

*Keeping the Tricolor Flying:
The French Pacific into the 1990s*

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In 1989, as France celebrates the bicentenary of the French Revolution, much will be heard of the revolution's ideals—*Liberté, égalité, fraternité* (Liberty, equality, fraternity). Yet on the other side of the world, in the South Pacific, France's critics will be tempted to point to the gap between these ideals and the realities of the French presence. The French Pacific territories have democratic institutions, but France has not always championed liberty in the region. In Vanuatu in the 1970s, local French officials obstructed the nationalist campaign for unity and independence. In New Caledonia, France has been confronted by the demands of the Kanak nationalist movement, representing the minority Kanak community, for its version of national liberty. The conflict has involved two bouts of unrest, in 1984–1985 and early 1988, which left more than fifty dead and brought the territory to the brink of civil war. Instead of promoting social equality, France has produced sharp inequalities in both New Caledonia and French Polynesia. And rather than promoting fraternity, French policies in New Caledonia, and nuclear testing in French Polynesia, have sparked strong opposition. For example, Fiji's representative told the General Assembly of the United Nations in October 1988 that France "must heed the collective and growing opposition of the peoples of the South Pacific to its continued nuclear testing and cease all future testing" (*FT*, 17 Oct 1988). In late 1985 the governments of the region condemned France when they learned that French secret agents had been responsible for the bombing in Auckland Harbour (which killed one crew member) of the *Rainbow Warrior*, the Greenpeace vessel that had been about to sail to Moruroa Atoll to protest the tests.

Against this background, France's relations with most of the countries of the South Pacific were difficult during the early and mid-1980s, espe-

cially while the government of Jacques Chirac held office, from March 1986 to May 1988. More recently, the style, policies, and image of France in the region have been modified following the coming to power in June 1988 of a socialist government under Michel Rocard. Two handshakes symbolize the changes. In late June 1988, the leader of the pro-independence Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS, National Kanak Socialist Liberation Front) in New Caledonia, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, clasped hands with his bitter opponent, Jacques Lafleur, president of the loyalist pro-France Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR, Rally for Caledonia in the Republic). After the unrest and deaths of early 1988, this marked the signing of an accord, negotiated by Prime Minister Rocard, that permitted New Caledonia's return to an uneasy peace. The second handshake took place in late August 1988, during a flying visit by Rocard to New Caledonia. Pausing along a reception line, Rocard studiously injected warmth into his meeting with David O'Leary, the Australian consul-general in Noumea. This signaled a new cordiality in French relations with Australia, the "giant" among the member countries of the South Pacific Forum, and with other countries of the region (*Australian*, 22 Aug 1988; *Age*, 27 Aug 1988; see also Richardson 1988).

This apparent transformation should be kept in perspective. The new French government is more moderate and constructive in its Pacific policies, and more temperate in its language, than its combative, rightwing predecessor. Yet French policy in the region has displayed strong continuities, despite variations in style of government or in policy emphasis. French governments have remained committed to regular nuclear testing in French Polynesia for an indefinite period. They have varied in their handling of New Caledonia, but all have sought to take account of settler interests and to ensure that French influence endures. They have consistently sought to uphold France's strategic, political, cultural, and economic presence in the region.

France regards as vital its overseas possessions, its independent nuclear deterrent, and its strong leverage in most of its former colonies, especially francophone Africa (Chipman 1985; Bernstein 1987). The French view is that these attributes ensure France's international prestige and influence; without them France would slip to the rank of middle power, consistent with its size and relatively modest economic strength. France's widely scattered South Pacific territories—New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna—number three among its eleven overseas possessions, located in the North Atlantic, the West Indies, South America, the

Indian Ocean, and the Antarctic, as well as the Pacific.¹ In the South Pacific, global concerns, and especially France's commitment to an independent nuclear deterrent, do much to shape French policy. Within this broad framework, the territories and the other aspects of the French Pacific presence are of considerable significance to France. The three territories have a combined total population of less than 350,000 but cost the French taxpayer more than A\$1450 million a year (Table 1). France is likely to invest further and to act firmly to protect its South Pacific presence, in the belief that the region has increasing importance.²

The French presence has important implications for regional stability and interregional relations. Many regional observers regard France as primarily a European power. They have been skeptical about whether a continuing French presence in the South Pacific is justified, since the other European powers (and the formerly British settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand) have relinquished their possessions there. They have argued that French policies, for example during the decolonization of Vanuatu and on nuclear testing and New Caledonia, have contributed to instability. France would prefer to subordinate local pressures in its Pacific territories to its global interests and aims. However, as recent developments in New Caledonia demonstrate, these pressures, strengthened to a modest extent by regional influences, have their own logic and momentum, which make it necessary for France to take them into account.

