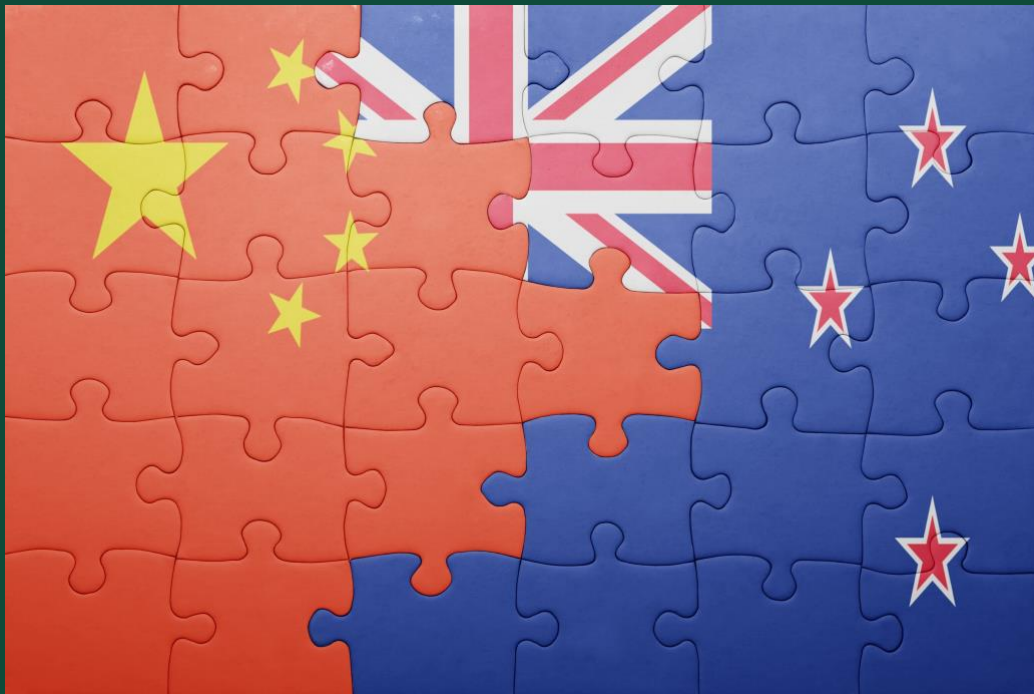


# **A Model Relationship? Chinese Media Coverage of New Zealand-China Relations**



**December 2021**

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Published by the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre  
Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington  
Wellington, New Zealand

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## **Executive summary**

New Zealand's relationship with China is one of its most important. It is also a relationship that has, in recent years, become more challenging to manage. When significant events occur that involve both New Zealand and China, New Zealand media sometimes quote Chinese media – the English language version of the Global Times is a common choice – to provide insight into how the issue is viewed in China. Despite this, how Chinese media present the New Zealand-China relationship to a domestic audience is a subject that has not been widely studied.

This report is intended to address that gap. It examines key themes in the coverage of the New Zealand-China relationship by three Chinese media outlets – the People's Daily Online (人民网), Xinhua Net (新华网) and the Global Times (环球网) – in the first six months of 2021.

It finds that New Zealand and China were depicted as engaged in a strong and mutually beneficial economic relationship. This was highlighted by the upgrade of the New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in January. The FTA upgrade was also used to contrast New Zealand's engagement with China with the more strained relations that China was experiencing with countries such as Australia.

New Zealand was portrayed as steadfastly pursuing an independent foreign policy informed by a dedication to its national interests. These interests were presented as served by maintaining close relations with China and resisting pressure, primarily from the United States and Australia, to take a more adversarial approach in its engagement with China.

New Zealand's relationship with China was at times presented as a model that other countries can learn from. Frequent contrasts were made between New Zealand's relationship with China and Australia's. Despite this, there were times when New Zealand was criticised for speaking out on issues such as human rights abuses in Xinjiang and the erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong. However, New Zealand's criticisms were often not made explicit, nor were the values that informed them.

Coverage in the media outlets examined for this report diverged significantly from how New Zealand media report on New Zealand-China relations and how New Zealanders, in general,

think about their country's engagement with China. This was especially so when it came to New Zealand's agency as an international actor, its national interests, and the concerns that it holds about China's behaviour. Such divergent interpretations of issues that are central to the relationship, in some regards, contradicts the notion of a resilient and mature relationship.

## Introduction

New Zealand's relationship with the People's Republic of China<sup>1</sup> is one of its most important. As the two countries approach 50 years of official diplomatic relations, China is New Zealand's largest trade partner, second-largest source (including Hong Kong) of foreign investment, largest source of international students<sup>2</sup> and a key source country for immigrants.<sup>3</sup> However, in recent years, as China has begun a 'new era' (新时代) under Xi Jinping (习近平), and competition between the United States – a major New Zealand partner - and China has intensified, the relationship between New Zealand and China has required increasingly careful management.

New Zealand's relationship with China is frequently reported and commented on in New Zealand media. In the first six months of 2021, key issues covered have included the New Zealand-China free trade agreement (FTA) upgrade,<sup>4</sup> the risks of overexposure to the Chinese market,<sup>5</sup> foreign interference,<sup>6</sup> New Zealand's relationship with the Five Eyes,<sup>7</sup> concerns about human rights abuses in Xinjiang<sup>8</sup> and the erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong.<sup>9</sup> New Zealanders

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<sup>1</sup> For brevity, the People's Republic of China will be referred to simply as China in the rest of this report.

<sup>2</sup> "Statistics," *New Zealand China Council* n.d., <https://nzchinacouncil.org.nz/statistics/>.

<sup>3</sup> "International migration: June 2020," *Stats NZ* 2020, <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/international-migration-june-2020>.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Manch, "New Zealand signs upgraded free trade agreement with China," *Stuff* 2021, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/124058012/new-zealand-signs-upgraded-free-trade-agreement-with-china>.

<sup>5</sup> Sam Sachdeva, "Mahuta warns against economic overexposure to China," *Newsroom* 2021, <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/mahuta-warns-against-economic-overexposure-to-china>.

<sup>6</sup> Craig McCulloch, "Chinese embassy dismisses claims spies infiltrating NZ universities," (2021), <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/445713/chinese-embassy-dismisses-claims-spies-infiltrating-nz-universities>.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Cooke, "Jacinda Ardern says New Zealand's new stance on Five Eyes isn't a backdown to China," *Stuff* 2021, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300281578/jacinda-ardern-says-new-zealands-new-stance-on-five-eyes-isnt-a--backdown-to-china>.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Manch, "Parliament unanimously declares 'severe human rights abuses' occurring against Uyghur in China," *Stuff* 2021, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/125034356/parliament-unanimously-declares-severe-human-rights-abuses-occurring-against-uyghur-in-china>. Manch, "New Zealand signs upgraded free trade agreement with China."

<sup>9</sup> Jamie Ensor, "Nanaia Mahuta, Australia's Marise Payne 'deeply concerned' about China's latest electoral changes in Hong Kong," *Newshub* 2021, <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/mahuta-warns-against-economic-overexposure-to-china>.

overwhelmingly support their country speaking up on such issues,<sup>10</sup> and New Zealand media follow how China reacts to it doing so.<sup>11</sup>

When significant events between New Zealand and China take place, New Zealand media frequently cite Chinese media – often the English language version of the *Global Times* - to give readers an idea of how events have been interpreted in China. However, despite the importance of the bilateral relationship to New Zealand and the recent challenges that need to be managed, little work has been done to understand how the Chinese media present the New Zealand-China relationship to a domestic audience.

This report is intended to modestly address that gap by examining key themes in Chinese media's portrayal of the New Zealand-China relationship. It is based on the analysis of more than 170 articles published in the first six months of 2021 on the People's Daily Online (人民网), Xinhua Net (新华网) and the *Global Times* (环球网) websites.

Its findings include the presentation of a strong, mutually beneficial relationship between New Zealand and China. New Zealand was portrayed as committed to an independent foreign policy. This was often characterised as a determination to maximise its national interests by maintaining strong relations with China in the face of pressure from the United States, Australia and other Western nations. The New Zealand-China relationship was, at times, depicted as a model relationship for Western countries, and often compared favourably to the Australia-China relationship. There were occasions, however, when New Zealand was criticised for raising issues that China deemed to be sensitive.

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<sup>10</sup> Jamie Ensor, "New Zealanders overwhelmingly back promoting human rights in China, even if it damages economic ties - research," *Newshub* 2021, <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2021/07/new-zealanders-overwhelmingly-back-promoting-human-rights-in-china-even-if-it-damages-economic-ties-research.html>. "Large majorities say China does not respect the personal freedoms of its people," Pew Research Center, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/06/30/large-majorities-say-china-does-not-respect-the-personal-freedoms-of-its-people/>.

<sup>11</sup> Henry Cooke, "China slams 'gross interference' from Jacinda Ardern and Scott Morrison's joint statement on Hong Kong and Xinjiang," (2021), <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300322188/china-slams-gross-interference-from-jacinda-ardern-and-scott-morrison-joint-statement-on-hong-kong-and-xinjiang>.

## Method

All articles published on the People's Daily Online, Xinhua Net and the Global Times between the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021 that covered or mentioned New Zealand-China relations were examined for this report. Articles were located using keyword searches within these websites. Google's function for searching within single websites<sup>12</sup> was also used to ensure that no articles were missed. The keywords and phrases searched, for example 'New Zealand' (新西兰) and 'China-New Zealand relations' (中新关系), returned a wide variety of articles, some of which did not relate to the topic. All articles that were not relevant to the relationship between New Zealand and China were then excluded and the remaining articles analysed.

