

(Politics aside) Do New Zealand's Defence Alliances remain as relevant today as when they were initiated.

The sacrifices that have been made by New Zealand soldiers during war is something that we must continue to remember and honour. What they experienced was an unbelievable tragedy that we would want never to be repeated. By acknowledging their loss and trauma, our remembrance of them on this day reminds us of the horrors of war and why we should do everything in our power to prevent such a thing happening to our people again.

One of the most significant ways we have attempted to prevent further bloodshed while ensuring safety and our way of life is through forming defence alliances. Today, in a world that seems so different to that of the world in 1918, we begin to ponder whether these past and current alliances are still relevant to our modern country. To do this we must take a closer look at our most prominent allies and why our relationship with them was formed, has changed, and what it tells us about the values and spirit of our country.

Our earliest alliance came from our settlement by Britain. We followed them through both World Wars with the policy of "Where she goes, we go; where she stands, we stand". Our 100,000 soldiers in World War One was a small number in the scale of the war but a huge number from our small country. Across the entire war, we made a mark in the British Army with many of the hardest fought battles such as the Gallipoli campaign. All this shows New Zealand's loyalty to our allies and our determination and strength - despite being small in size, New Zealand has never let our size define us, something we still refuse to do.

Following World War Two, New Zealand realised that we needed extra protection from a superpower with more influence in the Pacific. From here we turned to the United States and Australia, with whom we formed ANZUS. The treaty stated that should an attack on any of the countries take place they would work together to defeat the common enemy. This benefited New Zealand with its added protection, regular meetings, and the combined training of troops through the following decades. However, all this ended in the mid 1980's when a dispute over our firm No Nuclear Warships policy occurred. Despite having a security guarantee from the most powerful country in the world, the United States, New Zealand sacrificed this to stand by their beliefs.

It has always made sense that our closest ally is Australia. Geographically we are close, but we are also tied to them in so many other ways. Our British settlement and ANZAC relationship along with our similar attitudes and way of life mean that we have worked together in many fields. In terms of military contribution this has led to joint Anzac peacekeeping operations in Bougainville, East Timor, the Solomon Islands and Tonga. This reflects New Zealand's sense of responsibility to the region we live in.

There have been and continue to be a range of countries that we have been allied with, ANZAM, SEATO, the Five Power Defence Arrangements, United Nations, the Commonwealth and more. The benefit of these alliances extends beyond security. There is also access to policy makers in other countries which means our voice can be heard, access to technology and the experience of others. It also demonstrates positive international citizenship. These are all reasons that our defence alliances continue to be valuable.

So, in answer to the question this essay addresses, yes, forming defence alliances continues to be valid and valuable for New Zealand. As ANZAC Day approaches, we are reminded that any efforts that are intended to keep New Zealand and the rest of the world secure and free from the horror of war will always be important.

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