

**France in the South Pacific:
Power and Politics**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy
of The Australian National University

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July 2011



Evans in the South Pacific

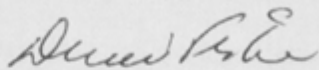
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A book published in the series of books of the
of the Australian National University

George Fisher

July 1954

I certify that this document is based on my own research and work, and that I have indicated through appropriate referencing where I have drawn on the work or comments of others.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Denise Fisher".

Denise Fisher

July 2011

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The analyses and any errors in this work are my own.

Abstract

France through its three Pacific entities is a resident sovereign neighbour in Australia's region. It has been a benign influence in recent years, with strategic benefits for Australia and the region. But this has not always been the case, and its accepted future presence may not be assumed. This thesis analyses France's history in the region to derive indicators for its future policies and regional security, at a time of global change.

France has earned a Pacific presence over more than four hundred years. Part I reviews its early history and motivations, which included a spirit of inquiry, internecine rivalry, national prestige and assertion of power, broadening to protection of its civil, missionary and convict populations. Economic considerations were secondary. New Caledonia's role in the American-led Pacific victory in World War II and the establishment of nuclear testing in French Polynesia enhanced the significance of the Pacific territories for France's national identity and strategic interests. These factors also catalysed the territories' demands for independence. Generous French financial and political inputs were accompanied by fitful and ambiguous responses. By the 1980s, France had left a poor legacy over Vanuatu's independence, unmet Kanak decolonization demands in New Caledonia had degenerated into civil war, and nuclear testing was increasingly opposed by new Pacific island states. Cosmetic efforts to counter regional opposition failed, undermined by France's bombing of an anti-nuclear vessel in New Zealand. By the end of the 1990s France was obliged to cease its nuclear testing and negotiate the Matignon/Noumea Accords deferring decisions about New Caledonia's status.

Part II addresses France's recent management of its entities' demands for more autonomy and independence, and its efforts to engage in the wider region, albeit as an outside power. Its record is mixed, and unfinished, as New Caledonia will vote on its future status after 2014. France has made impressive economic and political investments in its territories and the region. But it has resisted on matters fundamental to pro-independence forces. In New Caledonia, France has been slow to resolve differences over defining electorates, has encouraged French immigration to dilute indigenous numbers, has obfuscated ethnic censuses, has sought to pre-empt agreements on deferred defence and currency questions, and has been unclear about future immigration and mining responsibilities, while scheduled handovers and economic rebalancing have slipped. In French Polynesia, France has shown a lack of tolerance for a pro-independence elected majority.

Part III argues that France wants to retain sovereignty over its Pacific collectivities to enhance its international weight and for new economic reasons, as the world's second largest maritime nation through its Pacific coastlines, and given New Caledonia's nickel and hydrocarbon potential. Its ability to achieve this with regional acceptance will depend largely on peaceful democratic outcomes in its territories, particularly New Caledonia. Such outcomes are not assured. Some options for the future are identified.

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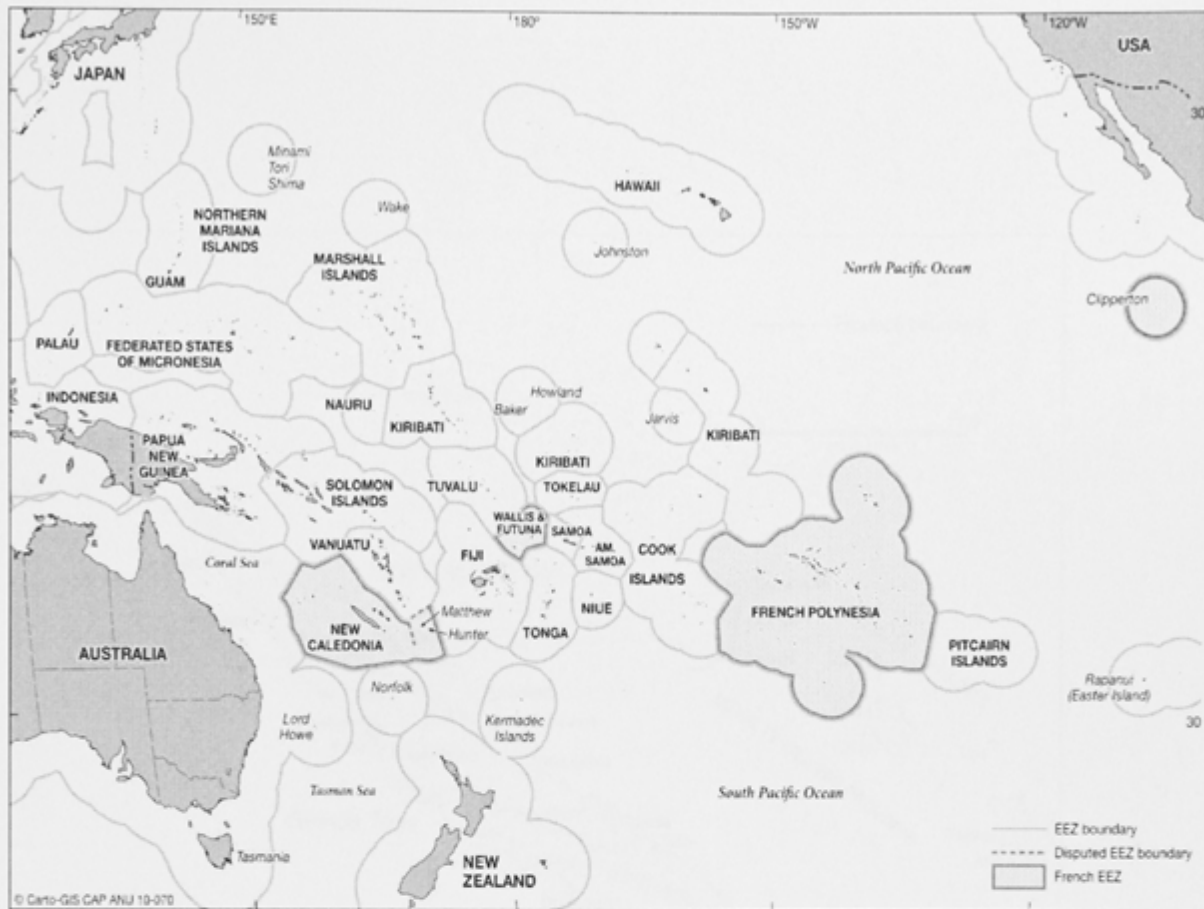
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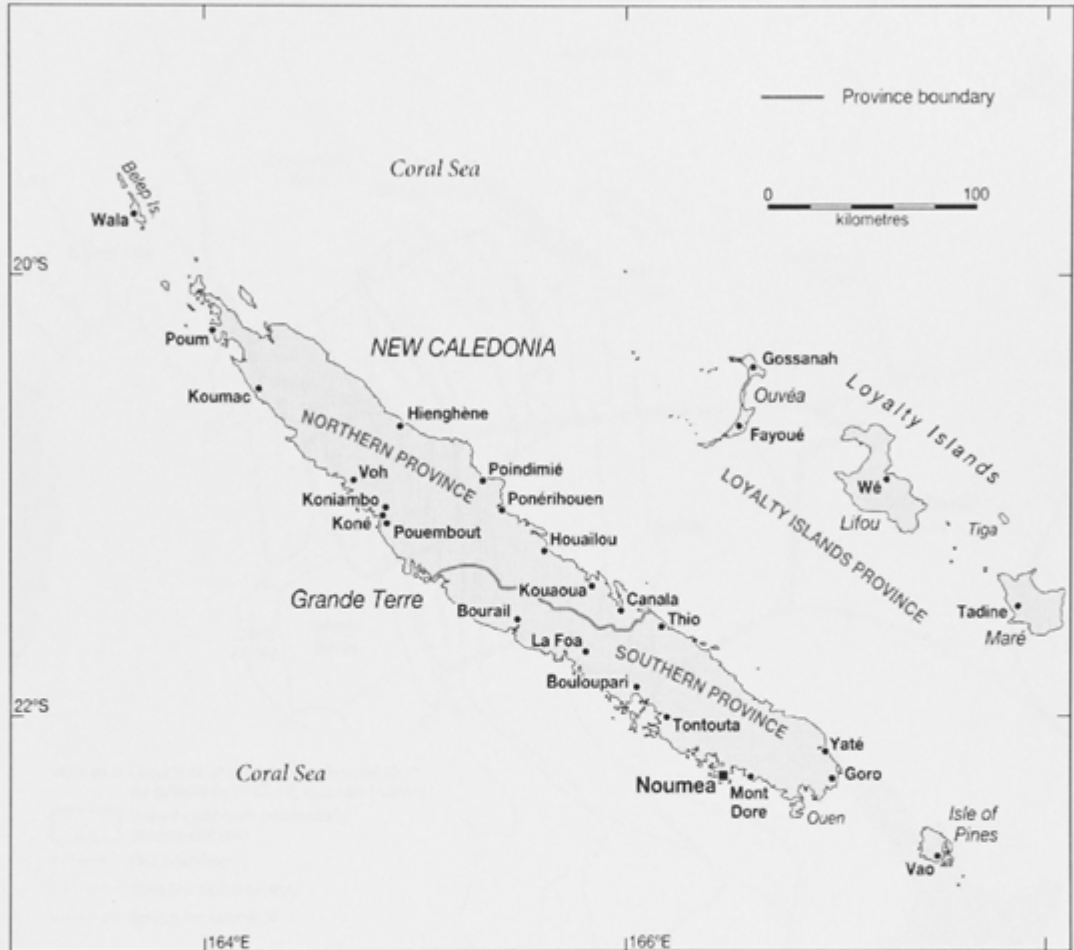
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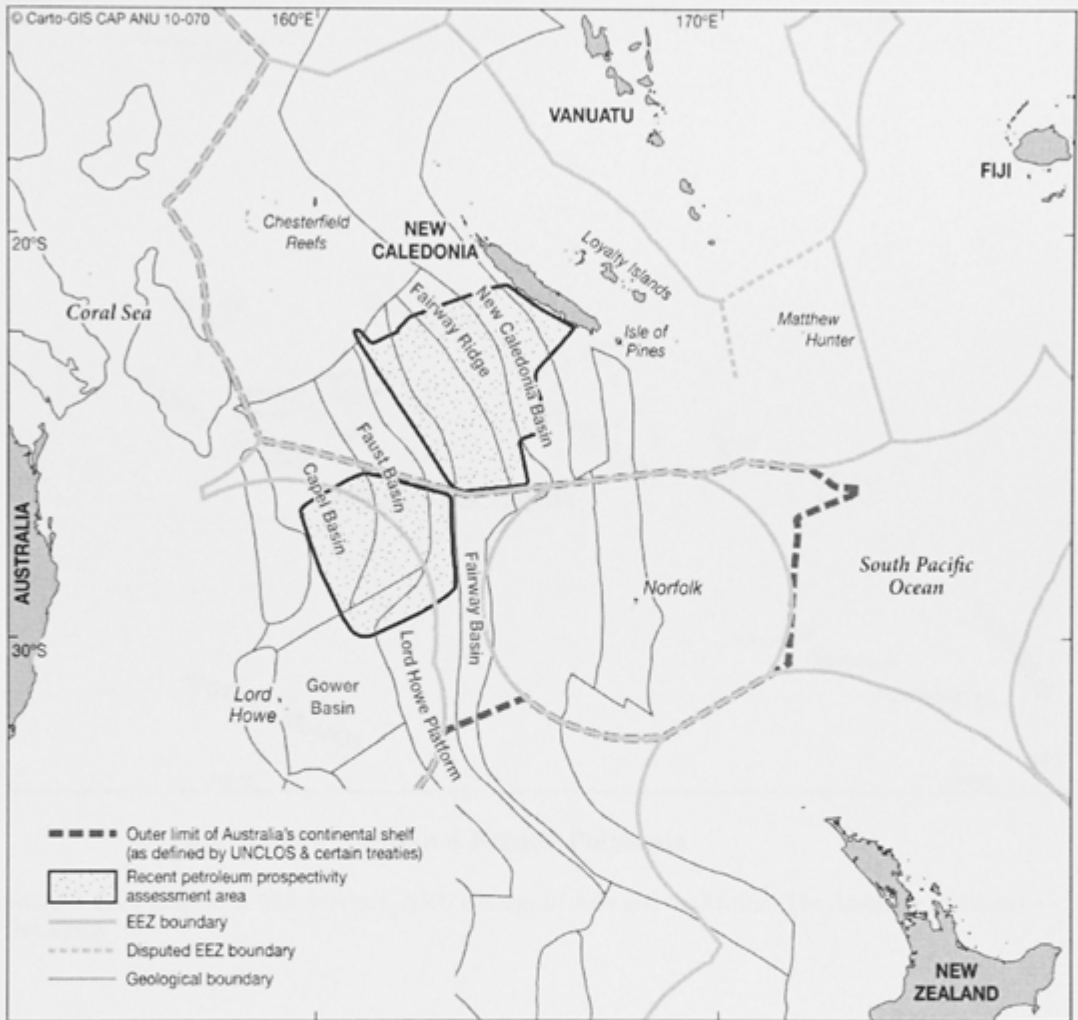
Map 1 France's South Pacific collectivities including Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)

Source: Cartographic & GIS Services, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University



Map 2 New Caledonia

Source: Cartographic & GIS Services, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University



Map 3 Location of Hydrocarbons off New Caledonia

Shaded areas indicate areas of recent petroleum prospectivity assessment by the Geological Survey of New Caledonia and Geoscience Australia, targeting known areas of comparatively thick sedimentary accumulations with likely petroleum potential

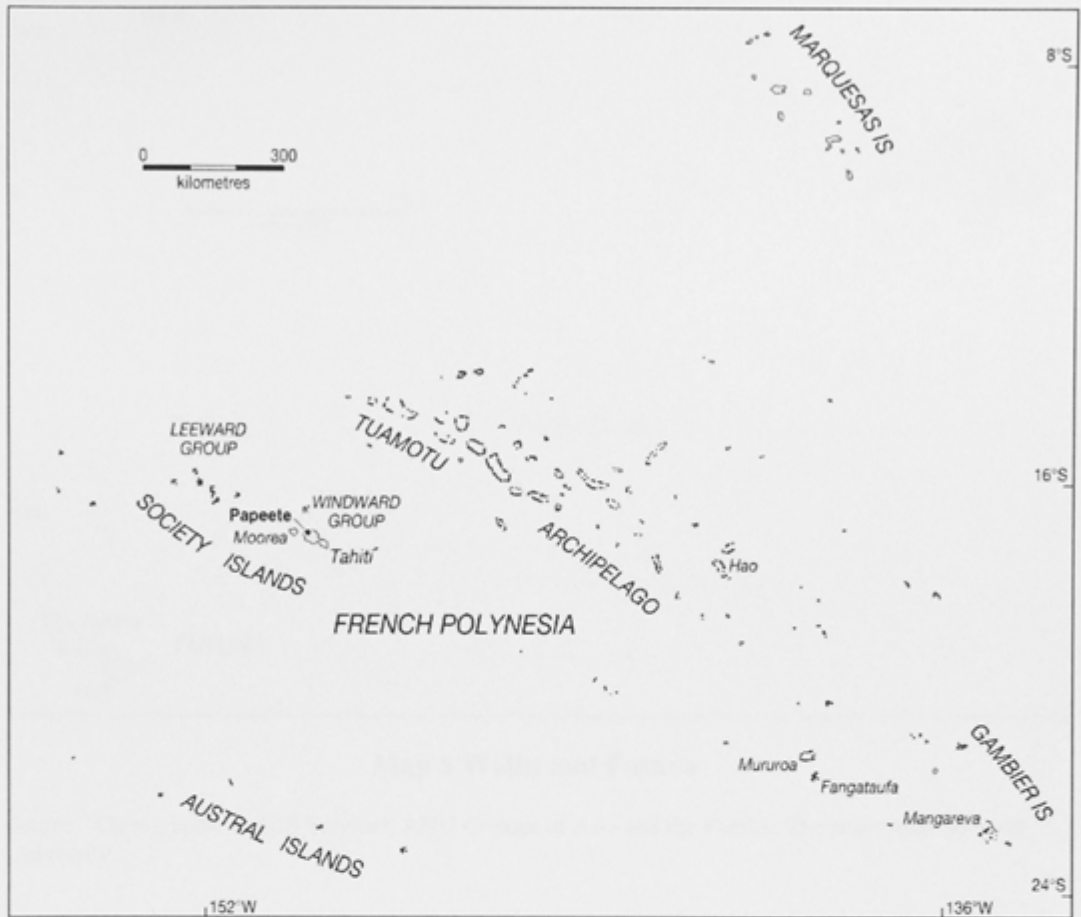
Source: Nouzé 2009; Geoscience Australia



Fig. 1. Location of Hydrocatchment of New Zealand.

Shaded areas indicate areas where we have not previously reported on the Hydrological Survey of New Zealand and Otago and Dunedin, which have been the subject of our previous work. The shaded areas are those that have been previously reported on.

Source: Jones 2009, Otago and Dunedin.



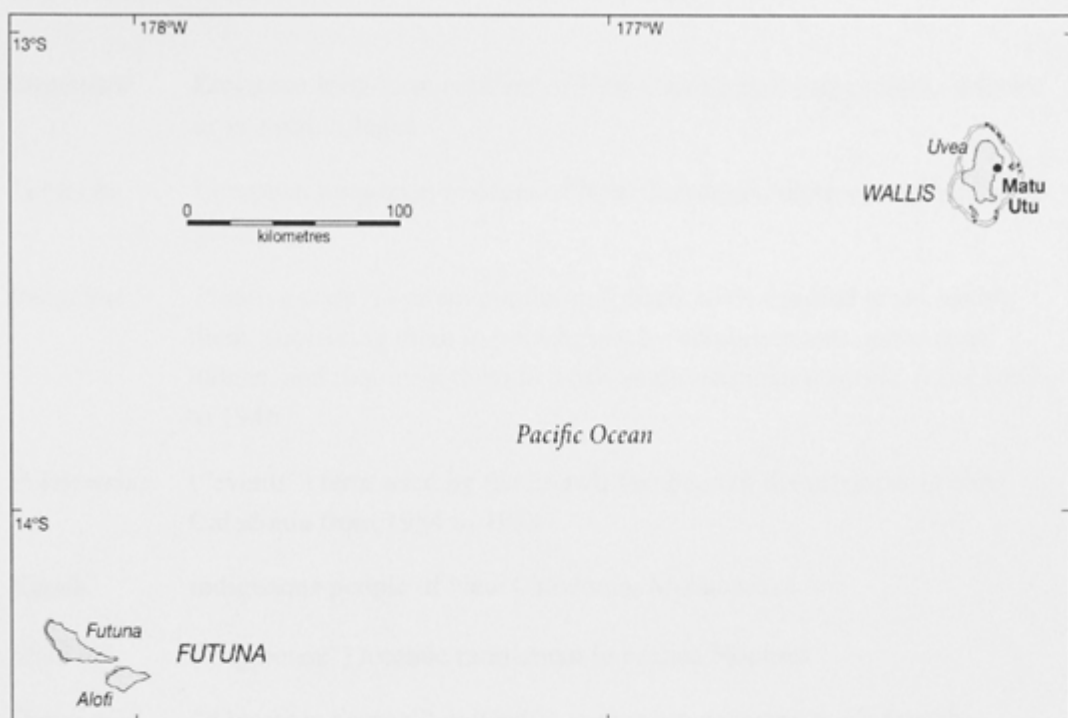
Map 4 French Polynesia

Source: Cartographic & GIS Services, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University



Map of French Polynesia

Source: Cartographie & GIS Service, ANU College of Arts and Education, The Australian National University



Map 5 Wallis and Futuna

Source: Cartographic & GIS Services, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University



Figure 5: [Illegible text]

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Glossary

<i>Broussard</i>	European long-term resident of New Caledonia living mainly on farms or in rural villages
<i>Caldoche</i>	European long-term resident of New Caledonia, often second and third generation
<i>Indigénat</i>	(“native code”) system confining Kanaks to designated areas, taxing them, subjecting them to punishment by administrators rather than judges, and requiring them to work on government projects, from 1887 to 1946
<i>Événements</i>	(“events”) term used by the French for the civil disturbances in New Caledonia from 1984 to 1988
Kanak	indigenous people of New Caledonia, Melanesians
<i>Mwá Ká</i>	(“big house”) totemic monument in central Noumea
<i>Outre-mer</i>	(“Overseas France”) collective expression referring to all French Departments, Territories and Collectivities overseas
<i>Régalien</i>	(“regalian”) sovereign, pertaining to the French sovereign state, often referred to in the Noumea Accord context as the five powers retained solely by the French State by the end of the Accord (2018), i.e. defence, foreign affairs, currency, justice and public order

Acronyms

French and Historic Institutions

ADECAL	<i>Agence de Développement Économique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> - New Caledonia Economic Development Agency
AFD	<i>Agence Française de Développement</i> - French Development Agency
CEP	<i>Centre d'Expérimentation du Pacifique</i> - Pacific Experimentation Centre, name for the French nuclear testing facility in French Polynesia
CFP	Currency of the French Pacific entities, variously translated as “ <i>Colonies Françaises du Pacifique</i> ” or “French Pacific colonies”, in early years; “ <i>Change Français du Pacifique</i> ” from 1947; and in recent years “ <i>Cours</i> ” or “ <i>Comptoir</i> ” “ <i>Français Pacifique</i> ”. It has a fixed value relative to the Euro, 1 CFP = .00838 Euro
COM	<i>Collectivités d'Outre-Mer</i> - Overseas collectivities

COMSUP	<i>Commandant Supérieur</i> - Commander of French Armed Forces
DOM-TOM	<i>Départements d'Outre-Mer, Territoires d'Outre-Mer</i> - Overseas Departments and Territories
EFO	<i>Établissements Français d'Océanie</i> - French Pacific Establishments, the former name for French Polynesia
EUR	Euro
FANC	<i>Forces Armées de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> - New Caledonian Armed Forces (French)
IFREMER	<i>Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer</i> - French Research Institute for Marine Exploitation
INCO	now Vale INCO - multinational nickel company operating in New Caledonia
INERIS	<i>Institut national de l'environnement industriel et des risques</i> - National Institute for Industrial Environment and Risk
INSEE	<i>Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques</i> - National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies
	<i>Institut agronomique de Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> New Caledonian Agronomic Institute
	<i>Institut Pasteur</i> Pasteur Institute, a French medical research institute
IRD	<i>Institut de Recherche pour le Développement</i> - Institute for Development Research
ISEE/ ITSEE	<i>Institut de la statistique et des études économiques/Institut territorial de la statistique et des études économiques</i> - Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies/Territorial Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (New Caledonia)
ISPF	<i>Institut de la statistique de Polynésie Française</i> - Statistics Institute of French Polynesia
LMS	London Missionary Society
RFO	<i>Radio France Outre-Mer</i> - France's overseas broadcasting service
SLN	<i>Société le Nickel</i> - The Nickel Company, French-owned nickel company in New Caledonia
STSEE	<i>Service Territorial de la Statistique et des Études Économiques</i> - Territorial Service for Statistics and Economic Studies (Wallis and Futuna)

Regional Pacific

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CRISP	Protection of Coral Reefs in the South Pacific Program
CROP	Council of Regional Organizations of Pacific
EDF	Economic Development Fund, regional funding arrangement of EU
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
FRANZ	France, Australia, New Zealand Arrangements to cooperate in maritime surveillance and regional disaster management
MSG	Melanesian Spearhead Group
OCO	Oceanic Customs Organization
PACER	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
PECC	Pacific Economic Cooperation Council
PICTA	Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
PIDP	Pacific Islands Development Program
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum (formerly South Pacific Forum, SPF, 1971 to 2000)
PITA	Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association
PPA	Pacific Power Association
PREPARE	Pacific Regional Endeavour for an Appropriate Response to Epidemics
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission
SPC	Secretariat for the Pacific Community (formerly South Pacific Commission from 1947 to 1998)
SPF	South Pacific Forum
SPNWFZ	South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone
SPREP	South Pacific Environment Program
SPTO	South Pacific Tourism Organization

International and Australian Institutions

ACP	EU Africa-Caribbean-Pacific developing country assistance program
ANSTO	Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organization
C24	Committee of 24, or Decolonization Committee within the Fourth (Political) Committee of the United Nations
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization
EC	European Commission
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
FAUST	French Australian Seismic Transect - program exploring offshore resources around New Caledonia
FEAST	French Australian Science and Technology program
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories of the EU members
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
STABEX	EU support for agricultural exports
SYSMIN	EU financing for mining products
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

New Caledonian institutions

ADCK	<i>Agence de Développement de la Culture Kanak</i> - Agency for Kanak Cultural Development
ADRAF	<i>Agence de Développement Rural et d'Aménagement Foncier</i> - Rural Development and Land Management Agency
ALK	<i>Académie des Langues Kanak</i> - Academy of Kanak Languages
	<i>Cadres d'Avenir</i> ("Future Executives") or <i>400 cadres</i> ("400 executives") positive action program for training and placement of Kanak executives
NMC	Nickel Mining Company, company involved in nickel mining in the north of New Caledonia

SLN	<i>Société le Nickel</i> - The Nickel Company, French-owned nickel company in New Caledonia
SMSP	<i>Société Minière du Sud Pacifique</i> - South Pacific Mining Company
SNNC	<i>Société du Nickel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> - New Caledonian Nickel Company, company involved in nickel mining in the north of New Caledonia
SOFINOR	<i>Société d'Économie Mixte de Développement Contrôlée par la Province Nord</i> - Mixed Economy and Development Company of the Northern Province
SPMSC	<i>Société de Participation Minière du Sud Calédonien</i> - South [New] Caledonian Mining Participation Company
STCPI	<i>Société Territoriale Calédonienne de Participations Industrielles</i> - [New] Caledonian Territorial Company for Industrial Participation
Zonéco	Program for resource assessment of New Caledonia's EEZ

Vanuatu Political Groups pre-independence

UPNH	<i>Union de la Population des Nouvelles-Hébrides</i> - Union of the New Hebrides Population
MANH	<i>Mouvement Autonomiste des Nouvelles-Hébrides</i> - Autonomist Movement of New Hebrides
UCNH	<i>Union des Communautés des Nouvelles-Hébrides</i> - Union of the Communities of New Hebrides

New Caledonian Political Groups

AE	<i>Avenir Ensemble</i> - Future Together - pro-France
AICLF	<i>Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyaltiens Français</i> - Association of Indigenous Caledonians and French Loyalty Islanders - 1946-1953
APLC	<i>Alliance Pour la Calédonie</i> - Alliance for [New] Caledonia - pro-France
CE	<i>Calédonie Ensemble</i> - [New] Caledonia Together - pro-France
CNDPA	<i>Conseil National des Droits du Peuple Autochtone</i> - National Council for Indigenous Peoples Rights - Kanak rights party

FCCI	<i>Fédération des Comités de Coordination des Indépendantistes</i> - Federation of the Independentist Coordination Committees - grouping of pro-independence parties
FI	<i>Front Indépendantiste</i> - Independence Front - pro-independence
FLNKS	<i>Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste</i> - National Kanak Socialist Liberation Front - pro-independence
FN	<i>Front National</i> - National Front - pro-France
FNSC	<i>Front National pour une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne</i> - National Front for a New Caledonian Society - pro-France
FULK	<i>Front Uni de Libération Kanak</i> - United Kanak Liberation Front - pro-independence
LKS	<i>Libération Kanak Socialiste</i> - Socialist Kanak Liberation - pro-independence
MCF	<i>Mouvement Calédonien Français</i> - French Caledonian Movement - pro-France
MDD	<i>Mouvement de la Diversité</i> - Diversity Movement - pro-France
Palika	<i>Parti de Libération Kanak</i> - Kanak Liberation Party - pro-independence
PSC	<i>Parti Socialiste Calédonie</i> - [New]Caledonian Socialist Party - pro-independence
PT	<i>Parti Travailleiste</i> - Labour Party - pro-independence
RDO	<i>Rassemblement Démocratique Océanien</i> - Democratic Oceanic Party - pro-independence
<i>Rheebu Nhuu</i>	("eye of the land") Kanak-based movement to protect the environment in the wake of nickel production
RPC	<i>Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie</i> - Rally for [New] Caledonia - pro-France party formed by Jacques Lafleur in 2006
RPCR	<i>Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie dans la République</i> - Rally for [New] Caledonia within the Republic - pro-France party formed by Jacques Lafleur in 1977 and re-named Rassemblement-UMP in 2004
R-UMP	<i>Rassemblement-UMP</i> - Rally-Popular Union Movement - pro-France
UC	<i>Union Calédonienne</i> - Caledonian Union - pro-autonomy from 1953 to 1977; pro-independence from 1977
UC Renouveau	<i>Union Calédonienne Renouveau</i> - Renewed Caledonian Union - pro-independence
UICALO	<i>Union des Indigènes Calédoniens Amis de la Liberté dans l'Ordre</i> - Union of Indigenous Caledonian Friends of Liberty in Order, from 1946 to 1953

UNI	<i>Union Nationale pour l'Indépendance</i> - National Union for Independence - pro-independence
UPAE	<i>Union Pour un Avenir Ensemble</i> - Union for a Future Together - pro-France
UPM	<i>Union Progressiste Mélanésienne</i> - Melanesian Progressive Union - pro-independence
USTKE	<i>Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanaks et des Exploités</i> - Federation of Unions of Kanak Workers and the Exploited

French Polynesian Political Groups and Expressions

<i>Ai'a Api</i>	New Homeland Party of Emile Vernaudeau - pro-autonomy, in various alliances
<i>Fetia Api</i>	New Star Party of Philip Schyle - pro-France
<i>Front de Libération de la Polynésie</i>	Polynesian Liberation Front (FLP) - pro-independence party precursor to Oscar Temaru's <i>Tavini</i>
<i>Here Ai'a</i>	Centre-left party
<i>Ia Mana Te Nunaa</i>	Power to the People - early pro-independence party
<i>Iorea Te Femua</i>	Land and Heart Party of Jean-Christophe Bouissou - pro-France
<i>O Porinetia to Tatou Ai'a</i>	Polynesia is Our Country Party of Gaston Song - pro-France
<i>Rautahi</i>	Unity Party of Jean-Christophe Bouissou - pro-France
<i>Tahiti Nui</i>	Greater Tahiti, name of proposal for a Noumea-type Accord for French Polynesia, and proposed alternative name for French Polynesia
<i>Tahoeraa Huira'atira</i>	People's Assembly led by Gaston Flosse - pro-France
<i>Tavini Huiraaatira - Serviteur du Peuple</i>	People's Servant Party led by Oscar Temaru - pro-independence
<i>Te Aia Api</i>	New Fatherland - early pro-autonomy party
<i>Te E'a Api</i>	New Way - early pro-autonomy party
<i>Te Here Ai'a</i>	Love of Fatherland - early pro-autonomy party
<i>Te Tiarama</i>	Pro-France party - <i>Tahoeraa</i> dissidents
<i>To Tatou Ai'a</i>	Our Land - pro-France coalition led by Gaston Song

- UPLD *Union pour la Démocratie* - Union for Democracy coalition led by Oscar Temaru - comprising pro-independence and pro-autonomy parties
- Union Tahitienne-Union pour la Défense de la République* - Tahitian Union-Union for the Defence of the Republic (UT-UDR) - early pro-France party precursor to Flosse's *Tahoeraa*
- Union Tahitienne-Union pour la Nouvelle République* - Tahitian Union-Union for the New Republic (UT-UNR) - early pro-France party

France in the South Pacific: Power and Politics

“Nous devons gérer les révolutions que nous ne pouvons pas éviter”¹

Introduction

The study and awareness in Australia of France’s presence and influence in the South Pacific have waned since France ended its controversial nuclear testing in French Polynesia in 1996 and seriously addressed Kanak demands for independence in New Caledonia through the Matignon and Noumea Accords from 1988 to 1998.

Few Australians are aware of the fact that France, present in its South Pacific entities New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna,² is one of Australia’s closest neighbours. New Caledonia is just two and a half hours flying time from Brisbane, but its name is less familiar to most Australians than the names of the Solomon Islands, Fiji, or even Tonga much further away. In recent years nightly regional Australian televised weather reports of the multi-ethnic government-subsidized channel, SBS, regularly omitted New Caledonia from their forecasts, presenters moving directly from pointing to Sydney across to Fiji, without reference to the long cigarette shaped main island of New Caledonia they traversed along the way. Including their maritime zones (Exclusive Economic Zones or EEZ), the three French Pacific entities stretch from east of Queensland to well over halfway across the Pacific. New Caledonia³ and French Polynesia respectively virtually bookend the South Pacific region, with Wallis and Futuna at the centre. France also possesses Clipperton Island, an uninhabited atoll southwest of Mexico, which is administered by the French authorities in French Polynesia.

For the last two decades, relative calm and stability have prevailed in the three French South Pacific entities. But in the two principal French Pacific collectivities, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, there are inherent instabilities. Administered by posted French officials side by side with elected local governments, they each have large indigenous populations and a history of protest and violence, and are inexorably anchored in their geographic region with links to neighbouring populations. Managing expectations of increasing autonomy within France and the region has called for innovation and flexibility. By the 1990s, the French were providing such a response, but only after serious opposition, including violence, in New Caledonia; a prolonged campaign in French Polynesia against nuclear testing there; and concerted regional

¹“We must manage those revolutions we can’t avoid”, Edgard Pisani, interview with Hugh White, Sydney Morning Herald reporter, 1985.

² With a constitutional change in 2003, under Article 74 of the French Constitution, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna became overseas collectivities or *collectivités d’outre-mer* (COM), and New Caledonia has a *sui generis* status as *collectivité spécifique* by virtue of section XIII of the Constitution (Faberon and Ziller, 2007 p.3). They will collectively be referred to as entities or collectivities. The South Pacific region will be considered to represent the regions encompassed by the members of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Pacific Islands Forum. Translations of French terms will be the author’s own.

³ which includes the islands of Walpole, Matthew and Hunter (or Fearn), Belep, Huon, Surprise, Chesterfield, Astrolabe and Bellone.

action and international criticism. Since it stopped nuclear testing in French Polynesia in 1996, and negotiated a renewed agreement, the Noumea Accord, transferring some autonomy and deferring a vote on independence in New Caledonia, France has generally maintained a creative, innovative approach for most of the last two decades. As regional leader and close neighbour, Australia has supported and encouraged France in these efforts.

But cracks are appearing. Instability in government has characterized French Polynesian governance since 2004. Critical deadlines are approaching in New Caledonia, Australia's near neighbour. There is a new generation of leaders in France, and given the priority France traditionally gives to its role in Europe, and its other domestic political and economic challenges, it is not certain that the solutions of the past will provide continued predictability and stability in the future. Nor even that France will remain in the region or, if so, on what terms.

Generally, very little has been written about the recent evolution of France's engagement in the South Pacific region. Strong views about the pros and cons of France's controversial engagement in nuclear testing and the decolonization of New Caledonia generally formed the basis of English and French language academic writings in the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, much of the commentary and academic literature on contemporary France in the South Pacific has emanated from the French Pacific collectivities themselves, or metropolitan France, and most is in the French language.⁴ In general, Australian academics and journalists writing on the South Pacific are restricted by language from exploring the French-language resources. This means that the complexities surrounding the French entities, and their role in the region, risk being overlooked by Australian policymakers. It also means that for French readers, some regional perspectives, including Australian perspectives, have been represented generally from a French viewpoint. Moreover, in the recent French-language literature, the voice of the indigenous people is notably absent.⁵ Thus this literature tends to favour, or assume, the continued presence of France, and to paint an unalloyed positive picture of France and its policies in its collectivities and in the wider region. The general consensus in the recent French literature is that the bad old days are behind France, and France, with its reformed policies, is now a welcome, unreservedly

⁴A decade of analysis in English in the 1980s by Australian-based writers including journalist Nic Maclellan (often in collaboration in both languages with French academic Jean Chesneaux), John Connell, Robert Aldrich, Stewart Firth, Stephen Henningham, Stephen Bates, and Helen Fraser, abated by the mid 1990s. While Nic Maclellan continues to write on the subject, along with Hawaii-based David Chappell and Quebec-based Eric Waddell, most recent writings are primarily in French, including by Paul de Deckker, Alain Christnacht, Jean-Pierre and François Doumenge, Isabelle Cordonnier, Jean-Yves Faberon, Mathias Chauchat, Pierre Cadéot, Nathalie Mrgudovic, Jean-Marc Regnault, and Frédéric Angleviel.

⁵ Indigenous views are not prolific. They are generally reported through publications such as the daily *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* and *La Dépêche de Tahiti* or New Caledonia's cultural periodical *Mwà Véeé*; party websites such as Palika's journal.kanal.org; or through cultural writings such as those by poet and politician, Déwé Gorodey. Even the views of Kanak leaders Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Paul Néaoutyine are recorded primarily in collections of their interviews (see References and Bibliography).

positive influence in the region.⁶ With its diplomatic attention focused in troublespots elsewhere in the Pacific, the Australian government tends to concur in this view.⁷

This thesis will question this assumption. It is written by a former Australian diplomat with a focus on broad strategic positions and practical policy. The work is based on an examination of the available literature, particularly the contemporary literature. It also draws on interviews conducted by the author with key figures in Paris, the French collectivities and in Australia, not only during the course of research, but also during a three-year posting as Australia's Consul-General in the French Pacific collectivities, based in Noumea, from 2001 to 2004. It starts with a review of the history and rationale underpinning France's South Pacific presence, and considers future directions and challenges, in the broad context of regional security. It will present for the English language reader some of the thinking evident in recent French language literature to add to understanding of contemporary French policy. Finally, it may signpost areas for further attention by Australian students of international relations, in an area that has generally been neglected but that offers significant rewards in terms of its direct relevance to Australian interests.

As set out in Chapters 1 and 2, history suggests that France has as much right to be present in the region as Australia does (an assertion that was much disputed during the 1980s and early 1990s when France's policies were opposed in the region). France has been in the region as long as any other European power. It has invested significant financial, political and human resources in ensuring a continued presence. Securing the Matignon/Noumea Accords in New Caledonia and statutory reform in French Polynesia enabled France to claim, as did Louis Le Penec, then Minister for Overseas France,⁸ that its presence is based on the democratic will of the people in its Pacific collectivities, including their indigenous peoples (Le Penec, 1990). In recent years France has sought to improve its image and engagement in the broader region.

One weakness in this argument is that the democratic will of the people in its Pacific collectivities is yet to be fully tested on the subject of their future status relative to France. Ideas about independence, decolonization and emancipation are still evolving in the Pacific collectivities. Both French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna look to New Caledonia to set the pace of their own future status. In French Polynesia, increasing support for pro-independence parties seeking, at the least, the autonomy measures accorded to New Caledonia, has been frustrated by pro-France pressure and marked by outbursts of violence and ongoing political instability. The tiny collectivity of Wallis and Futuna, ruled by an alliance of Kings, Church and State, is dependent on the

⁶ Evident in the assertion by former Prime Minister Michel Rocard in a forward to Nathalie Mrgudovic's work, *La France dans le Pacifique Sud: Les enjeux de la puissance* (2008) that France had passed "from the ranks of detested power... to one more like that of 'big sister'" (p.13).

⁷ Then Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Affairs Duncan Kerr, on 18 November 2008, spoke of Australia's "strong appreciation for the role of France in the region supporting the region's security and development" and said he was "convinced... that genuine integration is the key to a stable and prosperous future here [in New Caledonia]", Media Release, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 18 November 2008.

⁸ The term "Overseas France" will be used as an equivalent to France's use of the term *L'Outre-mer*, or overseas dependencies.

continued prosperity of New Caledonia where most of its people work. And in New Caledonia, the democratically-endorsed Noumea Accord and its suite of irreversible provisions for increased autonomy is yet to be fully implemented and is a transition measure only, on the future of which critical votes have yet to be cast.

This work will argue that central to France's continued positive influence and acceptance in its collectivities, and in the region, will be democratic governance there, particularly France's ability to find a long-term democratic solution to the status of New Caledonia by 2018. The provisions of the Noumea Accord come to an end by 2018, with votes to be held on the future status of New Caledonia between 2014 and 2018 (although one senior French adviser has already suggested the vote could technically be held as late as 2023, Christnacht 2011).

Regional leaders as a whole remain wary of France. Many remember the failed policies of the 1980s and early 1990s, when France was a force for instability in the region. While cautiously welcoming France's recent positive engagement, they hold high expectations for France's treatment of its collectivities, and its contribution to the economic development of the region. Paradoxically, the many post-colonial instabilities within the independent island countries of the Pacific seem to sharpen their leaders' expectations of France and its entities. This is particularly true of leaders of the Melanesian countries of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Fiji. In these Melanesian countries, important developments relating to the assertion of indigenous claims are evolving in parallel with New Caledonia's transition processes and deadlines under the Noumea Accord, creating their own uncertainties and potential for ongoing instability. Fiji, prey to government by military coup, is seeking a workable long-term democratic process to address the claims of all elements of its population, a population as ethnically divided as New Caledonia's. In the wake of internal division, the future of the Solomon Islands and the Regional Assistance Mission there is yet to be resolved permanently. Papua New Guinea has managed violent opposition to government policies in Bougainville by drawing partly upon the Noumea Accord model, providing for progressive autonomy with its own electoral deadlines falling due from 2011 to 2016, coincident with the Noumea Accord deadlines. West Papuan claims for independence from Indonesia remain a fractious issue for many regional Melanesians.

All these countries are members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), which was formed to support Kanak claims in New Caledonia. The MSG has shifted its focus to economic issues in recent years, but it remains a forum for Melanesian expression on regional issues, and it remains watchful of outcomes in New Caledonia.⁹ The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the United Nations Committee on Decolonization, while relatively dormant on the issue in recent years, retain a watching brief over New Caledonia. The positive relationships France has fostered in the region, and by extension the role of Europe and the effectiveness of the EU in the South Pacific, which France has led, are all at stake as the future of New Caledonia unfolds.

⁹ The MSG sent a visiting mission to New Caledonia in June 2010 to assess the implementation of France's promises under the Noumea Accord.

Strategic benefits for France

France's Pacific presence represents a global strategic asset. Its Pacific entities, as will be shown, are a key link in its worldwide chain of overseas possessions, with the potential for mismanagement to set off domino reactions elsewhere along the chain. Retaining a physical global presence has lent weight to France's claim to continue as one of only five powerful Permanent Members of the UN Security Council wielding a veto in the UN, at a time when the composition of that group is under discussion. Its sovereignty in the Pacific, and naval presence there, though small, mean France can bring a unique perspective to its NATO membership including its renewed participation in the High Command. As a leading EU nation, France's Pacific possessions provide an important support basis for activities such as the European space program.

Within the Pacific, the resident presence of France enables it to play a significant strategic role complementary to that of regional allies - the US, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan - and potentially balancing newcomers such as China at a time of global power shifts.

For France, New Caledonia represents a source of significant strategic resources such as nickel (it is believed to represent 30-40% of the world's nickel and the third largest world's reserves) and potentially petroleum (there are signs of hydro-carbons in the basins off New Caledonia and Australia). New Caledonia, along with French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, offer France the potential resources of their vast Pacific maritime EEZ. Together, they contribute 7.6 m. sq. km. of France's total of 11.57 m. sq. km. of EEZ. Controlling these existing and potential assets positions France at the forefront of the global marketplace, at a time when new long-term supplies of resources and energy are in demand.

Strategic benefits for Australia and the region

These region-wide and global dimensions of France's presence have specific security implications for the region, particularly for Australia as leading power of the region. France's responsibility for the smooth administration of its three collectivities in the Pacific has meant that, for the last two decades, Australia could devote its diplomatic and development cooperation effort elsewhere in the Pacific. Broadly, as noted by the Australian government's White Paper on Foreign Affairs and Trade, "instability in the South Pacific negatively affects Australia's ability to protect its eastern approaches" (Foreign Affairs and Trade 2003, p. 20). In crude terms, if the French were to leave, there would be three more potentially fragile island economies on Australia's doorstep, with all the diplomatic energy and resources required of Australia to ensure their development and stability appropriate for its security.

Australia and New Zealand together could never match the \$A 4.5 b. a year France puts into its entities. Without these inputs, there would be an inevitable weakening of these economies, with resultant security vulnerabilities for the region, and Australia. Whereas the populations of the French Pacific collectivities represent only less than 6% of the

population of the South Pacific countries in the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC), or 515,000 of a total population of 9.1 million of all SPC island member countries, they currently represent the highest standard of living of the Pacific island entities, with per capita incomes exceeding those of New Zealand (from Secretariat for the Pacific Community October 2006 figures, website www.spc.int accessed December 2008), due largely to significant French financial inflows. An unstable New Caledonia on its doorstep would impose particularly urgent demands on Australia, within the already tenuous Melanesian “arc of instability” embracing its northeast shores. Weak independent states of French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna would add further to the demands, not only on Australia and New Zealand, but on regional Pacific organizations, the PIF, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and the multiple regional organizations under the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP).

A second related factor is the regional burdensharing that France has provided, especially in recent years. For Australia, in whose charge the main weight of development and security of the island states remains, the political and economic resources of a major European state with a regional presence accepted by the wider region are welcome contributions to the region. Apart from up to \$A 163 m.¹⁰ it provides annually to numerous regional agencies and bilaterally, France, as a founding EU member, has been a prime instigator of the EU’s Pacific island development assistance programs. France is well-placed to improve the effectiveness and size of EU contributions to the region.

France’s presence carries strategic significance in the region. While the importance of the French collectivities in protecting sea routes and providing re-supply bases has diminished with global and technological change, that role remains. Noumea provided an important staging point for Australian ships during the 2006 Fiji coup and in the evacuation of injured servicemen when a Blackhawk helicopter crashed into a destroyer at that time. The presence of several thousand skilled and trained military personnel of a western ally, at the western and eastern ends of the Pacific in Noumea and Papeete, is a regional security asset for Australia. The French were the first physically to respond to Australia’s call for support in East Timor in 1999, being able to send a vessel that was already in the region.

And the future presence of France in the collectivities, made on a clear basis of choice governed by democratic principle, would constitute a belt of western and European interest and values in the region at a time when northern Asian interests are changing, with resource-hungry China turning its attention to the South Pacific.

Global security is now determined by more than military might, as it also involves good governance, successful environmental management and a predictable resource and energy supply. The French entities currently enjoy generally democratic government and a French justice system which accommodates local custom. They are a potential vehicle for French and local scientific and technical research and collaboration

¹⁰ See Chapter 7 for figures on French aid to the Pacific region

addressing major global environmental issues. Their extensive maritime zones, backed by French investment, represent potentially valuable albeit unchartered seabed resources at a time when the world is re-thinking its long-term future energy and mineral needs.

In the broader Pacific region the predictabilities of the past are giving way to the challenges of the future. The immediate post-colonial period is behind it, and the effects of globalization, while they present opportunities, also highlight weaknesses and vulnerabilities, as the global financial crisis has shown. Environmental issues present unique challenges for the island states. Concerns of traditional donors about governance problems, with their negative impact on the effectiveness of development cooperation that leave the island states open to the import of terrorism, raise complex security concerns. All of these factors have heightened the stark reality of the region's poverty and dependence on patron states. Meeting these challenges region-wide requires flexible approaches to cooperation and governance.

The conjunction of political and economic change within France, the effects of developments such as the global financial crisis and climate change on the wider Pacific region, and Australia's own growing strategic interest in France's democratically-based presence, has led to a narrowing of the difference between the interests of France and those of Australian and other regional governments, providing scope for closer cooperation in new areas and new ways

This thesis will argue that, with much depending on the *democratic* presence of France in the region, France's securing a successful, democratic outcome in New Caledonia will be the key, both to France continuing to derive strategic benefits in the region, and for Australia's ongoing regional security interests. Addressing ongoing instabilities in French Polynesia and ensuring continued tranquility in Wallis and Futuna, whose statutory framework dates from 1961, will be important. But these two collectivities look to New Caledonia as a model. And New Caledonia is in the midst of an agreed transition process, with specific deadlines for a democratic outcome, which is being watched by regional leaders. With its mineral wealth, status as France's regional base for its military and scientific research presence, and its proximity to the largest regional power, Australia, New Caledonia represents a significant strategic investment for France. As French academic Xavier Pons so eloquently put it when writing in 1991, New Caledonia's importance is that of "its potential as a powder keg, which, if it were to explode, might contribute to destabilize the whole region" (in Aldrich 1991 p.145). This remains as true now as it was then.

After the Noumea Accord?

In seeking a long-term solution to the future status of New Caledonia, French and local leaders have a range of alternatives to consider, including by drawing from the options already in operation in the Pacific island countries. Independence is not the only option, and indeed is seen as unlikely by many, in view of the demographic and economic realities in New Caledonia. But it is an option which some in New Caledonia will not give up lightly, having been willing to shed blood for it only twenty years ago.

With the future arrangements in New Caledonia, its pre-eminent Pacific entity, to be decided from 2014 to 2018, it is a propitious time to review elements of France's presence in the South Pacific, its official actions and policies, motivations, and its relationship with the wider region; and to reflect on future challenges, risks and options. To set this analysis in context, Part I will present an overview of the history of France's presence in the Pacific, from the time of the first French pirates with names like *Hallebarde* (after the ancient weapon of that name) and *Passe Partout* ("Go-anywhere") in the early 17th century, to the establishment of its colonial presence which could have easily included both Australia and New Zealand. It will then consider the World War II period, when Australia played a prime role in establishing the Gaullist French government in New Caledonia, in one of its first acts of national diplomatic independence; and the troubled post-war years when France's view of its presence as a projection of its worldwide middle power status reinforced its pursuit of policies overriding local sensitivities, creating problems to which it was required to respond.

Part II will examine the period after France's cessation of its nuclear tests (1996) and the conclusion of the Noumea Accord in 1998, a time when significant statutory change has been implemented in both French Polynesia and New Caledonia, a transition which is still in process. It will also survey France's policy towards the region as a whole, including the greater engagement of the EU there.

Part III will identify France's continuing motivations for staying in the region; some of the risks and uncertainties surrounding those interests; and the challenges for the future, including options for New Caledonia, and for how France might work with Australia and other regional countries to advance shared objectives.

Part I – France in the Pacific to 1990s

Chapter 1

The French Pacific presence to World War II

The image of the French in Australia is a complex mix of impressions. Australians see the French as a highly cultivated people, with a passion for perfection in knowledge and in the day-to-day elements of life whereby clothing becomes *haute couture* and food *haute cuisine*, a finely tuned sense of the romantic and the amorous, a healthy not to say excessive suspicion of all things Anglo-Saxon, an uncompromisingly juridical approach to life, an almost manic respect for the ambiguities and inflections of their own language, and a strong sense of religiosity associated with the Catholic church. There is a quixotic element to Australians' idea of the French, in whom Latin emotions are perceived to take over and at times inveterate stubbornness can give way to a disarming desire to right wrongs.

At the same time, in foreign policy circles, the image of France is that of a country single-minded in its pursuit of its national interests, to the extent that it can ride apparently roughshod, and unapologetically, over the interests of others. To the more initiate Australian, the French maintain such a pride for their own culture and their civilizing mission that they have coined a phrase, *rayonnement de la culture française*, which is untranslatable in other languages but which conveys a sense of transfiguring radiation of their culture, as if from a divine presence.

And ultimately France represents, for most Australians, the notions of *liberté, égalité et fraternité*, a semantic trinity which it first coined, to which Australians, often unwittingly, owe the basis of their own national institutions, and by which values France is held, often to higher standards than others.

In the long stretch of the history of France's presence in the South Pacific region all of these qualities in their contradictoriness and ambiguity are present in abundance. The story is one of courage, endurance, failure, at times brilliant success, stubbornness, and overall, of extensive financial and cultural investment. To examine this history, even in a cursory way, is to embark on an adventure as gripping as the history of Australia's British ancestors in its region, and just as important for Australians to understand because it has contributed to Australia's own national character and security.

Earliest French contact with the Pacific

For many French historians, serious French interest in the Pacific dates from the venturing of the great French explorer Bougainville, from 1766 to 1769. But France's very early contacts are of some interest as they embody the complex features of the later presence. The great Pacific historian, John Dunmore, has provided a detailed record of the evolution of France's presence including from their earliest travellers (see Dunmore 1978 and 1997). This review draws heavily from his work but skims only

lightly through the highlights of French discovery to define characteristics which inform understanding of current French policies.

Dunmore records the first French speculation about a southern land as being posed by a French monk, Lambert, in the 11th century. In 1503, a French explorer, Paulmyer de Gonneville arrived in a southern land, bringing back to France one of the locals, called Essomeric. But because de Gonneville was shipwrecked on his return after an encounter with pirates in the English Channel, losing all records of where he navigated, it is only largely conjecture that he landed either in Africa or Madagascar, or more probably in Brazil. But an important consequence was that his mysterious voyage set off further French and other efforts to find the southern land (see also Sankey 1991).

Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Century: the Spanish lake

In the 16th and 17th centuries the Spanish and Dutch led the quest in the Pacific. But Frenchmen were also present. There were nineteen French crew on Ferdinand Magellan's expedition which passed around the southern tip of South America to the Pacific in 1520. In 1608, Pierre-Olivier Malherbe travelled through Mexico and into the Pacific and the Solomon Islands. Less is known of the voyages of Jean-Baptiste de la Feuillade, who may have reached the Moluccas before being shipwrecked at the southern tip of South America. In the 1680s French pirates were active primarily in the Caribbean, but there are reports that they reached the Pacific coast (Dunmore 1997 p. 17). They had names like *Passe-partout* ("able to go anywhere"), *Hallebarde* ("halberd", a lethal 16th century weapon), and *Vent-en-panne* ("reviving wind"). There is evidence that one of these, Ravenau de Lussan, crossed the Isthmus of Panama into the Pacific in 1685, along with a group of other French and English buccaneers (which included William Dampier). Another French buccaneer, Massertie, travelled along the Pacific coast from 1683 to 1693.

The British and French group fell out after a number of years, partly because of differences between the Catholic French and the Protestant British in their numbers, a sign of conflicts to come. Massertie's return to France in 1693 sparked the interest of Jean-Baptiste de Gennes, who in 1695 led a fleet of 6 ships with official French Government support, in search of wealth and to assert a French presence in competition with that of Spain. But the expedition turned back at the southern tip of South America, defeated by bad weather.

By the 17th and early 18th century, French exploration in the Pacific was characterized by conjecture, patriotism marked by rivalry with other nationalities, shipwrecks, a missionary spirit, and later, by a certain commercial interest. But this period was not to see the effective establishment of a French presence.

After De Gennes' efforts, there followed a period when only privately funded French vessels travelled to the Pacific, leading to increasingly commercial activity.¹¹ The French India Company operated in the Pacific from 1706, and one of its ships, the *Saint-Louis*, was the first to sail around Cape Horn at the Southern American tip, and then across to and around the Cape of Good Hope, in 1707, establishing a critical new southern route between America and Africa. The first French circumnavigation of the globe was undertaken in this commercial environment, by Sebastien Dufresne in 1711, in the *Grand-Dauphin*.

This growing activity entailed difficulties with the dominant power, Spain, with whom France had to negotiate delicately. French officially-sanctioned trade ostensibly ceased, after the Treaty of Utrecht brought an end to the Spanish War of Succession in 1713, although the rules were honored in the breach and some activity continued. But with renewed hostilities against Spain in the Quadruple Alliance (with Britain, the Netherlands and Austria), French merchant ships revived their trade. By 1720, the French India Company had been rejuvenated and controlled 300 ships. Between 1698 and 1725, over 168 French ships were known to have sailed the Pacific, of which 12 were wrecked and 13 captured (Dunmore 1997 p 33).

The nature of French merchant activity in the Pacific in these early years, affected by European treaty and alliance relationships, showed the primordial effect of European political events and policy which, as will be shown, was to be a hallmark of France's presence in the South Pacific into the 21st century.

This period also saw the beginnings of scientific and strategic interest in the Pacific. The scientist Louis Feuillet visited the Pacific and taught astronomy in Peru from 1707 to 1712. Amédée-François Frézier, an army defence specialist, was sent by Louis XIV to South America to report on Spanish defences. He pursued his astronomy, botany and navigation interests there from 1711 to 1717 and drew the first reliable map of South America (Dunmore 1997 pp. 34 and 35). He was the first to emphasize the strategic importance of the South Pacific.

It was the scientific spirit of inquiry which prevailed following the early days of intensive commercial voyages in the eighteenth century. This was the time of the *philosophes* in Paris, who debated issues of the day in private *salons* informally sanctioned by the King. In 1756 the *Histoire des navigations aux terres australes* ("History of navigation in the southern lands"), the ideas put forward by Charles de Brosses, a shareholder of the French India Company, proved more durable and influential than his own visits to the Pacific. He argued for exploration, knowledge and commerce rather than conquest; for colonial establishments to provide bases for French fleets; and even suggested penal settlement as a substitute for penal punishment, all features to be taken up in subsequent years. It is de Brosses who first coined the terms "Australasia" and "Polynesia" (Bachimon 1990 p. 18). Dunmore noted that much of de

¹¹ These traders included Jacques Gouin de Beauchesne (1698), Noel Danycan (1701), Julien Bourdas (1701), Nicolas de Frondat (1707) and Michel-Joseph du Bocage de Bléville (who discovered Clipperton Island in 1711, which remains French today).

Brosses' work was controversially pirated by Englishman John Callander in his 1768 *Terra Australia Cognita*, a precursor of the rivalries and one-upmanship which was to characterize, and advance, the opening up of the South Pacific.

Eighteenth Century: From exploration to staking French claims

The voyage by Louis-Antoine Bougainville to the South Pacific from 1766 to 1769 is seen as a turning-point for the French. It embodied many of the features of future French exploration. This French aristocrat, who had studied science and mathematics, had a complicated history with the British. He had served as a diplomat at the French embassy in London and was elected as a member of the London Royal Society after publishing a treatise on calculus. With the outbreak of the Seven Year War, Bougainville served as *aide-de-camp* to Montcalm, the French commander in Canada, and negotiated the French evacuation after their defeat by the British.

Bougainville turned his mind to establishing a French South Pacific settlement to compensate France for the loss of Canada, setting a trend whereby French action in the Pacific would be motivated by balancing losses elsewhere (for example in Algeria and Indo-China, see Chapter 2). First he successfully installed a French colony in the Falkland Islands at the southern tip of South America, to control the gateway to the Magellan Straits and act as a bulwark against British ambitions in the eastern Pacific. In doing so he provoked concern both in Madrid and London. Under Spanish pressure, Bougainville withdrew his settlement and in return was granted a voyage to the South Pacific, setting off in 1766 (Dunmore 1977 p. 44).

Bougainville laid the French claim to the East Tuamotu islands in 1767, and then Tahiti in 1768, parts of what is now French Polynesia, establishing the future pattern of making a written declaration of possession for France and, in Tahiti, burying it in a bottle. He was accompanied by a number of scientists. His crew included many colourful characters, including the Prince of Orange and Nassau, and a woman disguised as a male valet (Ibid. p. 46; see Bougainville 1772 p. 13 and 301; and Cazaux 1995).

Bougainville initiated the sensuous, free island image of Tahiti and the South Pacific which endures to this day in French minds. In his own words, a young Tahiti woman from the canoes surrounding Bougainville's vessels climbed aboard "and negligently allowed her loincloth to fall to the ground...Sailors and soldiers hurried to get to the hatchway, and never was a capstan heaved with such speed" (cited by Dunmore who noted that "On that day the legend of Tahiti was born", 1977 pp. 48-49).

Again, symbolic of future patterns, the fact was that the British had beaten Bougainville to Tahiti, as Samuel Wallis had anchored there less than a year before. His experience suggests that the idea of ever-friendly Tahitians is more complex: he had been met

with resistance and had returned fire with his more powerful weapons, providing a signal lesson to the Tahitians who, as Dunmore points out, may well have decided shrewdly that providing women and food would speed any intruder along their way (Ibid. p. 49).

Taking along a Tahitian, Ahu-toru, Bougainville then travelled due west and sailed through what is now Vanuatu, an archipelago already identified in 1606 by the Spaniard Quiros, who had labelled them the Great Cyclades. Travelling on, Bougainville encountered reefs east of the northern tip of Australia, only narrowly missing discovering the Great South Land, the kind of fateful intervention which was often to dog the French in future Pacific discovery. He later took possession of the island that to this day bears his name, now within Papua New Guinea. Travelling through the East Indies and across to Ile De France (Mauritius) Bougainville returned to France in 1769. In the Parisian *salons*, Ahu-toru was to become a motif for the Rousseauist idea of the Noble Savage, his native islands the new Cythera. Geostrategists in London and Paris were to see Tahiti as an important logistical staging post in the Pacific quest (Ibid. p. 58).

On the heels of Bougainville, in June 1769, Jean-François-Marie de Surville set off into the Pacific from India in search of a "Davis Land", an apparent *el dorado* reputedly discovered in 1687 by the British buccaneer William Davis, west of Peru, which the British were thought to have rediscovered. (Dunmore has made a convincing case that the rumours of British re-discovery stemmed from Samuel Wallis' voyage in 1768 when he landed at Tahiti, and French corruption of "Wallis" into "Davis", Ibid. p.67.) De Surville landed in the Solomon Islands and gave landmarks the French names they possess today – Port Praslin and Choiseul Island. With an ailing crew de Surville headed for friendlier climes but fate again played a part and he missed what is now Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Sailing south he came within a very short distance of the coast of New South Wales, but veered to the east, reaching the shores of northwest New Zealand, and eventually anchoring in a bay (Doubtless Bay at the northern tip of New Zealand). De Surville and James Cook in fact reached northern New Zealand at the same time and missed each other by only a few miles, a fate which was to be repeated by the English and French two decades later at Botany Bay. Heading east, with a debilitated crew, de Surville abandoned his search and landed in Peru (Ibid. pp 69-73; see also de Surville, translated by Dunmore 1981).

There followed two voyages by Kerguelen in 1771 and 1773 where he discovered the Kerguelen Islands near Antarctica. He planted a bottled note of possession, thinking they were the great southern land which he named Southern France. Kerguelen remains a French possession, and uninhabited, although scientists work there. His co-captain François de Saint-Allouarn landed at Cape Leeuwin in Western Australia in 1772.

The next great French expedition to the southern ocean, that by Jean-François Galoup de la Pérouse, was as grand and epochal as that of Bougainville (see La Pérouse 1832). It too was led by an aristocrat in pursuit of the glory of the fatherland, who was on a mission of scientific discovery - but not possession, as La Pérouse believed Europeans

had no right to claim lands where inhabitants had worked and buried their ancestors (Dunmore 1977 p. 93). After Captain James Cook's discoveries in 1770, there had been a hiatus in British exploration of the Pacific as it was preoccupied with the revolution in its North American colonies. In 1785 Louis XVI commissioned La Pérouse to undertake a global voyage of scientific discovery, and spared no expense in equipping him and his team for the journey. Louis XVI took a close personal interest in the voyage. He was passionately interested in the sciences and the most eminent French scientists and cartographers of the day were included. La Pérouse's terms of reference were focused on discovery, both in the south Atlantic and south Indian Oceans, the northern Pacific from Alaska and the Russian coast, down to the southwest Pacific. The expedition had international support, the British, Spanish, Dutch and Russian governments all having agreed to help if necessary around the globe. It is worth noting that despite warring back home, the British and French cooperated in guaranteeing free passes to each other's scientific voyages (Ibid. p. 117), a paradoxical pattern to characterize their future relationship in the region.

La Pérouse in the *Boussole* and commander Paul-Antoine Fleuriot de Langle in the *Astrolabe* left Brest in 1785. They sailed south, around Cape Horn and northward to Easter Island, confirming that mythical Drake's Land and Davis Land did not exist. La Pérouse stopped at the Hawaiian Islands and proceeded up to Northern America from where he descended down the western North American coast, charting the geography along the way. From Monterey in California he travelled due west, through the Marianas and the Philippines to Macao and the southern coast of China. He ascended up the coast past the Korean peninsula as far as Kamchatka. Here, La Pérouse fortuitously sent a messenger, Barthélémy de Lesseps, overland to Paris (no small feat in itself) with letters and his journals; and received new instructions from the King to proceed south to New South Wales to report on British settlement plans there.

The expedition landed in the Samoan group, where de Langle and other crew were killed in a battle with the indigenous people. After stopping in the northern Tongas and passing Norfolk Island, La Pérouse proceeded to the Australian coast.

First French-British-Australian contacts in the South Pacific: cooperation and rivalry

On 23 January 1788, Le Pérouse landed in Botany Bay, near the English fleet which was anchored there. La Pérouse's journal noted that an English boat approached his ship, captained by Philip King, since Arthur Philip was away preparing for the fleet to move up to a more suitable site for settlement at Port Jackson. Despite La Pérouse's evident mission, to report on their activities, relations with the British were amicable and cooperative. They undertook to send French papers and letters back to France. La Pérouse spent 45 days in Botany Bay, and built replacement small boats for those lost in Samoa.

In this time, La Pérouse's chaplain, le Père Receveur, died and was buried ashore at Frenchman's Bay now in the Sydney suburb of La Pérouse. He was the first French person to be buried in Australia.

Mystery disappearance

The French fleet under La Pérouse left Botany Bay on 10 March, 1788. They were due to travel to Tonga and then double back towards New Caledonia, already discovered by Cook in 1774 but not fully mapped, before venturing north, through the Torres Strait and back to France via Ile de France (Mauritius). But they were never seen again.

La Pérouse's voyage and disappearance was a *cause célèbre* in France, which was by that time in the throes of the fomenting Revolution. A flurry of search expeditions were proposed, some of which failed, including one by Aristide-Aubert Dupetit-Thouars. Such was Louis XVI's attachment to the venture that his last words before the guillotine fell in 1793 were reported to have been a question about the whereabouts of La Pérouse.

While revolutionary events in France impeded further expeditions, determination to find out what happened to La Pérouse resulted in a voyage in 1791 by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux, also accompanied by eminent scientists (see Horner 1996 p. 5). He succeeded in travelling from Cape Town across the southern Indian Ocean and southern part of Australia, and then to the Isle of Pines in the New Caledonia archipelago in 1792, to the Solomon Islands, west past Papua New Guinea to the Dutch East Indies, and then back to circumnavigate Australia once more, this time to follow La Pérouse's planned route from Botany Bay. He passed by Vanikoro in 1793, where La Pérouse was later known to have been shipwrecked (Horner 1996 p. 166) (and it is possible that survivors could have seen his ships go by). He traced his way back to the Solomons and again west to Papua New Guinea, perfecting maps along the way. But it was a blighted expedition. Leaders d'Entrecasteaux and Kermadec, and second in charge d'Auribeau all died before arriving in the East Indies. Their research papers ended up in British hands after capture in the Atlantic, to be returned to France only after the intervention of Sir Joseph Banks (Ibid. Ch. 16), an outcome to be paralleled years later relating to research by Baudin (see below).

It was France's fate to be gazumped by the British once more as it was an Englishman, Peter Dillon, who finally established what had happened to La Pérouse. The story is once again one of adventure and rivalry (set out in detail, with poetic licence, in Guillou 2000). Dillon was a trader who had taken a German, his Fijian wife and an Indian, from Fiji to the Solomons island of Tikopia in 1813. Visiting them in 1826, he saw that the Indian had a European silver sword-hilt he had obtained from natives in neighbouring Vanikoro. Vanikoro elders spoke of two ships having been wrecked off Vanikoro in their youth, with at least two survivors. Dillon was unable to land at Vanikoro owing to the weather. Returning to India, he sought to establish the legitimacy of the claims. The origin of the sword-hilt was confirmed by none other

than de Lesseps, La Pérouse's emissary who had left the expedition in Kamchatka to return to Europe.

Dillon returned to Tikopia and landed at Vanikoro in 1827, and a French observer, Eugène Chaigneau, accompanied him. He heard that there had been four survivors but two had subsequently been killed. Of the remaining two, one had reportedly survived for about three years, and the other had lived with one of the Chiefs. Dillon located many artifacts from the wreck, including nails, scissors, porcelain, metal objects, some inscribed with a *fleur de lys*, symbol of the French monarchy, and even a silver chandelier with the coat of arms of La Pérouse's botanist, Collignon (Guillou 2000 pp. 99-100). One native was using a thermometer as a nose-bone. Dillon took the relics to Sydney where they formed a sensational exhibition reported in the *Sydney Gazette* in December 1827; and later in Calcutta, London and Paris (Ibid. p. 119).

Dillon was a colourful character. He had acquired a mixed reputation after an altercation with his ship's doctor in Hobart on his return voyage to Vanikoro, which had led to his arrest by Governor George Arthur and his officers, alienated British authorities and evidently discouraged French explorer Dumont d'Urville, who was in the area, from too close contact with him. Dillon struggled even to receive his promised salary from British authorities on his return to London, but was feted and rewarded by the French.

Other explorers had sought what Dillon had found, the answer to the La Pérouse puzzle. These included George Bass, Matthew Flinders, Louis de Freycinet, Louis Duperrey and Dumont d'Urville. The latter learned of Dillon's discoveries in Hobart in 1826 and proceeded to Vanikoro in early 1828, finding more artifacts and seeing the wreck sites where, Dunmore tells us, "cannons and cannon balls could clearly be seen on the bottom at a depth of ten to fifteen feet" (Dunmore 1997 p.108).

The fate of the La Pérouse expedition and its aftermath are emblematic of the dangers, risks, mystery and adventure that characterized and motivated European exploration at the time, and demonstrate as well the unusual mix of rivalry and unity of individual French and British explorers in pursuing goals in the region.

The French exploratory presence in the Pacific diminished in the late 18th century and early 19th century with the preoccupations of the Revolution and its aftermath. The British remained active, and British-French rivalry intensified.

Having left France before the Revolutionary Wars had begun, the eponymous Étienne Marchand, a French trader, landed at the Marquesas Islands in 1791 and claimed possession. In fact he had been preceded by an American, Joseph Ingraham, only months before. The British made similar claims in the north of the archipelago in early 1792. Marchand's most significant achievement was the fastest circumnavigation of the globe (in 20 months) and proving that France could be an efficient commercial competitor.

The scientifically-minded Nicolas Baudin, accompanied by 22 scientists, was commissioned in 1798 to circumnavigate Australia to establish whether it was two

separate islands, by the French Minister for the Marine who believed “a great nation must engage in great undertakings” (Minister Fleurieu cited in Dunmore 1997 p. 117; see also Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 55; and University of Sydney, Baudin Legacy Project website). But Baudin was still in the northwest of Australia when Matthew Flinders got to the south before him. He travelled to Tasmania to check on British settlement activity and was plotting from there the southern coast of Australia, travelling west, when he ran into Flinders doing the same thing from the other direction, at what is now known as Encounter Bay – yet another example of fortuitous, amicable, but tardy French interaction with the British. The British were watchful: they implanted a flag at King Island under the nose of Baudin, who was encamped nearby, out of concern that the French might settle Tasmania; and it is arguable that they established a settlement at Port Philip (later Melbourne) in 1803 from concern at the French presence (see Horner 1987, Dunmore 1997 p. 123).

Baudin died before returning to France. He had sent back earlier one of his ships with much of the expedition’s research, which was captured by the British in the English Channel and only released through the intervention of Sir Joseph Banks in a remarkable repetition of La Pérouse’s experience. But British unease remained, and indeed was heightened by Péron’s journal of the voyage, using French names instead of British geographical labels (Australia was “*Terre Napoléon*”). French patriotism, and nostalgia, was poignantly evident in the description of a meal shared with Péron and his fellow scientist Freycinet by Tasmanian Aborigines, when the Frenchmen stood up and sang the *Marseillaise* (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 55; Plomley 1983). As if to underline their position as second-comer, free French access to Australia from the west ceased with Britain’s taking of Ile de France in 1810, particularly after Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo in 1815.

In summary, France’s exploration of the Pacific in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was characterized by scientific interest, the patronage of the King and government, a strong sense of national mission, a complex cooperative yet rival relationship with the British who repeatedly beat them to the punch, and remarkable displays of courage and humanity in the face of loss of life, illness and disappointment. European politics and domestic preoccupations in France shaped the timing and nature of French exploration. The French made an invaluable contribution to scientific knowledge and especially in mapping the new lands at this time. While there were private, commercial ventures, notably at the end of the seventeenth century, and a century later, by Marchand, the main motivation was national prestige. This sense of national honour was only sharpened by the dominance of the British both in Europe and in the new Pacific lands into the early nineteenth century.

Nineteenth Century: consolidating a regional presence: rivalry and ambiguity

France consolidated its presence in the Pacific in the nineteenth century. Its motivations were to establish supply points for its navy; to protect its nationals, mainly missionaries; and to assert sovereignty over its settlements, including a penal settlement

in New Caledonia. There were commercial interests but these were secondary. France's pursuit of these interests was characterized by an overriding pattern of ambiguities, often arising from political circumstances back home. It was one of the first to establish settlements and claim sovereignty over them, yet once again it also lost out to the British and Americans on numerous occasions. Its overall approach was one of determined power and ambition, yet combined with hesitation and short-term vision (see Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 62).

Early in the century, and mainly when the restored monarchy was in place, the eighteenth century tradition of scientific discovery continued to drive French expeditions.¹² But these were followed by ventures with more political objectives.¹³ By the late 1840s, France had established consular representatives in Australia to safeguard its interests there, which comprised mainly looking after a small immigrant French community and providing intelligence for Paris (Aldrich 1990 p. 201).

Defending the missionary presence

France's experience in establishing a foothold in the Pacific in the early nineteenth century was a mixed one. It was driven principally by its need to protect the interests of its nationals who were Catholic missionaries. Common challenges in the various French missionary settlements were first, securing good relations with the locals; and second, securing a place in the face of competing activity by non-Catholic European missionaries who had usually arrived there first and were overwhelmingly British, raising related political rivalries.

European missionaries had been present in the Pacific since the earliest days of exploration, with a Spanish missionary presence in both Americas. As early as 1625 there was a Congregation of the Missions in Paris. A *Société des Missions Étrangères* (Foreign Missionary Society) was formed in 1663, but was unresponsive to efforts by the Catholic priest Jean Paulmier de Courtonne, a descendant of Essomeric, the native of the southern lands brought back to France by de Gonneville in 1503, to send an evangelizing mission to the land of his forebears, since no one knew precisely where that land was (Dunmore 1997 p. 126).

The disruptions of the French Revolution to the status of the French clergy impeded efforts to evangelize overseas which meant they were relatively late arrivals, and resented by others already there. These tended to be British or American Protestants. The London Missionary Society was set up in 1795 and sent representatives to Tahiti, Tonga and the Marquesas in 1796. The LMS had an agent in New South Wales and missions in New Zealand. American groups arrived in Hawaii and archipelagos to the east.

¹² These included expeditions by Freycinet (1817-20), Duperrey (1822-25), Bougainville's son (1824-26), and La Place (1829-31).

¹³ Including by Dumont d'Urville (1826-29 and 1837-40), de Vaillant (1836) and Abel Dupetit-Thouars, (1836-40 and 1842-43), whose uncle had failed in his efforts to search for La Pérouse (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 pp. 56-57)

It was in Hawaii that the French first undertook religious activity, when the chaplain aboard Freycinet's ship *Uranie* baptized the Chief Minister Kalanimoku at his request in 1819 (Dunmore 1997 p. 127). As a group of American Congregationalists arrived soon after, a local French resident, Jean-Baptiste Rives, urged the Paris Foreign Missionary Seminary to send French Catholic missionaries in 1824. The Sacred Heart "Picpus" fathers (named after their Paris address) sent six missionaries to Honolulu in 1827, but they were not welcomed by Queen Kaahumanu, who had been converted by the Americans. She expelled two of the priests, and sought to do the same when another arrived in 1835. The French captain de Vaillant, in Honolulu during his Pacific voyage, was able to secure a rescinding of this expulsion order. When two more missionaries arrived in 1837, they were again expelled. Despite efforts by visiting French captain Dupetit-Thouars, this time the expulsion stuck. Captain Cyrille Laplace visited in 1839 and was able to negotiate freedom of religion for Catholics, along with trade rights equal to those of the British and Americans. The Picpus fathers returned in strength, one of whom was Father Damien, known for his work with lepers. Such was the influence of the French that their consul was appointed Finance Minister in Hawaii in 1863 and then Foreign Minister. However, a provisional government took power in 1893 and demanded American annexation.

The Pritchard affair

The French were to experience similar contention when French Catholic missionaries arrived elsewhere, particularly in what is now French Polynesia, where the Protestant London Missionary Society (LMS) had preceded them. The experience has come to be known as the Pritchard affair, after the LMS representative in Tahiti at the time, Rev. George Pritchard. (Pritchard's account of the events has been edited by Paul de Deckker, see de Deckker 1983; see also Newbury 1980 and Faivre 1953.)

Two Picpus priests, Fathers Caret and Laval, arrived in the Gambier archipelago (part of future French Polynesia) in 1834, to a cold reception by the LMS, who subsequently withdrew from there. Father Laval went on to establish a highly effective ministry. In 1836 the fathers landed at Tahiti, where the LMS had been established since 1797. The priests courted Queen Pomaré to the ire of the LMS representative there, Rev. George Pritchard, who secured their expulsion by the Queen back to the Gambiers. Pritchard was subsequently appointed British Consul, confirming French fears that the British were using religious differences to oust them from the Pacific. The American Consul, a Belgian called Moerenhout, sympathetic to the French, informed a visiting French bishop about the priests' expulsion. Other French nationals (a carpenter and pearl fishermen) were also prohibited from landing in Tahiti.

In response, the French commissioned Dupetit-Thouars when he landed in Tahiti in 1838 to "assert the status of France as a nation 'which has the means and the will to ensure that its citizens everywhere are respected' " (the captain's instructions, cited by Dunmore 1997 p 136). Dupetit-Thouars then undertook some complex diplomacy to secure a positive result for France. He first offered Pritchard and Moerenhout asylum aboard his ship should hostilities break out. He then sought a letter of apology from

Queen Pomaré to King Louis-Philippe for her treatment of French citizens, monetary compensation and a gun salute to the French flag. The Queen accepted, blaming Pritchard for the problems. In the end, in a wonderful sign of the way things would evermore be done in the French Pacific, Pritchard had to come up with the cash compensation himself and Dupetit-Thouars himself supplied the gunpowder for the gun salute, as the Queen did not have these resources. Moerenhout was appointed French Consul, having lost his American appointment after Pritchard had complained to Washington. Dupetit-Thouars subsequently negotiated a favoured-nation trade agreement for France similar to that by Laplace in Hawaii. And thus French honour was preserved.

But not for long. After Dupetit-Thouars' departure a prohibition order was issued against Catholic preaching and Laplace once again came to the rescue, in 1839, negotiating a freedom of religion clause. Resentments between the British-led Protestants and the French Catholic fathers persisted. Dupetit-Thouars returned to Tahiti in 1842 to reinforce French rights, this time requiring the signing of a document placing Tahiti under French protection (Dunmore 1997 p. 139).

The underlying rivalry and bitterness with the British symbolized in the Pritchard affair remained a sore with the French for years, as subsequent history, to be addressed in the next chapters, will show (and see, for example, the injunction of the French National Assembly President to "turn the page once and for all on the Pritchard affair", *Assemblée Nationale* hearings on France and the Pacific States 1996).

In the Marquesas, years of unsuccessful efforts by non-Catholic missionaries in various islands from 1797 ended in 1838 with a successful implantation of Picpus missionaries at Tahuata, negotiated, again by the resourceful Dupetit-Thouars (Dunmore 1997 p. 140). In Tonga, the Wesleyans had been active from 1822 and resisted French Marist attempts to settle in 1837. In 1842 a Marist priest, Father Chevron, was able to preach there but the mission suffered repeated attacks from 1847 until Chevron obtained an edict allowing freedom for Catholics to practice their religion in 1861. Despite similar difficulties, by mid-century, Catholic missions were established in Fiji (from 1844), Samoa (from 1845), New Hebrides (from 1848) and New Caledonia (from 1843). In many cases the intervention of officials and visiting French ships was necessary to protect the missionary presence.

The establishment of a French presence in New Caledonia was difficult. A formal agreement was signed by the Melanesians, accepting French sovereignty, soon after the arrival of the Marist missionaries at Balade in the north, on 1 January 1844. But the settlement was abandoned in 1847 until 1851 after attacks by the Melanesians (recounted in Delbos 2000 Chapter 1). Later missionaries survived only after France's declaration of possession of the archipelago in 1853, and further contact by French ships.

Earlier attempts by the LMS to establish a foothold in New Caledonia in 1840 and 1841 did not succeed. LMS' Samoan teachers refused to land on Grande Terre, the main island, because of the ferocity of the locals; and the Isle of Pines settlement in 1841 was

troubled. The Society was more successful in establishing a presence in the Loyalty Islands from 1841, providing a further complication for the French in later years.

In New Zealand, in 1832, English missionaries had resisted possible French influence with the arrival of Laplace and other French explorers; and a Wesleyan group had unsuccessfully sought to oust French priests. Marist Bishop Pompallier arrived in 1838 to find Protestant missionary societies ensconced, but met little overt opposition mainly because of the size and disparate leadership of the islands (Dunmore 1997 p. 142). Despite the Bishop's strong influence in the north, where he conducted himself as a *de facto* government (Chesneau and Maclellan 1992 p. 58), the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 ensured British political dominance. The French had been gazumped by the British again.

The Marists were more successful in establishing ascendancy over the British in the islands of Wallis (named after the British adventurer Samuel Wallis) and Futuna in 1837. But nonetheless they too met a brutal reaction from the local inhabitants. Their Father Peter Chanel was to become the first Roman Catholic Pacific martyr, and later, saint, in 1841, at the hands of the King whose son he had converted. Remorse for this act was to see the entire population convert, which strengthened France's political influence there.

French Marists were to have much less success in the Solomons, where they tried to settle in various locations from 1845 but had given up by 1855. They did not even attempt a presence in Papua New Guinea until 1881, on Thursday Island; and 1885, at Yule Island near Port Moresby, although they were in constant dispute with the British including through the Governor of Queensland who in 1896 referred the differences to London and Rome.

The pattern of these experiences explains much about perceptions and contributions of the French in the Pacific in the first half of the nineteenth century. Overridingly, the Catholic religion soon came to be identified with French interests, and Protestantism with British or at least, in French eyes, Anglo-Saxon interests. While France succeeded in establishing its own presence in some settlements (French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna), it lost out in other places (Hawaii, New Zealand, for a time in French Polynesia, PNG), in most cases to the British. The religious animosities and resentments on both sides underlie the emotion often attaching to French perceptions of Anglo-Saxons in the Pacific, and vice versa, persisting until this day. The assertion of a political interest in order to protect its nationals became a deep-seated rationale for its presence, and one which, it will be seen, has also persisted into the twenty-first century.

Colonization

French acts of possession in the South Pacific were thus not unalloyed assertions of empire. France at the time was indeed motivated by national pride, a mission to bring what was seen as "civilization" or religion to the rest of the world and to protect its own nationals, and by the special status that an imperialist power might claim in the world

so that it might rank with other rival powers (Dunmore 1997 p. 179). And despite the difficulties of establishing and supporting the missionary presence in the face of rivals, France was the first to establish possession, thirty years in advance of other empire-builders (1842 in Tahiti, 1853 New Caledonia, 1858 Clipperton, and 1886 Wallis and Futuna; compared for example to Britain in Fiji 1874, Tonga 1885 and Solomons 1890; Germany in New Guinea 1885 and Samoa 1899; the US in Hawaii 1898 and Samoa 1899; in Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 59). France was also seen by other colonizing powers as a force to fear and to counter. However, France had also encountered failure along the way. Its failures can be attributed variously to greater strength of its rivals, and simple poor timing arising from preoccupations back home, but also, as will be seen, to indecision and hesitation. There were also fewer population pressures in France at this time (as opposed to elsewhere in Europe, see Dunmore 1997 p. 179), and France was engaged elsewhere (including Algeria), reducing the urgent practical need for it to set up settlements in the Pacific.

Chesneaux and Maclellan argue that in fact French losses were greater than their wins. They were beaten to the punch by the British in Tasmania as has been seen; they failed in Hawaii owing to the greater strength on the ground of the British and the Americans; and they failed to consolidate their foothold in New Zealand which Britain claimed first, despite France's considerable missionary, whaling and settler presence and frequent ship visits. The French navy intervened on numerous occasions in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa to support Marist missionaries, without asserting their presence, and indeed a suggestion of a French protectorate in Tonga was never realized. Proposals for French protectorates, sought by French advisors and missionaries in the Easter Islands in 1885, and in the north of the Cook Islands, in 1888, both failed largely because of indecision back in Paris, perhaps informed by hesitancy about the relative lack of return for such distant engagement (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 61).

Indecision, competing interests and preoccupations, and half-heartedness in the capital also dictated the French approach to the possessions they did establish. Working against French expansion in the Pacific were the extreme and constant political instability and changes of government in the motherland for most of the century (certainly 1815-80); the continual priority of European politics; the importance of colonial undertakings in Africa and Indo-China; the reticence of authorities towards Catholic missionaries towards the end of the century; and the relative weakness of French commercial activity in the region (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p 62).

Even where France did establish sovereignty, it did so only progressively and often after bartering with Germany and Britain: a Germany which successfully established its commercial enterprises from Apia to Fiji through to the Carolinas from 1857; and a Britain lobbied by its own colonies in Australia and New Zealand to entrench itself more deeply in the region. Just as European power relationships dictated the pace of French action in the Pacific when it was a Spanish Lake, so the political chessboard in Europe affected the pattern of French annexations in the Pacific.

In what is now French Polynesia, while the Marquesas were annexed in 1842, Tahiti remained a protectorate until 1880, Paris not confirming a declaration by Commander Dupetit-Thouars in 1842 in the wake of the Pritchard affair, which also had engaged American interests. The Gambiers were only annexed in 1881. French sovereignty in the Leeward Islands was set aside by agreement with the British in 1847, challenged by the Germans in 1879, proclaimed in 1880, and recognized internationally over Bora Bora, Huahiné and Raiatea only in 1888. Of the Australs, France formally annexed Rapa only in 1888, Remataru in 1900 and Ruratu in 1901, to avoid difficulties with Britain (for the same reasons France held back on annexing the Cooks and Easter Islands, in the end losing out to Britain and Chile respectively) (Dunmore 1997 pp. 203-4).

The New Hebrides remained an arena of French-British rivalry well into the twentieth century.