The People's Daily Online (人民网) is the website of the People's Daily (人民日报), the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (中国共产党中央委员会).<sup>13</sup> Given the relationship between the Party and the People's Daily, scholars argue that examining the content of the People's Daily provides insight into the views and interests of the Party leadership on reported topics.<sup>14</sup>

The Global Times website (环球网) is the website of the Global Times newspaper (环球时报),<sup>15</sup> a 'semi-official'<sup>16</sup> tabloid news outlet under the People's Daily. Its website, which is 'under the auspices of the People's Daily Online and the Global Times' (由人民网和环球时报社联合主办), claims to be 'the first-choice information sharing platform for Chinese people wanting to understand the world and is one of the Chinese media outlets with the highest rates

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<sup>12</sup> For example 'site:people.cn "新西兰"'.

<sup>13</sup> Dong Dong, Tsan-Kuo Chang, and Dan Chen, "Reporting AIDS and the Invisible Victims in China: Official Knowledge as News in the People's Daily, 1986-2002," *Journal of health communication* 13, no. 4 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730802063793>.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Hoddie, "Minorities in the Official Media: Determinants of State Attention to Ethnic Minorities in the People's Republic of China," *Harvard international journal of press/politics* 11, no. 4 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X06293728>; Xinsheng Liu and Yi Edward Yang, "Examining China's Official Media Perception of the United States: a Content Analysis of People's Daily Coverage," *Chinese journal of political science* 20, no. 4 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-015-9340-8>.

<sup>15</sup> In the rest of this report the 'Global Times' refers to the Global Times website.

<sup>16</sup> Jianwei Wang and Xiaojie Wang, "Media and Chinese foreign policy," *The Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 86 (2014): 228, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2013.832523>.



of citation by foreign media’ (是中国人了解世界首选的信息分享平台,也是海外媒体转引率居高的中国媒体之一).<sup>17</sup>

Xinhua Net is the website of China’s state news agency, Xinhua News Agency (新华通讯社).<sup>18</sup> Xinhua News Agency is a key source of news in China. It wields considerable agenda-setting power ‘as government instructions often oblige news outlets to use only Xinhua copy’.<sup>19</sup>

### **Mutually Beneficial Economic Relationship**

New Zealand and China’s mutually beneficial economic relationship was a frequent topic of coverage in all three media outlets. This included basic examinations of the amount of trade between the two countries, particularly the high proportion of New Zealand’s total exports that China accounts for and its position as New Zealand’s largest trade partner.<sup>20</sup> Attention was also given to the importance of trade with China to individual industries in New Zealand, such as the seafood and marine product industries reported in the *Global Times*,<sup>21</sup> red meat<sup>22</sup> and education<sup>23</sup> industries documented on Xinhua Net, and specific companies such as Fonterra<sup>24</sup> and Zespri,<sup>25</sup> also on Xinhua Net.

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<sup>17</sup> "About Global Times. 关于环球网," 2021, <https://corp.huanqiu.com>.

<sup>18</sup> Xinhua also operates China’s largest

<sup>19</sup>Roger Creemers, "Evaluating Chinese media policy: Objectives and contradictions," in *The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Media*, ed. Gary Rawnsley and Ming-yeh Rawnsley (Abington, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 54.

<sup>20</sup> Huaiquan Lu and Lei Guo, "New Zealand’s Exports to China Account for More Than a Quarter of its Total Exports. 新西兰对华出口额占其出口总额比例超四分之一," *People’s Daily Online*, <http://australia.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0603/c408038-32121719.html>; Lei Guo and Huaiquan Lu, "New Zealand-China Business Summit explores new models for developing bilateral trade. 新西兰中国商业峰会探讨发展双边贸易新模式," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-05/03/c\\_1127405878.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-05/03/c_1127405878.htm).

<sup>21</sup> Jiaxin Hou, "Foreign media: After imports from two factories were suspended by Chinese customs, New Zealand is urgently seeking an explanation from China. 外媒：两家工厂被中国海关暂停进口后，新西兰紧寻中方说明," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/41sLtkA6Qxc>.

<sup>22</sup> Huaiquan Lu and Lei Guo, "New Zealand sets record for red meat exports in 2020, China remains the largest market. 新西兰 2020 年红肉出口创纪录 中国仍为最大市场," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-02/05/c\\_1127070352.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-02/05/c_1127070352.htm).

<sup>23</sup> Huaiquan Lu and Lei Guo, "New Zealand to allow 1,000 international students into the country. 新西兰将允许 1000 名留学生入境," *People’s Daily Online* 2021, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0114/c1002-32000079.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Lei Guo and Huaiquan Lu, "Fonterra: Chinese Demand Drives Profit Growth. 恒天然：中国需求推动利润增长," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2021-03/18/c\\_1127225565.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2021-03/18/c_1127225565.htm).

<sup>25</sup> Ye Li, "How imported fruits capture the appetite of Chinese consumers. 进口水果如何抓住中国消费者的胃," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://sh.xinhuanet.com/2021-04/07/c\\_139863252.htm](http://sh.xinhuanet.com/2021-04/07/c_139863252.htm).

Across all three outlets, the framing of the economic relationship was consistently positive. For example, a Xinhua Net story, which was also published on the People's Daily Online, reported on May's China Business Summit in Auckland and featured several upbeat claims about the trade relationship and perceptions of attendees. It was observed that 'participating politicians and businesspeople believe that since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, both economies have shown strong economic resilience and should strive to develop a new model of bilateral trade in the future' (与会政商界人士认为, 新冠疫情发生以来, 两国经济展现强大韧性, 未来应致力发展双边贸易新模式). Attendees were also said to be 'keenly aware of the importance of the Chinese market, have an optimistic attitude towards the Chinese market and to be increasing their investment in the Chinese market' (深知中国市场重要性, 对中国市场持乐观态度, 正加大对中国市场的投入).

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was reported as speaking of the importance of the Chinese market to New Zealand, noting that 'New Zealand and China have always maintained a healthy comprehensive strategic partnership' (新中两国始终保持着良好的全面战略伙伴关系) and that 'in the future, the New Zealand government will strengthen dialogue and cooperation with China in areas such as bilateral trade and epidemic prevention and control' (未来新西兰政府将在双边贸易、疫情防控等方面加强与中国的对话与合作). Comments from New Zealand Minister of Trade and Export Growth Damien O'Connor highlighted the impact of demand from China on New Zealand's dairy industry and Chinese Ambassador Wu Xi (吴玺), also spoke positively about the economic relationship.<sup>26</sup>

In comments reported in a People's Daily Online article, the Economic and Commercial Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in New Zealand (中国驻新西兰大使馆经济商务参赞), Huang Yuefeng (黄岳峰) struck a similarly positive tone. Huang was reported as speaking of the 'strong resilience' (强大韧性) of the New Zealand-China economic and trade relationship, and the 'positive signal' (积极信号) that the New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

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<sup>26</sup> Guo and Lu, "New Zealand-China Business Summit explores new models for developing bilateral trade. 新西兰中国商业峰会探讨发展双边贸易新模式.,"; Lei Guo and Huaiquan Lu, "New Zealand-China Business Summit explores new models for developing bilateral trade. 新西兰中国商业峰会探讨发展双边贸易新模式," *People's Daily Online* 2021, <http://australia.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0506/c408038-32095550.html>.

upgrade sends to the world about both countries' support for free trade, as well as highlighting China's position as New Zealand's largest trade partner and the efforts of both countries to find new ways and opportunities to cooperate.<sup>27</sup>

### **FTA Upgrade**

The FTA upgrade mentioned by Huang was signed on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2021 and was the subject of substantial, positive coverage by all three media outlets. It was presented as reflecting the strength of the New Zealand-China relationship, boding well for future improvements in the relationship and sending signals to the international community that New Zealand and China are committed to multilateralism and free trade. In addition to coverage written at the time, the FTA upgrade was also used, as will be described below, to demonstrate the strength of the New Zealand-China relationship relative to other countries, most notably Australia.

On the People's Daily Online, the upgrade was frequently presented as building on the successes of the New Zealand-China free trade agreement - which had, in the words of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Zhao Lijian (赵立坚), 'brought tremendous, real benefits to both countries and peoples' (给两国和两国人民带来巨大的、实实在在的利益)<sup>28</sup> - to further promote trade relations for the benefit of both countries. It was also portrayed as signalling New Zealand and China's commitment to supporting multilateralism and free trade and providing a platform to enhance the 'comprehensive strategic partnership' (全面战略伙

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<sup>27</sup> Huaiquan Lu and Zhengan Chen, "Chinese and New Zealand companies explore cooperation prospects for photovoltaic power generation. 中国和新西兰企业探讨光伏发电合作前景," *People's Daily Online* 2021, <http://australia.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0618/c408038-32134289.html>.

<sup>28</sup> "Foreign Ministry: Hope that the new US government has learnt the lessons of the Trump administration's erroneous China policies. 外交部：希望美新政府吸取特朗普政府对华错误政策的教训," *People's Daily Online* 2021, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0126/c1002-32012957.html>. Xiaoru Chen, "New Zealand Prime Minister says China-New Zealand FTA upgrade agreement has special significance. Foreign Ministry: We appreciate that and are happy to hear it! 新西兰总理说中新签署自贸协定升级协议意义特殊, 外交部：赞赏！高兴！," *People's Daily Online* 2021, <http://australia.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0127/c408038-32014128.html>.