In this paper I review circumstances in late 1988 in the three French Pacific territories, discuss the nuclear testing program, examine France's relations with the region, and discuss prospects into the early 1990s. How far has the moderate, constructive approach of the Rocard government reduced the concerns of the South Pacific governments, especially by contributing to a resolution in New Caledonia? What are the probable variations in the manner and intensity with which concerns will be expressed, especially as a result of a more active French diplomacy in Fiji and elsewhere in the central South Pacific? And are the broad continuities in French interests and policies likely to outweigh the new style and emphasis of the Rocard government?

NEW CALEDONIA: AN UNEASY PEACE

In a whirlwind visit to New Caledonia in late August 1988, Prime Minister Rocard concluded an agreement between France, the FLNKS, and its loyalist anti-independence opponents, based on the Matignon Accord of late

Table 1. French Government Spending on the Pacific Territories, 1986

| Territory | Population | Land area (sq km) | Sea area (sq km) | Spending in millions* | | | Military spending as percent of total |
|------------------|------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------|--|
| | | | | French francs | Australian dollars† | us dollars† | |
| New Caledonia | 160,000 | 19,000 | 1,740,000 | 2,351.2 | 470.0 | 375 | 13.4 |
| French Polynesia | 170,000 | 4,000 | 5,030,000 | 4,797.0 | 959.4 | 770 | 60.0 |
| Wallis & Futuna | 13,500 | 124 | 300,000 | 120.0 | 24.0 | 19 | — |
| TOTAL | | | | 7,268.0 | 1,453.4 | 1,160 | |

Source: Assemblée Nationale 1987a, 39, 48, 62.

*Figures on spending are for total direct spending by French government departments; additional funds and benefits flow indirectly to the territories. Figures are rounded to the nearest 100,000 francs. In September 1988 A\$1 was equal to approximately 5 French francs.

†Approximate equivalents.

June. The agreement provides for a referendum in ten years, the division of the territory into three provinces, and a massive injection of development funds to reduce the disadvantages of the Kanak (Melanesian) community. A final consensus had been hard to reach (Carton 1988), the main obstacles being FLNKS demands for further concessions and bitter discord within the FLNKS about whether the nationalist movement should compromise with France. Meanwhile, the RPCR resisted any amendments to the Matignon Accord. The key demand of the FLNKS was that in the referendum planned for 1998 only those born in the territory should vote. This would all but guarantee the pro-independence result favored by the Kanak community by disenfranchising French metropolitan, Polynesian, and other immigrants, almost all of whom oppose independence (Tjibaou 1988). Because of loyalist pressure, French domestic political considerations, constitutional obstacles, and questions of democratic principle, the French government would not countenance this change. The government insisted on the Matignon formula, which restricted the referendum franchise to those already resident in the territory in November 1988, when a French national referendum would endorse the settlement. To reassure the FLNKS that it *is* implementing a program of decolonization, the French government has offered additional concessions and guarantees, which seek to ensure a much greater participation by Kanaks in the administration and the modern economic sector. They are also designed to encourage the departure before 1998 of those non-Kanaks who are merely seeking a life in the sun, rather than being committed to the future of New Caledonia. The government is considering increasing income taxes, shifting the administrative capital from Noumea to the interior, and reducing retirement benefits for former metropolitan French who retire in New Caledonia (Fraser 1988; Walls 1988a).