In New Caledonia, France's initial hoisting of the *tricolore* when first landing missionaries in 1843 was speedily negated by the capital, wary of putting the British further offside after the strains of the Pritchard affair in Tahiti. Official annexation of the main island, Grande Terre, occurred only in 1853, and effective control of the Loyalty Islands, where the London Missionary Society was active, by 1865.

French Polynesia

The progressive French annexation of what was to become, in 1880 with the appropriation of Tahiti, the *Établissements français d'Océanie* (French Pacific Establishments, EFO), was not only the subject of international negotiation referred to above, but also of internal resistance.

From the early years of the nineteenth century France had come to see Tahiti strategically, as an important staging post for its navy (based in South America), and a shipping stopping-off point for what it hoped would be profitable trade, over and above the romanticized image it perpetuated, particularly once the long-planned Panama Canal was constructed. French whalers responded to Government subsidies after 1819. In 1816 French marine lieutenant Camille de Roquefeuil on a voyage around the Pacific bought sandalwood in the Marquesas, noting that "In order to keep up a good understanding, it had been necessary to admit some young girls, who had expressed a desire to become acquainted with our people" (quoted in Dunmore 1997 p. 155). But such a warm welcome was not to last.

In the Marquesas, initial resistance by chiefs Iotete (1842) and Pakoko (1845) extended into guerilla activity leading to French military intervention in 1870 and 1880 (Toullélan 1990, Dening 1980). The population fell from 60,000 in 1840 to 3,500 in 1902 (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 70). In Tahiti, Queen Pomaré IV only reluctantly signed the French protectorate agreement in 1842 and led resistance from 1844, her forces reoccupying Tahiti in 1846. Tahiti's population had also suffered from new diseases and bloody conflict, falling from 70,000 in the 1770s to 10,000 in 1842 (Dunmore 1997 p. 181). Events in Tahiti had been complicated by the timing of

decisions back in Europe, with Britain agreeing in 1842 to the French protectorate, notwithstanding lobbying against it by their inveterate Consul, Pritchard, leading to French Parliamentary ratification of the plan in January 1843. Rebellions occurred in the Tuamotu group, on Anaa in 1852 and the Australes at Rapa in 1887. The Leewards war was to last ten years from 1888 to 1897 in response to French annexation attempts at Huahine, Bora Bora and Raitea. It took three warships and a force of a thousand men to bring the hostilities to an end. Underlying much of this resistance was the protestant allegiance and identity of the people, some of whom looked to the British to take the place of the French.

By the early twentieth century, France had consolidated its position. From 1885 the administration consisted of a Governor, and an elected General Council of 18 members, ten from Tahiti and Moorea, two from Marquesas, four from Tuamotus, one from Gambiers and one from the Australs and Rapa. Electors were French citizens.

France's control was complete to the point of local inertia. The population rose in Tahiti from 6,400 in 1881 to 11,682 in 1902, albeit with very few (around 1,000) immigrants from France (Dunmore 1997 p. 206). The attention of the colonial power was only mobilized when major events occurred which, once again, engaged broader national interest emanating from European political developments. Examples include a German raid against Papeete in 1914, the departure of a Tahitian battalion for World War I, and differences with Mexico over the annexation of Clipperton (for which the King of Italy, of all possibilities, was appointed arbiter in 1931, and who confirmed the French position) (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 71).

One area of continuing vexation throughout the latter nineteenth century was land ownership. Polynesian practice entailed individual usage of land, within a collective lineage ownership. Protestant missionaries had enshrined these principles in the Pomaré Code of 1842, which were directly contrary to the Napoleonic principles of individual ownership. In 1863 France established an Agricultural Fund to do a land survey, enabling land transfers to planters and agricultural producers (Europeans, Chinese, or locals). While Europeans were not numerous (600 in Tahiti and Moorea, in a total population of around 6,000), one resident official, Gauthier de la Richerie, asserted in 1862 that sooner or later all the lands would be assigned to whites through fraudulent practices such as trading land for liquor (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 pp. 72-73). European (overwhelmingly male) marriage into land-owning indigenous families further boosted the de facto European land transfer, leading to an influential class of "*demis*", or mixed-blood people (see Panoff 1989). Chesneaux and Maclellan noted that, while less direct than the cantonment and reservations of New Caledonia, the alienation of land from the indigenous people was no less real, and effective, in French Polynesia (Op cit p. 73). With Pomaré's signing of the Annexation Treaty in 1880, the High Court oversaw land transfers until around 1935 when it ceased apparently by general indifference perhaps as memories of the bloodshed of the early nineteenth century dissipated.

But French development plans in the EFO stalled. Its projects for large-scale productive plantations of cotton, sugar and coffee failed. The most profitable exports

were copra, vanilla and mother-of-pearl, ironically produced by small-scale locals but controlled by the big French trading houses. By the end of the century oranges were also being exported to California and Australia. Phosphate was mined on Makatea Island from 1907. But dreams of Tahiti as a strategic commercial stopping point were foiled, when, once again, French prestige was usurped over the construction of the long-awaited Panama Canal. A private French venture in the late nineteenth century to build the canal was led by Ferdinand de Lesseps (nephew of La Pérouse's erstwhile emissary, Barthélémy de Lesseps) but failed. To rub salt into the French wound, a later venture by an American company succeeded (Heffer 1995 p. 148-152). The Canal's opening, in 1914, meant effective US control of the eastern access to the South Pacific. In any case, less traffic was generated through Papeete than the French had expected, and shipping was dominated by the British.

Perhaps because of its strategic location in the centre of the Pacific, the EFO maintained links with its Pacific neighbours, Hawaii, the Cook Islands and even California. English was spoken as much as French as late as 1888 (when Robert Louis Stevenson visited) (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 pp.74-75).

The EFO were drawn into World War I. 1088 Polynesians fought for France, and 205 lost their lives. A German ship surreptitiously helping itself to phosphate on Makatea was captured by the French warship, the *Zélée*, at the beginning of the war. In September 1914 two German cruisers appeared off Papeete and shelled the town, sinking the *Zélée*, before sailing away. Another German vessel went aground in Maupihaa, west of Tahiti in 1917.

European interest in visiting the EFO, hitherto confined to prominent individuals such as Paul Gauguin, Matisse, and Robert Louis Stevenson, grew after the first World War and was actively promoted from 1924. A colonial exhibition in Paris in 1931 heightened awareness of the colonies. The making of films (*Tabou* in 1928, *Mutiny on the Bounty* in 1934) perpetuated the romantic Polynesian myth, and boosted interest in tourism.

New Caledonia

The French claim to New Caledonia, like that of French Polynesia, was characterized by difficulties with the British, and by internal resistance. In January 1843, Dupetit-Thouars dispatched Commander Julien Lafferrière to raise the French flag, and establish Bishop Guillaume Douarre and his missionaries at Balade, in the northeast of Grande Terre, New Caledonia's largest island. Aldrich (1990 p. 24) noted that a cession of land was concluded with local chieftains, but that "this did not effectively constitute a claim".¹⁴ But strains with the British over the Pritchard affair in Tahiti led the powerful new French Minister for the Navy, Guizot, architect of the new *entente cordiale* with the British back home, to recall Dupetit-Thouars and to have the flag at

¹⁴ A view not shared by all. In March 2009, Kanak leader Roch Wamytan referred to the January 1844 treaty with the customary chiefs as the basis for French nationality, not the later declaration of possession of 1853. Personal communication, 2009.

Balade lowered. In any case Douarre and his missionaries were forced to desert Balade within twelve months owing to hostility from the local people.

The motivation for the eventual declaration by Rear-Admiral Febvrier-Despointes of French possession of New Caledonia, at Balade, on 24 September in 1853, was twofold: the establishment of a strategic base and penal settlement in the western Pacific; and forestalling British annexation (Aldrich 1990 pp. 24-26, Dunmore 1997 p. 188), and indeed, a British hydrographic vessel was in waters off Isle of Pines at the time. By this time, France and Britain were allies in the Crimean War and there was no negative British reaction. Within a few days of the Febvrier-Despointes announcement, the chief of the Isle of Pines declared allegiance to France. Effective control over the Loyalty Islands only came later, Maré and Lifou in 1864 and Ouvéa in 1865 (Aldrich 1990 p. 26). A settlement was established by Captain Tardy de Montravel in 1854, at a harbour called Port-de-France (which became Noumea in 1866).

As in the EFO, from where New Caledonia was administered until 1860, colonization was a slow process, and met significant local resistance. Only 100 white settlers were in New Caledonia by 1860, mainly French but also British. The first Governor of New Caledonia, Admiral Charles Guillain, oversaw the introduction of convicts (from 1864 when 250 arrived) and left his mark in the penitentiary building on the Ile Nou (now, with reclamation, attached to the main island), the hospital, wharves, and Amédée lighthouse which exist today. In the process there were a number of violent uprisings by the local people, particularly over surveying of land to create concessions (Dunmore 1997 pp. 189-90).

The settlement was a penal colony from 1864 to 1897. It hosted 25,000 convicts in that time, as well as 4,526 deported members of the Paris Commune (the *communards*) after their 1871 uprising against the French government in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, and over 1,000 Algerian Kabyle insurrectionists in 1871. In 1880 there was an amnesty for political prisoners under which most of them left, only around 140 choosing to stay.

As convicts served their time and were freed with a grant of land, and as large French companies such as Ballande of Bordeaux were given land on the Grande Terre (main island), while the indigenous Kanaks were pushed towards the north and centre, indigenous discontent increased. Ownership rights were alien to Kanak concepts of land as a tribal home. An effective policy of cantonment of the Kanaks, relegating them to reserves, was introduced in 1876. By 1878 tensions erupted in a rebellion led by Chef Attaï, sparked by the encroachment on indigenous lands by European-owned cattle. The rebellion focused on settlements at La Foa, Bourail and Bouloupari on the western coast north of Noumea. Two hundred settlers and twelve hundred Kanaks (some engaged in intra-tribal battles) were killed, including Attaï himself (see Leenhardt 1937, Latham 1978, Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 pp. 63-64, Dunmore 1997 p. 212).

Immigration from the motherland was promoted, especially by the active Governor Feillet (1894-1903). Several large families and numerous small-holders established themselves, to be known as “*broussards*” (bush dwellers). Feillet’s long governorship was an aberration. He was succeeded by nine Governors or temporary occupants from 1903 to 1914, in constant rotations dubbed the *valse des gouverneurs* (Aldrich 1990 p. 314). By 1913 Kanaks were relegated to 120,000 hectares, or 7-8% of the surface of the main island, with the Europeans in the bush owning or renting three times more land with a population five or six times less (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 66). As in the EFO, successive attempts were made at large-scale cultivation of rice, maize, coffee and sugar, with little success. The Kanaks succeeded with small-scale coffee production in the 1930s. Cattle-raising too was successful, and both persist until today.

In 1874, French engineer Joseph Garnier discovered nickel on Grande Terre. By 1877 a processing plant was established at Pointe Chaleix in Noumea, and in 1880, the *Société le Nickel* (SLN), was set up by John Higginson funded by Baron Rothschild. The foundry was not successful at the time, in the face of new technical expertise and competition from Canada (Lawrey 1982). Ballande, a businessman from Bordeaux, set up the *Hauts-Fourneaux de Noumea* in 1909. He established a foundry at Doniambo just outside Noumea, in 1910, and another at Thio in 1912 (Jeffrey 2006, and www.sln.nc, accessed 21 October 2008). Ballande and SLN merged in 1931.

Besides Higginson and Ballande, other big names included Bernheim (who endowed a private library, which is still operating), Marchand, and Barrau (Aldrich 1990, p. 148). SLN and the large French importers dominated the economic life of the colony in the early twentieth century. Many smaller mines were established creating wealth for a few families, including the Pentecosts and Lafleurs (Ibid. p. 118) who remain dominant to this day. By the turn of the century New Caledonia was the world’s largest exporter of nickel and cobalt and second largest producer of chrome.

Not all of the leading figures were French. Higginson was originally Irish and came from Australia, though became French. James Paddon, a British trader from Australia, was a founding business trader in the colony from 1854. In the middle of the nineteenth century, English was more understood than French amongst the Kanaks, largely because of the work of the London Missionary Society. The first census in 1860 showed that the majority of the 432 Europeans were Anglo-Saxons (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 68). The Australian influence in the livestock sector has left words such as “station”, “stockman”, “stockwhip” and “store”, in current usage by the French in the bush even today.

A consultative General Council (*Conseil général*) was created in 1885 but was comprised solely of whites from the bush or Noumea. From 1887 the *indigénat* system was introduced, and applied until 1946, institutionalizing discrimination between the Europeans and Kanaks. Kanaks were forbidden to leave their reserves without permission, had to pay a per head tax, and were required to provide labour for road and other public works. Leaders called “Chiefs” and “Lesser Chiefs” were appointed by the French administration and were tasked with providing workers for the settlers or the mine (Ibid. pp.65-66).

Development differed between the main island, Grande Terre, and the Loyalty Islands and Isle of Pines which were predominantly Kanak and Protestant, and where no alienation of Kanak land had been allowed. The English-speaking LMS was replaced from 1891 by evangelical missions from Paris and the Bible was translated into local languages from 1922. An active French Protestant pastor and ethnologist, Maurice Leenhardt, took a great interest in the Kanaks, at times in conflict with the French administration (*Ibid.* p. 67).

As in the EFO, it took major events such as the 1878 uprising and the First World War for the metropolitan power to take much notice of New Caledonia. Three battalions of indigenous infantry-men fought for France in World War I (1,107 Melanesians and 1,006 Europeans fought in Europe, including at Gallipoli, of whom 456 were killed). It was Melanesian involvement in fighting for France that contributed to a further Kanak revolt in 1917 by Grand Chef Noël. Waddell (2008 p. 38) attributed the rebellion to a reaction against the colonial drive to recruit “volunteers” for the European war. Chesneaux and Maclellan suggested that it was French losses in the war, with the knowledge that France could be defeated, that contributed to Noël’s revolt (1992 p. 67). In the event the rebellion was easily controlled. Those Melanesians who had served in WWI were able to become French citizens, although this did not entail the right to vote (complete suffrage in New Caledonia was not attained until 1956, see Gohin 2002, point 16; and Chapter 2). In 1935 they were being included on all civil registers.

Between the wars New Caledonia reverted to its colonial torpor (John Lawrey quoted novelist Pierre Benoit who visited Noumea in 1928 and described it as “A small town so deeply asleep that it seems dead” 1982 p. 7). It was enlivened by the arrival of an effective Governor, Georges Guyon, from 1925 to 1929, who developed infrastructure and education, doubling those who attended school by 1939 to over 7,000, of whom 3,117 were Kanaks (Dunmore 1997 p. 223).

The success of nickel production fluctuated in line with the vagaries of world demand, as it does today. The 1929 depression affected nickel prices and disrupted construction of a planned railway, which ceased after the first stage was completed from Noumea to Paita nearby in the north. But despite the depression, nickel and chrome production increased until the eve of World War II. In 1939 nickel production reached 370,500 tonnes (over eight times production in 1925), and chrome 52,388 tonnes. Since Japan was a major customer, production was temporarily disrupted in the early 1940s.

With vacillating fortunes, the import of foreign labour, necessary to work the mines, also fluctuated. Indonesian, Japanese and Vietnamese workers were brought in to work on the mines early in the century. By 1929 they numbered 14,535, more than European residents at the time (Ward in Spencer 1988 p. 82). Many left when their contracts expired but by 1931 more than 7,000 Asians were in New Caledonia out of a total population of 57,300 (Aldrich 1990 p. 286 and ISEE 2008; Table 1a Chapter 5).

With the growth in prosperity punctuated by the Depression, a call for autonomy and dominion status was made in 1932, interestingly by a European resident, Edmond Cave, a member of the General Council, but did not gather momentum (Aldrich 1990 p.

314). Dunmore (1997 p. 223) noted that this call reflected the growing identification with New Caledonia as opposed to France, by those Europeans who were born there (12,600 of a total European population of 17,400 in 1936). The Melanesian population by this time was stabilizing rather than declining. At the turn of the century, the entire population numbered around 50,000, and was mainly rural, with only 7,000 living in Noumea. The numbers of Kanaks dropped from about 45,000 in 1860 to 27,100 in the 1920s, and rose again to around 30,000 in 1940 (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p.66, Barbançon in De Deckker and Faberon 2008 p. 120; Aldrich 1990 p. 286; Lawrey p. 9; and Table 1a in Chapter 5).

In contrast to the EFO, in the nineteenth century, New Caledonia with its dependence on French shipping and market for its nickel, its internal preoccupation with its role as a penal settlement, and with its near neighbour the large Anglo-Saxon continent of Australia, had few links within its South Pacific islands neighbourhood. These were limited to summary links between its Melanesians and those in the nearby New Hebrides islands, and contacts between French residents in each place.

Wallis and Futuna

Franco-British rivalry and indecision were features of French annexation of Wallis and Futuna. French missionaries had arrived in the islands from the 1830s. France did not respond to local requests for protectorate status in the 1840s, nor in the 1860s. The Queen of Wallis, Amélie, supported the French missionaries, and efforts by British evangelists to establish a presence were abandoned. France finally established a protectorate in 1886 in Wallis, and in Futuna in 1887, and then only in response to apparent efforts by the British to cultivate Amélie by inviting her to Fiji. But France only formalized annexation arrangements in 1913.

The strongly traditional focus of the islands, and their overwhelming response to Catholicism, meant that France did not need to exert much colonial effort to administer its colony there. Rather a pattern developed of synchrony between the few colonial administrators present, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and monarchs of the three traditional kingdoms, which persists today (see Aldrich and Merle 1997, Cadéot 2003, Centre for Contemporary Pacific 2003, Faberon and Ziller 2007, de Deckker in Howe 1994 p. 269).

New Hebrides

France's administration of the New Hebrides was shaped by the complex British-French relationship, yet more indecision, and a liberal amount of innovation.

Similar to the situation in Wallis and Futuna, France repeatedly declined several appeals for a French protectorate over the New Hebrides islands proposed by the Irish trader John Higginson from 1875. The French presence consisted primarily of missionaries and large-scale planters. Britain and France, in the face of heavy lobbying by their interest groups concerned about eventual dominance by the other, agreed in 1886 to set up a Joint Naval Commission to administer the archipelago from 1888.

Having no civil law to back them up, the two French and two British officers, who comprised the Commission in its early years, were largely ineffectual. Their Commission evolved into a Condominium of the New Hebrides in 1906, to administer a joint protectorate.

The Condominium arrangement was a creative solution at the time to accommodate the flagging imperial aims of both parties, who were working increasingly together back home to meet the growing German imperialist threat (Dunmore 1997 p. 198). The system involved ingeniously duplicative arrangements: two sets of administrators each responsible for their own citizens; two languages; two forms of Christianity; three sets of laws applicable respectively to the indigenous people, French and British settlers; two educational systems; two police systems; two sets of currencies and systems of weights and measures. Although at times the British and French Commissioners did not speak to one another, and differences were addressed by a mixed tribunal whose head at one time was a Spanish count who was deaf (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 76), it proved remarkably effective over 80 years and was one of the first examples of experimental forms of government in the Pacific.

It must be said that because the Commissions in practice administered their own nationalities (the French, their planters, the British, primarily missionaries), the numbers involved were minuscule. Chesneaux and Maclellan note that the British population was only 55 (compared to the French population of 151) in 1897, 228 (401) in 1906, and 298 (566) in 1910 (1992 p. 77), although by 1939 the French population was ten times bigger than the British and centred on the island of Santo. Needless to say, with the Commissioners responsible for their own nationalities, the administration of the Melanesians took a very low second place.

But ironically given the unique Condominium arrangement, it is in the New Hebrides that Anglo-French ambiguities of rivalry and cooperation were most acutely evident. France took its influence and protection of nationals responsibilities far more seriously than did Britain, using land claims of French nationals to create the grounds for an eventual takeover, and employing French nationals wherever possible, even in lowly positions. Despite, or perhaps because of, these efforts, British influence became more widespread (Henningham 1992 pp. 26-27). Because most planters were French, land disputes arising from different indigenous concepts of land ownership added to anti-French tensions amongst the local people. Although the dual, parallel nature of the condominium set-up arose from different concepts of the state, at times of catastrophe (for example, the 1913 eruption of the Ambrym volcano) the administrations worked well together (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 77). In an interesting example of cooperation on the ground, after the 1929 depression, the French state subsidized the price of copra to aid its planters, but the British did not, and often local British residents channelled their goods through a compliant French neighbour (Ibid. p.78). Until the 1960s, the condominium arrangement worked reasonably well and land issues between the French and the local people had receded (Henningham op. cit. p. 28).

Conclusion

France's activities in the Pacific from the very earliest days were motivated by national prestige, a quest for scientific knowledge, and religious proselytization. Rivalry with other European powers, mainly the British, and the experience of repeatedly being usurped by other powers in the region, sharpened France's sense of national assertion. Commercial activity came consistently second to nationalist objectives. Domestic political challenges and alliances at home in Europe, which were complex, and at times explosive, demanded primary policy attention and shaped the pace and energy with which France established its footholds in the Pacific. Increasingly, France became aware of the strategic importance of its Pacific colonies, particularly the EFO and New Caledonia, in serving its national purpose.

Hallmarks of the French presence included, at times, extraordinary leadership, courage, and sense of style in its commanders as much as its early privateers; in general, sophistication and deft diplomacy in a context of international rivalries; a commitment to personal hardship and sacrifice for national honour; but only sporadic application, in the Pacific, of the highly-developed national sense of brotherhood, freedom and equality which evolved in the home country from the late 1700s; a determination to suppress local opposition, backed by military strength; and, by the beginning of World War II, an element of administrative inertia even as innovative solutions, for example in New Hebrides, were being implemented.

Chapter 2

World War II and its legacy

“La fin de la guerre est aussi la fin de l'Empire colonial”?

(“The end of the war is also the end of the colonial Empire”, Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 348, my questionmark)

The Second World War challenged the political and economic role of the French in the Pacific as it did elsewhere. The rapid defeat of the French government in Paris and the participation of citizens from the Pacific overseas territories in combat in Europe (including the “Guitarist” battalion, 387 Kanaks and 318 Tahitians and New Hebrides locals, of whom a third died, Daly, 2002) traumatized the French and local communities in the Pacific, underlining the vulnerability of their French administrators. Closer to home, the Pacific theatre itself, where other powers were the main protagonists, introduced a violence and destruction of a scale unparalleled in the history of the local people. At the same time, the massive influx of American forces stationed at bases throughout the Pacific, but particularly in the French territories, exposed the local people to an alternative administrative influence, with relatively larger national and personal wealth than their French rulers, and new practices of economic and racial egalitarianism. It was the war and its aftermath which catalysed local independence movements in the region, including in the French territories. For Australia, one by-product of the Pacific War was greater awareness of the Pacific island region and its relevance to Australian security. The wartime experience initiated a habit of regional consultation and cooperation.

New Caledonia

In New Caledonia the early days of World War II saw fine examples of Anglo-French regional teamship in adversity, reflecting similar cooperation for survival in Europe. Australia, whose foreign policy until then had been essentially subordinate to that of Britain (Evans and Grant 1991 refer to Australian “foreign policy subservience” at the time, p. 19), was to take a central role in what was one of its first independent foreign policy decisions (argued in Fisher 2010c). This experience markedly changed Australia’s view of the French and New Caledonia, just as it did its view of the United States and Great Britain, as the young federation acted on the geographic realities of its national security.

Australian perceptions of their French neighbours in New Caledonia and New Hebrides in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were generally not warm. The declaration of French annexation in 1853 had been coldly received in Australia. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 2 November 1853 lamented that “by the laxity of the British government...the opportunity of colonizing that fine group [had] been lost” (*Sydney Morning Herald* 1853). Australia had consistently pressed London to colonize, with the more extreme advocates arguing for British hegemony in the southwest Pacific and the ouster of the Germans and French from the area (Dunmore 1997 p. 195). Australia was particularly opposed to calls (interestingly, by an Irish Australian, the trader Higginson) for French annexation of the New Hebrides which many saw as within

Australia's sphere (Dunmore 1997 p. 199 and Aldrich 1990 p. 224). By the late nineteenth century views on New Caledonia were shaped by the feeling, curious for a country itself built by convicts, that a loathsome penal settlement operated in the neighbourhood just as Australia had ridded itself of this curse, expressed in concerns that escaped convicts would make their way onto Australia's fair shores (Aldrich 1990 p. 225).

Australian perceptions of a menacing France were reciprocated. There was a French perception that Australia wanted to displace the French in New Caledonia to conserve its economic interests (Pons 1988 p. 156). Against their own value systems, some French people, even officials, had a disdain for Australians typified in the report of one French diplomat who in 1936 described Australians as lacking taste, having never "seen a fine piece of furniture, a beautiful painting, a truly elegant woman, ...[nor] eaten a decent meal. In the things that interest us, the Australian public is uneducated and uneducable" (Aldrich 1990 p. 309). (This was reflected in the title of the memoirs of the wife of one French Consul, the Comtesse de Chabrillan, "*Deuil au bout du monde*" or "Mourning in the back of beyond", Chabrillan 1877.) But despite all the acrimony in the Australian press, as Lawrey indicated, "Australasian colonists... never seriously questioned the permanency of French sovereignty over New Caledonia" (Lawrey 1982 p. 18). This belief was shaken temporarily when France fell to the Nazis in 1940.

Australia's role in installing the Free French Governor

When Paris fell in June 1940, the French Governor in New Caledonia, Georges Pélicier, was a senior colonial civil servant who, like many of his peers, saw Noumea as a brief career stepping-stone and had not engaged in the society he administered. When a central government was set up at Vichy, he was in a most difficult position as to whose interest he was to serve. Some of the Caldoches (or long-term European residents) sought to benefit from the situation to secure more local control. A local lawyer, Michel Vergès, promulgated a manifesto seeking a sovereign assembly to take over the Governor's powers, and was promptly arrested. Pélicier's own Secretary-General, André Bayardelle, seemed to agree with Vergès, noting that the colony was too much subjected to the Ministry of Colonies "whose initiatives were frequently untimely and cancelled out the best efforts of governors to organize the colony" (cited in Lawrey 1982 p. 8). At one point, a leftwing local representative called for New Caledonia to be placed under joint Australian-American protection (Burchett 1941 p. 197).

After a few weeks of judicious dithering, during which Pélicier even announced that New Caledonia would continue to fight at the side of Great Britain (Burchett 1941 p. 196), on 29 July, responding to pressure from Pétain, Pélicier gazetted Vichy's constitutional laws (although he resisted pressure to cut off relations with Britain and New Caledonia's principal supplier, Australia, Lawrey 1982 p. 28 and Munholland 2005 p. 38). Many Caldoches angrily demonstrated against these laws. In the event, while the General Council unanimously adopted a resolution calling for a

representative assembly, it added its disapproval of the Governor, and its resolve to contact General de Gaulle. In his declining days at the helm Pélacier called for the Vichy government to send a warship to Noumea, and the *Dumont d'Urville* arrived from Papeete in late August, captained by a confirmed Vichy supporter, Commander Toussaint de Quièvrecourt. De Quièvrecourt immediately reported to Vichy that the local agitators were subsidized by Australia, whose real aim was to annex New Caledonia (Lawrey 1982 p. 31). On 5 September, the vacillating Pélacier, after suffering a bomb attack at his residence and the mounting anger of the masses, quietly slunk out of town with his family, in the early hours, in the words of journalist Wilfred Burchett, wrapped warmly against the morning cold, "a peaked cap pulled down over his eyes" as the group was conveyed by launch to a Pan American Airways clipper (Burchett 1941 p. 205). His post was taken over by the Commander of local French forces, Maurice Denis.

Meanwhile, de Gaulle, then an exiled French military officer struggling to put together an alternative government in the wake of the German invasion and collapse of French resistance, moved into action. In an early indicator of his strategic vision of the role and importance of the French overseas possessions which was to characterize France's approach through many of the post-WWII years, he made his famous 18 June *appel*, or call for the support of the Empire. As Munholland noted, "Beginning as an improvised coalition of those who...chose to continue to fight at the side of Great Britain, the Free French under de Gaulle's leadership became a political movement devoted to a defence of the French Empire from its perceived enemies and served as a Gaullist instrument for the recovery of French grandeur, prestige, and influence after the humiliation of 1940" (Munholland 1986 p. 547).

As such, the *ralliement*, or winning-over, of the overseas territories had great symbolic value. It also had real value, in the need, which De Gaulle also saw, to neutralize, early, potential Vichy colonial and naval power overseas (Gorman 1997 and Floyd 2007 p. 10). Martin Thomas, in his military history of the *ralliement* in the empire, argued that "Control of the French empire was vital to the competing French leaderships of 1940-44, since the empire was a physical embodiment of what limited independence remained to the Vichy regime" (Thomas 1998 p. 5).

De Gaulle moved early to secure the support of the New Caledonia outpost to shore up his fledgling leadership. He asked the British to assist him to replace Pélacier with a pro-de Gaulle figure. The person he had in mind was Henri Sautot, a small man with a ginger moustache affectionately known as "*Pommes-paille*" ("Straw-potatoes"), who was French resident commissioner in nearby New Hebrides. There, he had rallied the local French population speedily to the Gaullist cause. He had also worked with Australia to build a strategically-important flying-boat base at Vila.

Australian involvement in the installation of de Gaulle's man, Sautot, was vital. At this time, its foreign policy institution was in a fledgling state. Since its formation at Federation in 1901, the Department of External Affairs had been subsumed into the Prime Minister's Department from World War I and only re-established as a separate entity in 1935 (Cleland 2008 pp. 164-171). Although Prime Minister Menzies had

signalled in early 1939 that Australia had its own primary responsibilities and needed its own diplomatic sources in the Pacific (Menzies 1939), in practice Australia had established diplomatic representation in only three places by mid-1940, in London, Washington and Ottawa (the latter two only established as full missions from February and March 1940 respectively, Foreign Affairs and Trade 2000).

To this point, at least from the armistice in June 1940, Australia had not been a disinterested bystander. On 18 June, the War Cabinet had discussed events in New Caledonia, discussions marked by concern that the Japanese presence in New Caledonia, associated with its ongoing purchase of nickel, posed a threat to Australian security, particularly with the Australian navy having left for the Mediterranean. This appears to be the first discussion of events in New Caledonia by the Australian Cabinet (War Cabinet Minute 18 June 1940, No 399 DFAT Historical Documents or HD). There was a broader concern about Japanese intentions in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), Indo-China, and Hong Kong (Cable Bruce to Menzies 19 June 1940 Document No 408 DFAT HD). The Department of External Affairs identified early that, of all the French possessions overseas, including Indo-China, it was most concerned about New Caledonia. It counseled caution, and the continuing support for the Bordeaux (later Vichy) government, unless an effective resistance could be organized (Memo for Minister 26 June 1940 Document No 440 DFAT HD). One of the early options Canberra considered, if only briefly, was an Australian takeover of New Caledonia (and then the New Hebrides), to forestall Japan, an option considered unattractive as it could provide a precedent for Japan to do the same in the Dutch East Indies (Cable to UK Secretary for Dominion Affairs 18 June 1940 Document No 400 DFAT HD).

Immediately after the armistice, Australia (along with New Zealand) had sent a message of sympathy to Governor Pélicier. Pélicier responded by stating “our firm resolve to co-operate with the French community throughout the whole world for the liberation of France, for which it has decided to continue the struggle by the side of the British Empire”, and seeking supplies from Australia (Cables Menzies to Pélicier 24 and 26 June 1940 Documents No 427 and 439 DFAT HD).

Australia drew its concerns about the vulnerabilities of the French Pacific islands to the attention of Britain and the United States. London responded by expressing concern at Japanese nickel purchases from New Caledonia, and suggesting Australia send a representative to Noumea (Cable Bruce to Menzies 25 June 1940 Document No 438 DFAT HD). Washington was not responsive (Cable Casey to Menzies 28 June 1940 Document No 464 DFAT HD). On its own initiative, Australia negotiated with the director of France’s nickel producer, the Société le Nickel, to purchase nickel matte, in July 1940, in order to encourage the colony to cease exporting to its major purchaser, Japan, with the primary aim of heading off on-shipment to Germany. This act was described by Lawrey as “a matter of enlightened self-interest”, since Australia had no need of nickel supplies and was acting solely to maintain a market for New Caledonia and keep it in the “allied orbit” (Lawrey 1982 pp 25-26). But the action was later to

backfire when the locals (incorrectly, as it turned out) accused Australia of acting unfairly as a middle-man.

Australia continued to be concerned about the potential for the Japanese to benefit from the situation. It had sent an Australian, Oughton, to negotiate the purchase of chrome from New Caledonia, similarly to ensure a market for the territory's chrome alternative to Japan. Oughton, among others, reported that the Governor was showing exaggerated respect for the Japanese Consul, granting a license for the sale of nickel to Japan (Cable to Bruce 13 August 1940 Document No 70 DFAT HD, Munholland 2005 p. 41).

In July, the Australian Government decided to appoint an Official Representative to Noumea, posting Bertram C. Ballard in the position. Ballard was a French-speaking lawyer who had been based in Vila from 1934. He was tasked to keep the Australian Government "fully informed on political and economic conditions in New Caledonia" and assess the attitudes of "officials, the General Council, and Caledonians" towards both Vichy and General de Gaulle's movement" (Instructions to Ballard, undated Document No 45 DFAT HD). Ballard's office in Noumea became Australia's fourth diplomatic mission overseas, preceding its first mission in Paris by five years, the latter being established in June 1945.

Responding to a request from de Gaulle, and because the area fell under the auspices of the Australian Naval Station, the British asked Australia to make available the *HMAS Adelaide* to install Sautot. Having just dispatched Ballard, Australia took its time to respond. The situation was complex, as one of Ballard's reports showed. He described the atmospherics of a dinner party with both the outgoing Pélicier, the incoming Denis and the visiting Fiji-based British High Commissioner for the Pacific, as "scarcely-restrained hysteria" (Lawrey 1982 p. 38). Wilfred Burchett, then a free-lance journalist but later to become one of Australia's well-known war correspondents, referred to the "glacial frigidity" of this dinner and the "Gilbertian" situation at Government House in a book he wrote about New Caledonia in the lead-up to the War (Burchett 1941 p. 204).

Canberra continued to bide its time. The Australian government did not want the French administering power to be overwhelmed by protesting Caldoches with the possibility of Australia being asked to fill the breach, and the potential for misinterpretation and consequence elsewhere, notably French Indo-China (Cable to Ballard 29 August 1940, Document No 83, DFAT HD; see also Daly p. 3). Thus Australia was concerned to ensure a working French administration in New Caledonia. There were also signs that the British were not fully aware of the complexities of the situation on the ground (see Fisher 2010c p. 27). In the event, Canberra took a decision to act only after Ballard assessed that a complaisant Vichy Governor was not likely and that the people would "welcome and follow" a Governor appointed by de Gaulle (Cable from Ballard 8 September 1940 Document No 110 DFAT HD).

Australia's hesitation to agree to London's request was perhaps one of the first indications that the Australian government, evaluating its own, as distinct from British, interests, saw advantage in a stable French-administered allied entity on its eastern flank (Fisher 2010c).

An aged Australian naval vessel, *HMAS Adelaide*, duly escorted a Norwegian ship, the *Norden*, with Sautot aboard, consistent with de Gaulle's characteristic instructions that the operation was to be conducted as a French operation with merely contingent support from the *Adelaide*. In the early hours of the morning of 19 September, 1940, the vessels approached the southern passage through the reef near Noumea. They were awaiting the agreed signal that it was safe to transfer Sautot to Noumea. This involved the quaint arrangement that the Gaullist boat to receive him off the main beach, Anse Vata, would throw overboard two kerosene tins when 300 metres from the *Norden*, and two more when 200 metres away (Sautot 1949 p. 39; Lawrey 1982 p. 44). Meanwhile, despite all attempts at secrecy, Sautot's planned arrival was well known in New Caledonia. Sautot himself explained, unsurprisingly, that one of the Gaullist Committee had confided the information to his mistress who, although a loyal Gaullist herself, could not restrain herself from spreading the information (Sautot 1949 p. 42). Ashore, the French *broussards*, or rural Caldoches, had descended on the capital from their stations and towns in the bush, to welcome the new Governor. Denis, after a pitiful show of indecision during which he twice dissolved into uncontrolled sobbing, finally escaped the crowd through a back window at Government House, ultimately to be detained in the village of La Foa (Burchett 1941 pp. 212-213).

In the event, the two vessels lumbered into Noumea harbour to see the *Dumont d'Urville* moored with guns trained fore and aft. It was later discovered that shore batteries had been given orders to open fire on the *Adelaide*, orders which were not carried out (Lawrey 1982 p. 46). At this point the *Adelaide's* commander, H.A. Showers, cast diplomacy to the winds and transferred Sautot from the *Norden* onto his vessel, and the *Norden* set sail back out through the harbour. Members of the Gaullist Committee approached in their boat, gave the kerosene tin signal, and took delivery of Governor Sautot. The *Adelaide* continued to patrol, wary of the *Dumont d'Urville*, whose captain showed prudent restraint, especially since some of the *broussards* in the capital were fully enjoying their victory in the streets. There were also reports that a second Vichy vessel, the *Amiral Charner*, was on its way from Indo-China to Noumea. The following day, de Quièvre court formally protested the *Adelaide's* presence and threatened a showdown. With both Showers and the Vichy captain referring time-consumingly to their capitals, tensions persisted for several days. But Showers initiated a personal meeting with the French captain and negotiated the departure of Vichy-sympathizing officials on a merchant vessel, and the *Dumont d'Urville's* departure, for Saigon. In view of this, the Vichy government ordered the *Amiral Charner*, en route to Noumea, back to Saigon.

Showers' diplomacy was not complete. Back in Noumea one Gaullist element had cornered the senior French civil servant, Secretary-General Bayardelle, and forced him onto the Vichy merchant vessel. The complexities were such that Bayardelle, not in the end a Vichyite, is recorded as telling Sautot at this time that within a very short time the British would be running New Caledonia (Lawrey 1982 p. 52). To head off further mob activity undermining his hard-won negotiations with de Quièvre court, Showers secured Sautot's agreement for him, Showers, to address the Gaullist committee directly, and explain the terms of his gentleman's agreement with the Vichy captain.

After the *Adelaide's* departure, the Australian government extended economic aid and cooperation pursuant to an agreement between Churchill and de Gaulle in August 1940. But this activity was fraught with difficulties and frictions, as locals grumbled about Australian delays. At one point, Free French accusations that Australia was abusing its position as middle-man in purchasing nickel (the device constructed to assist New Caledonia while preventing nickel purchase by the Germans) were being made surreptitiously to London at the same time as the Australian War Cabinet was resolving to exercise "a generous spirit" in assisting New Caledonia in its economic problems (Lawrey 1982 p. 68). These kinds of differences, imbued with emotion and potential for misunderstanding, were to characterize future dealings between New Caledonia and Australia in the latter half of the century.

Australian cooperation in providing reconnaissance, training and demolition expertise

Australia played another role in New Caledonia at this time. While the Free French government had been established in Noumea, a not inconsiderable achievement especially in view of de Gaulle's failure to do so elsewhere (Indo-China, Madagascar, the Levant, the French Antilles, all of North Africa and Djibouti, see Thomas 1998 p. 1), the Australian government knew the new neighbouring regime was fragile as Australia prepared for Japan's entry into the war. In February 1941 an Australian military mission visited New Caledonia. It recommended setting up an advanced operational air base there, to "contribute materially to the defence of Australia in the event of war with Japan" (Lawrey 1982 p. 55), supplying two six-inch coast defence guns for Noumea and arms, and ammunition and equipment for local forces. The War Cabinet meeting, which approved these recommendations, exceptionally included a French officer, sent by Sautot, whose task appears to have been, in true Gaullist tradition, to assure the Australians that the Free French were in effective control in order to head off RAAF control of any air base established in New Caledonia (Ibid. p. 56). It was curious that Australian Prime Minister Menzies met de Gaulle in London to secure agreement to these arrangements only in March, some weeks after the mission had arrived in Noumea. So it is not surprising that writers at the time (Ibid. p. 64) record some continuing suspicion on de Gaulle's part about Australian activities. For all his efforts, Sautot was to pay a heavy price for his cooperation with Australia and, later, the Americans (see below).

These activities were a measure of the strength of Australia's concern to shore up New Caledonia. The Army Minister, P.C. Spender, even pronounced that, economically, New Caledonia should be regarded as "part of Australia"; and, for the purpose of granting export licences, should be "treated on the same basis as an Australian State or Territory insofar as purchases from Australia are concerned" (see Lawrey 1982 p. 56).

A flying-boat base was duly established on the Ile Nou with a small RAAF detachment, two guns were installed on Ouen Toro hill in Noumea (where they remain today), and a small artillery detachment remained to train local troops in using them (Smith 2001). Australia provided shipping and support for the French Pacific Battalion which, with its

Tahiti contingent, sailed for the Middle East in May 1941. The RAAF surveyed and began construction of three landing fields, at Tontouta (which is now the international airport), Plaine des Gaiacs in the north, and Koumac on the northern tip of the main island, Grande Terre. And from December 1941 to July 1942 an Australian company led by D.G. Matheson was sent to New Caledonia to prepare for guerilla activity and if necessary deny the enemy useful assets such as nickel mines including if necessary by demolition. They were based in Bourail, north of Noumea (Garland 1997 Ch.2). They trained local Home Guards including Melanesians, (of whom they spoke very highly in their reports) and later, US infantrymen (see Appendix in Lawrey 1982 p. 123-4). Matheson was later killed in the Pacific war.

Australian soldiers thereafter were primarily active elsewhere in the Pacific and in Europe, while the Americans and New Zealanders worked out of New Caledonia.

De Gaulle's reflexive policy approach, imbued with suspicion about British (and for his followers in Noumea, Australian) designs on France's colonial empire and informed by the prevalence of the Vichy regime in many colonial capitals (see Thomas 1998), was to centralize his authority. He had already imposed controls relating to national pride, such as that Australian aircraft were to be employed only subject to local French approval and the numbers and roles of resident Australian personnel were to be limited, leading to a feeling in Australia that his attitude saw "ingratitude becoming a duty" (Lawrey 1982 op. cit. pp. 58-59). An instruction soon came to Canberra from London that all dealings with Sautot that would have previously been referred to Paris should be referred to de Gaulle's headquarters in London, not simply as a safeguard for Sautot but to underline to Australia, which London saw as diplomatically inexperienced, not to take advantage of the situation to arrogate to itself more political control in Oceania (Ibid. p. 62).

It is interesting that what led London to impute "diplomatic inexperience" to its former colony was in fact the latter's asserting its own interests and assessments at the time, perhaps more a mark of diplomatic coming of age. Australia's measured and calculated diplomatic activity from its early watchfulness over the nickel market with Japan, its establishment of its own Representative in Noumea, its role in ensconcing Sautot, and its follow-up military shoring up of New Caledonia's defences in its own interests, as distinct from that of the mother country Britain, were all the more impressive in that it all took place well before the fall of Singapore and Pearl Harbour.

Effect on Australian-French-New Caledonian links and embryonic Australian diplomacy

The development of Australian-French-New Caledonian relations at the beginning of the war set the pace for future relations and perceptions, notably the suspicions and counter-suspicions of future years. While some Australians had called for British hegemony in the Pacific to protect Australian security interests many years before, it was only at this time that Australia for the first time appreciated the strategic importance of effective *French* administration of its near neighbour, New Caledonia, as a direct element in its own security (this strategic significance and consequence for

policy is enunciated by Burchett at the time, p. 218 *et seq*). Australia's constant evaluation of its own, as opposed to British, interests, throughout these uncertain days was a critical developmental step. The pre-eminence of British interests for Australia until then was no doubt weighted against the fact that the United States at this stage had not entered the war and still had not recognized the deGaulle government even by the time General Patch arrived in Noumea in 1942. The Australian government's establishment of one of its first diplomatic missions (only its fourth office anywhere overseas) in Noumea in August 1940, five years before it was to establish a mission in Paris, reflected the significance of having its own links with New Caledonia, and the latter's important role in the development of Australian diplomacy and foreign policy in their earliest years. Australia's experience of its dealings with New Caledonia at the time, with its complex layers of formal links to central French headquarters (at this time in London but later Paris), to Noumea, and on the ground with local Caldoches and Kanaks, and its relations with Tahiti on a secondary level, was to leave an indelible imprint on Australian policy-making circles (see Fisher 2010c p. 31). It represented one of Australia's first involvements in regional multi-lateral cooperation, with Britain, France, the United States, and New Zealand, which was to build into the formal institution of the South Pacific Commission (later called Secretariat for the Pacific Community) based in Noumea. From this point, Australia's relationship with France in the Pacific, particularly New Caledonia, would be run from Canberra, and not from London.

The Sautot episode and the Australian advance defence mission are also important as they boosted the image of Australia in the eyes of many of the resident population, building on the identification the European residents were beginning to show towards their own New Caledonian interests in their own region with their own geographic neighbour.

Finally, the installation of the Free French government in New Caledonia represented one of the first successful "rallyings" of French colonies to the Free France cause. Whereas Martin Thomas argues that the various responses by France's other colonies to de Gaulle's call for support can be explained by a number of exogenous factors, the early response by the Pacific collectivities strengthened their status and place in the post-war Empire even if Australia's role in it was for the most part conveniently forgotten. So dealing with France over its Pacific territories became an early habit for Australia and its newfound post-war foreign affairs independence.

US "invasion"

But for the people of France's Pacific colonies, it was the American presence during the war that radically changed their expectations and way of life. Senior French officials in the early 2000s privately confided that it was the Americans during the War, not the French, who brought the French Pacific islands into modernity (Personal communication 2002).

Americans in New Caledonia

And the American presence in the French Pacific was not small. Noumea was the base of US operations in the South Pacific, and served with the New Hebrides air bases at Efate and Espiritu Santo as bastions of the US counter-offensive after the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. 22,000 US personnel were based in New Caledonia, with 2,600 on Wallis, 4,300 at an air base constructed in the New Hebrides and over 4,000 at a refuelling base at Bora Bora and a meteorological station at Raiatea in French Polynesia (Dunmore 1997 p. 234 and de Deckker 2003a p. 63). The US used the uninhabited French possession, Clipperton, as a meteorological and radio base (Aldrich 1990 p. 30).

The impact of the Americans in Noumea was huge. At one point in 1942, over 100,000 American and New Zealand personnel were there. They outnumbered the population of New Caledonia at the time (60,000) and boosted the population of the main island, Grande Terre, by nearly 100% (Lawrey 1982 p. 98). Around 1 million US soldiers were said to have transitted there during the war (see Lawrey 1982 p. 98 and Le Borgne 2005 p. 18).

The Americans were arguably more respected than the French administration in the early war years, mainly owing to the dubious behaviour of a French High Commissioner appointed by de Gaulle. Governor Sautot's easy manner with the Americans and Australians had created concerns for French leaders, so far away in the formal European environment. De Gaulle appointed High Commissioner d'Argenlieu to keep Sautot's feet to the fire and ensure that France's sovereignty would be appropriately defended. D'Argenlieu was an entirely different character to Sautot. He was a former World War I naval officer who had become a Carmelite monk and headed the Paris Carmelite province until his mobilization in 1939. He proved to be zealous to the point of obstruction in asserting French rights, focusing on form rather than substance and at one point delaying construction of needed airfields by the allies. He also devoted his energies to ousting the much-loved Sautot, finally arresting him and sending him off to New Zealand, and then London, at a time when New Caledonia was under direct Japanese threat (Sautot 1949 p. 176). He promoted suggestions that Sautot supporters were Australian agents (Lawrey 1982 pp. 109-110). At the time both the Australian High Commissioner in London and the Prime Minister had been concerned at d'Argenlieu's appointment, since he "had no knowledge of the Pacific" and his colonial experience had been in the West Indies (cable from Bruce to Menzies, DFAT HD August 1941), the kind of background which was to create difficulties for French officials in the region forty years later. Munholland (2005) attributed to these experiences of rigid French policy adherence the seeds of future differences between France and the US after the war. Another observer from the time, Jean le Borgne, wrote of de Gaulle's misunderstanding of the humiliation of Sautot inflicted by d'Argenlieu (Le Borgne 2005 p. 18). Sautot's own account is a harrowing tale of devotion to a cause and deeply felt betrayal and misunderstanding (Sautot 1949).

For their part, French concerns about American long-term designs were not entirely without foundation. The strategic importance of New Caledonia was made very clear early in the war. Anthony Eden referred to New Caledonia as a place of the highest strategic importance. Roosevelt, who was interested in the contribution New Caledonia could make as a US commercial aviation lay-over point in the South Pacific from 1935, repeatedly asserted in 1943 and 1944 that New Caledonia should not remain French after the war, but rather should be a trustee territory of the United Nations (Lawrey 1982 p. 121; Weeks 1989 p. 189). The US Navy General Board, and a US Senator touring the region, noted the strategic importance of New Caledonia for the US and recommended cession by the French to the US (Munholland 2005, Weeks 1989 p. 191). By the end of the war a group of New Caledonians themselves proposed that the colony become American (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 74). However, there never was a coherent US strategy for the annexation of New Caledonia, and the US lost interest in New Caledonia at the end of the war (Weeks 1989 pp. 185 and 196).

The local people responded warmly to the Americans' pragmatism and democratic values. In contrast to the French, who extracted free labour from the Kanaks under the *indigénat* scheme, the Americans paid local labourers. Notwithstanding segregation in the US Army, the behaviour of white and black GIs, as equals and at ease with each other, made an impression. The US military command favoured the study of indigenous languages, in contrast to the French approach (Chesneaux in Spencer 1988 p. 61). According to John Lawrey, who was working in the Australian diplomatic mission in Noumea at the time, the impact of the numerous hale and hearty, well-equipped Americans, cheerily sharing their rations of chocolate and chewing gum, was overwhelming (Lawrey 1982). The economy of the archipelago was boosted hugely by U.S. consumption. The fact that it was the Americans, not the French, who supplied the military materiel to defend the archipelago, weakened the authority of the French, for whom the inflexible d'Argenlieu, as described, was a poor representative. The practice at the end of the war, of dumping vast quantities of equipment in local waterways (this occurred in Wallis, New Hebrides at aptly named Million Dollar Point, and New Caledonia) rather than export it or leave it for local use or perhaps misuse, simply reinforced the wonder at American wealth and profligacy. One US jeep escaped this fate and is still used, today, in Noumea, on significant anniversaries of the war, when it is driven around by a jubilant group of Caldoches in the guise of World War II officers and a blonde Monroe-look-alike nurse in vintage uniform.

The War and Americans in the EFO, New Hebrides and Wallis and Futuna

As in Noumea, in the EFO, the confusion following the fall of Paris in 1940 saw demands for more autonomy, which persisted throughout the course of the Pacific war. In Papeete, the Free French Committee organized a referendum at the time, with the results overwhelmingly in favour of Free France over Vichy (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 80). One of their number, a returned local serviceman from World War I, Pouvanaa a Oopa, led a push for more autonomy and independence (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 314). An attempt was made to arrest him in 1941 but not carried through (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 80). During the war he was a vocal critic of the

local administration and rationing system (Dunmore 1997 p. 243) and this boosted his political profile.

While the American presence was not as pervasive in the EFO as in New Caledonia, the wealth and economic boost they represented changed Bora Bora, where they ran a fuel depot. The island was mythologised and represented as Bali Hai in the James Michener novel *Tales of the South Pacific*, later turned into a Hollywood film, leaving a lasting legacy as a tourist paradise. The values the Americans represented, of racial equality and modernism, complemented the push for autonomy already underway and vocalized by Pouvanaa and his followers.

In the New Hebrides, during the course of the war, 100,000 Americans passed through Efate where they had established an airstrip, huts and recreation base. The main impact of the American presence was the revival of an existing cargo cult on the island of Tanna, the John Frum movement.

The tiny island of Uvea in the Wallis group hosted two airfields. Such was the attachment of the islanders to the influx of well-off US soldiers that a call was made (but not taken up) for annexation before the Americans left in 1946.

Effects of the War and the US presence on France in the Pacific

The effect of the American presence and management of the war from the French colony, New Caledonia, had broader repercussions for the French Pacific colonies than social change. One consequence of the Pacific war for France was recognition of the strategic role of the French Pacific presence in regaining national prestige. The early rallying to de Gaulle by the French territories there left an important legacy, one which de Gaulle had doubtless foreseen in his very early efforts to secure their support. The war resulted in the dominance of the Americans in the Pacific as a whole, not simply in their continental littoral presence but with island territories of their own, mainly north of the Equator. This prevailing strength was to make the Pacific Ocean in the broad an "American lake" for most of the rest of the century (Heffer 1995 p. 250). For France, struggling to re-establish its national prestige within the western alliance, its Pacific presence was a strategic instrument as French leaders sought to entrench France's right to a seat at the high table of the UN Security Council in the wake of the war (see Chapter 3).

A second result of the US role in France's territories during the war was that it catalysed demands there for more political rights from France. But now the demands were being made of a France for whose credibility the American experience called into question, not only its military capacity to defend its colonies but the very values of liberty, fraternity and equality France professed to represent (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 75). De Deckker (in *New Pacific Review* 2003a p. 63) directly attributed to the influence of the Americans the introduction of voting rights in the Deferrre law of 1956 (see next chapter; also Le Borgne 2005 p. 18). There is little doubt that in New Caledonia, the budding demands for more autonomy already noted amongst the European residents in

the Cane (1932) and Vergès (1940) proposals were compounded by a growing Kanak demand for change arising from their contact with Americans, and arguably Australians and New Zealanders, during the war. In Tahiti Pouvanaa's demands were more extreme and curtailed immediately by the French. But notwithstanding the social impact of the Americans, and the calls for greater autonomy, it is undeniable that all through the war and beyond, the prevailing culture in all the colonies remained French.

A third determining feature of the Pacific war for the French territories was its reinforcement of the primacy of New Caledonia over the other French colonies in strategic and regional importance. Its location, relatively developed infrastructure and sophistication, and responsiveness to modernity, underpinned successful US-led prosecution of the Pacific war.

Another enduring characteristic of the early establishment of the American New Caledonian presence in the Pacific war was the habit of cooperation and consultation between the Free French in London and Noumea, the British, the Americans, New Zealanders and Australians, fraught as they nonetheless were with misunderstanding, prejudice, and the need for delicate diplomacy. This wartime cooperation was to lead the way for a new regional multilateral organization, the South Pacific Commission, with its seat in Noumea, in the former US Headquarters buildings, after the War.

Chapter 3

France manages independence demands and nuclear testing 1945-1990s

The immediate post-war period saw growing demands for autonomy in the colonies and signs of responsiveness in France. In the wave of post-war change, as its wartime allies shaped new international structures with the United Nations at its core, France acknowledged the need for more equality and evolution in the administration of its colonies. De Gaulle resigned in January 1946 because of differences over parliamentary powers in the new constitution, leading to a period of instability in French leadership. Steps to encourage more self-government and even independence for the colonies, particularly the African colonies, were initiated by the Fourth and Fifth Republics in the 1946 and 1958 constitutions, then rolled back by successive statutory measures, to serve French national interests, in a pattern which was to characterize future treatment of the South Pacific overseas territories.

At a conference in Brazzaville (the Congo) in 1944, provision was made for more decentralized administration of the colonies and representation in bodies redrafting the French constitution (Le Borgne 2005 p. 19). The Conference called for local elected assemblies and representation of the overseas territories in the Paris Parliament. However, the aim was to contain nationalist aspirations and keep the colonies with France (Henningham 1992 p. 120).

Some Melanesians and Polynesians (war veterans, pastors, customary chiefs) were accorded the right to vote in 1945. In 1945 and 1946 the French government decreed further rights for their overseas residents, including French citizenship, but not the universal right to vote. While the 1946 constitution affirmed that all residents of overseas territories were French citizens, it was only in 1951 that all French citizens in the colonies obtained the right to vote, and specifically only in 1956, with the Loi Defferre, that all native residents of the overseas were entitled to vote (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 348; Gohin 2002; Defferre Framework Law No 56-619 of 23 June 1956). This needs to be understood within the French context. Coutau-Bégarie (1986 Ch. 2) noted that this was not an inconsiderable achievement, since it was only in 1944 that all French metropolitan citizens, notably women, received the right to vote. In 1946, the *indigénat* system in New Caledonia was abolished.

The 1946 constitution created a French Union and committed France to leading its people to administer themselves and to manage their own affairs democratically, “*écartant tout système de colonisation fondé sur l'arbitraire*” (“eschewing arbitrary colonization”, Preamble). The EFO and New Caledonia were henceforward able to elect their own *député* (member of parliament) to the French National Assembly and Senate in Paris.

Another change in the 1946 Constitution created an administrative distinction, with the nomenclature of “departments” for the four oldest colonies (Guyana, Réunion,

Guadeloupe and Martinique) and of “territories” for the other possessions, including New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna.

France was not acting in a domestic vacuum. As post-war international structures evolved, the United Nations was founded in 1945 on a Charter specifying the principle of equality of rights and self-determination of peoples (Article 1). It called for states administering non-self-governing territories to develop self-government and transmit technical information to the UN on them (Article 73). However, the underlying intent of France’s apparent relaxation of its reins over its possessions was evident in 1947, when France decided unilaterally that it would not transmit to the UN information on New Caledonia and French Polynesia (and others of its colonies), arguing that they had a status similar to the French “departments”, with the implication that they had administrative and political autonomy and were therefore no longer non-self-governing (see Mrgudovic in de Deckker and Faberon 2008 p. 178). France claimed that only New Hebrides was non-self-governing (Bates 1990 p. 52). The UN endorsed a Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and set up a Decolonization Committee (known as the Committee of 24) in 1960 (UNGA Resolution 1514 (XV) and Resolution 1541 of 14 December 1960). But France maintained its position on its territories, even after New Caledonia was reinscribed as a non-self-governing territory after pressure from Pacific Forum countries in 1986 (and only acquiesced in its reporting responsibilities for New Caledonia from 2004, see section on reinscription below).

Apart from providing full French voting rights in the overseas territories and departments, the 1956 Defferre *loi cadre* or framework law aimed at more engagement by the Overseas France peoples in their own administration (Law No 56-619 of 23 June 1956, Article 1; see Cordonnier 1995a p. 47). By this time the French state was grappling with major challenges, particularly in Indo-China and Algeria, and its own government was unstable. By 1954 France had withdrawn from Indo-China. The Fourth Republic had seen 21 changes of government in 12 years (Dunmore 1997 p. 248). The interlinkages of the fate of the overseas colonies and domestic politics in France which obtained during the 19th century were to take on a new piquancy and relevance with the demise of the Fourth Republic largely because of controversial French handling of the Algerian rebellion (Dunmore 1997 p. 245; Ziller and Faberon 2007 p. 21). At one stage France hijacked a plane and arrested nationalist leaders (Bély 2001 p. 119). Amidst the threat of an army takeover in Algeria, the French President called on de Gaulle to form a government.

With the advent of the Fifth Republic, and the return of de Gaulle to head it, from 1958, a new constitution came into being which enshrined the principle of free determination of its peoples and the possibility of new institutions for the overseas territories desirous of participating in them, with a view to their “democratic evolution” (Preamble). De Gaulle turned the French Union into a Community, and referendums were held in 1958 throughout the empire on whether or not the colonies would accept the new French constitution, which de Gaulle made clear was a vote for staying with France (Henningham 1992 123). In his rhetoric, de Gaulle specified two things, first, that the

contemporary world made it necessary to belong to large economic and political federations, and second, that a no vote would mean going it alone, with France not giving “further moral or material help” (quoted in Henningham 1992 p. 124). These were arguments that were to recur in future years. By voting yes, the colonies could choose either integration into France, to continue the *status quo*, or expanded autonomy as a self-governing member of the French Community, effectively laying the basis for independence (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 21). All but one of France’s African possessions took up the independence option (Bates 1990 p. 12). All three Pacific colonies voted to stay with France, New Caledonia with a vote of 98%, and Wallis and Futuna 95%. French Polynesia returned a far lower vote, 64 %, owing to the efforts of independence leader Pouvanaa who was arrested for his troubles (Danielsson and Danielsson 1986 Ch 6, and see French Polynesia section below). But as the years ahead were to show, political evolution was subsequently seen as taking place within an indivisible French Republic.

Strategic Factors

The nuclear testing issue

With the loss of Algeria by 1962, de Gaulle adopted a different approach to its overseas, and Pacific, territories. Part of de Gaulle’s new vision for the Fifth Republic was to re-establish France as a self-reliant power, with a geographical and geopolitical presence throughout the world and the possession of nuclear weapons (Cordonnier 1995a p. 52; Waddell, 2008, p. 56). Thus retaining its overseas territories became an important objective.

The late 1950s and early 1960s had seen a rapid modernization of the French economy, with successful prestigious projects such as the construction of the supersonic *Concorde* aircraft. De Gaulle espoused what has been dubbed “the politics of *grandeur*” whereby France, befitting its status as one of the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, would restore its position in the wake of the losses of World War II, Indo-China and now Algeria, not to mention the defeats of World War I and the 1870 Prussian War. Self-sufficiency was a key ingredient to this policy. The national priority at the time was to maintain France’s status as a *puissance mondiale moyenne* (middle-sized world power) and an integral part of that was the *force de frappe*, or independent French nuclear deterrent (Danielsson and Danielsson 1986 p. 43; Woolner 1995; Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 96; Dunmore 1997 p. 247). The evolution of a European Economic Community with talk of a European defence organism strengthened France’s resolve to be responsible for its own defence. In 1960, France acquired the atomic bomb. In 1966, France withdrew from the NATO High Command as a mark of its determination to retain national self-reliance. Nuclear testing that had been carried out in Algeria was to take place in the Pacific, at Moruroa and Fangataufa in French Polynesia. It would be essential to maintain the Pacific possessions in the French fold, lest a change in status in one would encourage independence moves in French Polynesia.

Also in 1966, de Gaulle visited New Caledonia, telling the locals “You are *France australe* (France in the south). You have a French role to play in the world” (in Waddell 2008 p. 56), and went on to French Polynesia to witness one of the first nuclear tests there.

France’s acquisition of nuclear capability and testing practices were not an isolated act by a pretentious European state. While France, through its policy of self-reliance, distanced itself from the Anglo-American special relationship and NATO, its nuclear program nonetheless formed part of a western schema of similar activity in the broad Pacific region, notably by Britain (at Maralinga in Australia) and the United States (at Bikini Atoll in the Gilbert group).

In the early days of the Cold War, the international reaction against nuclear testing was slow to gather momentum, but when it took hold criticism of France was very strong, particularly in the neighbouring Pacific region. Contrary to French perceptions that the region was targeting France specifically, a general distaste for nuclear testing had been evident very early in the South Pacific region. As early as 1956, when neither the Cook Islands nor Western Samoa were independent, their local assemblies recorded protests against the British and US atmospheric tests in the region (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 184). So it was not surprising that South Pacific islanders were to zero in on France for its staging of tests, in Pacific perceptions, far away from the metropolitan area and within their neighbourhood.

Expanded maritime territorial boundaries

The other major international development in the strategic backdrop to France’s changing approaches to autonomy demands in the post-war period was the 1982 Law of the Sea (UNLOS) convention. After years of negotiation, the international community agreed to establish 200 mile exclusive economic zones (EEZ), legally increasing dramatically the surface of global sovereignty to individual countries. For France, as for many other governments still with overseas possessions, this was the most important single stroke for extending national sovereignty since the haphazard declarations of the eighteenth century. Although UNCLOS sets out the framework for, and records, nations’ claims, consistent precise figures about each nation’s rightful EEZ are difficult to establish.¹⁵ But the overall effect for France is clear.

With ratification of the Law of the Sea Convention, the French EEZ, i.e., its sea resources alone,¹⁶ is now the second largest in the world after that of the US (at the

¹⁵ In France’s case, see differences in figures cited by Sevaistre 1986 p. 41, who noted France’s EEZ was third largest after UK and US [sic] at 11,136,330 sq. km. of which 340,290 sq. km. was metropolitan France and 10,796,330 sq. km. in the DOM-TOMS, of which New Caledonia represented 2 m. sq. km.; Doumenge 2002 p. 101, noting France’s total EEZ as 11.7 million sq. km.; Mrgudovic 2008 p. 84 noting France’s EEZ at almost 10.5 sq. km. of which more than 7.6 m. sq. km. derive from its Pacific presence; and Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 8 citing French Overseas Files indicating that of France’s total EEZ of 11,574 560 sq. km., the entire DOM-TOM EEZ represented 11,234,270 sq. km. with metropolitan France’s EEZ only 340,290 sq. km..

¹⁶ Comparisons of EEZs are indicative only of a sovereign power’s control over *sea resources beyond its territorial sea*. When comparing total land, territorial seas and EEZ areas, France ranks seventh after

time, it was the third largest in the world after the US and the USSR, which subsequently disintegrated). France's territorial sovereignty including all of its departments and territories overseas (DOM TOM), extended over 40% of the total global maritime zones, or 8% of the surface of the globe, while France's land area covered only .45% of the globe (Wikipedia website accessed 1 July 2009 and Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 95). Compared to the EEZ of the French metropolitan "hexagon" alone of just 340,290 square kilometers, France's EEZ grew to 11.57 m. square kilometers, of which 7.3 m. sq. km. arose from its Pacific possessions and just under 5 m. sq. km. of that, from French Polynesia alone (Faberon and Ziller 2007 table based on Overseas France files, p. 8). While some French writers have claimed that France derives minimal economic return from its large EEZ (Leymarie 1985 p. 4) and it is true that much of the potential remains unknown, control over these resources boosted France's geopolitical prestige globally (see Mrgudovic 2008 p. 81 et seq), and particularly at a time when it was under attack in the region, both for its handling of Kanak independence claims in New Caledonia, and for its nuclear testing in French Polynesia.

Other international factors

It is also important to bear in mind that from the 1980s the Pacific Ocean once again began to be described as the new centre of the world, with writers and thinkers heralding the twenty-first century as the Pacific century (Aldrich 1988 p. 1; Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 102). In a sense, this was nothing new. There had been an earlier movement in France in the 1880s led by the Oceanic Lobby Group in Paris (Aldrich 1988 p. 11). But this time, the new wave of attention to the Pacific was global, and arose from dynamic economic growth in the rapidly industrializing Asian tigers (South East Asia, Hong Kong, South Korea), with China poised in the background, all littoral Pacific states. A European country with a direct stake in the region, even if it was simply in the southern hemisphere of the Pacific, where its Pacific naval presence was based, had a perceived advantageous foothold in an economically significant region (Lacour 1987 p. 131). Europe's exclusion from the newly-emerging Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation grouping in the late 1980s to early 1990s, and British effective withdrawal from the South Pacific in the same period (although it had defined its "east of Suez" policy much earlier), only served to strengthen French tenaciousness there.

Early post-war regional context

Within the South Pacific region, post-war France was increasingly working in a regional environment, joining up with the governments of Netherlands, US and UK, Australia and New Zealand to form the South Pacific Commission (known as

the Russia, the US, Australia, Canada, China and Brazil. It is worth noting that there is a minute difference between France's combined EEZ and territorial seas (11.57 m. sq. km.) and its EEZ, territorial seas and land (11.7 m. sq. km.) whereas for example with Russia there is a far larger difference (7.5 m. sq. km. to 24.6 m. sq. km.), reflecting the larger land mass of the latter Wikipedia EEZ accessed 1 July 2009). Thus the relative potential increase in resources by virtue of an EEZ is far greater for France.

Secretariat of the Pacific Community from 1998) (SPC) in 1947, with its headquarters in Noumea. The genesis of the Commission was one of consultations amongst those powers responsible for various Pacific islands on the basis of either colonial ties (France, Netherlands, United Kingdom) or UN mandates (US, Australia, New Zealand). After 1964, with the accession of the first independent Pacific island state, Western Samoa (which became independent in 1962), the organization included independent states, and added a technical assistance role (see Foreign Affairs and Trade 1997; Secretariat for the Pacific Commission 2007).

France from the beginning saw the SPC as a threat to its authority. Along with Netherlands and UK, France resisted proposals from Australia, New Zealand and the US for elected delegates, and calls by island leaders from 1965 to have representation in Noumea (Bates 1990 p. 42). More critically for its own interests, France actively opposed *political* (as distinct from technical) discussion at SPC meetings. It was France's intransigence over discussing political questions, notably the issues of regional nuclear testing and New Caledonian independence demands, which led the frustrated new island governments to form the South Pacific Forum (renamed Pacific Islands Forum, PIF, in 2000) in 1971 (see Fry 1981; Henningham 1992 p. 197). The Forum was established specifically as a political forum, and its first political preoccupations targeted French policies (see Forum Communiqué 1971). France was to tread a rocky path with the Forum in the 1970s and 1980s, and bilaterally with some of its members, which will be explored later in this chapter in connection with New Caledonia and French Polynesia respectively. But through it all, France was to retain the SPC headquarters in Noumea and its membership of the SPC. It thus benefitted from a privileged status throughout the regional difficulties of the 1980s to 1990s, a valuable asset when it finally sought to improve its standing in the region in the latter 1980s, which will be considered in the next chapter.

Institutional structures at home

The management of the overseas colonies in metropolitan France changed little at this time. A full Ministry for Colonies had been established in 1894. Before then, the Office of Colonies that Richelieu had established in 1710 had handled the overseas colonies for almost two hundred years, attached to the Marine Secretariat, later Ministry. The 1894 Ministry was located at one end of the Louvre, which Bêlorgey (2002 p. 84) noted justly reflected the poorly reduced empire after the Napoleonic losses that century. In 1910 it relocated to the large *hôtel* at Rue Oudinot where it remains today. The Ministry was simply divided into economic and political directorates until after World War II. During the war the importance of the overseas empire, particularly New Caledonia and French Polynesia, in declaring allegiance to the Free French government had been vital, an illustration of the interactivity of the overseas presence with French domestic politics. It is worth noting that both the Vichy and Free French governments had their Colonial Ministries, each seeing the "Overseas France" as important elements of their power (albeit with a realistic understanding of their ability to defend them, see Thomas 1998 Chapters 1 and 2).

Similarly, Bélorgey noted the great hopes after the War that the colonial empire would contribute to maintaining France's global prestige in the wake of the ignominious war-time experience (Ibid. p. 85). In 1946 with the *départementalisation* of the four "old colonies", the departments of Guyana, Réunion, Martinique, Guadeloupe came under the purview of the Interior Ministry. With the changes of the 1958 constitution, and the return of the conservative de Gaulle government, the departments and the territories were reunited in the Ministry of the "*DOM-TOM*" (*départements et territoires d'outre-mer*, or overseas departments and territories) under the Prime Minister, reflecting their importance as equal but different parts of France. The two remain united to this day, albeit more recently under the simpler nomenclature of "*Outre-Mer*" (Overseas France) (at various times in a Ministry or Permanent Secretariat).

Autonomy demands in the Pacific collectivities

It is against this background that demands for increasing autonomy within the French Pacific entities, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and New Hebrides emerged in the post-war period. Unfolding events in each entity exerted influence on the others. These will be reviewed briefly, and include New Hebrides' progress to independent Vanuatu in 1980; France's responses to increasingly violent independence demands in New Caledonia culminating in the Matignon and Noumea Accords in 1988 and 1998; and its management of its strategic interest in atomic testing along with autonomy and independence demands in French Polynesia until it finally ceased testing in 1996.

Tiny Wallis and Futuna, after it voted in 1959 to stay with France, became a French Overseas Territory in legislation enacted in 1961 which governs the entity, essentially unchallenged, to this day (Loi No 61-814 of 19 July 1961) (De Deckker 2003a p. 66; Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 335). The islands' principal interconnection with the other French entities during this period has been the migration of a substantial part of its labour force to New Caledonia (see John Connell in Aldrich 1991 p. 99) which will be addressed in discussion of recent developments in New Caledonia in Chapter 5.

New Hebrides becomes Vanuatu

Although the numbers of French residents in the New Hebrides were small after the War (900 French citizens compared to 320 British citizens, and 1,750 "protected French citizens", mainly Indochinese working on the plantations, in 1949, Dunmore 1997 p. 253), there were strong informal links between European residents of New Caledonia and New Hebrides, and France continued to invest extensively in infrastructure to support French planters in the condominium. But despite French efforts to resist decolonization, because it was sharing power with Britain, because Britain was on a path of relinquishing its presence east of Suez and granting independence to its Pacific colonies, and also because of France's own clumsy handling of demands for independence, the condominium of New Hebrides became the independent state of Vanuatu in July 1980.

While it could be argued that elsewhere in the Pacific, independence was being granted, indeed often hastened, because of the wishes of the colonial powers rather than the local people, France did not want to lose its presence in the New Hebrides (“We’re staying”, Henningham quotes the French Resident in 1969 p. 31), not the least because of the example it might provide to its other Pacific entities. Its independence was a significant blow to France within the context of its *grandeur* policy and maintaining its *puissance mondiale moyenne* status. Once again, it seemed French interests in the Pacific were usurped by Britain’s interests, and local indigenous forces.

Again, the old French Catholic v. British Protestant faultline came into play. British evangelists were more longstanding, and more entrenched, in the archipelago than the French Marists. The first calls for independence came from mainly English-speaking Protestants, while those favouring autonomy of individual islands were primarily French speaking and Catholic Melanesians. The English and French were highly suspicious about the other. Once again, as in New Caledonia during the war, the French attributed very negative motives to Australia and New Zealand (Coutau-Bégarie 1987 p. 287; Dornoy-Vurobaravu 1994; Dunmore 1997 p. 268). Such a position is the more revealing against the context of brief consideration at the time of the idea of Australia taking over from Britain some kind of tutelage role for Vanuatu, which Australia rejected (Personal communication from Malcolm Leader, 2009).

The key issues catalyzing independence calls were land acquisition by settlers, and European legal systems, the latter challenging local custom. Such differences, together with a cargo cult mentality in a number of small groupings, fostered by the relatively profligate presence of the Americans during the war, provided an impetus to phenomena such as Jimmy Stephens’ Nagriamel movement which propounded independence. The decision by French planters to move into cattle ranching in the 1960s, increasingly taking up interior land, heightened differences. In 1971 Stephens appealed to the UN for independence to be granted within a year. The same year, the former Anglican minister Walter Lini formed the Vanuatu Party, known variously as the New Hebrides National Party and the Vanuaaku Pati. Numerous francophone parties were formed to counter the Vanuatu Party – the *Union de la Population des Nouvelles-Hébrides* (Union of the New Hebrides Population, UPNH), *Mouvement Autonomiste des Nouvelles-Hébrides* (Autonomist Movement of New Hebrides, MANH) and the *Union des Communautés des Nouvelles-Hébrides* (Union of the Communities of New Hebrides, UCNH) all of which represented objectives short of immediate independence. For a time, MANH formed an alliance with Nagriamel and the UCNH with a cargo cult, the John Frum movement. The French sought to discourage support for independence, using the familiar argument that resource-poor countries would collapse (Henningham 1992 p. 35). At the same time, the Condominium provided for a Representative Assembly in 1974. The Vanuatu Party won elections in 1975 and 1979, after forming and then disbanding a Provisional Government in 1977.

France, influenced by New Caledonian lobbyists with interests vested in trade and other links with their French New Hebrides compatriots, had been sympathetic to Jimmy

Stephens. As the Vanuatu Party's support grew, French officials worked behind the scenes with parties opposing the Vanuatu Party before the November, 1979, elections. The Vanuatu Party victory was a surprise, especially as the Party won even in French dominated Santo and Tanna, albeit narrowly. In response, Stephens' movement grew into a secessionist rebellion, proclaiming a Republic of Vemarana on Santo in 1979, with a French-educated politician Alexis Youlou declaring the nation Tafea on Tanna and other islands. Youlou was killed shortly afterwards. The French were suspected of having supported these rebellions (Dunmore 1997 p. 269). French officials vetoed sending a joint Anglo-French police force to restore order in the rebellious islands. French supporters of Stephens were hopeful of continued French control, conscious of the Indian Ocean 1975 precedent in Mayotte, which had remained French while the Comoros had become independent (Henningham 1992 p. 40). Once again, outcomes in one French possession influenced French actions in others.

In preparing for 1979 elections leading to full self-government, French Secretary of State for the Overseas, Paul Dijoud, played a role in securing a quasi-federal arrangement to allow for separate identities, and continued French influence, in Santo and Tanna (Henningham 1992 pp. 38, 41). Henningham also noted that French policies may have suffered by the short-term rotation of its officials in the New Hebrides, in contrast to British officials who stayed for long periods and could develop deeper knowledge of the forces at play. He referred also to the different influences at work in Paris, between the Defence Ministry and Overseas France Department on the one hand, who were more pro-settler, and the Foreign Affairs and political leadership on the other, who were more pragmatic. While such considerations led to disjunctions between policy in Paris and French officials' attitudes and actions on the spot, the reality is that the French government had the power to control its officials but chose not to do so. Only a week before independence the French Resident told French residents on Santo that France would intervene to protect it and give it special status (Henningham 1992 p. 42).

And so it was that the new independent government invited Papua New Guinea to send troops to assist it deal with the rebels, which it did, with Australian logistical support, within days (Ibid. p. 43). A legacy of bitterness remained, despite customary ceremonies of reconciliation.

With this background it is not surprising that as first Prime Minister, Walter Lini pursued anti-French policies. He expelled around 700 French residents including planters, missionaries, officials and security people, most of whom went to New Caledonia where they became ardent anti-independence supporters (Ibid. p. 43). Vanuatu joined the British Commonwealth. It supported independentist groups in New Caledonia, promoting their cause in the United Nations, and criticized French nuclear testing at Moruroa. It was one of the founding members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group in the 1980s, mainly to pursue these objectives. It was only after Lini left the political scene in 1991 that relations with France improved. Although French aid continued during Lini's tenure (about \$A 8 m. in 1981 or one third of the budget, Henningham 1992 p. 44), it was controversial and heavy-handed, and centred on

French cultural and education projects. France did not help its cause by threatening to remove its aid when Vanuatu agreed to host the dissident New Caledonian Kanaky government in 1987 (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 222-223). Vanuatu expelled the French Ambassador in 1987 for financial subsidies he had deposited with opposition parties on the eve of November elections (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 197). By 1990 things had improved to the point where Vanuatu had introduced a virtual diplomatic détente with France (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992, p. 199). Nonetheless, unease remains, represented, for example, in Vanuatu's continuing claim, in competition with that of France, to Matthew and Hunter Islands, two islands 300 km east of New Caledonia and south of Vanuatu (see Chapter 5).

Enduring lessons

One of the legacies of Vanuatu's colonial experience, and arguably its experience with the French, was the very damaging effect on regional security, with implications for Australia and western interests broadly. Vanuatu adopted anti-west policies, or at the most generous interpretation, became skilled in playing off western interests against those of external Cold War players like the Soviet Union and Libya (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 220). It entertained invitations by Libya for scholarships for its students in the 1980s, establishing diplomatic relations in 1987. It was one of only two island states (the other being Kiribati) to sign a fishing contract with the Soviet Union in 1986, and one of only a few states (New Zealand, Palau, Solomon Islands) to ban nuclear ship visits to its ports. It was one of only two states (Tonga being the other) not to have ratified the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone in 1986-87 (see Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992). It is difficult to disagree with the judgement of PNG's then Ambassador to the UN, Renagi Lohia, that France's policies were "a direct threat to peace, security and stability in our region and they have serious implications for international peace and security" (cited in Bates 1990 p. 109).

Importantly, the post-colonial experience of Vanuatu showed what may be in store for the other French entities should France leave in the same circumstances, i.e., where it would prefer not to leave. While France, New Caledonia, and the region have come a long way since 1980, the lessons are there. At the time it was the relatively low levels and directions of French aid which were destabilizing, the former forcing Vanuatu to look for donors in new and unwelcome places, and the latter perceived as political interference. Even today, French interlocutors will point to Vanuatu as the inevitable result should France leave its other Pacific entities (Personal communications 2001-2004). At the 2008 Colloquium marking the anniversary of the Matignon and Noumea Accords, Vanuatu surfaced repeatedly as an example of what New Caledonia could become without continuing French support, and journalist Alain Rollat referred to warnings Vanuatu's leaders gave to Tjibaou about not pressing too hard for independence, cautioning "*le risque est l'oubli*" (lest New Caledonia be forgotten), harking back to de Gaulle's threats about withdrawing support from colonies voting to leave France (Regnault and Fayaud 2008 p. 57).

For the French at the time, the Vanuatu experience inevitably hardened their attitude to independence demands in New Caledonia and French Polynesia, and their anti “Anglo-Saxon” prejudices. It stiffened their resolve to continue nuclear testing, and their resistance to regional criticism.

New Caledonia: Violent road to compromise and innovation

The evolution of self-government and demands for independence in New Caledonia can be traced through the formation and roles of political parties, and the many (twelve) statutory changes, in a stop-start pattern from the early 1950s to the present (see Appendix 2 for a summary of statutory changes). The difficulties arising from this evolution need to be situated against the interplay of French domestic political demands and preoccupations in the hexagon, including France’s progressive participation in European structures, and the regional context and preoccupations confronting the local population. It will be seen that the disposition of administrative responsibilities for the territories in Paris, relative to other relevant levers of government, such as the Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministries, also came into play.

Political parties and statutory changes

Although others (Connell 1987, Dornoy 1994, Henningham 1992, amongst others) have traversed the field, it is worth briefly reviewing New Caledonia’s political development from WWII until the 1980s, because this history reveals a pattern of French fitfulness and outright renegeing over promised extensions of autonomy and self-government. It is this pattern which contributed substantially to the emotional eruption of protest in the 1980s, and which leaves continuing questions about the full implementation of agreements struck since then.

Against the background of the history of the differences between the Protestants and Catholics in the Pacific, it is perhaps not surprising that the first political groupings in New Caledonia followed these lines. In 1946 two groupings were formed, the Catholic *Union des Indigènes Calédoniens Amis de la Liberté dans l’Ordre* (Union of Indigenous Caledonian Friends of Liberty in Order, UICALO) and the Protestant *Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyaltiens Français* (Association of Indigenous Caledonians and French Loyalty Islanders, AICLF), which when forged together by Maurice Lenormand in 1953, became the *Union Calédonienne* (Caledonian Union, UC), the first political party of New Caledonia, under the banner, “two colours, one united people”.

The UC was a remarkable combination of the interests of European and indigenous New Caledonians. Lenormand became the first Vice-President, or head, of the small (7 member) Council of Government elected in 1957 in accordance with the **Defferre laws** (the 1957 Decree of 22 July 1957 implemented the 1956 Defferre Law for New Caledonia). The 98% support for staying with France in the 1959 referendum showed a certain unity of purpose of the peoples of New Caledonia which could perhaps be explained by a feeling that their wishes for greater autonomy were in general being met

by the French administration at the time. It should be remembered that at this time the French state was committed to an evolving democratic system for its colonies. It was to rethink this position following local pressures for change from European settlers and residents concerned by the majority representation of the UC in the Territorial Assembly.

All was to change with the **Jacquinet Law** of 1963 (Jacquinot Law, 21 December 1963) which began a series of statutory changes rolling back the powers of the Council. It relegated the Council to a consultative role only, removed Ministers, and increased the powers of the French State. It effectively returned to the *status quo ante* of 1957 (Bates 1990 p. 12). The **1969 Billotte Law** (Billotte Law of 3 January 1969), primarily focused on taxation exemptions for the mining industry, in practice was designed to cut short the enterprising activities of a sector of the New Caledonian local political elite, who wanted to control the development of the mining sector. Local Assembly members were being lobbied by a major Canadian-based company, INCO, to allow competition against the French effective monopoly, SLN (Coutau-Bégarie 1986 Ch. 2, and Maclellan 2005d). The Law effectively gave the French State power over any transaction relating to nickel, cobalt and chrome (Guillebaud 1976, p. 171). It was already a major shareholder in SLN (see Chapter 5). The Law also created communes under the control of the French State. The local Caldoches as much as the Kanak membership of the UC responded with continued calls for more autonomy.

The nickel boom of 1969-72 justified France's concerns to hold the purse strings. Production of nickel virtually tripled from 1967 to 1971, and for a time some of New Caledonia's GDP indices outstripped those of metropolitan France (Waddell 2008 p. 74). The boom meant an influx of experts and services people related to the mining industry, from metropolitan France, against a background of already increasing numbers of Europeans (i.e. French). Christnacht noted that the number of Europeans doubled from 1956 to 1976, with the number of Melanesians increasing by only two-thirds, and Asians, Polynesians and others by three times (2003 p. 3). Thus Melanesians lost their majority position.¹⁷ It is estimated that from 1970 to 1976 alone, 15,000 Europeans came into the territory, from metropolitan France or others of its overseas territories, bringing the European population to almost the same number as Melanesians (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 144, noted that Melanesians formed 41% of the population in 1969 and 34% in 1989), significantly changing the political complexion of the territory, and doubtless of the UC itself. Henningham noted that some decline in the relative numbers of Melanesians had been entrenched as early as 1960, although they formed 51% of the population in 1956, 46% in 1969 and 42% in 1976 (1992 p. 63, see also ISEE 2008 p. 35).

This influx of Europeans was not solely due to the nickel boom. Enunciating an overt French policy of encouraging external migration for political reasons, French Prime

¹⁷see also Tables 1a and 2 in Chapter 5; Barbançon in de Deckker and Faberon 2008 p. 124 chart noting Melanesian population increased by 35 % or 14,408 from 1963 to 1976, while Europeans grew by 52% or 17,402 and others by 124% or 14,904; ISEE TEC 2008 pp. 34 and 35.

Minister and former DOM-TOM Minister Pierre Messmer wrote to his DOM-TOM Secretary of State on 17 July 1972 that indigenous nationalist claims could only be avoided if residents coming from metropolitan France, or elsewhere overseas in France, became the demographic majority (“*À long terme, la revendication nationaliste autochtone ne sera évitée que si les communautés allogènes représentent une masse démographique majoritaire*” in Sanguinetti 1985 p. 26).

Such policies were contrary to the sense of political evolution in the surrounding region at the time. There, decolonization was under way, Western Samoa achieving independence in 1962, Nauru in 1968, Tonga and Fiji in 1970, Papua New Guinea in 1975, and Vanuatu in 1980.