伴关系) between the two countries.<sup>29</sup> These narratives were also present in both Xinhua Net<sup>30</sup> and Global Times coverage.<sup>31</sup>

In its coverage of the FTA upgrade, the Global Times presented several New Zealand voices, such as Catherine Beard, Executive Director of Export New Zealand, who said that some exporters would ‘let out a sigh of relief’ (松了一口气) at the signing, to illustrate the importance of the upgrade to New Zealand.<sup>32</sup> Chinese commentators, such as Chen Hong (陈弘), Director of the Australian Studies Centre at East China Normal University (华东师范大学澳大利亚研究中心), who called the upgrade ‘a godsend’ (及时雨) for New Zealand’s economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, also illustrated this point. Xinhua Net similarly made use of comments from New Zealanders, ranging from New Zealand Minister of Trade and Export

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<sup>29</sup> Qiaochu Li, "Ministry of Commerce: China and New Zealand sign FTA upgrade protocol. 商务部: 中国与新西兰签署自贸协定升级议定书," *People's Daily Online* 2021, <http://finance.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0126/c1004-32012794.html>; Qiaochu Li, "What are the new highlights of the China-New Zealand FTA? The Ministry of Commerce gives a detailed explanation. 中新自贸协定有哪些新亮点? 商务部详细解读来了," *People's Daily Online* 2021, <http://finance.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0126/c1004-32012828.html>; "Foreign Ministry: Hope that the new US government has learnt the lessons of the Trump administration's erroneous China policies. 外交部: 希望美新政府吸取特朗普政府对华错误政策的教训."; Chen, "New Zealand Prime Minister says China-New Zealand FTA upgrade agreement has special significance. Foreign Ministry: We appreciate that and are happy to hear it! 新西兰总理说中新签署自贸协定升级协议意义特殊, 外交部: 赞赏! 高兴!."

<sup>30</sup> Jiaxin Yu, "@You, the China-New Zealand FTA upgrade may bring about these changes... @你, 中新自贸协定升级可能带来这些变化..." *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-01/26/c\\_1127028302.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-01/26/c_1127028302.htm); "The first FTA that China signed with a developed country has been upgraded! 中国与发达国家签署的第一个自贸协定, 有了升级版!," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2021-01/26/c\\_1127026666.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2021-01/26/c_1127026666.htm); Jiaxin Yu, "Signed! China-New Zealand FTA upgrade will release more dividends of openness. 签了! 中国-新西兰自贸协定升级将释放更多开放红利," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/silkroad/2021-01/26/c\\_1127027275.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/silkroad/2021-01/26/c_1127027275.htm); Yong Yuan, "China-New Zealand FTA upgrade will bring convenience to businesses and benefit people. 中新自贸协定升级便企惠民," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-01/29/c\\_1127039083.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-01/29/c_1127039083.htm).

<sup>31</sup> Panpan Wang, "New Zealand Prime Minister says that the China-New Zealand FTA upgrade agreement is of great significance. Foreign Ministry: We appreciate that. 新西兰总理称中新签署自贸协定升级协议有重要意义 外交部: 赞赏," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/41fqHDMr4Cz>; "China and New Zealand sign FTA upgrade protocol. 中国与新西兰签署自贸协定升级议定书," 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/41fkObH7p7T>; Ao Xin, "Xin Ao: China-New Zealand FTA upgrade opens up new prospects for cooperation. 辛奥: 中新 FTA 升级开辟合作新前景," *Global Times* 2021, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/41gJQqy6vKF>; Mi Zhou, "Upgrade of FTA strengthens China-New Zealand open innovation collaboration platform. 升级自贸协定强化中新开放创新合作平台," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/41jCT64CUeN>.

<sup>32</sup> "Free trade agreement upgrade, China and New Zealand join hands to give ‘New Year gift.’ 升级自贸协定, 中新联手送上‘新年礼包’," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/41iQwFg23Qx>.

Growth, Damien O'Connor, to an Auckland office worker, to emphasise the importance of the upgrade to New Zealand's economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>33</sup>

Some coverage of the FTA upgrade advanced the notion that the relationship between New Zealand and China is one that other countries can learn from. For example, on the People's Daily Online, it was reported that 'analysis holds' (分析认为) that the upgrade will 'provide a constructive model for countries to cooperate to address the challenges of the pandemic, support multilateralism and free trade, and promote a stable recovery of the global economy' (为各国合作应对疫情挑战、支持多边主义和自由贸易、促进全球经济稳定复苏提供了建设性样板). Further, as two countries from different hemispheres with 'very different political systems and cultural backgrounds' (政治制度和文化背景差异很大), the upgrade was seen as 'setting an example for global economic and trade cooperation' (为全球经贸合作树立典范).<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, in an article in the Global Times,<sup>35</sup> it was stated that, like the initial signing of the FTA between New Zealand and China in 2008, the upgrade would have a 'demonstration effect' (示范效应). Shen Yujia (沈予加), an Associate Researcher at Sichuan University's School of International Relations (四川大学国际关系学院), argued that the FTA upgrade with New Zealand 'will prompt policymakers in some countries to re-examine the negative effects of excessive bundling of economic and trade policies with political ones' (会促使一些国家的政策制定者重新审视其将经贸政策与政治政策过度捆绑的负面作用).<sup>36</sup>

More broadly, the potential for New Zealand-China engagement to be a model for others was mentioned elsewhere. An article published in the Global Times and sourced from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided one such example. In the article, Chinese Vice Foreign

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<sup>33</sup> Zhengan Chen, "Summary: China-New Zealand FTA upgrade benefits are in the long-term. 综述：中新自贸协定升级利在长远," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2021-02/01/c\\_1127049541.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2021-02/01/c_1127049541.htm).

<sup>34</sup> Pingfan Jia, "The upgraded version of the China-New Zealand FTA upgrade has benchmark significance. 中新自贸协定升级版具标杆意义," *People's Daily Online* 2021, <http://finance.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0130/c1004-32017484.html>.

<sup>35</sup> The article was sourced from the official website of the People's Daily Overseas Edition's website.

<sup>36</sup> "Free trade agreement upgrade, China and New Zealand join hands to give "New Year gift." 升级自贸协定，中新联手送上“新年礼包”."

Minister, Xie Feng (谢锋), who was meeting with New Zealand Ambassador to China, Clare Fearnley, was recorded as stating that China was willing to work with New Zealand to ‘push forward China-New Zealand relations to become a model of friendly relations and mutual benefit between two countries with different social systems, stages of development, cultural traditions and sized economies’ (推动中新关系成为不同社会制度、发展阶段、文化传统和经济体量国家之间友好相处、互利共赢的典范).<sup>37</sup> Another Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs-sourced article in the *Global Times* reported Xie making near-identical comments in a virtual meeting with the New Zealand Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Chris Seed.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, a *Global Times* story cited an article from the *South China Morning Post* that claimed that New Zealand upgrading its FTA with China ‘may displease Australia’ (可能会使澳大利亚感到不快), which has yet to upgrade its own FTA with China. This was seen as reflective of the differences in the respective relationships that New Zealand and Australia have with China. The article also cited Chen Hong who blamed the Australian government for the lack of progress on upgrading the Australia-China FTA. It was stated that ‘this primarily stems from the damage done to the bilateral relationship by Canberra’ (这主要是源于堪培拉方面对两国关系的破坏).<sup>39</sup>

## **Independent New Zealand**

Another major theme in the coverage was the relative independence of New Zealand’s foreign policy, particularly as it pertained to China. This perceived independence was often used to differentiate New Zealand’s stance towards China from that of other Western countries, most notably, its fellow members of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia.

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<sup>37</sup> "Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng meets with New Zealand Ambassador to China Clare Fearnley. 外交部副部长谢锋会见新西兰驻华大使傅恩莱," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43c6esgK9BM>.

<sup>38</sup> Xie was reported as saying that China is willing to work with New Zealand to ‘push forward China-New Zealand relations to become a model of friendly cooperation between countries with different social systems, stages of development, cultural traditions and economic size’ (推动中新关系成为不同社会制度、发展阶段、文化传统和经济体量国家之间友好合作的典范). "Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng holds video call with New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Secretary Chris Seed 外交部副部长谢锋同新西兰外交贸易部部长锡德视频通话," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43c6lEneTpv>.

<sup>39</sup> Juecheng Zhao, "China-New Zealand upgrade FTA leading to many interpretations. 中新升级自贸协定引多方解读," *Global Times* 2021, <https://finance.huanqiu.com/article/41gPvA6BCpM>.

In all three media outlets, the Five Eyes was generally presented as hostile to China. For example, on Xinhua Net,<sup>40</sup> the Five Eyes was said to be ‘frequently criticising China on issues related to its internal affairs, such as those concerning Xinjiang and Hong Kong’ (频繁在涉疆、涉港等关系到中国内政的议题上指手画脚),<sup>41</sup> and being pushed by the United States to be ‘more clearly anti-China’ (更加旗帜鲜明地反华).<sup>42</sup> On the People’s Daily Online, the ‘arrogant manner’ (嚣张姿态) in which the Five Eyes, and the West in general, ‘interfere in the internal affairs of other countries’ (干涉他国内政) was noted.<sup>43</sup> In a Global Times article, it was presented that the “‘Five Eyes alliance” is an important pawn in the United States’ anti-China strategy’ (在美国的反华战略中, “五眼联盟”是一颗重要棋子).<sup>44</sup>

Given this view of the Five Eyes, New Zealand’s perceived independence from the four other ‘Eyes’ and, in particular its relative openness towards China, was regarded positively. This independence was noted as manifesting in several ways, including through New Zealand’s absence from several China-related statements made by other Five Eyes countries. When New Zealand did speak out on China-related issues, it was, at times, presented as having done so in a less belligerent manner than other members of the Five Eyes.

A Global Times opinion piece by Zhang Jiadong (张家栋), Professor at the Fudan University’s Centre for American Studies (复旦大学美国研究中心), argued that ‘although New Zealand has expressed “serious concern” about Hong Kong and Xinjiang issues, these statements are clearly more moderate than those issued by other “Five Eyes” members’ (尽管新西兰已经就

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<sup>40</sup> The article was sourced from Reference News (参考消息), a news website and newspaper under Xinhua News Agency. Reference News’ newspaper is China’s largest circulation daily newspaper. "About Reference News. 关于参考消息," 2021, accessed 15 August, 2021, <http://www.cankaoxiaoxi.com/about/>.

<sup>41</sup> "Will the “Five Eyes alliance” become “Four Eyes” because of China? 因为中国, “五眼联盟”要变“四眼”?, " *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2021-04/21/c\\_1211120321.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2021-04/21/c_1211120321.htm).