The settlement has been criticized by hard-liners on both sides in New Caledonia (Uregei 1988; George 1988; *SMH*, 18 July, 12 Sept 1988). However, FLNKS President Jean-Marie Tjibaou said in late July that despite many difficulties, he believed that the "objective conditions" in the territory were working in the direction of a peaceful resolution. Neither side wanted a return to the bloodshed and chaos of earlier in the year, and the leadership of both sides believed that the proposals of the French government offered them opportunities. The first big test for Rocard's approach came with the referendum on the Matignon Accord on 6 November 1988. Overall, 80 percent of participating voters in metropolitan France and its

overseas possessions voted yes in support of the plan, compared with 57 percent in New Caledonia. Participation rates were disappointing: only 37 percent of the overall electorate, and only 63 percent in New Caledonia, turned out at the polls, compared with the normal national and territorial turnout of around 80 percent. The turnout was fair to good in the Kanak majority areas, with overwhelming yes votes. However, in the southern electoral division, including Noumea and nearby municipalities, where most of the population is loyalist, the vote against was 60.8 percent, with a turnout of 65.3 percent (*Nouvelles*, 7 Nov 1988).

Assuming that France fulfills its pledges, the mainstream of the FLNKS is confident that the Rocard plan offers an opportunity to build a consensus in favor of independence over the next few years. In order for the independence movement to increase its credibility and take advantage of the opportunity, Tjibaou and his colleagues plan to reorganize the unwieldy FLNKS coalition. They will seek to reduce the influence of the coalition's ultramilitant, radical fringe, while increasing that of Tjibaou's Union Calédonienne, the largest and most moderate of the groups that make up the FLNKS. The FLNKS will work toward a much greater integration of Kanaks into the economic and administrative mainstream, a reduction of the problem of unemployment and delinquency among young Kanaks, and a demonstration to non-Kanaks that it is possible for the various communities to work together, in the hope of bringing a change of viewpoint among some of the loyalists.

On the face of it, the nationalist movement risks defeat in the 1998 referendum. The movement's shift to violent protest in the late 1980s expressed its frustration at not being able to gain independence through the ballot box. At present Kanaks constitute only about 45 percent of the population, and only some 40 percent of the electorate because of non-registration and a high proportion of their population below voting age. In addition, around 20 percent of Kanaks have so far opposed independence, and support for independence in the other communities has been negligible. Despite these obstacles, FLNKS analysts expect that the FLNKS will have an even chance in the 1998 referendum, given the exclusion from the vote of post-1988 immigrants. They have identified a longer-term trend for some non-Kanaks to emigrate from New Caledonia each year in search of better economic prospects elsewhere. The numbers are small, but they believe that the cumulative total after a decade will be significant. They also expect other loyalists unable or unwilling to adjust to changing

circumstances to depart, and hope for a change in view by some non-Kanaks, especially in the small Asian communities (Tjibaou 1988; Fraser 1988; UC 1988). They were encouraged by the voting patterns in the November referendum: of those who took part, most European loyalists voted no, while most loyalists from the other communities voted yes (*SMH*, 12 Nov 1988, 34).

For its part, the leadership of the RPCR is confident that account will be taken of loyalist interests, and accordingly has been ready to compromise, although it is clear from the results of the November 1988 referendum that many rank-and-file loyalists have strong reservations about the plan. The leaders of the party regard the centrist Rocard government as fairer and more neutral than the socialist government that sought to initiate reforms from 1981 to 1986 (Martin 1988). Most loyalists have grudgingly concluded that they need to take some account of the demands of the FLNKS and to remedy the disadvantages of the Melanesian community. The violence and unrest of early 1988 showed that the Chirac government had failed in its attempt to smash the nationalist movement. The FLNKS lacks the capacity to win a decisive victory in a colonial war against France (Walls 1988*b*), but it can create extensive disruption, upsetting the economy, discouraging investment, and making everyday life tense and difficult. In the longer term, it could raise to an unacceptable level the financial, political, and other costs of hanging on (Houbert 1985). Meanwhile, the intensity of repressive measures against Kanak militance is limited by French domestic and international opinion. Within New Caledonia, a particular constraint on repression consists of the attitudes of the loyalist minority of Melanesians, a group vital to the loyalists' argument that their cause has multiracial legitimacy. In late May 1988, Melanesian loyalist leaders told their white RPCR colleagues that their continuing adherence to the loyalist cause was questionable in view of Chirac's Rambo-style handling of the Ouvea affair. They complained trenchantly that the rescue of the hostages held by FLNKS militants in a cave on Ouvea was cynically timed in an effort to gain electoral advantage in the second round of the French presidential elections, and that the heavy casualty toll might have been avoided had negotiations continued. Their bitterness intensified when official investigations confirmed that some of the Kanak dead had been killed after surrendering.

