

New Zealand

Vanderbilt

New Zealand is coded as a democracy from independence in 1920. While we do not have Cheibub et al. regime type coding for the pre-1945 period, we code New Zealand as a parliamentary democracy. Archigos consistently codes PMs as effective rulers and the U.S. Department of State writes that “By the 1890s, parliamentary government along democratic lines was well-established [...]” Its political landscape has been dominated by the center-left Labour Party (Lab) and the conservative National Party (Nat). Until the introduction of a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system in 1996 there were no coalition governments (Woldendorp et al. 2000; Department of State 2011). From 1996 onward neither party has received an absolute majority. As a result New Zealand has known coalition or minority governments in the 1996-2008 period (Department of State 2011).

The political landscape in the pre-45 period was dominated by the United Party (Uni; formerly Liberal Party – LP) and the Reform Party (Ref). These two parties would later merge into the National Party (NP). Beginning in the 1930s, the Labor Party became a serious contender for government and after 1935 governments would alternate between Labor and the conservative NP (McLintock 1966, worldstatesmen.org).

The first post-war elections in December 1919 provided Massey’s Reform Party with a clear majority in government, after having been Prime Minister since 1912. However, in the 1922 elections the Reform Party lost its majority and had to govern with the support of four independents. Massey became increasingly ill in 1924 and died in May 1925. Following a short interim PM-ship by Bell (Ref), Coates (Ref) took over as PM. Under Coates the Reform Party would regain its absolute majority in Parliament (McLintock 1966).

In 1928 Coates was defeated in the general elections by Ward who had reconstructed the Liberal Party into the United Party and formed a government that relied on Labor support. Upon assuming office, Ward was very ill, and in 1930 his fellow party member Forbes took over as PM. In September 20, 1931, Forbes broke with Labor, and formed a coalition of the United and Reform Party (Hawke 1985, 146), and won the subsequent elections, which is coded as a minor SOLS change (McLintock 1966). In 1935 Forbes lost the elections to Savage’s Labor party (SOLS change). Subsequently, Savage formed the first Labor government, which heralded a spell of majority Labor governments that lasted beyond 1945. Consequently, no further SOLS changes were coded (McLintock 1966).

During and immediately following the Second World War, the country was led by the Labour Party under Prime Minister Peter Fraser. However, following the 1949 elections, New Zealand saw a long spell of conservative NP governments under Holland (Woldendorp et al. 2000; worldstatesmen.org). The transition to Holland is a SOLS change. Throughout 1956 Holland’s health deteriorated and he was succeeded by Holyoake (also NP) in 1957 (National.org.nz). This is not a SOLS change. Later that year Holyoake lost the election to Walter Nash of the LP. This is a SOLS change.

Nash served for one Labour term until 1960 and was succeeded by Holyoake, who led four successive NP governments before his retirement. Marshall of the NP finished Holyoake’s term. The transition to Holyoake is a SOLS change but the transition to Marshall is not. Marshall was defeated by Kirk of Labour shortly after assuming power in 1972. This is a SOLS change. Kirk died in office and his replacement Rowling (Labour) lost to Muldoon of the NP in 1975

(Woldendorp et al. 2000; worldstatesmen.org; national.org). This is a SOLS change. Muldoon headed yet another three cabinets of NP rule until Labour took over with Lange in 1984 (Woldendorp et al. 2000; worldstatesmen.org). This is a SOLS change. Labour dominance under Lange and his successor Palmer lasted a total of two cabinets until the NP (National Party) retook government in 1990 under the leadership of Bolger (Woldendorp et al. 2000; worldstatesmen.org). This is a SOLS change.

Following the 1996 introduction of the MMP electoral system, Bolger headed a government of the National Party that was joined by the UP - a formation of former Labor and NP MP's (minor SOLS, Feb 28). On 10 December 1996, Bolger's national party entered into coalition with the smaller New Zealand First party (NZF) (Europa World Yearbook 2003). This is coded as a minor SOLS change. Bolger was succeeded by Shipley of the NP as leader of the coalition. In August 1998, the NZF left the coalition, and the NP continued as a minority government (National.org.nz). The parting of the NZF was coded as another minor SOLS change.

Following the 1999 elections, it was Labour's turn to build a coalition government. This is a SOLS change. Helen Clark constructed a minority government with the Alliance (All.) that was supported by MP's of the Green Party. Following disintegration of the Alliance and increasing policy disagreement with the Greens, Clark called for new elections to be held in 2002. Following the July elections, Clark built a minority government that consisted of the LP and the Progressive Coalition (PC; also progressive Party - PP) with the support of the United Future New Zealand (UF). The Date of the coalition agreement, August 8, was coded as a minor coalition change (New Zealand Herald 2002). In the 2005 election, Clark's Labour Party surpassed the NP with a very narrow margin and built a minority coalition with the Progressive Party on October 17. Her coalition was dependent on support of the UF and NZF, with the UF and NZF even getting ministerial positions outside the cabinet (Bradford 2005, Department of State 2011). Labour's fortunes changed in 2008, however, when Clark lost to John Key of the National Party. The entry of his government on November 19 is coded as a SOLS change (worldstatesmen.org; Barrowclough 2008).

References:

Barrowclough, Anne. "John Key: victory for New Zealand's multimillionaire political novice." The Times, November 10, 2008.<

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article5119885.ece>>

Bradford, Gillian. "Clark forms nz coalition" Lateline - tv program transcript, Australian broadcasting corporation October 17,2005.<

<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2005/s1484340.htm>>

Department of State, U.S. Background Notes "New Zealand" (February 14, 2011).<

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35852.htm> >. Accessed on April 11, 2011.

Elections New Zealand. Available at << <http://www.elections.org.nz/elections/key-dates-electoral-reform.html>>> (Accessed 02/10/2012)

Europa World Yearbook. 2003. “*Regional surveys of the world: Far East and Australasia*” Psychology Press.

Hawke, Gary Richard. 1985. *The Making of New Zealand: An Economic History*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

McLintock, A.H (ed.). 1966. *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*. <http://www.teara.govt.nz>

National.org.nz – National Party Website <http://www.national.org.nz/About/history.aspx>

New Zealand Herald. “Clark sets up Govt with good faith, no surprises deal” New Zealand Herald, August 8, 2002. <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/election-2002/news/article.cfm?c_id=774&objectid=2348517>

U.S. Department of State. Background Notes “New Zealand”. Available at <<
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35852.htm>>> (Accessed 02/10/2012)

Coded by Eelco van der Maat (Vanderbilt)

Revised by Michaela Mattes (Vanderbilt) on 02/10/2012

Updated by Naoko Matsumura (Rice) on 06/18/2012

Post-1945 checked by Michaela Mattes (Vanderbilt) on 06/12/2011.

Post-1945 revised by Eelco van der Maat (Vanderbilt) on 10/10/2011

Combined by Matt DiLorenzo (Vanderbilt) on 06/21/2013

Edited by Andrew Wood (Rice) on 5/24/2014