<sup>42</sup> "Russian media: It will be difficult for “The Five Eyes” to become an anti-China military and political alliance. 俄媒: “五眼联盟”难成反华军政联盟," *Xinhua* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2021-05/13/c\\_1211153459.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2021-05/13/c_1211153459.htm).

<sup>43</sup> Honghong Fu and Yang Yuan, " “Five Eyes” expansion has ulterior motives. “五眼”扩容 别有用心," *People’s Daily Online* 2021, <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0107/c1011-31992200.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Hong Chen, "Chen Hong: If it wants to win respect, Australia should learn more from its neighbour. 陈弘: 想要赢得尊重, 澳应向邻居多学习," *Global Times* 2021, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/42ticf9b4dM>.

新疆和香港问题表示“严重关切”，但这些声明显然要比“五眼联盟”其他成员发表的声明更为温和).<sup>45</sup>

Another article, also published in the *Global Times*, held that unlike other ‘Western countries’ (西方国家) such as the United States, and Australia, New Zealand ‘hasn’t shown intense hostility towards China. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, New Zealand has always sought a “balanced approach” in its dealings with China’ (并没有表现出十分激烈的对华敌意。在总理杰辛达·阿德恩的领导下，新西兰一直在寻求着与一种中国交往的“平衡之道”).<sup>46</sup>

In a *Global Times* editorial published in February,<sup>47</sup> it was argued that ‘with the exception of New Zealand, the smallest of the Five Eyes, which is unwilling to get too involved in international conflicts, the other four countries are continuously increasing the coordination of their attacks on China, and have rapidly transformed what used to be an intelligence-sharing mechanism into a political clique.’ (除了新西兰作为五眼中最小的国家不愿意过多参与国际冲突，其他四国在攻击中国方面不断加强协调，已经从过去的情报分享机制迅速转化为政治团伙).<sup>48</sup>

In an article published on Xinhua Net,<sup>49</sup> it was claimed that by not taking part in the ‘lies’ (谎言) about the ‘so-called Xinjiang “human rights issues”’ (所谓新疆“人权问题”) of its Five Eyes partners, and by holding a different view about the role of the intelligence alliance, ‘the

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<sup>45</sup> Jiadong Zhang, "Zhang Jiadong: The US tactic of applying heavy pressure to “in-between countries” is difficult to sustain. 张家栋：美国重压“中间国家”策略难持久," *Global Times* 2021, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/43LEHCC1dX9>.

<sup>46</sup> Zhang, "Zhang Jiadong: The US tactic of applying heavy pressure to “in-between countries” is difficult to sustain. 张家栋：美国重压“中间国家”策略难持久."

<sup>47</sup>The headline of the article, ‘*The Five Eyes alliance has become an axis of white supremacy*’ (五眼联盟已成白人至上主义轴心), gives further indication of the esteem in which the Five Eyes was held in the *Global Times*.

<sup>48</sup> "Editorial: The Five Eyes alliance has become an axis of white supremacy 社评：五眼联盟已成白人至上主义轴心," *Global Times* 2021, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/423HIQZBHSS>. Although it’s criticism in the editorial was relatively mild, New Zealand was still accused of white supremacy. 共同拥有对盎格鲁撒克逊文明优越论的认同

<sup>49</sup> The article originally came from the Strategic Culture Foundation (俄罗斯战略文化基金), a Russian thinktank.



New Zealand government had “disrupted” the Five Eyes’ “symphony” (新西兰政府“破坏”了这首五眼联盟“交响曲”).<sup>50</sup>

## Remit of the Five Eyes

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta spoke publicly about New Zealand being ‘uncomfortable with expanding the remit of the Five Eyes’.<sup>51</sup> Mahuta’s comments were given significant attention and used to further illustrate the independence of New Zealand’s engagement with China. In the first ten days following Mahuta’s comments, the remarks were quoted or referenced in five Global Times articles<sup>52</sup> and one on Xinhua Net.<sup>53</sup>

The Global Times reported Mahuta’s expression of New Zealand’s discomfort in various ways. In one article, Mahuta was said to be “uncomfortable” with the Five Eyes alliance’s “remit” expanding to involve affairs beyond intelligence’ (对“五眼联盟”扩大“权限”介入情报以外的事务感到“不舒服”).<sup>54</sup> Another reported that ‘on the 19<sup>th</sup>, New Zealand Foreign Minister expressed that she was firmly opposed to the “Five Eyes alliance” controlling China-New Zealand relations’ (新西兰外长19日公开表示，坚决反对“五眼联盟”操纵中国与新西兰

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<sup>50</sup> "Russian media: It will be difficult for “The Five Eyes” to become an anti-China military and political alliance. 俄媒：“五眼联盟”难成反华军政联盟."

<sup>51</sup> "New Zealand ‘uncomfortable’ with expanding Five Eyes’ remit, says foreign minister," *The Guardian* 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/19/new-zealand-uncomfortable-with-expanding-five-eyes-remit-says-foreign-minister>.

<sup>52</sup> Xiaoya Zhang, "New Zealand Foreign Minister bluntly states discomfort with expansion of the “remit” of the “Five Eyes alliance” and uses Māori mythology as a metaphor for relations with China. 新西兰外长直言对“五眼联盟”扩大“权限”感到不舒服，还用毛利人神话比喻对华关系," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/42moG7Jfc33>; Yunyi Bai and Yi Wang, "Australia tore up the “Belt Road Initiative” agreement, China’s response: This shows that Australia is completely insincere about improving China-Australia relations. 澳撕毁“一带一路”协议，中方回应：表明澳方对改善中澳关系毫无诚意！," *Global Times* 2021,

<https://world.huanqiu.com/article/42omDdkBOOM>; Huicong Wang, "Japanese Ambassador to Australia: I hope Japan will join the “Five Eyes alliance.” 日本驻澳大使：希望日本加入“五眼联盟”，" *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/42pi3wA75Yc>; Chen, "Chen Hong: If it wants to win respect, Australia should learn more from its neighbour. 陈弘：想要赢得尊重，澳应向邻居多学习。"; Miao Wang, "Why New Zealand is able to see China “in a different light.” 新西兰为何能“另眼”看中国," *Global Times* 2021, <https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/42umgfqZiic>.

<sup>53</sup> "Will the “Five Eyes alliance” become “Four Eyes” because of China? 因为中国，“五眼联盟”要变“四眼”？."

<sup>54</sup> Zhang, "New Zealand Foreign Minister bluntly states discomfort with expansion of the “remit” of the “Five Eyes alliance” and uses Māori mythology as a metaphor for relations with China. 新西兰外长直言对“五眼联盟”扩大“权限”感到不舒服，还用毛利人神话比喻对华关系."

关系).<sup>55</sup> Former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark's opposition to the increased prominence of the Five Eyes was also mentioned in the *Global Times*.<sup>56</sup>

On Xinhua Net, an opinion piece sourced from Xinhua's Reference News (参考消息) noted the 'uproar' (骚动) that Mahuta's comments had caused in the 'Western world' (西方世界).<sup>57</sup>

Referring to the aforementioned speech, *Global Times* journalist Wang Miao (王淼) wrote that 'from Mahuta's speech it can be seen that since the Labour Party began governing alone, its [New Zealand's] China policy appears to be more rational' (从马胡塔的演讲中可以看出, 工党独立执政以来, 对华政策显得更加理性). This was in contrast to the actions of New Zealand's previous coalition government which had 'emphasised the "China threat"' (强调“中国威胁”) and 'expressed "strong concern" about the so-called South China Sea issue' (对所谓的南海问题表示“强烈关注”), as well as suspending its extradition treaty with Hong Kong and declaring support for Taiwan to return as an observer to the World Health Organisation. Such behaviour was classed as 'erroneous remarks and interference in China's internal affairs' (错误言论和干涉中国内政的做法).<sup>58</sup>

## New Zealand's Interests

New Zealand's decision to pursue an independent foreign policy - often shorthand for acting independently of the United States and building and maintaining a strong relationship with China - was presented as driven by its national interests.

In another *Global Times* article, it was claimed that 'the development of mutually beneficial cooperation with China most accords with New Zealand's national interests, which of course includes economic interests and, at the same time, includes regional peace and stability, regional economic development momentum, regional connectivity and other interest

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<sup>55</sup> Wang, "Japanese Ambassador to Australia: I hope Japan will join the "Five Eyes alliance." 日本驻澳大使: 希望日本加入“五眼联盟”."

<sup>56</sup> Liming Zhao, "New Zealand debates foreign policy towards China. Former Prime Minister: Should not blindly follow the US. 新西兰争论对华外交政策, 前总理: 不能盲目追随美国," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/431DE9NfV5k>.

<sup>57</sup> "Will the "Five Eyes alliance" become "Four Eyes" because of China? 因为中国, “五眼联盟”要变“四眼”?"

<sup>58</sup> Wang, "Why New Zealand is able to see China "in a different light." 新西兰为何能“另眼”看中国."

considerations' (与中国发展互利合作最符合新西兰的国家利益, 当然这里面包括经济利益, 同时也包括地区和平与稳定、地区经济发展势头、地区互联互通等利益考量). New Zealand's commitment to its national interests was seen as being such that it 'will not sacrifice its national and regional interests for those of the United States' (不会为了美国利益而牺牲本国和地区利益).<sup>59</sup>

Chen Hong argued in a Global Times opinion piece that New Zealand has a history of pursuing a relatively independent foreign policy. 'New Zealand always keeps a clear head when it comes to major matters of principle that relate to its national interests' (在涉及本国利益的大是大非问题上, 新西兰一直保持着清醒的头脑) - 'even in the face of demands, and even coercion, from the United States, New Zealand has not forsaken its principles and obeyed' (即使面临来自美国的要求乃至胁迫, 也并未无原则地服从).<sup>60</sup> 'At the same time' (与此同时), Chen noted, New Zealand has developed a strong relationship with China.