The RPCR leadership believes that the settlement based on the Matignon Accord offers the loyalists a chance to consolidate their position,

not least because, with the territory divided into three jurisdictions, they will control the rich southern province, including the main urban center—Noumea and its suburbs—where most of the non-Kanaks live. Many RPCR supporters are dismissive of the Kanaks' distinctive culture and identity, and believe that in due course the independence movement will fragment. They believe that if the Kanaks are integrated into the administrative and economic mainstream, then most of them will become more conservative and pro-French, and less assertive of their identity. The result would be either that most Kanaks will vote against independence in the 1998 referendum, or, although less likely, that a conservative form of independence, acceptable to the non-Kanaks, would be negotiated (Maresca 1988; Fraser 1988; *FEER*, 30 June 1988).

The French government is content to keep its options open while seeking to retain the confidence of both sides. Rocard's appointee as government envoy and high commissioner, Bernard Grasset, who arrived in July 1988, is a man open to dialogue and keen to arbitrate fairly between the rival blocs (Grasset 1988). In France, New Caledonia attracts only sporadic attention, and many other issues rank higher on the political agenda. The disturbances in April, May, and June of 1988, and above all the Ouvea affair, were a salutary shock. They discredited the combative policy of the Chirac government, demonstrating the necessity for a conciliatory, even-handed approach that would redress the legitimate grievances of the Kanaks. Against this background, the Rocard government has secured broad acceptance in France of both the Matignon Accord and its policy for New Caledonia. Both Chirac and Bernard Pons (Chirac's minister for Overseas Departments and Territories) at first supported the new approach, although they later qualified their stance. Their *Rassemblement Pour la République* (RPR Rally for the Republic) party called on its supporters to abstain from voting in the November referendum, even though the RPR's ally in New Caledonia, the RPCR, was supporting a yes vote. This policy, which took advantage of voter weariness after six previous polls from May to November 1988, contributed to the low overall participation rate.

Despite this hedging, Rocard's achievement has been striking, although it may not prove enduring: previously the handling of New Caledonia had been a party political issue in France, with the adversaries more interested in scoring points than in comprehending the New Caledonian problem or contributing to its resolution (Satineau 1987). Rocard's government will

maintain its pragmatic middle-of-the road approach, both for philosophical reasons and because the success of its New Caledonian policy depends on its broad acceptance in both France and New Caledonia. The Socialist party, which supports Rocard's stance, encompasses various currents of thinking, but, while in office from 1981 to 1986, its center of gravity shifted right, with pragmatic political concerns taking precedence over grand principle (Mazey and Newman 1987). Meanwhile President François Mitterrand's continued high standing depends on his maintaining a moderate stance. He would regard progress toward a lasting compromise in New Caledonia, based on a broad consensus, as an important achievement of his second term in office.

"Decolonisation within the framework of French institutions" was how Rocard presented his government's program during his August visit to New Caledonia (Walls 1988c), a message apparently intended to reassure the independence movement that independence was really on its way. But in early July, Rocard stated that his personal hope was that in 1998 the Kanaks would vote to stay French (*SMH*, 30 July 1988). Meanwhile the French high commissioner has said that in 1998 "all formulas will be open" for New Caledonia's constitutional future (Grasset 1988). French officials argue that focusing on probable voting strengths some years hence is raising a false issue, because an outcome of 50 percent plus one for a particular solution, with the rest of the voters bitterly opposed, would not permit an enduring, peaceful resolution. They argue that France's main task in New Caledonia is to help develop a broad consensus on the territory's future, no matter what the nature of that future.

FLNKS leaders are guardedly confident that a form of independence will result from the Rocard plan. They argue that in any case, in the absence of other realistic options, going along with the plan will bring benefits to the Kanak community and permit the nationalist movement to work constructively toward independence. Some officials and commentators see independence as inevitable in the longer term, whether achieved peacefully through the present plan, or more abruptly after further disruption and violence.