By 1969, Naidosh Naisseline of the Loyalty Islands, returning with many of his peers from studies in France during the 1968 student insurrections, formed a political movement calling for independence and comprising mainly Kanaks, named the *Foulards Rouges* (Red Scarves). In 1971, another Kanak, Elie Poigoune, formed the 1878 group, referring to the 1878 Kanak rebellion. This political activity, combined with the end of the nickel boom, meant that a number of Europeans left the territory from 1973. The UC continued to call for more autonomy, one of its Kanak leaders, Roch Pidjot, submitting proposals in 1971, 1975 and 1977. In 1975 Yann Céléne Urégei, having left the UC, formed the *Union multiraciale* (Multiracial Union) and went to Paris to seek more autonomy. His claims were rejected, and President Giscard d’Estaing declined to meet him. Stung, he transformed his objectives to independence demands, joining the *Comité de coordination pour l’indépendance Kanak* (Committee for the Coordination of Kanak Independence). Also in 1975, a rising political leader and former Marist priest, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, organized the Melanesia 2000 festival, an event funded by the French State and the local Assembly, focused on Melanesian identity and culture which involved representatives from the wider Pacific region. Tjibaou travelled the islands of New Caledonia, consulting clans and unifying support behind the Festival celebrating Kanak cultural identity (see Waddell 2008). Separately, in 1975 the Kanak parties joined to form the *Parti de Libération Kanak* (Kanak Liberation Party, Palika). Urégei’s party became the *Front Uni de Libération Kanak* (United Kanak Liberation Front, FULK) in 1977.

While disaffected Kanaks left the UC fold, so did unhappy rightwing Europeans. When in 1977 the UC, now led by prominent Kanak leaders Tjibaou, Eloi Machoro and Yeiwene Yeiwene, began to push for independence (Christnacht 2003 p. 3), Jacques Lafleur formed the *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie* (Rally for [New] Caledonia, RPC), which became in 1978 the *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République* (Rally for [New] Caledonia within the Republic, RPCR). His party won the 1977 territorial elections, and he displaced Roch Pidjot as elected *Député* in the French National Assembly early in 1978, a position he retained until 2007. Lafleur’s party with an anti-independence coalition called the *Front National pour une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne* (National Front for a New Caledonian Society, FNSC) won the 1979 elections, although the independentists received 35% of the vote (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 351). The RPCR was by no means solely European in complexion.

Senior Melanesian loyalists Jean-Pierre Aifa and Dick Ukeiwé respectively became the RPCR government's President and Vice-President.

French government responses to demands for further autonomy from the moderates, and to growing support amongst Kanaks for independence and assertion of their cultural identity, were not seen as adequate. While the **Stirn statute** (Stirn Statute of 28 December 1976) claimed to deliver a path to autonomy, it comprised only small steps, including establishing a Vice-President of the Governing Council and individual responsibilities for its members, withdrawing the right to vote from the French High Commissioner who nonetheless continued to preside over the Council (Dommel 1993 p. 25). French actions at the time, according to Guillebaud, belied any intention towards autonomy. He cited manipulation of elections and surveillance of pro-autonomists (Guillebaud 1976 p. 121). The **Dijoud Plan** (1978) was focused on land reform, but only with the suspension of any consideration of independence for ten years. The **Loi Dijoud** (Law no 79-407 of 24 May 1979) implemented an eligibility threshold of 7.5% of the vote for parties to participate in the territorial assembly, to address the proliferation of small parties (Dommel 1993 pp 26-7) but was perceived as a tightening of the central government's control. These measures were rejected outright in the territory (Henningham 1992 p. 70), the multiple Kanak parties forming themselves into the *Front Indépendantiste* (Independence Front, FI) to evade the Dijoud Plan's intentions. The FI included the LKS (*Libération Kanak Socialiste*, Socialist Kanak Liberation), FULK (*Front Uni de la Libération Kanak*, United Kanak Liberation Front), the UPM (*Union Progressiste Mélanésienne*, Popular Melanesian Union), and the PSC (*Parti Socialiste Calédonie*, [New] Caledonian Socialist Party). Its President was Jean-Marie Tjibaou.

Les événements – violence erupts

Although there had been some violent incidents and tensions earlier (Naisseline and some followers were arrested for sedition in the 1970s, and a young Kanak was shot dead by a policeman in December 1975, Henningham 1992 p. 67; Waddell 2008 p. 114), it was in the early 1980s that violence and confrontation increased in what were referred to as the *événements* ("events" or "disturbances"). While many see these disturbances beginning in 1984, tensions mounted effectively from the assassination of the Secretary-General of the UC in September of 1981 and only eased after the assassinations of Tjibaou and his deputy Yeiwéné Yeiwéné in 1989.

By 1979 the polarization of political interests had solidified into two camps, the primarily Kanak independentist group and the mainly European group loyal to France (loyalist) – but this has never been exclusively so, as there are Kanak and European elements in both camps. The pro-independence parties coalesced into the FI; and the pro-France group were centred on Lafleur's RPCR. With name changes and various satellites and fractures on either side, this was to remain the basic dynamic until the present.

In 1981 the UC, which in August 1980 had announced it would declare independence on 24 September 1982, asked the French government to recognize New Caledonia's right to independence, and the South Pacific Forum sent a mission to Paris to argue the same cause. Here the role of French domestic politics must once again be recognized: a new socialist government headed by President François Mitterrand had boosted the confidence of the pro-independence camp. Mitterrand responded favourably to the UC's demands, writing that "*nous demandons que le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes... soit effectivement reconnu au peuple Kanak*" ("we ask that the right of peoples to decide for themselves should be recognized for the Kanak people" Angleviel 2006 p. 139).

But on 19 September, 1981, UC Secretary-General Declercq, within months of his return from a visit to France advising of the planned 1982 independence date, was killed, it is thought by rightwing extremists, though, somewhat incredibly, the culprit was never found. By June 1982 RPCR's former partner the FNSC, apparently with active French government backing (Henningham 1992 p. 72, Angleviel 2006 p. 140), moved over to join the FI in a new Governing Council headed by Jean-Marie Tjibaou as Vice-President (the President being the French High Commissioner). Rightwing demonstrators disaffected by these arrangements (many Europeans from the FNSC shifted allegiance to the RPCR) turned out onto the streets that year, and assaulted FI and FNSC members in the assembly building (Henningham 1992 p. 73).

For its part, while the FI had foresworn a policy of violence (at its 1979 Congress), it did resort to mobilization of its supporters and disruption, including by setting up roadblocks. Tensions mounted. In early 1983, in separate incidents, a police station was bombarded with rocks by Melanesian youths at Touho; and at Koindé, Melanesians protesting police action during a demonstration against sawmill pollution, shot at police, killing two gendarmes and wounding six others. In May 1983 a Kanak was killed by a settler at Koindé-Ouipoin after a quarrel and Palika supporters destroyed a post office, houses and cars in retaliation. Numerous land occupations took place including an extensive one by Eloi Machoro in March 1984 (Henningham 1992 pp. 72-4). Meanwhile the FNSC dissolved, its supporters returning to the RPCR.

In July 1983, representatives of the FI, the RPCR and others participated in a round table conference at **Nainville-les-Roches** in France chaired by DOM-TOM Secretary of State, Georges Lemoine. This was the first meeting of all three parties (pro-France, pro-independence, and the French State) at the instigation of France and established a precedent of the French State taking at once the roles of arbiter, player, and enforcer of law and order, which persists until the present. It resulted in France's historic recognition of the Kanaks' "innate and active right to independence" as well as Kanak agreement to the participation of the whole population of New Caledonia in determining the future, the seeds of the future Matignon and Noumea Accords (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 352). Although the RPCR refused to sign the resulting statement and the FI was obliged to denounce the outcome owing to the non-acceptance by the smaller parties, that the meeting itself took place was a watershed of sorts.

The French followed up the meeting with the **Lemoine Statute** (Lemoine Law of 6 September 1984) providing for elections in 1984, increased internal autonomy and a five year transition period for a vote on independence in 1989 (Henningham 1992 p. 74). The Statute was adopted by the French National Assembly despite the opposition of the territorial Assembly. Henningham noted French hopes for an FI/FNSC government which would lead, over time, a consensus favouring independence with close links with France, or enlarged autonomy (Ibid. p. 75). The Statute had some novel elements, such as seats for customary representatives, legislative powers and removal of the French High Commissioner from the Ministerial Council. But the provisions once more proved too geared to the independentist side for the pro-France group, and insufficiently responsive for the independentists.

The essence of the differences centred on the effects of immigration, with the FI wanting a "restricted" electorate confined to those with long-term connections with the territory, a concern which was to remain at the heart of future negotiations. They calculated that Kanaks formed around 40% of a general electorate, but outnumbered Europeans in a "restricted" electorate defined by Kanaks and second generation settlers (Henningham 1992 p.75).

In keeping up the pressure, the FI were also conscious that the election of a conservative French government in 1986 legislative elections would further set back their cause. On 24 September 1984, the anniversary of the 1853 annexation of New Caledonia by France, they called for a boycott of the planned elections, and transformed themselves into a more militant liberation front, the FLNKS (*Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste* or National Kanak Socialist Liberation Front), which also included the UC, FULK, and UPM. Until 1986 it included the Kanak Womens Group, and, until 1989, the USTKE or *Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanaks et Exploités*, the Federation of Unions of Kanak Workers and the Exploited, a labour union federation. They declared the name of the future independent country would be Kanaky, with a green, red and blue coloured flag overlaid with a *flèche faitière*, or traditional hut-top totem finial. Two other less hardline pro-independence parties, also offshoots of the UC, remained outside FLNKS, Naisseline's LKS, and the PFK (*Parti Fédéral Kanak*, Kanak Federal Party). On the other side, an extremist rightwing party, the *Front National* (NF, National Front), emerged.

The FLNKS called for a boycott of the 18 November 1984 elections. On that day, Eloi Machoro wielded an axe against the ballot box at Canala, and burned the ballot papers with others burning town halls and disrupting polling, often violently. This act is commonly viewed as the beginning of the *événements*. The participation rate in the election was about 50%, against the more usual 70 to 80% (Henningham p. 83). For weeks afterwards, militant Melanesians maintained road blocking barricades, sparking serious clashes, including killings. On 1 December 1984, the FLNKS formed a provisional government with Tjibaou at its head. The French State sent a new High Commissioner, Edgard Pisani, who secured agreement with Tjibaou, on 5 December, to lift the barricades. However later that day, at Hienghène in the north, ten Kanaks were killed in an ambush, including two of Tjibaou's brothers. Tjibaou, who had been

expected to be with the group, had unexpectedly stayed on in Noumea. In a measure of his stature and leadership, Tjibaou overcame his personal loss and stuck to the dialogue process, and his agreement to lift the barricades. The assassins, local mixed-race farmers, were later acquitted.

The hastily proposed **Pisani Plan** (proposed only three days after Pisani's arrival in the territory on 4 January, elements incorporated in the Fabius Pisani Law of 23 August 1985) posited essentially independence in association with France, consistent with Article 88 of the French Constitution, an Article which had never before been applied, providing for the Republic to conclude agreements with states "which desire to associate themselves with it to develop their civilizations" (Christnacht 2004 p. 43). The Plan provided for a vote within months, i.e., by July 1985, by those who were residents of three-year standing (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 353), with France retaining "regalian", or core sovereign, responsibilities. (The French use of the word "*régalien*" to cover such powers in an essentially colonial situation is interesting given the etymological history of the term, referring to royal insignia and prerogatives.) These include responsibility for internal and external security in the event of independence. The Plan appeared to have drawn on the US' compacts in association with its Pacific possessions at the time (Armand Hage in de Deckker 2006, p. 285). Pisani himself admitted that he saw the proposals as a shock tactic to oblige Europeans to understand the need for change (Henningham 1992 p. 86). The RPCR, while denouncing the Plan, agreed to participate in the referendum if there were no change to the franchise, to demonstrate majority opinion against independence. Once again, the effects of immigration were at issue.

The Pisani Plan was the nearest New Caledonia had come to a vote for independence since 1958. Paradoxically it was offered in the wake of almost intolerable tension and violence, and yet it was precisely these tensions which aborted it. In November, Eloi Machoro's supporters had attacked some hardline rightwing settlers and killed one of them, Yves Tual. Rightwing demonstrations and riots ensued, only ending on 12 January, when a military police sniper shot dead Machoro and an aide at a farm Machoro had been occupying near La Foa on the west coast (Maclellan 2005b p. 415). In a fleeting visit in January 1985, President Mitterrand declared that France would maintain its role and strategic presence and would reinforce the military base at Noumea (Leymarie 1985 p. 1). Sporadic incidents continued in 1985. Pisani left in May 1985, to be succeeded, perhaps aptly in view of the state of the territory, by the former Ambassador in Beirut (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 354).

The next proposal, the **Fabius Plan** (Law of 23 August 1985), was a patch-up window-dressing effort, against the background of the imminent expected legislative victory of the conservatives in France in 1986 who would not be expected to implement it, to address the need for the Kanaks to have a measure of democratic control (Faberon and Ziller 2007 pp. 354-5). The Fabius Statute provided for the break-up of New Caledonia into regions, in some of which, notably the north and the Loyalty Islands, the Kanaks would be in the majority and at least could exercise power there. The majority of the pro-France group in Noumea and overall would ensure a continuation of the

status quo. This “regionalization” was a critical principle which was retained in subsequent negotiations. But another feature of the Fabius Law was the return of executive power to the High Commissioner, tightening the power of the French State.

The almost-immediate subsequent regional elections, in September 1985, saw strong participation and the return of Tjibaou in the north, and Jacques Lafleur in the south.

International and regional developments: United Nations reinscription of New Caledonia as a non-self-governing territory

The French disposition to broker some kind of compromise at this time was influenced by other developments in the surrounding region and in the United Nations. France had now become the focus of international attention and regional opprobrium, not only for its policies in New Caledonia but also for its nuclear testing in French Polynesia.

New Caledonia was the subject of close South Pacific Forum attention, and indeed one of the reasons for the Forum’s formation in 1971. FLNKS leaders had urged the Forum to support reinscription of New Caledonia on the UN Committee of 24 on Decolonization from the late 1970s and early 1980s. The term “reinscription” was used, as, as noted earlier, France had declined to report on its Pacific territories from 1947, claiming they were not non-self-governing. As the island states successively gained their own independence, they began to call in the United Nations for self-determination in the non-independent states. Fiji began to raise these questions regularly in the UN after it gained independence in 1970, and targeted the administration of the New Hebrides in 1975 (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 186).

The *Front Indépendantiste* presented a petition to the Forum in 1979, when they had a representative at the annual Forum meeting. Although the Forum recorded its regret and concern at France’s nuclear testing in its first Communiqué (Forum Communiqué 1971), its first formal reference to decolonization occurred in 1981, and in 1982 the Forum expressly referred to the need for New Caledonia’s decolonization (in *New Pacific Review* 2003 p. 107). Melanesian countries neighbouring New Caledonia (PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu) united to form the Melanesian Spearhead Group expressly to support Kanak independence in New Caledonia in the mid 1980s (including Fiji in an agreement signed in 1988). The MSG acted as a ginger group within the Forum. It was Australia who had urged restraint on the New Caledonia issue within the Forum, in order to give new French proposals a chance to work. Only in 1986, after Chirac’s reversal of reforms in his Pons proposals (see *Cohabitation* section below), did Canberra’s stance in the Forum change. Also in 1986, the Nonaligned Movement meeting in Harare admitted the FLNKS as an official observer.

The Kanak independence issue had been gathering external momentum at the time. FLNKS sent 17 Kanaks to Libya, an international terrorist pariah, for training in 1985, sparking concern in Australia and amongst western allies. Separately, in July 1985 France’s bombing of a Greenpeace vessel, the *Rainbow Warrior*, used to protest against French testing, in New Zealand, resulted in regional condemnation (see *Regional criticism* section below).

With Australia's change of position, in 1986, the Forum unanimously supported reinscription. Tjibaou went to New York to work with South Pacific delegations, culminating in the UNGA affirming the inalienable right of the people of New Caledonia to self-determination in December 1986, and the reinscription of New Caledonia as a non-self-governing territory with the UN Decolonization Committee (or Committee of 24, C24) (UNGA Resolution 40/41, 2 December 1986). Despite French diplomatic efforts, and expenditure, to reduce support for the Resolution by extensive lobbying, the UNGA reaffirmed this position in a resolution in 1987 A/Res/42/79 Question of New Caledonia, 4 December 1987).

After the Matignon Accords of 1988, which were seen as a sign of good faith by all parties, the C24 has retained New Caledonia on its list and passes a resolution each year on New Caledonia, without a vote (see UNGA Resolutions Question of New Caledonia each year, 1987 to present). The Committee's secretariat prepares annual working papers on New Caledonia (see for example A/AC.109/2008/9 Committee for Decolonization Working Paper on New Caledonia). France resolutely declined to fulfil UN obligations to submit an annual report, as the administering authority, until well after the Noumea Accord was signed (see Chapter 7). The Committee received submissions regularly from others, mainly various Kanak groups including most often FLNKS figure Roch Wamytan.

Although the Australian government had played a restraining role within the Forum, public feeling in Australia against France at this time ran high, particularly fuelled by antipathy to French nuclear testing in the region. Through the years of the *événements*, Kanak students trained in Australia and had close contacts with Aboriginal, Church, student and union groups. Powerful unions including of teachers and dockworkers, supported their case, with the Teachers Federation contributing funds to a Kanak radio station in Noumea, Radio Djido, which had been created by the Matignon Accords. These groups were all key constituencies of the Hawke Labor government at the time. Relations with France deteriorated as Hawke introduced a ban on uranium exports in 1985, then on French ministerial and official visits in 1986 (although he reinstated uranium exports).

In 1987, France expelled John Dauth, Australia's Consul-General in Noumea. While the French did not give any public¹⁸ or private background reason for the expulsion, they clearly were not happy with Australia's policies, and in particular their defeat on the floor of the General Assembly in New York, when the Forum-sponsored resolution on the reinscription of New Caledonia as a non-self-governing territory received broad support (Personal communication Dauth 2009). Whereas Chirac was said to have sought the expulsion of the Australian Ambassador to France, the Foreign Affairs Ministry had persuaded him to expel Consul-General Dauth instead. It was the Foreign

¹⁸It was put about as an ostensible reason that Dauth had given Australian government aid to the Kanak Cultural Centre at Hienghiène, which the French construed as interference (Personal Comments, O'Leary 2009), an idea which still had currency when the author served as Australian Consul General as late as 2001-2004.

Ministry, too, that had secured a month-long departure period for Dauth, over the objections of the Overseas France Ministry, who wanted him out immediately.

Cohabitation

Unfolding events were to demonstrate once more the dominating influence of French national domestic politics on its Pacific entities. French national legislative elections took place in March 1986 and as expected returned a rightist government under Jacques Chirac as Prime Minister. This was the first period of “co-habitation”, when the President (then socialist Mitterrand) was of one political complexion, while the government, headed by the Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, was of the other. This dynamic was to colour the handling of the New Caledonian situation at a critical time (see especially Cordonnier 1995b), the more so since it is the President who is responsible for defence and foreign affairs, and the Prime Minister for handling internal policies. During a period when French policy in the South Pacific was constantly under international scrutiny, the effects of co-habitation were not constructive overall and arguably delayed a resolution of New Caledonian internal tensions. The nature of the policy-making process, which engaged a broad range of agency interests only inadequately coordinated on a daily basis by the relatively junior *Outre-mer* or Overseas France ministry, complicated these negative effects and led to policy mistakes (see also Cordonnier 1995b p. 80). Moreover, there was a close relationship between Chirac and Jacques Lafleur, leader of the RPCR in New Caledonia, the latter supplying donations to Chirac’s campaign funds and fuelling Chirac’s criticism of Mitterrand’s handling of New Caledonia (Henningham 1992 pp. 99-100).

And so the new French government once again set about rolling back the provisions of the previous statutes. It created a unified land agency, the ADRAF (*Agence pour le Développement Rural et d’Aménagement Foncier* – Rural Development and Land Management Agency) which effectively suspended the purchase of settler properties for redistribution and introduced redistribution to all communities, not just Melanesians (Henningham 1992 p. 100). Similarly the Kanak Cultural Office was replaced by an organism that represented all cultures, and Tjibaou was removed as director.

As early as July 1986 the Chirac government introduced the **Pons I statute** (Law of 17 July 1986) providing for a self-determination vote in 1987 on the basis of only three years residence in New Caledonia, the latter which was patently unacceptable to the independentists. With a low 59% turnout (compared to historically more normal turnouts of 70-80%) following an FLNKS boycott, the July 1987 referendum unsurprisingly voted 98.3% in favour of staying with France. France pulled out all the stops to secure support, setting up roadblocks to prevent agitators entering Noumea and bussing in pro-France rural supporters (Personal communication O’Leary 2009). Chirac flew by Concorde jet to New Caledonia to be there for the electoral victory, staying just three hours before heading back to Paris.

Meanwhile, violence continued, heightened by the acquittal, in October, of those who had killed Tjibaou’s brothers and others at Hienghène. By this time, over six thousand

French military personnel were in New Caledonia, stationed under a policy of “nomadisation” near tribal villages ostensibly to aid in rural development (a policy continued to the present), but enabling close monitoring of Melanesian activists. In early January 1988, a further statute was enacted, **Pons II** (Law of 22 January 1988). It envisaged revised self-government arrangements, including implied abolition of Melanesians’ special legal status, and revised regional demarcation more sympathetic to pro-France views. But, although the pro-France group duly won in the newly created western region and made gains in the other Kanak dominated regions owing to boycotts, this Statute was never in the end implemented, as dramatic events at Gossanah Cave intervened.

Gossanah Cave Crisis

The first Pons territorial elections were to be held 24 April 1988, the same day as the first round of the French presidential elections, in which conservative Prime Minister Chirac was competing with, and trailing far behind, the incumbent, socialist Mitterrand. On 22 April, the FLNKS attacked a police station at Fayaoué on the island of Ouvéa in the Loyalties group, killing four policemen and taking four others hostage at a cave at Gossanah (Waddell 2008 Chapter 1, elaborated on tensions in Ouvéa and intra-Kanak divisions centred there). On 5 May, just after the first round of the presidential national election and three days before the second round, the French military were ordered to attack the cave and free the hostages. This was done at the price of 21 dead, 19 Kanaks and two French soldiers. The first round of the French presidential elections had left a run-off between Chirac and Mitterrand for the second round. The order to attack was signed off by Mitterrand on the recommendation of Prime Minister Chirac and the Defence Minister (Angleviel 2006 p. 161). The prime motivator for the decision was Chirac’s wish to be seen as strong on the eve of the second round, with Mitterrand not wishing to countermand such an order for the same reasons (see Legorjus 1990, cited in Angleviel 2006). The predominance of the Defence Ministry over the Overseas France Ministry played a role, as did the apparent complete absence of consideration for Foreign Affairs issues over domestic imperatives.

But the handling of the crisis backfired. Once again domestic and international opinion focused on New Caledonia. Metropolitan human rights groups SOS-Racisme and the *Ligue des droits de l’Homme* (Human Rights League) sought an independent enquiry into the way in which the Gossanah Cave events had been handled.

Matignon/Oudinot Accords

In the event, President Mitterrand was returned to the Presidency (although in New Caledonia, with a very reduced voter turnout of 58.3%, 92.3% voted for Chirac, see Angleviel 2006 p. 163) and appointed socialist Michel Rocard as Prime Minister. As Rocard himself described it (Colloque 2008 recorded in Regnault and Fayaud 2008 p. 13), one of his first jobs was to address the New Caledonian problem. This he did by sending a dialogue mission to New Caledonia, headed by DOM-TOM Prefect Christian Blanc, who had been Secretary General for New Caledonia in 1984-85; and including

not only senior officials but, somewhat creatively, senior representatives of key religious affiliations (Catholic Monsignor Paul Gilberteau; the head of the Protestant Federation of France, pastor Jacques Stewart; and prominent Freemason Roger Leray). Once again, Jean-Marie Tjibaou agreed to lead a process of dialogue rather than further violence. It is important to recognize here the role in the Kanak cultural context of the *parole*, or word. As elsewhere in Melanesia, the idea of extended discussion and consensus is important in the Kanak culture. And, as in western culture, the idea of keeping one's word is of great importance. On the basis of the mission's consultations, negotiations were initiated at the Prime Minister's Matignon office in Paris. They were difficult negotiations with concessions extracted from both sides only at the eleventh hour, late on 25 June, with follow-up later over three weeks at the Overseas France Ministry in the rue Oudinot.

The resultant **Matignon/Oudinot Accords**¹⁹ with the symbolic handshake between Tjibaou and Lafleur on 25 June 1988, set aside the thorny independence issue for another ten years, when a vote would be planned for a restricted electorate confined to those resident in New Caledonia in 1988 and their descendants. Only this restricted electorate would vote in provincial and Congress elections. The parties agreed in the meantime to work for the economic, social and cultural development of the territory, with a buffer one-year rule by Paris through the High Commissioner. Three provinces were created, with particular powers, and from their representatives a Congress was formed for the entire territory. A key underlying principle was to be "*ré-équilibrage*" or rebalancing of economic benefits, hitherto confined mainly to the European-dominated, wealthy Noumea, throughout the territory. With nickel as the key economic resource, part of the deal was that Jacques Lafleur would sell his shares in the South Pacific Mining Company (*Société Minière du Sud Pacifique* SMSP) to the Northern Province, with the necessary 1.8 b. cfp (\$A 29.8 m. converted March 2009) financed by the French State. A formula of application of State financial credits to all provinces was devised, and a Kanak training program of 400 *cadres*, or 400 managers, was initiated.

The State, perceived as having been too allied with the independentists at one stage (Pisani) and the pro-France group at another (Pons), was to take the role of impartial arbiter, a virtually impossible undertaking especially since executive power was returned to the French High Commissioner. Tjibaou, for his part, saw the inconsistencies in the role of the state, and warned, in a letter to the French Prime Minister at the time, that in the context of restoring sovereignty to the Kanak people "...the state cannot hide behind the role of arbiter. It is not judge but actor" (cited in Waddell 2008 p. 176). Issues related to this dual role were to persist.

All of this was subject to a national referendum, both for political reasons, to reassure the Kanaks that the French people supported the agreement, but also for technical

¹⁹ The Accords included the Matignon Accords (a declaration and two texts) agreed on 25-26 June 1988, and the Oudinot Accord addressing related legal provisions to be subject to a referendum in November 1988 (Christnacht, 2004 pp 57-58 and *Textes fondamentaux*, New Caledonian government and Congress websites).

reasons, since such a referendum was not subject to Constitutional Council scrutiny, and it was not at all certain that the measures for a restricted electorate were consistent with the French Constitution and its notions of indivisibility (see Christnacht 2004 p. 59). In the event, the national referendum endorsed it by 80% albeit with a low 37% turnout (Waddell 2008 p. 181, noted that this was the lowest turnout in any French national referendum since World War II). In New Caledonia, with a 63% turnout, only 57% voted yes, with mainly pro-France Noumea voting 63% against (and 54% choosing not to vote in Ouvea, where the Gossanah events had occurred). Once again domestic French politics came into play, with the RPCR in New Caledonia campaigning for the yes vote, but its national ally, Chirac's RPR, campaigning for abstention to weaken Mitterrand (Christnacht 2004 p. 59). The pro-France RPCR's taking this stance foreshadowed further situations where local imperatives surmounted metropolitan based positions ultimately leading to divisions within the pro-France coalition of interests in the early 2000s.

Ominously for the future, and for France's credibility with the pro-independence group, the only element not covered by the subsequent "referendum law" was the application of the restricted electorate to the Congress and provincial elections, owing to the apparent constitutional obstacle (Christnacht 2004 p. 60). Touching as it did on the most sensitive issue for the independentists, the effect of immigration on the electorate, this issue was unsurprisingly to resurface ten years later.

The difficulty in securing the Matignon Accords, and the continued volatility in the territory, was poignantly underlined a year later. In May 1989, attending a traditional ceremony to mark the lifting of the mourning period for those assassinated at Gossanah Tjibaou himself and his deputy, Yéwéiné Yéwéiné, were assassinated by extremist militant, Djubély Wéa, who felt Tjibaou had sold out their cause. Wéa was subsequently shot dead and the person charged was subsequently released (uncertainties surrounding the assassination are set out in Wall, 2009). The assassinations marked a turning-point in New Caledonia's political development. They represented a stark reminder to the French of the intensity of continued hostility to their policies within the ranks of the Melanesians, many of whom felt that Tjibaou had sold out to pro-France forces. Together with the memory of the violence of the preceding years, the assassinations were a sobering reminder of what was at stake and arguably fortified all sides to implement the Matignon/Oudinot arrangements.

The next ten years saw concerted growth and development. As envisaged by the French state, the Kanaks became more engaged in government, with their parties dominant in the Northern Province and Loyalty Islands Province following elections in 1989 and 1995; and the pro-France group becoming accustomed to engaging Kanaks politically, nominating senior Kanak pro-France supporters to prominent positions, such as Dick Ukeiwé to the European *Député* position in June 1988 (French overseas territories could vote for an overseas territory member of the European Parliament); and Simon Loueckhote as President of the Congress and then, in 1992, as the youngest Senator for France (Angleviel 2006 pp. 225-6). Roads, schools, clinics and hospitals and electricity lines were all established in the interior of Grande Terre and the islands.

Land reform was accelerated. The ADRAF distributed 82,000 ha of land between 1989 and 1995, increasing by 36% the land controlled by Melanesians (Angleviel 2006 p. 222). The 400 cadres program had a more mixed success, training numerous lawyers, some engineers and one pilot, but as Christnacht admitted, resulting in inadequate numbers of mid-ranking Kanak managers (2004 p. 61). The French State provided the bulk of the New Caledonia budget, spending \$A 470 m. in New Caledonia in 1986. There were some limited cultural and economic contacts with Pacific island countries (Christnacht 2004 p. 61).

But the fragility of the arrangements, in the wake of such tension and bloodshed, was apparent to leaders. Both FLNKS and RPCR leaders were managing the dissatisfaction of extremists unhappy with the compromises they had made. On 27 April 1991, in the knowledge that any referendum was likely to result in a no-vote to independence given the demographics (Angleviel 2006 p. 226, estimated 65% of voters would have voted against), and that such a result risked re-opening old wounds and a return to violence, RPCR President Jacques Lafleur proposed a “consensual solution” in order to head off a 1998 *référendum couperet* (literally “cut-off” or “guillotine-style” referendum). The UC took up this idea at its congress in 1993, designating such a solution as “negotiated independence”. From 1995 onwards, negotiations began with both the RPCR and the UC preparing papers and ideas.

Meanwhile, there were changes at the edges of the two main political groupings. Pro-France supporters grouped in Lafleur’s RPCR, were bookended by the rightwing National Front and a more leftwing party *Une Nouvelle-Calédonie pour Tous* (A New Caledonia for All, UNCT) formed in 1995 by Didier Leroux. The independentist FLNKS, now headed by Paul Néaoutyine of Palika (not headed by the UC, as when Tjibaou was leader) was riven by internal conflict. The LKS and the USTKE had left, leading to the creation in 1998 of the *Fédération des Comités de Coordination des Indépendantistes* (Federation of the Independentist Coordination Committees, FCCI), led by longstanding UC or Palika figures Léopold Jorédié, Cono Hamu, Raphaël Mapou, François Burck and Aymard Bouanaoué. Another party joined FLNKS in 1998, the *Rassemblement Démocratique Océanien* (Democratic Oceanic Party, RDO), formed in 1994 from the leftwing of the Oceanic Union, mainly representing Wallisians and Futunans, under Aloisio Sako (Angleviel 2006 p. 227).

The Noumea Accord

After a seven year gestation period, and drawing from the blueprint of the Maignon/Oudinot Accords, on 5 May 1998 the **Noumea Accord** (*L’Accord de Nouméa* 1998) was signed by representatives of the French State, the RPCR, and the FLNKS. The Accord had been hardwon. Lafleur (Colloque 2008) recalled that the parties spent ten hours at a stretch in discussion on the final day, as deadlines approached. It was endorsed by a vote by the people of New Caledonia, on 8 November 1998. 74% of the people voted, and of these, 72% supported the Accord (Ziller and Faberon 2008 p. 369), 87% of voters in the North, 95% in the Islands, and 63% in the South. While the support in the (pro-France dominated) South was in

marked contrast to its rejection of the Matignon Accords, still over a third voted no, and 42% of central Noumea voted no.

In the background to the exchanges of ideas by the two principal parties over seven years, negotiations had been taking place on the nickel resource. Because the rebalancing of economic benefits was so central to any negotiated solution, distributing the benefits from nickel became fundamental to any meeting of minds over political issues, to the point where they were described by the independentists as a *préalable minier*, or mining “prerequisite”. Lafleur had duly sold his SMSP in 1990 to Sofinor (*Société d'Économie Mixte de Développement Contrôlée par la Province Nord* – Mixed Economy and Development Company of the Northern Province), as agreed at Matignon, thus facilitating Kanak access to the mining sector, with SMSP becoming the largest exporter of (raw) nickel in New Caledonia (Christnacht 2004 p. 63). Sofinor had been able to diversify into investment in other sectors.

But now the Northern Province wanted to move beyond extraction and export of the raw nickel product, to establish a processing plant project with the Canadian company, Falconbridge. To do this, it proposed exchanging one of SMSP’s mining sites with SLN-Eramet in order to have sufficient proximate reserves for the Falconbridge project. The French State, which happened to be a major shareholder in Eramet, negotiated this arrangement only after strong resistance by Eramet. It was only in February 1998 that the Bercy Accord was agreed, which allowed for the exchange of the rich Koniambo range to SMSP in return for mining titles formerly purchased from SLN by the northern province at Poum, provided that Falconbridge reached certain stages of establishment of a nickel-processing plant by 2007 (the tortuous negotiations with SLN amidst strikes and coercion by FLNKS backed unions and the French State respectively are set out in Chappell 1999 pp. 383 and 384). The French State compensated SLN for the difference in value between the Koniambo and the less well-endowed Poum *massifs* (reserves). The Bercy Accord proved an indispensable element of the political negotiation process. However, while it signalled that greater control of, and return from, resources were an important part of pro-independence Kanak aspirations, it did not mean that the resource issue would replace the continuing objective, that of independence.

The Noumea Accord is a highly innovative groundbreaking agreement by all three partners, the French State, the mainly Kanak independentists, and the mainly European pro-France group. At its centre was a further deferral of any vote on independence, this time by 20 years, to a series of three votes between 2014 and 2018, to give more time for economic development and postpone a potentially painful divisive vote. Its key distinguishing features included an acknowledgement of the “shock” of colonization both to the identity of the Kanak people and those who had come either for religious reasons or against their will; a future for all groups within a common destiny; and a continued commitment to economic rebalancing. In a new concept of “shared sovereignty”, the French State would transfer all but the central, or *régalien*, sovereign competencies (defence, foreign affairs, justice, law and order, and the currency), progressively to local institutions in a defined schedule. New Caledonia was given a

special status of “*pays*” or “country”. Again, in an entirely new arrangement to the French Republic, the Congress was endowed with legislative powers to make “*lois du pays*” (laws of the country), subject only to French Constitutional Council review, and managed by a collegial executive elected on a basis of proportional representation by the Congress. New Caledonia was empowered to conduct certain relations with regional countries.

Remarkably within the French unitary Republic, the Accord recognized a New Caledonian citizenship, built on special definitions of those eligible to vote in the planned 2014-2018 referendum(s) and in territorial (as distinct from French national legislative and presidential) elections, and linked to special employment rights (Article 2). This step was to address Kanak concerns about the effects of immigration, and their core Kanak demand for a restricted electorate, which it will be recalled, had met the constitutional stumbling-block in 1988, raising Kanak suspicions about the intent and word of the French State. Then, the ambiguity related to those who could vote in the planned final self-determination referendum. Under the Noumea Accord, whereas all French citizens were eligible to vote in French national legislative and presidential elections, the electorates for local elections and for the ultimate referendum were again especially defined. Those who could vote in local (provincial) elections were essentially those who had been resident for ten years in 1998 (to reflect those who could have voted in 1988 as provided in the Matignon Accords). But for the final referendum(s) of 2014-2018, it included also newcomers, specifically those with twenty years residence by 2014 (i.e. continued residence from 1994, as opposed to residence from 1988 as for the local elections).

While the Accord is a considerable achievement, it is, nonetheless, ultimately an exercise by two of the three parties to secure the acquiescence of the third in further postponing the final resolution of fundamental differences. As further analysis will show, its subsequent implementation has revealed ambiguities in its drafting, precisely in the areas of fundamental difference, such as provisions restricting the electorate for the local elections.

On 21 March 1999, the Organic Law was gazetted, implementing the provisions of the Noumea Accord, marking a new stage in the statutory evolution of New Caledonia.

French Polynesia: Strategic pawn

In New Caledonia, political evolution in the post-war periods centred on pro-independence and pro-France groups, the latter arising from a large European population (34 % in 1996, with around 20% of the population long-term European residents, Baudchon and Rallu in Cadéot 2003 p. 248). There, the French State has strongly supported the pro-France group, while seeking to play a mediating role from the 1980s. New Caledonia also has some basis for endogenous economic growth in its nickel sector.

French Polynesia has differed from New Caledonia in that in the formative post-war years, its population has been historically more homogeneous with far fewer long-term European, mainly metropolitan French, nationals, and more intermarriage between Europeans and locals. Also, it has few resources other than tourism, and became chronically dependent on French handouts through its hosting of France's nuclear testing program.

Metropolitan French nationals numbered about 9% of the population in 1988 (Baudchon and Rallu in Cadéot 2003 p. 248) and they were relatively new arrivals, numbering around 30,000 in the 1980s as opposed to barely 1,000 in the early 1960s, before nuclear testing began in the territory (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 126). During this period as now, the large majority of the people were of Polynesian descent (82.7 per cent in 1983 Henningham p. 143), including large proportions of mixed race or *demis* peoples (17% in 1977 Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 126, 14.2% in 1983 Henningham p. 143), reflecting a far greater degree of marriage between the Europeans and the indigenous peoples than in New Caledonia. Although there was a longstanding Chinese community, many of whom came in the mid nineteenth century as agricultural workers and then became urban business people (4.5% of the population in the 1983 census Henningham p. 143), there was little immigration from outside France, unlike in New Caledonia. This homogeneity of Polynesian ancestry underlay more broadly-based support for greater autonomy and even independence. It has been the reason why there has been markedly less intercommunal conflict in French Polynesia than in New Caledonia. Experienced observers such as Henningham have observed that, without the "ballast" of a large European/metropolitan French majority settler population as exists in New Caledonia, pro-independence pressures could grow rapidly (p. 160). Therefore the hand of France has been all the firmer.

In French Polynesia, in the 1960s and early 1970s, the main political divisions were between pro-France groups, autonomists, and independentists, with the latter two groups in the ascendant. But from 1980 all of the principal local parties have sought greater autonomy, the clearest division amongst them being between the pro-independence versus the autonomy-within-France groupings, the latter loosely described as autonomist. Because of the broad base of the shared autonomy goal, even more than in New Caledonia, politics in French Polynesia have consistently been characterized by changes of loyalty, divisions and benchcrossing.

As in New Caledonia, the French State has been a behind-the-scenes player supporting the pro-France groups. But in French Polynesia it has acted more overtly with the pro-France autonomist parties. This consistently more open role can be explained by the central place of French Polynesia, until 1995, in maintaining France's position as a *puissance mondiale moyenne* (middle-sized world power) by providing the site for France's testing of nuclear bombs. Since then other motivations have come into play, which will be explored in later chapters. French Polynesian politics, like New Caledonia's, have also been marked by a succession of statutory change (summarized at Appendix 2).

Perhaps unsurprising given the violent resistance to France in the nineteenth century in the EFO, local demands for autonomy and independence increased after the Second World War. Over 300 French Polynesians served with the Free French forces, 76 of whom died. On their return they were more critical of their society and many found their jobs occupied by metropolitan civil servants (Henningham 1992, p. 121). The old war horse Pouvanaa (see Chapter 2) wasted no time after the war, in 1947, in forming the *Comité Pouvanaa* (Pouvanaa Committee) to assert local Maohi (indigenous Polynesian) economic and cultural claims (Danielsson and Danielsson 1986 pp. 22-26). Despite his arrest, and acquittal, that year for plotting against the French State, he continued to gather support. Enormously popular, he founded *Rassemblement démocratique des populations tahitiennes* (Democratic Assembly of the Tahitian Peoples, RDPT), and was elected *Député* or member of the French Parliament in 1949 with 62 % of the vote, retaining the seat until 1957 (Regnault 2003).

The **1957 decree** (Decree of 22 July 1957) implementing the 1956 Defferre Law (Law of 23 juin 1956) introduced new autonomy. The same year, a new name strengthened the connection with France, the EFO becoming *Polynésie française* (French Polynesia). Pouvanaa was elected to the most senior local position, Vice-President of the new Governing Council. His urging of autonomy increasingly became demands for independence, exploiting the dual meaning of the Tahitian word, *ti'amara'a*, (which means both autonomy and independence), a device to be used by later leaders. He had alienated many powerful families and businesses, and the French, with his vocal demands, which included pushes for a tax on business to fund independence. And he led the “no” vote in the 1958 September constitutional referendum for staying with France, with remarkable success, leading to only 64% approval for staying with France there, as opposed to the upper 90% in the other Pacific entities. At the time French officials worked actively to promote a yes vote, in the knowledge of the planned shift of the nuclear testing program from Algeria to French Polynesia (Henningham 1992 p. 125).

On the heels of this vote, in **December 1958** France issued new **ordinances** (*Ordonnance* No 58-1337 of 23 December 1958), winding back autonomy and reducing local freedoms (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 315). Immediately after the referendum, in October 1958, Pouvanaa was arrested, after arson incidents in Papeete were linked with him and his supporters, and weapons were found at his home. This time the French were thorough and he was exiled from Polynesia until 1968, and his party banned in 1963. But he remained popular despite his exile, and was elected as French *Sénateur* (Senator, member of France’s upper house) from 1971 until his death in 1977.

Nuclear testing begins

In 1962, the nuclear testing program was transferred from the Western Sahara to the French Polynesian islands of Moruroa and Fangataufa, with a support base on Hao in the Gambier archipelago, and headquarters in Papeete. To safeguard French interests in the light of demands for autonomy and independence, possession of the testing sites

was ceded to the French State in 1964 by the Permanent Commission of the Territorial Government (Henningham 1992 p. 164), and later, in 1980, these areas were decreed national security zones. Atmospheric tests began in 1966. After regional and international outcries, and only after a successful case was brought against France by Australia, New Zealand and Fiji in the International Court of Justice, atmospheric tests were replaced by underground testing from 1975, continuing to 1996 (with a suspension from 1992 to 1995). For the period of nuclear testing, maintaining French Polynesia within the French fold was indispensable to its national and international stature, and thus of vital strategic significance. In this period there was a massive inflow of funds, technology, jobs and infrastructure, including construction of the international airport at Faaa on Tahiti and airstrips and the *Centre d'expérimentation du Pacifique*, (Pacific Experimentation Centre, CEP) on the island of Hao.

Economic and social change

Such an influx brought about rapid social and economic change, and a prosperity which was as disruptive as it was artificial. Until 1960, the only airstrip was that constructed on Bora Bora during the War. Papeete did not have an airport before then, although flying boats landed there. As the traditional copra and vanilla markets slumped, and phosphate reserves on the island of Makatea dried up in 1966, the islands became ever more dependent on French inflows. During the 1960s the budget of the army and the CEP increased fifty times (from 1961 to 1966) and the numbers of civil and military functionaries from 400 to 15,000 (1961 to 1968). GNP increased 75 times from 1962 to 1982, and the minimum wage 15 times. Consumption increased but much of what was consumed was imported *holus bolus* from metropolitan France including energy (99%) and food (85%) (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 pp. 124-5).

Dependence on France increased dramatically. Before nuclear testing, French Polynesia did not rely heavily on metropolitan funding, with returns on exports averaging around 90 per cent of the cost of imports in the 1950s. But metropolitan transfers as a percentage of GDP averaged 16.1 percent 1960-63 and reached 39% in the 1970s (Henningham 1992 p. 128). The public sector became the biggest employer with salaries artificially inflated and paying no income tax. Metropolitan-based officials were posted with very large supplements to their salaries. Taxation was indirect and included import tax. All of these factors unnaturally elevated the cost of living. The windfalls were fitful, with the CEP employing 10,000 in the 1960s but only 3,000 in the 1980s, and CEP contributing 37% to GNP in 1970, but only 19% in 1980.

Migration to Papeete increased substantially and rapidly. In 1951 48.6% of the population lived on Tahiti, reaching 70% by the 1980s (Henningham 1992 pp. 129-130). By 1995, the population of Tahiti and Moorea had tripled (49,800 in 1952 to 161,000 in 1995, Dunmore 1997 p. 265). From being mainly a subsistence economy up until 1960, French Polynesia rapidly increased its food imports to the point where 80 per cent of its food needs were imported by the 1980s (Henningham 1992 p. 131). The self-employed peasant class rapidly became a worker class.

Pro-France versus pro-autonomy

With Pouvannaa out of the way, political divisions tended to coalesce between those wanting continued dependence on France, and those seeking increased autonomy. Overall, politics continued to be highly personal. Pouvannaa's supporters created political parties around their personal support bases. Francis Sanford and Daniel Millaud and their mainly mixed-descent *Demis* supporters created the *Te E'a Api* (New Way), and John Teariki and Jean Juventin and their more traditional Protestant Polynesian *Maohis*, the *Te Here Ai'a* (Love of Fatherland). The two parties became allies. Later, Émile Vernaudon split from *Te E'a Api* to form his *Te Aia Api* (New Fatherland). These autonomist parties joined to form the majority in the Territorial Assembly in the 1970s. Sanford was elected *Député* in the French National Assembly from 1968 and 1973. Chesneaux and Maclellan note succinctly that despite their generally autonomist disposition, these political groupings, sometimes allies, sometimes rivals, represented personal interests without a coherent political plan; and splits, defections, unexpected unions and changes of position were their political currency (1992 p. 131). France played a role in this, by mainly ignoring their political demands, as many French officials believed that autonomist demands were a means of squeezing more funding from France (Aldrich 1993; Regnault 2005a; Henningham 1992 p. 135). This tradition, of playing the independence card to extract economic gain, persists until today.

For these local pro-autonomy political groups, the French nuclear testing issue became largely a pawn in the game of political power. Generally, the autonomist parties were critical of French nuclear testing. In 1974 Sanford and Teariki supported anti-test François Mitterrand in the presidential campaign, but in 1981 thought nothing of switching support to Giscard d'Estaing who supported nuclear testing, in return for various development promises (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 131). (In the event, Mitterrand won.)

Increasingly dependent on France, in the 1960s the territory handed over to the French government responsibilities for posts and telegraphs, secondary and technical education and some public health programs. The French government expanded municipal government which both boosted the aid and development of the outer islands but also sheeted the credit to France rather than the Territory (Henningham 1992 pp. 135-6). By the 1980s, France was spending over \$A 1 b. annually in the territory, twice as much as it was spending in New Caledonia.

Re-emergence of independence demands

Their demands ignored, the autonomist groups occupied the Assembly building in June 1976 for almost a year. The French simply waited for them to leave (Henningham 1992 p. 136). With France failing to respond to autonomy demands, it was not surprising that pro-independence sentiment re-emerged. Jacqui Drollet formed the *Ia Mana Te Nunaa* (Power to the People) party in 1975, actively propounding independence from 1978, while acknowledging it would take a ten or fifteen year

planning period. The same year, Oscar Temaru formed a more militant pro-independence party, the *Front de Libération de la Polynésie* (Polynesian Liberation Front, FLP), which became the *Tavini Huiraatira* (*Serviteur du Peuple* or People's Servant) in 1982. It argued for immediate transition to independence, and immediate cessation of the nuclear tests. A range of smaller independentist groupings were formed in the 1970s and 1980s.

It was not until the late 1970s that France responded to the sharper calls for autonomy. A **1977 statute** (Law No 77-772 of 12 July 1977), described as an autonomy management statute, was passed recognizing financial and administrative autonomy in the territory, restoring the governing Council presided by the High Commissioner, and reinstating the Vice-President elected by the Territorial Assembly. The Vice-President and the Governing Council had collegial control over specified portfolios, and while the High Commissioner had executive power, in practice he refrained from attending every Council meeting (Henningham 1992 p. 140). Francis Sanford was elected Vice-President and served from 1977 to 1982. But the changes were slight and fell short of the 1957 Defferre Law provisions.

In time Sanford began to demand transfer of executive power from the French High Commissioner to the Vice-President. At this point Gaston Flosse, who had led conservative, pro-France opinion, decided to change his position to favour autonomy.

Autonomy within France v. independence

From 1958 Flosse had been active in the Gaullist *Union Tahitienne-Union pour la Nouvelle République* (Tahitian Union, Union for the New Republic, UT-UNR), leading its 1971 iteration the *Union Tahitienne – Union pour la Défense de la République* (Tahitian Union, Union for the Defence of the Republic, UT-UDR) and leading the successor party, the *Tahoeraa Huira'atira* or People's Assembly, which he set up in May 1977. A gifted politician with an eye to the main chance both for himself as much as French Polynesia, and stalwart of the French Republic, Flosse began as a relatively poor *Demi* (mixed descent) from Mangareva in the Gambiers. His skill in both Tahitian and French enabled him to relate easily to both worlds (Henningham 1992 pp. 140-141).

Until 1980 the conservative Gaullists staunchly favoured the nuclear testing program and its economic benefits, and opposed greater autonomy as inevitably leading to independence. Flosse's supporters claimed that his switch in 1980 to supporting greater autonomy was motivated by awareness that this was possible while maintaining close links with France. His switch reflected a judgement that supporting greater autonomy would, indeed, head off independence. His support for autonomy was a watershed for the territory, as it meant that a large majority of the electorate now favoured this position. Henningham noted this reflected a Tahitian identity based on the Polynesian ancestry of most of the population, with only a small minority favouring independence (Henningham 1992 p. 141). Flosse's switch paid off. *Tahoeraa* with the new platform won the 1982 elections, and he became Vice-President. He was to stay at

the head of the executive in various forms until 2004, except between 1987 and 1991. From 1986 to 1988 he was appointed by Chirac as the first State Secretary for the South Pacific. He was elected a *Député* in the European Parliament in 1984, and in the French Assembly in 1986; and as *Sénateur* from 1998.

The harnessing of the pro-autonomy sentiment from the broad Polynesian base saw a resurgence of interest in Polynesian and Tahitian cultural identity, reflected in the establishment of museums (*Musée de Tahiti et des Îles*, the Polynesian Centre for Human Sciences) and use of Tahitian language in schools from 1980 onwards. The new **Internal Autonomy Statute of 1984** (Law No 84-820 of 6 September 1984) reflected these changes, allowing the use of Tahitian along with French as an official language, and the flying of the Tahitian flag alongside the French *tricolore*. The Statute also considerably expanded self-government. While the French State retained responsibility for broad “sovereign” matters such as foreign relations, defence, immigration, currency, public order, and economic areas, there were some shared responsibilities and the territory was able to conduct some regional affairs. The Statute established a local President of the territory, a position won by Gaston Flosse which he held to 1987, when his party lost in the 1988 elections, but regained in 1991. The cultural symbols in the Statute were tangible rewards for local support for the Statute, in contrast to the New Caledonian nationalist opposition to a similar Statute there. The symbolic autonomy changes also reflected the greater strategic significance of French Polynesia to France as a testing site at the time. It was around this time that Flosse began to speak of a “free association” status for French Polynesia along the lines of the Cook Islands’ relationship with New Zealand (Henningham 1992 p. 160).²⁰

In 1986 Flosse’s *Tahoeraa* won the Assembly elections outright, the first time a single party had done so since Pouvanaa’s win in 1957. His party benefited from the electoral system’s heavier weighting to the less populous outer islands, whose voters are more conservative and pro-France. Henningham (1992 p. 152) suggested this system may well have been designed by the French government to its benefit, a precursor to systemic manipulation in the early 2000s.

At this time international and especially regional pressure was reaching boiling point, at France’s handling of the deteriorating situation in New Caledonia, and especially its bombing of a ship, the *Rainbow Warrior*, protesting against nuclear tests, in New Zealand (see *Rainbow Warrior* affair section below). In the context of a regional diplomatic offensive Chirac, as Prime Minister of France in March 1986, appointed Flosse Secretary of State for South Pacific affairs. This meant that Flosse would be increasingly absent from Papeete. Already, Flosse’s style and political decisions had alienated many of his supporters. He was authoritarian, and granted favours and

²⁰Under the Cook Islands arrangement, the Cook Islands has an independent international identity, full local self-government, and the right to proceed to full independence should it wish to do so, with New Zealand undertaking aid and defence commitments. Cook Islanders retain New Zealand citizenship and full immigration rights into New Zealand but control immigration by mainland New Zealanders. Cook Islands do not have a seat in the UN. See Henningham 1992, p. 161.

contracts to cronies while failing to address social problems and tensions in a timely way (Henningham 1992 p. 153). The incompatibility of his national ministerial responsibilities with those of his Presidency of the territory led him to relinquish the latter in January 1987, designating a mate, Jacky Teuira, to the position. His absences from the Territory and alienation of key industry players meant that a dockers' dispute erupted into a major riot in October 1987, damaging and looting several businesses in Papeete.

Autonomy and independence alliance

In the end defections from Flosse's party led to his loss of government and support for Alexandre Léontieff, a pro-France leader, heading a loose coalition of parties. This group was primarily united by their dislike of Flosse and included *Tahoeraa* dissidents (*Te Tiarama*), the *Here Ai'a* centre-left party and *Ia Mana* moderate leftwing, pro-independence party. This was not the last time such a disparate group would be gathered for electoral convenience, reflecting, as Al Wardi described it, "political nomadism" where ideological distinctions took second place to securing resources for constituents by shifting alliances (Al Wardi 2009 p. 198). The coalition held together until the end of 1990. In achieving this Léontieff had to tread a careful path promoting autonomist demands within France. As *Député* in the French Parliament, he cautioned that French misunderstanding of the special characteristics of the territory had re-awakened demands for independence. He and his government advocated an advanced form of internal autonomy within the French Republic, with all the advantages of independence without the disadvantages (*La Dépêche de Tahiti*, 10 June 1989).

A side issue at this time, resulting again from the tendency of French Polynesian leaders to eye developments in New Caledonia, was concern about French Polynesia's status and immigration inflows from Europe, raised by France's economic integration into the EU in 1992. Most parties boycotted or did not actively become engaged in European elections in July 1989 because of these concerns (Henningham 1992 p. 163). France was dismissive, referring to controls held by the French state since 1932 over entry and residence, supplemented by the 1984 Statute which provided for consultation with the territory on immigration and the control of expatriate residents.

The most important issue for autonomists remained French Polynesia's dependence on French funding arising from the nuclear testing site. Whereas formal opposition to nuclear testing was confined mainly to the *Tavini* and the *Ia Mana* which in 1986 together only attracted around 15% of the vote, general concern about testing was more widespread, but always tempered with concern that funding by France not be jeopardized. The Léontieff-led government took the approach of encouraging long-term planning by France to prepare for when testing was wound down. The French State continued to pursue its strategic interests without regard for local sensitivities within French Polynesia or more widely in the region, with President Mitterrand at one point, in late 1987, visiting the test sites via Hao and returning to France without even touching down in Papeete.

To answer some of these concerns, France legislated amendments to the 1984 Statute in **July 1990** (Law No 90-612 of 12 July 1990). These granted to the Territory some further limited controls over foreign investment, the budget, exploration and exploitation of seabed, marine and subterranean resources, and provided for a consultative committee over immigration. Local *Conseils d'Archipels* (Island Councils) were set up in the key island groups, Flosse's power base, in a bid to respond to outer island concerns about Tahiti's political predominance (Dunmore 1997 p. 264). Dissatisfaction continued, with unions organizing disruptive protests against rising fuel prices in July 1991, resulting in violence (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 139).

Nuclear testing and beyond

Finally, in the face of world and regional criticism for its nuclear testing in the Pacific (see following section), French President Mitterrand imposed a moratorium in 1992. The decision immediately led to an economic slump. Mitterrand began consultations with French Polynesian leaders on the future without the economic boost of the nuclear testing apparatus. These talks led to the Pact for Progress, agreed in January 1993 and implemented by the 1994 Economic and Social Development law for French Polynesia, with a development contract signed in May 1994, extended by another signed in October 2000 (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 316). Essentially the French underwrote extensive ongoing financial support well beyond any cessation of the tests as compensation.

Much of the goodwill accrued in this process was eroded by Chirac's decision, when he was elected President, to resume nuclear testing in 1995. Protests resurged, leading to riots and burning of the international airport and numerous shops and offices. The territory's one remaining economic asset, tourism, suffered as a result. When he revised his decision, in 1996, ended the testing program and closed the CEP, Chirac promised just under 1 b. former French francs (around \$A 300 m.) assistance over the succeeding ten years. Ironically, France's major investment, through the CEP, in infrastructure, port installations, roads, hydro-electric and solar power schemes, and in providing jobs, had built the territory's standard of living and expectations to a high, possibly unrealistically high, level. It would be costly to maintain.

France offered continued extensive financial support, in return for staying with France, along with continued self-government, albeit within constraints set by France and, it should be noted, with substantially fewer real powers than it accorded New Caledonia in 1998. French Polynesia's limited economic resources meant that the stakes were lower for France than in New Caledonia. Even Oscar Temaru acknowledged that independence would lower the standard of living in French Polynesia (on 13 April 2006 he told the *Nouvelles de Tahiti* that independence would only be possible "when our country's economic development allows it to ensure sovereignty").

Regional concern

No doubt, with the bulk of testing requirements behind it, France was ready to wind down its testing program in any case by the early 1990s. The 1994 Defence White Paper shifted emphasis from nuclear to conventional capability, and the focus of military research from nuclear to space technologies (Piquet 2000 p. 22). While it remained committed to its continuing status as a nuclear power and the *force de frappe* (nuclear deterrent), France had already established its nuclear credentials. The Berlin Wall had fallen and the Cold War was in its final stages. But there is no doubt that international and regional criticism played a major role in forcing France to do without continued testing and to close the CEP. In this, France had necessarily to weigh its strategic influence in terms of its nuclear imperative on the one hand, and its international reputation on the other. Events showed once again that domestic political preoccupations in Paris, linked closely with France's international image, would determine outcomes, and that lack of coordination of agencies involved would lead to errors.

Rainbow Warrior affair

On 10 July 1985, two French secret agents bombed the Greenpeace vessel, the *Rainbow Warrior*, killing a photographer, Fernando Pereira. Greenpeace had been about to launch another of the vessel's forays into the region, notably to French Polynesia, to protest against nuclear testing there. New Zealand sentenced and jailed two of the agents responsible, Alain Mafart and Dominique Prieur, in November 1985. But France then impeded wool and offal imports from New Zealand, New Caledonia stopped importing New Zealand lamb, and France threatened European Economic Community reductions in the EEC quota of butter imports from New Zealand (Henningham 1992 p. 226).

UN Secretary General Xavier Peres de Cuellar was called upon to negotiate a settlement, involving an apology and \$US 7 m. compensation from France, as well as an instruction to France not to obstruct New Zealand imports, in return for New Zealand releasing the two agents into French custody for detention for three years on Hao atoll. But France did not respect this agreement, freeing the agents and returning them to metropolitan France within two years (Henningham 1992 p. 226). New Zealand then sought further international arbitration. An international tribunal ruled in 1990 that France had indeed breached its obligations and required a further payment of \$US 2 m. into a French-New Zealand fund.

There were several consequences to this behaviour, which came, it will be recalled, on the heels of the most violent episodes in New Caledonia's *événements* (disturbances).

There were domestic repercussions. Until 1985, the nuclear testing and deterrent issue had broad-based French domestic support. But the *Rainbow Warrior* affair was to begin to change public opinion within France (Dunmore 1997 p. 260, Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 116). France's disregard for its UN-brokered commitment and the

legal case protracted over five years raised further questions in the minds of leaders of its own Pacific territories about its commitments to them, particularly in New Caledonia where France was negotiating the Matignon/Oudinot Accords based primarily on promises. The affair also underlined the role of the French Defence Ministry in dictating policy on the Pacific, over and above that of the Foreign Ministry (see also Mrgudovic 2008 p. 185). This did not result in good outcomes since, as Dunmore indicated, Defence planners were resentful of the activities of the anti-nuclear movement (1997 p. 259), had their own operational interests in prolonging the nuclear testing presence, and were not nuanced in foreign policy.

The external effects were disastrous for France and its prestige. The clumsy nature of the attack, with France's role and agents so publicly revealed suggested more the action of a banana republic indulging in state terrorism than a major world leader. The fact that the UN was required to mediate, and that the mediation dragged on over five years mainly owing to France reneging on its commitment, sullied France's reputation and counteracted the efforts France was making in other areas to improve its image in the latter 1980s.

The *Rainbow Warrior* affair enabled Pacific leaders to galvanise their efforts and to receive a sympathetic hearing on the international stage. As Chesneaux and Maclellan (1992 p. 117) indicated, the French action showed blithe contempt for successive Forum resolutions condemning French testing. The French argument against others interfering in their affairs had been cut dead by its own interference in a New Zealand port (Bates 1990 p. 137). The affair represented a golden opportunity for the islanders to demonise France (Du Prel 1996 p. 9), especially to portray it as an outsider creating instability (Maclellan and Chesneaux 1998 p. 190).

On a broader scale, the *Rainbow Warrior* incident hardened New Zealand's support for banning nuclear ship visits (Henningham, 1992 p. 224), which was arguably against broad western interests in the Pacific at the time, widening as this New Zealand policy did, differences within ANZUS. Thus, just as French handling of New Hebrides and New Caledonian issues had inadvertently opened the region to adverse strategic consequences, so did this aspect of its dealing with the French Polynesia testing issue undermine fundamental western strategic interests.

Regional criticism

To understand the depth of feeling and intensity involved in regional opposition to French nuclear testing in the South Pacific, and France's seeming disregard of this opposition for many years, requires an acknowledgement of significant spatial, economic and cultural differences between France and the newly independent island countries, and between France on the one hand, and Australia and New Zealand on the other.

The spatial context of the issue for the Pacific countries is fundamental to their stance. In the first place, while to a well-entrenched European power, the South Pacific countries seemed thousands of kilometers removed from the Hiroshima experience of a

nuclear explosion, those countries belong to the same hemisphere as Japan. For them the lessons from the Hiroshima explosion, the cost in human lives and suffering vividly portrayed in newsreels, were stunning in their immediacy and scope. The Hiroshima bomb had taken place in their neighbourhood. Memories were recent and vivid, and shaped attitudes to nuclear testing in the region itself.

Secondly, whereas France claimed the testing sites were on its sovereign territory, whatever the legality of this claim, for Pacific island countries they were taking place in their immediate neighbourhood, in what they repeatedly referred to as their “backyard” (see for example comments by Cook Islands Prime Minister Davis, in Henningham 1992 p. 218). The backyard is a concept of being at home and therefore the space for highly private family activity, to be respected by neighbours (France grew to appreciate this distinction – see comments made by David Camroux in *Assemblée Nationale de France*, 1996 report p. 53). They felt affronted by violation of this space, so proximate to their homes. France might well claim that the Hao area was thousands of kilometers from neighbouring islands, but for island countries, the distances were perceived as relatively small. Moreover, they shared long-term historical, cultural and ethnic ties and a community of interests. For them, even if the claimed risks in testing were only moderate (which they did not believe), those risks should be taken on French metropolitan territory.

The concept of being a good neighbour was also different. France’s approach to testing revealed much about its attitude to the region. Because of the lofty strategic significance of the testing program, France never ceased to conduct itself as a nuclear power even when ending its program. Even today France would be unlikely to describe island Pacific countries as its neighbours (see the section on France as “in” versus “of” the Pacific, Chapter 8). And so it has left a legacy which would take significant diplomatic and other resources to overcome.

There were other differences in perception. None of the Pacific countries, including Australia and New Zealand, had any experience of the positive uses of nuclear power in energy production, whereas in France over 50 % of its energy needs were being met by nuclear power stations by the early 1980s (Henningham 1992 p. 165). So in the Pacific there was no firsthand evidence of a successful use of nuclear energy, and to compound matters, a vivid impression of its most destructive impact. Furthermore, indigenous traditions are strongly disposed towards preserving and respecting natural forces. In contrast to secular France, Pacific island societies are religious, and operate within a more diffuse environment where the lines between religion and politics are blurred. Thus France tended to dismiss strong opposition region-wide by the Pacific Council of Churches, and Paris-based policymakers were too prepared to situate the Council’s opposition in the context of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant v. French Catholic paradigm of the nineteenth century, although the Council included both Protestants and Catholics, (Dunmore 1997 p. 259, Henningham 1992 p. 176). Rather, given their traditions and religious background, nuclear testing was perceived by many islanders as morally wrong.

And, for Pacific islanders, the nuclear issue was closely interrelated with the question of independence for both French Polynesia and New Caledonia.

South Pacific Forum action

Just as the Forum's strategy to urge self-determination in New Caledonia was a strongly held principle within a broader concept of support for decolonization, so its strategy to combat French nuclear testing took place within the broader context of its opposition to nuclear activity in the region.

Forum opposition to nuclear testing was broad-ranging and pre-dated French testing. In 1956, both the Cook Islands and Western Samoan local assemblies, even before independence, protested against British and American atmospheric tests. Western Samoa's Legislative Assembly described the French plan to test in the Pacific as a serious threat to health and security in the South Pacific a full year before the tests began (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 184). New Zealand also protested against American testing at the time (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 113).

Australia and New Zealand took France to the International Court of Justice in 1973, claiming the tests had negative radioactive fallout on the regional population. The ICJ found in favour of this proposition, at which point France withdrew from the process, effectively nullifying it. But France did announce that it would switch to underground testing, which it did in 1975 (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 188, Mrgudovic 2008 p. 118).

The islanders established, early, a link between the independence and the nuclear testing issues, enunciated by Fijian Prime Minister and founding Forum member, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara in 1973, when he said that by persuading the UN Committee of 24 on Decolonization to speed up the "liberation" of the French territories, France would no longer have the right to undertake its tests there (quoted in Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 186). French strategic thinker Isabelle Cordonnier understood the motivation when she referred in 1996 to the South Pacific as a geopolitical region, and to its opposition to nuclear tests, not as Anglo-Saxon opposition to France, but rather opposition to something which was seen as one of the last incarnations of colonialism (*Assemblée Nationale* 1996 p. 54). The formation of a group for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) from 1975 reflected this thinking.

Such an approach was not shared by the governments of Australia and New Zealand, who in the early 1980s exercised a moderating influence within the Forum on islander proposals targeting France and the US, over and above their restraining role on Forum resolutions on New Caledonia.²¹ This is not to say that the colonialist-nuclear link was not made by interest groups and unions in each country. In Australia these non-government groups conducted visceral campaigns against France including boycotts of

²¹A role not unnoticed in France itself, see comments by French Minister for Foreign Affairs 1985 to the French Parliament noting Australia's moderation in its assessment of the situation in New Caledonia, and the moderating influence of Australia on the measured stance in the South Pacific Forum, 29 July 1985, *Débats de l'Assemblée Nationale* 2 December 1985 (*Assemblée Nationale* 1985 p. 55549-50).

French restaurants, interruption to French postal and maritime services, and protests and even bombing of French diplomatic and other premises. Many of these groups, particularly the unions, were constituents of the Australian Labor Party.

In 1983, the new Hawke Labor government banned uranium shipments to France, a ban which endured until 1986. As noted in the previous section on New Caledonia, feelings also continued to run high against France's treatment of New Caledonia at this time, especially with France's reversal of autonomy provisions in the Pons Statutes raising questions about France's *bona fides*. In 1986 France banned ministerial visits to Australia, and expelled Australia's Consul General from New Caledonia in 1987.

Islander anti-nuclear concerns were wide-ranging. Not only did they oppose nuclear testing, many of the island countries wanted to control the disposal and movement of nuclear waste through the region, and to limit missile testing, and visits by nuclear ships. To harness these strong feelings in the region within the context of the interests of the western alliance, Australia's Labor government proposed a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone treaty in 1984. Australia exerted considerable diplomatic effort to refine the proposals, both with an eye to the needs of the major western ally, the United States, but also to protect broad western alliance, and therefore French, interests. The final treaty, known as the Raratonga Treaty after the capital where it was signed in 1985, prohibited Forum members from acquiring and stationing nuclear arms, nuclear testing, and depositing nuclear waste in territorial waters. Its annex exhorted the big nuclear powers not to conduct nuclear tests in the Zone, not to use nuclear arms against Forum members and to apply the treaty in their territories. Individual members could make their own decisions on visits by nuclear vessels. But the definition of the Zone, which included the French territories but not the US ones in Micronesia, gave rise to French grievances that they alone were being targeted.

Regional opposition to French testing, and the Raratonga Treaty nonetheless influenced France. France's cessation of atmospheric testing in 1975 when it turned to underground tests, occurred largely in response to the 1974 ICJ court decision brought by Australia and New Zealand against France. After the signature by regional countries of the Raratonga Treaty declaring the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone in 1985, France, in 1989, reduced the number of its annual tests to 8 or 9 and gave advance notice of them. The relevance of the Raratonga Treaty was demonstrated by France's signing it within months of its final test (in March 1996, after ceasing tests in January).

Nuclear testing issues linger

There was considerable debate, which continues until today, about the environmental and health risks of nuclear testing. As time, and opposition, progressed, France became more skilled at mounting information and diplomatic offensives. France invited a succession of regional teams to visit French Polynesia and conduct tests. These included one headed by Haroun Tazieff in 1982; New Zealand scientist Atkinson, in 1984; their own world renowned oceanographer Jacques Cousteau in 1987; and a Dr Feuillade in 1990. None of these missions produced conclusive reports which in any

case suffered because France did not allow free access to the sites (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 120 footnote elaborates on these). French officials also tended to quote selectively from these reports (Henningham 1992 p. 171). A US Greenpeace team conducted its own tests on the reef without French support in 1990, claiming to find radioactive substances before the group was arrested and bundled off to Papeete by the French navy (Op cit).

Lobby groups keep alive the question of negative impacts of the tests, ranging from damage to reefs and leaching of radioactivity into the sea, to direct health effects resulting in cancer or increased incidence of the disease ciguatera, a poisoning of coral fish arising from disruption of the reefs (see for example Maclellan 2006 on leukemia rates in the testing area). In April 2009 the Labour Tribunal heard the first case by a group of eight plaintiffs seeking compensation for effects of the tests on their health (see Moruroa e Tatou 2009). And in December 2009, the French government signed off on legislation providing for compensation for those assessed as having been affected by the tests, and set up a 10 m. Euro compensation fund (*Flash d'Océanie*, 23 December 2009). The matter remains controversial, and lobby groups staged a protest at the new legislation in December 2009, saying it did not go far enough.

Another remnant of the nuclear testing era is the infrastructure. Whereas much has been dismantled, empty buildings and airstrips remain, largely unused (Maclellan 2005e p. 370). Whether and how this infrastructure is used in future will reveal much about the safety of the atolls. A related outstanding issue is the question of the return of Moruroa and Fangatufa, ceded to France in 1964 (see section Nuclear testing begins above), to French Polynesia.

Conclusion

France's presence in the Pacific in the post-war years to the mid 1990s was characterized by its strong need to re-establish its national prestige, after the losses of the War and subsequently of Algeria and Indo-China. Elements of this process included the *force de frappe* (nuclear deterrent) which it tested in the region; but also, as the century progressed, recognition of the value of an extended EEZ that its territories represented; and maintaining a foothold in a region widely proclaimed as the central player in the forthcoming century. It held fervently to the stated need to protect the interests of its nationals, which were most pronounced in New Caledonia. The ambiguities of its position were evident in the United Nations, where France claimed equal rights with the other four permanent members, but at the time rejected reporting and other UN obligations towards its Pacific territories. In the SPC France similarly showed the primacy of its national interests at all times, and a reluctance to accommodate growing islander confidence, independence and participation. When this attitude led, counterproductively to its interests, to the formation of the political South Pacific Forum, France initially treated the Forum with contempt, ignoring its early calls for change in its nuclear testing and decolonization actions.

France's experience in New Hebrides/Vanuatu was seminal, not for the French state itself which perpetuated some of its mistakes elsewhere, but for regional attitudes to France. In this archipelago, France had been locked in an uneasy embrace with its traditional rival, Britain, for more than a hundred years. France's traditional concerns, to support its nationals and its missionaries, had led it to a surprising and generally successful innovation, in the Condominium arrangement. But France also showed duplicitous behaviour, in its meddling in a federation arrangement and its willingness to work with rebels such as Jimmy Stephens to foment rebellion and even secession, in its own interests. Its action was also foolhardy, in that if France had succeeded in securing the secession of the island of Santo, it would have created a precedent for the possible division of New Caledonia and even French Polynesia. In its presence in Vanuatu, France demonstrated that it would leverage aid and economic assistance in return for political support. Much of the inconsistency of its policy towards the new state arose from the lack of familiarity with the local situation in its administrators and representatives rotated for short periods without much control or interest from Paris, where institutional arrangements favoured stronger ministries such as Defence, over the Overseas France and Foreign Affairs agencies. The way in which Vanuatu's independence was handled by France directly led to anti-French sentiment, including to the formation of an anti-France Melanesian Spearhead Group with a strong Vanuatu base in support of New Caledonia. It also led the small Pacific states to efforts to look elsewhere, including Libya, or at least to be seen to be doing so, for support, which was contrary to the security interests of the Western alliance and Australia. These consequences constituted a critical message for France, and the region, as it managed its other collectivities.

The left-over issue of Matthew and Hunter Islands demonstrated both France's continuing wish to retain territory (and desirable EEZ) in the region and that it remained prepared to back up its claims with diplomacy underpinned by force.

The latter half of the twentieth century was a turbulent time for New Caledonia. The French State showed innovation, flexibility and creativity in its proposals to meet local demands while retaining sovereignty. But it also showed clumsiness, inconsistency and irresolution. The principal dynamic operating in New Caledonia has been between groups favouring staying with France and those favouring independence. From the end of World War II until the mid 1990s, France alternated between extending and reducing autonomy in twelve statutes over five decades. While this stop-start process finally resulted in an ingenious series of agreed, democratically-based Accords drawing elements from many past proposals, it has also left questions about the veracity of the State's word and intentions not only within the territory, but more broadly in the region. The potential impact of doubts about France's commitment was seen when Kanak pro-independence groups sought to seek support in dealings with Libya, risking regional security at the time.

By 1998 the French State, the pro-France groups, and the independentists, had worked out temporary arrangements to restore stability to their archipelago, based on promised rebalancing of economic development and political power between them, but heavily

dependent on the French State. Thus a complex, ambiguous, and partisan pattern emerged whereby the French State was both an actor and an arbiter in political and economic life, allied, by its predilection for New Caledonia to stay within the Republic, to the pro-France parties. A key compromise had been the idea of a restricted electorate for local elections and the final referendums on the future. Another was the planned sharing, between the main communities, of economic benefits arising from New Caledonia's main source of wealth, nickel. Handling these two issues was to continue to be critical to stability, and fundamental indicators of the perceived commitment of the French state to the pro-independence group. The restricted electorate touched on sensitive immigration issues. The nickel resource had historically fostered disparities and was vulnerable to the vagaries of world markets. A further variable arose from the consistent lesson in New Caledonian history that, whatever the good intent of the French State, the latter's primary preoccupation with its own metropolitan political, electoral and constitutional priorities and timetables, have complicated its administration of New Caledonia, even to the extent of provoking violence.

As elsewhere in its Pacific territories, the French State linked economic support with fealty to France, and backed its presence by force, dealing firmly with protests, most notably during the *événements* and in its Gossanah cave raid. The effects of metropolitan institutional constraints have been felt, as the Overseas France Ministry or Foreign Affairs Ministries have been overridden by the Defence Ministry. As the post-war period progressed, France did learn a lesson and increasingly sent senior officials to the territory who had some relevant experience (for example High Commissioner Alain Christnacht) but as ever they were rotated out within very short periods, continuing the early pattern of the "*valse des gouverneurs*".

And in French Polynesia, where, as the site of its nuclear testing, the strategic stakes were the highest for France during this period, many of the same features were evident, with one or two important differences. The key difference was that, with a more homogeneous population, demands for greater autonomy were always more broadly based. As in New Caledonia, French roll-backs of initial provisions for independence were met with a resurgence in pro-independence political groups in the 1970s. But in French Polynesia, the political dynamic shifted from pro-France v. independentist as in New Caledonia, to autonomist within France v. independentist in the 1980s in the absence of a substantial long-term French metropolitan settler population, and with the general dependence on the French nuclear testing program there. Prominent pro-France leader Gaston Flosse even advocated an independence-in-association formula as early as 1985.

Here too, with the added interest of its nuclear testing program, France has been prepared to flex its military might to retain support, cracking down on protests and riots and in 1985 fatally intervening even on a foreign vessel in a foreign port, to protect its interests. With the extensive economic effect of its nuclear testing program based in French Polynesia, it is here that the nexus between economic support and political dependence is most stark. With France promising ongoing funding for continued

fealty, local political groups threatened to change sides unless further financial support was forthcoming. So political allegiance between local parties, being less ideological and more clientelistic than in New Caledonia, was more fluid, with the French State a more direct player, overtly backing the interests of the pro-France autonomy group.

In the post-war period, France has responded fitfully to demands for autonomy in French Polynesia as in New Caledonia, through numerous statutory changes. And in French Polynesia, too, even more clearly than in New Caledonia, because of the nuclear testing program, the interests of one part of the metropolitan bureaucracy, the military in the Defence Ministry, regularly overrode the other ministries with an interest in the overseas territories. As an added overlay, in French Polynesia the close personal relationship between autonomist leader, Gaston Flosse, and the French President, Chirac, meant that administrative processes were circumvented and personal interests dictated policy, and even statutory change, a feature which was to intensify in the early 2000s.

Regional and international pressure played a role in shaping France's approach in both New Caledonia and French Polynesia in the post-war period, but stopped short of influencing France to grant independence to either. Forum efforts, engaging the United Nations, contributed to French efforts to be more flexible with New Caledonia in its Matignon/Noumea Accords. Regional opposition, and particularly the Forum-led Raratonga Treaty also led to better management, and then cessation, by France of its testing program in French Polynesia.

But an important legacy of regional opposition to French policies was the change of heart by France towards the region itself, its efforts to engage with the region, and to implement statutory change within its Pacific collectivities with an eye to the broader regional context, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Regional Diplomatic Offensive 1980s to 1990s

While France introduced a suite of policies to improve its image and engagement in the broader region from the mid-1980s, these superficial changes initially met with mixed success. It was only after genuine French attention to independence demands in New Caledonia, and the nuclear testing issue, that regional attitudes began to change.

After the war, well into the 1970s, French policy was to keep its territories relatively isolated from the region (Bates 1990 p. 92). Chapter 3 described how France resisted efforts to draw new island states into the SPC, and the consequent formation of the Forum which excluded France and its territories. France had given some indication of a wish to be more involved in the Pacific region in the 1970s. The Secretary of State for DOM-TOMs, Olivier Stirn, claimed in 1975 that there was no wish for France to isolate itself in its territories, and affirmed its desire for its territories to establish relations with their neighbours (cited in op. cit. p. 94), and he himself travelled to some of the Forum island states. One of the first meetings of France's senior officials and representatives in the South Pacific region took place in 1978 to plan a strategy for greater regional cooperation, with little apparent result on the ground. Bates notes that a subsequent call, in 1980, for a new approach to explain its presence only occurred because some island states were stepping up the campaign for the decolonization of New Caledonia. The idea languished in the early 1980s, although French Polynesia had lodged a request for observer status to the Forum by 1985.

It was only with the shock of the *Rainbow Warrior* affair to France's international and regional reputation in mid-1985, the reinscription of New Caledonia in the UN Decolonization Committee and the conclusion of the Treaty of Rarotonga, that President Mitterrand and later Chirac (Prime Minister from March 1986) took action to repair the damage, always with a Gaullist eye to preserving France's national prestige.

But the exercise from the outset was one of damage limitation rather than genuine policy change. Chirac proceeded with the Pons statutes in New Caledonia throughout this period; and even later, when France declared a moratorium on nuclear testing in 1992, it resumed its nuclear testing program from 1995 to 1996. Bates wrote at the time that the exercise was ill-founded in that it was designed to correct misperceptions that France believed Australia and New Zealand were responsible for perpetrating, and therefore was competitive and presentation-focused rather than collaborating with these countries to clarify any differences (Bates 1990 p. 97).

The first step in this image-improving process was a pledge by Mitterrand to increase diplomatic involvement and spending in the region. He set up a South Pacific Council in Paris and proposed a French university in the region and numerous scientific and cultural projects with island states, but only after having visited Moruroa in late 1985 "to reaffirm France's commitment to its testing programme" (Henningham 1992 p. 209). The Council was composed of key cabinet ministers, the French High

Commissioners and French senior diplomats from the South Pacific, attached to the office of the President.

Flosse as Secretary of State for the South Pacific

Chirac, who became Prime Minister in March 1986, proceeded with regional cooperation projects to stave off criticism from increasingly disaffected island states. He appointed his personal friend, Gaston Flosse, then President of French Polynesia, as Secretary of State for the South Pacific from early 1986, which post he retained until Chirac lost government in 1988. Flosse began a process of annual meetings on the South Pacific engaging senior regional French officials. He visited Island states and invited their leaders to visit Paris, French Polynesia and even Moruroa.

French regional multilateral activity increased. France increased its disbursements to the SPC. Links between its numerous research and scientific organizations and Forum countries, and regional organizations, improved. For the first time, French scientific and research activities were pitched to development of regional island states (Bates 1990 p. 100). With the negative aspects of nuclear testing in island leaders' minds, the French turned their attention to bolstering their environmental credentials, setting up an environment monitoring observatory to collect and disseminate data in coordination with similar laboratories in the region; and participated in conventions on the protection of natural resources in the South Pacific and on banning driftnet fishing in the region. France offered help in surveillance of EEZs and set up emergency rescue and first aid supplies in its territories, for regional use (SPC Conference communiqué October 1990, Henningham 1992 p. 214). It set up a computer centre for the SP Geosciences Commission, later SOPAC, in Suva. France joined the Pacific Islands Development Program based in Honolulu. France also established a Consulate General in Honolulu in 1987, accredited to the Micronesian entities.

Flosse oversaw new bilateral aid to regional states, consisting of emergency and humanitarian aid in the wake of environmental disasters such as cyclones, and project aid and loans, including from his small (\$US 4 m. per annum) South Pacific Cooperation Fund. Flosse's support to the Solomon Islands, in May 1986, providing speedy and effective assistance in the wake of a devastating cyclone, set things off to a good start and was replicated in aid to the Cook Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu after similar natural disasters. Overall, France increased its bilateral aid expenditure to an average of SA 12 m. a year from 1987 to 1990, a modest amount given it was spending over one hundred times that in its own Pacific territories (Henningham 1992 p. 209).

In all of this, the French military took a high profile, the senior representative accompanying Flosse on visits, often in naval vessels. Naval courtesy calls to Fiji and Polynesian countries increased, sometimes delivering aid equipment. This was seen by many as designed to legitimize the presence of the French military in the region (Bates 1990 p. 99).

France encouraged French business and investment in the non-French Pacific. *Alliances françaises* were formed in Fiji and Tonga. At this time, reflecting shades of

the old idea of France's *mission civilisatrice*, or civilizing mission, there was prevalent reference to the concept of *rayonnement*, or dissemination of French culture, in the South Pacific region, including by President Giscard d'Estaing. This included the idea of the French territories there being seen as a means to spread French influence, just as the colonies had done in Africa (see for example Leymarie 1985 p. 2, Aldrich and Connell 1989 p. 5, Ch. 8 and p. 101; Cordonnier 1995a p. 113; Henningham 1992 p. 194). This trend took place within the context of a revival of the idea of formalizing the influence of French culture globally, and specifically of the French territories, as a source of spreading French influence. Mitterrand created a High Council for *Francophonie* in 1981 and Chirac created a State Secretary for *Francophonie* in 1986 (see Aldrich and Connell 1989 Ch. 8).

Flosse's leadership of the strategy proved a mixed blessing for many reasons. On the one hand, his Polynesian ancestry, ability to speak Tahitian facilitating communication with other Polynesian speakers, his flamboyant creativity, frenetic preparedness to travel widely, and obvious desire to help were all assets. Importantly, he was a strong regional personality working from Papeete, and not a metropolitan Paris-based functionary.

But his brief was problematic. It was based on checkbook diplomacy and corrective presentation rather than collaborationist. He was tasked to play a role in general policy and economic development in the French territories and improve relations in the South Pacific working with the DOM-TOM Ministry and Foreign Affairs Ministries, but he was excluded from policies towards New Caledonia (Bates 1990 p. 97).

Apart from the confused messages inherent in Flosse's friendly overtures, while nuclear testing continued and policy tightened towards New Caledonia, he made some clumsy *faux pas*, reflecting a lack of understanding of island politics and a tendency to self-aggrandisement, which countered many of France's positive intentions. Financial payments were offered to the opposition in Vanuatu's elections in 1987, leading to the expulsion of the French Ambassador there. In the Solomon Islands, even the generous and speedy French emergency response to the 1986 cyclone was undercut by Flosse's provision of aid to Prime Minister Kenilorea's home village which played into the hands of the opposition and resulted in Kenilorea having to resign (Bates 1990 p. 105). He also oversubscribed in the Cook Islands, where Prime Minister Davis, who had been well-disposed towards French Polynesia despite opposing French testing there, also lost his job over handling of aid from France (Ibid.). Flosse's personal manner stood out from the generally modest island ways. For example, he arrived at the 1987 Apia Forum meeting with his own luxury armour-plated limousine, where all other Forum leaders including the Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers made do with the VIP cars provided by the Samoan government (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 197).

His regional impact was divisive, even to the point of threatening regional security. Already, France's New Caledonia policy had led elements in New Caledonia and Vanuatu to consolidate ties with Libya, and Libya was glad to comply given its own problems with France over Chad (Henningham 1992 p. 222). This development undermined the overriding western security strategy, led by regional powers Australia

and New Zealand, and supported by France, of denial of the region to hostile powers. But Flosse's heavy hand added its own ingredient of insensitivity and counterproductivity. At one point, in 1986, he threatened that if France withdrew from New Caledonia, there would be civil war between the Kanaks and Caldoches and the resulting power vacuum would be filled by the USSR and Libya. In June, 1987, he sought to galvanise Australia, New Zealand, the US, France and Great Britain to define a policy for the South Pacific (Bates 1990 p. 109), seemingly unaware of the provocative nature of this suggestion to the independent island states, with its overtones of colonialism.