For Chen, 'amongst the anti-China clamour' (反华喧嚣中), New Zealand insists on making its foreign policy serve its national interests and the welfare of its people. It has repeatedly refused to blindly follow the will of Washington and Canberra,<sup>61</sup> gaining widespread respect from the international community' (新西兰坚持让自己的外交政策服务于本国利益和人民福祉, 屡屡拒绝盲从华盛顿与堪培拉的意志, 赢得国际社会的广泛尊重).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Wang, "Why New Zealand is able to see China "in a different light." 新西兰为何能“另眼”看中国."

<sup>60</sup> To illustrate New Zealand's independent foreign policy, Chen stated that 'in the 1960s and 70s, New Zealand firmly rejected the United States' demands and did not agree to send troops to the Vietnam War' (20世纪六七十年代, 新西兰坚决拒绝了美国的要求, 未同意出兵参加越南战争). This does not closely correspond with New Zealand's actual engagement in a war in which more than 3,000 New Zealand military and civilian personnel served. See "New Zealand's Vietnam War," 2021, <https://vietnamwar.govt.nz/nz-vietnam-war>.

Another Global Times article made a similar claim to illustrate New Zealand's commitment to putting its national interests ahead of the US', stating that 'during the Cold War, New Zealand refused to follow the United States in sending troops to Vietnam' (新西兰在冷战时期拒绝追随美国出兵越南). See Wang, "Why New Zealand is able to see China "in a different light." 新西兰为何能“另眼”看中国."

<sup>61</sup> Australia on the other hand was seen as repeatedly following the United States into wars at great cost and doing its bidding in the Asia-Pacific region. In recent years when dealing with relations with its largest trade partner (最大的贸易伙伴), China, Australia was seen as 'completely disregarding its own practical interests' (完全无视其自身切实利益) and willingly acting as the most aggressive henchman (急先锋) of the United States' anti-China strategy (反华战略).

<sup>62</sup> Chen, "Chen Hong: If it wants to win respect, Australia should learn more from its neighbour. 陈弘: 想要赢得尊重, 澳应向邻居多学习."

Comment from New Zealanders also contributed to this narrative. Former New Zealand Prime Minister, Sir John Key, speaking at the China Business Summit on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May was reported in the *Global Times* as saying that, ‘in terms of foreign policy, New Zealand should not blindly follow the United States, especially Trumpism’ (在外交政策上, 新西兰不能盲目追随美国, 尤其是特朗普主义). The same article also quoted Key’s predecessor, Helen Clark,<sup>63</sup> as saying, “New Zealand is not a stepping stone for any country,” New Zealand is an independent, sovereign country, it has not in the past, is not, and will not slavishly follow Western powers.” (“新西兰不是其他任何国家的垫脚石”, “新西兰是一个独立主权的国家, 以前没有, 现在和今后也都不会跟随西方大国亦步亦趋”).<sup>64</sup>

Comments from Patron of the New Zealand-China Friendship Society, Sir David Carter,<sup>65</sup> articulated a similar notion. Carter was reported on Xinhua Net as ‘pointing out’ (指出) that New Zealand should have a China-policy that is independent of its so-called “traditional allies” and not just follow the crowd’ (新西兰应有独立于所谓“传统盟友”的对华政策, 不能人云亦云).<sup>66</sup>

In an opinion piece on the China-Canada relationship, Liu Dan (刘丹), a researcher at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies Centre for Canadian Studies (广东外语外贸大学加拿大研究中心), argued that New Zealand was better than Canada and Australia at balancing its national interests and its ‘alliance strategy’ (联盟战略) – that is, essentially, the degree to which it aligns itself with the United States against China. This, again, put New Zealand in the

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<sup>63</sup> Similar comments from Clark were also presented in another article published in the *Global Times*. See "Biden ordered a thorough investigation into the origins of the novel coronavirus? Western diplomacy with China is being hijacked by the security intelligence community! 拜登下令彻查新冠病毒源头? 西方对华外交, 正在被安全情报界绑架!," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43IBvDD30eW>.

<sup>64</sup> Zhao, "New Zealand debates foreign policy towards China. Former Prime Minister: Should not blindly follow the US. 新西兰争论对华外交政策, 前总理: 不能盲目追随美国."

A similar quote from Clarke was also present in another *Global Times* article - "Biden ordered a thorough investigation into the origins of the novel coronavirus? Western diplomacy with China is being hijacked by the security intelligence community! 拜登下令彻查新冠病毒源头? 西方对华外交, 正在被安全情报界绑架!."

<sup>65</sup> Carter is also a former National Party MP and Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives.

<sup>66</sup> Huaiquan Lu, "New Zealand-China Friendship Society Chairman: To be a friend of China, we must listen attentively to voices from China. 新中友协主席: 做中国的朋友, 就要倾听来自中国的声音" *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-05/24/c\\_1127486145.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-05/24/c_1127486145.htm).

position of (positive) model Western country. Liu held that Canada was seen as soon needing to decide ‘whether or not to recklessly become a “second Australia”, sacrificing its national interests by following the alliance, or learning from New Zealand’s pursuit of a relatively independent foreign policy’ (是不管不顾成为追随联盟牺牲国家利益的“澳大利亚第二”，还是学习新西兰追求相对独立的外交政策).<sup>67</sup>

In a similar vein, two *Global Times* pieces quoted a *South China Morning Post* article that claimed that New Zealand’s unique approach to China was seen as meaning that ‘China and New Zealand can show the world how two capable governments can cast off ideology and sensationalism and work together for mutual benefit’ (中国和新西兰可以向世界表明，两个有能力的政府如何能摆脱意识形态和哗众取宠，为相互的利益而共同努力).<sup>68</sup>

Discussion of the values that may inform New Zealand’s foreign policy decisions and their potential to complicate New Zealand-China relations received occasional mention. This was, however, only done in vague terms,<sup>69</sup> such as a reference to the ‘universal values’ (普世价值观) of the Five Eyes on Xinhua Net<sup>70</sup> and comments by Ardern<sup>71</sup> that ‘the differences between our two systems, and the interests and values that make up these systems, are becoming harder

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<sup>67</sup> Dan Liu, "Liu Dan: How much further down the road of bigotry against China will Canada go. 刘丹：加拿大在偏执对华路上还要走多远," *Global Times* 2021, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/43iRYA5D52q>.

<sup>68</sup> Wang, "Why New Zealand is able to see China “in a different light.” 新西兰为何能“另眼”看中国."; Xiaoya Zhang, "Ardern: Don’t define New Zealand’s relationship with China by its differences. 阿德恩：不以分歧来定义新西兰与中国的关系," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/42yI0QdqLz7>.

<sup>69</sup> Although, in the *Global Times* there was mention of Australia’s attempts at using ‘so-called “values diplomacy”’ (所谓的“价值观外交”), which was said to consist of emphasising freedom (自由) and democracy (民主) on the one hand, while smearing (泼脏水) China and claiming that it is ‘coercing other countries’ (胁迫他国). See Juecheng Zhao and Yang Liu, "New Zealand Trade Minister: Despite China-Australia tensions, New Zealand will continue to expand trade with China. 新西兰贸易部长：尽管澳中关系紧张，新西兰仍将扩大对华贸易 " *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43aC4RF6nRS>.

<sup>70</sup> Wang, "Japanese Ambassador to Australia: I hope Japan will join the “Five Eyes alliance.” 日本驻澳大使：希望日本加入“五眼联盟”."

<sup>71</sup> The article focused on Ardern’s comments at May’s China Business Summit in Auckland<sup>71</sup> in which she spoke of complications in New Zealand’s relationship with China. The article, in contrast with the ‘foreign media’ (外媒), which the article noted carried headlines that repeated Ardern’s claims that New Zealand’s ‘differences with China are becoming harder to reconcile’, carried the headline ‘Ardern: Don’t define New Zealand’s relationship with China by its differences’ (阿德恩：不以分歧来定义新西兰与中国的关系) and placed greater emphasis on the strength of the relationship and its potential to succeed, despite the complexities of the present geopolitical moment and the significant differences between the New Zealand and Chinese systems.

and harder to reconcile’ (我们两国制度间的分歧，以及构成这些制度的利益和价值观正变得越来越难以调和) in the *Global Times*.<sup>72</sup>

In a Xinhua Net article, reference was made to New Zealand’s stance (as articulated by Foreign Minister Mahuta) that ‘China and New Zealand will have differences in many areas such as their values and their interests, however, what is important is mutual respect’ (中新双方在价值观和利益等多方面都会存在分歧，但重要的是相互尊重). This was seen as being consistent with the ‘basic norms’ (基本准则) of international engagement that China has itself promoted.<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps the closest there came to an explanation of what New Zealand’s values are, came from another *Global Times* article, sourced from the website of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, during a virtual meeting between Mahuta and her Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi (王毅). Here Mahuta was reported as saying,<sup>74</sup> ‘New Zealand is dedicated to upholding multilateralism, cherishes its values, and is willing to, through a variety of channels, engage in dialogue and seek consensus on issues of common concern such as democracy and human rights’ (新方致力于维护多边主义，珍视本国的价值观，愿通过多种渠道就民主、人权等共同关心的问题开展对话，寻求共识).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Zhang, "Ardern: Don't define New Zealand's relationship with China by its differences. 阿德恩：不以分歧来定义新西兰与中国的关系."

It is worth noting that the articles in *People’s Daily Online* and Xinhua Net did not mention these comments from Ardern.

<sup>73</sup> "Will the ‘Five Eyes alliance’ become ‘Four Eyes’ because of China? 因为中国，‘五眼联盟’要变‘四眼’? ."

<sup>74</sup> Mahuta’s comments were also in the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ readout from the meeting – see "Wang Yi holds video meeting with New Zealand Foreign Minister Mahuta. 王毅同新西兰外长马胡塔举行视频会晤," 2021, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjzbzd/t1885798.shtml>.

