for veterans, we will introduce a target for VANZ to process requests within 20 working days of receiving all necessary information, ensuring timely assistance.
GET OUR COUNTRY BACK ON TRACK

☑ PARTY VOTE National

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