These lines of argument led to direct responses, especially by Melanesian leaders. In 1987, both Vanuatu's Prime Minister Lini and PNG Ambassador to the UN at the time, Renagi Lohia, referred to France's policies as "a direct threat to peace, security and stability...in our region and they have serious implications for international peace and security" (*Islands Business* April 1987 p.19), and the Solomons Prime Minister noted that "the powers that perpetuate terrorism in the region do not include Libya" (*Post Courier* 21 May 1987 p. 2).

And, just as French policies in New Caledonia had proven divisive regionally by directly resulting in the formation of first, the Forum, and then, the Melanesian Spearhead Group, so now Flosse compounded the problem, by counter-proposing a Polynesian Community. Although Flosse credited Cook Islands Prime Minister Sir Tom Davis with the idea, it seems generally accepted that it was Flosse's (by Chesneaux and Maclellan, 1992, p. 197; Bates 1990 p. 112). He organized meetings with Polynesian leaders to discuss it and raised it when he received regional leaders as his guests in Papeete (Bates 1990 p. 112). His actions were part of a deliberate policy of divide and rule, and were badly received.

France's relationship with Fiji was also regionally divisive. France sought to increase its influence, capitalizing on the nuanced regional responses to the 1987 coups by military leader Colonel Rabuka. Australia and New Zealand, and the Commonwealth, instituted sanctions against Fiji, although some island leaders were more forgiving. Although France publicly neither condemned nor condoned the coup, it conducted a joint naval exercise with Fiji shortly afterwards, and welcomed Prime Minister Sir Ratu Mara to Paris, providing much-needed international recognition in doing so (Henningham 1992 p. 216; Bates 1990 p. 101). France stepped up bilateral aid commitments to around \$A 16 m., which compared favourably to Australian annual aid of around \$A 14 m. at the time. This aid included a helicopter and civil emergency equipment which some saw as potentially usable by the rebellious Army. France already had military links with Fiji arising from shared participation in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon. EC aid continued uninterrupted, no doubt influenced by French views. Meanwhile Flosse drew pointed comparisons between regional views criticizing Rabuka's desire to reduce the influence of the Indian community while insisting the future of New Caledonia should be decided by the Kanaks; and questioning the Forum's view of New Caledonia as an international issue while maintaining Fiji was an internal matter (Bates 1990 p. 102).

The reaction of regional leaders was, understandably, mixed. The Forum in its annual Communiqués continued to voice its strong opposition to France's nuclear testing including its resumption in 1995; and to watch closely developments in New Caledonia. Some leaders, such as in Western Samoa and Cook Islands, favourably noted French efforts to dialogue and provide constructive aid, but continued to oppose France's nuclear testing and New Caledonia policies (Henningham 1992 p. 215, Bates 1990 p. 107, Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 199). Tonga's public position vacillated. Not surprisingly, Melanesian leaders were more resistant, with PNG and Vanuatu not dissuaded from their efforts in the UN attacking French nuclear and New Caledonia policies (Bates 1990 pp. 102-103). As noted in Chapter 3, Vanuatu expelled the French Ambassador and France reduced its aid there. Bates in 1990 made the harsh conclusion that the Flosse initiatives "failed to reduce the hostility of the Melanesian countries towards France and ...there is no conclusive evidence that they had a moderating effect on the attitude of the Polynesian states" (p. 113).

A policy shift from 1988

But over time, with the nomination of socialist Michel Rocard in place of rightwing Chirac as Prime Minister amidst the Gossanah Cave affair in May 1988, France bolstered its efforts with more concrete policy change. Rocard led France's changed approach to New Caledonia with the Matignon Accords, and, significantly, removed Flosse from his position in 1988. He revived France's South Pacific Council which had been inoperative under Chirac, and established a regional roving ambassador for the South Pacific, a position which endures until today. Naval visits to island states increased. Rocard himself visited the Pacific in 1989, including Australia, New Caledonia, Fiji, French Polynesia, but finished pointedly with Moruroa. During his visit he urged the French territories to integrate more in the cultural and economic life of the region (Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992 p. 200). And in 1992 his successor Pierre Bérégovoy announced a suspension of nuclear testing in French Polynesia (which Chirac resumed in 1995 as noted).

The island governments at this time were certainly happy to accept more engagement from France in development cooperation. In 1992, Henningham, while noting continued opposition by island countries over New Caledonia and nuclear testing, pointed to France's diplomatic offensive having "secured broader acceptance ...of the view that France has a legitimate role, and contributions to make to the region's economic welfare", particularly by Fiji, and countries of Polynesia and Micronesia, although acknowledged some improvement even with Melanesian countries by 1990 (pp. 218-19). But these countries continued to oppose nuclear testing, and remained vigilant over New Caledonia. It took concrete policy change in both areas to improve regional acceptance. Even after cessation of nuclear testing in 1996, regional leaders did not see either the Matignon or the Noumea Accords as sufficient in themselves to remove New Caledonia from the United Nations Committee of Decolonization (C24) list. Thus, as noted in Chapter 3, every year, to this day, a New Caledonia resolution is

passed without vote in the C24, sponsored by Fiji and PNG (see also Regional reactions section of Chapter 7).

In Australia and New Zealand, grassroots sentiment was strongly anti-nuclear testing (especially in New Zealand) and pro-independence for New Caledonia. The two governments officially recorded these policy stances, but worked to moderate regional pushes for tough action against France. As described in Chapter 3, they had slowed down island leaders' moves for reinscription of New Caledonia with the UN Committee of 24, only changing their stance when Chirac tightened policy with the Pons statutes. Differences with Chirac's approach had led to a deterioration in relations, especially between Australia and France, culminating in the expulsion of Australia's Consul General in Noumea, John Dauth in 1987. No doubt relations were coloured by the complexion of governments in the respective countries, improving for example when both French and Australian governments were of the socialist left, as when Rocard became Prime Minister in France in 1988 while Hawke led Australia. Throughout the difficult 1980s both the Australian and New Zealand governments had conducted private dialogue in Paris, to encourage change. Accordingly, both welcomed the Rocard reforms on New Caledonia, and strongly supported the Matignon Agreements. The Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, visited New Caledonia shortly after signature of the Agreements, where for the first time in many years the Australian Consul General at the time hosted a reception attended by both RPCR and FLNKS members (Personal communication O'Leary September 2009).

Notwithstanding lingering strains in New Zealand over the *Rainbow Warrior* affair, New Zealand's Foreign Minister visited Noumea in 1989, offered technical assistance to support the success of the Matignon Accords, and spoke of France's important role and enduring legacy in the South Pacific (in Henningham 1992 p. 228). Both governments took a more measured approach to decolonization than many other island governments, welcoming, for example, the Micronesian non-independent states into the Forum and regional structures in the 1980s (Henningham 1992 p. 222). This was to have the effect of paving the way for an accommodating view to the French entities in the 1990s.

By the end of the 1990s, France had begun to implement genuine policy change, ceasing its nuclear tests in the region by 1996, by which time it was well into implementing the Matignon/Oudinot Accords in New Caledonia, and adjusting its statutory provisions for French Polynesia to accommodate demands for change. These processes were not straightforward and involved extensive financial and administrative investment. France began advocating greater participation in the region by both collectivities in the 1990s and early 2000s. But, with a record of broken promises in the preceding decades, some of the difficulties France encountered in implementing changes in its entities, which will be explored in the next two chapters, left continued questions about its future role and acceptance in the region.

Part II – France in the Pacific - 1990s to present

Chapter 5

New Caledonia: Implementation of the Noumea Accord and political evolution from 1998

Chapter 3 concluded that the fundamental political pillars, on which the compromise of the Noumea Accord was based, included defining restricted electorates in certain local elections and the final referendum(s) to meet Kanak concerns at the weakening effect on their vote by immigration inflows from elsewhere in France; and the fairer distribution of the benefits accruing from the nickel resource between the Kanak north and islands, and the mainly European south. Developments surrounding these two critical elements unfolded at the same time as the fledgling New Caledonian government began to test its wings, operating as a collegial Executive, with resultant strains.

Restricted electorate and related issues, including immigration

Differences over defining the electorate in the Organic Law

Leaders of the different parties, both pro-France and pro-independence, and representatives of France signed the Noumea Accord on 5 May 1998. On 19 March 1999 the French National Assembly gazetted its Organic Law setting out the provisions by which the Noumea Accord would be implemented. Its wording (see below) led to strong disagreement about the definition of the electorates for local elections known as the restricted electorate, a concept fundamental to the new notion of New Caledonian citizenship, specified in the Accord's Article 2 (as noted in Chapter 3). The wording was at best a gaffe or at worst a cynical effort to favour the pro-France political groups, given the centrality of the restricted electorate/citizenship issue to the negotiations.

It should be acknowledged that the very idea of defining different electorates for different elections, based on years of residency, was an innovative and flexible response to Kanak concerns, on the part of French authorities, within a constitutional system which claimed above all to be unitary and indivisible, in the sense of delivering one vote to one person (see Diémert in Tesoka and Ziller 2008 p. 234). Previously, the Matignon Accords had introduced the notion of a 10-year residence requirement for a vote in the independence referendum planned for 1998; however, the implementing law had been itself the subject of a referendum, to circumvent scrutiny by the Constitutional Court. The Noumea Accord in contrast introduced a new notion of New Caledonian citizenship linked with the 10-year residence requirement for local elections, and was subject to constitutional amendment, a device again to prevent consideration by the Constitutional Court (see Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 390). It was a unique and difficult concept for the French legal draftsmen.

For the ultimate referendum(s) on the future of New Caledonia, Article 2.2.1 of the Accord, and Organic Law Article 218 (full text at Appendix I), defined the electorate as including those with twenty years residence to the referendum date no later than 31 December 2014 (i.e. those resident before December 1994); those eligible to vote in 1998; those having customary civil status or if born in New Caledonia, having New Caledonia as the centre of their material and moral interests or having one parent born there with such material and moral interests; voting age persons born before 1 January 1989 who lived in New Caledonia from 1988 to 1998; and those born after 1 January 1989 having one parent who could vote in 1998. There was little difference between the meaning of what was enshrined in Article 2.2.1 of the Accord, and subsequently spelled out in Article 218 of the Organic Law, although there was one obvious difference, the Accord referring to twenty years residence to 2013, and the Organic Law referring instead to twenty years residence to 31 December 2014. But no differences arose (to the time of writing, early 2011, at least) from the wording of these provisions.

For local elections, i.e., provincial assemblies and Congress, it had been agreed that the electorate would be a narrower group, including those eligible to vote in 1998 as well as essentially those who had been resident for ten years. But questions arose from the wording of the provisions applying to some voters as they appeared in the Organic Law, i.e., whether those on a particular annex list needed ten years residence to the date of any particular Congress or provincial election being held during the Noumea Accord period (envisaged in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014), or simply ten years residence to 1998.

It was the wording of Article 2.2.1 of the Accord that gave rise to the ambiguity that led to a particular interpretation being enshrined in Article 188 of the Organic Law (see Appendix I). Article 2.2.1 of the Accord defined the electorate for the local provincial and Congress elections as including (a) those able to vote in 1998, (b) those on an annex list of those not normally able to vote in New Caledonia but who had ten years residence “*at the date of the election*”, i.e., without specifying which election was referred to ; and (c) those reaching voting age after 1998 who either had ten years residence to 1998, or a parent either eligible to vote in 1998 or a parent on the annex list as having ten years residence “*at the date of the election*” (again unspecified). Thus, this provision referred at one point (under (c)) to voters with ten years residence *to 1998*, and in (b) and elsewhere in (c) to voters on an annex list, with ten years residence *at the date of the election*. The inference, for pro-independence supporters, was that “*at the date of the election*” referred to the 1998 vote referred to in (a).

But when it appeared in March, the implementing legislation, the Organic Law, Article 188, referred to (a) those able to vote in 1998, (b) those on an annex list and resident in New Caledonia for ten years “ *at the date of the election to the Congress and to the province assemblies*” and (c) those attaining majority age after 1998 either with ten years residence in 1998, or having had one of their parents fulfilling the conditions to be a voter in the 8 November 1998 referendum, or having one of their parents registered on the annex and with ten years residence in New Caledonia at the date of

the election” (i.e. unspecified election but with the implication that it would be the specific election to the Congress and province assemblies referred to at (b).

The wording of Article 188 of the Organic Law referring to Congress and provincial elections, and the confusion of meanings in the Noumea Accord Article variously to ten year residence *to 1998*, and to annex list voters with ten years residence to an unspecified election, provided for ambiguities and ill feeling which were to plague subsequent years.

The differences reflected fundamentally different ideological approaches. For the pro-independence groups, preserving the unique voting rights of the electorate as it stood in 1998 meant respecting the special place of the indigenous, Kanak, and for some, Caldoche, resident, amidst a fear of being outnumbered by continued influxes of newcomers. It was part of the agreed, “rebalancing” process under the Accord, and the basis for the concept of New Caledonian citizenship and the objective of common destiny (see the position of the pro-independence party *Union Calédonienne, Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 7 February 2005; comments by Roch Wamytan, *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 8 May 2003). The pro-independence groups argued for the “frozen” (*gelé* or *figé*) interpretation, i.e., ten years residence requirement to 1998, since this would freeze the electorate at the time of the Noumea agreement, and not include future immigrants from elsewhere in France who would distort the balance between pro-independence and pro-France support, in favour of the pro-France lobby. For this interpretation, the “annex list” of those ineligible to vote remained that in operation in 1998.

The pro-France groups took as their starting point the defence of the fundamental right of each person to vote without exclusion (see for example the viewpoint of the Association of the Defence of the Right to Vote, *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 17 March 2005; and the position of the pro-France *Rassemblement, Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 15 February 2005). They argued for the “sliding” (*glissant*) interpretation, i.e., ten years immediately preceding any provincial election, which for the 1999 elections would mean people on the annex list resident for ten years to 1998, but for subsequent elections held in 2004, 2009 and 2014, would include people who had ten years residency immediately before each of those elections – i.e., on subsequent annex lists that did not even exist at the time of the Noumea Accord itself. This would include French newcomers who could be relied upon to inflate the pro-France vote.

In the event, the French Constitutional Council ruled in favour of the “sliding” interpretation, favouring the broader interpretation of the “annex list”, which favoured the pro-France groups (see Christnacht 2004 p. 65).

To remove any ambiguity and settle mounting concerns amongst the pro-independence group, the Jospin government initiated a change to the Constitution to re-establish its own interpretation of the frozen restricted electorate. This involved a huge procedural effort, to make a creative compromise conceived in a particular local circumstance consistent with the fundamental one-person one-vote principle of the French constitution. Presumably to hasten this unusual provision through the necessarily

cumbersome processes (which involved convening the Versailles Congress, or joint session of both the National Assembly and the Senate), it was hooked for administrative purposes to another, unrelated, amendment on the independence of the French national Superior Magistrature. A statutory provision expanding the concept of citizenship and legislative powers for French Polynesia was also attached to this amendment (see Chapter 6). However, both amendments failed in 2000 when the Magistrature amendment was abandoned as being judged to have insufficient support.

This device, whereby important New Caledonian and French Polynesian legislation was attached and made hostage quite randomly to a piece of unrelated national legislation, is a stark example of how the overseas collectivities' statutory needs are subordinated, often quite unnecessarily, to metropolitan political process. The issue reflected the fundamental paradox of reconciling indigenous rights with Republican constitutionalism. In New Caledonia, given the controversy about the restricted electorate issue, concerned local players could be forgiven for believing that the device was construed precisely to slow down the implementation of these pieces of legislation, and to suspect the commitment of the French State. In any case, that was the effect (see for example conclusions of the pro-independence group Palika's annual congress in 2004 questioning the French State's ambiguous positioning and its capacity to guarantee balanced Noumea Accord institutions, and calling for the immediate re-establishment of the fixed restricted electorate, *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 17 November 2004).

Discontent amongst the pro-independence group, particularly the Kanaks, not surprisingly continued to simmer, so much so that when Chirac visited Noumea in 2003 he promised to resolve the problem before the end of his mandate in 2007. In 2003 the Melanesian Spearhead Group focused Pacific Islands Forum attention on the "lack of implementation of certain provisions of the Noumea Accord, in particular the electoral process and issues relating to New Caledonia's referendum process" (MSG Attachment to 2003 Auckland Forum Communiqué), urging the Forum Ministerial Committee to focus on the issues in a planned visit in 2004 (see also Chapter 7). In October 2005, FLNKS leader Roch Wamytan included concerns about the restricted electorate in a speech he made to the UN Fourth Committee on Decolonization (see UN Document A/C.4/60/SR.5, October, 2005, p. 11), proving in the process that the UN procedures remain relevant to the New Caledonia situation.

Meanwhile, more recently-arrived European residents of New Caledonia, with the backing of pro-French parties, had taken their case, claiming they had been deprived of a vote in local elections, to the French State Council, which in 1998 rejected their claims, as did the Appeals Court (*Cour de cassation*) in response to similar claims in June 2000, and again the Administrative Appeals Court in October 2003. Separately, aggrieved citizens took their cases to international courts. The European Human Rights Court decision on 11 January 2005, while indicating that the ten year residence requirement seemed disproportionate to the goal pursued, recognised the validity of the statutory requirement taking into account "local necessities" which justified it. And the UN Human Rights Committee indicated on 15 July 2002 that the dispositions of the

New Caledonia statute relating to voting rights were not contrary to the International Civil and Political Rights Convention (see Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 393-4).

It was only in February 2007, almost nine years after the Accord was agreed, that the French legislative amendment was implemented, confirming the frozen electorate interpretation, and clarifying what had become for the independentists a continuing sore. To compound the ambiguous drafting in the first place, the procedural handling meant that France appeared to have redressed Kanak and independentist grievances only after three of its own Courts and two international institutions had supported them. The word of the French State was thereby once again proven suspect.

Immigration: removal of ethnic categories from the census

In a related development, Chirac further raised Kanak and pro-independence concerns. When he visited Noumea in July 2003, on the eve of a scheduled local census, he met a group of young New Caledonians and answered “impromptu” questions. One young white New Caledonian referred to the forthcoming census and complained that she could not tick any of the “ethnic membership” boxes on the form, not being Kanak, Wallisian, or Asian but “just” being a French citizen. Professing outrage, Chirac described these questions in the census as irresponsible and illegal, saying “There is only one reply to such a question, you are all French and there are French people of all ethnic origins” (RFO TV News 24 July 2003; Maclellan 2005b p. 404). He commanded that the New Caledonian census would thenceforward not seek information about ethnic origins (Chappell 2009 p. 363). The census had to be deferred for a year while forms and procedures were reviewed.

This decision was troubling for Kanaks for two reasons. First, knowledge of their numbers and locations in the archipelago was an important instrument of rebalancing economic development, which was a fundamental element of the Noumea Accord. Second, ethnic figures revealed the extent of immigration from metropolitan France and other French overseas territories, and French encouragement of such immigration had historically been one of the Kanak and pro-independence group’s prime concerns and underpinned concerns about voting rights and calls for the restricted electorate. Doumenge, for example, had noted that France had till then specifically retained the ethnic classification for New Caledonia given the evolutionary process arising from the Matignon and Noumea Accords (in Faberon and Gautier 1998); and that the ethnic statistic was relevant to the prediction that there would be a Kanak majority over time (Doumenge 2000 p. 65). In response, some Kanak groups (*Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanaks et des Exploités*, Federation of Unions of Kanak Workers and the Exploited, USTKE; UC; *Calédonie mon pay*, Caledonia my country) boycotted the 2004 census. The FLNKS agreed to participate only with the promise of a parallel “cultural” survey of villages as a gesture to these concerns, even though such a survey was not comparable to a full census.

Concerns about the implementation of the restricted electorate, and ongoing immigration, were shared by some Caldoches (see Muckle 2009 p. 191). Shared local

concerns over immigration-related issues contributed to a gradual coalescence of interests between some elements of the pro-independence and pro-France groups leading to a political realignment incorporating both (elaborated on in the Political transition and realignment section).

More broadly, in the South Pacific context, the French State's doing away with ethnic indicators was anomalous. Other regional countries, including Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji, routinely counted ethnic numbers if only to assist in the economic development of disadvantaged groups. The decision thus had important social and political ramifications, the more so because it was taken deliberately by the Chirac government.

In practice, the boycott rendered the 2004 census virtually useless on many counts, and even official published statistics continued to draw upon 1996 figures as the most recent reliable figures right up to early 2011 (the two main sources are New Caledonia's *Institut de la Statistique et des Études Économiques*, Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies ISEE; and France's national *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques* National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies INSEE; see for example ISEE 2008 and Table 2).

It was notable that there was no regional reaction to this change, reflecting the weakened impact of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, and the tentative preliminary engagement in regional organizations by the new, pro-France-led New Caledonian Government (see Chapter 6). However, in its annual working paper on New Caledonia preparatory to the annual UNGA resolution on New Caledonia, the UN Decolonization Committee noted the removal of the ethnic category in the census and local indigenous opposition to it (UNGA Fourth Committee 2008 p. 2).

It was only in late 2008, perhaps conscious of the reference in the UN Working Paper, that France reversed the decision and announced that the ethnic categorization question would once again be included in the 2009 census. However, in the event the New Caledonian Government questioned the manner of conducting the 2009 census and the result, claiming the outcome understated the population increase, an important indicator on which funding from France is based (Lepot 2010). The New Caledonian government claimed that some households were not covered, and queried the coverage of the census, noting the numbers and efficacy of census agents had been affected by a flu outbreak at the time, and an unusually high turnover of agents. It queried the results for some suburbs and the census' migration figures. ISEE announced it would do a further study on immigration inflows, mid-2010 (Lepot 2010). Apart from the overall population figure and the three provincial figures, the publication of most figures from the 2009 census was held up until April 2011, with the annotation initially that this was awaiting "authentication by decree" (ISEE website 2009 census accessed 13 May 2010) and subsequently that the figures were "not available" (ISEE website 2009 census figures accessed 3 December 2010 and 12 January 2011). By April 2011 the ethnic composition figures were included in ISEE's website, however they too were qualified, by the inclusion of extra categories which affected direct comparison with previous census figures (see below).

Immigration inflows: continuing increases from metropolitan and Overseas France

Despite the disruption to ethnic category numbers from 1996, the signs are that immigration from metropolitan France and other French overseas territories has increased since the 1998 Noumea Accord was agreed (see analysis below), and this has not gone unnoticed. New Caledonia's Vice-President, the FLNKS' Déwé Gorodey, in her opening speech to a 2008 Colloquium marking the 20 year anniversary of the Matignon Accords, referred early to the concerns of the drafters of the Matignon and Noumea Accords to legitimize the sharing by immigrants of a common destiny with the Kanak people, and concluded her speech by noting the fragility of the pact, which depended on trust (Regnault and Fayaud 2008 p. 25). FLNKS Leader Roch Wamytan in his presentation to the same Colloquium referred to the continued influx of metropolitan immigrants from 2000 to 2004 (Regnault and Fayaud 2008 p. 47). Palika leader Paul Néaoutyine at the December 2008 Noumea Accord Signatories Committee meeting flagged immigration as a continuing concern (*Relevé de conclusions* 2008, p. 7).

Table 1a shows the official breakdowns of Kanak²² and European population percentages in various censuses since 1887, graphed, from 1911, to 1996, in Table 2. Table 1a also includes figures reported by ISEE in April 2011 on the basis of the 2009 census, but which included extra ethnic categories and thus render a comparison impossible with earlier years (see below). For analytic purposes, Table 1b includes the percentage breakdown of the communities in 1996 and the qualified, but not directly comparable, figures reported from the 2009 census in April 2011.

The increases in the "Others" categories between 1911 and 1931 followed by the post-war dramatic fall from 1946 to 1956 can be attributed to the early development of the nickel industry when workers were imported, many temporarily, from Indonesia and Vietnam. The number of "Others" has increased dramatically and steadily with the nickel boom and since and has included Wallisians from Wallis and Futuna, Tahitians, Indonesians, Vietnamese and other Asians, Ni-Vanuatu, and others.

²² We use the term "Kanak" in this population section to refer to New Caledonia's indigenous Kanak population. Official ISEE-INSEE statistics often refer to "Mélanésiens" (Melanesians) when referring specifically to New Caledonia's Kanaks, but do not include other Melanesians such as ni-Vanuatu who are reported separately as "ni-Vanuatu" or are included in their "Others" category.

Table 1a
New Caledonia: Population: Kanaks, Europeans and Others 1887-2009

Year	Kanaks Number	%	Europeans Number	%	Others* Number	%	Total
1887	42,500	68.0	18,800	30	1,200	2.0	62,000
1901	29,100	53.5	22,750	41.8	2,550	4.7	54,500
1911	28,800	56.9	17,300	34.2	4,500	8.9	50,600
1931	28,600	50.0	15,200	26.6	13,400	23.4	57,300
1946	31,000	49.4	18,100	28.9	13,600	17.0	62,795
1956	34,969	51.1	25,260	36.7	8,351	12.2	68,580
1969	46,200	46.0	41,268	41.0	13,111	13.0	100,679
1976	55,598	41.7	50,757	38.1	26,878	20.2	133,333
1983	61,870	42.6	50,757	37.1	29,524	20.3	142,251
1996	86,788	44.1	67,151	34.1	42,897	21.8	196,936
2004**	n/a**	n/a**	n/a**	n/a**	n/a**	n/a**	230,789
[2009***	99,078***	40.3****	71,721***	29.2***	74,781***	30.5****]	245,580

*Other : includes Wallisians from Wallis and Futuna, Tahitians, Indonesians, Vietnamese, Ni-Vanuatu and Others, except for 2009 ***

**There was no ethnic category in the 2004 census

*** "Others" in 2009 included new categories "métis" or mixed race, "Caledonians", and more "non-declared", and for this reason are not comparable with 1996 or earlier years, see Table 1b

Source: Christnacht 2004 p. 29 ; Institut de la statistique et des études économiques and Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques ISEE-INSEE Recensements de la population, Population Census, 2008 and 2009

Table 1b
New Caledonia: Ethnic composition of population, 1996 and 2009
(Limited comparability)

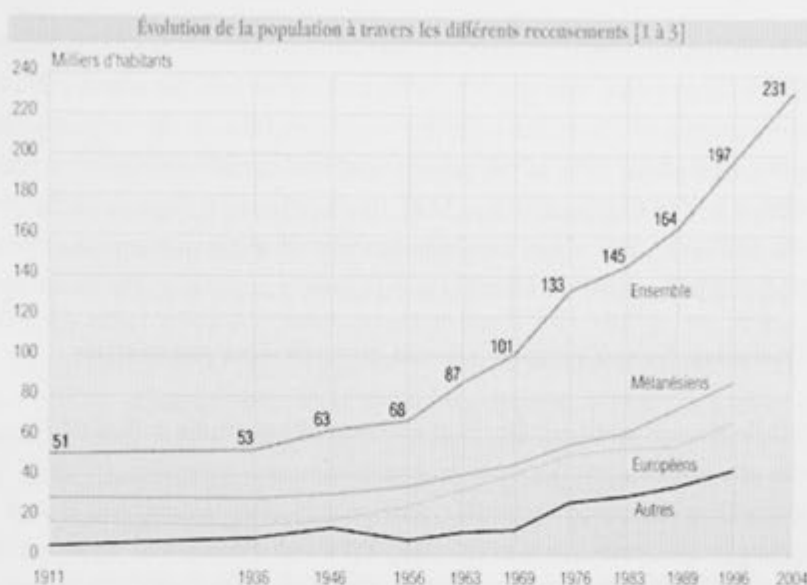
Community	1996 %	[2009*] %	[2009] % main groups reallocated**
Kanak	44.1	40.3	44.3**
European	34.1	29.2	33.9**
Wallisian (Wallis and Futuna)	9.0	8.7	10.4**
Tahitian	2.6	2.0	
Indonesian	2.5	1.6	
Vietnamese	1.4	1.0	
ni-Vanuatu	1.1	.9	
Others	5.0	16.3	
<i>Of whom*</i>			
<i>Other Asian</i>		<i>(.8)</i>	
<i>Mixed race, multiple</i>		<i>(8.3)</i>	
<i>Caledonian</i>		<i>(5.0)</i>	
<i>Other</i>		<i>(1.0)</i>	
<i>Non-declared</i>		<i>(1.2)</i>	

*Figures based on new census formulation with new categories under "Others", shown

**Figures calculated by ISEE reallocating some of the mixed race figures attached to the three main ethnic communities

Source: Pascal Rivoilan et David Broustet, *Synthèse - Recensement de la Population 2009* ISEE website accessed 12 May 2011

Table 2
New Caledonia: Census and Population Composition 1911-2004



SOURCES [1] INSEE-ISEE, *Résultats du Recensement de la Population de la Nouvelle-Calédonie 2004*. [2] ORSTOM, *Atlas de la Nouvelle-Calédonie: Nouméa, 1981*. [3] INSEE-ITSEE, *Résultats des Recensements de la Population de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1956, 1963, 1969, 1976, 1983, 1989, 1996*.

Source: Institut de la statistique et des études économiques website accessed 16 February 2010

Note: “Mélanésien” refers to Kanaks, see footnote 22.

The ISEE noted that the large increase in the “Others” category in the 2009 census (Table 1b) occurred in part because that census offered more options under “Others” for the citizen to nominate, than in earlier censuses, including new categories of “*métis*” or “mixed race”, “Caledonian”, and “non-declared” (Rivoilan and Boustet 2010). Why the 2009 census would do this when the ethnic category issue was so controversial was not explained. The ISEE not only set out the full breakdown (second column of Table 1b), which showed a marked decline in the Kanak and European populations and increase in the other categories, but went on to reallocate some of the “mixed race” figures to the sensitive Kanak and European categories, resulting in a pattern similar to that in 1996, albeit with a slight increase in the Kanak community over 1996, and a slight decrease in the European category (columns 2 and 3 of Table 1b). How it was decided whether a person of mixed race was allocated to the European or Kanak group was not explained. The resultant uncertainties around these two key and sensitive indicators mean that they cannot reliably be used for comparative purposes. Still, they point to a continuation of the underlying general trends evident from Tables 1a and Table 2.

One trend maintains a steady and large increase in recent immigration from other parts of overseas France, mainly from French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, which inevitably reduces the proportion of the population that is indigenous. Overall, as Table 2 graphically shows, the numbers of Europeans and “others” combined have increased

steadily, rendering the Kanaks more of a minority over time (see Increasing European immigration section below).

According to Gérard Baudchon, then head of the ISEE, of the 34.1% of the population in the “European” category in 1996, more than half (or about 20% of the population) were people of European ancestry who were born in the territory. Around a third (he estimated about 12% of the population) had come from metropolitan France (Baudchon with Rallu in Cadéot 2003 p. 248). As a point of comparison, he noted that only around 9% of French Polynesia’s population were born in metropolitan France (88% being Polynesian), and 4% of Wallis and Futuna’s population (87% being Polynesian).

Declining Kanak proportion of a more diverse population

While Kanak numbers dropped dramatically with the influx of European settlers late in the nineteenth until the early twentieth century, troughing in 1931, Tables 1a and 2 show they increased thereafter, particularly after World War II and after 1969. These changes are attributable to the early effect of disease and violence by the incoming settlers, and the return of confidence and prosperity after the world wars. The proportion of Kanaks in the total population was on a steadily decreasing trend from 68% in 1887, down to about half by 1956, and reaching a low of 41.7% in 1976. The relative decline in the 1970s underpinned Kanak independence claims and concerns about becoming a minority in their own country.

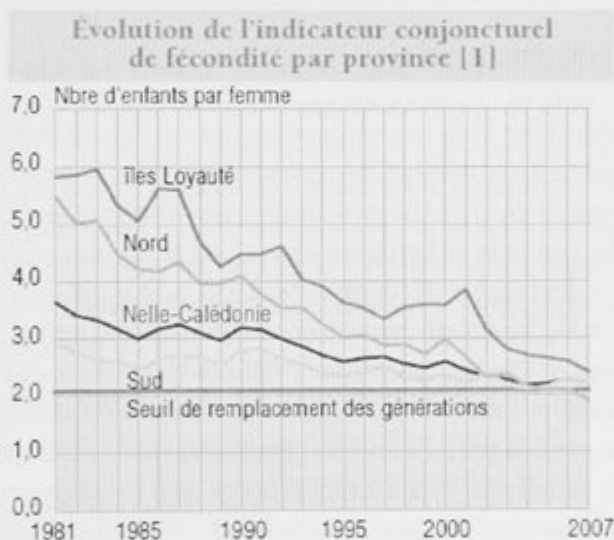
Since then, the Kanak proportion increased to about 44% in 1996, the last clear comparable census, with the 2009 census indicating either a similar figure (44.3% in column 3 Table 1b) or a decline to 40.3% (column 2 Table 1b). This 2009 figure of 40.3% for the Kanak population, before “reallocation” increased it to 44.3% as shown in Table 1b, shows a significant decline. Indeed it is lower than the 1976 all-time low of 41.7% and would be a serious concern to pro-independence Kanaks.

In both 1996 and the known 2009 results (i.e., both before and after “reallocation” of the mixed race group), New Caledonia’s largest population groups remain the Kanaks who represented 44.1% in 1996 and 40.3% (or 44.3% “reallocated”) in 2009; then the Europeans 34.1% in 1996, 29.2% (or 33.9% “reallocated”) in 2009; followed by the Wallisians from Wallis and Futuna 9% in 1996 and 8.7% (or 10% “reallocated”) in 2009 (ISEE-INSEE TEC 2008 and 2009 published 2011). Kanaks also may be increasingly seen as one of a number of growing Pacific Islander communities relative to others. In 1996, Pacific Islanders represented 57% of the population, compared to 43% non-Islanders, mainly European and Asian. While exact comparison cannot be made with 2009 because of the “Others” category issue, taking figures before reallocation of the “mixed race” category (column 2 of Table 1b), the total of Kanak, Wallisian, Tahitian and ni-Vanuatu alone is 55.9% and it could be assumed that most of the 8.3% of “mixed race” respondents would be of Islander origin. “Post-reallocation” figures (column 3 of Table 1b) show Pacific Islanders as at least 57.6% of the population (Kanak, Wallisian, Tahitian and ni-Vanuatu). Thus it seems that the

Pacific Islander component is increasing while the non-Islander component (mainly Europeans and Asians) is declining.

Kanaks have traditionally lived primarily in the Northern and Islands Provinces whose populations are declining, as evident in Table 7. There has been increasing internal migration from those provinces to the Southern Province (see analysis by Faberon and Ziller 2007 pp. 357-358). Table 7 shows that in 2009, 74.5% of the population were in the Southern Province, 18.4% in Northern Province (compared to 21% in 1996), and a low 7.1% in the Loyalty Islands Province (compared to 10.6%). In 2009, Kanaks formed 96.6% of the population of the Loyalty Islands Province, 73.8% of Northern Province (Europeans 12.7% and other communities 5.7%), and 26.7% of Southern Province (Europeans 35.9%, Wallisians 11.4% and other communities 9.7%) (Rivoilan and Boustet 2011). Around 50% of the Kanak community (whose numbers were qualified in the 2009 census, as indicated above) lived in Southern Province, whereas 90% of all other communities lived there (Rivoilan and Boustet 2011).

Table 3
New Caledonia: Fertility Index by province 1981-2007



Translation from top:

Fertility Index Change by Province

Number of children per woman: Loyalty Islands, North, New Caledonia, South, Threshold of generational replacement

Source: ISEE-TEC, Éditions Abrégées, 2010, *Indice de fécondité par province*

In the past, Kanak fertility rates have been high relative to other residents, but they are declining. In 1997, the territory-wide average was 2.67 children per woman, while the rate was 3.3 in Loyalty Islands, and 2.9 in Northern Province, both provinces where Kanaks predominate (Baudchon and Rallu in Cadéot 2003 p. 248); compared to 2.5 in Southern Province. Table 3 graphs the overall declining trend from 1981 to 2007. Internal migration by Kanaks from the Kanak provinces to Southern Province (see Table 7) limits the capacity to make assumptions about Kanak fertility rates on the

basis of Province. However, in 2007, the territory-wide average dropped to 2.2, and all Provinces showed a drop from 1997, with the Loyalty Islands at 2.4, Northern Province 1.9, and Southern Province 2.2. Table 3 shows that fertility rates for the predominantly Kanak provinces is declining more steeply than rates in the predominantly European Southern Province.

Continuing immigration (see next sections) on a declining, minority Kanak base mean that Kanaks are unlikely to become the majority in New Caledonia for the foreseeable future. More importantly, as Tables 1a and 2 show, Kanaks were in the minority in 1994, which is the year of 20-year residence eligibility for the electorate voting in the final referendum(s) 2014 to 2018 (see first section, this Chapter).

As noted earlier, the influxes of outsiders in the past have consisted predominantly of Europeans from metropolitan and Overseas France; with some non-Kanak Islanders mainly from Wallis and Futuna, Vanuatu, and Tahiti; and Asians, principally from Indonesia, Vietnam and Japan who came as workers on the mines in the early twentieth century. All three inflows have occurred as a result of deliberate French policy for varying reasons at different times. The next sections concentrate on the two most sensitive inflows, those of Europeans (read French) and of Wallisians.

Increasing European immigration

France has encouraged the long-term presence of its metropolitan nationals. The numbers of Europeans grew through the nineteenth century in response to the French State's establishment of convict and agricultural settlements (see Chapter 1). Tables 1a and 2 show that the numbers of Europeans increased at the turn of the century, declined until the mid 1930s, and rose particularly after 1956, and again after 1969 and 1989. The decline early in the twentieth century coincided with the period of colonial torpor described in Chapter 2. The increases after 1956 can be attributed to Gaullist policies encouraging settlement of the territories, and an influx of French expatriates from Algeria (known as *pieds-noirs*). From 1969 the numbers reflect the influx of experts and administrators associated with the nickel boom, and those encouraged by Prime Minister Messmer's famously vaunted aim to head off independence claims of Kanaks by outnumbering them (see Chapter 3). The European population stabilized from 1976 to 1989 as the *événements* took hold. After the signature of the Matignon Accords in 1988, Table 2 shows that the European population steadily increased, as did the Kanak ("Melanesian") population. This reflects inflows of expertise accompanying the development of the nickel projects and the relative stability secured by the Matignon and Noumea Accords. While figures after 1996 are less reliable, there is evidence that influges from other parts of France occurred, partly because of development of the nickel resource, and partly as a result of French salary and retirement incentives (see below).

Public official statistics after 1996 are broken down unevenly, for example see Table 5, the columns of which were published in the ISEE-INSEE Census 2004 and 2009, comparing periods of varying length, i.e., 6, 7, 8 and 5 years). ISEE-INSEE's *Situation*

Démographique 2008 and 2009 offer annual population and migration figures and estimates, enabling a rough comparison of per annum migration at Table 6.

Although the figures set out in Table 1a show the European proportion of the population declining steadily from 41% in 1969 to 34.1% in 1996 (and 29.2% or at most 33.9% in 2009, see Tables 1a and 1b), they do not tell quite the full story. Many people of European origin often tended to say in the censuses they were New Caledonians of European origin (i.e. rather than born in metropolitan France) (see Faberon and Ziller 2007 pp. 357-358 and Baudchon and Rallu in Cadéot 2003 p. 248), meaning they were not included in the European category and may have been included into categories such as “others” or “undeclared”. In the 1996 census, a breakdown of the non-Kanak, non-European population (the broader “others” category of 21.8% in Table 1a) showed that figure included Wallisians (by then 9% of the total population), Tahitians (2.6%), Indonesians (2.5%), Vietnamese and other Asians (1.9%), Ni-Vanuatu (1.9%) and 4.6% of the population as either “others” (6, 829 or 3.5%) or “undeclared” (2,209 or 1.1%) (ISEE statistics cited in Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 359). Thus as many as a further 4.6% of the population represented in this “others” or “undeclared” group *may have been* European, which could bring the European proportion to as much as 38.7% in 1996.

In 2009, when the “Others” group included many more categories, there were as many as 16.5% who defined themselves as “mixed race” (8.3%), “Caledonian” (5%), “undeclared” (1.2%), or “other” (1.0%) (ISEE Census 2009). INSEE included some (4.7%) of the 8.3% “mixed race” group in its “reallocated European” figure of 33.9% (column 3 Table 1b), but the criterion they used is unknown, so there may have been more who were European; and up to 7.2% more (i.e., certainly many of the “Caledonian” category, plus some from “undeclared” and “other”) could conceivably be added to that figure.

Thus, the manner of presentation of ethnic breakdown figures, especially in 2009, can understate the European category.

Migration inflows 1989-1996

Table 5 fills out the picture from Table 2 for the period from 1983 to 2009. Based on official ISEE-INSEE statistics which vary in periods applied, and including figures from the boycotted 2004 census, it shows natural growth in the population of 2.6% from 1989 to 1996, with migration inflows at .7%, or over 9000 people in that period (compared to 2.1% per annum from 1983-89).

The 1989-1996 figure is similar to the extensive immigration of the nickel boom at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s (11,000 immigrants came to New Caledonia between 1969 and 1976, see Doumenge et al 2000 p. 65). The official statistician, ISEE-INSEE, noted that after the nickel boom around 1970, new arrivals had slowed by 1989, attributing the increase from 1989 to 1996 to the signature of the Matignon Accords in 1988 (ISEE-INSEE 2004 Census). Table 5 shows that per annum net migration significantly increased to 1996 (from 163 in 1983-1989, to 1298 1989-96), and Table 6

too shows relatively large increases in per annum inflows from 1990 to 1994 (an average of 1267 per year for that 5 year period). Most of these immigrants were French, as Table 4 shows that the number of people in New Caledonia born in France or its overseas departments increased from 17.2% in 1983 to 17.5% in 1996.

These figures are important as all of those arriving before 1994 will be eligible to vote in the 2014-2018 referendum(s), and, mostly being French, would be likely to vote pro-France in such a referendum.

Migration inflows 1996-2009

After 1996, figures are affected by the 2004 boycott, the non-inclusion of an ethnic category in the 2004 census, the qualification of the ethnic category figures from the 2009 census, and they continue to be reported and analysed by the French authorities over differing time periods. Moreover, figures on migration inflows for 2009 were only released in April 2011 and were unclear, applying two different methodologies (see Royer 2011).

Still, Tables 4, 5 and 6 report overall population, natural and migration inflow increases, and country of birth figures and are less affected by the problems with the 2009 ethnic categories (albeit all are affected by the 2004 boycott, and Table 5 by the presentation of different time periods and methodologies). They show an overall trend of continued steady migration mainly from France and the overseas French entities.

Table 6 shows that the large per annum inflows from 1990 to 1994 (an average of 1267 per year for that 5 year period), were followed by lower inflows from 1995 to 1999 (an average of 504 per year for that 5 year period), followed by similar inflows to those of the early 90s from 2000 to 2009 (average of 1162 a year for the 9 year period). Jean-François Royer applied various methodologies to the 2009 census results and reported that from 2004 to 2009, per annum net migration inflow was 900 people (mean of 5 years), compared with 500 from 1996 to 2004 (mean of 8 years) and 1200 from 1989 to 1996 (mean of 7 years) (Royer 2011 p. 3). Despite qualifications, Table 5 shows a trend of increase in migration inflows of 1.7% per annum from 1996 to 2009 although at a lesser rate than the 2.6% rate from 1989 to 1996 over seven years, with an apparently greater increase from 1996 to 2004 (1.9% per annum over eight years) than thereafter (1.2% 2004 to 2009 or five years, estimate). Royer postulated that the fluctuation and, according to some (for example, the New Caledonian government who had questioned the results), surprising relative lack of growth in the population to 2009, had occurred because of young New Caledonians travelling to France and other places including Australia, for higher studies, rather than reduced migration flows *per se* (Royer 2011, pp. 3 and 4).

And after 1996, even more of the newcomers came from France, either the hexagon or its overseas entities. ISEE reported that from 2004 to 2009, 18,500 people born outside New Caledonia settled there, 75.5% from metropolitan France, 17.3% from other countries, 4.9% from Wallis and Futuna and 2.3% from French Polynesia (Rivoilon and

Broustet 2011 p. 2)(Note: differences between these numbers and the figures in Tables 5 and 6 can be explained by different methodologies, including calculation of the net apparent migration inflow, which covers arrivals and departures, not simply arrivals).

In 2009, results reported in Table 4 show that, of 245,580 inhabitants, 75.6% were born in New Caledonia, 19.2% in metropolitan or Overseas France, and 5.2% in foreign countries. The Table shows that the number of people in New Caledonia born in France or its overseas departments increased from 17.5% in 1996 to 19.2% in 2009, exceeding the increase in the difficult 1980s period when French immigration was considered a problem. In 1996, the flawed 2004 census, and 2009, the percentage of French/Overseas French-born was 17.5%, 18.1% and 19.2% respectively, each more than the 17.2% in 1983.

Table 4

	New Caledonia: Place of birth 1983-2004 (in %)				
	1983	1989	1996	[2004*]	2009
New Caledonia	76.8	78	76.7	76.8	75.6
France/other Overseas depts	11.6	10.8	12.4	13.9	15.0
French Pacific entities:					
Wallis and Futuna	3.5	3.6	3.4	2.9	2.9
French Polynesia	2.1	1.8	1.7	1.3	1.3
Total France/Overseas France	17.2	16.2	17.5	18.1	19.2
Foreigners	6.0	5.8	5.8	5.1	5.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*census subject to a boycott call by some pro-independence parties

Source: ISEE-INSEE *Recensement de la Population de la Nouvelle-Calédonie au 31 août 2004; Recensement 2009 Tableau 1*

Cadéot's analysis of the 1996 census showed that 23.3% of residents of New Caledonia (see Table 4), and 35% of those of the greater Noumea area, were born outside the collectivity. Of those born outside New Caledonia, 75% were French, of whom 50% were born in the metropole, the others from elsewhere, mainly the former French possessions in North Africa, Indochina, and New Hebrides (Cadéot 2003 p. 57).

Annual estimates for natural population increase show a declining trend from 2000 to 2007, averaging 3086 a year, standing at 2886 in 2007 (ISEE-INSEE 2008). However their figures for migration inflows slightly increased, averaging 1020 per year in that time, and standing at 1134 in 2007, increasing to 1760 in 2008 (see Table 6). Given earlier trends (Table 4) it can be assumed that most of the migration inflow was from metropolitan France or from other French overseas entities.

Even accepting the probable *underestimate* of the population increase of 1.9% per annum from 1996 to 2004, owing to the boycott by some locals, to a total increase of 33,953 over the five year period (Table 5), official statistics noted that this growth was far greater than in metropolitan France (.5%), and French Polynesia (1.8%) (ISEE-TSEE *Recensement 2004*).

Table 5
New Caledonia: Demographic summary 1983-2009

	1983-1989 (6 Years)	1989-1996 (7 Years)	1996-2004* (8 years)	2004*-2009+ (5 years)
Population (start of period)	145,368	164,173	196,835	230,789
Population (end of period)	164,173	196,836	230,789	245,580
Variation(start to end)	18,805	32,663	33,953	14,791
Net natural increase	17,826	23,552	27,817	14,134
Apparent net migration	979	9,111	6,766	657*
Natural increase (%) pa	2.0	1.9	1.5	N/A+
Net migration (%)** pa	0.1	0.7	0.4	N/A+
Total per annum change	2.1	2.6	1.9	1.2 Est** 1.7++
Per annum apparent net migration***	163	1,298	845 [2000-07	1020 pa#]
<i>According to Royer## analysis 2011</i>		1200	500	900

*census subject to a boycott call by some pro-independence parties

**difference between numbers of those entering and leaving, regardless of place of birth

***apparent net migration divided by number of years in the relevant period

+some figures not available, ISEE 2009 figures provisional

++figure presented by ISEE 2010 for 1996-2009 *Graphique complémentaire 1*

#ISEE *Situation Démographique 2008* provided as basis of comparison in absence 2009 figures

Source: ISEE-INSEE *Recensement de la Population de la Nouvelle-Calédonie au 31 août 2004*, ISEE *Recensement 2009* (provisional figures), ISEE *Recensement 2009*, April 2011; ##Jean-François Royer, *Les Fluxes migratoires externes de la Nouvelle-Calédonie 1989-2009*, ISEE 2011.

Table 6
New Caledonia: Estimated annual population and migration figures 1981 to 2007

Year	Population*	Migration	Year	Population*	Migration	Year	Population*	Migration
1981	141 136	331	1991	173 163	874	2001	215 260	932
1982	144 221	41	1992	177 560	1004	2002	219 387	1132
1983	147 178	25	1993	182 038	1532	2003	223 592	1305
1984	150 187	27	1994	186 953	1850	2004	227 878	1518
1985	153 072	28	1995	192 010	389	2005	232 258	1361
1986	155 828	21	1996	195 621	504	2006	236 528	751
1987	158 866	7	1997	199 506	350	2007	240 390	1134
1988	162 082	5	1998	203 330	528	2008	244 410	1760
1989	165 160	521	1999	207 228	751	2009	245 580	
1990	168 635	1078	2000	211 200	571	2010		

*estimates, at 1 January

Source: from Table P1 – *Évolution générale de la situation démographique en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, ISEE *Situation Démographique 2008* ; *Recensement 2009*

Table 7
New Caledonia: Population by province 1976-2009 (% of total)

	1976	1983	1989	1996	2004	2009+
Loyalty Islands	10.9	10.7	10.9	10.6	9.6	7.1
Northern Province	24.0	21.5	21.0	21.0	19.2	18.4
Southern Province	65.1	67.8	68.1	68.4	71.2	74.5
Of which Noumea	55.8	58.5	59.4	60.4	63.4	66.7
New Caledonia	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ISEE-INSEE *Recensement de la Population de la Nouvelle-Calédonie au 31 Août 2004* ; ISEE *Recensement 2009 Tableau 2*

Overall, these figures suggest a significant recent increase in numbers of migrants into New Caledonia from other parts of France. Added to the apparent understatement in statistics of the size of the “European” (born in France) group, it is clear that the proportion of Kanaks relative to other communities is declining, in a generally more diverse population.

The development of three major nickel projects (see section on Nickel and rebalancing development in this Chapter) in the early 2000s has inevitably meant an increase in the number of French experts and companies to service them (Gérard Baudchon and Jean-Louis Rallu in Cadéot 2003 p. 250), just as the 1970s nickel boom saw similar inflows. This influx can be expected to continue and grow as the nickel projects develop.

Retirement incentives

Apart from the inflow of personnel relating to the production of nickel, a second factor underlying a large influx of immigrants from metropolitan and Overseas France has been the active encouragement by the French state of retirement by French officials to its overseas collectivities, including New Caledonia (and French Polynesia) (Chauchat 2006 p. 140).

From 1950, there have been special payments, or *surrémunérations* (extra remuneration) for French civil servants working in the overseas territories. As an example, when Chauchat wrote in 2006, the extra payments brought the normal salaries of working civil servants in New Caledonia to as high as 194% (in the more remote communes, a mere 173% in Noumea Ibid. p. 143). In French Polynesia, the payments were even higher, going up to 204 % in some islands. Little by little these special payments attached to retirement, and not only of Overseas France civil servants, but to any civil servant retiring to the French overseas entities, which was thereby expressly encouraged by the French state. In 2006, when Chauchat wrote about the subject (and as of September 2008), retirees, not just former civil servants who had worked in the French Pacific territories, but any civil servant retiring from metropolitan France or other overseas territories, were paid 175% of their normal retiring pensions if they retired to any of the French Pacific territories, with more if they had dependent children, and special extra entitlements for former military personnel (Ibid. p. 147). Chauchat ascribes these payments to an active State policy encouraging movement of people to the Overseas entities (Ibid. p. 140), and clearly such incentive payments are designed to encourage a strong presence of inhabitants from the hexagon, as opposed to local indigenous peoples.

From 2003 to 2006 there were three parliamentary efforts to curtail these payments, to address the soaring costs (which Chauchat 2006 p. 149, put at EUR 2.2 b. all-up in 2001, although Overseas France Minister Yves Jégo indicated that the sum was EUR 295 m. in 2007, perhaps measured differently, see *Flash d'Océanie*, 4 July 2008) given the relative attractiveness of the overseas entities to retirees removing the need for special incentive payments, but mainly to redress the situation where many beneficiaries had had no previous connection with the French overseas entities to which

they were retiring. All three attempts met with opposition by the Overseas France Minister at the time who said such changes would need wide consultation, would profoundly impact the small economies, and could result in law and order problems (for example, Minister Girardin comments to Senate review in 2005, Chauchat 2006 p. 176).

However, in April 2008 new President Nicolas Sarkozy said that the implementation of this system would be progressively curtailed, underlining that this was because it applied to people who had never worked in the particular overseas entity to which they were retiring (RFOFr website, April 2008, *Retraites : Menaces sur les fonctionnaires d'Outre-mer*, accessed 15 September 2008). In July 2008 the French Secretary of State for Overseas France, Yves Jégo, announced that the scheme was coming to an end (*Flash d'Océanie*, 4 July 2008). At that time, 83% of civil servant retirees in New Caledonia (and 59% of those benefitting in French Polynesia) had never served anywhere but metropolitan France. The French National Assembly passed legislation by the end of 2008 which provided for very gradual phase-out of the provisions, by 2027.

The various (not necessarily consistent) figures quoted by French authorities showed that such immigration had been increasing dramatically, particularly in recent years. A French budget report showed a 70% increase in costs of the scheme in Overseas France overall, in 2005 over the payments in 2000 (*Flash d'Océanie* 4 July 2008). Jégo told *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* on 28 July 2008 that there had been a tripling of the numbers in New Caledonia from 1658 in 1989 to 5198 in 2005. ISEE figures (TEC *Tableaux de l'Économie calédonienne*, Caledonian Economic Tables 2008, *Les fonctionnaires retraités en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Retired Civil Servants in New Caledonia) showed there were 3,927 retired French State officials receiving pensions in New Caledonia in 1990, and 3,954 in 2001, after which there were big increases, almost doubling, to 5,451 in 2007, receiving pensions worth a total of 20.3 m. cfp (\$A 334 m. converted 16 March 2009). The daily newspaper *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* estimated there were about 6000 in 2008 on the basis of local statistics (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 28 July 2008 accessed 9 Sept 2008). Of New Caledonia's population estimated to be just over 230,000 in 2008, 6,000 French mainland or overseas retiree migrants is a significant figure, especially when the entire population grew at 1.9% , around 4,000 people, per annum in the five years to 2004 (Table 4, and see Faberon and Ziller p. 358).

Those retirees estimated to number around 4000 by 1994 (on the basis of ISEE TEC 2008 figures above) will be able to vote in the final referendum(s), having twenty years residence to 2014. These retirees, being newcomers from other parts of France, would be likely to vote pro-France. With the retirement incentives not fully cutting out until 2027, all of the 6000 or so retirees currently in New Caledonia would have a personal interest in the outcome of the Noumea Accord and their rights in a post-Accord New Caledonia.

Inflows from Wallis and Futuna and ethnic violence

The historic relatively large and continuing influx of people from Wallis and Futuna is a sensitive issue in New Caledonia. The absence of the ethnic breakdown from the 2004 census is particularly relevant here. The qualifications of the 2009 census reporting on ethnic categories highlight the sensitivities, since the published figures show “reallocations” from the new “mixed race” category only for three communities: Kanak, European and Wallisian. Despite the apparent drop in numbers of people born in Wallis and Futuna in the flawed 2004 and 2009 censuses at Table 4 (from 3.4% of the population in 1996 to 2.9% in 2004 and 2009), and the apparent drop in proportion of Wallisians from 9.0% in 1996 to 8.7% in 2009, which shifts to an increase to 10% in 2009 after “reallocation” (Table 1a), other indicators are that their numbers are in fact increasing. A 2008 census of Wallis and Futuna showed that there were 13,445 Wallisians in Wallis and Futuna, representing a 10% decline in population from 2003 (Hadj 2009), and the main destination of the emigrants is New Caledonia. There are more Wallisians in New Caledonia than in Wallis and Futuna. The 1996 census reported 17,763 Wallisians in New Caledonia then, while *Flash d’Océanie* of 27 August 2008 reported an estimated 20,000 Wallisians in New Caledonia at that time.

The inflows are set to continue. There is no source of income for Wallis and Futuna other than direct inflows from the French State and remittances from workers in New Caledonia (and to a lesser extent French Polynesia), and it is French policy to facilitate these remittances. Part of the Noumea Accord involved special commitments by New Caledonia towards Wallis and Futuna, specified in Article 225 of the 1999 Organic Law. An agreement was signed between the French State, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna in December 2003 specifically providing working rights for Wallisians in New Caledonia, with the State undertaking to cover social services costs for Wallisians there for a period of ten years. This unusual provision appears to have originated in the strong support Wallisians in New Caledonia have traditionally given to the pro-France political groups.

Violent Disturbances

Wallisian immigration has been inflammatory. The only major outbreak of violence in New Caledonia since the *événements* of the 1980s has centred on ethnic differences with the Wallisians.

In 2001, ethnic violence erupted at the outlying mission township of Saint-Louis near Noumea where local Melanesian Kanak communities uneasily lived side by side newcomers from Wallis and Futuna, who are Polynesians. Kanak tribes had been established in the area since the late nineteenth century. Wallisian workers began to be settled there from the 1960s (see Maclellan 2005a pp. 8-9). Ethnic differences were exacerbated by the fact that Wallisians, along with most newcomers from other French metropolitan and overseas collectivities, tended to support the pro-France group (Henningham 1992 p. 185). Their leader, Robert Moyatea, supported the pro-France

Rassemblement-UMP group. The local Kanak clan chief is Roch Wamytan, a prominent FLNKS leader. There were allegations that the pro-France RPCR leader Jacques Lafleur had encouraged settlement of Wallisians in the Saint-Louis area to shore up electoral support in the Noumea outer area against the FLNKS.

Tensions mounted from 2001, and included a longstanding road blockade and violence engaging the local gendarmerie. At the height of the disturbances two Kanaks and a Futunan were killed, and a police officer and a French priest were shot. In July 2003, 250 French gendarmes intervened against Wallisian troublemakers. This attack occurred the same month that President Chirac visited New Caledonia. It was followed by the removal of the Wallisian community from their homes, to be resettled in housing elsewhere in Noumea, in what many saw as an ethnic cleansing operation.

The unstable situation at Saint-Louis is a recent example of the fundamental volatility of New Caledonia, and shows how the French presence, even as a guarantor of law and order, continues to be based on military muscle. It also highlights the complexity of the political scene, where strong French action was taken to support the grievances of the Kanak, pro-independence peoples there.

Tension persists between the Kanaks and Wallisians, including occasional violent personal attacks.

Other immigration issues

To respond to Kanak concerns about immigration, the managers of the major nickel projects under construction have devised elaborate ways to limit the impact of imported labour. Inco used a prefabricated design for construction largely outside New Caledonia for the building element of the massive Goro project in the south. From 2006 to 2009, Inco imported around five thousand workers from the Philippines for the construction phase of the project. The workers were flown in on charter aircraft, stayed for temporary rotations, usually six months, at campsites where they were kept without being allowed to circulate beyond the site. Xstrata are planning to do the same thing to meet labour demands when construction begins on the smelter in the north at Koniambo. The arrangement resulted in industrial protests in late 2006 (see *Flash d'Océanie* 10 August 2007), arguably laying the basis for continuing strikes and the ultimate formation of the union-based Labour Party (see Political transition and realignment section below).

It remains to be seen how well a similar arrangement will work in the north, where the mining sites are located in the midst of Kanak settlements, and where the local Kanak people are keen to be employed. There are potential human rights issues relating to these workers.

Control over immigration

Another, related question is that of control over immigration. Currently, it is the French government which has control over entry into New Caledonia, with the local

government having a say over the related matter of approvals for employment of foreigners.

The Noumea Accord does not refer specifically to immigration, but does provide, under “Shared Powers”, at Article 3.2.2 that the New Caledonian Executive will be “associated with the implementation of rules relating to entry and stays of foreigners” (the implication being that it is the French State which has the principal power). And under “New responsibilities immediately transferred to New Caledonia” at Article 3.1.1 the Accord specifically indicates that local inhabitants’ employment rights will be respected, and that regulation will be strengthened over people not settled in New Caledonia. But in the Organic Law of 1999, the French government’s control over entry and stay of foreigners is stated explicitly (Article 21). Article 34 provides for the High Commissioner to “consult” the local Government on entry and stay and on visas for stays of more than three months, with the local government being “informed” of decisions taken.

In practice the French State approves entry, and the local New Caledonian Executive Government (ministerial council) approves work permits. The Executive considers every application by a foreigner to work in New Caledonia, on a case by case basis. The system is unwieldy, and foreign experts are in limbo while the processes churn through their applications, and many have no choice but to enter on tourist visas to do contracted work.

The New Caledonian government has no power, however, to limit the entry or employment of French nationals from elsewhere in France or Overseas France, notwithstanding the protective provisions of Article 3.1.1 of the Accord.

It is significant that immigration is not mentioned amongst the five “régalien” or core, sovereign, powers to be the subject of the final referendums.

European Union immigration

Another potentially troublesome area for New Caledonia arises from the consequences of European citizenship of its inhabitants. All French nationals are EU citizens, including all Melanesians, Caldoches, immigrants from other French entities such as French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, and all French officials and their families on temporary posting in the collectivity. There is also a very small number, difficult to quantify from official statistics, but apparently growing (see Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 267, also discussion in Chapter 7 of the effects on the French collectivities), of non-French EU citizens (who would be included in the “foreigner” category of Table 4, which in total was 5.8% in the last comprehensive census, 1996, and 5.2% in 2009).

Chapter 7 outlines in some detail the impact of EU membership on the French Pacific entities. France has negotiated special non-reciprocal rights for its citizens in New Caledonia relative to the EU. Thus New Caledonians can vote in EU elections, travel to and work in EU countries, and export goods to the EU at preferential rates, while there are restrictions on similar EU rights in the French collectivities.

Still, there is unease in New Caledonia (as in French Polynesia) about these provisions and their potential effects, particularly if EU immigration, especially from parts of Europe other than France, were to grow and add to the complexities of French inflows. This unease is reflected in very low voter turnouts in elections for representatives to the EU Parliament (21.82% in June 2009, despite the EU having altered arrangements and provided for one *Député* or Member of the European Parliament, specifically for the French Pacific collectivities, see background in Chapter 7).

In electoral arrangements negotiated by France, the EU has accepted that EU voters are not able to vote in New Caledonia's provincial and congressional elections, recognizing the special reasons for which the restricted electorate was devised in New Caledonia. However, EU law provides that any EU citizen may vote in *municipal* elections in any EU member country, including the EU overseas collectivities of member states, after a six month residency period and registration with the local commune. The Noumea Accord does not specify a restricted electorate for municipal elections. Locals fear the effect of votes in municipal elections from newly arrived European residents, who would have little understanding of the history of the restricted electorate and the sensitivities underlying it (Maclellan 2005b p. 413). The broad number of EU residents includes French nationals otherwise ineligible to vote locally, such as French and European newcomers, and newcomers from other French collectivities, arriving since 1998; and French officials posted temporarily in New Caledonia and their families; who could be expected to support pro-France political groups. The dimensions of the potential impact of the European vote is evident in New Caledonia, where the eligible voting population was 154,228 in the June 2009 EU election compared to 135,000 who were eligible to vote in the May 2009 provincial elections. In 2009 the winning Pacific candidate was Maurice Ponga, a longstanding Kanak UMP (pro-France) representative who had retired from the Congress.

Immigration: summary

Managing the effect on Noumea Accord commitments of immigration inflows from metropolitan and Overseas France, and potentially the EU, is a continuing concern for the Kanaks, the Caldoches, and the French State. The way in which the French State handled the definition of the restricted electorate, Chirac's decision to remove ethnicity from the census, belatedly but only incompletely rectified, and the inclusion of non-comparable ethnic categories in the 2009 census, renewed local concerns about France's commitment to its word, particularly given continued increases in numbers of newcomers from the rest of France. Local concern consolidated into new political alignments (to be discussed below).

Sarkozy's early attention to curtailing retirement provisions encouraging French migration into the Pacific entities was a positive development for Kanaks and other long-term residents, although the phase-out will not take full effect until 2027, well beyond the Noumea Accord deadlines.

Population inflows from the other French entities, particularly Wallisians, created different and more serious concerns. The only significant recurrence of violence since the *événements* occurred in 2001-3 over ethnic and political issues arising from the presence of Wallisians in a Kanak tribal area. The import of thousands of temporary immigrants from the Philippines to work on the major nickel projects presents potential problems, including human rights issues. And EU citizenship created obligations which complicate implementation of the Noumea Accord.

The French State's handling of these issues will be a critical determinant of trust and stability for the future.

Nickel and rebalancing development

The second core issue critical for the success of the Noumea Accord, is the more balanced distribution of economic returns to the collectivity between indigenous and non-indigenous interests. This principle had been established by Michel Rocard in the Oudinot Accord hammered out after signature of the Matignon Accord, i.e., to restore economic, social and cultural balance dubbed the "bet on intelligence" by Rocard (see Angleviel 2003). By far the most valuable resource at this stage is nickel, and this has been the principal focus of the rebalancing effort.

New Caledonia has over a quarter (and possibly up to 40%) of world nickel reserves, and is the third largest nickel producer in the world and the largest producer of ferro-nickel (Horowitz 2004 p. 299, Maclellan 2005c). Folklore amongst old mining hands has it that, in an ancient geological upheaval, what is now New Caledonia broke away from the vast Gondwanaland (the major part of which now forms Australia), turned upside down and exposed massive reserves of red iron along the whole of Grande Terre. Burchett in 1941 wrote of the expanses of the red ore so dense that lakes formed because water simply sat on top of soil so iron-rich it prevented absorption (Burchett p. 161). New Caledonia's extensive nickel reserves are the more valuable at a time when world demand for nickel is generally increasing, and as China and India industrialise and consume more stainless steel, of which nickel forms the principal component, in household and other products, although the 2008-9 global financial crisis has impacted on these trends.

The French state is the largest contributor to New Caledonia's budget, contributing 121.5 b. cfp or \$A 2 b. in 2007, about a sixth of its GDP of an estimated 768.1 b. cfp (\$A 13 b. converted 7 July 2009) that year (ISEE TEC 2008 p. 96; ISEE website www.itsee.nc accessed 28 October 2008). But nickel is by far the largest single source of income: nickel mineral and matte exports were worth an estimated 177 b cfp (\$A 3 b.) in 2007, when prices were high, contributing around a quarter of New Caledonia's economic growth between 1998 and 2006 (ISEE TEC 2008 p. 91, *Bilan économique* 2009 p. 5). However, the vast bulk of these profits accrue to French interests (see section below on Greater returns of profits, for breakdown of SLN ownership). Raw nickel is currently exported to Australia (worth around \$A 85 m. in financial year 2007-8, DFAT website www.dfat.gov.au accessed 7 July 2009).

While the principal funding and investment effort in New Caledonia is directed towards expanding the nickel sector, to date the single nickel producing unit remains SLN's 150 year old Doniambo plant in the south; and the only completed new processing plant, the enormous Goro nickel complex, is also in the south, albeit not yet producing (to time of writing, mid 2011) after substantial financial setbacks (see below). Albeit much planning and groundwork having been achieved in the north, completion is still a long way off, in part a consequence of the global financial crisis.

Ambiguity in the responsibility for mineral resources

Under the Noumea Accord, the New Caledonian government was given responsibility over the exploration, exploitation, management and conservation of natural resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone (Article 3.1.1), a significant concession. But there are ambiguities. The transfer of responsibility for hydrocarbons, potash, nickel, chrome and cobalt is under the heading of "Shared Powers" in the Accord (Article 3.2.5), with the New Caledonian government taking over the drafting of mining regulations, and the Provinces the power to enforce them. The State participates in a Mining Council.

But in the 1999 Organic Law implementing the Accord, the State is described (Article 21, point 7), as being responsible for regulation in matters mentioned in Article 19, point 1, of Decree No. 54-1110 of 13 November 1954 reforming the regime of mineral substances in the overseas territories, and installations which use them. That Decree covers substances useful in research and activities relating to strategic substances linked to national defence (including related to atomic energy, see Faberon and Ziller, 2007 p. 380). In Article 22 of the Organic Law, New Caledonia is given (at point 10) responsibility for the regulation *and exercise of rights of exploration, exploitation, management and conservation* of natural, biological and non-biological resources *in the exclusive economic zone*; and (point 11) *for regulation relating to hydrocarbons, nickel, chrome and cobalt* (my italics) (Organic Law 1999 points 10° *Réglementation et exercice des droits d'exploration, d'exploitation, de gestion et de conservation des ressources naturelles, biologiques et non-biologiques de la zone économique exclusive*; and 11° *Réglementation relative aux hydrocarbures, au nickel, au chrome et au cobalt*). The lack of specification of the exploration and other rights on the latter resources lying other than in the exclusive economic zone is an effective qualifier.

The ambiguity is related to earlier qualifiers of the mineral responsibility in the Matignon Accords and its Referendum Law of 1988. According to a Senate Report at the time, any strategic primary resource linked to national defence and mentioned in the referendum law of 9 November 1988 endorsing the Matignon Accord remained the responsibility of the French State. Article 8 point 7 of that Law referred to "any strategic primary substances as defined for the entire territory of the Republic" (see Referendum Law 88-1028 of 9 November 1988; and French Senate Document No. 180 p. 68, report by M. Jean-Jacques Heist on the draft Organic Law).

The ambiguity at the least gives rise to confusion. Angleviel noted that there is an overriding stipulation, defined by the French Council of State, relating to strategic ore

(uranium) and oil, which could enable the predominance of national interests over local or international ones (New Pacific Review 2003 p. 157). Senior New Caledonian leader Jacques Lafleur maintained (Personal communication March 2009) that the French State continued to hold power over the sub-soil of the EEZs regardless of the provisions of the Accord. Australian companies interested in exploration offshore have had difficulty clarifying which State or New Caledonian authority was responsible for what. The ambiguity over responsibility for such an important resource has the effect of limiting external interest in investment, which may well be the intent, and raises the question of whether France intends to retain control over the development of minerals-related industry.

Greater returns of profits from SLN France to New Caledonia

Still, France has ensured that more of the returns from nickel production return to New Caledonia than in the past, although French interests retain the largest shares.

Until the time of writing (early 2011), the only productive nickel processing unit has been the 150-year old Doniambo plant just out of Noumea, in the mainly European Southern Province. The plant is run by Société Le Nickel (Nickel Company, SLN). The French State acquired 50% share and exclusive ownership in 1947 (see Horowitz 2004 p. 292). It has retained a large ownership since. The 1969 Billotte Laws shored up French control over mining during the 1960s/1970s nickel boom, and indeed were designed to head off Canadian interests in the industry at the time (see Chapter 3). In 1983, the French State owned 70% of SLN by way of its public company, ERAP (the remaining 30% equally divided between Elf Aquitaine and Imétal, two other French companies).

These days, while the French state's share in SLN has reduced, the largest share of SLN's revenues continues to return to France (see Horowitz 2004 p. 300 and Henningham 1992 p. 78). This predominance is an issue for the pro-independence groups. The FLNKS sought a 51% share for New Caledonia in SLN (Néaoutyine 2006 p. 164). Today, French company Eramet remains the largest shareholder in SLN (56%), and Nishin Steel Japan owns another 10%. However, in a deal struck in 1999 as background to the Noumea Accord, New Caledonia now has a 34% share in SLN through the New Caledonian company STCPI (*Société Territoriale Calédonienne de Participations Industrielles*, [New] Caledonian Territorial Company for Industrial Participation). When STCPI was created in 1999, it acquired 30% of SLN and 5.1% of SLN's parent company Eramet. This was substantially less than the 51% sought by the FLNKS. Under an option arrangement in July 2007, STCPI's share of SLN was revised upward to 34% of SLN along with a downward revision of its share of Eramet to 4.1% (see www.euroinvestor.co.uk accessed 20 October 2008; and www.sln.nc accessed 21 October 2008).

Apart from New Caledonia's (STCPI) 4.1% share of SLN's parent company Eramet, the other major shareholders in Eramet are French. They include the French Duval family (37%); Areva (26%), a strategic nuclear-power related company 93% owned by

the French State; a private French investor Romain Zaleski (13%); a US company Northern Trust (3%); and remaining shares unknown (see www.transnationale.org/companies/eramet.php and www.eramet.com). There is an agreement between the Duvals and Areva that they will vote and act together (see www.pressreleasepoint.com/eramet-sorameceir-and-areva-renew-their-shareholders039-agreement).

STCPI continues to seek to increase its holdings in both SLN and Eramet.

With these changes in shareholdings in favour of New Caledonia, through STCPI, New Caledonia has benefitted substantially. Through the nickel boom years 2007 and 2008, SLN paid over 20 b. cfp (EUR 167 m. or \$A 300 m. converted 7 July 2009) in taxes and 2.3 b. cfp (EUR 19.2 m. or \$A 33 m.) in dividends to the New Caledonian government. SLN claims it spent another 25 b. cfp or EUR 209 m. (\$A 366 m.) in local purchases, and 663 m. cfp or EUR 5.55 m. (\$A 9.7 m.) in training and working conditions in New Caledonia. In addition SLN spent 35 b. cfp or EUR 293 m. (\$A 513 m.) on expanding Doniambo's capacity to 75,000 tonnes (see Doniambo expansion section below) (www.sln.nc accessed 17 March 2009).

Extended production of nickel in the south and new production in the north

At the same time plans were set in place to develop mining outside of the European-dominated south. Chapter 3 described how as a background prerequisite to the signature of the Noumea Accord, the mainly Kanak Northern Province was endowed with the Koniambo mountain range, and with a share in the establishment by a multinational company (initially Falconbridge, subsequently taken over by Anglo-Swiss company XStrata) of a processing plant at Koniambo. The development of a third processing unit at Goro in the mainly European Southern Province by Canadian company Inco was a further arm of this agreement to balanced development, along with expansion of production to 75,000 tonnes a year of the Doniambo plant in the South.

The success of this rebalancing strategy will be integral to the continued peaceful presence of the French in New Caledonia, and more broadly, in the South Pacific. Horowitz (2004) in a perceptive review of nickel politics noted that the balanced development of projects in the north and the south will reflect the expectations under the Noumea Accord itself, i.e., the expectations of the Kanaks that economic independence will lead to the possibility of political independence, and the expectations of the pro-France groups in the south (and the French State itself) that rebalanced economic development will, by its very prosperity, head off independence demands. She wrote that "The Koniambo Project is thus viewed either as representing the possibility of greater political and economic autonomy for Kanak as a precursor to independence or, in contrast, as yet another in a series of actions that have used economic gains to deter pro-independence aspirations" (Horowitz 2004 p. 309).

Challenges affecting rebalancing success of the mining projects

At the outset it must be recognized that development of even one major nickel plant in an island economy is a massive undertaking, involving billions of dollars, complex technological and metallurgical challenges, labour concerns, social and environmental factors. Such projects challenge any government. For France, the development of the three nickel projects in New Caledonia represents the largest French mining interest ever on its soil. Indeed the Goro project alone is the largest French mining venture within sovereign French territory (see Newman 2001). Undertaking this multi-project venture thousands of miles from the capital in an island environment adds further dimensions of complexity. And the fact that it is doing so at the same time as it is developing the statutory framework for its entity of New Caledonia, within its Noumea Accord commitments, adds another complication. Even for the French State the projects are enormous (as the Mayor of Noumea, Jean Lèques, charmingly put it, even the most beautiful woman can only give what she has, Personal communication March 2009).

Added to that is the fact that the relatively inexperienced New Caledonian Government, and provincial administrations, under their new-found powers from the 1998 Noumea Accord, are tackling these large projects in their first years of existence, developing legislative frameworks along the way.

A second consideration is that, accepting that producing the annual existing 50-60,000 tonnes of nickel from the Doniambo plant adjacent to the relatively sophisticated infrastructure of Noumea has never been simple or straightforward over the 150 years it has existed, it is even more complicated to envisage establishing a further plant in the South, still relatively near to Noumea. Factors include the far greater volume of ore to be processed, the new technology involved (acid leaching), the extensive new infrastructure in terms of port facilities and power generation required, and the extremely fragile nature of the environment at Goro and Prony Bay.

But development of a similar plant in the northern tip of the main island of Grande Terre, where Koniambo is located, multiplies the demands by several degrees. While there has been a Northern Province government which has run the province effectively since it was created by the Matignon Accords in 1988, particularly under the current Province President, the respected and capable Paul Néaoutyine, local government there is a relatively new phenomenon. Because most economic development has taken place around Noumea, there is far less infrastructure and support in the north even in the small provincial capital Koné, 200 km north of Noumea, let alone at nearby Koniambo. Logistic requirements are enormous. The initial investment in establishing housing, shops, schools and transport within the area to service the new plant is considerable.

Added to all these elements are the normal vagaries of the international market and multinational business activity. The biggest single threat to the success of the rebalancing plan in the nickel sector is, as in the past, the volatility of the market. The global financial crisis of 2008-9 has had devastating effects on the rebalancing effort.

For example, the all-time high price for a tonne of nickel in early 2007 was \$US 54,000. With the effects of the global financial crisis, the price had dropped to below \$US 10,500 by early 2009. In October 2008, two major bankers backing the critical northern Koniambo project (the failed Lehman Brothers, and the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank) withdrew from the project (*Flash d'Océani*, 20 October 2008).

The French State's support for the nickel projects, financial, administrative, and especially in law and order and the framework of judicial and legislative backing, on a daily basis, led by its successive High Commissioners there, is its most important indicator of good faith and commitment to its word under the Matignon and Noumea Accords. At the same time, this commitment by the French State is a strong indicator of its will to keep New Caledonia French. There is no doubt that the running of the major nickel projects favour French interests, businesses and personalities.

Southern Province - Doniambo expansion

Investment:	\$US 380 m.
Projected production:	75,000 tonnes p.a. (from 62,000 tonnes in 2007) (TBA)
Projected employment:	2,200 (from current 2,000)

In 2001, SLN initiated a program to expand its capacity at the existing Doniambo plant from around 60,000 tonnes of nickel per annum, to 75,000 tonnes per annum after establishing an enrichment plant at Tiébaghie in late 2008. With the dramatically lowered nickel prices consequent to the global financial crisis, these plans have been revised.

Doniambo's production reached 62,000 tonnes in 2007 as nickel prices rose, but with the effects of the global crisis, production dropped to only 51,000 tonnes in 2008. Profits dropped from 70 b. cfp (\$A 1.1 b. converted March 2009) in 2007, to 8 b. cfp (\$A 130 m.) in 2008. (See section on Greater returns of profits for details of SLN's ownership.)

By late February 2009, when the company was losing 100 m. cfp a day (\$A 1.6 m. converted March 2009), SLN Managing Director Pierre Alla announced a series of measures, including reduced working hours, to meet revised production needs without retrenching staff (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 21 February 2009). As the largest employer in New Caledonia, these measures met stiff union opposition, including by the prominent militant mainly Kanak union the USTKE, which had just formed a political party exacerbating divisions on the pro-independence side of politics in the lead up to the May 2009 provincial elections (see Political transition and realignment section below). Despite advanced work on expanding production capacity at Doniambo, effective increases will depend on world markets.

Southern Province – Goro

Investment:	\$US 4.3 b.
Projected production:	60,000 tonnes p.a. (possibly late 2011 or 2013) nickel 5,000 tonnes p.a. (possibly late 2011 or 2013) chrome

Projected employment: 2,000 (construction)
 (plus 4-5,000 temporary imported workers)
 800 (production)
 2,000 (indirect at production)

The massive Goro project has been a hardwon effort on the part of Inco (which became Vale Inco in 2006 when the Canadian company was taken over by Brazil's Companhia Vale do Rio Doa, or CVRD, later Vale). Inco had had interests in New Caledonia since 1902. In 1969, it undertook exploration in the Goro area, a large stretch of bright red land, so rich with ore that when it rains water just sits on top of the mineral-dense soil. The Billotte Laws described in Chapter 3 were expressly designed to prevent local authorities from dealing with Inco and to keep control in French hands. Inco's work in New Caledonia has been long and patient.

In 1999 Inco constructed a pilot project to test the new hydrometallurgical process, itself an impressive refinery. Construction of the huge Goro plant itself, 100 times bigger than the pilot project, began in 2002. As the first cab off the rank of all the planned new projects, the commencement of construction threw up a range of difficulties which needed to be tackled by the relatively inexperienced New Caledonian government under its new powers. Getting it right was fundamental, not only to the success of the Goro project itself, but for the other planned New Caledonian projects in the south (Prony) and north (Koniambo).

Problems emerged as soon as the bulldozers reached the ground, problems which were to increase massively the cost of investment. Despite dramatically increasing nickel prices at the time, driven by increasing demand in China, barely a year after they began, Inco had to suspend operations, from late 2002 until 2005, to re-cast the project, in the wake of a range of cost-increasing local concerns and demands. The revised project boosted the investment cost from \$US 1.4 b. to \$US 2 b. (Chauchat 2006 p. 126) but this was to rise to \$US 3.2 b. by 2008, and \$US 4.3 b. by 2011 (Reuters report 26 April 2011). Concerns focused on local employment and workers rights, environmental issues, and cultural issues arising both from the neighbouring Kanak communities and the Caldoches.

A shared concern was that the Kanaks and Caldoches would be by-passed in the project. The Kanaks were concerned that their status as indigenous residents and relationship to the land at Goro would not be respected. They wanted assurances that their communities would receive some of the financial benefits and employment opportunities. They were concerned about environmental issues, and particularly opposed a plan to dump manganese wastes into the ocean. They organized themselves into a committee called *Rheebu Nhuu* ("eye of the land") under the leadership of Raphaël Mapou, and staged protests, strikes and road blockades. This grouping represented a further fragmentation of the FLNKS parties (see Political transition and realignment section below). Separately the Customary Senate established a Resource Management Council (see Waddell 2008 p. 206). In 2003, sponsored by Inco, Mapou and others travelled to Canada where they met Inuit leaders from whom they took further cues on ways to secure assurances and make claims for compensation.

For their part, established Caldoche small business and contractors were concerned about being sidelined by large foreign firms and personnel including from Canada and neighbouring Australia, in providing goods and services to the mining project. Not surprisingly the scale of the project was unfamiliar and overwhelming for many of them. Cultural issues, of a different nature than for the Kanaks, also emerged. After decades of protection and isolation from the region, the Caldoches were unused to the manner and ways of foreign company representatives who came to set up local offices. Small matters such as the kind of electric plugs used (the regional Australian standard or the French European one which had prevailed till then) set off accusations of foreign takeover.

What followed was an example of practical cooperation and teamship in a tense and fractious environment. The French State, through the office of the then High Commissioner, Daniel Constantin, played a key advisory role. Constantin's input was highly underrated at the time, mainly because of his lowkey approach and discretion.

In consultation with senior French and Province officials, Goro's management led by Inco's Brisbane headquarters and its local CEO at the time, Pierre Alla, undertook a thorough review and developed mechanisms to deal with local concerns. A brief consultation of Goro's website reveals the result: a pilot committee of the Southern Province, a Local Community Involvement Program to ensure opportunities to local contractors, a Community Participation Program for the employment and training of local communities, including Kanak communities, a Business Participation Alliance, a Community Relations Office and a Worksite Accord with project workers. The company also took groups of Kanak leaders to Toronto to meet senior company representatives and see how Inco operated in its Canadian projects.

Share participation by the three Provinces of New Caledonia was also devised. Vale Inco has a 69% interest in the project. The three provinces of New Caledonia together hold a 10% equity interest. This was increased from an initial 5 per cent following FLNKS opposition to the Southern Province grant outright, in 2002, of an exploration permit to Inco relating to the neighbouring Prony site (see next section below). The New Caledonian share is paid to the *Société de Participation Minière du Sud Calédonien* (SPMSC South [New] Caledonian Mining Participation Company, of which 50% is owned by the Southern Province and 25% each by the other two Provinces (see Faberon and Ziller 2007, p. 361; and <http://www.inco.com/global/goro>). Through a jointly owned company called Sumic, Nickel Netherlands, Japan's Sumitomo Metal Mining Co. Ltd. and Mitsui Co. Ltd. own the remaining 21% interest in the project.

Apart from its business and community consultation, Inco complied with the environment code set up by France's INERIS (*Institut National de l'Environnement Industriel et des Risques*, National Institute for Industrial Environment and Risk). For its part, the French State enabled the inclusion of the Southern Coral Reef on the UNESCO Common Heritage list, while negotiating arrangements allowing for the Goro project activities in Prony Bay.

Inco also established extensive training facilities; and to deal with concerns about imported labour, and devised a method of pre-fabrication for the construction phase, whereby 400 modules making up the plant were to be constructed in the Philippines. The company imported around 5,000 workers from the Philippines during the construction phase (2006 to 2008), chartering planes from the Philippines, immediately bussing the workers to campsites where they were confined for the duration of their contracts (generally up to six months), and returning them the same way. Given the extreme sensitivity of the local population to immigration issues, French immigration and security personnel were engaged to ensure quiet movement in and out of the small island entity with minimal social disruption or media attention.

The plant will process low-grade ore using hydrometallurgical technology. It is estimated there are 50 years of reserves. At capacity, the site will produce 60,000 metric tonnes of nickel per annum, 4,300 to 5,000 metric tonnes of cobalt. It will generate around 800 local jobs directly, 2000 indirectly and during the construction phase.

Construction was due for completion in 2008, with production in phases to begin from 2009. However, the global financial crisis, declining nickel prices, and technical problems delayed production, which had not commenced by the time of writing (early 2011). One report referred to a production date as late as 2013 (*Voila encyclopedie* website "Vale Inco Nouvelle-Calédonie" accessed 13 June 2011).

Southern Province - Prony

Investment:	\$US 1.5 b.
Projected production:	60,000 tonnes p.a. (2011-23?) nickel 6,000 tonnes p.a. (2011-23?) chrome
Projected employment:	n/a

In 2002, the then President of Southern Province, Jacques Lafleur, granted an exploration permit to Inco for the Prony mining resource, contiguous to Goro. The grant potentially allowed Inco to double its production capacity at Goro, at a time when Inco was seriously re-examining the viability of the Goro project in the face of severe cost overruns and local opposition. The decision was highly controversial at the time. Lafleur's own supporters in the Provincial Assembly resented his lack of consultation, and the Kanaks believed that Inco was granted the licence free of charge (Néaoutyine 2006 p. 169). It was not well-received in New Caledonia and arguably contributed to the defeat of Lafleur's party by a more broad coalition of pro-France and pro-independence supporters in 2004 provincial elections, in which Lafleur lost the Presidency of the Southern Province (see Political realignment and transition section below).