The readout provided by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade provided somewhat greater clarity on New Zealand’s stance. It said that Mahuta “outlined the importance that New Zealand places on the international rules-based system, and the values-based approach that New Zealand takes to its foreign policy. In this regard, noting that New Zealand takes a respectful, predictable and firm approach, Minister Mahuta also reiterated New Zealand’s grave concerns over the human rights situation of ethnic Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang province, as well as deep concerns over the erosion of political freedoms in Hong Kong”. See "Foreign Minister Mahuta’s video call with China's State Councilor Wang Yi – Readout 22 June 2021," 2021, <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/media-and-resources/foreign-minister-mahutas-video-call-with-state-councilor-wang-yi/>.

<sup>75</sup> "Wang Yi: Welcome New Zealand athletes to China to participate in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. 王毅：欢迎新西兰运动员来华参加 2022 年北京冬奥会," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43dzcPkeBWc>.

The same article reported Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi saying that ‘on the question of values, China advocates the values common to humanity of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom’ (在价值观问题上，中国倡导和平、发展、公平、正义、民主、自由的全人类共同价值). Wang added that the realisation of such values differs from country to country due to ‘differences in their national conditions’ (国情不同) and ‘stages of development’ (发展阶段) and that whether or not a country is upholding human rights or democracy is something that is most appropriately judged by the ‘common people’ (老百姓).<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng was reported in the *Global Times* as saying ‘China and New Zealand should adhere to independence, jointly advocate the democratisation of the international system, uphold genuine multilateralism and safeguard international fairness and justice’ (中新应当坚持独立自主，共同倡导国际关系民主化，坚持真正的多边主义，维护国际公平正义).<sup>77</sup> The different ways that New Zealand and China interpret and enact these values were not mentioned.

### **Pressure on New Zealand**

It was commonly presented that New Zealand’s independence was a cause for concern among its Five Eyes partners, prompting them to pressure New Zealand to more closely align its China engagement with theirs. An article published in the *Global Times* discussed New Zealand being ‘intimidated and threatened’ (恐吓和威胁) by ‘schoolyard bully’ (校园恶霸) the United States and its ‘lackey’ (狗腿子), Australia to take a stronger line on China.<sup>78</sup> Or somewhat less colourfully, it was noted that ‘as a member of the “Five Eyes alliance”, New Zealand has twice been absent from United States-organised actions directed against China, causing significant dissatisfaction among the other “four Eyes”. The New Zealand government, which has traditionally pursued an independent foreign policy, is facing enormous pressure from its allies’ (作为“五眼联盟”的一员，新西兰已经有两次没有参与到美国组织的针对中国的行动中，

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> "Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng holds video call with New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Secretary Chris Seed 外交部副部长谢锋同新西兰外交贸易部秘书长锡德视频通话."

<sup>78</sup> "The US, which condemned China for carrying out “wolf warrior diplomacy” has revealed its true colours with New Zealand! 骂中国搞“战狼外交”的美国，却在新西兰身上暴露了自己的真面目!," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43R2aj8kCf8>.

Although, the ‘biggest victim’ (最大的受害者) of bullying was said to be China, not New Zealand, as China was perceived to be subject to bullying and isolation. – not sure this is needed...

这使得其他“四眼”产生了许多不满。传统上追求独立外交的新西兰政府也面临着来自盟友的巨大压力)。<sup>79</sup>

In a *Global Times* opinion piece, Zhang Jiadong pondered the reasons why, when New Zealand had previously maintained a largely ‘rational’ (理性) and ‘pragmatic’ (务实) attitude towards China, Foreign Minister Mahuta was forecasting a possible deterioration of the New Zealand-China relationship. By way of explanation, Zhang cited analysis from ‘Western media’ (西方媒体) that claimed that Mahuta’s comments were reflective of the increasing pressure on New Zealand, with the ‘United States and the West’ (美西方) ‘repeatedly demanding that the country take a tougher stance on so-called “China’s violation and suppression of human rights”’ (一再要求该国对所谓“中国侵犯和镇压人权的行为”采取更强硬立场)。<sup>80</sup>

In a *Global Times* article, it was argued that despite the pressure that New Zealand was under to follow the United States and Australia, it ‘should have the determination to overcome external interference and resolutely promote the development of China-New Zealand relations’ (应有定力排除外部干扰，坚定推动中新关系发展)。<sup>81</sup>

Another *Global Times* article reached a different conclusion. It stated that Australia had previously faced similar pressure to that which New Zealand was now facing, leading to it becoming ‘twisted and bigoted’ (扭曲和偏执). The author claimed that they were unsure as to whether New Zealand would follow Australia, however, it was stated that ‘New Zealand, which belongs to the geopolitical circle of the United States, doesn’t seem to have much choice’ (本身就属于美国那个地缘政治圈子的新西兰，似乎并没有太多选择)。<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Zhang, "Ardern: Don't define New Zealand's relationship with China by its differences. 阿德恩：不以分歧来定义新西兰与中国的关系."

<sup>80</sup> Zhang, "Zhang Jiadong: The US tactic of applying heavy pressure to “in-between countries” is difficult to sustain. 张家栋：美国重压“中间国家”策略难持久."

<sup>81</sup> Yunyi Bai and Qingqing Li, "Australia and New Zealand joint statement wantonly interferes in China's internal affairs. Foreign Ministry: We're resolutely opposed. 澳新联合声明粗暴干涉中国内政，外交部：坚决反对," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43M4BK9Y5cv>.

<sup>82</sup> "The US, which condemned China for carrying out “wolf warrior diplomacy” has revealed its true colours with New Zealand! 骂中国搞“战狼外交”的美国，却在新西兰身上暴露了自己的真面目!."



An opinion piece sourced from Xinhua's Reference News (参考消息)<sup>83</sup> and published on Xinhua Net also discussed the pressure that New Zealand was facing. It was claimed that the pressure may cause New Zealand to 'choose to thoroughly embrace the "Five Eyes alliance" and take a path of confrontation with China' (选择彻底拥抱“五眼联盟”,走上与中国对抗的路子).<sup>84</sup>

In the Global Times, the 'Western media' (西方媒体) were often accused of adding to the pressure that New Zealand was under to take a tougher line on China. Journalist Wang Miao argued that 'whenever the New Zealand government develops normal relations with China, Western media clichédly say, "this is New Zealand selling its soul for economic interests" and put pressure on New Zealand' (每当新西兰政府发展正常的新中关系时,西方媒体就老生常谈地说“这是新为经济利益出卖自己的灵魂”,并给新西兰施加压力).<sup>85</sup>

A further Global Times article featured references to reports from 2018 that 'some United States media and institutions' had used New Zealand's domestic "donation" incident<sup>86</sup> to wantonly sensationalise the "China interference theory", and, with ulterior motives, "sincerely advise" the New Zealand government and people to be extra vigilant of China's "interference in New Zealand's internal affairs" (美国一些媒体和机构曾借新西兰国内政治“献金”事件大肆渲染“中国干涉论”,还别有用心地“忠告”新政府和民众要格外警惕中国“干涉新西兰内政”).<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Reference News is a newspaper under Xinhua News Agency. It claims to have the largest circulation of any daily newspaper in China. "About Reference News. 关于参考消息."

<sup>84</sup> "Will the "Five Eyes alliance" become "Four Eyes" because of China? 因为中国,“五眼联盟”要变“四眼”? ."

<sup>85</sup> Zhang, "Ardern: Don't define New Zealand's relationship with China by its differences. 阿德恩:不以分歧来定义新西兰与中国的关系."

<sup>86</sup> The donation incident, while not made explicit, is likely a reference to the case of Zhang Yikun (张乙坤), a Chinese New Zealand businessman with alleged links to China's United Front Work Department. Zhang was said to be involved in the donation of \$100,00 to the New Zealand National Party. Zhang, two associates and former National Party MP Jami-Lee Ross have since been charged by the Serious Fraud Office. See Laura Walters, "Zhang Yikun and the alleged \$100k donation," *Newsroom* 2018, <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/zhang-yikun-and-the-alleged-100k-donation>. and "Defendants plead not guilty in National Party donations case," Serious Fraud Office, 2020, <https://sfo.govt.nz/media-cases/media-releases/defendants-plead-not-guilty-national-party-donations-case/>.

<sup>87</sup> Wang, "Why New Zealand is able to see China "in a different light." 新西兰为何能“另眼”看中国."

The Western media's dissatisfaction was, in one instance, thought to have manifested itself in the choice of a photo of Jacinda Ardern used in a BBC article. The article rhetorically asked whether the unflattering photo was selected due to Ardern's China policy not being as the BBC had wanted and New Zealand's decision to not join the other Five Eyes countries in criticising China. The answer to which, was that it would 'not be surprising' (不令人意外), as the BBC has a 'record' (前科) of 'politicising' (政治化) photos and videos.<sup>88</sup>

New Zealand voices also contributed to this narrative. The Global Times cited an article<sup>89</sup> by New Zealand radio host Heather du Plessis-Allen, written in response to an episode of Australian current affairs programme *60 Minutes* about New Zealand's relationship with China. Du Plessis-Allen was said to have written that 'this is just the latest complete nonsense from Western media and commentators, 'the problem is not China, it's the "Five Eyes alliance"', the "Five Eyes alliance" is pressuring New Zealand, much more than China is"' (这只是西方国家媒体和评论员最新的无稽之谈, "问题不在于中国, 而在于'五眼联盟', '五眼联盟'向新西兰所施加的压力, 比来自中国的压力大得多").<sup>90</sup>

An article on the annual meeting of the New Zealand-China Friendship Society featured comments made to Xinhua and reported on Xinhua Net by Society National President Dave Bromwich who also criticised the New Zealand media. The article said that, in response to reports from the New Zealand media on human rights abuses in Xinjiang, Bromwich said that they 'lack evidence' (缺乏证据) and there are 'clear signs' (痕迹明显) that the media had been 'manipulated' (操纵) by 'political groups' (政治集团). He added, 'many New Zealanders don't really understand China, they are easily misled by false information' (很多新西兰人对中国不太了解, 他们容易被不实信息误导).<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Zihao Bian, "After the "underworld filter," the BBC has another trick: If you don't criticise China, it'll publish this sort of photo of you. "阴间滤镜"之后, BBC 又出手段: 不批评中国, 就刊登你这样的照片," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/430fMI11Ofb>.

<sup>89</sup> "HDP: What 60 Minutes' hysterical promo gets wrong about NZ and China," 2021, <https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/heather-du-plessis-allan-drive/video/heather-du-plessis-allan-what-60-minutes-hysterical-promo-gets-wrong-about-nz-china-relationship/>.

<sup>90</sup> Zixi Mu and Shuangyan Hao, "'Absurd", "too embarrassing to watch", Australian TV programme accusing New Zealand of abandoning Australia for "China's fast money" has led to broad ridicule. "荒谬"、"尬到没眼看", 澳媒节目指责新西兰为了"中国快钱"抛弃澳大利亚引来群嘲," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43JaY8RMU7L>.

<sup>91</sup> Lu, "New Zealand-China Friendship Society Chairman: To be a friend of China, we must listen attentively to voices from China. 新中友协主席: 做中国的朋友, 就要倾听来自中国的声音".

New Zealand media came in for further criticism in the *Global Times* in relation to claims made in a Radio New Zealand report (and accompanying podcast, *Redline*) that ‘teachers suspect that there are Chinese Communist Party Spies in New Zealand universities’ (教师怀疑，中国共产党间谍存在于新西兰高校). The article was said to have been widely reported but based on evidence that was ‘laughably absurd’ (荒谬到可笑). ‘A local person’ (一位当地人士) was reported to have told the *Global Times* that ‘this sort of journalism based on presupposition and completely without evidence is a common tactic of some New Zealand media - since there’s no evidence, they can say what they want’ (这种预设立场又完全没有证据的新闻报道方式，是新西兰一些媒体惯用的手段，反正没证据，怎么说都行).<sup>92</sup>

### **Trans-Tasman Contrast**

The differences between New Zealand’s and Australia’s approaches to their engagement with China was repeatedly raised, with New Zealand cast, once again, as a model international partner.

Comments made by New Zealand’s Minister for Trade and Export Growth, Damien O’Connor, provided a frequent point of reference for the perceived differences in New Zealand and Australia’s approaches to engagement with China. First reported in the *Global Times* in an article headlined ‘*How to repair China-Australia relations? New Zealand Minister of Trade teaches Australia a lesson: Be like us, respect China*’ (如何修复中澳关系？新西兰贸易部长给澳大利亚上课：和我们一样，尊重中国), O’Connor<sup>93</sup> was reported as saying, ‘I can’t speak for Australia and the way it handles its diplomatic relations, but it’s clear that if Australia displayed respect as we do, I think, with a little bit more diplomacy from time to time and careful rhetoric, there is hope that they can be in a similar situation (to New Zealand).’ (“我不能代表澳大利亚及其处理外交关系的方式来表态，但很明显，如果澳大利亚和我们一

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<sup>92</sup> Liming Zhao, "Media make groundless accusations about ‘Chinese spies being in universities,’ New Zealand Minister of Education: There is no evidence. 媒体捕风捉影炒作“高校存在中国间谍”，新西兰教育部长：没有证据," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43jJAAXIUEc>.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas Manch, "Trade Minister Damien O'Connor says Australia should 'follow us and show respect' to China, causing trans-Tasman tension," *Stuff* 2021, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/124083238/trade-minister-damien-oconnor-says-australia-should-follow-us-and-show-respect-to-china-causing-transtasman-tension>.

样，展现出尊重。我想，时不时再加一些外交上的行动，言辞也谨慎，他们也有希望能处于（与新西兰）类似的境况”。<sup>94</sup>

The comments were presented by Chen Hong in the *Global Times* as O'Connor ‘calling on Australia not to demonise China, and to show it greater “respect”’ (呼吁澳大利亚不要妖魔化中国，要对中国表现出更多的“尊重”)。<sup>95</sup> ‘O'Connor’s sincere advice’ (奥康纳真诚的劝告) was also mentioned by journalist Jia Pingfan (贾平凡) in an opinion piece on the *People’s Daily Online* about the need for Australia to improve its relationship with China in the face of the economic pain that it had suffered as a result of worsening Australia-China relations.<sup>96</sup> The comments were also mentioned in another *People’s Daily Online* piece about the poor state of Australia’s relationship with China.<sup>97</sup>

O'Connor’s comments featured in several other articles, such as one published in the *Global Times* that contrasted the successful New Zealand-China FTA upgrade with Australia-China relations which were seen as having ‘deteriorated to their worst state in decades’ (已经恶化到几十年来最糟糕的状态)。<sup>98</sup> Another, also in the *Global Times*, noted the absence of meetings between Chinese and Australian Trade Ministers, the ‘deterioration’ (恶化) of the bilateral relationship over the past year and the ‘heavy losses’ (损失惨重) suffered by Australian businesses. This was juxtaposed with New Zealand which ‘last month signed an upgrade to its

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<sup>94</sup> Jiixin Hou, "How to repair China-Australia relations? New Zealand Minister of Trade teaches Australia a lesson: Be like us, respect China. 如何修复中澳关系？新西兰贸易部长给澳大利亚上课：和我们一样，尊重中国," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/41hcT7wORZN>.

<sup>95</sup> Bai and Wang, "Australia tore up the “Belt Road Initiative” agreement, China’s response: This shows that Australia is completely insincere about improving China-Australia relations. 澳撕毁“一带一路”协议，中方回应：表明澳方对改善中澳关系毫无诚意！."

<sup>96</sup> Pingfan Jia, "To improve relations with China, Australia must show sincerity. 改善对华关系，澳方必须拿出诚意," *People’s Daily Online* 2021, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0218/c1002-32030279.html>.

<sup>97</sup> Qiao Gao, "Why Australian politicians have deep “China anxiety.” 澳政客为何深陷“对华焦虑症”，" *People’s Daily Online* 2021, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0218/c1002-32030278.html>.

<sup>98</sup> Xuan Zheng, "“Show more respect to China!” New Zealand official teaches Australia how to handle relations with China, angering senior Australian officials. “对中国展现更多尊重”！新西兰官员教澳大利亚处理对华关系，惹怒澳高官," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/41i2It2w2HU>.

“Free Trade Agreement” with China, and called China its key ally’<sup>99</sup> (上个月与中国签署了升级版的《自由贸易协定》，并将中国称为其关键盟友).<sup>100</sup>

Australia was portrayed as one of the main allies putting pressure on New Zealand to change the way that it engages with China. In a *Global Times* article, such pressure was said to include Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marise Payne’s, cancellation of the state of Victoria’s Belt and Road Initiative (一带一路) agreement with China. Given the context of Mahuta having recently stated her discomfort about expanding the ‘mandate’ (职权范围) of the Five Eyes and Payne visiting New Zealand on the same day that the cancellation was announced,<sup>101</sup> this was seen as a ‘warning’ (警告) to New Zealand - and an ‘attempt to force New Zealand back into the anti-China camp’ (试图迫使新西兰回到反华阵营中来).<sup>102</sup>

The *Global Times* carried an article on a joint statement between the Prime Ministers of New Zealand and Australia in which they expressed ‘serious concern’ (严重关切) about the ‘human rights situation’ (人权状况) in Xinjiang and ‘developments’ (事态发展) in Hong Kong. It contained one of the strongest articulations of New Zealand’s stance on human rights in the coverage examined in this report and ran contrary to much of the discourse in the outlets about the differences between New Zealand and Australia’s positions on China. Ardern was reported as telling media that New Zealand and Australia’s ‘overall positions’ (全面立场) on issues such as trade with China and human rights are ‘completely in accord’ (是完全一致的) with one another.

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<sup>99</sup> New Zealand is not in an alliance with China; however, it did sign a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with China in 2014 – as did Australia and Fiji. See Jason Young, "US–China competition and small liberal democracies: New Zealand and the limits of hegemony," *Political science* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00323187.2021.1967763>.

<sup>100</sup> "New Zealand Minister “taught Australia how to deal with China,” Senior Australian official: He quickly cleared things up with me. 新西兰部长“教澳大利亚跟中国打交道”，澳高官：他随后找我澄清," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/41nEkFskxDn>.

<sup>101</sup> Bai and Wang, "Australia tore up the “Belt Road Initiative” agreement, China’s response: This shows that Australia is completely insincere about improving China-Australia relations. 澳撕毁“一带一路”协议，中方回应：表明澳方对改善中澳关系毫无诚意！."

<sup>102</sup> Chen, "Chen Hong: If it wants to win respect, Australia should learn more from its neighbour. 陈弘：想要赢得尊重，澳应向邻居多学习."

The article also featured a strongly worded condemnation of the statement from Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Wang Wenbin (汪文斌)<sup>103</sup> and lengthier comments from China Institute of International Studies (中国国际问题研究院) Assistant Researcher Ning Tuanhui (宁团辉). Ning told the Global Times that ‘New Zealand has recently followed the “Five Eyes alliance” in making irresponsible remarks on Hong Kong and Xinjiang issues and was interfering in China’s internal affairs, however, in essence, China-Australia relations are not the same as New Zealand-China relations’ (新西兰在涉港和涉疆问题上最近也跟随“五眼联盟”发表了不负责任的言论，干涉中国内政，但究其本质来看，中澳关系和中新关系并不一样).