The grant was challenged in the Administrative Tribunal, and taken to the Paris Appeal Courts. In June 2008 a judgement was pronounced against the allocation of the licence to Inco. The new Southern Province President, Philippe Gomes, called for tenders. Vale Inco, SMSP and SLN all tendered and the rights were granted to the French company SLN. This bolstered the longstanding French State and private French

interests already vested in New Caledonia. It is worth noting that in the meantime, Inco's former CEO Pierre Alla, who had overseen the construction of the Goro project, had taken up the position as Director-General of SLN. In this way, French-dominated interests once again held sway over the beleaguered Inco. It is ironic that the original concerns that one company, Inco, should not dominate both Goro and Prony projects did not prevent the one major French company SLN being accorded Prony rights, notwithstanding its dominance of the nickel industry through the only working unit, Doniambo.

Few believe that the Prony development will proceed speedily. SLN Managing Director Pierre Alla believed in 2009 that it would be fifteen years (i.e. 2023) before production would begin. In proceeding with the project, SLN will necessarily conduct negotiations with Vale Inco who manage the neighbouring Goro project over joint infrastructure issues including energy requirements and other inputs, efficiencies which were at the heart of the earlier decision to grant the Prony licence to the operators of the Goro project in the first place. The granting of the licence to SLN gave power to the dominant French company with its own interests at Doniambo, to dictate the pace of production.

Northern Province – Koniambo

Investment:	SUS 3.8 b.
Projected production:	54,000 tonnes p.a. (mid 2012 to 2014)
Projected employment:	2,000 (construction) 750 (production) 2,000 (indirect at production)

The Koniambo nickel project in the mainly Kanak Northern Province is a critical element of rebalancing efforts. The Koniambo deposit is a rich resource. It is estimated that it holds reserves sufficient for 100 years of production (Néaoutyine 2006 p. 170). Under the terms of the Bercy Agreement (see Chapter 3), which granted the Koniambo massif to the Northern Province company *Société Minière du Sud Pacifique* (SMSP), the Canadian multinational Falconbridge was obliged to complete a feasibility study, the decision to construct a refinery, and investment program by 1 January 2006 to forestall the return of the Koniambo Massif to its original owners, Eramet and SLN. In 1996 the Northern Province company and Falconbridge submitted a plan for construction of the plant to the French government which was approved. As the deadline approached Falconbridge was subjected to a takeover bid by Inco, which would have meant an effective monopoly of the two major planned nickel projects by the one multinational. Behind the scenes, French officials sought alternative investors to stave off domination of all of the major new New Caledonian projects by Inco. There was also interest by Chinese companies, which worried senior French officials.

In the event, Falconbridge was taken over by the Anglo-Swiss company Xstrata (which already had a 20% stake in the company) in 2005. Xstrata holds 49% interest in the Koniambo Nickel SAS company, with SMSP holding 51%. The project involves refining ore through established pyrometallurgical processes, and producing 54,000 tonnes of nickel a year, equal to the annual production at Doniambo. The deadlines for

the project feasibility study were duly met, and construction of infrastructure providing access to the site, roads, a port and townships, began in early 2007. Earthworks for the refinery site were concluded by early 2009.

With the withdrawal of two major backers of SMSP's share in the wake of the global financial crisis (Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and Lehman Brothers), two New Caledonian based French companies, Caisse d'Épargne and the Bank of New Caledonia extended credit lines but for amounts far short of what was needed by SMSP (\$US 212 m. over 20 years, with SMSP Chairman Andre Dang noting further amounts would be needed, *Oceania Flash* 6 January 2009). This arrangement was a less satisfactory solution for the Northern Province than external backers, as it restored a certain degree of French control.

Inevitably, the global financial crisis has meant delays in the construction phase of the refinery itself. The project involves investment of \$US 3.8 b., with tax exemptions by the French State worth \$US 150 m.. The project will also require an electric power station and dam to provide electricity and cooling for the refinery. It should create 2000 jobs in the construction phase, 750 jobs when up and running and a further 2000 indirect jobs in the area (Horowitz 2004 p. 307). It will also require the importation of foreign labour, which may be more difficult in the Kanak heartland than it was for Goro in the south (see Other immigration issues section). At the Seventh Meeting of the Noumea Accord Committee of Signatories in December 2008, caution was registered about the need to "carefully prepare" for the necessary use of foreign workers (*Relevé de conclusions* 2008).

Horowitz concluded in 2004 that the development of the Koniambo project suggested that the French State and the pro-France forces had succeeded "in their attempts to convince independence-minded Kanak - through financial assistance that increases political dependency - to focus their efforts on economic development while postponing the push for independence to a point in the indeterminately distant future". She believed that pro-independence Kanaks "have used political pressure to negotiate a very favourable deal for their mining company" (p. 309).

In the immediate aftermath of the global financial crisis, the pro-independence parties generally understood that the pace of the project was bound to be affected and were not unduly concerned about that (Personal communication 2009). However, should the crisis, and delays, persist closer to the 2014-2018 Noumea Accord deadlines, their position could change, particularly if other projects in the south managed to increase their production, especially if their own northern project should stall, again skewing production and benefits towards the south at the expense of the Kanak north.

To put the exogenous difficulties in context, Xstrata was expected to proceed with construction at a time when three nickel mines closed in Western Australia (BHP's Ravensthorpe, Norilsk's Cawse mine, and Xstrata's own Sinclair mine) owing to the effects of the global financial crisis.

Northern Province – Gwangyang

The Northern Province investment arm, SMSP, has entered into a 30-year agreement with the Korean company Posco. Two joint subsidiaries have been created, the Nickel Mining Company (NMC) and the *Société du Nickel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, New Caledonian Nickel Company (SNNC). SMSP owns 51% of the venture, and Posco 49%. Using raw ore imported from three companies based in the Northern Province (1.8 b. tonnes over the next 30 years), the smelter in Gwangyang, Korea will produce 4,000 tonnes of matte in 2008 building to 30,000 tonnes (from exports of 1.8 b. tonnes of raw ore from New Caledonia) by 2010. The first shipment left New Caledonia in June 2008. The Northern Province hopes to use the revenue from the venture to offset costs of the Koniambo project.

Northern Province – Poum

Consistent with the Bercy Agreement (see Chapter 3), with Xstrata's proceeding with the Koniambo project as scheduled, SLN duly took over the Poum massif in January 2006 but to date there is no indication as to how this resource will be used (www.sln.nc accessed 21 October 2008).

In summary, whereas very solid progress has been made towards increasing New Caledonian shareholdings in existing projects, and in establishing a Northern Province nickel plant, progress has fallen short of Kanak and FLNKS expectations. FLNKS and other New Caledonian groups would like to see a bigger share for New Caledonia in SLN and Eramet, the French companies controlling existing nickel production. Progress on the big projects (Doniambo expansion and Goro) in the south has been speedier and potentially more lucrative than the northern Koniambo project. This has not gone without the notice of the Kanaks. FLNKS spokesman Victor Tutugoro warned in 2002 that it would be disastrous if the Southern Province were to have two projects and the Northern Province none (in Horowitz 2004 p. 308).

The sleight-of-hand of southern pro-France leaders in allocating a third project to the south through the Prony permit, and the subsequent legal redress then open tender which resulted in increased control by the existing dominant French company SLN, was also a blow to the confidence of the FLNKS in the context of rebalancing development. The stepping-in of two French companies to replace substantial foreign investors in the Northern Province Koniambo project similarly strengthened French control. Local concerns over job protection and the environment aggravated divisions within the pro-independence and the pro-France political groupings, to be reflected in political developments to be outlined below. The huge drop in the international price of nickel with the international financial crisis in late 2008 to less than a quarter of what it was in 2007, inevitably affected the pace of the projects. While there is time for a recovery in world prices, questions about the viability of the projects and the real effect on economic rebalancing efforts are likely to remain in the critical 2014-2018 decision-making period.

Hydrocarbons

Another major potential source of revenue for New Caledonia, rarely spoken about publicly, is evidence of the presence of hydrocarbons offshore within its EEZ.

The presence of oil and gas in the west of the main island, Grande Terre, had been known from early in the twentieth century, although it was not believed to be of commercial quality (Vialley et al 2003). From 1994, Australia and France (the French Institute, IFP, *Institut français de pétrole* in collaboration with the Mining Service of New Caledonia) participated jointly in the FAUST (French Australian Seismic Transect) within the framework of Zonéco (the program of resource assessment of New Caledonia's EEZ) to assess the likelihood of hydrocarbon resources within the contiguous EEZ.

The 2001 FAUST Zonéco survey found likely petroleum potential, both oil and gas and gas hydrate, in the northern part of the New Caledonian Basin and at the Fairway Ridge Basin (see Vialley, Lafoy, Auzende et al 2003), although later research (Nouzé et al 2009) disproved the gas hydrate possibilities. French and Australian scientists have conducted numerous prospectivity assessment surveys and studies in French and Australian waters respectively either side of the EEZ/Australian continental shelf line in the last ten years, in areas shown at Map 3 (Location of Hydrocarbons off New Caledonia). These areas are being studied closely on the basis of indicators of the presence of hydrocarbons (mainly sedimentary thickness, for early background see Symonds and Willcox 1989 and Bernardel et al 1999).

While the potential resource reserve in New Caledonian waters may be comparatively large, there is some question about viability of exploitation with existing technology. The increasing price of petroleum, and its expected scarcity in decades to come, suggest that at some point New Caledonia's offshore resources are likely to become exploitable. Some oil companies (Total and Hardman Resources) have shown interest in exploration rights.

The hydrocarbon potential represents a strategic asset for France into the future, and thus would bring into play the clauses placing a caveat over New Caledonia's responsibilities for its resources, cited earlier in this Chapter (see section on Ambiguity in the responsibility for mineral resources). Clarifying who has control over the hydrocarbon potential offshore is likely to come into play in the lead up to the 2014-2018 Noumea Accord deadlines.

Progress in implementation of the Accord

Against the background of the complex tasks of managing the immigration/electorate issue and rebalancing the benefits of the mineral resource, other aspects of Noumea Accord implementation have proceeded, with mixed results.

Institutions and symbols

Generally, the structures introduced by the Accord have been established and work well. These include the Provincial governments and Congress, along with a parallel Paris-organised Committee of Signatories to discuss and monitor the implementation of the Accord schedules.

New institutions, such as a Customary Senate, have been put in place and are engaged in the legislative process on a consultation basis. A committee was formed in 2007 to consider New Caledonian symbols, and by 2008 the government had endorsed a New Caledonian anthem and a motto, although issues such as a name and flag remained under discussion. Debate on the flag has exposed divisions (see The flag issue section below).

Despite the provision in the Accord for New Caledonia's special status as a "country", the term is actively avoided by the French State and pro-France groups. Instead, references are made to "*la Nouvelle-Calédonie*", "*la Calédonie*", the "*collectivité*" or even the outmoded and incorrect "*territoire*"; pro-independence leaders do use the term "*pays*" (see, for example, Sarkozy 2007b; Frogier in *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 8 March 2010; Néaoutyine 2009).

The land issue has receded, with a conference on land held in Noumea in 2001, and ADRAF (*Agence de Développement Rural et d'Aménagement Foncier* or Rural development and Land management Agency) carrying out its acquisition and distribution with generally very little contention. In 2008, in the context of development of the northern mine at Koniambo, agreement with customary leaders was secured for a housing estate to be built on customary land. FLNKS leaders however continue to monitor the land issue and claim few resources have been given to ADRAF in recent years to allow it to continue its work. The current schedule of transfers show the handover of ADRAF as being one of the last, projected to take place by January 2014 (*Flash d'Océanie*, 21 September 2010).

The three provincial governments are responsible for the administration of their regions, effectively with the Kanaks governing the Northern and Island Provinces, and the pro-France groups governing the Southern Province. The Matignon/Noumea Accords were based on this federal provincial system, designed to provide a means whereby the Kanaks could govern themselves within a united New Caledonia. However, one New Caledonian commentator has noted that in the implementation, too little power has been exercised by the provinces relative to the collectivity-wide Congress (Colloque 2008, Bretegnier in Regnault and Fayaud 2008 pp. 49 and 91), an eventuality which would dilute the power of the pro-independence groups (since, while they are in charge of two of the three provinces, it is the pro-France groups that dominate in the collectivity-wide (collegial) government). But it could be argued that the jury is still out on that issue. Certainly the Provinces wield some key powers relating to development of resources including mineral resources, despite ambiguities

in the Noumea Accord and Organic Law (see section on Ambiguity in the responsibility for natural resources).

Education, employment and training

The “400 cadres” (400 managers) training program (later called “*Cadres avenir*”- future managers program) was set up in 1988 to redress the chronic underrepresentation of Kanaks in the professions (then fewer than 6%, see *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 10 August 2009; see Haut Commissariat, 1999; and Guiart, 1999, p. 131). At the time, a senior Kanak leader cautioned that the training program, over ten years, would lead to the emergence of a Kanak bourgeoisie, and was part of a strategy of integration, to silence nationalist demands (Waddell 2008 p. 205). This may well have been the intention.

The French High Commission issued a 10-year review of progress in 1999. It noted that 444 people had concluded some kind of training, 70% of them Melanesian (generally meaning Kanak) (this proportion it claimed was consistent with rebalancing objectives), with a 70% success rate defined as having an employment placement (Haut Commissariat 1999, p. 8). By June 2010, the Committee of Signatories noted the High Commissioner’s report that by 31 December 2009, there were 1058 trainees, of whom 69% were Melanesian; of 700 of these who had returned to the collectivity, 490 were Kanaks who had been employed (*Relevé de conclusions* 2010 p. 5). This means that over 30% of the intake were non-Melanesian. The inclusion of non-Melanesians itself is a shift from the original aims of the program, focused on providing opportunity for Kanaks. It is not clear where the returning trainees have been placed for employment. These former trainees were not particularly evident in the upper echelons of government or industry. A newspaper report in mid-2009 suggested that the program until then had trained 41 engineers, 4 pilots, 3 doctors and 2 architects (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 10 August 2009), quite a low return for the investment in the program. It is true that Kanaks are heavily engaged in government in the Northern and Islands Provinces. But in 2009 the administration of these provinces still included large numbers of French and Caldoche officials, teachers and advisers (one Kanak leader illustrated this by referring to the Northern Province official directory, where just three of the ten directors of departments were Kanak, all of the others European, Personal communication, March 2009).

Progress on efforts to enshrine protection of local employment in local law, a critical element in the concept of New Caledonian citizenship under the Accord, has been slow. A draft law prepared by the *Avenir Ensemble*-led government, relating to preferential employment in the local civil service, was rejected by the French Council of State, and a subsequent draft before the Congress, aiming at protecting access to local jobs by local residents of 10 years’ residence was hampered by an abstention by the FLNKS in December 2009 (Muckle, 2009 pp 190-191; *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 14 January 2010). A text was agreed and voted on by July 2010, with some reservations on the criteria applying to locals protected by the law (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 28 July 2010). The Committee of Signatories in December 2010 simply foreshadowed further

consideration of this issue by the Congress in the future (*Relevé de conclusions* 2010 p. 5).

The French State has respected its commitments to “accompany” the collectivity by providing the requisite funding transfers as various responsibilities have been devolved. However, there remain issues over the phased handover of some powers to the New Caledonian government by the French State, particularly the responsibility for education. The Noumea Accord provided for transfer of primary school responsibility in the first term of the newly created New Caledonian Government (i.e. 1999 to 2004), which was duly completed; and secondary schooling in the second and third terms (2004-2009 and 2009-2014 respectively). Little had been done by the end of the second mandate (2009), or indeed by the time of writing (mid 2011), to transfer secondary education to New Caledonia, amidst concerns by some pro-France forces about changing the French national system with the risk that standards would not be maintained. While this opposition came mainly from the Caldoches, French transients (posted in the collectivity) and mainly European Noumea urban population, some FLNKS elements shared some of the concerns. It was only well behind schedule, in November 2009, that the New Caledonian Congress passed legislation providing for the handover of the secondary education function by January 2012; and the pro-independence side accepted continued authority by France over teacher qualification, issuing diplomas and approving the final school curriculum (see Maclellan 2009c). And by September 2010, when New Caledonian President Gomès and French High Commissioner Dassonville signed a framework agreement covering the transfer of some responsibilities, on the critical education issue, the schedule had again slipped, providing for the transfer of secondary education from 1 January 2011 to 1 January 2013 (*Oceania Flash* 21 September 2010).

The education issue is particularly delicate, as the French education system was a major issue in the *événements* period, with FLNKS supporters establishing Kanak People’s Schools in the rural areas in the early 1980s. There has been some progress in responding to Kanak concerns. The primary school curriculum has been altered to cover local history, and an *Académie des langues kanak*, Academy of Kanak Languages, was established in 2007. But, whereas the local French system is one with universal access, in practice it remains two-tier in New Caledonia. Kanak children attend local primary schools in the provinces but only by travelling long distances or by boarding at very young ages, or both. Schooling is also conducted in French, a handicap for the indigenous people, particularly when it is considered that there are 28 indigenous languages (Tryon in Faberon and Hage 2010 p. 399; also Mokkadem et al 1999). When important exams occur at the end of middle school, the “*brevet*”, many Kanaks are funneled into more technical areas while academic streams tend to be dominated by non-Kanaks. Most of the 30% of students who drop out of the school system are Kanaks (Maclellan 2009c). Kanaks represented only 23% of candidates for the baccalauréat exam in 2009, compared to 69% Europeans (*De l’école coloniale à l’école d’émancipation, Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 22 March 2010). The 2009 Census showed that in 2009, 54.1 per cent of Europeans had the baccalauréat, compared to

only 12.5 per cent of Kanaks and 14.2 per cent of Wallisians. 20,233 Europeans had obtained a tertiary degree, but only 2,214 Kanaks and 470 Wallisians.

Slippage in other transitional arrangements

In other areas, the New Caledonian Congress agreed, in November 2009, that it would take over control of maritime affairs in its territorial waters on January 1, 2011 and control of domestic air transport and airport police in January 2013, although the international airport at Tontouta would remain under French control (*Flash d'Océanie* 1 December 2009; Maclellan 2009c).

For the duration of his term, from late 2007 to October 2010, the French High Commissioner, Yves Dassonville, sought to play an energizing role, tightening up the processes for successful completion of transfers of powers, even in sensitive areas (Personal communication February 2009). However, implementation of the main process, convening the Noumea Accord follow-up mechanism, the Committee of Signatories, was fitful. After the Seventh Meeting in December 2008, the Committee did not meet until June 2010, Paris twice deferring scheduled meetings (from 2009 to early 2010 *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 29 March 2010), citing pressing domestic preoccupations, but perhaps also responding to emerging differences within each of the pro-France and pro-independence groupings. The Conclusions of the Meetings reveal a hesitation and slippage in implementation, particularly on the key issues.

The Seventh Meeting of the Committee, in December 2008, agreed that transfers in the key areas provided for in the Noumea Accord (secondary public education, and responsibility for the *Agence de Développement de la Culture Kanak* (ADCK or Kanak Cultural Development Agency) and the *Agence de Développement Rural et d'Aménagement Foncier* (ADRAF or Rural Development and Land Management Agency) should proceed. While it underlined that no transfer should be partial, it did agree that transfers could be “progressive”, i.e., that the pace of transfer could be negotiated. The French State agreed to provide accompanying funding. The meeting decided that certain other powers, specifically civil security, and civil and commercial law, should be treated with flexibility. In mid 2009, the transfer of these powers was deferred from 2009 to 2011 (see *Relevé de conclusions* 2008; and *Flash d'Océanie* 10 December 2008).

When the June 2010 Meeting was finally scheduled, as preparation, the New Caledonian Congress sought in May 2010 to endorse a convention on the transfer of responsibilities to be signed by President Gomès when the Committee of Signatories met. However, UC members absented themselves from the vote and instead sought a review of progress under the Accord (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 20 and 24 May 2010). The Eighth Meeting essentially established a number of sub-committees to handle ongoing issues: a Pilot Committee on the Transfers of Responsibilities, to assess progress so far; a Strategic Industry Committee to continue the work of a mining assessment team; and a Committee to prepare for the post-2014 vote provided for in the Accord (*Relevé de conclusions* 2010).

New Caledonian President Gomès signed a framework agreement with French High Commissioner Dassonville on 24 September 2010, but it covered the transfer of some responsibilities already transferred (public service training, public telecommunications and post office functions), and, as noted above, slowed the transfer of secondary education to 1 January 2013. The New Caledonian government announced at the same time that working groups were looking at transfers in further areas, including civil and commercial law, civil status, civil security, all three levels of education, lands and cultural institutions. Transfer of the ADCK was envisaged to take place by January 2012, of the ADRAF by January 2014, and of domestic maritime and domestic air transport police and security, respectively, by January 2011 and 2013 (*Océanie Flash* 21 September 2010).

The Ninth Committee of Signatories was scheduled to meet in June or July 2011.

External affairs responsibility

The Noumea Accord provides for New Caledonia to take over some aspects of external trade, air and maritime services (Article 3.1.1), the French State specifically retaining responsibility for foreign affairs, but with New Caledonia able to have its own representation in South Pacific countries, and certain South Pacific, EU and UN organizations, and to negotiate agreements with these countries in areas of its responsibility under the Accord (Article 3.2.1). The Accord specifically says that training will be provided to prepare New Caledonians for their new responsibilities in international relations (Article 3.2.1).

In practice, however, as in the other two Pacific entities, there has been little substantive investment in preparing New Caledonian local officials for such responsibilities. Although a Unit for International Cooperation exists under the office of the President, it is poorly staffed and resourced. Bernard Deladrière, an experienced advisor to the New Caledonian Government under Frogier, handled foreign affairs virtually single-handedly until the 2004 elections, after which the Thémereau government engaged a New Zealander to head its external affairs unit. However from 2008 to 2009, the Martin government attached no priority to the external affairs unit, which was moved to a different building from that occupied by the Government, without appointing a director for it. There has been little or no training in English, or in international relations and diplomacy. The Gomès government has announced that it will attach local personnel to French embassies in the Pacific (see *Flash d'Océanie* 10 March 2010). Without a solid and well trained Secretariat, and strong English-language skills, it is difficult for senior New Caledonian government members to participate meaningfully in the many specialized regional meetings they ideally should attend each year.

France's claim over Matthew and Hunter Islands

Notwithstanding the transitional nature of the Noumea Accord, France has continued to assert its claim over the islands of Matthew and Hunter, a claim which has been contested by elements of the FLNKS.

Originally discovered by British sea vessels in the late 18th century, both France and Britain had claimed the islands relatively recently (France in 1929 and Britain in 1965). France retained its claims after Vanuatu's independence in 1980, when Vanuatu asserted its own claim. To make a point, France established a weather station on one of the islands in 1981. As recently as 2004, an incident demonstrated the commitment of each to their claim. France had detained a Taiwanese fishing-boat for illegally fishing in Matthew and Hunter waters in November 2004, but allowed the vessel to leave when the fishermen flashed a fishing authorization by Vanuatu authorities. Subsequently both France and Vanuatu agreed to negotiate an agreement on the sharing of resources in the area and France proposed further cooperation with Vanuatu in policing the maritime zone. In May 2005, Vanuatu threatened to take the matter up with the United Nations (*Flash d'Océanie* 25 May 2005), but did not subsequently do so.

In May, 2007, as part of Law of the Sea procedures enabling members to extend their continental shelves, France lodged a submission on behalf of New Caledonia, relating *inter alia* to the area encompassing the Matthews and Hunter group. In July 2007 Vanuatu's Prime Minister wrote to the President of France objecting to UN consideration of the submission, and subsequently registered its objection with the UN. In a letter from the office of the French Prime Minister to the Secretary-General of the Law of the sea, France wrote that it "takes notice of this objection" (Gorce 2007).

In recent years France has sent annual "*missions de souveraineté*" (sovereignty missions) to the island groups, often with scientists aboard (see for example *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 3 February 2009).

Vanuatu has called upon Melanesian solidarity in advancing its claim. In July 2009, on the eve of France's hosting its Oceanic Summit with regional leaders, the Melanesian Spearhead Group, which has its secretariat in Vanuatu, and includes Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and the FLNKS from New Caledonia, signed the Kéamu Declaration, stating that the Matthew and Hunter group traditionally belonged to Vanuatu. The FLNKS signatory, Victor Tutugoro, had secured the agreement of New Caledonia's Customary Senate to the agreement (*Flash d' Océanie* 28 and 29 July 2009).

Action on post-Noumea Accord sovereign or "régalien" powers

The Noumea Accord provides that votes will be held after 2014 on the transfer of responsibility for the final sovereign powers: foreign affairs, defence, justice, law and order, and currency (Article 3.3). But France has acted in two of these areas, defence and the currency, in ways which would bear on the future, post-Accord characteristics of New Caledonia.

Defence commitments

In 2008 France constructed a large military complex in Noumea, for the first time bringing together the headquarters of all of its Pacific military forces under one roof. The same year the French installed a listening post facility near Tontouta, the

international airport in New Caledonia (*Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 6 September 2009). And in its Defence White Paper that year, the Sarkozy government announced that New Caledonia would form the base for France's Pacific military presence (see Chapter 8). Also in 2008, France announced a Mutual Logistical Support Arrangement with Australia, under which New Caledonia would give ongoing logistical support to Australia (see Chapter 7).

Since the defence function is one of the five *régalien* or sovereign responsibilities specifically mentioned in the Noumea Accord as being subject to a vote after 2014, the timing of France's consolidation of its defence presence raises questions about its commitments to the Accord. Indeed, this French action is reminiscent of the declaration made by Mitterrand about reinforcing Noumea as a military base in the troubled mid 1980s, designed to underline French military power to potential troublemakers (see Chapter 3).

The inconsistency with Noumea Accord principles has not gone unnoticed. Kanak leader Roch Wamytan opposed the defence measures (*Islands Business* November 2009), saying that such steps were inconsistent for "a country on the path to emancipation". Acknowledging that defence was a French sovereign power, Wamytan noted that the French state was making decisions lasting five to twenty years in the future without involving the pro-independence signatories of the Noumea Accord.

Question of the Euro

One further inconsistency in the implementation of the Noumea Accord has been on another of the five sovereign powers to be addressed after 2014, the currency. New Caledonia's current currency is rooted in the colonial past. The three French Pacific territories have used the cfp from 1945, when it referred to "*colonies françaises du Pacifique*" or French Pacific colonies, but was known as "*Change français du Pacifique*" from 1947 (Tesoka and Ziller 2008, p. 395), although it has been defined variously as "*cours*" or "*comptoir français pacifique*" (all loosely meaning "French Pacific Currency"). France negotiated a special exception in the EU Maastricht Treaty when it adopted the Euro and stipulated "France will retain the right to issue currency in its overseas territories...and will be the only authority to determine parity of the cfp" (Special Protocol Number 13, Maastricht Treaty, see Tesoka and Ziller 2008 p.404). From 1 January 1999, the cfp was linked with the Euro at a specified rate (EUR 1:120 cfp). Until then, it had been linked with the US dollar for a number of years (including through the US:French franc rate, see Webster's online dictionary, Definition of Cfp).

With France's switch from its own franc to the Euro in 2002, the French State's position on the cfp has been that it can be replaced by the Euro if all three French Pacific collectivities agreed to do so. Despite initial opposition, French Polynesia has agreed to the change, and the question is not an issue in Wallis and Futuna. But for the pro-independence parties in New Caledonia, the question is a sensitive one. They see the cfp as a symbol of the past. For FLNKS leaders, resorting to the currency of the *métropole*, let alone that of Europe, would be a backward step in the move to

independence. Some even believe that if a change were to be made, it would be preferable to move to the Australian dollar given the economic realities of the region, a position which is totally unacceptable to the French State (Personal communication to author 2004; see also Maclellan 2005b p. 413 on local concerns that a move to the Euro would be inconsistent with linkages to the Pacific region).

Most importantly, pro-independence leaders see discussion of this issue as premature. They point out that the currency is one of the five “*régalien*”(sovereign) issues spelt out in the Noumea Accord) which are to be looked at within any new political organization resulting from the 2014-2018 consultations following a referendum (see Néaoutyine 2006, p. 78 and Personal communication Tutugoro 2009). They wonder why France has raised this issue and see it as divisive.

The issue remains under ongoing discussion in the Noumea Accord Signatories Committee. The seventh meeting of the Committee of Signatories in December 2008 could only secure agreement for working groups to “study” a possible move to replace the cfp with the Euro (*Relevé de conclusions* 2008).

Social and cultural factors

It is difficult to assess the social effect of the implementation of the Noumea Accord to date. As in other regional island countries, urban drift is a fact of life (see Table 7). But a two-tier society is particularly evident in the city. Chirac’s decision to excise the ethnic category from the 2004 census, questioning by the New Caledonian government of official 2009 census results, and the inclusion of non-comparable ethnic categories in 2009, all make it difficult to quantify the ethnic characteristics of Noumea. The 1996 census showed that of Greater Noumea’s population of 118, 823, Melanesians (Kanak) totalled 25, 613 (21%), Europeans 54, 323 (45.7%), and others 38,887 (32%, including Wallisians, Tahitians, Indonesians, Vietnamese, ni-Vanuatu and others) (ISEE TEC 2008 p. 35). So Kanaks were far outnumbered by Europeans and other islanders and ethnic groups.

The 2009 census showed that the population of Noumea itself (i.e. not Greater Noumea as cited above) had increased from 76,293 in 1996 to 97,579 in 2009; and the population of the Southern Province as a whole from 134,546 to 183,007 in the same period. The populations of the two Kanak-dominated provinces showed an annual decline of 1.38% and small increase of .66% respectively whereas the white dominated Southern province grew by 2.4% per annum in that period, suggesting that much of the inflow to the South consisted of Kanaks from the Northern and Islands Provinces.

Noumea has remained clearly a European city. The council housing blocks on the outskirts of Noumea, while pleasant and of a high quality, were fully occupied by Kanaks, and the miserable squats in certain outlying areas solely Kanak, and growing. A 2009 survey showed that the middle classes were deserting Noumea (15% decline from 1996 to 2002), which was showing a widening gap between the very well-off (who are generally European) and the squatters (mainly Kanaks) (SCAN 2009 cited in *Les classes moyennes désertent Nouméa, Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 22 March 2010).

The new, small, efficient public buses that serviced the capital were almost exclusively used by Kanaks and occasionally foreign tourists, rarely if ever by Caldoche or French residents

In central Noumea in 2009, Kanaks were notable by their absence in meaningful employment in government, shops or business. They occupied low level service jobs, such as in garbage collection and domestic cleaning. The only other visible Kanaks were the aimless groups, mainly of young Kanaks, sitting and strolling around the Place des Cocotiers at any given time.

According to a senior Kanak leader Déwé Gorodey, many young people took refuge in music and drugs (mainly light hashish), and by returning to their villages periodically, rather than participating in modern life. Such practices are of real concern when set in the context of Tjibaou's concerns about the reasons for, and effect of, alcohol consumption by Kanaks, which were important underpinnings for his leadership of the independence movement (Waddell 2008).

The creation of the impressive Tjibaou Cultural Centre on the Tina peninsula on the outskirts of Noumea, and of the *Agence de développement de la culture kanak*, also reflect the society's dichotomies. These institutions certainly represent the financial commitment of the French State to encourage the evolution of Kanak culture. But it is an irony that the Tjibaou Centre's main buildings were designed by a European architect, Renzo Piano. Although inspired by the concept of a *case*, or Melanesian house, in the process of construction and evolution, the construction is essentially a European one. Kanak-sponsored performances in this elegant structure have been dwarfed by large-scale rock concerts which Kanak groups organize regularly in fields and stadiums elsewhere, featuring international and local indigenous artists. Young Kanaks flock to these rock concerts in large numbers.

Mwâ Kâ and cultural symbolism

The continuing role of Kanak cultural symbolism, and the ambiguous views of the French and local Caldoches towards it, were evident in the effort by the *Conseil National des Droits du Peuple Autochtone* (CNDPA, National Council for Indigenous Peoples Rights) to give a totemic monument, the *Mwâ Kâ* (literally, "big house") to the city of Noumea (see Maclellan 2005a for a full discussion of this). The monument, 12 metres high and carved by representatives of the eight traditional Kanak areas, was designed to represent the unity of the people of New Caledonia. The organizers had planned to erect it, on 24 September 2003, the day when France's taking possession of New Caledonia is traditionally marked, and specifically for the 150th anniversary.

The organisers had hoped to erect the monument in the central Place des Cocotiers, in between the statues of two Governors, Olry (described by one organizer as a symbol of military repression) and Feillet (referred to as representing economic development for profit alone).

Not surprisingly, the event was fraught with tensions and differences. Senior FLNKS leaders were at pains to emphasize that the initiative had not been an FLNKS one, but one from a small group of Kanaks (Personal communication, 2009). On the pro-France side, the Mayor of Noumea, Jean Lèques, declined to situate the monument in the central Place des Cocotiers as requested, with veteran Southern Province President Jacques Lafleur stepping into the breach and inviting its temporary location in a square not far from the New Caledonian Government and Southern Province offices. For different reasons, this offer displeased some Kanak activists and pro-France supporters alike. Differences over this issue highlighted, and reflected, divisions which were emerging at the time within both the pro-independence and pro-France groupings to be discussed in the Political transition and realignment section below.

It was only on 24 September, 2005, when a new *Avenir Ensemble* government agreed to the monument's permanent placement, that a handover ceremony took place, at a site near the Museum of New Caledonia. Some senior pro-France New Caledonian leaders did not attend the ceremony erecting the totem.

Family Reconciliation: Tjibaou meets Wéa

More encouragingly, the easing of tensions and stable climate engendered by the Noumea Accord did allow for a rapprochement of sorts between the Kanak clans affected by the 1989 assassination of Tjibaou at Gossanah.

In 2004 Marie-Claude Tjibaou led a ritual reconciliation ceremony between the Tjibaou family at Hienghène and the Wéa family of Ouvea. However, this gesture, designed to signify not only forgiveness by the wronged family, but a unity of common cultural purpose, was itself fraught with tension. One of Tjibaou's sons did not participate, and customary leaders in Hienghène were reserved about the ceremony. Strong emotions continue to surround not only the assassination, but the path represented by Tjibaou, leaving question marks for the future, particularly should a new young Kanak pro-independence leader emerge (for a sympathetic elaboration of the dynamics in Ouvea as opposed to elsewhere in the Kanak communities, see Waddell, 2008).

Political transition and realignment

The Noumea Accord is based on an inclusive, collegial government, albeit one which votes on issues, necessarily strengthening the power of a majority. The Accord, continuing measures established in the Matignon Accords, provided for three provinces, each of which elect representatives to provincial assemblies, some of which serve in New Caledonia's Congress (see Table 8). Southern Province elects 40 members (of whom 32 are in the Congress), Northern Province 22 (15) and Loyalty Islands Province 14 (7). Elections operate on a party list system, and only parties securing more than 5% of the vote can earn representation. The Congress in turn elects a collegial "Government", or Executive made up of Members (similar to Ministers) who hold assigned portfolios. This Government may include from 5 to 11 Members, elected on the basis of a formula reflecting the proportion of party strength in the

Congress. The Congress has legislative powers in specified areas within its competence.

Table 8
New Caledonia: Political institutions

Provincial Elections (restricted electorate) → Congressional seats → New Caledonian Government

<i>Southern Province</i>					
40	of which	32)		
<i>Northern Province</i>)		
22 seats of which	of which	15)		from 5 to 11
<i>Southern Province</i>)		
14	of which	7)		

Source: ISEE TEC 2008 p. 3.2

The Noumea Accord envisaged elections to the provincial assemblies and Congress every 5 years, i.e., four sets of elections (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014), after which the issue of proceeding to a series of up to three referendums would be addressed.

As the following sections will show, despite, or perhaps because of, the violent differences which led to the Matignon and Noumea Accord provisions, the collegial province-based system has shown itself to be generally resilient in its first decade, surviving political division. Not unnaturally in this transition period taking over the levers of government in a new collegial format, both major groupings have undergone significant change and fragmentation. The first three elections to the Congress in the post-Noumea Accord period have reflected a number of these political changes (see Table 9 on Political Representation 1999 and 2009), and are a good measure of the success of the Noumea Accord system.

Pro-France fragmentation

The most significant political change in New Caledonia from 1999 to 2009 has been a realignment within the pro-France groups. This change represented in part generational change. The old pro-France guard, led by the authoritarian and energetic, albeit ageing, Jacques Lafleur in the RPCR renamed the *Rassemblement-UMP* (R-UMP) after its conservative counterpart in France, the UMP (Popular Movement Union), was challenged by a younger group, the *Avenir Ensemble* (AE, Future together) led by Harold Martin, Marie-Noëlle Thémereau, Philip Gomès, and Didier Leroux. This new party was formed just months before the 2004 elections, but managed to win 16 of the 54 Congress seats in that election.

Apart from concern over the centralized style of Lafleur and related personality differences (for example, Lafleur and Didier Leroux participated in a heated televised

debate leading up to the election), the formation of the AE was driven by a feeling that Lafleur's Rassemblement-UMP was running the Congress and Executive more as a majority government than as a collegial group as explicitly intended in the Accord. These concerns were not without foundation. At the outset, in the first years of the first term, the Executive had been scrupulous to observe the externalities of a collegial government. The (RPCR) President was never seen at public functions without the (FLNKS) Vice-President at his side, with amusing cartoons showing the ubiquitous image of the tall Frogier with the diminutive bespectacled Déwé Gorodey in her flowered oceanic dress. The image was a powerful symbol of the new arrangements.

But the RPCR's inclusiveness and patience with the FLNKS cooled over time within that first five-year term. Increasingly, the exigencies of government demanded that the Executive vote on key government decisions, inevitably leading to a pattern of dominance by the majority over the FLNKS minority. By 2003 Gorodey no longer appeared with Frogier, and physically distanced herself from the RPCR/R-UMP. She declined to move into the new Congress headquarters, across the road from the grander Southern Province waterside offices, on the basis that the Congress would be literally overlooked constantly by Jacques Lafleur (President of Southern Province)(*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 4 December 2002). (Reviving the 1980s tendency to blame Australia for problems with the Kanaks, one local satirical political monthly, the *Chien Bleu*, reported an RPCR view that Gorodey preferred the company of the Australians, a reference to the location of the Australian Consulate-general in the same building as the former government offices, where Gorodey had chosen to remain, *Chien Bleu* January 2003.)

Meanwhile, there were many developments, apart from concerns at how collegiality was working, which established and reinforced a commonality of interests among some pro-independence and pro-France supporters. These common concerns resulted from the French State's handling of definition of the restricted electorate, the removal of the ethnic category from the census, and over employment protection and environment concerns highlighted by the rapidly developing nickel projects at the time. As discussed below, the FLNKS itself was experiencing further fragmentation and disaffection, partly fed by the old divide-and-rule habits of the RPCR/R-UMP. For example, the RPCR had been instrumental in husbanding the support of immigrant Wallisians, and stirred the pot at Saint-Louis between Wallisians and FLNKS leader Roch Wamytan, who was chief of the local Kanak tribe there. These moves backfired when some disaffected Kanaks gravitated towards the new AE. The AE thus came to unify many Caldoches and Kanaks around these common concerns. In a way it reflected a new pro-New Caledonian ideal which eclipsed for a time other fealties, and led it to win as many seats in the 2004 Congress as the RPCR/R-UMP did (Table 9). This development led to a shake up in the R-UMP itself, with Frogier replacing Lafleur as President, followed by the resignation of Lafleur who formed a further party, the *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie* (RPC) in 2006 along with Senator Simon Loueckhote. But by 2008 Loueckhote himself had formed yet another pro-France party, the *Mouvement de la Diversité* (Diversity Movement, MDD).

The split in the pro-France camp, especially around these New Caledonian-centred issues, concerned the French State. The government of newly-elected UMP candidate Nicolas Sarkozy called for the AE and R-UMP to unite, which while resulting in a short-term reshuffle, instead led to further splits in the pro-France ranks into a number of small parties. In July 2007, AE leader Martin agreed on a cooperation pact with Pierre Frogier of the R-UMP, which was opposed by other AE founders Philippe Gomès and Didier Leroux. President Thémereau and Leroux resigned from the Executive. Frogier became Congress President and Martin, President of the Executive. By the end of 2008, just months before the 2009 provincial/Congress elections, the AE had split into numerous parties including those led by Philippe Gomès (Caledonia Together, *Calédonie Ensemble*), Thémereau (Union for a future together, *Union pour un avenir ensemble*) and Didier Leroux (Future Together *Avenir Ensemble*). The ultra right wing Front National split when its former leader Guy George formed the *Mouvement Calédonien français* (French Caledonian Movement, MCF). Moreover, a number of small groups emerged covering a range of interests, from environmental to protection of local employment, some neither pro-France nor pro-independence, but all hoping to be courted by either side for representation in electoral lists.

In the end, the pro-France side paid a high price for disunity. In May 2009 provincial elections it returned with a reduced majority, winning 31 of the 54 seats, five fewer than in 2004. The overarching role of the RPCR had been replaced by three major groups, the R-UMP headed by Frogier (13 seats), the Caledonia Together headed by Gomès (10 seats) and the Future Together by Martin (6 seats), together with Jacques Lafleur's new party the RPC (2 seats). The most nationalist group, the National Front/MCF, won no seats at all. And no pro-France group won any representation in the Loyalty Islands, which was a first.

Pro-independence disunity

The FLNKS too were divided. Leaders could not agree even on who should be President from 2001 onwards, although in the consensus-centred Kanak culture this was less a problem than it might have been in the other mainly non-Kanak political parties. Whereas the FLNKS ran on a relatively united ticket in 1999, by 2004 the UC and a new UC Renouveau could not agree to run on the FLNKS ticket, dividing the vote and considerably damaging their chances in the Southern Province. In 2004 the FLNKS did not win one seat in Southern Province. This was a new and worrying trend for collegiality, the more so when there remained in both the Northern and Island Province some form of representation, however small, of the pro-France parties (see Table 9). The real concern was that with no representation in the Southern Province, where the vast Goro project was proceeding relatively swiftly compared to the Koniambo project in the North, the Kanak polity would feel further marginalized and isolated from power and money centres.

The FLNKS had appeared to have learned the political lesson of its losses in the Southern Province. Together with the LKS, it had been able to secure four cabinet ministries in the new Executive elected in 2007 following the R-UMP/AE accommodation, as opposed to the three positions it had held before then. Its efforts

to agree on a united ticket in the south, in order to win back representation there, were frustrated, however, by the formation of a new, more vocal and potentially disruptive, pro-independence force.

In November 2007, the *Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanaks et des Exploités* (Federation of Unions of Kanak Workers and the Exploited, USTKE) formed a new political party, the Labour Party (*Parti travailliste*). The USTKE, although not the largest or most powerful Kanak union, was a highly visible one, and had been behind numerous strikes, protests and blockades for decades, including in the years following the signature of the Noumea Accord, stirring up general strikes and airport blockades over local employment protection issues. As a union, it had also been manipulated in the past by pro-France groupings in order to undermine Kanak unity.

The Labour Party's platform included to protect employment rights of the Kanaks and ensure implementation of the Noumea Accord. It held its first Congress in November 2008, and revised its objective to seeking full sovereignty and independence in 2014. It noted the non-implementation of the Noumea Accord particularly in the areas of local employment protection and economic rebalancing. In March 2009 it staged a blockade at the international airport on employment rights (opposing SLN measures to reduce working hours in the wake of plummeting nickel prices) to which the French State responded with police force and teargas (see Fisher 2009a). In the lead up to the May 2009 provincial elections, the Labour Party supported the idea of proceeding immediately to a referendum on independence in 2014 (see Referendum issue section below).

Although the formal membership of the Labour Party is small (just over 500 attended its 2008 Congress), its potential to mobilize has been proven, not only to rally supporters to demonstrate as in the early 2009 airport blockade, but also in the USTKE's sponsoring large music festivals which have attracted tens of thousands of young New Caledonians (see for example Maclellan 2005a p. 11).

So the new Labour Party presented a problem for the unity of the pro-independence group. It ran its own lists in all three Provinces, drawing away votes from the mainstream FLNKS groups.

Table 9
New Caledonia: Post-Noumea Accord election results

Turnout	1999 74%	2004 76.42%	2009 (May) 72%	2009 (Dec)*
New Caledonian Congress				
RPCR (pro-France)	24			
RPC (Lafleur)			2	2
Rassemblement-UMP (Frogier)		16	13	13
Front National	4	4		
Alliance (pro-France)	3			
Avenir Ensemble (pro-France)		16	6	6
Calédonie ensemble(Gomès)			10	10
<i>Total Pro-France</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>31</i>
UNI-FLNKS (independentist)		8		
FLNKS	12		3	3
UNI (Palika)	6		8	6
Union Calédonienne		7	8	8
Fédération de Coordination des Indépendantistes (FCCI)	4	1		
UC Renouveau		1		
LKS	1	1	1	1
Parti Travailleiste			3	4
Union nationale pour le renouveau				1
<i>Total pro-independence</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>23</i>
Total	54	54	54	54
<i>Executive</i>				
AE		4		
RPCR/Rass UMP	8	4	3	
M' mt pour la Diversité			1	
Calédonie Ensemble			3	
<i>Total pro-France</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>7</i>	
UNI-FLNKS	3	2		
UC		1	2	
Palika			1	
FLNKS			1	
<i>Total pro-independence</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	
<i>Total Executive</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>11</i>	

Southern Province

AE (pro-France)		19	8
Calédonie Ensemble			11
RPCR (pro-France)	25	16	
RPC			2
Rassemblement-UMP			15
Alliance Pour la Calédonie (pro-France)	4		
Front National (pro-France)	5	1	
<i>Total pro-France</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>36</i>
FLNKS	6		4
<i>Total pro-independence</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>4</i>
Total	40 (of which 32 in Congress)		

Northern Province

UNI-FLNKS (ind)		11	9
FLNKS-UC			8
Parti Travailliste			3
FLNKS	6		
UNI	8		
UC (independentist)		7	
FCCI	4		
<i>Total pro-independence</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>20</i>
RPCR	4	3	
AE		1	
Rassemblement-UMP			1
Une Province pour tous			1
<i>Total pro-France</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2</i>
Total	22 (of which 15 are in Congress)		

Islands Province

				Dec 2009*
FLNKS	6			
FLNKS/UC			6	
Palika	2			
UC		4		6
UNI		2		
UNI/FLNKS			4	
LKS	2	2	2	2
Parti Travailliste			2	4
UC Renouveau		2		
FCCI	2	2		
Union nationale pour le renouveau				2
<i>Total pro-independence</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>14</i>
RPCR	2	2		
<i>Total pro-France</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Total	14 (of which 7 are in Congress)			

*December 2009 figures reflect a re-run of the Islands elections in December 2009

Still, in May 2009 provincial elections, the mainstream pro-independence groups were able to increase their support in both the Loyalty Islands and the Southern Province,

enabling them to restore representation they had lost in the latter province in 2004 (although it is arguable that FLNKS could have won more than the 4 out of 40 Southern Province seats if the Labour Party had not run its own list). They increased their total representation from 18 to 20 seats in the 54-member Congress, with the UC and UNI (*Union Nationale pour l'Indépendance* – National Union for Independence) 8 seats each, FLNKS 3, LKS 1, see Table 9). But the brand new Labour Party won 3 seats, bringing total pro-independence representation to 23 seats.

The Labour Party also had managed to secure representation in both the Northern and Loyalty Islands provinces. However it was not satisfied with its win of 2 seats in Loyalty Islands, and called for a re-run of the election there owing to electoral anomalies (principally the disproportionately high number of proxy votes for those islanders residing on the main island). The French Council of State voided the province's election and in a re-run in November 2009, the Labour Party doubled its representation, to four. This meant a further increase in its representation in the Congress, from 3 to 4 seats.

Meanwhile divisions within the FLNKS mainstream groups persist (for example in the election of the Vice-President, the former incumbent and expected winner, Palika's Déwé Gorodey was displaced by UC's Pierre Ngaihoni.²³ How the mainstream FLNKS groups manage their own divisions, and more extreme Labour Party demands, will be a challenge as the 2009 Congress prepares for the transition to a post-Noumea Accord New Caledonia.

Evolving views on what comes after the Noumea Accord

Referendum issue during the 2009 campaign

The campaign for the 2009 provincial elections saw the emergence of preliminary positions on both sides relating to the holding of one to three final referendums as provided for under the Noumea Accord.

The Accord provides that from the beginning of the fourth term (2014) with the approval of three fifths of Congress, a date will be set for a referendum on the transfer of the “*régalien*”, or five sovereign, responsibilities to New Caledonia (i.e. justice, law and order, defence, currency and foreign affairs); on its access to “an international status of full responsibility”; and on the organization of citizenship and nationality (Article 5). The electoral body for such a referendum is broader than that for provincial elections, including all voters in those elections but also those establishing 20 years' residence to December 2014 (i.e. those establishing residence before 31

²³ The post 2009 elected New Caledonian “Government” or Cabinet consisted of seven members from pro-French parties (for Rassemblement-UMP: Bernard Deladrière, Jean-Claude Briault, Sonia Backes, for Calédonie Ensemble: Philippe Germain, Philippe Dunoyer and for LMD party, Le Mouvement pour la Diversité, which had entered into an alliance with Rassemblement-UMP: Simon Loueckhote) and four from the pro-independence side (UC: Pierre Ngaihoni, Yann Devillers, Palika: Déwé Gorodey, FLNKS: Jean-Louis d'Anglebermes).

December 1994) (see Appendix 1). If voters vote against the proposals in the first referendum, and if one third of the Congress decides so, a second will be held, and if the vote is again negative, a third on the same basis. If the response is still negative, then “political partners” will meet to examine the position. If Congress has not fixed a date for a vote before the end of the penultimate year of the mandate (2017), the French State will do so in the final year (2018). This provision, together with the successive three vote option, led one senior French adviser, Alain Christnacht to suggest, in early 2011, that technically a vote could slip to 2023 (Christnacht 2011). Whatever the case, the “political organization”, set in place by the 1998 Noumea Accord, will remain, at its latest stage, without any regression to the *status quo ante*.

Well before the May 2009 May provincial elections, the pro-France side had already planted the seed of an alternative to the provisions of the Noumea Accord. They claimed that proceeding to the referendum(s) envisaged in the Accord would result in the predictable outcome of a vote to stay with France, since, in all elections so far since the Noumea Accord, the pro-France side has won the most seats. They warned that proceeding to a vote would therefore needlessly arouse sensitivities and probably violence (see for example “*L’Interview: Jacques Lafleur mêlera sa voix à la campagne*”, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 27 February 2009). The caution is probably justified. The demographics discussed earlier in this Chapter show increasing predominance of newcomer immigrants from France and other French entities, who tend to support staying with France; and a decline in the percentage of Kanaks, who form the bulk of those supporting independence. It was such concerns which had led to the proposal by Jacques Lafleur to renegotiate and extend the Matignon Accords in 1998. At that time, he envisaged an extension of an independence vote by 30 years, although compromised on the 15 years provided for in the Noumea Accord (i.e. from 1999 to 2014) (according to Pierre Frogier, Lafleur made the concession in the pressured final hours of the negotiations, Personal communication, March 2009).

On 4 January 2008, echoing Lafleur’s earlier moves in 1998, AE’s Harold Martin in his inaugural speech as President of the Congress, referred to the Noumea Accord provision for the post-2014 Congress to approve with a three fifths vote, the holding of an electoral consultation, or referendum, on New Caledonia taking over full state powers, which would be three times repeated in the event of a negative vote, after which all political parties would meet to discuss the situation. He noted that the result of any such vote would be predictable (i.e. not in favour of the independence camp) and proposed devising now “a new accord for New Caledonians”, without waiting for the referendums (see *Flash d’Océanie*, 8 January 2008). His suggestion at the time was met with silence from the pro-independence FLNKS side, whom he had evidently not consulted.

Separately, from early 2009, Jacques Lafleur persistently floated the idea of a 50-year further delay in moves to any vote for independence in a “*pacte cinquantenaire*” (50-year agreement) (for example, *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 26 February 2009, 27 April 2009, 5 March, 2009, 25 September 2009, 27 October 2009, 13 January 2010).

During the 2009 provincial election campaign, there were mixed views amongst the parties on the idea of delaying a vote. Interestingly, the most strident views came from elements of each opposing camp, both favouring the idea of proceeding as early as possible to a “*référendum couperet*” (cut-off referendum), but for different reasons. Pierre Frogier, R-UMP leader, spoke volubly and publicly about the need to proceed immediately in 2014 to a referendum, i.e., not to wait until later in the agreed period to 2018 to vote. He described holding an early referendum openly, and provocatively, as to “*déclencher*” or “*purger*” (to “activate” or “purge”) discussions of a new future sooner, rather than to delay inevitable decisions any longer, probably with the aim of thereby forestalling independence indefinitely.

Ironically, the only other proponent of an earlier rather than later referendum was the new Labour Party at the extreme end of the pro-independence spectrum (“*Le Parti travailliste pour l’indépendance en 2014*” *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 18 November 2008). Its support was potentially troublesome given the tendency of its backbone, the USTKE, to initiate strikes and even violence to progress its causes.

Other parties were more cautious. On the pro-France side, the views of Harold Martin’s AE were already known, i.e., favouring talks to circumvent the need for the referendums (see above). Philippe Gomès, leading the *Calédonie Ensemble*, supported this view (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 20 April 2009). In a rare public comment from the mainstream FLNKS, Paul Néaoutyine disagreed with Frogier’s idea of a “purging referendum”, saying it was based on a disrespectful view of independence. Independence, he said, was a right to be respected, not something to be feared. He favoured a consensual approach, one which was yet to be explored (“*un résultat qui doit se rechercher*”), but one where all the options were on the table, i.e., independence as well as that of staying with France (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 20 April 2009).

For its part, the French state maintained a public distance on the question during the election campaign, with President Sarkozy having said, addressing the December 2008 Noumea Accord Signatories meeting, that it would be for New Caledonians to decide on a referendum “whatever pro-independence or otherwise (sic) beliefs, there is a rendezvous and you will decide, but without violence” (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 10 December 2008). Preserving the role of an impartial State, representatives of the French State were privately unequivocal in claiming its commitment to proceed to referendums strictly consistent with statutory requirements under the Accord and the 1999 Organic Law (Personal communications February 2009 and May 2008).

In the event, in the 2009 election, both parties that publicly had supported an early referendum did very well, the R-UMP winning the most seats of any single party, and the Labour Party winning 4 seats after its establishment only eighteen months earlier.

L'après-Accord: independence and sovereignty

Pro-France groups

The fact that the most conservative pro-France party had shared a strong position in favour of an early referendum with the most extreme, pro-independence party, seemed to galvanise the mainstream pro-France parties around a position advocating caution about holding an early referendum, which may well have been the intent behind Frogier's position. Indeed, the R-UMP stance seemed to have been simple posturing: by October 2009, Frogier was no longer speaking of "purging" independence by the earliest possible "yes or no" vote, but rather of a vote proposing a choice between independence and an option of substantial autonomy (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 26 October 2009). He proposed an option of a form of free association where New Caledonia would remain French and allow France to continue to be in charge of the more expensive powers (which he defined as the five *régalien* powers), while New Caledonia took on the remaining powers (*Flash d'Océanie* 27 October 2009). In his proposal, Frogier was reflecting the recently evolved positions of other pro-France parties, in an effort to respond favourably to Sarkozy's desire for the pro-France parties to work together.

On the pro-France side, Harold Martin and his AE, who had long supported discussions to circumvent a referendum, endorsed Frogier's October proposals. Martin saw any definitive "*solution de sortie*", or post-Noumea Accord scenario, as having to be shared with the pro-independence groupings and the French State. It was thus "necessary to negotiate these sovereign responsibilities". He linked the idea with President Sarkozy's support, expressed in 2007, for the most innovative solutions for New Caledonia, in order to guarantee the personality and powers of New Caledonia within France (Sarkozy 2007a, Martin in *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 29 October 2009). Separately, Martin proposed engaging former High Commissioner and Noumea Accord negotiator Alain Christnacht in preparing for "*l'après-Accord*" (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 12 September 2009).

Philippe Gomès' *Calédonie Ensemble* adopted a more nuanced position. Before the 2009 provincial elections, he had warned about the risks of an early 2014 referendum, raising the spectre of a resurgence of political tensions concealing ethnic cleavages (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 20 April 2009). He had also supported a referendum affirming a Caledonian identity providing for enlarged responsibilities and possibly even "shared sovereignty" with the French State, for example joint exercise of "*régalien*" or sovereign responsibilities in the region, an idea which Frogier appeared to subsequently take up. By February 2010, after Frogier had spelled out his association-style proposal, Gomès noted his continuing opposition to a "useless" referendum, and said he favoured early discussions with pro-independence groups to outline what was to come after the Noumea Accord. But he underlined that it would be for the representatives elected in 2014 to finalise arrangements. No doubt mindful of the damaging effect of the 1988 Presidential election campaign on New Caledonia's history (see Chapter 3), he also cautioned lest the discussions be influenced by the

French presidential election campaign in 2012 (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 22 February 2010).

Pro-independence groups

The thinking of the pro-independence groups was also evolving.

Paul Néaoutyine of Palika had elaborated on his ideas of independence in a comprehensive interview published in 2006 (Néaoutyine 2006). At that time, he had referred to “*décolonisation en douceur*” (“soft decolonization”) whereby a New Caledonia which had been accompanied by France in its emancipation, rather than left on its own, would be able to establish links with France as with any other country (Néaoutyine 2006 p. 68). Victor Tutugoro, official spokesman for FLNKS, spoke in similar terms in 2008, agreeing with his interviewer that independence was a dead concept in a globalized world. He argued that independence and sovereignty meant the capacity to choose one’s own interdependencies, to choose with whom one wanted to work and exchange (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* interview, 17 June 2008). In a personal interview with the author, Tutugoro was more precise, saying the FLNKS wanted the right for New Caledonia to decide who it concluded treaties with, and that France was one of a number of possibilities (Personal communication April 2009).

In their emphasis on the post-Accord New Caledonia having the capacity to decide with whom it would deal, both Néaoutyine and Tutugoro were building on the foundation established by Tjibaou when he said that “Sovereignty is the right to choose partners; independence is the power to manage all the needs that colonization, the present system, has created.....Sovereignty gives us the right and the power to negotiate interdependencies. For a small country like ours, independence is choosing our interdependencies skilfully” (Tjibaou 2005 p. 152).

In his 2006 interview, Néaoutyine also emphasized that, while independence was a right, the ways and means to it could be negotiated (Néaoutyine 2006 p. 71). On the currency (Euro) issue and defence relationship with France issues as for the three other *régalien* areas (justice, law and order and foreign relations), “we can be included in a more global disposition and keep our independence”. “We have already entered into independence”, and with the planned transfer of responsibilities in the near future, “we can never go back”. “What we decide over the last five [*régalien*] responsibilities, will only concern areas which we will share with others. *At that stage we will be practically already independent.* (“*A ce stade nous serons pratiquement déjà indépendants*”) I think most citizens understand that” (my italics, Néaoutyine 2006 p. 82). By the end of the Noumea Accord, he said, the country would find itself in a situation of being “*virtually independent*”. “In other words, we are on the way to acceding to sovereignty. The Noumea Accord is a concrete process, at the end of which the responsibilities will be transferred from the governing colonial power to a country on the way to emancipation...” (Ibid.).

In May 2009, on the eve of the provincial elections, Néaoutyine told the *Nouvelles Calédoniennes* that independence was written into the Accord, and that after 2014,

when the transfer of the last responsibilities would be effected, “our country Kanaky-New Caledonia would be independent” (6 May 2009). A few days later, he elaborated that the final referendum would focus on the future of the five remaining *régalien* sovereign responsibilities, which he noted independent states in the world exercised in quite varied formulas, even in “shared ways” such as was the case for France in its currency and defence. “I consider then that our country will be in the situation of quasi-independence; and it is possible to resolve this question and the future of the five sovereign responsibilities by discussion” (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 8 May 2009).

By September 2009, Néaoutyine was supporting Gomès’ ideas of “shared sovereignty” as contributing to accelerating the implementation of the Noumea Accord. He underlined Palika’s support for the continued transfer of responsibilities, adoption of identity signs (for example, a flag), and equitable social and economic reforms. He indicated once again that the objective of decolonization as proposed by the Noumea Accord was reached by transferring responsibilities and preparing for the final referendum, and defining a clear political framework for Caledonia’s exercise of regional and international responsibilities.

At the same time, in a reference to the activities of the Labour Party, Néaoutyine denounced any strategy of destabilization, saying the new social contract would be through social dialogue, not through street movements resulting in imprisonment of the young in the name of an industrial union which they did not understand. Despite statistics showing widening social gaps, Néaoutyine said the new institutions of New Caledonia, including the provinces, had resulted in many improvements in the distribution of public monies. He said he had no sense of an impoverishment of the people in the bush or tribes, although there was a problem of access to employment (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 24 September 2009).

Participating in a visit to Australia in March 2010, as part of the collegial government, Néaoutyine said that as the pro-independence group was a minority, majority government would exclude them (Personal communication Néaoutyine 2010). As such, a collegial, proportional representation system was important to give the *indépendantistes* access to power via the provinces. This seemed to suggest that proportional voting for a collegial government should be retained post-2014. He underlined that the pro-independence group were “*acteurs*”, i.e., they had an active role, in the “emancipation” process.

Also early in 2010, as some already agreed legislation on the protection of employment was returned to the Congress after Council of State approval, only to meet further discussion, Néaoutyine flagged a “destabilization” that was occurring. He warned that “If the non-sovereign responsibilities are not transferred, constitutionally, the referendum [foreseen by the Noumea Accord] can not be organized” and that “If this is the aim of the manoeuvre [i.e. questioning agreed legislation], to delay things, to find ourselves again in a new situation, this must be clearly said” (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 29 April 2010).

Palika's Charles Washetine shared Gomès caution about what was strictly *required* under the Noumea Accord in 2014. He spoke of respecting the calendar and modalities of the Accord, which stipulated only that provincial elections must be held in 2014, i.e., with greater flexibility on the timing of a referendum (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 30 November 2009). In other comments he said that the FLNKS were prepared to "play the game" of the Noumea Accord to its full completion (Personal communication 24 February 2009). Palika's Déwé Gorodey added, in October 2009, that her priority was not independence at any cost, but rather, successful decolonization, with access by the Melanesian world to every place it was legitimately able to claim. The essence was not a referendum, with winners and losers on different sides. What counted was an outcome of the Accord, through which those who had nothing today "feel they are winners" (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 7 October 2009).

For their part, the broad FLNKS coalition was more cautious, and suspicious about the motives and actions of the French State. In September 2009, the FLNKS met to review political developments. In comments reported by the *Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, the FLNKS ascribed nefarious motives to the French State, specifically in its dealings with social conflict (i.e. heavy handed approach to USTKE action), the evolution of the Organic Law (i.e. amendment to allow for slower implementation of some transfers of responsibilities), and on the international stage (a possible reference to efforts to have New Caledonia displace the FLNKS in the Melanesian Spearhead Group). By all this, the FLNKS saw the French State as aggressively preparing the way for a new negotiated solution in place of a referendum on full sovereignty. The FLNKS described the recent agreement between the R-UMP, Calédonie Ensemble, and AE as "a deviation from democracy dictated by the French State". "What the State is not able to say in view of its international engagements, it tries to impose by a strategy aiming to suggest that the Noumea Accord has broken down...But the FLNKS will not be duped in this, and would remain vigilant" (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 4 September 2009). Nonetheless the FLNKS leaders singled out Philippe Gomès, namely his policies aimed at tackling inequality in wealth distribution, for positive comment.

The FLNKS remained mute on Frogier's October 2009 "in association" proposal, despite holding a further scheduled meeting shortly after his announcement (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 30 October 2009). In a private comment, the FLNKS spokesman Victor Tutogoro noted that the final referendum would pose a choice between remaining under guardianship ("*tutelle*") with considerable autonomy, or acceding to "full sovereignty" (which would not seem so very different from the "association" v. "independence" choice Frogier was proposing). But he specifically rejected leaders "slicing up" the Noumea Accord by deciding not to apply certain aspects of the Accord which had been ratified by the people (Personal communication 30 October 2009).

Elements of the FLNKS added their own comment in subsequent months, marking further areas of concern. Jacques Lalie (*Union nationale pour le renouveau* – National Union for Renewal, UNR) declared that his party shared the FLNKS position, noting that in view of what the "colonized people" had already given up, "it was difficult to say that we had still more to offer". However, it was necessary to work on a

democratic outcome, and proceed to an initial referendum, one or two years after 2014 (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 2 December 2009). The UC's Charles Pidjot said his party aimed at the transfer of all responsibilities, except the sovereign responsibilities, before 2014, followed by a referendum (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 6 November 2009).

French State

When the Secretary of State for Overseas France, Marie-Luce Penchard visited New Caledonia in November 2009, she reportedly supported Frogier's "free association" idea provided it was endorsed by a consensus in New Caledonia (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 6 November 2009).

In his New Year speech to the Overseas France in January 2010, President Sarkozy said discussion was required amongst Caledonians so that the vote foreshadowed in the Accord "would translate into a result approved by a very large majority" (Sarkozy 2010a). Since he had ruled out independence for the Overseas France as a whole, earlier in his speech, he clearly hoped for the people of New Caledonia to agree on an alternative option (see Chapters 8 and 9).

The flag issue

Discussion and decision around the issue of a flag or flags for New Caledonia have sharpened divisions and tested the provisions applying to the workings of the Congress. The R-UMP's Pierre Frogier proposed, in February 2010, that the Kanak and French flags be flown together as a gesture of recognition in the context of talks about future institutions (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 9 February 2010). Philippe Gomès of the pro-France *Calédonie Ensemble*, and Néaoutyine of the pro-independence Palika, alike rejected the idea as contrary to the Noumea Accord, which, Néaoutyine pointed out, called for "one" identity sign (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 15 and 29 April 2010). Article 1.5 of the Noumea Accord provides for common discussion of identity signs, including of "a flag" in the singular, whereas Article 5 of the Organic Law provides for New Caledonia to "mark its personality alongside the national Emblem and signs of the Republic" under certain conditions, including the agreement by 3/5 of the Congress.

The Committee of Signatories agreed on 24 June 2010 that both flags be flown together in view of 2011 Pacific Games to be held in New Caledonia the following year (*Relevé de conclusions* 2010). The same day, President Sarkozy endorsed flying both flags above the French High Commission building in Noumea, provided the New Caledonian Congress endorsed the idea by passing a pertinent resolution. He recognized that the recommendation had not been easy for the parties, and that it was one preliminary step in a longer process that would result in the choice of one flag that would be accepted by all (Sarkozy 2010b). On 13 July the Congress voted by a strong majority (42 of the 54 members) in favour of flying the two flags (*Voet* No 1, 13 July 2010). The resolution occurred days before the French Prime Minister, François Fillon, arrived in Noumea to witness the flying of both flags over the French High Commission building.

Despite Congress' resolution on the issue, some municipalities declined to fly both flags. The *Union Calédonienne* took exception to this, and resigned from the Government on 17 February 2011, precipitating a new vote for a new Government by the Congress. Article 121 of the Organic Law provided that, if one member of the collegial Government resigned, all resigned, and a new Government should be elected by the Congress within fifteen days. On 3 March, following the election of a new Government, Gomès authorized one of his *Calédonie Ensemble* members to resign, once again triggering another election on 17 March, following which a *Calédonie Ensemble* member again resigned, with another election on 1 April. In all three elections Harold Martin was elected President with his R-UMP/*Avenir Ensemble* grouping winning the most seats. Gomès claimed that the initial UC action had been taken in concert with Frogier's R-UMP in order to oust him, and pushed for province-wide elections so the people could have a voice over the flag issue. He also appealed to the French Council of State against the High Commissioner's decision to allow the election of a new government on 3 March once his party representative had resigned (*Le Figaro* 8 April 2011). This appeal was not upheld by the Council of State.

The *Union Calédonienne* called for a public demonstration by its supporters on the issue on 3 April, and the *Calédonie Ensemble* likewise called out its supporters for the same day, leading the High Commissioner to ban such demonstrations on that day. Meanwhile, Overseas France Minister Marie-Luce Penchard visited the collectivity on 17 April and negotiated an agreement to suspend further resignations and elections, and to endorse the continuation of the Martin government in caretaker mode, until Article 121 of the Organic Law could be amended, in the interests of stability and the continued working of the government (*Flash d'Océanie* 18 April 2011). This occurred, with the amendment providing for an eighteen month period after a resignation before a subsequent resignation could occur (*Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 28 May 2011).

These developments were important as they showed the underlying emotion surrounding the issue of the flag, and the risks associated with precipitating action outside of the Congress (i.e. through the Committee of Signatories) without adequate consultation and under pressure from external and French domestic events such as the visit by the French Prime Minister, the French President and the hosting of the Pacific Games (the latter two events planned for August 2011). The developments also showed that even when the majority of the Congress voted for a particular action, if underlying concerns were unresolved, progress would not occur, an important lesson for addressing key questions for the future.

Metropolitan and other Institutional Factors

Despite the French State's financial and political commitment to implement the letter and the spirit of the Noumea Accord (see for example speech by Secretary of State Jégo to Colloquium, Regnault and Fayaud 2008 p. 23), there has been a tendency for the French State, as the Noumea Accord signature recedes in time, increasingly to treat New Caledonia (and the more so French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna) as just another administrative unit. Institutional changes suggest diminished attention to

Overseas France and the Pacific entities, particularly over the first years of President Sarkozy's leadership.

Ministerial level

From 1999 to 2010, there were eight Ministers or Secretaries of State for Overseas France (see Table 10), all of them relatively junior in the ministerial pecking order, and with progressively less experience or background in the Pacific. Early appointees had some close engagement with the region and issues (Secretaries of State Queyranne and Paul by virtue of their direct engagement in the Noumea Accord and Matignon processes respectively). Brigitte Girardin, a former senior bureaucrat, had at least worked closely with Australia on issues relating to Antarctica. But after Girardin, appointees had little or no familiarity with the Pacific.

Table 10
List of French Ministers/Secretaries of State for Overseas France 1999-present
(all working under the Minister for the Interior)

M. Jean-Jack QUEYRANNE

Secretary of State for Overseas France
4 June 1997

M. Christian PAUL

Secretary of State for Overseas France
29 August 2000

Mme Brigitte GIRARDIN

Minister for Overseas France
7 May 2002

M. François BAROIN

Minister for Overseas France
2 June 2005

M. Hervé MARITON

Minister for Overseas France
27 March 2007

M. Christian ESTROSI

Secretary of State for Overseas France
19 June 2007

M. Yves JEGO

Secretary of State for Overseas France
18 March 2008

Mme Marie-Luce PENCHARD

Secretary of State for Overseas France from June 2009
Minister for Overseas France from November 2009

There was also a pattern of appointing political figures to what became very short stints (notably the terms of Mariton and Estrosi, less than a year each), with incumbents using the position for their own domestic political ambitions (for example, Estrosi after his short term taking up the position of Mayor of Nice).

The pattern has not gone unnoticed. One of the clearest messages from the New Caledonian participants at the 2008 commemorative Colloquium on the Accords was the loss of knowledge and understanding of their concerns, in Paris (see for example comments by Wallis Kotra noting the worry that younger generations of officials belonged to a culture at odds with the Overseas France and with New Caledonia in particular, in Regnault and Fayaud 2008 p. 55).

From the time of de Gaulle, all French Presidents, Pompidou, d'Estaing, Mitterrand, and Chirac, shared the Gaullist view that the Overseas France *was* France, and contributed to the *grandeur* of France (Aldrich and Connell 1989 Chapter 1; Leymarie 1985 p. 2; Dornoy-Vurobaravu 1994 p. 50-51). With the election of President Nicholas Sarkozy in May 2007, his views on France's possessions overseas were little known. Sarkozy departed from the usual cast of French Presidents, coming from a younger immigrant generation and with a foreign wife. He did see Overseas France as important in his presidential candidature, sending his advisers on information gathering missions there during his campaign. In New Caledonia's case he also set out his views in writing, portrayed himself as overly sympathetic to the pro-France view, and was obliged to correct this impression in later contacts (see Chapter 8). While his priorities clearly lay with Europe and economic reform, this in itself was not something new for French Presidents.

However, early in his Presidency, Sarkozy did not give a high priority to the overseas possessions. What little clues he gave about his policy seemed to stem from his own background as a tough Interior Minister who cracked down firmly on crime and local disturbances. He initially relegated the Overseas France portfolio, which had been held under Chirac by a full Minister (albeit working to the Interior Minister), to a Secretary of State. His Ministers for the Interior, to whom the Secretary for Overseas France worked, have consistently been individuals with strong metropolitan political ambition but no familiarity with the Overseas, or French Pacific (Michèle Alliot-Marie to 2009, succeeded by Brice Hortefeux in mid-2009 and Claude Guéant in February 2011).

In his first two years, Sarkozy continued the trend, set under Chirac's latter years, of appointing to the Overseas France portfolio, political allies and individuals without much familiarity with Overseas France, let alone the French Pacific. Christian Estrosi, a close supporter, was his first appointment. At first the administration glossed over Estrosi's disastrous handling of his inaugural visit to New Caledonia, in October 2007. The visit occurred after a long period of industrial unrest, strikes and blockades. No doubt taking his cue from Sarkozy's firm domestic security policy, Estrosi directed the High Commissioner to control a protesting crowd assembled outside the Commissariat. The experienced High Commissioner, Michel Mathieu, who had served a full term in French Polynesia before arriving in Noumea two years before, resigned over the

incident. Estrosi used the incident to underline the Sarkozy government's intolerance of industrial disruption and social unrest (*Flash d'Océanie*, 15 October 2007). The FLNKS reacted badly, accusing Estrosi of precipitating a political crisis (Radio New Zealand International, 15 October 2007). In Tahiti, Estrosi also announced reforms to deal with ongoing political instability in French Polynesia. Although close to Sarkozy, Estrosi had no prior background in the Pacific. He was essentially a domestic political animal with his eye on the Mayorship of Nice, a position he subsequently assumed, resigning from the Overseas France portfolio to do so in March 2008. Sarkozy replaced him with Yves Jégo, one of his own advisers but who also had no background on the French Overseas entities, or the South Pacific.

And Jégo likewise created difficulties. As Overseas France Permanent Secretary from 2007 to 2009, he supported the trend of *ad hoc* attention to Overseas France, and of treating the latter as more or less just another domestic part of France. He even publicly posited a reorganization whereby the Overseas France Secretariat could be abolished, with matters relating to the overseas entities being handled within each relevant ministry (*France 24* interview 19 February 2009). Handling matters this way would mean that the special challenges and characteristics of the overseas entities, and certainly the particular regional settings in which they operated, could be lost in bureaucratic processes. This presented particular risks for New Caledonia in the Pacific, as the last phase of the Noumea Accord processes began.

The new administration's relative disregard for the particularities of Overseas France changed in early 2009, after violent strikes and protests about the high costs of living in Guadeloupe, speedily spread to Martinique, Guyana and Réunion. After a failed visit to Guadeloupe by Jégo to deal with the protests (when he speedily retreated to Paris despite having promised to stay in that territory until the matter was resolved, see, for example, *Le Figaro* 10 February 2009), Sarkozy was forced to address the issues himself. By June 2009 he had called a general review of the State of the Overseas France; created an Interministerial Council for Overseas France; and replaced Jégo with Marie-Luce Penchard, a Guadeloupe bureaucrat, the first Overseas France local resident to be appointed to lead the Overseas France portfolio. In November 2009 he announced a number of measures principally to address economic concerns in Overseas France arising from the review. He also upgraded Penchard to full Minister status, albeit continuing the long tradition of serving under the more senior Minister of the Interior. He continued with his overall firm approach to security issues.

So Sarkozy has learned about managing Overseas France essentially by trial and error. But whether his reformed approach to Overseas France in general translates to better handling of the Pacific entities, particularly New Caledonia, remains to be seen (Chapters 8 and 9 analyse Sarkozy's approach to New Caledonia). Penchard may come from Guadeloupe, but, like her immediate predecessors, she has no experience of the French Pacific. So Sarkozy's presidency seems to point to a continuation of the relative institutional relegation of the management of the Overseas France of recent years, which, as the experience of Estrosi and Jégo shows, has already had some

negative consequences in terms of stability of both the French Pacific and the Caribbean.

Officials level

Generally, many of the most senior officials posted to the Pacific entities, i.e., as High Commissioners, have tended to have had some previous experience of the region. Since the conclusion of the Noumea Accord, French High Commissioners in Noumea Thierry Lataste, Daniel Constantin, Michel Mathieu, and Yves Dassonville all had previous experience in the region and South Pacific issues. They also had in common long years of experience as prefects, the internal mainland counterpart of the High Commissioner designation in overseas collectivities. But, as Mathieu's fate has shown, their experience can be overlooked by zealous political appointees to the Secretary/Minister of Overseas France position.

In February 2011, President Sarkozy interrupted the trend by appointing as High Commissioner in Noumea Albert Dupuy, a senior and experienced prefect but without any experience in the South Pacific. And many of the other French officials posted to support the High Commissioners routinely do not have previous experience of the Pacific. They are officials of the Interior or other domestic Ministries such as Education, posted for two-year terms. They may have extensive experience in administering densely-populated, complex and sometimes ethnically-charged situations within metropolitan France. They may sometimes have experience in other overseas territories (in announcing his Caribbean-focused reforms on 6 November 2009, Sarkozy provided for the nomination and consideration of at least one Overseas France resident applicant when posts in the overseas France were being filled, on a trial basis, Sarkozy 2009). But they often have little knowledge of the South Pacific region, and as Interior Ministry officials they are not versed in foreign policy. Their primary interest is domestic. Thus they use the same mechanisms to address local concerns as they might in mainland France handling urban racial violence, i.e., a heavy handed police force armed with batons, tear gas and shields.

One worrying continuing trend in terms of the effectiveness of the Overseas France Secretariat in operating with a clear understanding of the regional context is the ongoing tendency for it to operate in Paris largely in isolation from other ministries, even the Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministries. Coordination is *ad hoc*, with different French ministries becoming involved only as issues relating to them arise (Personal communication, senior Overseas France Secretariat official, Paris May 2008).

Sarkozy's newly formed Interministerial Council for Overseas France may redress this situation, at least as far as the broad interests of the Overseas France (as distinct from Pacific France) are concerned. The Council was formed in 2009 primarily to conduct a review of Overseas France policy after problems in the Caribbean. When he announced reforms relating to Overseas France after the problems in Guadeloupe and Martinique, on 6 November 2009, after the first Interministerial Council meeting, Sarkozy said that

he wanted all ministries to feel they had a role in relation to Overseas France, not just the Overseas France portfolio (Sarkozy 2009).

But the ongoing role of the Council is not clear. Moreover, while at the same time he upgraded the relevant senior politician to Minister as opposed to Secretary of State for Overseas France, the incumbent was still to work to the more senior Interior Minister, protracting the problem of coordination and ultimately power of decision-making. As in the past (see Chapter 3), the relatively junior place of the Overseas France Permanent Secretary in the hierarchy of ministries means the critical inter-ministerial consultation and coordination task cannot be carried out effectively by the Overseas France Secretary or Minister. This provides a particular weakness in respect of such senior Ministries as Foreign Affairs and Defence whose inputs are particularly important in successful implementation of policies in the South Pacific. History has shown the strong role naval personnel have played in France's evolving presence.

French analyst Gérard Bélorgey noted in 2002 that not only did the relatively low level in the ministerial pecking order hamper the Overseas France Minister or Secretary in the coordination and arbitration of other ministries' activities in the overseas entities, he emphasized that dealing with Overseas France often involved issues which by their very nature were not conducive to easy ministerial partnerships. He noted that the coordination function involved highly political activity, not only because it meant ensuring toeing a certain line of conduct, but because Overseas France inherently involved power stakes (Bélorgey 2002 p. 92). As evident in earlier chapters, these coordination difficulties relating to Overseas France have been an ongoing issue since early colonial times.

In practice, when there are differences of view, the arbitrating function falls to the political advisors for Overseas France in the offices of the President and the Prime Minister, officials who are versed in domestic politics and rarely, if ever, have even visited the South Pacific or the French Overseas entities. Whereas in the Pacific region itself, there are annual meetings of senior French functionaries, including the resident Ambassadors, High Commissioners and senior military representatives (see below), in Paris such regular structured consultation on an ongoing basis does not occur. There is no overarching political eye, or steering inter-agency Overseas France committee that meets regularly. In practical day-to-day matters, each functional ministry operates on their usual (domestic) policy basis, guided mainly by an objective that the political masters not be bothered by problems from the overseas entities. When a serious problem does arise, the political advisors step in (Personal communications Paris 2008).

Within the Secretariat the interests of the Pacific entities with their individual statutes are not helped by the fact that the Secretariat also manages the French overseas *départements*, entities with an entirely different status and set of needs, being juridically integral parts of France itself. Sarkozy's Interministerial Council for Overseas France similarly handles the affairs of the entire Overseas France, which dilutes attention to the peculiarities of the French Pacific (indeed most of the 137

reforms relating to the Overseas France announced in November 2009 applied primarily to the French Caribbean entities Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Guyana).

For its part, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has three ambassadors, one for the Pacific, one for the Indian Ocean, and one for the Caribbean overseas entities. They are nominally assigned to the Prime Minister's office, not the Overseas France Secretariat, mainly because they are more senior to most of the personnel in the Secretariat, an arrangement which is unlikely to endear itself to Secretariat personnel and thus is likely to impede close cooperation. However, the ambassadors are physically located within the Overseas France Permanent Secretariat at Rue Oudinot.

The main job of the Ambassador for the South Pacific is the representation of France to the SPC and guiding the expenditure of the Special Fund for the South Pacific (Personal communications by then-incumbent, 2002), the latter role itself having been diluted in recent years with the establishment in 2003 of a steering committee for the fund which includes representatives from the entities themselves who take turns in Chairing meetings (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 299). The Ambassador has a role in France's relationship with the Pacific Islands Forum but tends to focus on technical rather than political issues. As diplomatic professionals, they carry out their tasks discreetly and without fanfare, and for relatively short appointments (around three years). The occupant also needs to take care not to step on the toes of the bilateral resident Ambassadors. Moreover, the position is based in Paris, not in the region. The Ambassador has an assistant, a relatively junior level diplomat from the Foreign Affairs ministry, based in Noumea. This person's main role is to provide ongoing liaison with the SPC and to advise the High Commissioner on foreign policy issues. The value of these arrangements in providing a well-informed decision-making apparatus in Paris and in the Pacific entities themselves depends mainly on the personalities involved, and on the willingness of the neighbouring bilateral French ambassadors to copy their reporting and analysis to Noumea and Papeete.

There are annual officials meetings in the region including France's regional ambassadors (from Australia New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Fiji), the Ambassador for the South Pacific, its resident High Commissioners from Noumea and Papeete and Delegate from Wallis and Futuna, and senior Paris-based officials. In 2008, at France's invitation, Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs responsible for the South Pacific, Duncan Kerr, attended one of these meetings. Although these meetings tend to focus on technical issues, there is potential for them to address broader strategic questions. The extent to which their discussions influence decisionmaking in Paris is limited, without a similarly regular Paris-based interagency mechanism.

New Caledonia, and the other two French Pacific entities, all have a presence of sorts in Paris. However the main function of the three offices for the Pacific collectivities has been to provide support for visiting residents of the entities, directing them to social services and other functional support. The offices are not staffed with trained diplomats or functionaries and do not carry out a role of advocacy for the entities with the French State. French Polynesia has had a Delegation in Paris since 1971, long

occupying, with the Tahitian Tourist Office, fashionable premises in the Boulevard Saint Germain. Until very recently New Caledonia's presence was modest, having been established in 1989. In 2008 the *Maison de Calédonie* moved to more impressive premises near the Place de l'Opéra. Wallis and Futuna in contrast has a very small office within the Overseas France Secretariat at Rue Oudinot.

None of this is conducive to regular informed policy review, definition of an overarching strategy, or even coherent policy implementation in relating to the South Pacific entities, particularly New Caledonia at this sensitive time. Furthermore the administrative structures and the relative infrequency of strategic policy statements do not ensure accurate public or media understanding in metropolitan France, of the issues in the overseas collectivities, which is already at a very low level (Bélorgey 2002 p. 88). The risk here is that, should the situation change suddenly, as occurs often in the Pacific, and as is increasingly likely with approaching New Caledonian deadlines, the media and public opinion can react in an uninformed way, and become an aggravating factor.

Conclusion

A fundamental question for the future of New Caledonia remains the credibility of the word of the French State, ultimately defined by its full implementation of the spirit and letter of the Matignon/Noumea Accords. In the conclusion of his "intellectual biography" of Tjibaou, Eric Waddell underlined Tjibaou's understanding of the importance of the "*parole*", or word for the Kanak people. "He knew full well that the *parole* is at the origin of and determines the *geste* - the act. It is binding, with one having no sense or meaning without the other. France's unfulfilled words and shallow memory have been a constant source of frustration and bitterness for the Kanak people" (Waddell 2008 p. 208). At the 2008 Colloquium marking the 20th anniversary of the Matignon Accords, the idea of France keeping its word was a recurring theme, with then Overseas France Secretary Jégo underlining the importance of France delivering on its "*parole donnée*" (having given its word) (see Regnault and Fayaud 2008, p. 23 and 167).

The French State and the pro-independence and pro-France sides have all put considerable energy, effort and resources into sustaining a stable political situation for the first ten years of the Noumea Accord. The political system established under the Accord has generally proven resilient in its first decade.

However, cracks have emerged which need ongoing attention.