Ning argued that, compared to Australia, which had ‘provoked’ (挑衅) China on issues such as the ‘so-called “China infiltration theory”’, the coronavirus pandemic, the South China Seas and the Belt Road Initiative, New Zealand had been ‘much more pragmatic’ (务实得多) in handling its relationship with China. Ning also pointed out that the joint statement, while constituting ‘interference’ (干涉) in China’s internal affairs, ‘did not go beyond’ (没有超出) previously expressed positions of the two countries and was a show of unity. Ning also added that of the entire joint statement, ‘only a few paragraphs’ (只有几小段) related to China.<sup>104</sup>

The difference in the treatment of New Zealand and Australia was apparent in a report, carried by both the People’s Daily Online<sup>105</sup> and the Global Times, on a press conference given by Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying (华春莹) in March. Hua was asked for a response to a joint statement made by the foreign ministers of Australia and New Zealand stressing the importance of transparency and accountability and calling on for United Nations

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<sup>103</sup> Wang accused the two Prime Ministers of making ‘irresponsible remarks, making baseless accusations against China, wantonly interfering in China’s internal affairs and seriously violating international law and the basic norms of international relations’ (说三道四，对中方无端指责，粗暴干涉中国内政，严重违反国际法和国际关系基本准则).

<sup>104</sup> Bai and Li, "Australia and New Zealand joint statement wantonly interferes in China’s internal affairs. Foreign Ministry: We’re resolutely opposed. 澳新联合声明粗暴干涉中国内政，外交部：坚决反对."

<sup>105</sup> The People’s Daily Online article reported on a second question asked of Hua at the same press conference about New Zealand and Australia’s concerns about Xinjiang and support for sanctions against by the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and the European Union in response to human rights abuses in Xinjiang. Hua responded by not mentioning New Zealand or Australia individually but by criticising the ‘United States and its “Five Eyes” allies’ (美国及其“五眼联盟”盟友).

experts and independent observers to be allowed ‘meaningful and unrestricted access’ (有意义、不受限制的访问) to Xinjiang. She answered by speaking of Australia’s accountability for ‘serious crimes’ (严重罪行) committed by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan and asking whether Five Eyes countries should consider sanctioning Australia, while also criticising Australia for its ‘notorious “White Australia policy”’ (臭名昭著的‘白澳政策’) and treatment of Aboriginal Australians. New Zealand, on the other hand, was not mentioned at all.<sup>106</sup>

## Conflict

There were, on occasion, times when New Zealand was criticised for its treatment of China without its behaviour being attributed to pressure from the United States and its allies.

For example, following the New Zealand Parliament’s declaration that ‘severe human rights abuses’ are being carried out against Uyghur people in Xinjiang, the Global Times published, in its entirety, a statement from the Chinese Embassy in New Zealand. In the statement, Parliament’s actions were described as ‘gross interference in China’s internal affairs, seriously violating international law and the basic norms of international relations’ (粗暴干涉中国内政, 严重违反国际法和国际关系基本准则). New Zealand was urged to ‘respect objective facts, immediately cease erroneous practices, and take practical actions to safeguard the overall development of China-New Zealand relations’ (尊重客观事实, 立即停止错误做法, 以实际行动维护中新关系发展大局).<sup>107</sup>

Similarly, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Wang Wenbing’s response in May to New Zealand and Australia’s ‘serious concern about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, China,’ (对中国新疆的人权状况表示严重关切) and desire to see United Nations groups

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<sup>106</sup> "Foreign Ministry: Look at a map of the world and you'll see that China has friends all over. 外交部: 看看世界地图就知道, 中国的朋友遍天下," *People's Daily Online* 2021, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0324/c1002-32059941.html>. Hua's comments were also published in the Global Times. See, "Australia calls on China to allow UN experts to be allowed to visit Xinjiang. Hua Chunying: The door is always open, but how is the investigation into the crimes of Australian soldiers in Afghanistan going? 澳呼吁中国允许联合国专家访问新疆, 华春莹: 门始终开着, 但澳军人在阿富汗罪行查得怎么样了?," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/42R8dBVlrgp>.

<sup>107</sup> "New Zealand Parliament passes Xinjiang-related motion. Chinese Embassy in New Zealand: We urge New Zealand to respect objective facts and immediately halt its erroneous course of action. 新西兰议会通过涉疆动议 中国驻新西兰使馆: 敦促新方尊重客观事实, 立即停止错误做法," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/42zye4VMU1X>.

given ‘meaningful’ (有意义的) access to Xinjiang was covered in all three media outlets. The ‘leaders of Australia and New Zealand’ (澳大利亚、新西兰领导人) were said to be ‘making irresponsible remarks’ (说三道四) and were both criticised for making ‘baseless accusations against China, wantonly interfering in China’s internal affairs, which is a serious violation of international law and basic norms’ (对中方无端指责，粗暴干涉中国内政，严重违反国际法和国际关系基本准则). New Zealand and Australia were urged to ‘stop making irresponsible remarks and do more to benefit the development of bilateral relations and regional peace and stability, and not the opposite.’ (停止发表不负责任的言论，多做有利于双边关系发展和地区和平稳定的事，而不是相反).<sup>108</sup>

Another such example came from the China Business Summit in Auckland and was carried by both Xinhua Net and the People’s Daily Online. At the Summit, Ambassador Wu Xi was reported as saying that ‘issues such as Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan involve China’s sovereignty, security and development interests and it will absolutely not permit any external interference. It hopes that New Zealand will earnestly respect China’s core interests and serious concern’ (新疆、香港、台湾等问题涉及中国主权、安全和发展利益，绝不容许任何外来干涉，望新方切实尊重中方核心利益和重大关切).<sup>109</sup>

Several articles that reported on meetings between New Zealand and Chinese diplomats and politicians included statements from Chinese representatives on sensitive issues, such as the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. For instance, one article published in the *Global Times*, and sourced from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, included statements such as, ‘Xie Feng emphasised that issues related to Xinjiang and Hong Kong concern China’s sovereignty and

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<sup>108</sup> Zhuoyan Ma and Xin Cheng, "Foreign Ministry responds to Australian and New Zealand leaders' comments on China: Resolutely oppose gross interference in China's internal affairs. 外交部回应澳、新领导人涉华言论：坚决反对粗暴干涉中国内政," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-06/01/c\\_1127515148.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-06/01/c_1127515148.htm). "Foreign Ministry: The US is recognised as the world's foremost "hacking empire" and major stealer of secrets. 外交部：美国是公认的全球头号“黑客帝国”和窃密大户," *People's Daily Online* 2021, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0531/c1002-32118548.html>; "Foreign Ministry responds to Australian and New Zealand leaders' comments on China: Resolutely oppose gross interference in China's internal affairs. 外交部回应澳大利亚、新西兰领导人涉华言论：粗暴干涉中国内政，坚决反对," *Global Times* 2021, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43LiL9iCXeC>.

<sup>109</sup> Guo and Lu, "New Zealand-China Business Summit explores new models for developing bilateral trade. 新西兰中国商业峰会探讨发展双边贸易新模式.;" Guo and Lu, "New Zealand-China Business Summit explores new models for developing bilateral trade. 新西兰中国商业峰会探讨发展双边贸易新模式."



territorial integrity and touch upon Chinese core interests, interference by foreign forces will not be tolerated' (谢锋强调, 涉疆、涉港问题事关中国主权和领土完整, 涉及中方核心利益, 不容外部势力干预).<sup>110</sup> Even more simply, in a Xinhua Net article, it was written that 'China set forth its principled position on issues related to Hong Kong and Xinjiang' (中方阐述了在涉港、涉疆问题上的原则立场).<sup>111</sup> Whether or not these statements had been prompted by New Zealand raising concerns – either in the meetings or previously - was not made explicit in the articles in which the statements themselves were reported.

## Conclusion

This report has examined key themes present in the coverage of the New Zealand-China relationship by the People's Daily Online, Xinhua Net and the Global Times between the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021. The economic relationship between New Zealand and China was depicted as resilient and mutually beneficial - the FTA upgrade signed between the two countries in January was seen as highlighting this.

New Zealand was seen as striving to maintain an independent foreign policy. This stance was said to be motivated by a commitment to its national interests, which were presented as best served by maintaining a strong relationship with China. New Zealand's independence, it was argued, was a concern for other Western countries, the United States and Australia in particular. Western countries were said to be pressuring New Zealand to disregard its national interests and take a more oppositional approach to China. New Zealand's pragmatic relationship and positive engagement with China was often contrasted approvingly with Australia's more combative relationship with China.

The relationship between New Zealand and China was said to be a model that other countries, particularly those in the West, should strive to emulate. There were, however, times when New Zealand was rebuked for its criticism of China, although the specifics of its criticism were not made explicit.

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<sup>110</sup> "Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng meets with New Zealand Ambassador to China Clare Fearnley. 外交部副部长谢锋会见新西兰驻华大使傅恩莱."

<sup>111</sup> "Shen Yueyue holds video call with New Zealand Parliament Deputy Speaker Rurawhe. 沈跃跃与新西兰议会副议长鲁拉斐举行视频会晤," *Xinhua Net* 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-03/19/c\\_1127230814.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-03/19/c_1127230814.htm).

The way that these media articulate the New Zealand-China relationship to their audience - such as the importance of the New Zealand's trade relationship with China, its commitment to an independent foreign policy and the relative stability of its relationship with China when compared to its Trans-Tasman neighbour - would, at least on the surface, be familiar to consumers of news in New Zealand. However, there is a significant disconnect between their presentation of the relationship and how it is depicted in New Zealand's media. There is also a considerable divergence in how New Zealanders, in general, view their country's engagement with China. These differences are particularly pronounced for certain issues that are central to New Zealand's relationship with China, such as New Zealand's agency as an international actor, definitions of its national interests, and the concerns that it holds and has expressed to China. Having such significantly different narratives on these issues does, in some respects, run counter to the notion that the two countries are engaged in a mature and resilient relationship.

The media included in this report, while highly influential, are only three of many outlets in China's domestic mediasphere. Future research should focus on a broader array of outlets and mediums to better understand the range of views of the New Zealand-China relationship that the domestic Chinese audience is presented with. Additionally, a comparative study of New Zealand and Chinese media coverage of the relationship would be of great value in uncovering the similarities and differences in how the relationship is covered by media in both countries.

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