In the first instance, the "word" of the Accord has meant different things to different sides, as evident in the disagreement over the fundamental definition of the restricted electorate. Similarly, the Accord itself represents different things to each side, as Horowitz has argued. For the pro-independence groups, the Noumea Accord means a step forward in the acquisition of more autonomy on a path ultimately leading to independence. For the French state, it provides more time during which France may,

through generous financing and judicious control of the handover of elements of more autonomy, and by keeping its promises, secure the support of the pro-independence groups to relinquishing their goal of independence. Indeed, nowhere in the Noumea Accord are the words “independence” or “self-determination” used. Instead, there are references to “emancipation” and “a common destiny” (see Berman 2001, for an elaboration of what these omissions may mean for the future). But the question of whether this rules out full independence *per se* cannot yet be answered. The public comment by “mainstream” (FLNKS) pro-independence leaders has so far been ambiguous, as they wait for the interim terms of the Noumea Accord to be fulfilled; and the influence of the more definitively independence-oriented Labour Party is yet to be fully tested.

France’s dilatory approach to fulfilling the restricted electorate promise, its longstanding encouragement of immigration, its dilatory and ambiguous handling of the critical ethnic category in the census, and the relatively slow transfer of important responsibilities such as education, have all strained Kanak credulity. Even as Noumea Accord deadlines approach, with defence and the currency among one of the five powers yet to be decided, France has built up its defence infrastructure near Noumea, and urged replacement of the cfp by the Euro. Despite rhetoric about implementing Noumea Accord provisions for New Caledonia to engage directly in regional relations, little preparation of a working regional relations capacity is evident.

Similarly, despite significant financial support by France, the economic rebalancing and redistribution of the benefits of exploiting nickel have to date been demonstrably and quantifiably more successful in the European-dominated South than in the mainly Kanak North. World economic conditions have had an effect, slowing the pace of investment and production schedules, and leading to withdrawal of external investors to be replaced by French interests, in the Kanak North. To the time of writing, despite all the planning and expenditure, the only working processing of nickel remains in the ageing French-dominated SLN unit at Doniambo in the South. There remain as yet untested statutory ambiguities about responsibility for minerals pertaining to the exploitation of the nickel resource, and the potential for hydrocarbons.

Kanaks remain generally isolated and alienated in society and politics in the wealthy, more populous and predominantly European south. They have so far shown patience with this situation. As the 2007 nickel boom recedes, and if ongoing global constraints on nickel exploitation continue as Noumea Accord deadlines draw near, their patience will be tested.

Financial shares granted to New Caledonia in the major nickel companies SLN and Eramet, as well as Inco’s Goro project, which have been used to buy off support for independence, have been the subject of bargaining, and seen to be inadequate especially by the pro-independence group. There has been considerable local concern about job protection and environment issues. The overall result is shared anxiety, by Kanaks and some Caldoche alike, about the French State’s intent and impartiality, which has underpinned the fracturing and realignment of parties within the pro-France group.

For its part, the pro-independence group has sought to participate constructively within the Noumea Accord structures, but is dealing with divisions of its own, including the emergence of a radical new political force in the Labour Party. One writer has described French efforts to redress the economic divide as seriously divisive of the Kanaks, precisely by focusing on economic development as distinct from political emancipation (Waddell, 2008 p. 206; see also his reference to writer Ferenczi's description of Rocard, the architect of Matignon Accord, as a "virtuous Machiavelli", footnote 11 p. 214). Outside of the agreed political institutions, Kanak activism finds expression through ethnic disharmony, primarily but not solely at Saint-Louis, with a potential for further violence remaining so long as Wallisian ethnic issues are not fully resolved; assertion of environmental protection principles, through the *Rheebu Nuu*; and of indigenous rights, for example through the CNDPA efforts to establish the *Mwá Ká*, with mixed responses from the Caldoche and the French. Kanak leaders have used and will continue to use international forums on occasion to raise some of their concerns.

In the context of the importance of keeping the "*parole*", feelers by the pro-France groups about commencing negotiations on the future, circumventing the proposed Noumea Accord referendums, have been met with a mixed reaction from the mainstream independence group. In May 2009 elections, it was the group at either end of the political spectrum (Frogier's pro-France R-UMP and the pro-independence Labour Party), that supported an early referendum under the Accord, i.e., 2014, which fared well (R-UMP winning the most pro-France seats, Labour Party making inroads in the new Congress). But since then, conscious that holding a referendum, which is most likely to result in a vote against independence, risks a return to violence by the pro-independence groups, even R-UMP's Frogier has advocated a more moderate consultative approach to manage the referendum process.

Handling of the dual-flag proposition raised by the pro-France R-UMP, apparently influenced by external events such as visits by French dignitaries, has highlighted deep-seated divisions which go beyond agreements reached within institutions such as the Committee of Signatories and even the Congress. The strength of divisions has tested the viability of these institutions. These developments raise cautions about the future handling of sensitive core Noumea Accord issues.

Pro-independence groups are cautious and insistent on the full implementation of the Noumea Accord, including full transfer of responsibilities as promised, and a referendum posing the choice between remaining with France with a high degree of autonomy, and independence. So future negotiations are likely to centre on the subject of a referendum (see Chapter 9). But the demographics, and electoral patterns so far, suggest that the majority of eligible voters will not support the independence option. Thus, there is potential for violence and disruption.

Overlaying all of these issues, senior French officials in Paris are increasingly less directly experienced and without first-hand knowledge, of either the transitional issues

or of the region, and work only in stop-start contact with other related ministries including Defence and Foreign Affairs.

Finally, implementation of the Accord so far has shown the continued relevance of the UN, the PIF, the MSG, and even the EU, in enabling a Kanak dissenting voice to be heard. The UN Decolonization Committee, and UN human rights and indigenous rights organizations such as the UN Rights of Indigenous Peoples Forum remain forums for venting Kanak concerns. The UN Decolonization Committee has heard Kanak concerns, particularly on the restricted electorate, protection of employment, the ethnic census category, and Matthew and Hunter issues. The MSG has been the vehicle for Melanesian agreement on Vanuatu's claim to Matthew and Hunter. And the PIF and EU Human Rights Court have been engaged on electoral process issues.

All of these factors operating together, in a transition period as new government systems are settling into place, mean there are fundamental vulnerabilities and instabilities which could yet surface in a way prejudicial to smooth negotiations for a durable, stable future in New Caledonia beyond 2018.

Chapter 6

French Polynesia: Autonomy or Independence?

Since nuclear testing ceased in 1996, as in New Caledonia, French Polynesian politics have also been characterized by fragmentation of principal parties, loyalist and pro-independence alike, and surprising alliances, but, unlike New Caledonia after 1999, all against a background of continued constant statutory change without broad consultation. Local corruption and overt French intervention have been characteristic of French Polynesian politics in the last decade.

Elections in 1996 saw the return of Flosse's Tahoeraa but also an increase in support for Temaru's pro-independence Tavini. Flosse closely followed developments in New Caledonia, especially its Organic Law of 1999 giving it special status (where it was assigned *sui generis* status and referred to as a "pays", or country). He sought similar provisions for French Polynesia. While he did not claim a self-determination referendum or restricted electorate, as applied to New Caledonia, he did seek legislative powers and special citizenship provisions linked with protecting local labor and property rights. Despite the difficulties of cohabitation, conservative President Chirac and socialist Prime Minister Jospin endorsed Flosse's proposals, as did a constitutional review. However the final step, adoption by a joint sitting of the French Assembly and Senate in a Versailles Congress, was frustrated by linking the measure with a separate and unrelated amendment on the independence of France's Superior Magistrature, which was judged in the end unlikely to attract support and was thus withdrawn, the same provision that held up the restrained electorate amendment for New Caledonia (see Chapter 5). Once again, other domestic metropolitan priorities dictated policy change in the South Pacific entities.

After Flosse's Tahoeraa won 2001 local elections, and Chirac was re-elected as President in 2002, a renewed constitutional review process judged, in March 2003, that the proposals could not go as far as Flosse had sought. French Polynesia would have to remain as an overseas "collectivity" (not "country" like New Caledonia, as proposed), albeit a collectivity with considerable autonomy. It would also not take on legislative powers of its own, as the New Caledonian government had done. Without the full support of the local assembly, the resulting **Organic Law of February 2004** (Law No 2004-193 of 27 February 2004) was passed by the French National Assembly. While not delivering everything Flosse had sought, it was a monument to Flosse and his majority, pro-autonomy within France, party. It strengthened the Presidency (Flosse was to be titled President of French Polynesia) and included a measure allocating a bonus of one third of the seats, in each electorate, for the winning party, presumed to be Flosse's Tahoeraa, in local elections. But in subsequent elections in May 2004, the provision backfired. Despite winning 8% more votes in the collectivity as a whole, Tahoeraa was defeated by just 400 votes in the most populous electorate, the *Iles du Vent* (Windward Island), in Papeete and Faaa. Thus the bonus 13 seats went to the winning Tavini-led coalition. Of the 57 seat Assembly, Tavini's *Union pour la*

Démocratie coalition (UPLD, Union for Democracy) won 26 seats, anti-Flosse autonomist parties a further 3, and Flosse's Tahoeraa 28. Temaru's alliances, and winning over one Tahoeraa member, enabled him to take government with 30 votes. Aside from the procedural aspects, the election of and support for Temaru reflected increasing dissatisfaction with Flosse's personal style and government of patronage.

Pro-independence ascendance

For the first time, the government was led by avowedly pro-independence parties. At the time, Temaru was measured and conciliatory, announcing that the goal of independence was a long-term one, perhaps over fifteen to twenty years (see Chappell 2005b, Regnault 2005a p. 43). He spoke about shared sovereignty along the lines of the Cook Islands/New Zealand model (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 360, Nichols 2007). Since then he has been relatively silent on the concept of independence in the domestic arena (but see Regional issues section). In June 2009, in stocktaking discussions with French officials as part of a French program of consultations after the violent May 2009 protests in Guadeloupe, he made a distinction between "sovereignty" and "independence", expressing his support for sovereignty for French Polynesia while noting that independence would not mean a "full break" (*Radio New Zealand* 17 June 2009).

When he was elected, in May 2004, Temaru also made no reference to his earlier reiteration, since 1990, of a demand for the UN Decolonization Committee to reinscribe French Polynesia as a non-self-governing territory. But by the end of 2004, with his leadership frustrated by efforts by the pro-France group, Temaru did raise independence questions in regional forums with a predictable French response (see Regional Issues below).

On Temaru's surprise election, there began an ongoing game of musical chairs, with various members and elements of the coalition switching sides in votes of no-confidence in successive Presidents. Flosse thus regained the Presidency in October 2004. But, in a move which looked like French collusion with Flosse, the French Council of State annulled the 2004 Windward Islands electorate election a month later, requiring a re-run. At the same time, in a move reminiscent of France's resistance to Vanuatu's independence (see Chapter 3 p. 10) the Overseas France Minister, Girardin, threatened to turn off the economic aid tap if Temaru won the election (Chappell 2005b p. 199). Again France's efforts backfired: a re-run election delivered a slightly increased vote to Temaru, this time he won by 600 rather than 400 votes, leading to the reinstatement of Temaru as President in March 2005 (29 seats to 26). Destabilising activity by Flosse (backed by his French supporters) continued. By the following year, the UPLD majority lost the Presidency of the Assembly in April 2006 but regained it the same month, only to lose it again in December 2006. This time, aware of mounting feeling against Flosse personally, the Tahoeraa did not put forward Flosse as President, but one of his supporters, Gaston Tong Sang.

The French Government, dismayed by the chronic instability inherent in French Polynesia, and no doubt the loss of support for the pro-France faction seemingly as a result of its 2004 changes, sought to stabilize things with two pieces of legislation, provisions in an **Organic Law for Overseas France in February 2007** (Organic Law No 2007-223 of 21 February 2007) with the effect, for French Polynesia, of abolishing the one-third bonus for the majority in each electorate, and a revision of French Polynesia's 2004 **Organic Law in December 2007** (Law No 2007-1720 of 7 December 2007) which Paris again pushed through the National Assembly, despite the local Assembly's vote against it (in 44 of 57 votes). To limit the proliferation of new parties, the new Law provided for proportional voting in two rounds, with only those receiving a minimum of 12.5% of the vote in the first round proceeding to the second. To curb the constant change of Presidents and Speakers, the President could henceforth only be replaced by a motion which included the simultaneous election of a successor; and the Speaker could only be elected once for a full five-year term. Various parties in the Assembly, including the Tahoeera and UPLD, were united in their opposition to the legislation which they saw as French tampering with local issues (*Flash d'Océanie* 11 October 2008). As succinctly described by Lorenz Gonschor, "This episode proved once more that the statute of autonomy does not guarantee real local self-government, as France remains able to make arbitrary modifications to its political system against the explicit will of the local assembly" (Gonschor 2008 p. 154).

As in New Caledonia, French efforts to rally the pro-France parties backfired by inadvertently promoting a coalescence of interests between the local parties around their own French Polynesian interests. Partly, too, developments were influenced by Sarkozy's election as President in May 2007, meaning that Flosse had lost the close political support in Paris of his friend Jacques Chirac. But then Flosse's supporters became disenchanted with Tong Sang when they were left out of a delegation visiting Paris in mid 2007 (see Gonschor 2008 p. 152). Tong Sang's government too proved to be shortlived, to be replaced in August 2007 by the unlikely coalition of Flosse and Temaru, with Temaru as President. Flosse's chameleon politics operated once more, as they had when he changed from pro-France advocate to pro-autonomy champion in the 1980s. By agreeing to share power with his former arch enemy, pro-independence Temaru, he was preserving his own position and role, but also working to represent local interests.

Regnault, in 2005, noted the increasing similarities between the Flosse and Temaru camps at the time, their shared view of an evolving autonomy along the New Caledonian model, a desire to distance French Polynesia from links with the metropolitan power, but with a strong awareness of the need for cooperation for development and aid (Regnault 2005a p. 38). As Flosse lost personal support and Temaru gained experience in government, their objectives merged sufficiently to allow for an alliance convenient for each. Nonetheless, some of Flosse's supporters deserted to Tong Sang at this time (Gonschor p. 152).

In February 2008 elections, Gaston Tong Sang became President. He had formed a new party, *O Porinetia to Tatou Ai'a* (Polynesia is our country), leading an alliance

called the *To Tatou Ai'a* (Our Land) with Tahoeraa dissidents including Jean-Christophe Bouissou's *Rautahi* (Unity) party; former Temaru ally Emile Vernaudon's *Ai'a Api* (New Homeland party); the former centrist *Fetia Api* (New Star of Philip Schyle); and some small pro-France parties. Tong Sang's alliance won 27 of the 57 seats, Temaru's UPLD 20, and Flosse's Tahoeraa 10. This suited the French State, which had envisaged a coalition of pro-autonomy Tong Sang-Flosse supporters (as opposed to pro-independence supporters). Indeed, Secretary of State for Overseas France, Estrosi, had visited the collectivity during the months before the election, showing support for Tong Sang and reportedly telephoning Flosse and another party leader Nicole Bouteau, in between rounds, to urge them to join with Tong Sang (Gonschor 2008 p. 155); and again after the second round, when Tong Sang's coalition fell short of a majority, phoning Flosse to urge him to support Tong Sang.

But Flosse found it intolerable for Tong Sang to take the Presidency, notwithstanding his strong showing. To the chagrin of the French state, a few days later, on February 23, Flosse, after having pledged during the election campaign that he would never again work with Temaru, struck a last-minute alliance once again with Temaru, cobbling together further support from other dissidents, and became President with Temaru as Speaker of Parliament. Unlike his treatment of Tong Sang, Estrosi did not congratulate Flosse, but rather "took note" of his presidency (Gonschor 2008 p. 157). To show their concern, Sarkozy's UMP government in Paris expelled Flosse from the metropolitan party (*Flash d'Océanie* April 16 2008).

In his analysis of the results, Gonschor pointed to Temaru's loss of support through the departure of his key ally, Vernaudon, to Tong Sang, and disappointment with Temaru's performance. At the same time Tong Sang had proved skilful in consolidating a relative majority after a short time because of the desire of many for a cooperative relationship with France, particularly amongst the growing number of French settlers and the Chinese community from which Tong Sang came (Gonschor 2008 p. 157), and who in the past had supported Flosse. Flosse's Tahoeraa indeed appeared to have retained mainly the support of rural and working class Polynesians, who tended to be critical of France, and who tended therefore to have more in common with Temaru, thus explaining the odd working relationship between Flosse and Temaru.

But the situation did not end there. In April 2008 Tong Sang was once again elected President with the support of benchcrossers. Overseas France Secretary Jégo again congratulated Tong Sang, noting that as President he reflected truly the will of the people expressed in the February elections; stating, or perhaps warning, that this time stability would prevail; and pledging support for large-scale projects in French Polynesia.

Instability and divisions continued to prevail. On 12 February 2009, following Tong Sang's resignation as President, the Assembly elected Temaru as President, with 37 votes of the 57 members, including support by his own Tavini but also that of Flosse's Tahoeraa, and of a Tong Sang breakaway group *Iorea Te Fenua* headed by Jean-Christophe Bouissou. Tong Sang received 20 votes. The change was the tenth since 2004 elections, and the fourth time Temaru was elected President since 2004, which

suggested majority support lay with him, whatever the divisions. This time Temaru proclaimed he would govern in a form of national unity government, to bring stability for the remainder of the term, to 2013. He consolidated his support in succeeding months to 40 of the 57 seats. In April 2009 Temaru reshuffled his Cabinet to reflect differences with Flosse, retaining two Tahoeraa members who were considered to be serving in their personal capacities. But by November 2009 instabilities emerged again, as the collectivity's budget appropriation was being debated, with Tong Sang winning a parliamentary vote on the Presidency once more.

In the meantime, Flosse was under personal pressure. He had long had a murky past including facing corruption charges, mainly getting off with at most minor charges and penalties. Amongst other charges he faced, Flosse had been given a three month suspended sentence in June 2006 after having been convicted of abuse of political office related to an investment in a hotel by his son (see *Radio New Zealand International* 21 June 2006). A journalist mysteriously disappeared while investigating Flosse's alleged involvement in the Clearstream secret accounts allegations by then Prime Minister Villepin against Sarkozy. However in November 2009 Flosse's immunity from prosecution, deriving from his status as French Senator, was removed at the request of judges investigating irregularities in the Office of Posts and Telecommunications. He was charged with passive corruption, embezzlement of public funds and complicity in destruction of evidence, involving alleged financial kickbacks via an advertising company that was once in charge of the French Pacific territory's phonebook and related advertising revenues (*Flash d'Océanie* 24 December 2009). He was imprisoned temporarily, securing a release on bail of just under \$US 1 m. in December, when he again took up his Assembly and French Senate seats. Separately, in early December, Flosse was found guilty in a "fictitious jobs" scam (involving numerous jobs for friends and allies which were not seen as serving any public purpose and which were not advertised) while he was President and required to repay over \$US 2 m. and a hefty fine (*Flash d'Océanie* 24 December 2009). Gonschor (2008) enumerates many examples of the political nepotism rife under Flosse's leadership.

In January 2010, in a message to the Overseas France, President Sarkozy foreshadowed further reforms of the electoral system and institutional mechanisms in French Polynesia, "in order to guarantee more stability to elected majorities and therefore to give more capacity to envisage political and public actions in the long-term" (Sarkozy 2010a). The promise did not put an end to instability: in April 2010 Temaru was elected as Speaker of the Assembly, with 30 votes of the 57 members, prompting President Tong Sang to appeal to President Sarkozy to dissolve the Assembly given the untenable political situation.

When released in March 2011, the draft electoral reforms appeared to be mainly technical, including limiting the number of Cabinet members, specifying a minimum 5-year term for President of the Assembly, and increasing to 2/3 of the Assembly the number of votes required for a no-confidence motion to succeed. However, the reforms specifically included an electoral "bonus" of 33% (or 19 seats) to the majority in the

first-past-the-post system, when it had been a similar bonus that had caused problems in 2004 (*Flash d'Océanie* 18 March 2011). Whether these reforms will be adopted, and how they will be implemented and respected, remains to be seen.

In the context of division and partiality by the French state, Temaru has managed time and again to maintain leadership and a certain dignity, with the apparent support of most French Polynesians.

Regional Issues

In a regional context, Temaru's leadership is significant. He has maintained longstanding links with regional leaders, to whom he is well known, unlike Tong Sang, and well liked, unlike Flosse. He well understands regional history and is able to play the regional and Pacific Islands Forum cards when possible. In September 2007, under threat from Tong Sang's new coalition, when Temaru was obliged to work with Flosse, he used his regional contacts to dissuade some regional Polynesian island leaders from participating in a royal Polynesian gathering sponsored by Tahitian royal family descendant Joinville Pomare with the support of Tong Sang. While representatives from New Zealand, Cook Islands, Wallis and Futuna and Hawaii attended, Temaru and Flosse successfully discouraged representatives from Western Samoa and Tonga from attending. (Pomare, like Temaru, is a pro-independence supporter, but sees a greater role for traditional leaders than Temaru, and has allied himself with Tong Sang, see Gonscher 2008 p. 153.)

Temaru is skilful in using his regional influence, via regional public calls for independence and reinscription of French Polynesia with the UN, to consolidate his position in the archipelago particularly on those many occasions when the French State and others resist his electoral pull. As noted in the last section, whereas Temaru was relatively silent on independence issues at home immediately after his first election, even softening his idea of the timing and form of independence, after France's tinkering with the electoral system and the electoral re-run of 2004, he continued to raise the independence issues in the Pacific Islands Forum. When he attended the Forum summit following French Polynesia's admission as an Observer in 2004, he said he wanted reinscription with the UN Decolonization Committee to be on the Forum agenda (*Radio New Zealand* 5 August 2004). He raised the issue at the 2006 Forum summit, where the French were quick to react, a French official saying that French Polynesia already had the capacity for self-determination and did not need external support for what was essentially an internal matter (Nichols 2007 p. 118). This was redolent of the French rationale for non-cooperation with the UN in 1947.

After French unilateral legislation to change the political system yet again in 2007, at the 2007 Tonga Forum summit, Temaru called again for Forum support for reinscription, and called for an autonomy solution for French Polynesia, a "Tahiti Nui" Accord, along the lines of the Noumea Accord of New Caledonia. He warned about French efforts to change statutory provisions relating to elections, and to seek further

elections in early 2008 (*TV New Zealand*, 17 October 2007). No doubt this influenced French support for other contenders in the local leadership stakes.

Back at home Temaru and his followers did not let independence issues rest either. In January 2008, his Tavini party sought signatures on a petition favouring UN reinscription. And in June 2009, just after he once again acceded to the Presidency after Tong Sang's resignation, in the context of discussions with French officials in the wake of violent protests in Guadeloupe, Temaru said that the issue of sovereignty (as distinct from a complete break with France) needed to be discussed, and proposed discussions of an alternative name for French Polynesia, such as Tahiti Nui (the Greater Tahiti) or Maohi Nui (The Greater Indigenous people) (*Radio New Zealand* website www.radionz.co.nz 16 and 17 June 2009 accessed 19 June 2009).

When Noumea hosted the UN Decolonization Committee's 2010 Pacific regional seminar, Temaru visited Noumea and staged a protest outside the SPC headquarters where the meeting was being held. While claiming that he was not speaking as the French Polynesian Speaker, but in the name of the *Maohi* or indigenous people (*Flash d'Océanie* 18 May 2010), he said that if they won the next election, they would declare the country independent and sovereign. He again called for reinscription of French Polynesia with the UN (*La Dépêche de Tahiti* 21 May 2010). By July 2011, his party began to lobby regional governments (Personal communication, Tuheiava 2011).

French Polynesia signed on to an agreement to work more closely with the other French Pacific entities in February 2010. At the time, then Assembly Speaker and pro-France leader Philip Schyle, said that he was interested in how aspects of New Caledonia's Congress and the institutional arrangements under the Noumea Accord might apply to French Polynesia (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 26 February 2010). Encouraging closer consultative relations between the three French Pacific entities enables France to provide a regional alternative for French Polynesia to Temaru's support within the PIF. In time, depending on how the grouping evolves, and on whether or not the French entities become full members of the PIF, it could represent a pro-France ginger group, or sub-group, within the PIF. As such it will be pushed by France.

Economy

Unlike New Caledonia, French Polynesia's economy offers no single valuable resource to fuel its economy. For most of the second half of the twentieth century its mainstay has been income derived from France's nuclear testing, directly, until cessation of the tests in 1996; and since then, from massive compensation payouts over periods which have successively been extended. This means that the French budgetary contribution is far higher than in New Caledonia, around a third (of the total GDP 536.3 b. cfp (\$A 6.8 b. converted 24 February 2010) in 2006). France contributed around 190 b. cfp (\$A 2.4 b.) in 2007, 159 b. cfp (\$A 2.0 b.) in 2006, and 148.6 b. (\$A 1.8 b.) in 2005 (*Haut-Commissariat, Direction des Actions de l'Etat, Bureau des affaires économiques et des entreprises* in ISPF website accessed 24 February 2010). Its expenditure includes EUR

150 m. (\$A 307 m.) a year (*Sénat* 2006) in its ongoing nuclear compensation commitment.

All political players understand this dependence. Thus when Oscar Temaru talks about independence, he also speaks of a continuing role for France, for example in a formula similar to that applying between the Cook Islands and New Zealand (Mrgudovic 2008 and Nicholls 2007). No one doubts that any form of independence would require continuing aid from France. And France, by constant reference to its largesse (for example, Girardin's threat to turn off the economic tap in the event of a pro-independence victory, Chappel 2005b p. 199), has made it clear that independence would mean French Polynesia going it alone.

Local resources are thin, mainly tourism and pearls. Because of the high cost structure, the number of tourists is unlikely to increase and indeed has hovered around 210,000 a year since 2004. 218,000 tourists visited in 2007, mainly from the US, metropolitan France, Europe, and Japan. Global conditions resulted in a drop to 196,496 in 2008, and 160,000 in 2009, with large decreases from all destinations other than metropolitan France. This has led the major hotels to re-think their presence, and by early 2010 the Tahiti Hilton was set to close (*La Dépêche de Tahiti* 11 March 2010). Although Flosse secured the identification of French Polynesia as a target tourist destination by the PRC, so far his efforts have not been rewarded by a large influx of Chinese tourists.

Services, mainly tourist-related, dominate the economy, employing 54,000 of 69,000 total salaried workers in 2007.

Pearl exports are valuable but a modest and declining proportion of total exports (Table 11).

Table 11
French Polynesia: Contribution of pearl exports to total exports 2006-2008
In millions of cfp (\$A converted 24 February 2010)

	2006	2007	2008
Total exports	22 380 (\$A284.4 m.)	17 135 (\$A217.7m.)	22 239 (\$A282.6m.)
Pearl exports	11 098 (\$A141.0m.)	10 681(\$A135.7m.)	8 473 (\$A107.6m.)

Source: IPSF website <http://www.ispf.pf/ISPE/Chiffres/bref.aspx> accessed 24 February 2010

Although successive governments have nominated fisheries as a development priority, for various reasons including migration of fishing stocks, inadequate infrastructure, high local costs, and the increasing habit of importing frozen fish from France, fisheries have not taken off, sales from local production declining from 683 tonnes in 2004 to 539 tonnes in 2007, rising to 612 tonnes in 2008 (ISPF 2008 www.ispf.pf accessed 28 October 2008 and 24 February 2010).

Metropolitan Handling and Institutional Factors

As in New Caledonia, the French state has continued to play a behind-the-scenes role to push the local leadership in a pro-France direction, seemingly unresponsive to the democratically expressed sentiments of the local people. Its failed early support for Flosse, including by introducing statutory measures specifically designed to bolster his majority, were followed by a distinct public preference for Tong Sang over Temaru, reflected in congratulatory messages to Tong Sang referred to earlier in this chapter. No supportive public statements were made by French officials when Temaru was elected in 2004; instead a re-election was held in which once again he won without comment from the French state. And the French state was again quiet following Temaru's subsequent election in early 2009.

As for New Caledonia, senior officials in Paris and in Papeete dealing with French Polynesia have over time increasingly been individuals with little experience of the Pacific region. With the departure of High Commissioner Michel Mathieu for Noumea in 2005, an official versed in the Pacific, successive high commissioners have been highly trained professionals, but not particularly experienced in regional affairs or even with previous experience in French Polynesia itself.

Conclusion

The recent history of French Polynesia demonstrates the mixed legacy of France's presence in the Pacific. Because of the dominance of personality-driven politics, with the small-time corruption and nepotism that that implies, the dynamics have tended to evolve around the French State's preference for the archipelago to be led by a pro-France big man rather than an avowed pro-independence indigenous leader. Thus France has tended to take a partisan, interventionist position, with constant reminders of the archipelago's dependence on French largesse, which has encouraged at times a venal coalescence of interests between the local pro-France and autonomist supporters who switch allegiance for personal gain, defying French efforts to consolidate the pro-French grouping. Frequent statutory change has been imposed without full consultation and assent by the local assembly. The fact that the economy of French Polynesia offers no dominant resource such as New Caledonia's nickel, and that its principal resources, tourism, pearls, and fisheries offer limited scope for development, means that the collectivity would be less likely than New Caledonia to survive as an independent entity without substantial French aid. It is arguable that the instability arising from local personality driven politics, corruption, and French interference, which ensures a weak economy dependent on France, serves French interest in remaining in French Polynesia. But as such, these elements of the political scene create ongoing uncertainty and instability ripe for exploitation, particularly should a sufficiently motivated and powerful leader emerge.

In French Polynesia as in New Caledonia, the UN and PIF remain relevant venting points for dissatisfied pro-independentists, Temaru having raised the issue of

reinscription of French Polynesia with the UN Committee of Decolonization in the Forum, making himself visible at the Committee's regional seminar in Noumea in May 2010, and lobbying regional governments in July 2011.

The French state has reacted to Temaru's periodic efforts to draw regional attention to French Polynesia's dependent status, by seeking to dislodge him from power over the last five years. This raises questions about respect for democratic principles in French Polynesia, and also reflects France's determination to retain control over French Polynesia.

Chapter 7

France's engagement in the region from the 1990s – French collectivities, France, the EU and the region

As memories of the aberrations of the 1980s receded, and as France fine-tuned its approaches in New Caledonia and French Polynesia while mounting its regional diplomatic offensive in the 1990s, it became a more familiar and accepted regional participant into the 2000s, albeit as an outside player. While the French state continued to invest heavily both financially and politically in managing aspirations in its Pacific entities for more autonomy, it encouraged greater contact by all three with the region, within limits.

France develops its regional links

Diplomatic Representation

France continued to deepen and broaden its own links with the region. The Foreign Affairs Ministry maintains resident diplomatic representation in the largest Pacific countries, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and for historical reasons in Vanuatu; and continues to have a Paris-based Ambassador for the South Pacific, supported by a diplomat based in Noumea. The Interior Ministry sends high level representatives to each of its collectivities, known as “High Commissioners and Delegates of the French Republic” in Noumea and Papeete, and known as “Prefect” in Wallis and Futuna. In April 2009, announcing a global reorganization of priorities in its foreign representation based on a 2008 white paper, Paris indicated that its Embassy in Canberra would carry the highest diplomatic responsibility in the region (“*mission élargie*”, i.e., with the broadest range of responsibilities); that Wellington and Port Vila would be secondary missions (“*missions prioritaires*”, with a secondary set of responsibilities) and Suva and Port Moresby, would be considered as posts with a simple diplomatic presence (*Flash d'Océanie* 30 March 2009). The mission at Suva covers, besides Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru.

Since the 1980s France has conducted annual meetings of its Pacific-based high-level officials, including its regional ambassadors and Ambassador to the South Pacific, its High Commissioners and Prefect from its three entities, and Paris-based Overseas France Ministry or Secretariat officials. In 2008 for the first time it invited Australian Parliamentary Secretary for the Pacific, Duncan Kerr, to participate in one of these meetings in Noumea.

Oceanic Summits

France has been a dialogue partner with the Pacific Islands Forum from 1989, participating in post-Forum summit meetings with island leaders each year. These contacts at the highest level were boosted when President Chirac launched an initiative

for regular consultations with regional leaders, called France-Oceanic Summits, the first of which was held in Papeete in 2003. France hosted a second Summit in Paris in 2006, and a third in Noumea in 2009. At these Summits, France has expressed support for the Pacific region, reinforced its desire to see its own collectivities participate more in the life of the region, and pledged cooperation principally in environment and fisheries surveillance, and through its South Pacific Fund (see South Pacific Fund section below). Each successive Summit has represented a demonstrable effort to address issues of significance to the island states, in the context of objectives defined in the Pacific Islands Forum and other organizations, and to integrate EU activity as well. However, the third Summit in Noumea, which was the first under Sarkozy's presidency, lost a certain momentum when he decided not to attend, relegating French representation to his Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, with concomitant lower level representation by Pacific leaders (only the presidents of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and the Prime Ministers of Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue attended themselves, all other delegations were headed by ministers, MFA spokesman, 28 July 2009, website of French Embassy Fiji accessed 24 February 2010).

In its second and third meetings, France sought to engage Australia. Australia was absent from the first, owing to a diplomatic hiccup. Then French Polynesian President Flosse, long disaffected with Australia, had omitted to invite the Australian Government. When Paris-based French officials belatedly extended an invitation just weeks before the event, the Australian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were unable to attend, and France did not accept the Australian proposal to send a Special Envoy, maintaining at the time that it was a senior leaders meeting. (Interestingly, at the same time Australia had extended an invitation to France to participate in a regional counter-terrorism ministerial summit in Indonesia and yet accepted a designated ambassadorial level representative when French ministers were unavailable.) Nonetheless, the Australian Government has been supportive of France strengthening its links with regional leaders in such meetings. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer participated in the second Oceanic summit in June 2006 in Paris, and Parliamentary Secretary for the Pacific, Duncan Kerr, in June 2009 in Noumea.

Cooperation within the United Nations

At the same time as it was initiating its Oceanic Summits, France was quietly reviewing its approach to the UN Decolonization Committee, or Committee of 24.

As noted in Chapter 3, France had removed its Pacific colonies from the UN Decolonization list of non-self-governing territories in 1947, arguing that its entities were self-governing, and declining to transmit reports to the United Nations provided for under Article 73(e) of the Charter.

France did not alter its approach when the UN Decolonization Committee was established in 1960. The Decolonization Committee prepares Working Papers on non-self-governing territories on the basis of reports by the respective Administering

Authorities. UNGA Resolution 1541(XV) of that year set out the Principles which should guide members as to whether or not an obligation exists to transmit information called for under Article 73 e of the Charter. It refers to non-self-governing territories as “those in a dynamic state of evolution and progress towards a full measure of self-government”. France bitterly opposed New Caledonia’s reinscription on the UN List of Non-Self-Governing Territories, after intense lobbying by the Pacific island countries, in 1986. Even after it had concluded the Matignon Accords in 1988, France declined to transmit reports on New Caledonia to the United Nations.

But from January 2004, without any public fanfare, for the first time France began to submit (confidential) annual reports on the situation in New Caledonia to the Committee, as Administering Authority (Personal communication from C24 Secretariat 2008). Against the background of the history of France’s non-compliance with the Committee, this was an extraordinary step, undoubtedly reflecting renewed confidence in its position, and a belief that the international community would endorse its unfolding plan for New Caledonia. Several of the current 29 members of the C24 come from the region: Papua New Guinea, Fiji, East Timor and Indonesia are all on the Committee. Moreover, in the post-Cold War world, Committee members Indonesia (with an eye to its troubles in West Papua and Aceh), Russia and China amongst others, all for domestic reasons are disposed to resist active decolonization moves that might bolster separatist claims. France calculates that its Noumea Accord framework for an outcome in New Caledonia will receive widespread support in the very Committee which regional Pacific and Kanak independentist leaders used, by reinscription, to further their claims.

In the same spirit, in October 2009, the New Caledonian government, with France’s blessing, sent a delegation to make a presentation to the UN Decolonization Committee for the first time. The delegation was led by pro-France leader Philippe Gomès and included representatives of the collegial government, including FLNKS. Gomès referred to his government’s participation as providing a more balanced input to the Committee, which had till 2004 received petitions and presentations from non-government sources in New Caledonia, mainly the FLNKS.

France and the delegation extended an invitation for the Decolonization Committee to hold its next Pacific regional seminar, in Noumea in May 2010. The Committee agreed, and duly held its seminar in the SPC headquarters in Noumea, 17-18 May. The regional impact of France’s efforts to court the Committee was undercut by France’s treatment of Kanak customary leaders and visiting French Polynesian Speaker and intermittent President Oscar Temaru, all of whom protested outside the building at their non-inclusion. French authorities sent them on their way (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 21 May 2010, *Flash d’Océanie* 17 May 2010), although they were given an opportunity to meet Committee representatives at a dinner hosted by Kanak customary leaders.

But there are signs that France is picking and choosing those elements of the decolonization process which it will support. The suggestion by at least one member of the Decolonization Committee, that a *quid pro quo* of holding the Decolonization Committee’s Regional Seminar in Noumea should be the requirement for a visiting

(investigatory) UN mission to New Caledonia, was not implemented. France has never accepted a visit by such a UN mission to New Caledonia. It has maintained this position despite the record of cooperation by other Administering Authorities (for example, New Zealand has accepted five visiting UN missions to Tokelau since the 1970s, UN Paper A/AC.109/2006/20), and despite strong exhortations by the Committee that Administering Authorities do so (see UN Paper A/AC.109/2009/L.6). The ministerial Pacific Islands Forum missions to New Caledonia have sent their reports to the UN Committee (PIF Communiqué 1991, paragraph 34), although there has not been a visiting PIF mission since 2004 (see section Pacific Islands Forum Watching Brief below).

There are also moves under way to overhaul the wording of the annual UN General Assembly Resolution on the Question of New Caledonia, which has been a thorn in the side of France from 1986. A general review of the text will provide an opportunity for France to modify longstanding critical references to the situation in New Caledonia.

Implicit in France's taking on its UN responsibilities as Administering Authority, is an acknowledgement that New Caledonia is a non-self-governing territory whose future would therefore be bound by UN decolonization principles. These principles provide a pointer to the possible future status of New Caledonia. The principles are laid out in two linked UN General Assembly Resolutions (1541 and 1514). UN General Assembly Resolution 1541 of December 1960 provides for three options by which a territory "can be said to have reached a full measure of self-government: (a) Emergence as a sovereign independent State; (b) Free association with an independent State; or (c) Integration with an independent State" (United Nations Resolution 1541 December 1960, Annex). The principles include a commitment to an outcome based on "the free and voluntary choice by the peoples concerned" (Principle VII (a)). In the case of the integration option, the outcome is to be based on "equal status and rights of citizenship between the peoples of the erstwhile territory and the independent territory to which it is to become integrated" (Principle VIII), begging questions about the special citizenship rights France provided under the Noumea Accord (i.e. the restricted electorate for the final referendum on New Caledonia's future status).

In the recurring UN General Assembly Resolutions on the Question of New Caledonia, the UN General Assembly has invited "all the parties involved to continue promoting a framework for the peaceful progress of the Territory towards *an act of self-determination in which all options are open* and which would safeguard the rights of all sectors of the population, according to the spirit and letter of the Noumea Accord" (UNGA A/Res/64/102 operative clause 12).

France's taking on its Administering Authority responsibilities also reasonably means that France should comply with injunctions such as that in UNGA Resolution 35/118 which in its Annex calls for member states to "adopt the necessary measures to discourage or prevent the systematic influx of outside immigrants and settlers into Territories under colonial domination, which disrupts the demographic composition of those Territories and may constitute a major obstacle to the genuine exercise of the right to self-determination and independence by the people of those Territories"

(UNGA 35/118 Plan of Action for the Full Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 11 December 1980). UN General Assembly Resolutions on New Caledonia have variously referred to the problem of immigration, the most recent noting “the concerns expressed by representatives of the indigenous people regarding incessant migratory inflows” (A/RES/64/102, 19 January 2010, operative para 4).

France no doubt calculates that its objective to retain its Pacific entities will be enhanced by complying with some of the UN decolonization procedures. But the UN mechanisms, with their history of non-compliance by France, remain a vehicle for any dissenting pro-independence voices in the French Pacific entities, particularly New Caledonia, to make themselves heard, should their aspirations not be met. In particular, the relatively new UN instrument protecting indigenous people’s rights (such as the 2007 Declaration on Indigenous Rights, see Chapter 9), provides a further avenue of redress for disaffected Kanak peoples in the playing out of the Noumea Accord and its aftermath.

Aid to region

France contributes aid to the region through its participation in the SPC and the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), and support for Forum activities. France contributes to emergency disaster management and fisheries surveillance through a trilateral FRANZ (France Australia New Zealand) arrangement (see below), and defence training and exercises engaging regional countries and its Armed Forces in New Caledonia and French Polynesia. Its main aid delivery arm, the *Agence Française de Développement* (French Development Agency, AFD), has only one bilateral aid program in the region, in Vanuatu, which it operates from Noumea after closing its office there in 2002. France is a major contributor to the EU European Development Fund (EDF) activities in the region and participates in the Asian Development Bank. And its Ambassador to the South Pacific administers a small South Pacific Fund.

Inconsistent Statistics

Statistics about French contributions through these various mechanisms are opaque and inconsistent. Depending on sources, there is clearly some overlap in stated expenditures, creating a confused picture (for example, overlaps in reported French bilateral aid and EU aid, see below; also some program assistance, as distinct from core budget support, to SPC comes from the South Pacific Fund; and some emergency assistance under the FRANZ arrangements is included in expenditure by the New Caledonian Army (FANC, *Forces Armées de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*).

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs shows variable and not necessarily comparable figures. An item on its website dated June 2006 (accessed 27 February 2010), entitled “France and the Pacific Region”, showed that in 2006, France’s total bilateral aid budget to the region was around EUR 15 m. a year, and specified a further 12.8 m. that year through EU channels, a total of EUR 27.8 m. (around \$A 40 m. converted 19 May

2010). An item on the same Ministry website, dated October 2009, showed France's bilateral aid disbursement to the Pacific totalled EUR 103 m. (\$A 146 m.) in 2008 and EUR 98 m. (\$A 140 m.) in 2007, and was not clear on whether that included funds through the EU. These figures appear to be a large leap from the EUR 27.8 m. in 2006, but may include French contributions through the EU (French Foreign Affairs website www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo_833/oceanie_14692/index.html accessed 14 May 2009 and 25 February 2010 and superseded by May 2010; and bilateral aid section accessed 25 February and 19 May 2010).

If these figures do include contributions by way of the EU, then the situation is further muddied by the caveats to EU aid (see EU representation and aid to the region section) such as the pattern of underspending allocations; and the occasional lumping together of EU funding to the independent Pacific countries along with EU overseas collectivities (such as the French Pacific ones there) (see for example EU website overview on EU and the Pacific, www.europa.com).

France also sometimes includes in its aid figures, expenditure in its own entities. A figure provided by the French Government to the OECD in 2006 and cited by OECD as gross French bilateral aid to "Océanie" or the Pacific (undefined), amounted to \$US 110 m. (\$A 128 m. converted 19 May 2010), but this included some items specified as bilateral aid, to its own three collectivities (OECD 2008a Tables B.3 and B.4 pp. 86 and 87).

Some other analyses (see for example Mrgudovic 2008 p. 326 footnote 1012; Hughes 2003 p. 20) also include in aid figures, France's financial support for its own three Pacific entities. This is very distorting, since this amount is very large, totalling around \$A 4.6 b. a year (\$A 1.9 b. or 121.5 b. cfp to New Caledonia in 2007 in ISEE TEC 2008 p. 960; \$A 2.7 b. or 159.1 b. cfp to French Polynesia in 2006 from French High Commission press release 7 August 2007; and \$A 5 m. or 373.7 m. cfp to Wallis and Futuna in 2006 from Wallis and Futuna Statistics Office, STSEE, www.spc.int/prism accessed 19 May 2009). While there is no doubt that much of this expenditure in the French collectivities benefits economic development there, and therefore the region, since it is expenditure on sovereign soil of a developed country, it is difficult to describe this as development assistance to the region.

From all of this, while there seem to be some discrepancies, the clearest conclusion to be made is that France, on its own account and through contributions to the EU effort, spent EUR 27.8 m. in 2006, EUR 98 m. in 2007 and EUR 103 m. in 2008, on aid to the Pacific region over and above its expenditure in its own Pacific collectivities (Note: the large increase in 2007 and 2008 appears to be accounted for by the inclusion of EU contributions, and possibly includes some EU *allocations* as opposed to *expenditure*). France's 2006 expenditure of EUR 27.8 m. in the Pacific included assistance in governance (against drug trafficking and money laundering), sustainable development (through SPREP and SPC projects including on coral reefs), health (including a joint Australian project on AIDS through the SPC, and a New Zealand project on public health monitoring), education (university cooperation and professional and technical training), broadcasting (cooperation with RFO and other French broadcasters),

infrastructure (modernization of secondary airports and renovation of Vanuatu's hospital) and natural disaster assistance (including implementation of the FRANZ arrangement). France has been a member of the Asian Development Bank from 1970 with 2.322% of shares (fewer than Australia's 5.773% but much more than New Zealand's 1.532%). It is described as a non-regional member. The ADB supported projects in the South Pacific through loans and financing to a value of \$A 684 m. in 2007 (ADB 2008 p. 16).

Table 12
Indicative figures on France's assistance to the region (in millions of Euros (\$A))

	2006*	2007#	2008#
Aid to region*	27.8 (\$A 40)	98 (140)	103 (146)
Of which, bilateral*	15.0 (\$A 21)		
Of which, through EU (just under 20% EDF)	12.8 (\$A 19)		

Some indicative programs funded (not complete):

South Pacific Fund	2.4 (\$A3.4) average p.a. 2007-2009
SPC+	3.0 (4.2) average p.a. 1999-2009
Plus French share/EU	1.0 (1.4) average p.a. 2002-2007
Coral Reefs Initiative 2004-9	2.0 (2.8) average p.a. 2004-9
Activities through FRANZ++	1.0 (1.4)
(emergency aid, logistic support)	

Sources: *French Ministry of Foreign Affairs website www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo_833/oceanie_14692/index.html accessed 14 May 2009

#French Ministry of Foreign Affairs website accessed 26 February 2010; may include allocations through EU programs

+SPC Annual Reports and Financial Statements, France and EU Support to SPC 1993 to 2009.

++Estimate from FANC

Considering it is a country resident in the region, France's aid to the region is relatively modest, given the contributions of other Pacific region donors and given its own contributions to other regions.

Australia's 2009-10 budget for the region totalled \$A1.092 b. (Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Press Release 12 May 2009). New Zealand spent \$ NZ 205.5 m. in the Pacific in 2007-8 and allocated \$NZ 756 m., or \$NZ 278 m. per annum, for the three years from 2009-10 (NZ AID website <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/programmes/c-pac-countries.html> accessed 19 May 2009 and 6 July 2010).

As a point of comparison, the OECD Official Development Assistance or ODA figures are useful. ODA only includes specially defined assistance (essentially official government aid with the main aim of economic development of developing countries and containing a certain percentage of grant aid, see OECD 2008b). The OECD ODA statistics used by Australia's Ausaid in its 2009 publication, *Tracking Development and Governance in the Pacific*, showed that France provided \$US 16.7 m. (\$A 19.4 m. converted 19 May 2010) or 1.4% of total ODA contributed to the Pacific Islands Forum countries in 2007, with the EU contributing \$US 71.2 m. (\$A 83 m.) or 6.1% (and

France contributes around 19% of EU funding to the Pacific). In the same comparison, Australia provided \$US 649.3 m. (\$A 757 m.) or 55.7% of ODA, and New Zealand \$US 120.9 m. (\$A 141 m.) or 10.4%. France was also outshone by the US (14.7%) and Japan (6%)(Ausaid, 2009 p. 42).

Table 13
French global bilateral public development assistance disbursements 2007 and 2008
In millions of Euro

	2008	% total	2007	% total
Europe	295	7%	180	4%
North Africa	436	10%	459	10%
Sub-Sahara Africa	1 886	43%	2140	47%
South America	141	3%	263	6%
Middle East	531	12%	724	16%
Central and Southern Asia	120	3%	135	3%
Far East	372	8%	218	5%
Pacific	103	2%	98	2%
Non-zone assistance	550	12%	356	8%
Total bilateral assistance	4 435	100%	4 572	100%

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Source: French Ministry of Foreign Affairs website www.diplomatie.gouv.fr accessed 19 May and 8 December 2010

Compared to its own expenditure in other regions, France's aid to its immediate neighbours in the Pacific region seems meager. The French Foreign Ministry site's table of global disbursements (Table 13) showed that the 2008 and 2007 figures for the Pacific represented just 2% of total French bilateral aid disbursements, well behind Africa (which received 53% in 2008), the Middle East (12%), Asia (only 3%) and South America (3%). In 2005, the tiny state of Mauritania alone received EUR 36 m.

(\$A 64 m.), more than the entire Pacific region at the time (French bilateral aid, French Foreign Ministry website www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo_833/oceanie_14692/index.html accessed 14 May 2009). These figures suggest that despite its sovereign presence, France does not see the Pacific as its own immediate region, with special aid contribution responsibilities.

Moreover, the relative disproportion of France's expenditure in its own entities relative to the rest of the region underlines the paucity of its aid to the region. France contributed \$A 1.9 b. or 121.5 b. cfp to New Caledonia alone in 2007 (not including its metropolitan based expenditure such as payment of military personnel see ISEE 2008, p. 96), more than the GDPs of each of the Forum island members except PNG, Guam and Fiji. Its total contribution to its three territories (280 b. cfp or \$A 4.6 b.) is worth more than any individual Forum member's GDP except PNG and Guam (SPC statistics translated into cfp, Table, ISEE TEC 2008 p. 12). France's \$A4.6 b. expenditure in its own Pacific collectivities compares with Australia's total global aid program of \$A3.8 b. (2009-10, Ausaid's website www.ausaid.gov.au accessed 5 October 2009).

South Pacific Fund

At the same time as France is talking about improved political dialogue and hosting its Oceanic Summits, its assistance through its own South Pacific Fund is declining. The Fund is the same one originally established by Flosse when he was Minister for the South Pacific (see Chapter 4). It has fluctuated in value, from around EUR 3m. a year in the 1990s, but has declined in recent years, from EUR 2.7 m. in 2007, to EUR 2.5 m. in 2008 and EUR 2 m. in 2009 (see *Flash d' Océanie* 13 March 2009, 14 November 2008, and 2 April 2008). Moreover, the focus in the last few years has shifted from Flosse's idea of supporting local Pacific island projects, to funding projects primarily and overtly to assist the French Pacific entities' involvement in the region (see the list of priority areas under the program, article "Le Fonds Pacifique", website of the French Embassy in Papua New Guinea, http://www.ambafrance-pg.org/article.php3?id_article=427 accessed 8 March 2010). This means the Fund serves France's regional objectives, more than the priorities of the independent Pacific island countries themselves.

France and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)

From 1947, France has hosted the headquarters of the SPC in Noumea, including throughout the regional difficulties of the 1980s. Originally housed in the former US military headquarters from the Second World War, the French State facilitated the construction of an impressive new headquarters at a valuable nearby beachfront site, completed in 1995. It provided 75 million francs (\$A 20 m.), the largest single component, towards construction costs (*Journal Officiel du Sénat*, response to question 10070, 15 October 1998). The main conference room, designed by a Fijian architect, takes the form of an upturned boat with oceanic details such as a reflective pool mirroring the ocean against its internal walls, and finishes of ropework over the glossy wooden panels. The organization has operated in both French and English since its

inception, a significant symbolic achievement for France given the cost and limited capacity of most of the members to draw on the French translations. Despite France's modest ongoing financial contributions to the SPC, French nationals have held prominent positions in the organization. New Caledonia's Jacques Iékawé was appointed Secretary-General in 1992, but passed away before assuming office. The office of Deputy Director General to the SPC has recently been occupied by French nationals (the former Cultural Attaché to the French Embassy in Sydney, Yves Corbel, served as Deputy from 1997 to 2006; and his successor, Richard Mann, is a French national).

Since it is the largest international conference facility in Noumea, the French State and New Caledonia have benefitted from their investment. The SPC has been amenable to the Conference facility being used for a range of domestic political meetings, including a New Caledonian land issues conference in 2001, and a satellite video hook-up between the New Caledonian government and the then Overseas France Minister, Brigitte Girardin, in 2003.

Mrgudovic (2008 p. 139) argued that the SPC had been a strong force for the integration of France and its entities into the Pacific. If so, this is more because of the institutional presence of the SPC in Noumea and the political effect of Pacific island experts and officials travelling to Noumea regularly, than because of French engagement in the work, and funding, of the SPC. The technical focus of the SPC has set it apart from political differences over the years, and is a testimony to the maturity of the Pacific island countries, supported by large regional donors, Australia, New Zealand, France and to a lesser degree the United States and, in the past, the United Kingdom.

France's contribution to the SPC has averaged just over EUR 3 m. in each of the last ten years, although according to one senior official, the amounts expended in any year fluctuate owing to the nature of program assistance (SPC 2009). For example, SPC figures show that it contributed \$US 7.1 m. in 2007, about half of what Australia and New Zealand respectively contributed (\$US 14.7 m. Australia, \$US 14.5 m. New Zealand) (SPC 2007). France also contributed through EU contributions which also, by their nature (going to programs rather than the core budget), are variable, averaging around EUR 5 m. a year from 2005 to 2007, *Ibid.*)

France, Australia, New Zealand and regional defence and other links

While France's 2008 Defence White Paper said very little about the Pacific *per se* (see Ministère de la Défense 2008; Fisher 2008c), it did highlight the importance of regional partnerships, specifically mentioning Australia. The Paper sought to focus France's domestic priorities on better intelligence and technology while rationalizing and reducing overall numbers of personnel and bases. In this context, the Paper announced that Noumea would host the pre-eminent French defence presence in the region, with personnel in French Polynesia to be reduced by half between 2011 and 2015 to 1100. New Caledonia's defence personnel would be reduced slightly from its current 3000,

but its police and civil security personnel would increase. France had already built a consolidated headquarters bringing together all arms of the defence presence at a new SA 13 m. headquarters in Noumea.

Cooperative defence relations between France and Australia, often with New Zealand, have grown. The tripartite FRANZ arrangement, based on an exchange of letters in 1992, provides for disaster relief coordination engaging aid and defence elements from all three countries. There have been numerous examples of FRANZ cooperation to assist regional countries after natural catastrophes (for example, Solomon Islands in 2007 after a tsunami). Aid officials from each FRANZ country meet regularly for planning purposes. In recent years the Arrangement has been extended to cover maritime fisheries surveillance, formalized in a joint declaration signed in Canberra in March 2006 (DFAT website France country brief, Pacific Engagement, accessed 8 December 2010). France provides feedback to Pacific island countries from overflights by its military aircraft on illegal fishing identified in vast areas contiguous with its territory. It is a complementary mechanism to similar activity by Australia and New Zealand in other areas of the South Pacific, with regular day to day engagement by France with regional countries providing useful, economically valuable regional intelligence.

FRANZ countries, along with the United States, participate in annual quadrilateral discussions on maritime security, including fisheries and Pacific traffic issues. France has participated from 1998 through its military forces based in French Polynesia and New Caledonia (Press Release, US Coast Guard, 19 March 2009; *Flash d'Océanie* 21 April 2009). The COMSUP (Commander of French Armed Forces in the Pacific) advised in early 2009 that the French Force contribution to FRANZ was worth around EUR 1 m. a year (\$A1.75 m. converted 7 July 2009, Personal communication 2009).

Australian and French defence cooperation in the Pacific operates within the context of close broad bilateral defence relations, outlined in the 2006 Defence Cooperation Agreement, which entered into force in July 2009. Cooperation includes regular political/military consultations from 2001, defence supply compatibility programs, and commercial Australian defence contacts involving French companies, particularly EADS. France is the world's fourth largest defence materiel exporter, and Australia is one of its biggest customers (see Maclellan 2009b p. 13). In September 2008, after meeting the new Australian labour Minister for Defence Joel Fitzgibbon, the French Defence Minister Hervé Morin announced that New Caledonia would be available to give military logistical support to Australia in a Mutual Logistical Support Arrangement (Joint press conference Australian and French Defence ministers 17 September 2008). This arrangement formalized the kind of military support the French had provided from New Caledonia on various occasions. For example, New Caledonia provided an evacuation point for injured Australian personnel when an Australian military Blackhawk helicopter crashed on an Australian vessel, HMAS Kanimbla, during an evacuation operation offshore from Fiji during the 2006 Fiji coup, and served as a staging point for Australian ships preparing for the eventuality of consular evacuations from Fiji (see Fisher 2008c).

An important bilateral gesture to Australia and New Zealand respectively is made every year by France in its commemorations of Anzac Day in New Caledonia. The event is commemorated over three days in three different locations. On the first day, usually Anzac Day itself, a ceremony is held in the centre of Noumea, in the presence of the High Commissioner, New Caledonian President and other dignitaries, and war veterans. On the second day, officials travel en masse to participate in similar ceremonies at the Commonwealth cemetery at Bourail; and on the third day, to a hilltop overlooking the Plaine des Gaiacs in the north, the site where American Seabees laid a now overgrown airstrip to Australian design early in World War II. These pilgrimages engage the local communities as much as the French representatives, and mark their great affection and respect for the ANZACS who fell in metropolitan France and in the region during the two World Wars.

France participates in regular military exercises with Australia and New Zealand from its base in New Caledonia, many of which include other Pacific island countries. These include the annual Equator naval exercise off the coast of Queensland; the biennial Southern Cross exercises in New Caledonia, and Australian regional exercises including Pitch Black and Kakadu (DFAT Country brief on France accessed 28 October 2008; French Embassy in Australia website, www.ambafrance-au.org, accessed 11 November 2008). Many training exercises routinely involve Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea often alongside French, Australian and New Zealand troops. French senior military officials visit Papua New Guinea regularly.

Ship visits and visits by respective senior military leaders both ways between New Caledonia and Australia are frequent and have increased in number in recent years (for example from around four a year to more than eight from 2001 to 2005). This form of cooperation draws France in to the normal defence activity of the region, enhancing interoperability, and facilitating close cooperation in times of need. The official French approach has been extremely positive, with local French forces undertaking joint exercises on French soil working entirely in English, an important symbolic effort showing the French defence forces' willingness to adapt to the region.

Beyond formal agreements and exercises, France has taken great care to support Australian regional defence objectives. France was the first regional country to respond when Australia called for participants in the UN backed International Force for East Timor in 1999, arriving there even before New Zealand, a significant reminder of the potential strategic benefits for Australia and the region deriving from France's physical presence in the Pacific. France let Australia know that it would be interested in participating in the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) deployed in July 2003, although did not in the end participate given regional sensitivities (see section, Regional reactions to French efforts, below). And as indicated above, France provided important logistical support for Australian activity at the time of the 2006 Fiji coup.

Mixed reaction in New Caledonia

Whereas these formal defence links are a positive indication of Australian-French cooperation, local feeling in New Caledonia is mixed. Roch Wamytan has commented on the incompatibility of France's bases restructuring in New Caledonia with New Caledonia's decolonization process (MacLellan 2009b p. 13). An FLNKS leader has commented privately that it was disappointing that the first sign of the new Australian Rudd government's interest in New Caledonia was the military pact (status of forces arrangements).

Reforms flowing from France's 2008 Defence White Paper will lead to New Caledonia becoming a major French defence logistical base from 2011, literally on the eve of the final five-year stage (2013-2018) of the Noumea Accord. Reflecting Kanak sensitivities, in a submission to the United Nations Decolonization Committee in November 2008, FLNKS leader Roch Wamytan noted the French decision to regroup its military forces to New Caledonia violated the obligation of Administering Powers not to use non-self-governing territories for military bases or installations (see UNGA 2008 A/C.4/63/SR.5).

French-Australian scientific cooperation

The French Pacific collectivities, particularly New Caledonia, also provide a venue for French-Australian scientific and cultural cooperation.

France and Australia have signed a number of bilateral scientific agreements. These include the Scientific and Technological Agreement, October 1988; the Scientific and Technological Marine Agreement, May 1991; the Industrial Research Program Agreement, May 1991; the French Australian Science and Technology program (FEAST), November 2003; and a scholarship program benefitting Australian students in France (Fisher 2004).

Cooperation also flows from France's presence in New Caledonia. There is significant contact between Australian research institutions and the many French research institutions based in New Caledonia. Australian scientific cooperation is handled by Australian tertiary institutions individually, and not the Government as is the case with France. It is therefore difficult to identify the full range of cooperation. As an indicator, in 2004, the New Caledonian based *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement*, Institute for Development Research, IRD, alone cooperated with more than 10 Australian institutions in a number of scientific areas. These included the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization) on oceanography, biology and entomology; Geoscience Australia on geology and coastal modeling; ANSTO (Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organization) on radio-chemical applications to the marine environment; the Queensland Museum on marine natural substances in Vanuatu; the Sydney Botanical Gardens on algae; the Sydney and Victorian Museums on crustaceans; the Universities of Canberra and Queensland on climatology; James Cook University and ANSTO on metals in soils; Monash University on botany (Personal communications Colin 2004).

France and Australia co-funded a house of residence for Vanuatu students at the University of New Caledonia in Noumea in 2001.

In the area of educational exchanges, since the Noumea Accord was signed, Australia has provided about \$A 1 m. per annum to fund scholarships to enable students from all three French Pacific collectivities to study in Australia. The take-up has been excellent. Despite ongoing problems with the recognition of Australian qualifications in the French entities, New Caledonia has made an effort by allowing case-by-case consideration of Australian-qualified applicants to its civil service. As the mining sector grows, companies are less likely to be concerned about where training occurred and employment prospects for Australian-trained New Caledonians will increase. There is little or no exchange in the other direction. Indeed, from 2008, New Caledonia began to send many young people to train in francophone Canada, suggesting that it would prefer French language institutions rather than the regional Anglophone ones (see *Partir pour mieux revenir, Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 7 August 2008).

Trilateral Development Cooperation

Other forms of cooperation in the region with Australia and New Zealand have included a tripartite declaration on the surveillance and combating of illegal fisheries (April 2006), the PREPARE (Pacific Regional Endeavour for an Appropriate Response to Epidemics) program with New Zealand and the WHO on treatment of epidemics, the France-Australia prevention of sexually transmissible diseases and HIVAIDS, the Santo 2006 project on marine and land-based biodiversity in Vanuatu, and the Protection of Coral Reefs in the South Pacific Program (CRISP) from 2002 (see Gazzi 2009).

Regional participation by the three French collectivities

Regional institutions

Statutory provisions reserve responsibility for foreign affairs to the French State, but enable both New Caledonia and French Polynesia to participate in regional contacts in their own right. The Noumea Accord, Article 3.2.1, provides essentially for New Caledonia to be a member, or associate, in international bodies including specifically Pacific regional organizations, the UN, UNESCO, ITU (International Telecommunications Union) and a broad "et cetera"; to have representatives in the Pacific zone and EU organizations, and to negotiate agreements with these countries in areas of its responsibility, which are defined at 3.1.1 to cover external trade, rights of foreigners to work, some specified air services, and maritime services. The February 2004 Organic Law for French Polynesia provides for it to have its own representation in any State (although the Constitutional Council has specified this is not full diplomatic representation); for the President to negotiate administrative arrangements with any Pacific State or territory to advance its economic, social and economic development; and to sign cooperation agreements in any area within French Polynesia's responsibility (Articles 15 to 17). With the agreement of the Republic's authorities,

French Polynesia can be a member, associate or observer of international organizations, or its President can be associated with work of regional Pacific organizations in the areas of its responsibility (article 42). The Law defines French Polynesia as having all responsibilities other than those (*régalien*, or sovereign) functions of the French State which are specified (and include foreign policy, defence, entry of foreigners (not their access to work), and air services within the Republic (see Faberon and Ziller 2007 pp. 323-325).

All three French Pacific entities have participated in the SPC since 1983, although they functioned for many years as part of the French delegation and have not been active in their own right.

Membership of the Pacific Islands Forum has been more problematic, since the organization is more political in nature and was created as a vehicle of opposition to French policies in the Pacific. The Forum allowed only entities on the way to self-government to become observers. With the signature of the Noumea Accord, New Caledonia was seen as having qualified and became an observer in 1999, and French Polynesia in 2004 after its Organic Law changes. But in acknowledgement of significant efforts by France to develop relations, including by the Chirac government hosting a meeting of the France Oceania Summit for Pacific leaders in Papeete in 2003 and in Paris in June 2006, the Pacific Islands Forum welcomed both in a new category of Associate Member in 2006, when Wallis and Futuna became an observer. Since then New Caledonia's President Gomès has indicated that he wants full membership status for New Caledonia (see *Flash d'Océanie* 19 January 2010).

All three French entities are members of the Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association and the Pacific Power Association (PPA) and the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP). New Caledonia and French Polynesia are members of the South Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO), known as South-Pacific Travel; the Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP); and associate members of the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC). French Polynesia is an Observer to the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website, at South Pacific regional organizations, www.dfat.gov.au accessed 9 March 2010).

Thus the French collectivities are represented in some way on seven of the ten inter-governmental members of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP), i.e., in the SPC, SPREP, SOPAC, PIDP, SPTO, FFA, and the PPA. There are only three CROP bodies in which the French Pacific collectivities are not represented: the University of the South Pacific, the Fiji School of Medicine, and the South Pacific Board for Education Assessment. The Universities of New Caledonia and of French Polynesia (which split apart from the united French University of the Pacific in 1999) are not members of CROP. The Universities operate in the French language which limits the potential for cooperation. Still, there would be a good argument for closer collaboration between France, its regional universities and CROP's education members.

Table 14
Participation of French Pacific Collectivities in Pacific regional organizations

	SPC	PIF	SOPAC	FFA	PECC	SPTO	PIDP	SPREP	PPA	OCO
New Caledonia	M	A/M	A/M		A/M*	M	M	M	M	M
French Polynesia	M	A/M	A/M	O	A/M*	M	M	M	M	M
Wallis & Futuna	M	O			A/M*			M	M	M

M Member

A/M Associate Member

O Observer

A/M* combined Associate Member with France

SPC Secretariat for the Pacific Community

PIF Pacific Islands Forum

SOPAC South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission

FFA Forum Fisheries Agency

PECC Pacific Economic Cooperation Council

SPTO South Pacific Tourism Organization

PIDP Pacific Islands Development Program

SPREP South Pacific Regional Environment Program

PPA Pacific Power Association

OCO Oceanic Customs Organization (non-CROP, Council of Regional Organizations of Pacific)

Source: ISEE TEC 2008 p. 13

France and its collectivities together participate as an Associate Member of the tripartite (government, business, academic) Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) through the Paris-based France Pacific Territories National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation. The collectivities are members of the Oceanic Customs Organization which was headquartered in Noumea in 1999 but which subsequently moved to Suva.

Much of the promising breadth of participation by the French collectivities is limited by the cultural divide between their senior officials and those of the regional groupings. The Noumea Accord specifically states that training will be provided to prepare the collectivities for foreign affairs activities (Noumea Accord 3.2.1). However, whereas France has been active in overtly campaigning for full participation of its collectivities in the Pacific Islands Forum, and allowing for their participation in their own right in Forum activities and those of other regional organizations, it has been less energetic in ensuring that local officials are equipped to participate fully in this Anglophone organization. Senior New Caledonian leaders have privately expressed their expectation that the Forum, made up of the poorest island states that happen to be English-speaking, should fund parallel French language interpretation services, an

unrealistic hope given the dominance of anglophone countries and the cost of translation services. Lacking an adequately resourced local secretariat for external affairs, New Caledonian leaders and officials are also not conversant with key Forum and CROP issues on a regular basis.

For their own part, the collectivities have been mixed in their attitude to regional participation. The Frogier-led government (2000 to 2004) was distinctly unenthusiastic, senior leaders complaining privately about the fact that proceedings were conducted in English about issues they were not fully briefed about either from their own local viewpoints or certainly in the regional context. Chapter 5 noted the limited development of an external affairs unit in New Caledonia, which had no director by 2009.

One trend evident in recent years has been greater contact and cooperation between the French Pacific entities themselves (see “Franconésie” unity section below).

President Sarkozy has himself underlined his wish that France’s overseas entities integrate more closely in their regions (Sarkozy 2009; and he exhorted the French territories to open themselves more economically to the countries surrounding them, Sarkozy 2010a). To assist the French Pacific collectivities to participate effectively and genuinely in their own right, training in English and regional affairs, perhaps through exchanges, will be essential. A greater effort needs to be made by France, and regional donor countries, Australia and New Zealand, in this area.

Melanesian Spearhead Group

As seen in Chapter 3, the MSG was formed to show solidarity with New Caledonia’s Kanaks and press for their independence. Since the signature of the Matignon/Noumea Accords, the grouping altered focus to economic cooperation (see May 2011 p. 2), but maintains an interest in the New Caledonian decolonization issue, along with support for the autonomist aspirations of West Papuans. The MSG is now made up of the independent governments of PNG, Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, along with the FLNKS. New Caledonia as an entity is not a member. The MSG put in place a Free Trade Agreement in 1993, and established a Free Trade Zone in 2006, with limited effectiveness.

France has shown some flexibility towards the MSG. Perhaps with a concerned eye on China’s funding of a new secretariat building for the body in Vila, which was inaugurated in 2007, the French State allowed Noumea to host an MSG meeting in 2001. French High Commissioner Dassonville met MSG representatives in late 2008 to discuss technical issues (address to Colloquium on Melanesian Integration, de Deckker and Faberon 2008 p. 10).

In October 2009, President of the New Caledonian government Philippe Gomès told the UN Committee on Decolonization in New York that his government wanted New Caledonia to become a full member of the MSG (see *Flash D’Océanie* 19 January 2010). Although such participation would possibly strengthen the effectiveness of the

MSG as an economic sub-grouping, the idea was not at all welcomed by some of New Caledonia's Kanak leaders. FLNKS spokesman Victor Tutugoro commented that the idea of the MSG, formed as part of the Kanak fight for liberation, was that a fully independent New Caledonia would eventually become a member in its own right. He also noted that New Caledonia, or Kanaky, was not yet fully emancipated (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19 February 2010). His comments came after a debate at the annual FLNKS congress where Palika generally supported developing regional links for New Caledonia, while the more ascendant UC defended the traditional objectives of the FLNKS within the MSG. In June 2010, an MSG delegation visiting New Caledonia in order to assess Noumea Accord implementation, and expressed continuing concern at the slow rate implementation of Accord commitments (May 2011 p. 6 and see Regional reaction section below).

“Franconésie” unity

France has encouraged its three Pacific entities to consult and work together in recent years. Rumley (2006 p. 244) referred to France's intention for the three collectivities to work together in a kind of “Franconesia”, to “reinvigorate a French regional role”.

From 2003, the three take turns to chair the meetings on the allocation of the South Pacific Fund. In 2009, the three French collectivities met and agreed to work together and meet on a regular basis. In February 2010, the heads of the Assemblies of the three French Pacific entities signed a partnership agreement under which they agreed to consult and formulate common approaches to French State policy announcements. While this grouping is embryonic, when set against long-term objectives of the French entities of fuller participation in the PIF and other regional groups, it can be seen, potentially at least, as operating as a sub-group of interests within regional bodies.

Trade engagements

New Caledonia has used its capability to negotiate, and even sign (on behalf of the French State), bilateral agreements in the region in areas of its responsibility (Noumea Accord Articles 3.1.1 and 3.2.1). The first country to sign an agreement with New Caledonia was Australia (Trade and Economic Relations Arrangement in March 2002); followed by Vanuatu (cooperation agreements 2002 and 2006, see French Foreign Ministry website, <http://www.diplomatique.gouv.fr/en/country-files> Vanuatu cooperation, accessed 12 January 2011).

The Australian Arrangement provided for regular bilateral economic officials talks. In practice these have been infrequent. By mid 2009 only two had been held, the first in Canberra in September 2002, the second in Noumea in November 2005; and in March 2010, a delegation led by President Gomès visited Australia.

Bilateral economic links between the collectivities and the region are few. The big two, Australia and New Zealand, are unsurprisingly more important for the collectivities than the collectivities are for them. New Caledonia, the most

economically significant of the three collectivities, ranks as Australia's 47th trading partner with two-way trade equal to .1% of Australia's total. It is, however, Australia's fourth largest trade destination in the South Pacific. Australia's exports there (mainly civil engineering equipment and parts, coal, prefabricated buildings and wheat) amounted to \$A359 m. in 2007-8, and are on an increasing trend. Imports largely consisted of iron ore, and were worth \$A 85 m. . Australia was only New Caledonia's sixth largest export destination in 2007 (after Japan, the EU, France, Taiwan, and China), taking just 5.2% of New Caledonia's exports. Australia was New Caledonia's third largest source of imports that year, after France and Singapore (from where New Caledonia imports its petroleum), providing only 10.7% of its imports. French Polynesia's links with Australia are even slimmer, importing around \$A 80 m. worth of goods in 2007-8 (mainly fuel and processed and other food) and exporting only \$A6 m worth of pearls and boats. Australia was French Polynesia's sixth largest import source and seventh largest export destination in 2007 (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Fact Sheet, New Caledonia, French Polynesia www.dfat.gov.au accessed 2 June 2009, and ISEE TEC 2008 pp. 90 and 91).

New Caledonia exported just under \$NZ 1 m. worth of goods to New Zealand in the year to June 2007 (mainly fruit and vegetables and copper); New Zealand exports totalled \$NZ 160.8 m. (yachts and vessels, iron and steel products, food). Total exports from New Zealand to New Caledonia in the year ending June 2007 were NZ\$160.8 million - a year on year growth of 31%, with some 60% of this amount derived from just twenty export categories. New Caledonia is New Zealand's third largest export market in the South Pacific (New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Country Brief, www.nzmfat.gov.nz accessed 2 June 2009).

Economic links with the Pacific islands are even more limited and tend to be focused on Melanesia. New Caledonia imported some products from Fiji (worth 383 m. cfp or \$A 4.6 m. converted 19 May 2010) , Vanuatu (304 m. cfp), PNG (94 m. cfp) and Solomon Islands (52 m. cfp) in 2007 (ISEE TEC 2008 p. 92). In all cases, further growth in economic links is affected by the French collectivities' restrictive trade barriers and reliance on the French and European markets, apart from the relatively limited range of imports from other island economies.

It is therefore unsurprising that there is far to go to engage the French collectivities in regional economic activity. Although the French entities have been invited to participate in regional free trade programs, the PACER (Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations) and the PICTA (Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement), they have responded cautiously. There is a strong awareness of the differences between the well-off, heavily subsidised economies of the French collectivities and the majority of Pacific island states, and of the corresponding economic responsibilities a regional economic agreement would impose on the better-off economies. The French collectivities have made much of the need to protect local business in order to develop economic activity. So, while New Caledonia is studying the two agreements, and officially indicated its willingness to enter into negotiations for its eventual participation, it is unlikely to move quickly to do so (for an indication of the

protectionist approach in New Caledonia, see a contribution by the then head of its Regional Cooperation and External Relations unit, Laurent Sémavoine, in de Deckker and Faberon 2008 p. 241).

France, the European Union and the region

Beyond France's specific bilateral and regional engagement, and that of its collectivities in the Pacific, France has led the way for greater EU activity in the region. It has done this in two ways, first, by actively leading European support for the overseas territories of EU members, including those of France in the Pacific; and second, by pioneering the ACP (African-Caribbean-Pacific) program whereby Europe assists developing countries in Africa and the Pacific, with France providing a significant contribution to funding for this EU development cooperation, including in the Pacific.

Because many aspects of the EU's handling of the French overseas collectivities highlight some specific regional concerns and departures from overall EU practice, and because their treatment under EU provisions differs to those the EU applies to the island Pacific countries, the dispositions of EU treatment of the French Pacific collectivities and the Pacific island states will be considered in detail.

EU and the French Pacific collectivities as European Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT)

From the beginnings of the creation of the European Union (EU) with its origin in the European Economic Community (EEC), France led the way for some form of association with European members' overseas possessions. This meant that the French Pacific entities represented a slice of Europe in the Pacific from the late 1950s in some form or other.

Overseas countries and territories

The first European treaty, the 1951 Treaty of Paris on coal and steel, made only cursory mention of extra-European territories of member states, guaranteeing that any preferential measures in those territories would be extended to other member states (art. 79) (Faberon and Ziller 2008 p. 244.) The 1952 Paris Treaty on a European Defence Community made oblique mentions of Algeria and Saint-Pierre et Miquelon.

But from the 1957 Treaty of Rome, provision has been made for "overseas countries and territories" (OCT) to be associated with the EU, which at the time essentially meant the French overseas possessions, Belgian and Italian African territories and Dutch territories in the Americas. And French influence was the decisive factor ensuring that these provisions were included (European Commission 1998, p. 11; Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 249; Jorda in Tesoka and Ziller 2008 p. 343). The OCT arrangements have

broadly remained unchanged since then, and are aimed at advancing economic and social development of the OCT and the establishment of close economic relations between them and the whole Community (Article 131 of the 1957 Treaty, Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 250). The French OCTs include New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna, the French Southern and Antarctic Territories, Mayotte, and Saint-Pierre et Miquelon.

The provisions under the 1957 Treaty included the creation of a European Development Fund (EDF) from which the French overseas possessions derived considerable financial benefits. France has consistently contributed a larger amount than other European countries with overseas possessions (Sémavoine in de Deckker and Faberon 2008 p. 240 reported France contributed 19.3% of the EDF but Jorda in Tesoka and Ziller 2008 noted France contributed 24.3% for 2000 to 2007, well ahead of Britain, Netherlands and Denmark, and that this was over 8% of French development aid in 2006). For the 10th EDF France will become the second largest contributor (19.55% after Germany but before Britain, Netherlands and Denmark, Tesoka and Ziller 2008 p. 347).

Africa-Caribbean-Pacific

With the decolonization of many overseas European, including some French, possessions in the 1960s and 1970s, the EC developed links with the newly independent African states and Madagascar in the 1963 Yaoundé Convention; and preferential trading measures with the new Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) countries under the 1975 Lomé Convention. The ACP arrangements were agreed at regular intervals, most recently in the Cotonou Agreement of June 2000, applicable for ten years. In parallel, arrangements for the OCTs were periodically renewed, initially by an agreement of application, then by decisions of association taken by the European Council at various intervals.

Preferential treatment of OCTs relative to ACPs

Under these agreements, the preferential access to EC members markets was the same for ACPs and OCTs until 1991, when the OCTs were accorded free and unlimited access to the European market, while the ACPs had to comply with rules of origin and transborder requirements.

Further benefits were accorded to the OCTs in 1997, following the establishment of the European Union in 1993, in an annex to the Treaty of Amsterdam. No EU customs duties or other charges were payable by OCTs. The arrangements are not reciprocal, and OCTs can make their own customs legislation, for example to protect sensitive sectors of their economies. By this time, overseas territories of other European members had been added to the OCTs (those of the United Kingdom in 1973, Denmark in 1986). But the special nature of the French OCTs was accentuated here too by two further protocols to the Treaty of Amsterdam, one called the "Protocol on France" preserving the privilege of issuing currency in its overseas entities, the other a

declaration reserving the right of each member state to act separately from other member states in the interest of the OCT (European Commission 1998 p. 30).

Both French Polynesia and New Caledonia have provisions in their respective Organic Laws for their governments' executives to be involved in relations and negotiations with the EU, and for consultation with their assemblies on proposed acts of the EU (Articles 30 and 89 of the 1999 Organic Law for New Caledonia, and Articles 41 and 135 of the 2004 Organic Law for French Polynesia, see Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 271, and Faberon in Tesoka and Ziller 2008, p. 285 *et seq*). In practice, the collectivities themselves have not been directly engaged with the EU.

In the Pacific, the French Pacific entities as OCTs have thus held a privileged position over other Pacific island states, who are ACPs, in relation to their treatment by Europe.

French Pacific entities: Implications for citizenship

The way in which EU provisions apply to the populations in the OCTs is variable, and still being worked out. Muller, 1999, noted the differences in application for example between Gibraltar and French Polynesia. But the French OCTs retain particular privileges relating to citizenship, which impacts on local sensitivities in the Pacific collectivities.

Because of their French citizenship, and its "indivisibility" or supposed non-discriminatory application to all citizens (Faberon and Ziller p. 253, and Gohin 2002 point 4), inhabitants of the French Pacific entities who are French can vote for special overseas seats in European elections and are entitled to European passports (European Commission 1998, p. 15); they enjoy non-reciprocal rights of mobility and settlement in EU member countries; and they can protect sensitive sectors of their economies from EU imports and can issue their own currency. It is ironic that these benefits derive from the "indivisibility" of French citizenship, given the unique status of New Caledonian citizenship, the restricted electorate and protective local employment conditions provided under the Noumea Accord which seem incompatible with the notion of indivisibility and equality of all French citizens (Gohin 2002 points 32 and 33). The arrangement is yet another example of the creativity of the French State in supporting their collectivities even against the background of monolithic Europe.

Voting Rights

In view of the controversies surrounding New Caledonian citizenship issues, and to some extent French Polynesian employment-protection citizenship issues, the association of the French Pacific collectivities with the EU, with its generally reciprocal arrangements, not surprisingly touches sensitive nerves (see Chapter 5).

Faberon and Ziller note that the European Commission Treaty applied fully to all EU citizens, and therefore to all French citizens wherever they resided, in metropolitan France, in its overseas departments, in its overseas collectivities enumerated in Article 74 of the French Constitution, or in New Caledonia, despite its *sui generis* status (2007

p. 240). All French citizens, including all those French citizens in the French Pacific collectivities, have the right to vote in EU elections. They are the only member state nationals living outside the EU who may do so (Muller 1999 p. 43; *Commission Européenne* 1998 p. 15). Three special *Députés* (members of Parliament) positions were created specifically to represent the French overseas collectivities.

But for the locals in the three Pacific collectivities, this right to vote is seen as a mixed blessing, reflected in the low voter turnouts (around 20%, compared to around 70% turnout in other elections, see for example Table 9) and general lack of appreciation of the benefits, or potential benefits, of European membership. As noted in Chapter 3, many in French Polynesia were suspicious about the EU relationship, when they effectively boycotted or at best ignored the 1989 EU Parliamentary elections (Henningham 1992 p. 163). Local leaders at the time warned that the EU vote risked fuelling independentist sentiment and Flosse suggested the EU identity could erode local culture and identity (Muller 1999 p. 44). It is possible that the changed status of the OCTs relative to the ACPs from 1991 may well have resulted from such sensitivities. In New Caledonia, the pro-independence Palika has traditionally opposed participation in EU elections on the basis that it would imply integration into a system that condoned colonialism in Kanaky (Chappell 1998 p. 443). As Chapter 5 described, after the Noumea Accord was signed, France secured special non-reciprocal rights by which EU members resident in New Caledonia could not vote in congressional or provincial elections. However they remained able to vote in municipal elections, which aroused particular concern amongst the pro-independence groups.

These efforts by France failed to reduce the sense of concern and isolation in its entities: in the June 2004 EU parliamentary elections, voter turnout was a low 25.43% in New Caledonia, and 39.85% in French Polynesia. In May 2005 Palika, a leading constituent of FLNKS, called for a boycott of the French vote on the EU constitution (Maclellan 2005b p. 413). This was consistent with its anti-EU election stance noted above, and occurred when Palika was challenging the pro-France group's interpretation of the restricted electorate for provincial elections in New Caledonia.

A further effort was made to encourage more active participation in EU elections. Until 2009, the three French overseas EU Parliament positions were contested on a basis of one electorate and list of candidates on a proportional basis. This meant that candidates from the more populous Réunion invariably won all three seats. Again at the instigation of France, for the 2009 election, this procedure was changed, with the creation of three electorates, enabling the election of one representative from each of the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific collectivities. During the lead-up to the election, newspapers reported extensively on the substantial funding the OCT received from Europe. But this effort too failed. Voter turnout in New Caledonia and French Polynesia was even lower than in 2004 (21.82% in New Caledonia in 2009 compared to 25.43% in 2004, and in French Polynesia, 22.59% compared to 39.85%)(see also Muller 2010 p. 6). These turnouts are low when compared with the overall turnout for France in EU parliamentary elections (46.76% in 1999, 42.76 % in 2004, and 40.63% in 2009 website www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament, accessed 12 January 2011).

Non-reciprocal rights of travel and settlement

Again, by virtue of their French citizenship, the French Pacific originating populations are able to settle in each of the other 26 European Union member states on the same terms as residents of other EU member states (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 254). In so far as the reciprocal right is concerned, the 1957 Treaty provided for regulation of this right by agreements requiring the unanimity of States members, which have never been adopted (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 255; European Commission 1998 p. 27). Therefore the OCTs benefit from the non-reciprocity of the right to travel and settle in other EU states.

In 1985, some countries of the EU, including France, agreed to create an area of free movement of peoples, abolishing border checks at internal borders. By 2008, most EU countries participated (see The Schengen area and cooperation, EU website accessed 12 January 2011). At France's request, the French OCTs are not part of the Schengen group, since they maintain their own police border controls, unlike countries within the Schengen space (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 256).

The special work protection provisions of New Caledonia and French Polynesia are allowed for under the EC Treaty. Thus the French OCT can take protective measures on employment, so long as incoming workers from European Union members are treated no differently to those from third countries (European Commission 1998 p. 27, Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 267). Interestingly, in theory this would provide a means for local French collectivities to treat incoming French citizens, as EU citizens, seeking employment, just as rigorously as those from third countries, although so far the local governments have not taken up this option. Senior French officials acknowledged in personal communication in early 2009 that local political parties in New Caledonia were pressing for greater controls on French immigrants. The sensitivity of the immigration issue means that all applications by foreigners for employment visas are individually seen and decided upon in the Executive (or Cabinet) of New Caledonia. This is bureaucratically demanding. The criteria for endorsement are opaque (for example, even when the officially-approved Goro nickel plant construction project was under way in 2003, many Australian contractors did not receive work visas and were obliged to travel on tourist visas, Personal communications from Australian contractors 2003). Faberon and Ziller (2007 p. 267) have noted that while statistics are difficult to come by, judicial experience indicates that the EU provisions have resulted in a greater influx of EU workers into the French OCTs, particularly French Polynesia.

Economic benefits

The French OCTs are given full access to the internal market of the EU, which, as the Commission itself points out, is a meaningful privilege given that virtually all of their economic activity is geared towards the European community (European Commission 1998 p. 30). Moreover, the French OCTs can make their own customs legislation protecting sensitive sectors, and issue their own currency (which has been a sensitive political issue, see Chapter 5). In these respects, it is worth noting that the four French overseas *départements*, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Martinique and Réunion, are not OCTs

as they are considered an integral part of the European Community by virtue of their status as departments of France. As such they cannot make their own customs legislation, must apply European customs arrangements to imports and are given support from the Structural Fund rather than the EDF (European Commission 1998 p. 18).

While the French Pacific collectivities enjoy, and exercise, their right to make their own protective customs legislation even against European imports, the reality is that their economies are dependent on France and on Europe particularly given habits and tastes of the inhabitants, and this, together with strong vested local interests, acts as a strong brake on the exercise of this privilege. This means that duties and import taxes are more likely to be directed against regional imports, for example from Australia, New Zealand, and the neighbouring Pacific states, than against European imports. The net result is that the economies of the French Pacific collectivities remain inexorably linked to France and Europe, which impedes their integration within their own region even given the dramatically higher costs.

The ambiguities of OCT status for the fledgling participation of the French Pacific entities within their own region have led to some misunderstandings. In the early 2000s, senior New Caledonian leaders would argue publicly that New Caledonia would provide a door for Pacific economies (including the large Australian and New Zealand economies) to European markets. In practice, this is not the case, as the EU maintains local content rules and rules of origin which preclude processing of essentially foreign imports in an OCT, for example, New Caledonia, for subsequent preferential entry to its markets.

Development benefits

The French Pacific collectivities as OCTs benefit from aid flows and projects under the Economic Development Fund. Faberon and Ziller (2007 p. 266) notes that these benefits are not as favourable to them as the Structural Fund available to EU member states. The EDF applies not only to OCTs but also to ACPs. Because New Caledonia and French Polynesia are large and enjoy a higher standard of living than many other OCTs and ACPs, and because they fall outside some of the specific recent EDF programs, they do not receive as much as others (Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 274). However, they nonetheless have access to considerable support.

A further problem is the time-consuming bureaucratic processes which, when coupled with the isolation and distance from Brussels of the French OCTs (despite the presence of a resident EU representative in Noumea and Suva), means that the often impressive notional allocations are rarely fully spent (this problem is one shared by the ACP Pacific countries, see EU aid to the region below). From 2000 to 2007, New Caledonia was granted support totalling cfp 2.6 billion (EUR 21.5 m. or \$A 43.2 m. converted 25 November 2008), which covered a number of projects including a new aquarium, roadworks and professional training. But this figure included 1.6 billion cfp (EUR 13.8 m. or \$A 27.7 m. converted 25 November 2008) for the period, as well as much as EUR 7.8 m. (\$A 15.6 m. converted 25 Nov 2008) unspent from the previous period

(see ISEE website, <http://www.isee.nc/tec/ecofinances/telechargements/16-1-aideeurop.pdf>, accessed 25 November 2008).

Wallis and Futuna is defined as a least developed OCT and receives special assistance as such. For the Ninth EDF (2000-7), it was allocated 2 b. cfp (EUR 16.7 m. or \$A 33.5 m. converted 25 November 2008) of which 630 m. cfp (EUR 5.2 m. or \$A 10.4 m. converted 25 November 2008) were carried over from the previous period.

Bearing in mind these difficulties in implementation, the 10th EDF (2008-2013) has allocated EUR 19.81 m. (\$A 34.7 m. converted on 7 July 2009) to New Caledonia, again focused on training and infrastructure; EUR 19.79 m. to French Polynesia; and EUR 16.5 m. to Wallis and Futuna (Geographical Partnerships EU website accessed 9 June 2009).

The OCTs also benefit, as do the ACP countries, from the STABEX and SYSMIN systems for supporting agricultural exports and financing mining products respectively. They also have access to the European Investment Bank. However, given the level of economic development, French Polynesia and New Caledonia do not generally qualify over other OCTs (Faberon and Ziller p. 274), although New Caledonia has received some training and mining rehabilitation funding from SYSMIN.

Currency: the Euro

France would like its three Pacific collectivities to adopt the Euro instead of the special French Pacific franc currently in circulation, but has indicated that it will introduce the Euro only if all three collectivities agree to do so. Wallis and Futuna has indicated it will fall in with such a decision taken by the other two collectivities. French Polynesia voted in 2006 to introduce the Euro. Chapter 5 referred to the reasons why New Caledonia has so far been disinclined to accept the Euro as its currency, essentially seeing such a move as stepping back from the Noumea Accord's stipulation that currency would be dealt with as one of the final sovereign matters to be voted upon in due course between 2014 and 2018.

Political benefits

Importantly too, the OCTs have the right of petition before the European parliament mediator, introducing a new area of influence over what happens in their (OCTs) territory (European Commission 1998, p. 30). It is notable that New Caledonian pro-French interests had recourse to the European Court of Human Rights over the restricted electorate issue, with that Court judging in favour of local interests given the special sensitivities of the New Caledonian situation (see Chapter 5). Thus, the political association with Europe provides a potential check to French administration practices and a new pressure point to which the French Pacific collectivities can have recourse not only on local issues but also on issues of interest to the wider Pacific region as well.

Review of EU-OCT relationship

The EU is reconsidering its approach to the OCTs. Its 2008 Green Paper noted that the emphasis to date on development cooperation, and the relatively high expenditure on the OCTs relative to the ACPs (for example, footnote 4, page 6, “Under the 10th EDF (2008-2013), the average per capita level of Community financial assistance to the OCTs is approximately six times higher than the average per capita level of Community financial assistance to the ACP states) was outmoded. The Paper said the approach had been formed when most OCTs had been African colonies, and may not be consistent with the contemporary realities of the OCTs. Aspects under consideration included whether or not the development cooperation approach was the most relevant, given the relatively high standards of living in the OCTs; whether and how the OCTs could play a key role as strategic outposts for the EU; whether better means could be found for their integration into their geographic regions; and how they could better engage in environmental protection of their unique biodiversity. The Green Paper also raised the special role and influence of other countries in respect of the OCTs, in the case of the Pacific, the role of the US, Japan, China, Australia and New Zealand (European Commission 2008 p. 13).

The focus of the Paper, as outlined above, provides insight into how France, a major player in the revised approach, sees the French Pacific collectivities.

EU representation and aid to the region

The OCTs themselves form an important part of the EU’s presence in the Pacific region, and are seen as such by the EU. In its 2008 Green Paper on the OCTs, the Commission stated that “Indeed, while the OCTs do not form an integral part of the EU, they are a part of or at least closely related to an EU Member State, which means that they cannot be uncoupled from the EU and, in a sense, are ‘part of its ultimate frontiers’ ” (European Commission 2008 p. 7). But apart from the EU’s engagement with France’s three OCTs in the Pacific (and Britain’s minuscule Pitcairn), the EU is formally represented in the region, contributes to some regional organizations and has been involved in assisting the independent Pacific countries through the ACP relationship. France has been a major contributor to this process, and to funding.

The EU has residential diplomatic representation in Australia and New Zealand, a regional delegation office in Fiji and a delegation office in Papua New Guinea, technical offices in East Timor, Samoa and Kiribati, and offices in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. It also has an office for the French OCTs in Noumea. The EU participates in post-Pacific Islands Forum dialogue discussions immediately after PIF summit meetings.

The EU launched a new strategy for the Pacific in 2006 (European Commission 2006). It noted that its support for regional governments dated from the 1975 Lomé Convention, revised in 2000 as the Cotonou Agreement, and totalled EUR 1.8 b. (just over \$A 3 b.) to 2006. It described itself as the second largest aid contributor to the region but tended to include in its calculations the separate aid contributions by some of its members (France, United Kingdom and Portugal) (European Commission 2006 pp.

25 and 26). Its assistance focused on governance, regionalism and sustainable development of natural resources, elements that corresponded to the Forum priorities of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. The strategy noted France's regional presence in its three OCTs and its military presence, along with the desirability of promoting integration of these entities (as well as Britain's Pitcairn) into the region (Op. cit. pp. 4 and 5).

The Tenth EDF 2008-2013 allocated to Pacific programs an overall envelope of EUR 293 m. (\$A441 m. converted 2 March 2010, or just under \$A 90 m. a year) with a possible 25% increase if countries demonstrate clear commitments to good governance (European Commission 2007, Preface, p. 7). There are regional and bilateral (i.e. EU/individual Pacific island states) programs. The regional program allocates EUR 105 m. over the five-year period (\$A 157 m. converted 9 March 2010), within the broad objectives of the Forum's Pacific Plan focused on sustainable energy and preservation and exploitation of natural resources. Of this amount EUR 45 m. (\$A67.4 m.) has been earmarked for regional economic integration, EUR 40 m. (\$A 60 m.) for sustainable management of natural resources and the environment, and EUR 10 m. (\$A 15 m.) for non-state actors and the Forum (EU website [www.http//ec.europa.eu/development/geographical/regionscountries/eupacific_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/development/geographical/regionscountries/eupacific_en.cfm) accessed 6 April 2009).

The EU also on occasion lumps its funding to independent Pacific island countries along with that to its own collectivities (for example, "The EC'S Delegation to the Pacific: European Union and the Pacific: Overview" at http://www.delfji.ec.europa.eu/en/eu_and_country/index.htm, states that the EU has transferred financial and technical cooperation worth EUR 1,330 m. over the last 20 years to the Pacific ACP countries *and the overseas collectivities and territories* with another 400 m. planned over the next five years, *my italics*).

Only very little of this funding has been channelled through the SPC. The EU does not contribute to the core budget of the SPC. It does provide funding for programs, and therefore the annual amounts fluctuate widely depending on the timing and pace of expenditure in the programs it supports. It averaged contributions of just under EUR 5 m. (\$A 7.4 m.) per annum in the five years to 2007 (SPC 2009). In 2007, the EU contributed EUR 1.8 m. (\$US 2.8 m. or \$A3.1 m.) in 2007, or 5.16% of SPC income (SPC 2007 Income by Source, SPC Annual Report 2007, Part 2 Annual Accounts). France contributed \$US 7.1 m. that year, or 12.97% of total income. Since France contributes just under 20% of EU EDF funds, it can be assumed it contributed an estimated EUR 1 m. (\$A 1.5 m.) per year to the SPC via the EU contribution in the five years to 2007.

As for the OCTs, EU funding is limited by the capacity of the bureaucratic processes in Brussels to deliver, in a timely way, appropriately tailored projects to the small island Pacific states. The capacity for these small states to provide the necessary documentation is also an issue, as is the propensity for the Europeans to prefer regionwide program approaches, often not suited to the diverse needs of the Pacific states. Together, these factors account for the regular underspending of generous

European allocations in the past. There was a 36% underspend for the 6th EDF 1985-90 and 49% for the 7th 1990-95, which led to an emphasis in the 9th EDF 2000-07 on redressing this situation (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 332).

Other EU links

Trade between the region and the EU is minute. Although the EU takes 10% of Pacific ACP exports, over 90% of these come from PNG and Fiji alone (European Commission 2006 p. 24). The importance of the EU to Fiji is reflected in its taking half of Fiji's major commodity, sugar, at guaranteed prices, until the phase-out of the program in 2010, although this preferential treatment has been suspended on occasion to sanction Fiji's undemocratic practices (most recently, on 18 May 2009 the EU cancelled \$A 31 m. aid to Fiji's sugar industry as Fiji's military dictatorship entrenched itself). It has signed fishery agreements with the Solomons, Kiribati and the federated States of Micronesia, covering fishing licenses for Spanish and French fishing vessels. The EU has acceded to the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Convention.

From September 2004 the EU has been negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements, to replace the preferential Cotonou arrangements. Although Australia and New Zealand have not insisted on prior consultation with them as provided for in the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), negotiations have been slow and have extended well beyond the original deadline of 2007. No doubt this reflects the limited interest for Europe in the Pacific island states as sources of trade or investment.

Regional reactions to French efforts

As with its efforts to improve its image in the region in the 1980s, the reaction in the region to French overtures in recent years has been mixed.

On the one hand, regional leaders have responded to France positively. They have participated in the France Oceanic Summits. Many (PNG, Tonga, Vanuatu, Fiji) participate in defence exercises and exchanges with France, and welcome French naval visits. However, just as some Melanesians were uneasy with the Rudd government's conclusion of a defence agreement with France over the use of French defence facilities (see Cooperation with the United Nations section of this Chapter) so are some island leaders cautious about engaging France in regional defence activity. When Australian Foreign Minister Downer was putting together the Regional Assistance Mission for the Solomon Islands, in 2003, in response to a request to Prime Minister Howard from the Solomon Islands Prime Minister, he had in mind French participation.²⁴ In the event,

²⁴ Downer mentioned the idea to the French Ambassador, at a lunch he was hosting for European ambassadors around that time. Preliminary indications were that the French would have responded positively (Personal comments Downer 2003).

regional island leaders, sounded out informally in the corridors of a meeting hosted by the Australian Government in Sydney to plan the Mission, were not responsive to the idea of French participation, and the idea was dropped (Personal communications Downer 2009).

The same hesitation was evident at the time Australia was encouraging Indonesia to develop a long-term democratic solution in East Timor. Indonesian President Habibie strongly rejected a proposal Prime Minister Howard put to him in a letter on 19 December 1998, to apply a Matignon Accords-type solution to East Timor. Then Ambassador McCarthy reported at the time 'that he (Habibie) found the choice of a colonial example unpalatable' (McPhail 2007 p.116 and 117). McPhail attributed the rejection to "the bitter legacy of Dutch colonization of Indonesia which made any suggestion that Indonesia was acting as a neo-colonial power highly offensive to the President" (Ibid.).

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), despite holding one of its meetings in Noumea, has stopped well short of full endorsement of France and its presence in the region. An example of its reticence towards France is its support for Vanuatu's claim to the Matthew and Hunter Island group, drawing on traditional Melanesian links and history, in the face of France's continued assertion of its own claim by virtue of its New Caledonian presence(see Chapter 5). New Caledonia's pro-France President, Gomès, has flagged his wish for full membership of the MSG by the government of New Caledonia, as a replacement for the FLNKS (*Flash d'Océanie* 19 January 2010). This would mean that the collegial, albeit pro-France dominated, government, would replace and therefore significantly weaken, the voice of the Melanesian grouping which first mobilized the MSG. The idea has been met with a studied silence from the MSG. Instead, the MSG sent a visiting mission to New Caledonia in June 2010, which in its private report expressed some criticism of progress in the implementation of the Noumea Accord so far (Personal communication by senior Pacific island country official, 2010 and May 2011 p. 6). While the MSG has been preoccupied with economic issues in recent years, it has not forgotten its core concerns about New Caledonia's status.

Pacific Islands Forum stance: a watching brief on New Caledonia

A certain reserve about France is also evident within the Pacific Islands Forum, particularly in responding to the French entities' desire for full membership in 2010.

Forum membership is confined to "independent and self-governing states" (Forum website accessed 27 September 2010). Nonetheless, the Forum welcomed French Polynesia and New Caledonia to participate, initially as Observers (New Caledonia in 1999 and French Polynesia in 2004) and then as Associate Members in 2006, with Wallis and Futuna becoming an Observer in 2006. At the time, in 1999, the Forum specifically defined Observers as "A Pacific island territory on a clear path to achieving self-government or independence" (Pacific Islands Forum Koror, Palau, Communiqué 1999). To accommodate the two largest French Pacific entities, the Forum created a

special category of Associate Member (not defined and subject to Leaders' discretion, Article 1, Agreement Establishing the Pacific Islands Forum (revised), 27 October 2005). The Forum has so far held the line at these forms of association for the three French collectivities, while retaining a separate mechanism for engagement of France in the post-Forum summit dialogues.

This creation of a special category for New Caledonia and French Polynesia was ambiguous. On the one hand, Forum action suggests that the two collectivities had transcended the category of Observer in some way. The granting of Observer status to Wallis and Futuna seemingly overlooked the fact that that entity was not particularly on a path to self-determination or independence (although other Observers include entities as various as Tokelau, the Commonwealth, and the Asia Development Bank, with East Timor as a Special Observer). Meanwhile applications by the US dependencies, American Samoa and Guam, to be Observers merely remained under consideration.

On the other hand, assigning a special unique category to these two French entities is not inconsistent with ongoing monitoring of the as yet unfolding process of self-determination.

The evolution of New Caledonia's status has remained on the Forum agenda since the Forum welcomed the Noumea Accord in 1998, but its support for the Accord was not unqualified. The Forum at the time specifically recognized New Caledonia's right to self-determination (which the Forum has reiterated in subsequent Communiqués). The 1998 Pohn Pei Forum Communiqué expressed support for continuing contact between the Forum and all communities in New Caledonia, and established a mechanism for monitoring implementation of the Accord. "Leaders agreed to a continuing future monitoring role for the Forum Ministerial Committee on New Caledonia *during the period of the Noumea Accord, particularly with respect to the referenda that will be conducted pursuant to the Accords*" (my emphasis) (1998 Pohn Pei Forum Communiqué). As noted above, when it admitted New Caledonia as an Observer to the Forum in 1999, the Forum took care to define Observer explicitly as a territory on a clear path to achieving self-government or independence. At the same time, Forum leaders agreed "to continue to bring to the attention of the UN the question of New Caledonia's political future" and called on members to consider making available training awards for the Kanak people (1999 Koror, Palau, Forum Communiqué).

The Forum sent a Forum Ministerial Committee to visit New Caledonia in 1999, 2001 and 2004. The 2002 Fiji Communiqué noted the report of the visiting Ministerial Committee (2001), welcomed the establishment of institutions under the Noumea Accord, and encouraged all communities to support and implement the Accord, and supported self-determination in New Caledonia. "The Forum also agreed to continue to bring to the attention of the UN the question of New Caledonia's political future", and agreed to support more Kanak training through a Kanak Training Fund. Forum leaders encouraged greater integration and participation of New Caledonia in the Forum region and endorsed the continuing monitoring role of the Forum Ministerial Committee.

The Forum also acts as a conduit for what is effectively a sub-group, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). The MSG representative at the time, Roch Wamytan, secured the inclusion in the 2001 Nauru Forum Communiqué of a reference to Noumea's hosting of a summit meeting of the Melanesian Spearhead Group in July that year. In an attachment to the 2003 Auckland Communiqué, the MSG leaders in a statement, "noted with concern the lack of implementation of certain provisions of the Noumea Accord, in particular the electoral process and issues relating to New Caledonia's referendum process". They noted the planned visit by the Forum Ministerial Committee the following year, and urged it to focus on these two issues.

In 2005, after the 2004 Forum Ministerial Committee's visit to New Caledonia, the Madang Forum communiqué welcomed the high degree of political will from all stakeholders in the implementation of the Noumea Accord. But it also endorsed the Ministerial Committee's "continuing role in monitoring the affairs of the territory" and in encouraging closer regional engagement (Madang Forum Communiqué 2005). However a Forum visit has not taken place since 2004.

The MSG sent its own visiting mission to Noumea in 2010, a mission which was critical of some aspects of implementation of the Accord (see Melanesian Spearhead Group section above).

More recently Forum leaders have made clear their ongoing concern about resolving the status of New Caledonia. At the same time as he was seeking New Caledonia's full membership of the MSG in late 2009 and early 2010, New Caledonian President Gomès also pressed for its full membership of the Pacific Islands Forum (*Flash d'Océanie* 19 January 2010). In response, at their August 2010 Summit, Forum leaders, specifically referring to New Caledonia's wish for full membership, noted that the Noumea Accord "self-determination" process itself would resolve the question of New Caledonia's international standing, and pointedly referred to further engagement, including by a visiting Forum mission, which as noted, had not taken place since 2004. The Forum simply "welcomed the continuing interest of French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna to deepen their engagement with the Forum" (Pacific Islands Forum Communiqué 5 August 2010).

So, for the Forum, the first real test of French intentions, and the long-term status of the French entities, will be the post-Noumea Accord outcome in New Caledonia.

Pacific Islands Forum advocates self-determination in French Polynesia

As the date of the last French nuclear test recedes, the election of pro-independence leader Oscar Temaru as President of French Polynesia, and perceived French efforts to frustrate his leadership, keep alive a regional focus on developments in that collectivity. Temaru has shown a willingness to exploit his longstanding personal links with Forum leaders to maintain pressure on the French State. Whereas he has toned down his references to full independence at home in French Polynesia, Temaru has not been so silent in his comments outside the territory, especially to the Forum itself (see also Chapter 6).

The Pacific Islands Forum has underlined the importance of self-determination in its consideration of French Polynesia. French Polynesia's admission as an Observer had to await its constitutional review, and only occurred in 2004 once statutory change had been put in place (see the 2003 Auckland Forum Communiqué in which leaders noted constitutional developments in French Polynesia and agreed to pursue a visit there the following year). After Temaru's election in May 2004, with subsequent initial uncertainty and then outright frustration of the result, the Forum's response was careful. The August 2004 Forum communiqué expressed leaders' welcome to French Polynesia as an Observer "in its own right", and their support for French Polynesia's right to self-determination; and pointedly encouraged it and France to seek "an agreed approach on how to realise French Polynesia's right to self-determination". Moreover, leaders asked the Chair to convey their views to French Polynesia and France, and called for the Secretary-General to report on "developments in respect of French Polynesia's progress towards self-determination". In 2005, the Forum noted the Secretariat's report on French Polynesia, again in the context of the entity's "progress to self-determination" (Madang Communiqué 2005), i.e., at no time did the Forum judge that French Polynesia had attained self-determination.

At the 2006 Forum Summit, Temaru raised the issue of reinscription of French Polynesia on the UN's list of non-self governing territories, to which the French responded by publicly saying French Polynesia already had the potential for self-determination (see Chapter 6). It was at this Summit that the Forum gave Associate status to French Polynesia (along with New Caledonia). Temaru once again called for Forum support for reinscription of French Polynesia at the 2007 Forum Summit, also calling for a "Tahiti Nui" Accord, along the lines of the Noumea Accord of New Caledonia. Doubtless because of the constantly alternating leadership between pro-France groups and the pro-independence Temaru, the 2007, 2008 and 2009 Forum Communiqués make no mention of French Polynesia's political issues. The 2010 Communiqué welcomes French Polynesia's continuing interest in deepening its engagement with the Forum, after referring to New Caledonia's self-determination process under the Noumea Accord.

The Pacific Islands Forum's approach to the French collectivities is therefore ambiguous, and indications are that its hesitations arise from the inconclusive state of self-determination in the French entities, and discomfort with what it sees as France's continued colonial presence. Just as Forum leaders were not swayed by the simple Fosse-led public relations program of the 1980s, but awaited concrete policy change (cessation of nuclear tests in 1996 and the conclusion of the Noumea Accord in 1998) before they responded to French overtures, so they are waiting for resolution of the long-term status of the French entities before welcoming them as fully-fledged equals in relevant regional political bodies (the Forum, the Melanesian Spearhead Group) (argued in Fisher 2010b). The Forum's treatment of the French entities, separately to the dialogue arrangement with France, suggests that the Forum would not want to see a situation develop where the French Pacific entities' participation becomes a guise for French participation. The Forum is kept informed about the statutory evolution in

French Polynesia, and has recognized, by keeping Wallis and Futuna at a different, Observer, level, that the latter is in a category of its own

All of this suggests that the Pacific Islands Forum, the Melanesian Spearhead Group, and the UN Decolonization Committee, while relatively dormant in recent years on the French collectivities, maintain ongoing monitoring processes which could be activated if necessary to defend particular collectivity interests and focus international attention on any issues.

France “In” or “Of” the Pacific: Ongoing ambiguity

A strand of debate amongst academics, related to France’s desire as a global power to be present in the Pacific, has been that of whether France is simply “in” the Pacific, or whether it is also, or should be, “of” the Pacific (see Fisher 2010d). The distinction is not merely semantic, but goes to the heart of how France wants to be seen in the region, and in the world. While there is little doubt that, by virtue of its sovereign collectivities, France is “in” the region, academic discussion has focused on whether it, or even its collectivities, can or should be more “of” the region.

Tjibaou himself gave France the benefit of the doubt. He told Jacques Lafleur, pro-France leader, in a televised panel discussion in 1983 that a big difference between Lafleur’s people and the Kanaks was that “We are from here and nowhere else, you are from here but also from somewhere else” (*TV 5 Panel Discussion 1983*; Fraser 1990b; Cordonnier 1995a p. 25). He at least conceded that the pro-France Caldoches were indeed from the Pacific.

The question came under discussion at the height of regional opposition to France’s nuclear testing in French Polynesia, a time when France’s assertion of its presence in the South Pacific became a little shrill. Régis Debray, speaking as Secretary General of France’s High Council for the Pacific in 1987, demanded that France’s right “as a member of the Pacific family, on an equal footing [to other Pacific states], be recognized” (Chesneaux 1987a p.1). At the same time, Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, while noting that France’s French Pacific entities returned little revenue to the motherland, underlined that a principal benefit was that they “*allowed France to be present in the Pacific*” (1987 p. 286).

While Jean Chesneaux acknowledged the undisputed sovereignty of France in the Pacific, its rights over extensive EEZs there and its permanent presence in its collectivities, he noted that this seemed inconsistent with its commitment to nuclear deterrence, which was at odds with Pacific policies of a nuclear free Pacific. While nuclear testing ensured France’s status as a nuclear power, he noted that it did not make it a *Pacific* nuclear power (Chesneaux 1987b p. 131). Moruroa was not essential for underground testing *per se*, and the testing presence there had not meant an increase in military personnel but in fact had seen a decrease. Chesneaux underlined that the motivation of the French Pacific presence at the time was first and foremost political, not economic, given the enormous expense of exploiting the nickel resource, and the

relatively small percentages of trade with Australia and the region (French commercial interests were worth less than 3% in Australia and 1% New Zealand markets in 1983). He referred to the irony of France's global nuclear strategy, with its objectives defined thousands of kilometers away, being based on a technical presence in the Pacific, in "splendid isolation" (p. 132). He questioned the reigning ideas France adduced about the Pacific: that the Pacific was the centre of the world, the technological Pacific myth (nodules, space centres, aquaculture all in foreign or multinational hands), the Pacific as a theatre of Soviet-US confrontation, French-Anglo rivalry, and peaceful island communities subject to the covetous greed of Australia and New Zealand; all of which he said were ghosts and myths and not very coherent by the mid 1980s (pp. 208-213). He was suggesting that this idea of the Pacific did not reflect the reality, a reality France did not want to confront at the time.

While depicting France as an outsider in the region, Chesneaux noted that it was nonetheless a longstanding outsider, and as such had an ongoing role in the region particularly in the provision of aid (1987a p. 17). Indeed, because France is "in" but not "of" the Pacific, one could say that France needs to do more than others to provide development assistance. And, as noted, its record so far has been, to say the least, modest.

Even after the Matignon Accords were in place, and before the resumption of nuclear testing in the Pacific, regional analysts were drawing the distinction of France being "in" as opposed to "of" the Pacific.

In his brief but comprehensive paper on France and the South Pacific island countries, Bates clearly saw France as an outsider. As in the past, he believed France's approach would primarily be dictated by its own national interests, and its interests within Europe. Crucial decisions about the South Pacific would continue to be made on the other side of the globe (1990 p. 138). He warned about this, noting that "in any conflict between its national security interests in Europe and regional interest in the South Pacific, the former will inevitably take precedence (1990 p. 137). Because of this, France could do and say things that seemed incomprehensible to people in the Pacific. Bates used the example of France during the vexed 1980s, telling the Pacific island states to stay out of its internal affairs over New Caledonia and French Polynesia, and yet seeing no inconsistency in sending agents to New Zealand to attack a ship in its harbour.

Dornoy-Vuroburavu began her 1994 essay on *Perceptions of France in the South Pacific* with the observation that France was "essentially a European power and partner with expertise, not a Pacific country" (1994 p. 1). She proceeded to illustrate this by examples of Gallicisms, including citing the French Minister for Cooperation in 1975 saying that France must be present everywhere in the world, "where her thinkers' genius has given her a place without any relation to her demography or resources"; President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing saying "France is what is best"; President Mitterrand referring to "this indefinable genius" of France; and de Gaulle himself: "our action aims at linking objectives, which, because they are French, answer the needs of all men" (1994 p. 1, citing Abelin 1975, and Hearn 1989). Régis Debray is

once again cited as applying this kind of thinking to the Pacific, saying in 1986 "To demilitarise the Pacific would deprive it of Francophonie" (Dornoy-Vuroburavu 1994 p. 3). Dornoy-Vuroburavu described Australia as considering itself as a Pacific country, and considering France as an external power (Op cit p. 15).

Isabelle Cordonnier took the debate further, writing in 1995 that, while the French collectivities themselves were seen by Pacific island states as part of the region, the *métropole* was not. Taking the cue from Tjibaou's words to Lafleur in 1983 (that the latter was from "here but also from somewhere else"), she noted that in South Pacific eyes, you are an insider if you come from there and nowhere else, and that by dint of geography at least, Australia and New Zealand were from the Pacific and, therefore, "legitimate" Pacific countries (Cordonnier 1995a p. 25). Cordonnier saw such differences as explaining some of the critical ambiguities in French policy, for example, how it could support nuclear testing in the region as an instrument of France's *grandeur* and status as a middle global power, in the face of negative perceptions in the region based on fear that testing would provoke a spiral of terror in case of nuclear war (1995a p. 20).

The Gallic-Anglo Saxon distinction often made by France was seen as a factor forever condemning it to being an outsider. In 1998, Maclellan wrote about France's tendency to attribute opposition to it and its policies, variously to Australian and New Zealand's own imperialist ambitions, or even to a 'conspiracy' of customary law of the Pacific islands and the Biblical morality of the London missionaries. French leftist Admiral Sanguinetti in 1985 wrote that France was motivated by remaining in the region after the British had left (Sanguinetti 1985 p. 32). Today it is common for French officials and longstanding French settlers in New Caledonia to dismiss the rest of the Pacific as "Anglo-Saxon".

Maclellan saw this kind of defensiveness by France as ignoring the sense of regionalism, of belonging to the South Pacific, that made the settler states in Australia and New Zealand part of the region, as much as France remained "an outsider" (1998 p. 194). In 2005, he commented that the "sense of belonging—of looking to the skies, seeing the Southern Cross, and feeling at home—underlies much of the regional opposition to France's nuclear policy", noting this emotion against "outsiders" from Paris rang just as true in Australia and New Zealand as Pacific countries, as in the Islands (Maclellan 2005e p. 365). Himself a longstanding opponent to nuclear testing in the Pacific, Maclellan described regional opposition to nuclear testing as not so much due to quantitative measures of distance but to a qualitative political and cultural unity that had developed in the region. The formation of the Pacific Islands Forum (see Chapter 3), showed that this unity was largely cemented as a response to the dissonant French approach. Maclellan saw it as impossible for France, after nuclear testing, to be anything other than an outsider: "After Moruroa, France can intervene in Pacific affairs, can make a valuable contribution. But it cannot be part of the region - it can only participate from outside the region, as others do ... *France can no longer pretend to be a power of the Pacific, but must act as a power in the Pacific*" (my italics; Maclellan 1998 p. 240). In 2005 he wrote that the nuclear issue was not closed, with

continuing issues such as dumping of waste; passage of waste ships; uranium mining; testing of missile defence satellite systems threatening the multilateralism of space; and issues over the long-term effects of past nuclear testing, where French positions were at odds with those of the Pacific (Maclellan 2005e p. 365).

Another Australian analyst, Graeme Dobell, when writing in 2007 of China's activities in the region, lumped France along with China and Japan as external powers or outside players who acted as though they wanted a stake in the region (Dobell 2007 p. 9). One prominent think tank in 2009 had made tentative plans to convene a regional conference on outside powers in the Pacific, specified as France, China and Japan. The perception is therefore very strong.

Nathalie Mrgudovic in her major 2008 work on France in the Pacific noted that while France claimed to have been "of" the Pacific until the end of the 1980s, France has since pursued a more nuanced approach of claiming simply to be "in" the Pacific (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 37), while working for the integration of its entities "in *their* region" (her italics, Op. cit. p. 240). She noted the view of the Pacific Islands states that France was not "of" the region (Op. cit. p. 360), and in the context of the RAMSI force noted that France was an "extra-regional" power (Op. cit. p. 314).

Former Prime Minister Michel Rocard wrote in his Preface to Mrgudovic's 2008 work that France had moved from the detested colonizing power that detonated bombs in the Pacific to a status more like a "big sister" to the region, rejecting arbitrary dominations, accompanying "its former territories" in their progress towards autonomy much to the "relief" of the bigger powers Australia and New Zealand (Mrgudovic 2008 pp. 13-14). He similarly exaggerated the reaction of regional states, saying that the Forum, explicitly created to shun France in the region, had become one "of the firmest defenders and even seekers of our presence" (Ibid. p. 15). This idea of being a big sister to the region continues a certain ambiguity about its role: France wanting to project itself as one of the family, but ever conscious of its larger power status.

Perceptions that France is not "of" the region are not immutable. It is within the power of France, if it so chooses, to change the perception that it is an outsider to the region. For example, in 2008, Maclellan analysed one of the ongoing issues, compensation over the health of those affected by nuclear testing, in terms very damaging to France (pointing out that France, while professing to be compensating for damages, had written legislation which excluded large numbers of potential beneficiaries, see Maclellan 2008a). But in April 2009, France announced compensation measures for those whose health had been affected by its testing in the Pacific, potentially covering 150,000 former workers, and on favourable terms which removed the onus on the worker to prove cause. Chapter 9 examines areas where France might address aspects of its regional involvement.

When viewed against the current and continuing motivation of France to retain its Pacific collectivities, i.e., being able to claim to be a sovereign indigenous power in affairs affecting the Atlantic, Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Oceans, and indeed as the only such European power, representing "tropical Europe" (Aldrich and Connell 1989

p. 164 and Chapter 8), it would be important for France to continue to work to alter the widely-shared perception amongst non-French and French analysts alike, that it is an outsider in the region, so that it truly can project itself partly as a Pacific power. France appears to be addressing this issue by repeatedly claiming that it wants its *collectivities* to engage more in the region, perhaps seeing its collectivities as proxies for its own interests (a prospect hardly likely to be welcomed by neighbouring Pacific island states), but as discussed earlier without giving them the wherewithal to participate effectively in the region. However in this area as in many others, it may be that France prefers a certain ambiguity in its position.

Conclusion

In the 1990s and early 2000s, France has directed considerable diplomatic energy towards improving its standing in the Pacific. It has done this first, by developing its own range of regional and relevant international links, conducting regular summit meetings between French and Pacific island leaders; becoming, selectively, engaged in the UN Decolonization Committee; holding regular annual meetings of its senior regional representatives; and expanding defence cooperation links. France has increasingly drawn senior Australians into this network of activity, or hitched itself onto existing Australian and New Zealand initiatives (such as fisheries surveillance), boosting the impact at very little cost. Thus for example Defence Minister Hervé Morin, visiting the region in 2008, is cited by *Flash d'Océanie* on 15 September 2008, as saying “the two main Pacific powers are Australia and France”.

Second, France has said it wants its own Pacific collectivities to participate in the region, in both the SPC and the Forum, and some other CROP organizations, albeit without providing them the training, regular networking and travel, and resources they need to do so effectively. It is encouraging them to work more closely together.

Third, France has funded regional activities, although at an extremely modest level, primarily through the SPC, the Forum and its small, and decreasing, South Pacific Fund.

Finally France has been a major player in developing EU links with the region, seeking, as Karis Muller describes it, to “Europeanise” its geopolitical ambitions in the Pacific (Muller 2010 p. 13). Once again, the results have been mixed. Its own collectivities themselves have an ambiguous view of their unique EU connection, largely stemming from their geographic isolation and local preoccupations and sensitivities, thereby leaving the shaping of EU activity to France. In this context, some of the privileges France has won for the collectivities, within the EU, have been perceived as dubious: their ability to vote in the European parliament is seen as irrelevant, and carrying risky reciprocal consequences in terms of voting rights on their territory; freedom of movement albeit not completely reciprocal is seen as risking influxes of Europeans competing with locals for jobs heightening immigration concerns; economic EU access privileges have limited value given the hold of French custom and capture of the market; pressure to introduce the Euro is seen as a backward step by pro-independence

groups, particularly in New Caledonia; and access to EU development cooperation is limited by the very prosperity the French collectivities enjoy. Dealing with all of this locks the French collectivities into the European system, crowding out the effect of tentative forays into integration within the Pacific region, whatever France's rhetoric promoting regional "insertion". One benefit from the local perspective is the recourse the French collectivities have, through the EU association, to EU mediation and political pressure agencies such as the EU parliament and the Human Rights Court. As the successful EU Human Rights Court decision on the restricted electorate for New Caledonia has shown, these instruments are potentially useful for the collectivities in pursuing grievances against the French State.

The EU's direct engagement with Pacific island countries also has been mixed. While funding pledges sound impressive, effective implementation on the ground does not have a good record, and is geared through bilateral and other initiatives rather than the successful regional organizations such as the SPC. EU attempts at replacing ACP aid arrangements with economic partnerships have similarly foundered on their inconsistency with other regional ventures and arrangements, such as PACER and PICTA which are intrinsically not attractive to France or the French entities. Whether these activities are the result of well-intentioned but misdirected largesse, or efforts to distract the Pacific island states away from more constructive regional activity under way, is not clear.

The broader response by Pacific island state leaders to France's efforts has not been one of unalloyed enthusiasm. The UN Decolonization Committee, the Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group – all of whom have overlapping Pacific island memberships - maintain a watching brief on the implementation of the Noumea Accord in New Caledonia. While the Forum has so far stopped short of formally calling for reinscription of French Polynesia in the UN Decolonization Committee, its summits have underlined the importance of France and local leaders agreeing to work out self-determination measures, and have provided an opportunity for French Polynesian President Temaru to vent his frustrations about his quashed leadership, and to renew his calls for reinscription of French Polynesia in the UN decolonization system.

Just as regional leaders waited for significant policy change (ceasing nuclear testing and negotiation of the Noumea Accord in New Caledonia) from the colonial French power before accepting the French Pacific entities as guests into their Forum, so they are likely to await the outcome of a post-Noumea Accord future in New Caledonia, and democratic handling of instability in French Polynesia, before truly welcoming the French entities as equal partners within their own political organizations. From the regional perspective as much as for France and its three Pacific entities, New Caledonia has become the pre-eminent French Pacific collectivity, and outcomes in French Polynesia will depend increasingly on solutions in New Caledonia.

The next chapter will examine France's changing motivations guiding its policies, before turning to security risks these may present to the region, along with identifying areas of further regional engagement and possible alternative outcomes in New Caledonia.

Part III - France in the Pacific – Present and Future

Chapter 8

French motivations in the Pacific

France has increasingly sought, quietly, to play a greater role in the region, including through maintaining stability in its collectivities and contributing to selected regional activities, which it has increasingly sought to do in tandem with Australia. For its part, Australia has been a willing partner. The peaceful administration of the French Pacific entities could be relied upon, as Australia grappled with serious governance shortcomings in the Melanesian arc, from Papua New Guinea and Fiji, to Solomon Islands and even a fragile Vanuatu. French military assets have enabled regional burdensharing in surveillance and emergency assistance across vast areas of the South Pacific. So an important question for Australia, and for the stability of the region, is: will France stay in the Pacific and if so, why, and how?

There has been very little recent specific public articulation of French policy on these questions. Chapter 5 referred to institutional factors in Paris working against a coherent strategic approach. As in most key areas of France's presence in the Pacific throughout history, ambiguity is rife. Doumenge *et al*, when they wrote in 2000 of the French overseas presence, stated baldly that "the position of the French government *vis-à-vis* the overseas territories is not always clear" (p. 207).

Just as so often occurred in the past, today France's European and domestic priorities continue to dominate its approach to its Pacific collectivities. Senior French officials note the overriding priority of preoccupations within metropolitan France and Europe, and variously ascribe State action relating to the Pacific collectivities as based on reflex and past approaches, as linked solely to statutory requirements, or as arising purely and simply from duties to protect French settlers abroad (Personal communications Paris April 2008 and Noumea March 2009).

Pointers to France's continuing motivations in the Pacific are evident in its past motivations, and statements made by the current Sarkozy government about its approach to its territories, or Overseas France, in the broad, and its practice and policy in the Pacific.

Past motivations

"*La grandeur*"

As noted in earlier chapters, France's very early ventures were based on national prestige and *grandeur* (greatness), to establish its ascendancy as a global power, originally based on a quest for knowledge and wealth, accompanied by a competitive objective for its cultural influence to prevail (*rayonnement* and *mission civilisatrice*, or cultural expansion and the civilizing mission) particularly over that of Britain. By the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century there was also a logistical need to

support its missionaries and residents and provide *points de relâche* (provision and supply stops) for the presence of its own navy; and a temporary motivation in the nineteenth century to relocate its convicts. For the most part, economic or commercial gains were very much secondary motivators (Dunmore 1997; Chesneaux 1992; Doumenge et al 2000 p. 59 and especially Ageron 1978 whose major thesis is that business interests were notable more for their absence than presence in the France's colonial adventures to the twentieth century).

For most of this time too, France was affected by losses of territory in Europe, particularly in the nineteenth century (for example, in 1815, in 1870, Doumenge et al 2000 p. 59; Coutau-Bégarie on New Caledonia post-Trafalgar 1986 p. 26) and sought by its overseas empire to make up for these losses. Chapter 3 showed that this kind of thinking persisted into the twentieth century, after the two world wars and also after its loss of Algeria and Indo-China which shaped its approach to New Caledonia.

At this time an important motivation was also something a bit vaguer, what Aldrich described as “an effort to give France a stake in the region and a bet on later uses of the possessions” given the region's potential for the future, its “strategic centrality” (1990 pp. 32 and 334). Mrgudovic described this as a “will to be present” (“*une volonté de présence*”) rather than a policy of conquest (2008 p. 73). Coutau-Bégarie noted the importance for France of simply being present by virtue of its Pacific entities, despite the lack of revenue they brought for France (1987 p. 286).

Coutau-Bégarie's writings provide some insight into longstanding French beliefs which inform its current approaches still. He emphasized the preoccupation of France with providing a Gallic leavening to the predominant Anglo-Saxon presence. This was extrapolated from Britain towards Australia, to the point of accusing Australia of being jealous of France. He enumerated instances where Australia had allegedly sought to stymie the French presence: in 1918, apparently succeeding in ensuring France did not get any German islands in the reallocation of colonial possessions; alleged efforts to “relieve” France of New Caledonia in 1945 and alleged Australian efforts to erase signs of the French presence on Vanuatu's independence in 1980 (Coutau-Bégarie 1987 p. 287). This kind of thinking was behind the concerns of de Gaulle's London-based supporters in 1941, to get rid of Governor Sautot, who had worked so assiduously with Australia and the Americans precisely to sustain a loyal pro-de Gaulle New Caledonia, but was thereby suspect (Chapter 2).

Logistical bases and strategic denial

Aldrich described the strategic motivators for France as changing in the nineteenth century, from supply points for its merchant navy in the 1840s, to coaling stations for steamships in the 1880s, and in the early twentieth century to airfields for transpacific aviation in the 1930s (1990 p. 334), to which could be added naval support as the second world war approached. Generally, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, imperial Pacific powers were motivated more by strategic factors in a global

context, and focused more on the ocean than on the islands themselves (Alexander 2001, on Japan).

During the world wars the Pacific possessions were seen by European powers, including France, as important assertions of sovereignty and logistical bases from which to defend it. Moreover, during the Second World War, and throughout the Cold War, France, along with the western allies, saw its Pacific possessions as an important bulwark from which to keep out hostile powers (for example Guillaud 2003, Henningham 1992 p. 222). Thus France saw itself, along with the United States, as the principal balance to unwanted Soviet intrusion. Chesneaux (1992 p. 91) sketched in polemical terms the tendency of France to “only realize its destiny in the Pacific through an adversary which it demonized”. Again, commercial factors were secondary (Guillaud 2003).

French Polynesia and the independent nuclear deterrent

By the middle of the twentieth century, an initial post-war impulse to free their dependencies gave way to a determination to retain them, albeit within a more democratic framework. As Chapter 2 showed, de Gaulle foresaw the role of France’s overseas empire to bolster its flagging prestige very early in the European war. As France under de Gaulle sought to build its own self-reliant defence capabilities after its humiliating experiences during the two world wars, the fundamental importance of the nuclear deterrent, the *force de frappe*, meant it was vital to retain testing grounds isolated from metropolitan France. Its fevered efforts to retain Algeria in part for this purpose failed. These traumatic events all underpinned the strength of France’s determination to retain the French Polynesian testing site and to continue testing well into the closing years of the twentieth century, despite regional and international opposition.

The coincidence of this commitment with independence demands in New Caledonia also partly explained France’s obstinacy there: if New Caledonia were to become independent, it could set a poor precedent for French Polynesia, then the more strategically important possession. (Such is the potency of the domino effect argument that one senior New Caledonian pro-France leader as recently as March 2009 expressed his personal belief that it had been the CIA who had instigated the independence movement in New Caledonia precisely to undermine France’s nuclear testing in French Polynesia (Personal communication March 2009. This thinking is almost incomprehensible to an Australian, or any western ally, given US support for France as a nuclear power, notwithstanding the latter’s desire to be an independent member of the nuclear club.)

France as European “*puissance mondiale moyenne*” (middle-sized world power)

In the 1980s, in an increasingly defensive mode, France made much of the global dimension of its presence. As former Prime Minister Raymond Barre said, “whatever the cost, our overseas possessions assure us [France] of a global dimension which is

fundamental to us” (Chesneaux 1992 p. 99). Underlying this thinking at this time was France’s self-defined role as a *puissance mondiale moyenne* (middle-sized world power), a Fifth Republic concept that grew out of the “grand design” of the Gaullist years (see Chesneaux 1991).

The importance of the French overseas presence, particularly in the Pacific, to this role was evident in publications of the *Institut du Pacifique* (such as Ordonnaud 1983). A seminal work of the time on the subject was a paper by French journalist Philippe Leymarie called *Les enjeux stratégiques de la crise calédonienne* (“The strategic stakes in the Caledonian crisis”, *Monde diplomatique* 1985). That the work is breathtaking in its articulation of a French/Eurocentric perspective, warts and all (he described the territorial continuity provided to France by its overseas presence in the Pacific as stretching from Australia “in the east” to Easter Island in the “west” (p. 3)), does not diminish the contribution Leymarie has made to enunciating French motivations in the Pacific at the time. Despite, or perhaps because of, his French chauvinist tendencies, his article is particularly illuminating on French motivations, to the modern, non-French reader. Implicit in his paper is a certain justification or legitimization of the French possessions.

Related domino effect

Leymarie cited a 1985 French armed forces study stating that, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, France was meeting its “destiny as a middle global power” by its presence in the Pacific (Leymarie 1985 p.1 and see also Chesneaux 1987a p. 4.). He expanded on the potential domino effect of a crisis in New Caledonia for France’s possessions elsewhere (not only in the Pacific but in the Indian Ocean and beyond, specifically Guyana, Guadeloupe and Réunion, see Leymarie 1985 pp. 1, 3). In this context, he noted that whereas the only questioning (*contestation*) of French power for the other overseas territories was internal, this was not the case in the Pacific, especially New Caledonia, where it was the surrounding region that questioned French rule. He cited other specific cases where external claims were being made such as to Clipperton (by Mexico) and Matthews and Hunter (by Vanuatu).

Role in defence of France and Europe

He noted the importance of the Pacific presence for the defence of France and Europe including through the leverage France’s Pacific Overseas entities provided for the western alliance, particularly for action in advance of that of the United States, which he noted had proved circumspect on any issue in which its own interests were not directly engaged; and for maintaining a role independent of the East-West division in the Third World. The idea of the islands as advance “aircraft carriers” or “economic shopfronts” in the Pacific was enunciated, as launching points for penetration of regional markets, cultural “*rayonnement*” (radiation, or influence) and development cooperation as well as sovereign bases from which dissuasion or external intervention could be authorized from Paris (Leymarie 1985 pp.1 and 2).

In a precursor argument for the policies in France's 2008 Defence White Paper (see Sarkozy Government Policy below), Leymarie extolled the virtues of upgrading Noumea as a defence logistics base, for pre-positioning materiel rather than personnel which, he noted, could be landed there in 36 hours. He referred to the value of Noumea in protecting access from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean via the Torres Strait in the event of conflict to the north, describing it as the only alternative to sea lanes flanked by Indonesian and Malaysian waters (sic, given Indonesia's proximity to that Strait). This access, he asserted, would be important to protect the New Caledonian nickel resource. Once again he adduced the argument of displacement: France by its presence prevented other powers from obtaining a foothold, among which he mentioned, revealingly, Australia in company with the then USSR.

EEZ resource base for Europe

Leymarie also referred to the foothold the Pacific presence gave France in the unexploited economic zone resources, including fisheries and minerals, in an Ocean touted as the new centre of the world. He argued that it was only at the level of the European Community that this challenge could be met. Still, he noted that the military importance of Noumea should not be exaggerated, citing other examples where relinquishing a presence did not necessarily mean another enemy moving in (Seychelles, Mauritius, Malta, Maldives) and indeed asserting that to leave could better ensure a presence ("*s'en aller pour mieux rester*", to go the better to stay) as France had done in Djibouti, Gabon, Senegal and the Ivory Coast (Leymarie 1985 p. 4). He claimed that even the nickel resource would not be lost, as it would be exploited jointly and "France would share the revenue with any new state" as its commercial interests made this worthwhile. In any case he noted that France was concentrating its search for metallurgic nodules more on Clipperton, than elsewhere in its territories at the time.

Post-1990s French policy to retain Pacific collectivities within France

Recent history (see Chapter 3 and 6) shows that successive French administrations in Paris have exercised considerable innovation and ingenuity in developing solutions for the Pacific collectivities even by changing the French Constitution, confirming that they want them to stay with France. They are prepared to underwrite the considerable financial costs. At the same time, New Caledonia has replaced French Polynesia in primary strategic importance.

French Polynesia

Chapter 6 showed that in French Polynesia, there was no question of French departure so long as the nuclear testing program had not been completed, by 1996. But, since then, France has paid a premium to ensure continued sovereignty there by extending its compensation payments to French Polynesia well into the future. It has also invested political energy in statutory change and exerted political pressure to entrench its interests.

As in New Caledonia, France has repeatedly wielded the economic carrot, warning that payments could be at risk if pro-France forces lost out. This threat is the more effective given that French Polynesia has few resources and would be unlikely to survive on its own without French aid. Pro-France groups have frustrated the repeated election of pro-independence forces since 2004. The French State has so far stopped short of extending to French Polynesia the new key powers it has given to New Caledonia (the ability to legislate, special citizenship benefits, and the promise of a vote on independence). Thus France retains leverage over local parties to maintain French sovereignty.

Ascendance in importance of New Caledonia

By the end of the 1990s, with the end of nuclear testing and the agreement of the Noumea Accord, the relative dominance and importance of the two French Pacific collectivities was inverted, with New Caledonia setting the pace in acquiring increased autonomy (Chapters 5 and 6).

Part of the evolving solution for New Caledonia from 1988 included the development of its rich nickel resource, in ways designed to distribute the benefits more equitably to Kanaks and European New Caledonians alike. The prospect of petroleum reserves in New Caledonia's EEZ heightened the stakes. The commitment to an eventual vote on New Caledonia's future status was made in an innovative transition formula, through the Matignon and Noumea Accords, to buy more time for the French State to build confidence and economic prosperity such that few would wish to take on the responsibilities of independence outside the French republic.

But the day of reckoning is yet to come, and developments to 2018 will be critical in a peaceful ongoing resolution of differences in New Caledonia.

Generally, there was, too, undeniably an element of the legacy of history by which France, having held on to its Pacific possessions, had to some extent little choice but to implement its statutory commitments to them. In Wallis and Futuna, for example, there was little push for change (indeed, the entity still operates on its 1961 statute), and in both New Caledonia and French Polynesia the pro-independence forces have been shown to have used their public stances to pressure France for more support for their groupings at times. But overall, France maintained a continuing objective to retain the three French Pacific collectivities within the French fold. Did France's motivations change from the 1990s?

France's motivations post-1990s

Continuing strategic importance of France's Pacific presence

While the nuclear deterrent remains a bedrock of French defence policy (see for example France's 2008 Defence White Paper), the suspension of the nuclear testing program in French Polynesia altered the contribution of its Pacific entities to France's global place. France's foothold in the Pacific continued to deliver strategic benefits. But

the role of the Pacific was now more indirect. Retaining a presence in the Pacific returned for France a boost to its strategic weight (as part of the chain of Overseas France possessions); real and potential commercial benefits; a negative benefit related to preventing critical public opinion domestically and internationally as had occurred in the past; and a claim to new democratic legitimacy and protection of its nationals abroad. Each of these elements will be examined in turn, before considering the Sarkozy government approach to the French Pacific collectivities.

Ballast for France's European and global role

France continues to be motivated by its sense of itself as a global power with special privileges and responsibilities. Its leaders no longer use the phrase *puissance moyenne mondiale* in a world where the emergence of China reduces France's status to that of a small power rather than a medium sized power. Still, France wants to retain its status as one of the elite 5 Permanent Members of the Security Council at a time when the composition of that group is under debate. France's presence in every corner of the globe therefore remains important. As Chirac so succinctly said, "Without the departments and territories overseas, France would be only a little country" (in Aldrich and Connell 1989 p. 148).

In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, France was seen as maintaining its overseas possessions to add to its strategic weight (see Firth in Howe 1994 p. 302: "France resisted, and continues to resist, the decolonization of its Pacific territories, because their loss would undermine France's claim to be a world power and create a gap in the global string of French military installations"; Doumenge et al 2000, p. 205: "the French overseas collectivities give France a listening post in all the large regions of the world"; Berman, 2001 p. 24 "Continued presence in New Caledonia projects France's status as a global power").

Elements of Chesneaux's analysis, written in 1987, remain true today. He noted that France was the only power apart from the US capable of worldwide military basing and a communications network firmly based on its sovereign possessions including Noumea and Papeete (Chesneaux 1987a, p. 5). A major new listening station was opened near Noumea's international airport, Tontouta, in 2004. The EU's Briefing Paper on Military Installation lists France's military assets in its Pacific entities (EU Parliament 2009).

Cordonnier in 1995 talked about French military motivations of nuclear dissuasion, exploitation of space; freedom of air and naval mobility; a strategic perception that the presence in the Pacific balanced France's presence in the Atlantic; and the role of the Pacific territories in the *rayonnement* (influence) of France in its global maritime domain, with its vast EEZ deriving from them, its ports, bases and business interests. She also referred to the "vacuum filling" objective of preventing colonization of the Pacific by hostile Asian states (1995a p. 112). It is partly this concept of denial to outsiders that underpinned the diplomatic effort to improve France's image in the region as a constructive partner from the 1990s (see Chapter 7).

As late as 2003, De Deckker wrote (2003b p. 2) that France went against the current in maintaining its Pacific collectivities to preserve its strategic mining and military interests, the interests of its French nationals, and a nuclear assurance of national defence in French Polynesia.

There was some official acknowledgement of the strategic importance of the French entities in the Pacific. In 2003, then Overseas France Minister Girardin wrote that “our territorial collectivities of New Caledonia, Polynesia (sic) and Wallis and Futuna enable our country to be present in this ocean” (in Cadéot 2003 p. 7). In his Preface to Nathalie Mrgudovic’s 2008 work on France in the South Pacific, former Prime Minister Michel Rocard referred to the South Pacific as a place where France faced the classic contradiction between its “generous” principles and “its interests as a great power that it claimed at every opportunity” (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 13).

Since 2007, President Sarkozy’s administration has continued to see the Overseas France as key to France’s global status, which he has described in terms reminiscent of de Gaulle’s vision for France (see section Sarkozy government policy below).

Strategic denial/balance

Since Cordonnier wrote of “vacuum filling” by France in 1995, China has become more engaged in the South Pacific, starting from a competitive chequebook flashing race with Taiwan but also including aid and other investment activities targeted at securing valued fisheries and minerals resources, and simply a strategic presence (see Hanson 2008 especially on China’s \$US 150 m. annual aid program; Dobell 2007, on its destabilizing effects; and Firth in de Deckker and Faberon, 2008 p. 174 on the increasing presence of workers to reconstruct the business district of Nukualofa in Tonga, stadiums and other structures in some island countries including a headquarters for the MSG in Vila, and mineworkers to staff a Chinese-owned mine in PNG). France retains control in an area currently the object of the attention of a future superpower, and contributes to balancing China’s presence for the western alliance.

Firth (1989, p. 75) argued that it is the non-sovereign Pacific states which are of greater strategic importance than the independent Pacific states, and the French entities themselves are no exception. The US dependencies generally lie north of the Equator (the exceptions being the island of Jarvis, the EEZ of Micronesia and Baker Islands). For Australia, France’s presence in its three Pacific entities south of the Equator arguably confers wider strategic returns than relations with the independent states, particularly when coupled with the coincidence of France’s strategic interests with Australia’s own (Firth 1989 p. 87). Waddell noted in 2008 that France now shared with Australia, New Zealand, and the independent Melanesian states, “a convergence of strategic preoccupations, notably the concern to buttress “failed” island states and the need to protect the region from what are perceived as destabilizing forces originating in Asia” (Waddell 2008 p. 12). Australia’s Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs Duncan Kerr acknowledged France’s contribution in working with Australia on

issues of mutual security, defence cooperation, control of illegal fishing, and other areas when he visited New Caledonia in November 2008 (Kerr 2008).

By its role in strategic denial alone, France's presence returns strategic benefits not only for France, but also for the western alliance, and most importantly for Australia. But, as history has shown, these benefits have the potential to turn into negatives should France's presence again become destabilizing, for example by virtue of opposition or dissent by a significant percentage of its local populations who could turn to unwelcome sources of external support as they have in the past (shown for example when New Caledonia and Vanuatu turned variously to Libya and the Soviet Union, Chapter 3).

Role in supporting space technology within Europe

Part of France's role as a global middle power from the second half of the twentieth century has been its engagement in space technology. Its overseas possessions are an important element of this engagement. Guyana has been the launching site for the French *Ariadne* rocket since 1968, and from 1975 for the European Space Agency which co-funds the spaceport and launched the European space shuttle *Hermes*. There has long been a recognition of the importance, or at least the potential importance, of a presence in the vast Pacific Ocean in the French space program. On 14 February, 1986, Régis Debray, Secretary General of the High Council for the Pacific, told *Libération* that "the Pacific may provide opportunities for France and Europe to establish control and treatment stations for geo-stationery and circulating satellites...the space age will raise the importance of the overseas territories" (Chesneaux 1987a p. 4).

And France indeed does derive a leading role within Europe from its role in developing space technology. Apart from its hosting the European satellite launching site in Guyana, France's extensive presence in the vast Pacific Ocean facilitates space sensing, monitoring and retrieval. While the CEP has closed down, useful infrastructure remains on the French Polynesian islands of Hao and Moruroa (landing strips on each, some staff and scientific monitors measuring underground movements on Moruroa, Personal communications Noumea, March 2009; also Maclellan 2005e p. 372). For example, the United States has signed an agreement with France to use the Hao landing strip for the American space shuttle (see Mrgudovic 2008 p. 98).

President Sarkozy acknowledged the role of the Overseas France in France's status as a first-rate space power ("*une puissance spatiale de tout premier plan*") in his November 2009 speech on Overseas France reform (Sarkozy 2009).

Commercial motivations

In recent years, commercial incentives for France to stay in the South Pacific, which were marginal in the past, have strengthened.

Resource base and extended EEZ

France is the second largest world maritime nation owing to the size of its EEZ, the largest part of which derives from its Pacific collectivities (see Chapter 3 and Sarkozy 2009), with all the potential that extensive EEZ offers in unknown economic resources. While French Polynesia by its vast extent contributes the largest portion of EEZ to France (see Chapter 3), the importance of the EEZ extends to the tiniest element of France's sovereign claims. Mrgudovic described France's continuing assertion of its claim over the island group of Matthew and Hunter, representing 24,000 sq. km. of EEZ, as illustrating the attachment of France to its strategy of territorial presence, as one of the elements of its power primarily by virtue of its EEZ rights (Mrgudovic 2008 pp. 219, 261, 397). France's continued scientific research off the Clipperton Islands is another example.

While analysts no longer talk of manganese nodules as they did in the 1980s, largely because of the continued availability of land-based minerals and the relative expense of seabed extraction, there is little doubt that the seabed is one of the earth's last unexplored frontiers. Almost a third of existing oil deposits come from undersea deposits (Mrgudovic 2008 p. 95). Paul de Deckker noted in Cadéot (2003 p. 205), the EEZ was not only significant for the resources it may contain, but also in the scope it offered for scientific research and technology transfer. This is an important consideration for a country like France, which projects itself as a world leader in science and technology. Whereas sovereignty is not a necessary condition for scientific research, it facilitates research at lower cost than such research in foreign shores. President Sarkozy has acknowledged the role of Overseas France in enhancing the role of France in space and in biodiversity (Sarkozy 2009).

As far as the French Pacific is concerned, Garde refers to the various areas of fisheries developments, scientific research, space interests, new technologies, and hydrocarbons all giving increasing value to the Pacific entities, a value which may be worth much more in 20 or 50 years time (Garde 2002 p. 67). De Deckker went so far as to say that the first decades of the twenty-first century, because they are more preoccupied with the economic over the political, will invalidate the priorities of the past, i.e., economic gain will become the major priority unlike in the past (in Cadéot 2003 p. 205). Coutau-Bégarie as long ago as 1986 saw the EEZ and nickel resource potential as likely, in the long-term, to outweigh the costly record of the French Pacific collectivities, which were then popularly known as "*les danseuses qui coûtent cher*" (expensive dancing girls) (1986 p. 208).

In the Pacific, New Caledonia provides the pre-eminent interest for France, because of its nickel resource and the potential for exploitation of hydrocarbons offshore. Rumley refers to France's "geopolitical project" in New Caledonia, which assists in France's global status and access to the potentially rich seabed and resources (Rumley 2006 Chapter 13). As discussed in Chapter 5, New Caledonia's current nickel projects represent France's largest mining activities nationally. In December 2008, President Sarkozy told the Noumea Accord Signatories Committee that Eramet, France's vehicle for participating in New Caledonia's nickel development, was the largest single French mining actor, and wielded strategic responsibilities for the country (*Nouvelles*

Calédoniennes 11 December 2008). With global energy demands changing, signs of the presence of currently unviable, large hydrocarbon and natural gas reserves represent a significant potential asset.

Link with Pacific as new economic hub

More broadly, reprising the debate of the late 1800s (set out in Aldrich 1988 and see also Chapter 3), there is a view that sees France's presence in the South Pacific as somehow linking it to the vibrant economic growth of the northern Pacific (for example, Ordonnaud 1983; and Lacour 1987, who argued that the centre of the world inexorably derived from the Pacific Basin, and France's fortuitous presence gave it a chance to take its place amongst the great powers competing for influence there, p. 17). The idea of the importance of having a presence in this newly important hemisphere persists, despite warnings like that of Chesneaux in 1992 about the risks of confusing the two parts of the Pacific in the fashionable concept of the Pacific as the new centre of the world (p. 102). Then Overseas France Minister Brigitte Girardin in a forward to Cadéot's 2003 volume on the French Pacific overseas collectivities, stated that the French Pacific collectivities "enable our country to be present in this ocean which has become in the twenty-first century the other Mediterranean. So the Pacific Overseas is an opportunity for France: a gangplank to other civilizations, a gateway to a dynamic economic zone and the place for innovative policies" (p. 7).

So for the first time, the collectivities in the Pacific represent a positive economic asset for France, notwithstanding France's considerable financial outlay there. This is of interest since for Australia and New Zealand, "the importance of the region in defence and security terms ... far outweighs its economic importance to them" (Henningham 1992 p. 219). In a sense, because of these real and potential economic considerations attaching to its Pacific collectivities, France has a greater direct economic motivation than either Australia or New Zealand to be in the region.

Investment requires stability

One consequence of the ascendancy of the economic factor, particularly the importance of large-scale projects such as in nickel mining and the potential processing and exploitation of hydrocarbons, is that investors are required, in a competitive global environment; and investors seek a certain political and economic stability. This has injected a new element into the political debates about political independence and economic dependence in the French collectivities. It strengthened France's hand with its overseas communities, as France is better placed than any local government to provide the requisite civil stability and financial inputs. Thus, pro-France leader Jacques Lafleur frequently argued that New Caledonia needed France to negotiate the big commercial deals it needed in order to develop (Lafleur 2002; Personal communications 2002, 2009). On the other hand, in New Caledonia in particular, the new players, particularly if they come from metropolitan France, want a say in their community, and expect rights such as voting rights (Doumenge et al 2000 p. 207),

which potentially undermines the special electoral arrangements devised to underpin ongoing stability.

France as leader of the EU in the Pacific

France's increasing provision of economic and other types of assistance to the region, and its role in leading EU contributions there, potentially increases its capacity, and that of the EU, to win supportive votes from the numerous Pacific island states in multilateral bodies, most notably the UN, on issues of interest to it. At the same time, France and Europe need to exercise this leverage carefully. As elaborated on in Chapter 7, the Pacific island states are aware that EU and French engagement can be a two-edged sword (for example, France threatened access to the EU butter markets by New Zealand in the wake of the Rainbow Warrior affair; Europe holds the purse strings over sugar with Fiji).

Public opinion

Another recent, unstated motivator for France has been the desire to ensure that its overseas Pacific presence does not become the subject of negative public opinion, either internationally or domestically. One recent senior French official said that his brief before departing for Noumea was succinct: "*pas d'ennuis*" (no problems) (Personal communication April 2008).

As noted in Chapter 3, just as French domestic policy and preoccupations have dictated the pace and direction of policy applying to the French Pacific entities, so too have negative developments in the overseas entities impacted severely on French governments. The starkest example was the effect of the Algeria debacle in bringing down the Fourth Republic government. Another is the role of the Gossanah Cave affair on the French presidential elections of 1988. France's Pacific policy engaged the full force of public opinion, not only in France, but internationally, over the nuclear testing issue, the Rainbow Warrior affair, and treatment of New Caledonia, with devastating effect on France's image.

So France does not want to have its hand again forced by domestic and world focus on what it is doing in the Pacific. On the one hand, this has motivated France to behave more responsibly in the region, but on the other it has reinforced a tendency if not to secrecy, at least to non-articulation, or ambiguity, of policy and a desire not to draw too much attention to itself. It has also taken firm preventative action, for example by seeking to mute Temaru's influence in French Polynesia after he raised self-determination and UN reinscription issues in the Pacific Islands Forum (Chapter 6).

Relative disinterest of French public

Back home, historically, domestic public opinion neither focused on, nor cared about, the French overseas presence in general, and even less about the Pacific presence.

Chesneaux (1992 p. 91) noted that the French at home were too concerned with their own political differences and issues to worry about Overseas France, and that in any case France's Pacific Overseas entities received less interest and attention than Africa or Indochina. This is true so long as no major disturbance occurs overseas, such as the *événements* in New Caledonia; or, more recently, protests in the mid-2000s in Guadeloupe, spreading to other Overseas *Départements*, about the cost of living.

Characteristic of the history of France's overseas presence has been the relatively thin spread of institutional involvement in the overseas Empire. As described in Part I, France's overseas possessions were run initially by the navy (which indeed has taken a predominant role right up until the present, see Chapter 5), then by a relatively small Overseas France ministry which persists until today. Narrow lobby groups have in the past sought to influence policy, including the oceanic lobby of the late nineteenth century. But rare has been any broad media or public interest in Overseas France. Such disinterest can be explained by relative ignorance about the Overseas France, but also by greater substantive interests, for example by business people and travellers, in other parts of the world such as Asia.

More recently, René Dosière, French MP for the Aisne, with the special parliamentary role of Rapporteur for the Organic Law of 1999, told the Colloquium marking the twentieth anniversary of the Matignon Accords that "The National Assembly shows no interest at all in the Overseas, which corresponds to the state of metropolitan public opinion" (Regnault and Fayaud 2008 p. 159; also see Coutau-Bégarie 1986 p. 40; Chesneaux 1987a p. 9 and 1992 p. 144; Guillebaud 1976 p. 29; Victor 1990; Doumenge et al 2000, p. 61; Christnacht 2003 p. 5; Diémert in Tesoka 2008 p. 239).

Public disinterest seems to apply even to the political issues and lavish expenditures on the Pacific collectivities (demonstrated by Dosière in Regnault and Fayaud 2008 p. 159-163; Personal communication by members of the Senate Finance Committee 2008). There is no public debate about the collectivities, even when their budgets are under consideration (Senator Loueckhote noted that he often had to remind officials presenting to the Senate Finance Commission to say something about expenditure in the Pacific collectivities, Personal communication March 2009).

Relatively low cost of French Pacific entities

Partly, the French public does not take a close interest in the overseas presence because the costs are not widely known. Moreover, within the overall context of the French budget, the costs are relatively insignificant. The budget for all the overseas entities is only .7% of France's GDP, with costs of the three South Pacific entities, totalling EUR 2.65 b. (\$A 4.6 b.) in 2008, only .14% of France's GDP or .95% of the French budget (figures provided by French Senate Finances Commission September 2008).

Doumenge *et al* writing in 2000 considered that the costs of Overseas France were relatively cheap. They noted that costs per head of the population in the French Pacific collectivities were lower than those per head of the population nationally (23,300 francs

per overseas resident (\$A 6227) as opposed to 28,800 francs nationally (\$A 7700) in 1999); and they cite an article in *Le Figaro*, 14 September 1999, showing that Corsica, including “subsidies, fraud and tax exemptions”, cost the French state 50 times as much (10 b. francs or \$A 2.6 b.) as French Polynesia (200 m. francs or \$A 53 m.) in 1999 (Doumenge et al 2000 p. 205).

Chapter 5 described how even reductions in excessive special payments to newcomer retirees in the French Pacific collectivities were motivated more by abuse of the system by newcomers than by a concern about the costs themselves.

Lack of political clout of French entities

Doumenge *et al* argued that the Pacific escaped much scrutiny partly because the population of the Pacific collectivities together represented only around 20% of the population of all the overseas entities of France in 1999 (Doumenge et al 2000 p. 61), whereas the four Departments of the Overseas (DOMs) represented over 70% . All together the non-continental French populations totalled only 2.157 m. in the 1999 census, or a mere 3.5% of the entire population of France, overseas and continental (60.9 m.); and according to internet figures for 2006-2007, even fewer: 2.12 m. or 3.25% of a total population of 63.2 m. (see Faberon and Ziller 2007 p. 6). And from these figures, the South Pacific collectivity populations represented fewer than 500,000 all together, or less than 1% of France’s overall population in either 1999 or 2006-2007 figure.

These figures underpin the political reality that the French Pacific collectivities between them represent limited voting power in the National Assembly and Senate: two *députés* (MP) and one senator each from New Caledonia and French Polynesia, and one *député* and one senator from Wallis and Futuna (of a total of 577 *députés* and 343 Senators).

Doumenge *et al* argued that this disinterest meant that the future of the overseas entities was in question (2000 p. 61) but it could be argued that the converse is true. As shown by their own figures, to the extent the costs were thought about, they are not seen as funding an overseas colonial presence, but rather as part of France. And the French do not have the Australian/Westminster tradition of extensive, broadly-based public scrutiny of government costs and efficiencies. The French public is more preoccupied with internal and European issues than France’s overseas possessions. There is also a general feeling that even if the French Pacific entities were independent, they still would require French handouts (see for example Coutau-Bégarie 1986 p. 208), just as the former African colonies do.

But the lack of a public opinion does not mean there is no potential for such an interest should things sour, as shown by the damage to France’s international image over the Pacific nuclear and decolonization issues. So it can be said that maintaining a low level of public interest in itself is a motivating factor and an objective for French administrations.

Democracy and the will of the people

With the agreement of the Noumea Accord and statutory evolution in French Polynesia, France's stated motivations began to reflect the new democratic underpinnings these processes had provided for its regional presence. France could now proudly claim, as did the Minister for DOM-TOMs, Louis Le Pensec, in 1990, that it retained its overseas territories first and foremost because it was the wish of their inhabitants to remain French (Henningham 1992 p. 193). But, as Henningham pointed out in the early 1990s, Le Pensec did not mention Kanak complaints about the shifts in the population, and therefore the electoral balance, against them in previous decades by government-encouraged immigration, nor that French officials and politicians had worked hard to discourage pro-independence sentiments (*Ibid.*). And, a few years later, Piquet noted that the underlying assumption of this approach was the familiar *mission civilisatrice*: that from a republican basis of democratic choice, the civilizing mission was "to progress according to a linear pattern towards absolute perfection and refinement", i.e., to remain French (Piquet 2000 pp. 9-10). Just as much of its activity in the Pacific in the past was hinged upon the presence of its missionaries, France claimed it wanted to preserve and advance the interests of its nationals in the Pacific entities (de Deckker 2003b p. 2, and see next section Protection of nationals). In the same vein, senior advisers on New Caledonia indicated that France would proceed to the planned referendums simply because it was statutorily bound to do so, as it had committed itself to do so by the legal processes set up under the Noumea Accord (Personal communications Paris 2008).

Today, after the extensive modification of statutes and laws to deliver more autonomy and democracy to the two largest French Pacific entities, and continued influxes of metropolitan French into New Caledonia with a pro-France view, the principal claim by senior French officials continues to be that France is present in the Pacific exclusively because the people of those entities want France to be there, by their votes in successive elections. This claim is made privately by senior officials, to the point of some denying any other interest in remaining in the Pacific (Personal communications Paris, April 2008 and Noumea March 2009).

And yet there appear to be some inconsistencies in this position. As evident in Chapters 3, 5 and 6, since 1958, when both New Caledonia and French Polynesia voted to stay with France, the question of remaining with France has been a vexed one, and indeed, central to political debate in both places.

On the only occasion in which the question was put to the people of New Caledonia since 1958, in 1987, a strong boycott by pro-independence forces clouded the result (see Chapter 3). The 1988 Matignon Accords and the 1998 Noumea Accord were specifically designed to defer any referendum on the question of independence or staying with France, at least until 2014-2018.

New Caledonians did vote for what are transitional arrangements in the Matignon and Noumea Accords (see chapter 5, although only 57% of the 63% turnout supported the Matignon Accords; while with a turnout of three quarters of the population, 72% of them voted to accept the Noumea Accord ten years later, but this, after further inflows of migrants from France and elsewhere in the French Pacific). Since then, some New Caledonians (a restricted electorate, defined precisely as set out in Appendix 1, but generally requiring ten years' residence to 1998) have voted on a proportional basis for a temporary, local, collegial government of transition in provincial elections. The majority of even these restricted electorate voters in these successive provincial elections indeed have supported pro-France parties, but as noted in Chapter 5, many of these pro-France parties have increasingly adopted policies shared with pro-independence partners. And 2009 provincial elections showed an overall reduction in the pro-France vote, with a clearer polarization of the pro-independence vote in the Loyalty Islands, where the pro-France groups could not win even one seat, even as the pro-independence groups won more representation than in 2004 in the mainly pro-France South (see Chapter 5).

All New Caledonians (i.e. not just a restricted electorate) have been able to vote in French national parliamentary elections (the “*législatives*”) and have returned, every time, pro-France *députés* (MPs) but in the exceptional transitional period this can hardly be pointed to, as commonly French officials privately do, as a vote to remain with France. The two legislative districts returning a *député* each, both include substantial proportions of Noumea and therefore more pro-France voters (as opposed to the provincial electorates, two of which are predominantly Kanak). Moreover, in 2007 legislative elections, the pro-France R-UMP's Gael Yanno won easily in the first district (including Noumea proper and small outer islands), whereas Frogier won in the second district (which includes Noumea suburbs and the interior) with a closer margin (54% as opposed to 46% for his UC competitor Charles Pidjot).

In a referendum or referendums on the status of New Caledonia after 2014, there will be a broader electorate than that voting in provincial elections. In addition to the latter, i.e. those with ten years residence to 1998, the referendum electorate will include voters with twenty years residence to 2014, i.e. those arriving in the collectivity up to 1994 as opposed to those who had arrived by 1988 (see Chapter 9 and Appendix 1). As such, that electorate may be expected to include more pro-France newcomers.

In French Polynesia too, the picture is mixed. Frequent floor-crossing and support-bartering between individuals mask the true political affiliations of elected representatives. However in entity-wide votes, in 2004, voters twice returned a leader who propounded independence, and the results were only overturned through procedural means with the complicity of France.

Protection of nationals and the demonstration effect: the “red line” of independence

In a strand of argument related to the “will of the people” assertion, French officials claim that France remains in order to do the right thing by its citizens. Although this

contention covers all of its citizens, indigenous and otherwise, some senior players point specifically to the responsibilities of protecting longstanding French settlers. Once again, in this respect, they claim that New Caledonia remains key to continuing French motivations in the Pacific because there is a larger France-originating settler population there than elsewhere (Personal communication Paris March 2008 and also Henningham 1989, referring to the “political ballast” of the majority settler population in New Caledonia not present in French Polynesia, p. 31).

Linked to this idea of defending the interests of its nationals, particularly its settlers, in the overseas collectivities is the idea of preserving the indivisibility of the French republic, to head off a domino effect throughout its entities. Because New Caledonia has been granted the most autonomy of France’s overseas possessions, the future fate of New Caledonia is seen as having specific importance as a demonstrator effect for other French collectivities. Thus, a principal motivator for France to succeed in New Caledonia is to retain its possessions elsewhere. Specifically these include French Polynesia, which, as noted in Chapter 6, looks to New Caledonia as a model for its own status; but also Guyana, the vital launching pad site for France’s space program; and Mayotte (Mrgudovic notes parallels between New Caledonia and Mayotte in France’s access to control of petrol-supply routes, 2008 p. 96).

Closer to home in metropolitan France, the demonstration effect is particularly feared for troubled Corsica. Australian analysts Bates (1990) and Aldrich (1989) referred to French concern at the implications of actions in New Caledonia for Corsica, with Bates quoting then Interior Minister Charles Pasqua as describing the defence of Bastia (northern Corsica) beginning in Noumea (1990).

But the domino effect operates both ways: what happens in other possessions also has an effect on the French Pacific collectivities. French handling of the riots and protests in Corsica are equally salutary for New Caledonia. The mainstream New Caledonian newspaper *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* throughout the early 2000s regularly reported news of Ajaccio as if to remind the French reader in New Caledonia of the importance of maintaining the French presence there.

The outbreak of violent protests against *la vie chère* (high cost of living associated with being tied to the French economy) in Guyana, led to similar protests in Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion in February and March of 2009. The speedy chain reaction throughout its West Indies territories and ultimately as far away as Réunion, in the Indian Ocean, confirmed France’s fears of the contamination effect of events in one possession influencing developments in the others. In the French Pacific, after the outbreaks on the other side of the globe, arrangements were speedily set in place for local consultations to head off similar reactions. The Sarkozy government response was firm. It included clamping down on violent protests, a major reform of its provisions to Overseas France, and a clear indication of an “unbreachable” line, that of independence (see Sarkozy government policy section below).

Sarkozy government policy

Strategic importance of Overseas France but declining interest in French Pacific

Sarkozy, elected in early 2007, has taken little interest in the French Pacific collectivities. More broadly, he came late to formulating a policy towards the Overseas France, only personally addressing the subject when trouble broke out in the French entities in the Caribbean and Réunion in 2009 over the high cost of living. As a new style of President, of a new generation and with an immigrant background, Sarkozy's views were relatively unknown. His predecessors had all held firmly to the important role of France's overseas possessions in defining the international prestige of France, from de Gaulle, Pompidou, Giscard d'Estaing, and Chirac on the right; to Mitterrand who, although from the left, had served as Overseas France Minister. Sarkozy's early priorities were cultivating a special relationship with the United States, and consolidating France's role in Europe, including by returning France to the high table of NATO by rejoining the High Command. In attending to these national priorities, the strategic role of France's string of overseas possessions became clear, as the evolution of thought in official statements shows.

Contribution of Overseas France to France's international status

The early view of the Sarkozy administration about Overseas France emerged over a number of statements by his Overseas France Secretary, Yves Jégo. Speaking to a France-EU seminar in Paris in June 2008, Jégo highlighted the importance of the OCT (overseas collectivities) for Europe, through which, he said, "Europe has become the first world maritime power" (*Flash d'Océanie* 1 July 2008). In an interview in October 2008, he said that few people understood what the overseas presence meant, for example, that it provided 80 % of France's biodiversity, that it made France the second largest maritime power in the world, and that France was present in the three oceans by virtue of its overseas presence. He said the overseas presence was "an opportunity for France and for Europe in a globalized world" (*Le Parisien* 14 October 2008).

In his response to the troubles in the Overseas Caribbean territories, President Sarkozy built on these statements. He made two important speeches on the Overseas France, one in November 2009 and the other as a New Year message to the Overseas France, in January 2010. In his November speech, he referred to France's status as the second maritime nation of the world with an EEZ equal to that of the United States; as a premier space and nuclear power, and one with major diplomatic influence over oceans, and unrivalled biodiversity, all owing directly to the Overseas France. "*La France sans l'Outre-mer*", he said, "*ce ne serait plus la France*" (France would not be France without the Overseas France)(Sarkozy 2009). Similarly, in his January 2010 speech, he said that it was because of Overseas France that France was "*France des trois océans*" (France of the three Oceans). It was Overseas France that contributed to France's

identity, “à notre rayonnement, à notre grandeur et à notre puissance” (“to our influence, our grandeur and our power”) and “The inclusion of all, across the thousands of kilometers that separate us, in the same national community is one of the multiple facets of the French genius” (Sarkozy 2010a). These are the words of de Gaulle (see de Gaulle 1947). Sarkozy’s use of them seem to suggest that, two years into his Presidency, he was convinced, as de Gaulle had been, of the role of France’s overseas possessions in bolstering France’s claim to international status and power.

Sovereignty reinforced: no tolerance for violence or independence

In his speeches, Sarkozy reinforced France’s intention of continued sovereignty over its possessions, if necessary backed by force; and announced areas of reform, even innovation, in the governance of its various possessions but always stopping short of independence. His November 2009 speech was designed to announce a number (137 in total) of reforms primarily targeted at the Caribbean possessions, providing for institutional change including more local participation; and greater economic engagement by entities in their geographic regions. But at the same time, Sarkozy reaffirmed that his government would not tolerate violence or independence.

In his 2009 speech, his comments were focused more on the West Indies (“To be perfectly clear, the question to be put to voters in January will be the appropriate degree of autonomy of Martinique and Guyana in the Republic, and not that of independence. I restate this very simply, but firmly: the question of independence of Martinique and Guyana will not be put. These territories are, and they will stay, French lands”, Sarkozy 2009). But in his early 2010 New Year speech to the Overseas France, Sarkozy was more general. He said he was prepared to countenance a range of options for France’s overseas *territories* (as opposed to *collectivities*, as in the Pacific), provided that the unity of the Republic was not called into question. He then noted that the French constitution allowed considerable flexibility, of which he intended to make use, with respect for the will expressed by the relevant populations, “with only one red line which I will never accept to be breached: that of independence. *The Overseas (France) is and will remain French*” (my italics). This language, i.e., “the Overseas”, includes all French Overseas possessions, including the French Pacific entities.

View of the French Pacific

Specific statements and approaches to the French Pacific territories are rare. Sarkozy’s comments on the strategic role of France Overseas in the foregoing section can be expected to apply to the French Pacific as well, particularly in view of the vast expanse of the Pacific entities.

French white papers on Foreign Affairs (July 2008) and Defence (November 2008) commissioned by Sarkozy do not provide much insight into the administration’s view of the Pacific, surprising given France’s sovereign presence there. There is no reference to the Pacific region in the Foreign Affairs paper. The Defence White Paper simply referred to changing domestic logistical dispositions within its French Pacific

entities, which it treated entirely as domestic appendages (see Noumea becomes preeminent base for France's Pacific military presence below). Apart from a general reference to Australia being a valued partner, no Pacific regional defence priorities or perspectives were identified as stemming from France's resident Pacific presence. Rather, it emphasized exclusively the priority for France of the arc stretching from Mauritania in Africa across the Middle East to the Indian Ocean (Fisher 2008c). Indeed, the Paper spoke of the "éloignement" or isolation of Asia, hardly the perspective of a resident Pacific nation (Défense 2008).

Chapter 5 analysed institutional arrangements and senior appointments Sarkozy has made which suggest a continuing declining importance of structures and attention devoted to the French Pacific collectivities. Funding allocated to the small South Pacific Fund has declined (see Chapter 7). Sarkozy decided not to head the French delegation to the third Oceanic Summit, in Noumea in late July 2009, the first time the French President did not chair that meeting. He had not visited the Pacific by mid 2011.

New Caledonia: commitment and ambiguity

Sarkozy and members of his government say that they are committed to fulfilling the obligations of the Noumea Accord, that their preference is that New Caledonia remain with France, and, somewhat ambiguously, that the French State should take an active but impartial approach as the Noumea Accord comes to its end.

The earliest indication of Sarkozy's thinking was set out in a letter he wrote to New Caledonians in March 2007, while he was still a presidential candidate (Sarkozy 2007a). In the Gaullist tradition, his letter began by recalling that New Caledonia was the first overseas territory to rally to Free France and noted "your desire to continue to live within our Republic", which he shared. He expressed the hope that, at the appropriate time, New Caledonians would indicate by free choice their wish for a "French destiny". He quoted de Gaulle saying "New Caledonia must be part of a bigger whole. Of what whole could it be part, if not the great French whole?" Implicitly affirming his commitment to the scheduled referendum, he noted that in the term after the next presidential term, New Caledonians would be called upon to make a decisive vote as foreshadowed in the Noumea Accord. He wrote that some New Caledonians believed that independence could be a solution for the future, but stated that while he respected their choice, "it is not mine". Nonetheless, he reaffirmed the importance of respecting the Noumea Accord, listing his belief in a policy of consensus, the role of the Provinces, the collegial government, and, somewhat oddly given his earlier statement of viewpoint, the impartiality of the French State.

He then proceeded to seek to "persuade" the independentists that staying with France was possible with a "very large autonomy" for New Caledonia relative to the *métropole*. Further, he said that if Noumea Accord partners wanted New Caledonia to evolve and engage in new perspectives within the Republic, then they could count on his support. He pledged innovative judicial solutions to guarantee the personality and powers of New Caledonia within France.

He then listed French State responsibilities in New Caledonia (justice, public order, defence, foreign affairs, currency, part of national education, tertiary education, immigration control) in all of which he said he would apply the same commitments to French people in New Caledonia as he had made to those elsewhere in the Republic. He emphasized particularly security measures which he had introduced as Interior Minister since 2002 (which had represented a firm hand on disturbances, and hence a reminder of the firm control of the French State). And he pledged the State's respect for commitments on development and economic rebalancing under the Noumea Accord, noting support for the nickel project in the South and that of Koniambo.

Finally, he wrote that he wanted to be President of all the French people (i.e. not just those from the *métropole*) and of the Republic, which would defend with energy and conviction the place of New Caledonia *within France*.

That he had gone a little too far in expressing a preference for New Caledonia within France quickly became apparent. The local R-UMP President, Pierre Frogier, apparently taking his cue from the UMP presidential candidate back at home in metropolitan France, proceeded to write his own "letter to young Caledonians" on 16 May 2008 (Frogier 2008). He noted that it was the independentists who had chosen the path of violence 25 years before, and described the Ouvea events as an attack on the police brigade in the Loyalty Islands, noting the killing of four policemen without mentioning Kanak losses, and affirming that there was no need for shame at what France had done at that time. He underlined the suffering and memories of that time which had not healed. He referred to the importance of the Lafleur-Tjibaou handshake, the foundation of the Matignon and Noumea Accords. He then said that it was legitimate to question the intentions and motivations of those who wanted to reopen these wounds, and to refuse a "partisan, erroneous and deformed" vision of history. This letter was seen by the pro-independence groups as provocative.

By December 2007, newly installed as President, Sarkozy shifted tack. In his message to the Committee of Signatories to the Noumea Accord, he reaffirmed his commitment to respect the letter and the spirit of the Noumea Accord (Sarkozy 2007b). He re-stated the paradoxical active role of the French State "not only the role of an arbiter", with the State conducting itself *impartially* (my emphasis) in the search for consensus which must prevail in the application of the Accord as it comes to its conclusion. Bearing in mind the caution of Tjibaou on the primacy of the State's role as an actor rather than judge (see Chapter 3), this reference was one calculated to appeal to both sides. He noted economic rebalancing, social cohesion, and cooperation with the South Pacific countries as essential questions for the future of New Caledonia. He said the principle of the transfer of responsibilities was provided for in the Noumea Accord, and there was no room for debate about that (putting paid to hopes Frogier had raised that there could be a turning back of the clock). The task remained to devise a timetable and the modalities, while preserving the quality of public services for all Caledonians. He indicated that the State would intervene financially, with tax exemption measures, to support the Northern nickel project, and did not mention that of the South.

But once again Sarkozy reiterated that, when New Caledonians made their choice with the end of the Noumea Accord, his preference was to continue its path with France, in a new relationship yet to be defined. This “personal and transparent expression of this preference naturally was not at all contradictory with respect for the Accord and its deadlines in all impartiality. I commit myself to that personally”. He then urged participants not to lose sight of what was at stake in the dialogue process, which was not the victory of one side over the other, but the construction of a common destiny.

More recently, at the seventh meeting of the follow-up committee to the Noumea Accord in December 2008, Sarkozy once again reaffirmed that the French Government would respect its commitments although reiterating that it was an active player despite claims of impartiality: “We will go to the completion of this process. The State will not shy away... and will play an active role in this phase of our history, it will not just be a passive referee” (*Flash d’Océanie* 10 December 2008). High Commissioner Dassonville re-stated this approach in his 2009 new year message, saying “I will work to represent a State as much a participant as arbitrator, firm in the exercise of its powers, but always ready to invite dialogue, a State present without being overbearing...” (“*je m’efforcerai d’être le patron d’un État acteur autant qu’arbitre, ferme dans l’exercice de ses compétences, mais toujours prêt à privilégier le dialogue, un État présent sans être pesant...*” New Caledonian government website www.nouvelle-caledonie.gouv.fr accessed 4 February 2009).

In his New Year’s address to Overseas France in January 2010, as outlined in the Sovereignty reinforced section above, Sarkozy drew a red line at independence for “Overseas France”, which, in its application to New Caledonia, was at the least ambiguous, and at worst, begged questions about just how he was to implement fully the commitments of the Noumea Accord relating to a self-determination referendum on the future status of New Caledonia (see Fisher 2010a).

In the same speech, Sarkozy made some specific comments about New Caledonia which were also ambiguous. He noted that transfers of responsibility were under way, and that the vote “*on self-determination*” (my italics) would be organized after 2014. In a new and refreshing note of impartiality, he said the State would be faithful to all partners of the Accord, whether they were in favour of retaining New Caledonia in France or were independentist. But he said that it was essential that all Caledonians begin discussion so that the *vote foreshadowed in the Accord “translated into a result approved by a very large majority of voters”* (my italics). Since Sarkozy had ruled out independence, his words suggest that he does not have in mind a vote directly on the independence issue, as envisaged by many pro-independence parties and as implied in the Organic Law (relevant articles appear under the heading “Vote on the accession to full sovereignty” Titre IX, Organic Law 1999). Sarkozy went on to say that, while the discussions should be between Caledonians, the State would help them and assume to the end its role as signatory to the Accords (Sarkozy 2010a). In March 2011 (at the time of finalization of this thesis), the French hosted a Colloquium in Noumea on the Destinies of the Pacific Political Collectivities, examining alternative models for the future, which assumed continued sovereignty with France.

Through his appointments to key positions in New Caledonia, Sarkozy has also sent mixed messages. He appointed close advisors Estrosi and subsequently Yves Jégo as Secretaries for Overseas France, suggesting the importance he attached to the positions. Estrosi did not last long in the job, partly because of heavy-handed handling of a local protest in Noumea during his first visit there (Chapter 5). But Sarkozy's subsequent appointment of his collaborator Jégo as Overseas France Secretary, and of a senior advisor to Estrosi, Jean-Yves Dassonville as High Commissioner in Noumea, underlined his intention to handle protests firmly. Indeed Dassonville said as much on his arrival, when he indicated that the disturbances betrayed an underlying need for better social dialogue (i.e. handling industrial disputes), which the French State would become involved in although it was not strictly its responsibility, and that it would do so with firmness (*Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 10 November 2007). In his own public statements following violence in the Caribbean territories and Réunion, Sarkozy stated unequivocally that he will not tolerate violent protest in Overseas France (Sarkozy 2009, 2010).

Noumea becomes preeminent base for France's Pacific military presence

The Sarkozy government's Defence White Paper, issued shortly after assuming government, defined significant overarching defence reforms based on reducing personnel, sharpening equipment priorities and enhancing intelligence-gathering (Defence White Paper 2008). The few references to France's South Pacific collectivities imply that their continued possession by France is a given. The Paper specified that it would be New Caledonia which would provide the principal base for France's military presence in the Pacific, including the capacity, mainly aero-maritime, for rapid intervention at times of crisis.

The assignation of this role expressly to New Caledonia was a significant change, in that the entire Pacific naval presence had until then been commanded from Papeete. The changes would take place gradually until 2015. The presence of the strongest contingent of the French regional military presence in New Caledonia would therefore coincide with the most important transition period spelled out by the Noumea Accord, that from 2014 to 2018 when votes would be taken on the future, including specifically defence.

A related development has been the construction of a large complex in a central location in Noumea to house French military headquarters, and to bring together for the first time the main services under one roof. The building is a large, impressive and expensive structure, discreetly located at the end of a winding road surrounded by vegetation, but strategically sited at the naval dock not far from central Noumea.

The shoring up of a defence presence, including construction of expensive French military headquarters in Noumea, with responsibility for the entire French Pacific military presence, well before the vote on the final five sovereign powers, of which defence is one, as provided for under the Noumea Accord, reaffirms Sarkozy's

commitment to meet violence or protests with a firm hand, and raises questions about France's commitment as an Accord signatory (see Chapter 5).

French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna

In his 2010 New Year comments to Overseas France, Sarkozy referred to the "vast comedy" of French Polynesia's political representatives "where yesterday's enemies become today's allies". He noted that political stability had still not been found, and that this was intolerable for Polynesians. He foreshadowed a further reform of the voting and institutional system to guarantee more stability to majority elected representatives. In March 2011, draft reforms were submitted to the French Polynesian Assembly for its consideration. The draft provisions maintained an electoral "bonus" for the majority party; fixed the term of the Speaker of the Assembly, to exclude the position from changing when the government changed; increased the minimum number of votes required for a no-confidence vote; and increased the minimum percentage of votes required for a party to proceed to the second round of votes in an election (*Flash d'Océanie* 18 March 2011).

Sarkozy announced he would consider, from 2010, proposals to modernize the organization of the territory of Wallis and Futuna. No indication of these proposals had been released by mid 2011.

From the foregoing France clearly wants its collectivities to remain French, and continues to be prepared to back this objective through force. And France derives sufficient strategic benefit, including more recently, actual and potential economic benefit, from its resident presence in the Pacific to continue to pay for them to remain French. Will it continue to do so?

Future motivations

Possible future policy motivations can be proposed, drawing from past practice and policy reviewed earlier in this Chapter. These are likely to derive from strategic interests, commercial factors, and the protection of domestic interests, including the protection of French citizens.

Strategic motivations

France is likely to see continued strategic advantage deriving from its Pacific presence. First, a Pacific presence will continue to provide justification for its claims to retain its seat as one of the elite Permanent Members of the UN Security Council. In this respect, presiding over a successful decolonization of New Caledonia under the auspices of the UN would be important. France has already signalled a more forthcoming approach to the Committee of 24.

Second, France through its Pacific presence will be able also to retain its status as the second largest sovereign EEZ in the world, second only to the United States. Third, a continued sovereign presence in the Pacific will facilitate France's maintaining a self-reliant defence posture within the EU and NATO, based on the nuclear deterrent. Retaining the South Pacific collectivities facilitates the presence of French naval and other armed forces in the region. It also keeps vast areas of the Pacific Ocean under French control, including infrastructure at Moruroa and Hao, all of which are potentially useful contributions to Europe's space program.

Fourth, France will also see its Pacific presence as bolstering its status as a member of the western alliance beyond that of NATO and the EU in Europe. By virtue of its Pacific presence, France can contribute to prevent or at least balance foreign forays in the region, notably by China. It can also provide a balance to the predominantly Anglo-Saxon influence in the South Pacific. Its military presence supplements those of the allies, including by providing refuelling and rest and recreation stops, protecting access to sea lanes in the event of blocking of the Malacca Straits; enabling emergency assistance, cooperative disaster relief and sharing of regional marine resource intelligence. Its presence also contributes to western (as distinct from European, mentioned earlier) capabilities for tracking missiles and satellites in space. Finally, France's resident regional presence enables it to promote scientific and technological research in the region (Hage identifies many of these points, Hage 2003 pp. 86-87; and De Deckker and Faberon 2008 p. 278).

Commercial interests

Whereas commercial returns were secondary for France in its early history in the region, more than ever before, France stands to gain specific future commercial benefits, in the context of global concerns about renewable energy and sustainable development, well into the twenty-first century, as known reserves of key resources decline.

It is here that France's status of sovereignty over the second largest global EEZ is relevant. The extent of economic resources accruing to France by virtue of its extensive EEZ in the Pacific Ocean is as yet unknown. However, its intensive research into suspected hydrocarbons offshore from New Caledonia and specific investigations in waters around Clipperton suggest that these resources are of some interest to France.

More immediately, France is expanding exploitation of the nickel resource in New Caledonia. Having incorporated the idea of extending nickel production into the formula for responding to Kanak concerns, and having supplied important fiscal backing and private investment from metropolitan France into the massive nickel projects in New Caledonia, France is already a major producer of a valuable global resource, poised for greater production.

Protection of domestic interests and French settlers globally

France shows a continuing commitment to protect the presence and security of its overseas residents, specifically its overseas settlers from metropolitan France, notably in New Caledonia, the French overseas collectivity where they are the most numerous. France is likely to continue to show a desire to head off a potential domino effect on its chain of other overseas possessions, particularly important in Guyana (its space launching site), and Corsica close to home but also, in principle, important to all of its other collectivities. It is likely to continue to ensure a low level of domestic metropolitan public interest in the overseas possessions. It is likely to continue to do this through a policy of "*pas d'ennuis*" (heading off trouble) in the Pacific entities, backed by military force; through a program of consolidating relations with Pacific island neighbours; and through appropriate responsible behaviour in the international arena (for example, as UN administering authority in New Caledonia; and meeting its nuclear compensation commitments in French Polynesia). It will continue to claim a desire to meet its statutory commitments, particularly in New Caledonia, without prejudicing its other objectives

Future policy implications

On the basis of these motivations, and its past practice, French policy approaches are likely to include continued efforts to meet its legal commitments in New Caledonia under the Noumea Accord. It is likely to seek to do this within UN decolonization principles (i.e., by offering a genuine choice, including an independence option), with a minimum of violence. This is likely to be a challenge, given the strong possibility of rejection of the independence option, with possible accompanying violence by pro-independence elements. France can be expected to urge local parties to agree on imaginative and innovative solutions including post-Accord arrangements maximizing autonomy within the French republic.

France can be expected to continue to provide lavish expenditure in all three of its Pacific collectivities, both to encourage their continued commitment to French sovereignty and to head off domestic public interest back home in metropolitan France which might result from opposition or instability in overseas France

France is likely to continue its long-term pursuit of the most valuable of the economic resources in the Pacific, particularly exploitation of nickel, and potentially hydrocarbons, in New Caledonia, and the conduct of aquatic scientific research around all of its Pacific possessions, including the remote ones such as Clipperton.

France will continue to maintain a regional military presence consistent with its other objectives, and the will to exert military pressure when necessary to ensure law and order. It will continue its defence cooperation with large regional powers and selected island states, especially focused on disaster response and the protection of fisheries. France will continue to use its capacity as a western ally to head off intrusion by

foreign powers, and this is likely to be accompanied by a tendency to overlay the significance of activities in the region by foreign powers.

France is likely to continue with the institutions handling its Pacific collectivities in a way not commensurate with the strategic return they deliver to France. The domestic affairs of the collectivities will continue to be managed by the Interior Ministry and its France Overseas France Secretariat, and military institutions; with the Foreign Affairs and Defence ministries responsible for policy in the wider region. It is not certain that the day-to-day coordination of these various ministries will improve.

France's aid efforts in the wider region are likely to continue to be low-key and modest, multilaterally through the SPC and PIF, and through selective bilateral programs; and through the EU. There is likely to be continued lip-service to encouraging the regional participation of its Pacific entities, without building the capacity for them to do so effectively.

Conclusion

France derives significant strategic advantage from its resident, sovereign presence in the South Pacific. Apart from providing continued credibility to France as a democratic, global power bolstering its claims within the UN, EU and NATO, the Pacific presence now represents a real and potential economic asset, and a resource in future space exploration and exploitation, all of which bring a particular contribution by France in these organizations. These are strong motivations leading to France's desire to remain present in the region, even at considerable financial cost and diplomatic and political investment.

Having established France's likely motivations and strategic returns from its Pacific presence, and pointed to likely future policy directions, the next chapter will examine elements of risk undermining its ability to continue to pursue these interests and policies, with the potential to undermine regional stability; and identify actions which might be taken to minimize these.

Chapter 9

France's Future Role in the Region

France has a long history in the Pacific region, and derives strategic benefits from being there. In recent years, France has exerted innovation and flexibility backed by military force, along with significant economic and political investment in its collectivities, and, to a lesser extent, the region, to maintain its presence.

As explored in Chapter 3, between just twenty and thirty years ago, France's behaviour created serious disruption and instability in the region. Its resistance to Vanuatu's independence left an early legacy of suspicion, resentment and violence, and was an indicator to Pacific neighbours of what might follow should similar circumstances arise in its other Pacific entities. France initially withdrew financial and other resources, supported rebellious forces, and intervened politically in the aftermath of Vanuatu's independence, despite the democratic vote in favour of independence.

Chapter 3 also showed how France's nuclear testing program, which persisted to 1996 despite regional opposition, strengthened negative feeling in the region towards France and, together with its veto of discussions of non-development problems in the SPC, resulted in the region forming a new regional grouping, the Pacific Islands Forum, in 1971. France's mismanagement of Melanesian independence demands in New Caledonia alienated Melanesian and broader Pacific opinion further, resulting in the formation of the Melanesian Spearhead Group in 1984, potentially dividing hard-won South Pacific cooperation and consultation mechanisms. France's policies in New Caledonia also brought on violence, and introduced destabilising extraneous terrorist factors such as Libyan links with Melanesian political parties.

Despite overtures in the 1980s to improve its image (set out in Chapter 4), it was only after France changed its policies, by suspending nuclear testing once and for all, and by concluding the Matignon and then Noumea Accords to address Melanesian independence concerns peacefully, that regional leaders responded more positively towards France (Chapter 7).

As Australia and its immediate Pacific region confront the consequences of failures in governance within the region, against the background of global economic and environmental pressures, and a tectonic shift in power relationships between the two great Pacific powers, the US and China, they may well welcome the energy and resources of France, a significant western ally present in the region, with similar values and interests here.

But the history of France's presence, its motivations and recent practices in the Pacific, point to areas of risk to future stability, both within the French collectivities, and the wider region. These risk areas potentially undermine France's ability to achieve its objectives in the region, i.e., to remain present, and to integrate its collectivities there. At the same time, they potentially threaten regional security.

The uncertainties centre around two main areas: continued acceptance of the French presence by Pacific island leaders; and the continued peaceful, workable, democratic status of France's Pacific collectivities, particularly New Caledonia, on which wider regional acceptance hinges.

Regional acceptance

Chapter 7 showed that, at the broadest level, France has succeeded in establishing itself as an accepted presence in the region as a major bilateral partner, albeit with some continuing unease, and certainly with perceptions that it is an outside power. In the wider Pacific, France moved beyond its activity, initiated in the 1980s, simply to alter perceptions in the region about itself, by working to change its unpopular policies and to support concrete regional and bilateral aid programs relevant to the region's own needs. It has built up regional credit by stopping nuclear tests, continuing to address some of the lingering issues related to the tests, and introducing responsive change in New Caledonia. It has also engaged itself more productively in regional bodies, including the Pacific Islands Forum, SPC, SPREP, and in selected bilateral activity. It has presented itself as a close partner of Australia and New Zealand. It claims to want its collectivities to integrate more in the region.

With its double role as a major western power and a vehicle for a greater EU presence in the region, France as a presence in the South Pacific is a strategically important partner to other Pacific powers, notably the United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. France supports and complements their own strategic presence in the Asia-Pacific region, and reinforces the balance to the forays China is making into the region. Facing the heavy demands of governance failure, particularly in the Solomon Islands, and ongoing needs of development cooperation in the region, Australia and New Zealand in particular welcome the stability and burdensharing that have flowed from the French presence (see Chapter 8).

But France has yet to achieve full acceptance of its presence within the region. Partly this derives from its own ambiguous presentation of its interests. As discussed in Chapter 8, there is relatively little high-level articulation beyond its own borders of France's strategic interest in being in or staying in the South Pacific. The rare references to the South Pacific, or even the French Pacific, in strategic documents such as the 2008 Foreign Affairs and Defence White Papers, underline that the priority areas for France lie elsewhere in the immediate geographic vicinity of metropolitan France, and that key policy advisers undervalue the strategic returns the Pacific presence delivers. The language France uses when talking about the Pacific is at best ambiguous over whether it sees itself as an outsider or as a resident South Pacific power with strategic interests stemming from that presence (Chapter 7). Despite France's proclaimed interest in enmeshing its collectivities more in the life of the region, there is uncertainty, and wariness, about whether France's three collectivities speak for themselves or only channel French views and policy. So, as Chapter 7 showed, perhaps it is not surprising that others in the region do not see or welcome France clearly as a resident power.

In Australia's 2009 Defence White Paper, France was mentioned along with other NATO countries such as Spain, Germany, Italy and Sweden, as a cooperative European partner, with a brief reference to practical cooperation in the Pacific and Southern Oceans and Afghanistan; and as a donor in the South Pacific to support capacity building (Defence White Paper 2009 pp. 98 and 100). No mention of France was made in sections on interoperability, intelligence, and science and technology, nor even when the Paper discussed coalitions with others in military operations, disaster and humanitarian relief in the Pacific and Timor Leste, where France has specifically played a role (in FRANZ and in INTERFET, International Force for East Timor) (Australian Defence White Paper 2009, pp. 50, 54 and 105). There was no indication from Australia's Defence White Paper that France was considered other than as a cooperative European partner and donor, and certainly not as a *regional Pacific* power.

Chapter 7 suggested that many regional island country leaders remain cautious about France. Some remember the period of French opposition to, and frustration of, Vanuatu's independence process; French nuclear testing; and the long refusal to respond to Kanak independence demands. Their caution is not allayed by France's assertion of its claim to the Matthews and Hunters, contested with Vanuatu (Chapter 5). France's own efforts in the region have been well received, but remain modest in financial terms, fitful (for example, Sarkozy's non-attendance at the French Oceanic Summit, the desultory holding of bilateral talks between Australia and New Caledonia under the 2002 Trade Arrangement, Chapter 7), and generally involve hooking on to existing longstanding initiatives by Australia and New Zealand. While working for an accepted role for its collectivities within the Pacific Islands Forum, which the Forum acceded to, France has only reluctantly acquiesced in the Forum mechanisms to monitor its policies, such as the regular Forum ministerial committee visits to New Caledonia to 2004. French officials privately claim that Pacific island leaders themselves are no models of good governance and should not be judging France's performance in the Pacific. But they overlook the fact that regional leaders have been fair and balanced in their conclusions from these visits, and restrained in responding to calls by French Polynesian and New Caledonian indigenous pro-independence leaders for the Forum to take positions on French policy. At the same time regional leaders expect more of a Western sovereign power and will judge French action in its collectivities by higher standards than they apply to themselves, however unfair this might seem.

So long as France sees itself as an outside power in the region, regional countries know that ultimately France will pursue its own national interests, to which their interests, and those of the French collectivities located in the Pacific, will always be secondary. The bigger states, Australia and New Zealand, know that France sees them as useful regional allies and information sources, but only up to a point, the point where France's overriding national interests as a UN, EU, NATO and global player become engaged. France seems to undervalue the leverage these regional relationships can provide in the pursuit of its own interests, for example with China and the United States. Thus France can probably not expect to do much more with the big Pacific countries in the defence and intelligence area than participate in exercises and exchanges to promote

interoperability, and exchange intelligence in practical areas such as fisheries, as it is currently doing. The regional powers will continue to be wary of closer cooperation in sensitive areas such as intelligence exchanges so long as they perceive France may use these resources to further interests and relationships different to those of the region.

Island leaders have successfully used regional and international mechanisms to influence French policy in the past. The UN Decolonization Committee, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group were all useful and remain potential instruments should differences with France arise. In May 2008, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged administering authorities to discharge the UN's mandate on decolonization, arguing that "Colonialism has no place in today's world" (Ban Ki-Moon 2008). The UN Decolonization Committee has the mandate to send visiting investigatory missions to New Caledonia, although it has not exercised this mandate to date (early 2011), not even when the Committee agreed to host its regional Pacific seminar there in May 2010. Through the Pacific Islands Forum, regional leaders have a watching brief on how France deals with Melanesian and Polynesian demands for independence (see Chapter 7). They have an ongoing mandate to send visiting missions to the French collectivities should they wish to do so. The Melanesian Spearhead group has remained active, reminding the Forum of Kanak concerns related to New Caledonia such as French handling of the restricted electorate and the ethnic category of the census, and supporting New Caledonia's Melanesians on important issues such as Vanuatu's Matthew and Hunter claim. All three mechanisms remain safety valves for the expression of Kanak and French Polynesian frustrations (for example, Roch Wamytan continues to make submissions to the UN Committee; Oscar Temaru and the MSG have respectively raised self-determination concerns recently in the Forum, see Chapter 7) and are tools that remain available to Pacific leaders should France transgress (see also Mrgudovic 2008 p. 390).

Chapter 7 showed how France has sought to insert itself and its supporters into these mechanisms in recent years, presumably in order to neutralize their potential to be used again against it. Having secured a special status of Associate Membership for the two larger Pacific French entities in the PIF, France and its pro-French supporters are now seeking full membership, even before the full status of New Caledonia is decided. The pro-France President of New Caledonia is now calling for New Caledonia to become a full member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, in a bid to displace or weaken the voice of the current member, the Kanak coalition FLNKS. And France has begun to report as Administering Authority for New Caledonia to the UN Decolonization Committee, and has hosted Committee's May 2010 regional Pacific seminar in Noumea, thereby diluting the effect of petitions to the Committee by Kanak groups. Whether France is successful in its efforts to head off future criticism from these various organizations remains to be seen.

More broadly, the adoption by the UN General Assembly in October 2007 of a Declaration on Indigenous Rights (A/Res/61/295 of 2 October 2007) has set the stage for another avenue of pursuit of grievance by aggrieved Melanesian people. The Declaration specifically provides for the right of *indigenous* peoples to self-

determination (Declaration on Indigenous Rights, Article 3, and enshrines their right to control their education (Article 14) and not to be forcibly displaced from their lands arbitrarily (Article 10). It is too early to assess the significance of this avenue of redress.

In the international and Pacific regional context, debate is under way over the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination, as distinct from rights of non-self-governing territories. Jan Furukawa, Guam's Decolonization Commissioner, has argued that the right of Guam's colonized people, however few they might be, to "forge their own permanent, political identity" was not dismissable but "inalienable" (Furukuwa 2003) and US-administered Guam has prepared legislation for a future self-determination referendum for the minority indigenous Chamoru people.

New Caledonia's own Sarimin Boengkih in 2010 made a distinction between the voting rights of the "colonized peoples" as opposed to immigrant settlers in New Caledonia (Boengkih 2010), referring to the requirements of UNGA 35/118, which, as noted in Chapter 7, calls for member states to discourage the systematic influx of outside immigrants and settlers into Territories under the Committee's auspices.

Against this background, whatever bilateral arrangements France works out within its sovereign borders, indigenous peoples may, in theory, continue to raise their grievances and receive support in an international context. Given the untested nature of the relatively new Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, there may be considerable scope for differences to arise in New Caledonia over indigenous rights.

Within the region, France may need to continue to work hard to build confidence in the Pacific in its policies and presence.

Facilitating closer links in the South Pacific

The history of France's presence in the South Pacific suggests that there remain ways in which France could improve its regional links.

Institutional factors in Paris

From an outside observer's perspective, aspects of France's inchoate institutional arrangements in Paris relating to its Pacific collectivities do not seem compatible with the best management of its own strategic interests, many of which are shared by Australia and New Zealand, deriving from France's presence in the Pacific.

France's wish to remain as a sovereign presence in the South Pacific suggests there would be value in continuing to build expertise on the Pacific within its bureaucracies which deal with the Pacific region (Foreign Affairs, Defence Ministries, offices of the President and the Prime Minister) and those dealing with its Pacific collectivities (the Overseas France Secretariat and its posted officials in the South Pacific from the Interior Ministry); and to provide for sound ongoing coordination between the two, and

between them and the rest of the French domestic bureaucracy (Environment, Health, Education and other Ministries).

As the disastrous, but relatively recent, experiences of the Gossanah Cave crisis and the *Rainbow Warrior* affair show, maintaining the most effective Paris-based decision-making apparatus relative to the Pacific entities is critical to France's international image and prestige. As these incidents and the *événements* themselves recede in history, and as new challenges arise (see New Caledonia outcomes section below), the idea of continuing to administer the French Pacific entities on the basis of past policy reflexes, is risky.

This thesis has shown how, from its first foray into the region, France's policy on the South Pacific and towards its possessions there has been subject to the ebbs and flows of its domestic and European preoccupations. It goes without saying that France's direct national interests must come first for France. Given recent talk of reorganization of the French Overseas structures (such as Jégo's suggestion to abolish the Overseas France Secretariat itself, Chapter 5), retaining a distinct, effective institutional unit for the French Pacific Overseas collectivities will be all the more important to ensure their particular political, cultural and regional circumstances are understood and not subsumed in large domestic bureaucratic structures.

In view of the strategic value of the French Pacific entities, and the desirable ongoing engagement of the most senior of the Ministries such as Defence and Foreign Affairs, it would seem anomalous that the Overseas France Secretariat is only a junior ministry. If the office is to remain headed by a Secretary of State or junior Minister as has been the case to date, then moving the Office to the office of the Prime Minister, or the President, would enhance its bureaucratic weight relative to the ministries it needs to consult. Its senior officials should desirably have a history and experience in Overseas France, particularly in New Caledonia, as critical deadlines fall due for New Caledonia.

Specific ongoing inter-agency steering committees in Paris on the Pacific French collectivities, coordinated by an appropriately senior Overseas France Minister or Secretary reporting direct to the Prime Minister or President, as New Caledonia's deadlines approach, would keep communication lines open and minimize the potential for a repeat of past disasters. Such a committee would desirably include, apart from the Pacific unit of the Overseas France Secretariat; the Foreign Affairs Ministry, especially its Oceanic Division; the Defence Ministry; and from time to time, the Paris-based offices of the French Pacific entities, and other ministries such as Environment, Health and Education. Whether the broader, temporary Interministerial Committee for Overseas France, established by Sarkozy for the 2008-9 review of Overseas France (see Chapter 5), will take on such a function is not yet clear. What we do know from the past subsuming of France's Pacific collectivities into the Overseas France structures (whether an Overseas France Ministry or Secretariat under the Interior Minister) is that French Pacific issues can get lost.

Policy ambiguities

The policy ambiguities enshrined in France's behaviour, sometimes as a power "in", and sometimes as a power "of", the Pacific outlined in Chapter 7, reflect to some extent the inadequacies of the inter-agency consultation process. They also reflect the understandably Eurocentric character of French policy-making, which have generally served French interests well, albeit on occasion leading to disruption in the Pacific. In recent years, France is both "of" the region, by virtue of its collectivities, and "in" the region as a European country with sovereignty in the Pacific. France can in some ways be all things to all interests: European to Europe, French to its citizens in the region, a helpful, but not extravagantly so, external donor to the Pacific, a benign supporter to its collectivities' regional engagement, all without much cost.

The dualities of this position will probably not fully be resolved until New Caledonia has expressed itself democratically on the question of independence. The implementation of credible democratic principles in French Polynesia will also be important, and the impartiality of planned further statutory reforms there will be a signal of French intent. If New Caledonia were to endorse staying with France by a vote before 2018, without dissension, and if French Polynesian electoral outcomes are respected, then France could consider identifying itself more as a rightful regional presence "of" the Pacific, with a unique identity, similar to that of Australia and New Zealand. France might then reasonably expect that it and its collectivities be accepted fully into regional organizations. Even in this case, it is not clear that France would be prepared to project itself unambiguously as a resident regional player, for example in playing its full role as an aid and trade partner.

If however, there is political opposition and unrest in New Caledonia as the Noumea Accord application period comes to a close, and/or if France's role in French Polynesia appears to be partisan with associated political instability and disturbance, then regional leaders may well continue to be hesitant to embrace a more fulsome French/French collectivity presence in their regional structures. This hesitancy would be compounded should such instabilities again lead to the engagement of external powers hostile to western alliance interests.

France supporting its collectivities in regional engagement

France's effectiveness in engaging constructively for its own benefit in the region would be enhanced not only by more financial support to the region, but by more concrete practical assistance to the three French Pacific collectivities to participate in the region in their own right, an objective which France openly espouses but to which it has devoted few resources.

Fundamental to regional integration of the French collectivities is a letting go of any idea of cultural competition in the region.

History has shown how emphasizing the “Anglo-Saxon” distinction has contributed to misunderstanding and instability in the region. Just as France has made large gestures towards the indigenous people in its collectivities and in the region, French authorities could lead a change in how it views what is undeniably an anglophone neighbourhood. Accepting the realities of the anglophone region around the French collectivities means accepting at face value that the bigger regional governments, Australia and New Zealand, are no longer mere ciphers for their former British colonizers, and indeed, that they have not been so for most of the last century. Even in recent years, both in Canberra and in the French collectivities, European diplomats and officials in private communications continue to assume that Canberra’s policies reflect British policy. French analysts have made revealing references to Australia and New Zealand as “dominions” in their academic writings, a quaint throwback to pre-federation (1901) status in the case of Australia (see for example Cordonnier 1995a). Broadsweeping comments that Australian and New Zealand policy positions are “Anglo-Saxon” mean little in these countries built on immigration from all over the world, with multicultural populations and leadership. France has taken great pains in recent years to cement closer relations with Australia and New Zealand. Better efforts to understand regional positions on their own terms would ensure continued partnership within the region on an equal basis.

Equipping the leaders and officials of its own collectivities with the appropriate language training would enable them to participate confidently, in ongoing communication with neighbouring governments. In the Pacific, as elsewhere, France has handicapped itself with its insistence on the use of French when English is the international language. Despite the SPC having provided full interpretation facilities for the benefit of the three French entities and France for over sixty years, it is not realistic to expect the South Pacific region, with all its underdevelopment and multiplicity of languages of its own, to provide French language interpretation to facilitate integration of the French Pacific collectivities in the many CROP bodies and working committees. The practice, implemented when the full New Caledonian government delegation visited Australia in March 2010, of French Pacific delegations travelling in the region with their own interpreters and portable interpretation equipment is an impressive sign of genuine willingness to participate in the region.

Such an approach would not undermine the important process of retaining, and indeed promoting, the exquisite and unique French language and culture at home in the collectivities. For the collectivities, there is nothing to be lost, and much to be gained, by actively engaging with the wider region in the English language. Regional island country leaders, most of whom are multilingual themselves in indigenous languages, would recognize and welcome the gesture. One could envisage very useful exchange programs whereby indigenous Pacific island state officials and researchers work side by side with their French collectivity counterparts in work exchanges in the collectivities, in Pacific island states, and in Australia and New Zealand.

A key element contributing to regional stability and understanding is the capability and effectiveness of a professional regional affairs unit in each collectivity, appropriately

resourced and staffed with personnel trained in diplomacy and the English language, to provide day to day guidance for the collectivities' participation in regional affairs, to monitor and participate actively in regular regional meetings. Provision for exchanges between the regional affairs unit staff and diplomatic officers of the island governments would substantially boost understanding in both the collectivities and Pacific island governments of their respective contributions and potential contributions to the region. An active role by the English-speaking Pacific governments, including Australian and New Zealand, in funding and supporting such inter-Pacific Islands Forum exchanges, and funding expanded English-language training for personnel of the French collectivities, perhaps with co-funding by France, would maximize the benefits of such regional cooperation between the French and independent Pacific governments.

Such a unit would simplify interactions by foreign interlocutors with the French entities. Currently, in New Caledonia alone, outsiders such as officials from neighbouring foreign governments and regional bodies, need to deal with three critical layers of government: the French state authorities, in areas of their power and also for courtesy's sake; the New Caledonian government; and the provincial governments in their areas of responsibility. Australia and New Zealand, and to a lesser extent, Indonesia, as countries with resident representation in Noumea, understand this. But other governments, particularly Pacific island governments with their own capacity constraints; regional organizations; and other potential interlocutors such as non-governmental organizations, do not. Simplifying the government structures through an effective, professional, one-stop regional affairs unit would facilitate interchange with neighbouring governments. The unit could provide valuable support for officials and leaders of the collectivities when they travel throughout the region. It would facilitate integration of the French entities in the region. It would also enhance understanding by island governments of French motives and actions in the region. There is currently very little knowledge in the region of innovative French practices of potential interest elsewhere in the Pacific, such as the involvement of customary indigenous authorities in judging civil law cases, the presence of central officials in remote areas, the application of gender parity law which has significantly boosted the representation of women in the assemblies and Congress (Berman 2005), and the implementation of collegial government in a multi-ethnic society.

Visits by metropolitan, collectivity and island government leaders and politicians

The regular regional meetings of senior French officials in the region (French regional ambassadors, High Commissioners of the collectivities, and Paris-based officials) are a valuable input into informed policymaking in Paris. More visits by young French politicians from the hexagon to the Pacific collectivities, and to the Pacific region; and by Pacific leaders from the collectivities and the Island countries to Paris to meet French politicians and officials, could assist in informing members of the French National Assembly and the Paris based French administration about issues, history and preoccupations, and in enabling the appointment of responsible ministers or permanent secretaries with a background knowledge of the region. A tailoring of the rhetoric during these visits could be useful, with senior French officials, visiting the

collectivities and the wider region and receiving regional visitors in Paris, emphasizing less the fact of French sovereignty but rather focusing on the particular needs and experiences of the islanders.

Development cooperation, economic engagement and investment

France's development assistance to the region has grown in recent years, and it has strongly contributed to increased assistance by the EU. But France's annual financial contributions to the region outside its own sovereign territory remain minuscule (Chapter 7 noted that figures are vague but totalled at most EUR 103 m. or \$A146 m. (converted May 2010) in 2008, of which about half may be through EU development aid and not identifiably French aid). This compares poorly to its expenditure in its own Pacific collectivities (\$A 4.6 b.), and its expenditure elsewhere (it is 2% of its overall aid effort compared with 43% to sub-Saharan Africa; and compares to its spending of \$A 1 b. in the Maghreb in North Africa alone). And it compares poorly to the aid expenditure in the region by Australia (\$A 1.092 b. in financial year 2009-10 Minister for Foreign Affairs press release 12 May 2009) and New Zealand (\$NZ 205.5 m. in 2007-08, or half of its total aid overseas of \$NZ 429 m., source, NZAID website accessed 25 June 2009).

Its relatively low expenditure in the region reinforces the view that France, with a sovereign presence in the Pacific, does not see the region as part of its own area of responsibility.

One could argue that France's own effort to engage more in the region in the last few years itself increases expectations, and the potential for misunderstanding and old thinking, towards France. Its encouragement of exchanges and visits to its entities by regional figures, which is desirable, while impressing them with the prosperity in the French collectivities and in Paris, heightens expectations about potential aid in the minds of officials from countries, almost all of whose entire GDP is less than what the French spend in one collectivity each year (see Chapter 7). It would be helpful if such visits were matched by more visits in the other direction, by leaders and officials of the French collectivities, and French officials from Paris, to other island countries.

The EU activity France has encouraged, although welcome, is not large, averaging a planned \$A 90 m. per annum for the five years to 2013, of which about 20% comes from France and is included in France's regional aid figure above (see Chapter 7). While some changes are being made, in the past this aid has proven at odds with existing mechanisms. The EU process of shifting from an aid donor/ACP basis to new trade partnerships through EPAs, was complicated by initial disregard for the region's own evolving trade arrangements. Despite its proclaimed 2006 Strategy for the Pacific, the EU's endemic bureaucratic requirements and a tendency to a one size fits all approach in a varied and disparate group of archipelagos has resulted in delayed and inefficient aid delivery, generally outside of existing regional mechanisms such as the SPC. These efforts are complicated by the growing gap between the way the EU treats its OCTs (overseas collectivities, including the French Pacific collectivities) and the

way it treats to ACPs (Chapter 7). Pacific leaders remember, too, that EU aid is a two-edged sword, bringing with it unflinching human rights standards and the threat of economic sanction. The EU has used its muscle to sanction Fiji, and France threatened to cut off New Zealand's access to EU markets in the post-Rainbow Warrior period (see Chapter 3).

The increased presence of the EU in the region has the further strategic consequence for France that any opprobrium attaching to France amongst regional leaders will by extension also attach to the EU, and vice versa. Whereas in the past, pressure on France came from the regional island countries and the UN, in any future situation of concern to the region, France is likely also to come under pressure from the EU itself (as indeed it did when the European Court of Human Rights endorsed the restricted electorate in New Caledonia). Thus, France's European engagement can act as a helpful brake in its wielding of power within the region. On the other hand, action by the EU, for example in its dealings with Fiji, which might be perceived as negative, will also have an accompanying residual effect on regional attitudes to France.

In the grand scheme of things, the reality is that the Pacific islands are low in the pecking order of Europe's foreign policy priorities. In this context, as a major EU and Pacific power, France is in a privileged position to promote the regional economic efficiencies which the Pacific Islands Forum countries aspire to, enunciated in the Pacific Plan. It can facilitate better information flows between the Pacific island states, the French Pacific collectivities, and Paris and Brussels, on trade matters to ensure the EU in pursuing its Pacific strategy works within the Pacific Plan, PACER and PICTA (for example, in implementing its EPA arrangements); and to ensure better communication and understanding between its Pacific EU OCTs and the Pacific island ACP states. Again, equipping local officials in its collectivities with training and a working external affairs secretariat will be important (see France supporting its collectivities in regional engagement section).

Apart from increased funding more commensurate with the needs and status of the Pacific island states as neighbours to France in the region, France could also encourage the EU to work more through regional mechanisms which are proven to be effective, such as the SPC, the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP) organizations, and bilaterally particularly in consultation with the government and non-government aid organizations of Australia and New Zealand who are experienced in working in the small remote communities of the Pacific islands.

Just as France devotes considerable expenditure to supporting commercial activity within its Pacific collectivities, regional integration of its collectivities would benefit from France providing funding to examine economic links between the Pacific island states and the French Pacific collectivities, and to promote private French investment in the Pacific island states. So long as the collectivities' dependence on European and French imports is unlikely to change substantially given tastes and preferential tariff arrangements, true economic integration is unlikely to occur without a re-examination of the high tariff protection the French collectivities maintain against regional imports. Whereas full PICTA and PACER participation might be too large a concession to make

by the French collectivities, some review of their extremely high tariff walls would be a welcome gesture. President Sarkozy's announcement in November 2009 of reform measures relating to the Overseas France, including measures for French collectivities to become more economically engaged in their own regions, may be a good start.

One of the most valuable targets for any increased expenditure by France and the EU would be increasing people-to-people links, both ways, between the French entities and the rest of the region. Apart from promoting training exchanges in the field of diplomacy to address the desire of France to integrate its collectivities into the life of the region, such exchanges could take place in areas of regional trade, engaging for examples the officials of ADECAL (*Agence de Développement Économique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, New Caledonia Economic Development Agency), New Caledonia's trade promotion arm, with those of neighbouring counterparts. Exchanges involving regional organizations could also be helpful.

Greater funding and engagement by France and its national and regional experts could build on France's solid start in focusing on the big challenges for the Pacific region, those of sustainable development, food security and the protection of the environment, particularly marine resources and fishing stock management, in which France has expertise.

There is scope for France to engage regional neighbours more in its technological and scientific activities, which are second to none within the region but often little known about and under used. Institutions such as the IFREMER (*Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer*, French Research Institute for Marine Exploitation), IRD (*Institut de Recherche pour le Développement*, Development Research Institute), and agricultural institutions (*Institut Pasteur*, *Institut Agronomique de Nouvelle-Calédonie*) are represented in the French entities and have a valuable role to play in the region in hosting more workshops and exchanges at the grassroots, working level, which would be welcomed, if language issues are seriously addressed. The cultural context of exchanges needs to be recognized. Pacific island researchers themselves have valuable expertise. Many good intentions, and considerable financial expenditure, can be wasted by seminars in the European tradition, for example the idea of "Assises", or stocktakes of existing European research, which is an alien idea for the Pacific island researcher, and involves presentation formulas that can appear to be talking *at*, rather than talking *with*, regional experts.

As indicated in Chapter 7, France or its collectivities have formal links with all the CROP organizations except the three specifically involving tertiary institutions. Whereas there are systemic differences in the operation of French education institutions, with changes in the European tertiary system of the last few years, aligning European degrees more closely with those of the anglophone system, there may be opportunities for further collaboration between the two French Pacific universities and regional tertiary institutions.

France has supported ongoing cultural links between the indigenous peoples of its collectivities and their neighbouring peoples. New Caledonia will take its turn to host

the Melanesian Arts Festival in 2011, held every four years under the auspices of the Melanesian Spearhead Group. It supported the meeting of Polynesian royal families in Tahiti in 2007. It promotes sporting participation by the French collectivities in regional sporting events which is valued in the region. The Pacific island state participants could benefit from more training funds to ensure more equal competition with the well-funded French athletes who have tended to scoop most events.

In the cultural context, France has understood the need to proceed gently. The explicit use of expressions and concepts such as *rayonnement*, or the national mission to expand cultural influence, have notably been reduced in recent years, perhaps a response to the sensitivities of the small island states. The role of French culture is a unique idea to French people. The justified pride and emotion with which the French approach their culture and intellectual heritage, and their feeling of the responsibility to share it, can be misunderstood. Introducing others to a body of literature, culture and thought not accessed without an understanding of the French language and thinking, is a valuable contribution to the region that only France can make. It can be achieved through more two way exchanges, visits, scholarships, sport sponsorships, promotion of *Alliances Françaises* (French clubs) and other study opportunities, building on existing programs France is funding. France is also in a unique position to expand exchanges to enhance understanding of the indigenous Pacific cultures in its collectivities, for example exhibitions and visits to highlight Kanak and Polynesian culture in other parts of the Pacific, including Australia and New Zealand.

Further French underwriting of the tourist industries in its Pacific collectivities would enhance regional understanding of its presence. New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna each represent unique cultural show-cases, and yet are considerably more expensive tourist destinations than other Pacific islands and therefore out of reach for travellers from most other Pacific countries.

Building on France's own development cooperation, and on EU activities, its cultural links, and its investment and trade links, would balance France's projection of itself as a defence player along with Australia and New Zealand, an aspect which Pacific leaders find disquieting (as evidenced in their unease over France participating in the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, see Chapter 7).

Successful outcomes in French collectivities

By far the most important medium term outcome France can continue to provide for the region is continued democracy, stability and economic prosperity in the French collectivities. France faces particular challenges in achieving this outcome within the next ten years. The key to France's success lies in New Caledonia, to whom the other French collectivities, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, look as a guide to their future.

Within the Melanesian "arc of instability", New Caledonia has in a sense been a shining light of democratically-based stability, at least for much of the period of the

Matignon and Noumea Accords (marred by the assassination of Tjibaou in 1989 and ongoing ethnic problems in Saint-Louis). The critical deadlines under the Noumea Accord fall due from 2014 to 2018, as new uncertainties arise within the Melanesian arc. Transitional arrangements in Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, which were themselves based partly on the Noumea Accord model, fall due from 2011 to 2016 (see Maclellan 2005e p. 369). In Indonesia, West Papuan issues remain a potential trouble spot, and West Papuan independence leaders have links with New Caledonian counterparts. The Solomon Islands will be conceivably reconsidering the mandate for the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands which will have been in operation for a decade. Fiji is a military dictatorship. Democracy in Vanuatu is also fragile.

Against this background, Pacific island leaders and Australia and New Zealand will be alert to any new difficulties or instabilities in the French Pacific collectivities, particularly in New Caledonia where the terms of continued French control are yet to be agreed.

French Polynesia

In French Polynesia, democratic expression in a personality-dominated political culture with an economy bankrolled generously by France has led to constant changes of leadership, and shifts of alliances around increasingly French Polynesian local interests, as distinct from pro-France interests. This coalescence of local interests has in part been brought about as a reaction to the French State's own intervention, through statutory and other means, to favour pro-France political outcomes (Chapter 6). Such actions, with the accompanying corruption and frequent changes of government, hardly help French credibility in the region.

In real terms, such instability has had a low level of impact locally since it is the French sovereign power that delivers budgetary support, all services, and a flow of high quality consumer goods. And France controls law and order. The lack of any substantial economic resource means that few see long-term benefit in pushing for true independence. So long as that continues, and France is prepared to pay, stability is assured. However, the implementation of the latest reforms of French Polynesia's statute applying to elections will be a test. If the reforms are used to favour the pro-France group, as has occurred in the past, they may exacerbate rather than reduce political volatility.

In the best of times, it is a difficult, expensive, and thankless task for French authorities to foster democratic processes, while maintaining first world standard services and civil law and order in the remote archipelagoes of French Polynesia. If there were a significant downturn in French economic support, local protests and heavy handed responses by French security services could create further instability. With global financial pressures, French systems and processes, already under pressure from shifting local groupings, may be tested further.

French Polynesia, like New Caledonia, has a record of recent violence (1987, 1991 and 1995). The influence of Flosse, who through his personality and close relationship with the now departed Chirac had been able to secure increasingly favourable autonomy measures, has faded. Young French Polynesians are well aware that the big changes occurred in New Caledonia only after the violence of the 1980s. A French Polynesian participant at a Colloquium on New Caledonia in Paris in May 2008 noted that there had been no Rocard-type mission to French Polynesia because there had been no violence there (Comments to Colloquium 2008). Mrgudovic (2008 p 244) signalled that of the many statutory changes applying to New Caledonia since 1958, only the last was negotiated, suggesting that it was violence which was the factor leading to a negotiated outcome. In a contracting global economy which inevitably impacts on the one resource employing French Polynesians, tourism, the possibility of French Polynesians seeking further political autonomy through violence cannot be ruled out.

Unlike Flosse, whose record in the region was mixed, Oscar Temaru has a strong network amongst regional island leaders, many of whom have supported his cause. This can be an asset for France. Respect for Temaru has meant some regional tolerance even for his recent alliances with Flosse, and the dilution of his independence demand. But should Temaru up the ante on independence or autonomy issues, he would find ready support in the Pacific Islands Forum and the region. He has shown he is prepared to use the Forum card, calling for reinscription of French Polynesia on the UN decolonization list regularly in recent years (and meeting strong French official reaction) and advancing ideas on further autonomy at the 2007 Forum Summit (Chapter 6), including his idea of a Tahiti Nui Accord for autonomy for French Polynesia, based on the Noumea Accord. His quiet but protesting presence outside the SPC headquarters Noumea venue for the UN Decolonization Committee's Regional Pacific Seminar in May 2010 reflects his continuing determination to use UN avenues to put his case where possible.

French Polynesia will continue to look to the treatment of New Caledonia as a model for its own future. An unstable long-term outlook for New Caledonia will therefore have repercussions there.

Wallis and Futuna

For the time being, there are few forces for change in Wallis and Futuna. France has done virtually nothing to connect the collectivity with its near neighbours. Despite its location neighbouring Fiji and Samoa, Wallis and Futuna remains isolated, with more flights to and from New Caledonia, 2500 km. away, than from Fiji, 800 km away and none from Apia, just 500 km. away. There are no ferry services to any of these places. The archipelago has little infrastructure, including roads, shipping and air services, both within the collectivity and to other parts of the Pacific. The potential for tourism has not been developed.

Sarkozy's promise of a review of the 1961 Statute (Sarkozy 2010a) that still governs the collectivity has not provoked major opposition. The dependence and remoteness of

the archipelago suggest few problems for the French administering authority. However, agreeing on a successor to the King of Wallis, one of the three kings in Wallis and Futuna, after his 40-year reign, in 2008 was a time-consuming and initially divisive exercise, which suggests that old systems are not necessarily up to future challenges. Moreover, prosperity and peace in Wallis and Futuna rest largely on the continued ability of the bulk of its citizens to find work in New Caledonia. So what happens in New Caledonia matters in a real sense for Wallis and Futuna.

Long-term solution for New Caledonia

In New Caledonia, the first test for France will be in fulfilling its Noumea Accord commitments, and being seen by Kanak and regional leaders alike to be doing so. This is a critical prerequisite given France's history of dealing with autonomy provisions, revising and often breaking promises from 1956 to 1988 (Chapters 3 and 5). The current generation of Kanak and regional leaders are aware that the most recent, post-1988 French promises, were obtained under the strict duress of civil war and loss of life on both sides for and against independence. Tjibaou was murdered within a year of negotiating the Matignon Accords, by Kanaks who felt he had sold them out and succumbed to France's manipulation, just twenty years ago. Already the Noumea Accord, deferring the vote promised by the Matignon Accords for a further ten years, has been seen by some as simply a delaying tactic. In the years to come, the test for France will be to respond to the frustration expressed by Kanak leader Roch Pidjot in his last speech to the National Assembly in Paris, in 1984, when he said:

"France's sole preoccupation is to maintain its presence in the Pacific. In order to do this, it privileges the interests of Europeans and of other immigrants...convinced that New Caledonia must be governed at the center, you play into the hands of the most reactionary elements in this country and those of small political groups, thereby providing an unexpected chance for them to appear much more important than they are in reality....it is a classic strategy: you divide to rule....Our human dignity is profoundly wounded by declarations to the effect that Kanak independence would be racist.... Our wish is that the referendum be held and that New Caledonia becomes independent.... *You have hurt us too many times. So we have become skeptical, and we will judge the Government not on its declarations but on its actions.*" (my italics, Waddell 2008 p. 128).

For his part, President Nicolas Sarkozy when he addressed the Overseas France in January 2010 repeatedly underlined that "the State would keep its word" in undertakings that it made ("If we say something, people believe it. If people believe it, we don't just say something, we do it" Sarkozy 2010a). But in the same speech, he opposed independence (see Chapter 8).

And the record of the French state in keeping its commitments under the Noumea Accord has been mixed (Chapter 5). It has a positive report card in the areas of setting up relevant institutions, innovative democratic systems and financial support for increasingly autonomous government, engaging all political groupings, Melanesian and Caldoche, pro-independence and pro-France alike. These are themselves major

achievements. But it has recorded serious minuses in its handling of the sensitive restricted electorate promise; allowing if not encouraging continued immigration of French nationals from elsewhere; altering the basis of entity-wide censuses; and raising one of the five sovereign powers, currency, and entrenching its presence on another, defence, well before the Noumea Accord deadline. There have also been delays in the scheduled transfer of important responsibilities such as education, and even in meetings of the Noumea Accord Signatories Committee.

Moreover, on sensitive economic rebalancing promises, despite all of France's considerable inputs to facilitate better production and distribution of the nickel asset across the peoples of New Caledonia, international and local circumstances have contrived to limit the pace of progress, such that to date the only producer of the valuable commodity remains in French hands and in the European-dominated south, and there has been increasing French control of investment in the critical northern project.

France itself faces difficult dilemmas, injecting their own uncertainties into the situation, as it shepherds New Caledonia to its next stage. It claims to be impartial arbiter at the same time as it is an active participant in the transition process (Chapter 8, comments by Sarkozy and Dassonville). But it was this dual and conflicting role that impeded implementing the Pons and Pisani proposals in the mid 1980s, a role that led to Tjibaou's prescient warning that France was not a judge but an actor (Chapter 3). Despite these early lessons, France has been open in its support for New Caledonia remaining within France, and supporting the pro-France political groups, undermining any claim to impartiality. Its record in French Polynesia, of blatant partiality for particular pro-France groupings (Flosse-led in the 1980s and 1990s, and Tong Sang in the mid 2000s, see Chapter 6), despite electoral outcomes supporting the pro-independence groups, with serious effect on political stability, suggests what lies ahead for New Caledonia if the final stages of the Noumea Accord are frustrated by pro-independence activity.

A practical problem for France on a daily basis arises from statutory arrangements which provide for the French state to be responsible for law and order in New Caledonia, while many of the decision making powers underpinning stability are in the hands of the New Caledonian government. For example, it is the Congress which decides the regulations and legislation which may give rise to workers' grievances leading to strikes and disruptive barricades and burning of tires; but it is the French authorities who are responsible for imposing order. Procedurally, the common link between development of the policies (in many key areas the responsibility of the New Caledonian government) which will impact on security, and the security responsibility of the French State is the French High Commissioner, who is present at all meetings of the New Caledonian Executive and the implementer of law and order as senior representative of the French State. But since the Noumea Accord, he no longer has executive power in the areas of responsibility of the New Caledonian and provincial governments. These considerations become more relevant with the emergence of the Labour Party and its capacity to stage violent industrial protest, and the tendency,

particularly since Sarkozy's presidency, for the French State to treat protest with a firm hand.

Possible radicalization of pro-independence demands

As New Caledonia looks ahead to the final denouement of the Noumea Accord processes, local political forces are divided, not only between the pro-France and pro-independence groups, but within each side as well. There has been some effort on the part of the pro-France groupings to unite around the idea of holding discussions on the future of New Caledonia after the Noumea Accord (*l'après Accord*), but divisions persist. And the pro-independence groups include a raft of viewpoints within the mainstream FLNKS grouping that signed on to the Accord. The mainstream FLNKS itself, the more influential because of its status as signatory to the Accord, has responded mutely to pro-France overtures to consider an "association with France" style outcome, and has accused the French State of meddling. One of its constituents, the UC, has frustrated the signature of a framework for the further transfer of responsibilities and called for a review of progress in transfers to date (Chapter 5), while playing into the hands of divided pro-France groups over the flag issue. These are hardly promising signs for the future.

Many analysts have signalled that a major risk to the continued stability of New Caledonia in its transition phase under the Accord would arise from the rift between the young and the older generations, with the emergence of a new, possibly young, idealistic Kanak leader to lead a new push for full independence (see Maclellan 2005b p. 412, Faberon 2002 p. 57, Donroy-Vurobaravu 1994 p. 28; Christnacht 2003 p. 10; Personal communication, senior official May 2008). The emergence and effect of the avowedly pro-independence, mainly Kanak, Labour Party, with a capacity to mobilize large numbers of people, including the young (see Chapter 5), and with a record of violent strategic protest, including blocking flights at the international airport, create worrying uncertainty and the potential for instability and even violent protest. Whether the Labour Party will provide a radical leader, or whether the pro-independence mainstream groups will become radicalized, remains to be seen. Much will depend on the inclusiveness and realism of the negotiation process. As Rumley warned in 2006, the "*status quo*, or the no-change" option "will heighten the intensity of that [Kanak] resistance and lead to increasing local and regional instability" (Rumley 2006 p. 241).

Another, related, question on which future stability will rest in New Caledonia is whether or not, given a certain commonality of interest between long-term European residents and Melanesian leaders, social, economic and generational cleavages might assume greater importance than ethnic ones. Such divisions have the potential to bolster the support for the traditional pro-independence group and break down traditional pro-France loyalties, as has been evident in the political realignments of the early 2000s (see Chapter 5).

Next steps for New Caledonia

Chapter 5 sketched the next steps under the Noumea Accord process, which include the continued transfer of responsibilities followed by the holding of a referendum on three questions: the transfer of the sovereign responsibilities, access to an international status of “full responsibility” for New Caledonia, and organization of citizenship into nationality (Noumea Accord Article 5), described as a vote on “accession to full sovereignty” in the Organic Law (Titre IX). As noted in Chapter 5, the scheduled transfer of specified responsibilities has already slipped, and the Signatories Committee which oversees them had a large gap in its meetings, from December 2008 to mid 2010. Uncertainties therefore continue to surround the transfer of some significant responsibilities including education and aspects of civil law.

Non-acceptability of deferring a referendum beyond 2018

The holding of a final referendum specifically on the independence issue, became a contentious issue during the 2009 provincial election campaign. Chapter 5 outlined the demographic and psephological pointers to any vote on independence probably being rejected. The unique electorate for the final referendum suggesting more pro-France voters (as it includes more newcomers, i.e. those with 20 years residence to December 2014, than the electorate for provincial elections, who have residence from 1988), the decline in relative numbers of Kanaks (from whom the largest numbers of pro-independence support come) and the record of the greater weight of the pro-France vote in provincial elections to date, suggests that the likelihood of any pro-independence outcome is slim. The most recent provincial election in 2009 nonetheless showed a sizeable, and growing, part of that electorate supported the pro-independence groups.

Recent history has shown that holding a vote on independence, which would probably result in a “no” vote, would be likely to rouse sensitivities on the part of extreme pro-independence voters, with the risk of violence and civil war once more. It was for these reasons that the Matignon Accord deferred a vote for 10 years from 1988, and that the Noumea Accord deferred a vote yet again for 20 years.

As Chapter 5 noted, it was this thinking that led pro-France leaders Jacques Lafleur and Harold Martin to propose yet another deferral of a vote. In early 2009, seasoned leader Lafleur, who was a signatory to the Accords and who had a strong memory of the civil war of the 1980s, proposed a deferral by up to 50 years this time, reflecting the gravity of his concern. But these proposals did not meet with general approval. Indeed, the results of the 2009 provincial elections showed that not proceeding to a referendum as provided under the Noumea Accord was not an option. In that election, parties arguing for an early referendum (from amongst the pro-France and pro-independence groups alike) attracted strong support, highlighting the paradoxical polarization around the issue.

Arguably, one reason why the deferral option was not viable related to the poor record of the French State over the years in delivering on its promises. Its early track record was one of successive statutory measures bestowing then revoking various powers (Chapter 3), and delays in meeting the deadlines of its own complex scheduled transfer of responsibilities under the Noumea Accord, generous though the promised transfers might be (Chapter 5). In particular, the French State's perceived early renegeing over the central "fixed" restricted electorate issue, allowing continued inflows of migrants from other parts of France and frustrating the census process applying to ethnic categories, was not well received by pro-independence groups. Deferring a vote would raise the difficult question of the continued application of a restricted electorate beyond 2018. It is inconceivable that the pro-independence side would accept abolishing the hardwon concept of a restricted electorate for the final vote, given the swelling of the non-indigenous population. At the same time, it is difficult to see the pro-France side agreeing to prolong the application of the restricted electorate after 2018, given the influx of many pro-France supporters in recent years who, as French citizens, would expect the right to vote.

So in a sense, either choice, that of deferring a referendum as in the past, or proceeding to a referendum resulting in the rejection of independence, risks serious negative reactions and possibly violence. While it is impossible to predict the future, developments to date, outlined in Chapter 5 and 8, suggest that the French State will encourage all parties to agree to a referendum focused on a result that will be acceptable to all in the long-term. The stakes in ensuring stability in coming years by seeking to promote a successful, peaceful referendum are high.

A referendum, on what?

With the idea of deferring a referendum, or not holding one at all, ruled out by the May 2009 provincial election result, by late 2009 and early 2010 political debate began to focus on the *subject* of the referendum.

Thus, as set out in Chapter 5, pro-France leader Frogier shifted from a position advocating an early referendum to floating a proposal for an "in association with France" option in October 2009. He received a mixed response even from within the pro-France camp, the *Avenir Ensemble* supporting him with Gomès' *Calédonie Ensemble* preferring discussions on a more general idea of "shared sovereignty". The pro-independence group too were divided. Palika aligned itself more with Gomès' ideas, and the mainstream FLNKS chose not to make a public comment specifically on the "association" idea, and instead questioned the motives of the French state.

By January 2010, the French State acknowledged the growing importance of the terms of the referendum itself. President Nicolas Sarkozy exhorted both sides to hold discussions, so that the result of the vote "for self-determination" provided for by the Noumea Accord would translate into a result approved by "a very large majority of voters" (Sarkozy 2010a, and Chapter 8). As pointed out in Chapter 8, Sarkozy was vague and ambiguous as to the subject of the referendum. He had, earlier in his speech,

ruled out independence for the Overseas France, so his comments exhorting a result approved by a large majority suggests he was not expecting the vote to focus on an independence option. And yet the Organic Law implementing the Accord specifies a vote “on the accession to full sovereignty” (Titre IX), and pro-independence signatories expect that the independence option would be put.

The terms in which a referendum question is cast, and careful inclusive negotiation, will be the more critical, since the Organic Law provides for repeated votes, up to three, from 2014 to 2018, if the initial vote results in a “no” vote (Article 217). Three successive votes against independence over three years would conceivably heighten the potential for prolonged violence. No doubt Sarkozy calculated that it would therefore be preferable to pose a different question, in such a way as to receive an overwhelming endorsement the first time round.

Despite the flexible interpretations of some of the mainstream pro-independence coalition about what true independence and sovereignty mean (Chapter 5), not all pro-independence forces may be convinced to set aside the specific option of independence. For some pro-independence supporters, a vote on independence *per se* would alone be seen as fully implementing the spirit and letter of the Noumea Accord. Supporters of the new Labour Party would fall into this category, and that Party and the Union which forms its base have a record of violent disruption.

A further note of caution arises from the conclusion by one senior legal advisor to the French government by March 2011 that technically, given the Organic Law provisions for up to three referendums with associated specified time frames, a referendum could be held as late as 2023. He noted that this would entail an added complication of election of another Congress in 2019 (Christnacht 2011). This writer notes that such a further Congressional mandate was not foreseen by the Accord or Organic Law.

Options and risks for New Caledonia’s future

The Noumea Accord specifies that the final “vote will be concerned with the transfer to New Caledonia of the *régalien* [sovereign] responsibilities, the access to an international status of full responsibility, and the organization of citizenship into nationality” (Article 5). These matters will be the subject of debate and negotiation between the various parties.

By recommending its reporting responsibilities as Administering Authority from 2004, France has seemingly committed itself to working within the context of the UN decolonization provisions. The language of many of the pro-independence groups has also begun to centre on “decolonization” as opposed to “independence” (see Chapter 5). As noted in Chapter 7, relevant UN General Assembly Resolutions provides that a non-self-governing territory may reach a full measure of self-government in one of three ways: emergence as a sovereign independent state, free association with an independent state, or integration with a metropolitan state (for example, UNGA Resolution 1541 (XV) 1960). Within the Pacific region itself, there exist already all of these three plus numerous other models. Examples include fully independent states

(the independent Pacific island states), total integration in another state (Hawaii), attachment to another state while retaining significant autonomy (Norfolk Island, Marianas), and association (Cook Islands, Palau) (see Robert Aldrich, in Regnault and Fayaud 2008 p. 199; Firth 1989; New Pacific Review 2003).

For New Caledonia, using the UN decolonization framework as a basis for comparison, some of the options might include, in ascending degrees of retained links with France:

- formal independence. France's commitment to retain its Pacific collectivities, its economic support and careful management of grievances of pro-independence forces since 1988, recent voting patterns in New Caledonia, and ultimately France's control over immigration and law and order backed by civil and military power, reduce the likelihood of an independence scenario. In an independence outcome, substantial support by a number of donors, no doubt including France, would be required. The new state would be vulnerable to the same factors the other Pacific island countries face: reduced economic resources, inadequate defence forces, weak governance, shifting alliances, rapidly changing governments, and pressure from foreign benefactor governments. This outcome is not favoured by France. It would deliver new vulnerabilities to the region, negatively affecting security and economic development. On the basis of the Vanuatu experience, it could demand an input of economic support from Canberra, an idea unwelcome to Australia given Australian commitments elsewhere in the region.
- some kind of free association with France, as loosely mooted by Frogier, although perhaps under another name such as "partnership" in view of the tainted nature of this option under the Pisani proposal. Various models already exist in the Pacific region:
 - compact of free association such as Palau has with the US, with its own UN seat, and defence taken care of by the US for 50 years
 - compact of free association as in Federated State of Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands, which has its own UN seat, with defence taken care of by US
 - "in association" option of Cook Islands with New Zealand, with full participation in regional organizations but no UN seat. Freedom to vote to change its status
 - "commonwealth" option of the Northern Marianas with the US, or Niue and Tokelau with New Zealand, with no UN seat, no responsibility for foreign relations, and the status loosely of an unincorporated dependent territory

- A form of integration, perhaps either
 - federation within France. New Caledonia could become a federated “state” or province of France (see arguments on this possibility by Faberon, *L’idée fédérale en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, in Regnault and Fayaud 2008 Chapter 2). This would require amendment to the French constitution. New Caledonia would retain its rights acquired under the Noumea Accord, for example, to foreign relations with its immediate region, some civil aviation matters, etc.
 - entrenching the provisions of the Noumea Accord and the Organic Law so that the *status quo* at the time, i.e., 2018 or before, becomes permanent. This would mean a continued consultative collegial government, with ultimate majority (pro-France) votes on important legislation. Since the restricted electorate would be unlikely to continue, the government would be elected on a basis of proportional representation, with declining influence of the Kanak ethnic group over time.

(Note: A further theoretical option would be that of partition, under which conceivably the generally pro-independence Northern and Loyalty Island Provinces could attain full sovereignty; while the Southern Province, dominated by pro-France supporters, could remain with France. This option has been specifically ruled out by the Noumea Accord, which provided at its Article 5 that the results of any final referendum will apply globally to New Caledonia, spelling out that one part of New Caledonia cannot accede to full sovereignty or preserve different links with France on the basis of different results in different parts of the electorate.)

Each of the above options provides a basis for implementing the provisions of the Noumea Accord (Article 5) to focus on the five remaining **sovereign powers** (justice, public order, defence, currency and foreign affairs), **international status**, and **citizenship and nationality**. The way in which these issues might be handled is also guided by the Noumea Accord provision that “so long as the referendums provided for do not result in new political arrangements, then the political arrangements set in place by the 1998 Accord will remain in force, in its last iteration, without possibility of regression, this ‘irreversibility’ being constitutionally guaranteed” (Article 5). That is, New Caledonia will never revert to what it was before 1998; it will retain the powers transferred by 2018 under the Accord.

Under the Noumea Accord, it is assumed that all but the five *régalien* or **sovereign powers** would be transferred to New Caledonia before 2018 (even though experience to date shows considerable slippage in these transfers). Of the options set out above, New Caledonia would take over all five remaining sovereign powers in the independence option. France would retain all these powers under an integration option, although New Caledonia would retain those elements of foreign affairs that it received under the Noumea Accord (for example, regional representation, see Chapter 5). In the “in

association” option, negotiations would centre on elements of the remaining sovereign powers which might be traded, for example, responsibility for certain foreign relations and civil law and enforcement elements. Apart from these five powers specified in the Accord, for any non-independence scenario, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, important questions remain about the future responsibility for control over external immigration and mining, central issues which have been blurred in the Accord.

With respect to the access to **international status**, in all three options New Caledonia would retain the responsibilities it has already been accorded under the Accord to representation in regional organizations. Under the independence option, New Caledonia would clearly as an independent country take over all foreign affairs powers and gain full membership of international organizations such as the UN. Under the integration option, France would retain these responsibilities. Negotiations for an “in association” option can be expected to focus on the nature of New Caledonia’s regional relations and representation in regional and other bodies, i.e., factors such as whether New Caledonia could set up its own diplomatic representation in regional countries, and whether it would have delegations of its own as opposed to being subsumed in French delegations. A central question would be whether or not it could be a member of the UN, as are the Pacific island states in forms of association with the United States.

New Caledonia would clearly take over entire responsibility for **citizenship and nationality** questions in an independence option. For the other options, discussion of these questions is likely to be thorny, since it is here that the question of immigration from other parts of France, non-continuation of the restricted electorate beyond 2018, and the application of employment protection and preferences, would be addressed, all of which have been core elements of the Kanak pro-independence groups’ claims. And any negotiation will need to include questions of the control and ownership of mines (currently mainly in French hands), distribution of benefits from mining (especially between the North and the South), clearer delineation of powers over minerals and hydrocarbon resources, along with difficult sustainable environment issues.

In the integration option, New Caledonia would presumably retain those citizenship protections it has currently, and will have attained by 2018, such as employment protection for long-term residents, begging the question of continued application beyond 2018. France’s commitments to comply with UN decolonization principles also come into play. UN decolonization principles provide for equal status and rights of citizenship between the peoples of the erstwhile territory and the independent territory to which it is to become integrated (United Nations Resolution 1541 December 1960, Annex). But the Noumea Accord, by its “non regression” provision, ensures no turning back to the *status quo ante* for any of its provisions, including on citizenship questions.

Likewise, in an “in association” option, the status as at 2018 would be simply the starting point, suggesting difficult discussions about preserving the rights of longstanding New Caledonian residents over newcomers, and about the distinctions between New Caledonian citizenship and French nationality. France would also need to address implications for the non- reciprocal arrangements it has negotiated with the EU.

It is unlikely that pro-independence forces, who have sacrificed much on these particular issues, would agree to dispense with immigration controls, the restricted electorate and employment protection for long-term residents without significant progress in their other expectations (international status, but especially the mining dividend). Differences over these questions between newly arrived residents and longstanding Caldoche residents and the indigenous people; and between pro-France and pro-independence groups may be exacerbated. This would be a factor for ongoing instability.

In all but the independence option, it is likely the Euro would be speedily introduced, and that inflows of French settlers from other parts of France would continue and probably increase.

From all the foregoing, the most likely direction for the future would seem to be discussions centring on some kind of future “in association” with France. The violent history of the referendum issue and the expectations of the pro-independence group about a referendum, suggest that these discussions, and the holding of a referendum in coming years, are likely to be painstaking and sensitive processes, with risks of violence and disruption. The discussions initiated by the French authorities, in the March 2011 Colloquium on the Destinies of the Pacific Political Collectivities, were a start, albeit seeming to concentrate exclusively on sovereignty-within-France options.

Whatever the subject of the referendum, because of the sensitivities and potential for disturbance, France, and New Caledonian leaders, including FLNKS leaders like Paul Néaoutyine and Roch Wamytan, would benefit from keeping regional leaders informed, through the UN, PIF, and MSG mechanisms, about the processes under way.

Conclusion

France has earned a long and respected place in the South Pacific region. Its presence has been characterized variously by a sense of enquiry, mission and adventure; strategic interest, national pride and global power; the imposition and maintenance of its military weight; and more recently, commercial interest. In the past, France’s presence has brought strong elements of stability, but also some elements of instability, to the Pacific region.

This thesis has sought to identify the elements of risk to stability which remain.

The challenge for France is to respect its own commitments to its entities and the international community, and its responsibilities as a resident neighbour to regional governments and leaders, particularly as it handles difficult governance issues in French Polynesia, and the working out of a long-term status for New Caledonia acceptable to all of its people. France’s Pacific neighbours understand the complexities of this process, one with which they are themselves constantly grappling in their own ways. They will continue to welcome and support genuine, unflinching democratic effort on the part of France and its collectivities.

Appendix 1

Wording of Noumea Accord and 1999 Organic Law on Restricted Electorates

Relating to local (provincial and Congress) elections

Article 2.2.1 of the Noumea Accord:

“le corps électoral aux assemblées des provinces et au Congrès sera restreint : il sera réservé aux électeurs qui remplissaient les conditions pour voter au scrutin de 1998, à ceux qui, inscrits au tableau annexe, rempliront une condition de domicile de dix ans à la date de l’élection, ainsi qu’aux électeurs atteignant l’âge de la majorité pour la première fois après 1998 et qui, soit justifieront de dix ans de domicile en 1998, soit auront eu un parent remplissant les conditions pour être électeur au scrutin de la fin de 1998, soit, ayant eu un parent inscrit sur un tableau annexe justifieront d’une durée de domicile de dix ans en Nouvelle-Calédonie à la date de l’élection.”

“The electoral body for the assemblies of the provinces and the Congress will be restricted: it will be confined to voters who fulfilled the conditions to vote in the 1998 vote, to those who, registered in the annex table, would fulfil the residency requirement of ten years at the date of the election, as well as voters who have reached majority age for the first time after 1998 and who, either with ten years residency in 1998, or with a parent fulfilling the conditions to vote in the election at the end of 1998, or, having a parent registered on the annex table would be resident for ten years in New Caledonia at the date of the election.”

Article 188 of the 19 March 1999 Organic Law:

“Le congrès et les assemblées de province sont élus par un corps électoral composé des électeurs satisfaisant à l’une des conditions suivantes :

(a) Remplir les conditions pour être inscrits sur les listes électorales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie établies en vue de la consultation du 8 novembre 1998 ;

(b) Etre inscrits sur le tableau annexe et domiciliés depuis dix ans en Nouvelle-Calédonie à la date de l’élection au congrès et aux assemblées de province ;

(c) Avoir atteint l’âge de la majorité après le 31 octobre 1998 et soit justifier de dix ans de domicile en Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1998, soit avoir eu un de leurs parents remplissant les conditions pour être électeur au scrutin du 8 novembre 1998, soit avoir un de leurs parents inscrit au tableau annexe et justifier d’une durée de domicile de dix ans en Nouvelle-Calédonie à la date de l’élection.”

“The Congress and the provincial assemblies are elected by an electoral body composed of voters satisfying one of the following conditions :

- (a) Fulfilling conditions to be registered on the electoral role of New Caledonia established for the referendum of 8 November 1998;

- (b) Being registered on the annex table and resident for ten years in New Caledonia at the date of the election to the Congress and the provincial assemblies;
- (c) Having attained the age of majority after 31 October 1998 and either with ten years residence in New Caledonia in 1998, or having had one of their parents fulfilling the conditions to be a voter in the 8 November 1998 vote, or having one of their parents registered on the annex table and with ten years residence in New Caledonia at the date of the election.”

Relating to the final referendum(s)

Article 2.2.1 of the Noumea Accord :

“ Le corps électoral pour les consultations relatives à l’organisation politique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie intervenant à l’issue du délai d’application du présent accord (point 5) comprendra exclusivement : les électeurs inscrits sur les listes électorales aux dates des consultations électorales prévues au 5 et qui ont été admis à participer au scrutin prévu à l’article 2 de la loi référendaire, ou qui remplissaient les conditions pour y participer, ainsi que ceux qui pourront justifier que les interruptions dans la continuité de leur domicile en Nouvelle-Calédonie étaient dues à des raisons professionnelles ou familiales, ceux qui, de statut coutumier ou nés en Nouvelle-Calédonie, y ont eu le centre de leurs intérêts matériels et moraux et ceux qui ne sont pas nés en Nouvelle-Calédonie mais dont l’un des parents y est né et qui y ont le centre de leurs intérêts matériels et moraux.

“Pourront également voter pour ces consultations les jeunes atteignant la majorité électorale, inscrits sur les listes électorales, et qui, s’ils sont nés avant 1988 auront eu leur domicile en Nouvelle-Calédonie de 1988 à 1998 ou, s’ils sont nés après 1988, ont eu un de leurs parents qui remplissait ou aurait pu remplir les conditions pour voter au scrutin de la fin de 1998. Pourront également voter à ces consultations les personnes qui pourront justifier, en 2013, de vingt ans de domicile continu en Nouvelle-Calédonie.”

“The electoral body for the referendums on the political organization of New Caledonia at the end of the period of application of this agreement (Point 5) will include exclusively: voters registered on the electoral role at the dates of the referendums foreshadowed at 5 and who would be able to vote in the vote foreshadowed at Article 2 of the referendum law, or who fulfilled the conditions to vote in this vote, and those who could prove that interruptions to their continued residence in New Caledonia were due to professional or family reasons, those who, by customary status or born in New Caledonia, have the centre of the material and moral interests there, and those not born in New Caledonia but for whom one parent is born there and who has the centre of their material and moral interests there.

“Also able to vote in this vote in these referendums are young people of majority age, registered on the electoral role and who if born before 1988 would have their residence in New Caledonia from 1988 to 1998 or if born after 1988, have a parent fulfilling or who could fulfil conditions to vote in the vote at the end of 1998. Also able to vote in these referendums are people who can prove, in 2013, twenty years of continued residence in New Caledonia.”

Article 218 of the 19 March 1999 Organic Law:

“Sont admis à participer à la consultation les électeurs inscrits sur la liste électorale à la date de celle-ci et qui remplissent l'une des conditions suivantes :

- a) Avoir été admis à participer à la consultation du 8 novembre 1998 ;*
- b) N'étant pas inscrits sur la liste électorale pour la consultation du 8 novembre 1998, remplir néanmoins la condition de domicile requise pour être électeur à cette consultation ;*
- c) N'ayant pas pu être inscrits sur la liste électorale de la consultation du 8 novembre 1998 en raison du non-respect de la condition de domicile, justifier que leur absence était due à des raisons familiales, professionnelles ou médicales ;*
- d) Avoir eu le statut civil coutumier ou, nés en Nouvelle-Calédonie, y avoir eu le centre de leurs intérêts matériels et moraux ;*
- e) Avoir l'un de leurs parents né en Nouvelle-Calédonie et y avoir le centre de leurs intérêts matériels et moraux ;*
- f) Pouvoir justifier d'une durée de vingt ans de domicile continu en Nouvelle-Calédonie à la date de la consultation et au plus tard au 31 décembre 2014 ;*
- g) Etre nés avant le 1er janvier 1989 et avoir eu son domicile en Nouvelle-Calédonie de 1988 à 1998 ;*
- h) Etre nés à compter du 1er janvier 1989 et avoir atteint l'âge de la majorité à la date de la consultation et avoir eu un de leurs parents qui satisfaisait aux conditions pour participer à la consultation du 8 novembre 1998.*

Les périodes passées en dehors de la Nouvelle-Calédonie pour accomplir le service national, pour suivre des études ou une formation ou pour des raisons familiales, professionnelles ou médicales ne sont pas, pour les personnes qui y étaient antérieurement domiciliées, interruptives du délai pris en considération pour apprécier la condition de domicile.”

“Those allowed to vote in the referendum are voters registered on the electoral role at the date of the referendum and who fulfil one of the following conditions :

- a) Having been able to vote in the referendum of 8 November 1998;
- b) Not being registered on the electoral role for the referendum of 8 November 1998, but fulfilling the residence condition required to vote in that referendum;
- c) Not having been able to be registered on the electoral role for the referendum of 8 November 1998 because of not fulfilling the residence requirement, by proving that the absence was due to family, professional or medical reasons;
- d) Having had customary civil status or, born in New Caledonia, having there the centre of their material and moral interests;
- e) Having one of their parents born in New Caledonia and having there the centre of their material and moral interests;
- f) Being able to prove a continual residence of twenty years in New Caledonia at the date of the referendum and at the latest to 31 December 2014;
- g) Born before 1 January 1989 with residence in New Caledonia from 1988 to 1998;
- h) Born after 1 January 1989 and having reached majority age at the date of the referendum and having had one parent fulfilling conditions to participate in the referendum of 8 November 1998;

Periods passed outside New Caledonia to complete national service, to pursue studies or training, or for family, professional or medical reasons are not, for persons with prior residence, deemed to interrupt the period taken into consideration to fulfill the residence requirement.”

The following text is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a multi-paragraph document, possibly a report or a letter, but the content cannot be discerned due to the low contrast and blurriness of the scan. The text is organized into several distinct blocks, likely representing paragraphs, but the specific words and sentences are unreadable.

Appendix 2
Principal Statutory Measures and Proposals – New Caledonia and French Polynesia

Year	Title	Key Features	Status
New Caledonia			
1957	Defferre Law	Administrative autonomy. Territorial Assembly based on universal suffrage, Council of Government of 6-8 ministers	Law 56-619, 23 June 1956 Decree, 22 July 1957
1963	Jacquinet Law	Reduced autonomy. Removed title of Ministers; Governor the unequivocal head of territorial services	Law 21 Dec 1963
1969	Billotte Law	Reduced autonomy. Local municipalities replaced by communes run by Paris; confined control over tax exemption for minerals, and other controls over minerals, to French state	Laws (3) 3 Jan 1969
1976	Stirn Statute	Increased autonomy. High Commissioner shares control of government with Assembly. Members of government council have responsibilities.	Law 28 Dec 1976
1979	Loi Dijoud	Weakened autonomy. Minimum threshold 7.5% for parties to win seats in assembly. Council of Government elected by majority rather than proportional vote; Council can dissolve Assembly	Law 79-407, 24 May 1979
1984	Lemoine Law	Internal autonomy. Referendum within 5 years Allows distinctive identity signs. Local President of the Territorial Assembly who controlled administration Consultative mine and credit councils; Assembly including customary representatives	Law 6 Sept 1984
1985	Pisani Plan	Independence-in-association Referendum July 1985, if yes: transfer of sovereignty January 1986 Citizenship of new state for all Non-Kanaks rent from traditional Kanak owners Retention of French nationality France to provide defence, expertise, funding for development and training	Law 23 Aug 1985 Not implemented
1985	Fabius Plan	Reduced autonomy. Introduced regionalization. French High Commissioner takes on executive power aided by smaller Council. French Government takes ordinance issuing powers. Customary Council created Referendum on independence-in-association to be held by 31 December 1987	Law 23 Aug 1985
1986	Pons I Statute	3-year residence rule for self-determination vote in September 1987; powers of regions weakened; new Land Agency created	Law 17 July 1986

1988	Pons II Statute	Revised demarcation of regions, more autonomy Executive Council of 10 members, High Commissioner participates without right of vote. Territory freely determines identity signs	Law 22 Jan 1988 Never implemented
1988	Statut Rocard	Matignon/Oudinot Accords Created three provinces, each with assembly; a Congress including representatives from the provinces, a Consultative customary council; referendum on self-determination in 1998 by restricted electorate of voters resident in 1988 and descendants; direct rule from Paris for one year; French State takes control of Land Agency and French High Commissioner assumes executive control	Law 9 Nov 1988
1998	Noumea Accord	Collegial government and Congress based on proportional vote in provinces by one restricted electorate; phased handover of all but five sovereign powers by 2018; up to 3 votes between 2014-2018 on these powers, on international status and on citizenship, by different restricted electorate; work for agreed identity signs; protection of employment for defined New Caledonian citizens	Agreement to 2018 Organic Law No 99-209 19 Mar 1999

French Polynesia

1957	Defferre Law	Application of the Defferre Law to French Polynesia (not now EFO), providing more autonomy	Law 56-619 23 June 1956
1958	Ordinance	Reduced autonomy and local freedoms Reaffirmed pre-eminence of French Governor Removed individual ministerial responsibility in favour of collegial responsibility Reduced Governing Council from 6-8 to 5 members	Ordinance 58-1337 23 Dec 1958
1977	Management Autonomy Law	Some increased autonomy in management Reinstates Vice-President of Governing Council with some collegial management powers French Governor becomes High Commissioner with executive power	Law 77-772 12 July 1977
1984	Law	More internal autonomy, executive power devolving to the Assembly rather than French High Commissioner; Tahitian flag and official language Local President created. French State sovereign responsibilities but some shared responsibilities, return to territory of some responsibilities (post and telegraphs, secondary education) taken by State in 1960s	Law 84-820 6 Sept 1984
1990	Law	Modifies internal autonomy More powers to Territory over direct foreign investment budget; exploration and exploitation of seabed, marine and subterranean resources; and regional relations; consultative committee on immigration and foreign residence	Law 90-612 12 July 90
1996	Organic Law	Statute of autonomy	Law 96-313

2004	Organic Law	Reinforces 1996 Law after constitutional review	12 April 1996 Law 2004-193 27 Feb 2004
2007	Organic Law	Modifies Organic Law as it applies to election	Law 2007-223 21 Feb 2007
2007	Law	Modifies the February 2007 Law applying to elections	Law 2007-1720 7 Dec 2007

Sources: Faberon and Ziller, 2007; Henningham, 1992; www.legifrance.gouv.fr

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed description of the experimental procedures and the instruments used.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the study. It includes a series of tables and graphs that illustrate the findings. The data shows a clear trend in the relationship between the variables studied.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings. It highlights the potential applications of the research in various fields and the need for further investigation.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study. It summarizes the key findings and provides a final statement on the significance of the work.

6. The sixth part of the document includes a list of references and a list of figures. The references cite the works of other researchers in the field, and the figures provide a visual representation of the data.

7. The seventh part of the document contains a list of appendices. These appendices provide additional information and data that are not included in the main text.

8. The eighth part of the document includes a list of tables. These tables provide a detailed breakdown of the data and are essential for understanding the results of the study.

9. The ninth part of the document contains a list of figures. These figures are used to illustrate the data and to show the relationship between the variables.

10. The tenth part of the document includes a list of appendices. These appendices provide additional information and data that are not included in the main text.

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