Other outcomes remain possible. In discussion in August 1988, a senior French official raised the example of the French Indian Ocean island of Réunion. He said continued integration with France had become widely accepted there since a push for independence led by the Réunion Communist party some years ago had lost momentum, and suggested that some-

thing similar could happen in New Caledonia. Meanwhile, scholars working on France's overseas possessions have suggested that New Caledonia (and French Polynesia) could follow the pattern of the other overseas possessions, with autonomist and pro-independence pressures being checked by increased funding and open access to France for work and education (Aldrich and Connell n.d.). However, opportunities in France are fewer than previously, and travel costs from the Pacific are higher than from the other overseas possessions. More important, the indigenous ethnic groups in both New Caledonia and French Polynesia have a clear sense of identity as a basis for nationalist aspirations, compared with the ethnically diverse populations, in some instances entirely immigrant in origin, in the other possessions.

The loyalists regard a partition of the territory as a "safety-hatch," to quote a prominent loyalist, should the Rocard plan and the resulting referendum fail to work out to their satisfaction. The no vote in the southern electoral division in the November 1988 referendum showed the strength of loyalist reservations about coming to terms with the Kanaks. Various possible solutions have been discussed, ranging from giving Noumea a special status akin to that of Hong Kong, to keeping the rich southern province French while permitting the rest to become independent (see, e.g., *Groupe* 1987). Partition has some precedents in the history of French decolonization: Mayotte remained part of France when the Comores became independent, and local French officials tried to separate Espiritu Santo and Tanna from the rest of Vanuatu in 1979–1980 (Beasant 1984). The partition of New Caledonia could be supported by a French government under certain circumstances, although it is clear that dividing a single main island, even in a relatively sparsely populated territory, is less practicable than separating one island from others in a group. Assuming that the nationalist movement would contest a partition, the French electorate could tire of costs and trouble in a tiny territory on the opposite side of the world. The rescue of the Ouvea hostages, which Chirac ordered a couple of days before the final round of the presidential elections, did little to assist his efforts to defeat Mitterrand, and may have harmed them. Well-informed French contacts said in July–August 1988 that if present efforts to achieve a lasting consensus aborted, then any French government, whether right or left, could well seek to resolve the matter summarily by granting a form of independence endorsed by a national referendum. One added that this approach would be similar to that finally adopted—by a rightwing French government—for Algeria.

Although partition or other scenarios remain possible, prospects are fair for at least some months of peace, during which the peoples of New Caledonia can seek to work out their future together. Resentment and bitterness run deep; nationalist and loyalist perceptions of where the plan should lead are contradictory; minor incidents have continued to take place; a majority of loyalists and many nationalists have reservations about the plan; and an ongoing threat to peace and cooperation is posed by extremists on both sides. At any time, as a result of one or two incidents, the situation could deteriorate rapidly. However, most people on both sides would prefer to avoid further violence and would like to reach an enduring consensus. The new French government has so far been successful in obtaining the cooperation of the leadership of both blocs and an overall majority of the population of the territory. The settlement negotiated by Rocard will face several hurdles, beginning with the elections to the new provinces in 1989, and may not run its full course of ten years, but should provide a breathing space.

FRENCH POLYNESIA: TROUBLES AHEAD IN THE NUCLEAR TERRITORY?

Despite the deep divisions in New Caledonia, several French officials and academics have suggested in recent discussions that French Polynesia could present France with more problems over the next few years. As well as having at least fair prospects for an enduring political settlement, New Caledonia has some economic potential based on nickel and other minerals, agriculture and grazing, and tourism. French Polynesia, in contrast, has a chronically dependent economy, meager economic potential, and severe social problems.

The economy of the territory has been skewed by the impact of the establishment of the nuclear testing sites on the outlying atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa, along with a support base on Hao Atoll and headquarters and support facilities in Papeete, the capital of the territory. In addition to spending associated with the testing program, France has injected extra funds to encourage local acceptance. France spends nearly A\$1000 million on the territory—more than twice as much as it spends on New Caledonia—although French Polynesia's population is only slightly larger (see Table 1). Most of the extra spending is linked directly or indirectly to the testing program. French Polynesia lacks the resources and potential to cover the costs of its present services and infrastructure, or to sustain

present standards of living. Seabed mining could one day bring in good returns, but won't be feasible until early next century, if then, and would require massive investment. The territory's per capita gross domestic product is higher than New Zealand's, and much higher than that of its independent Pacific Island neighbors, but the high average obscures sharp internal inequalities (Léontieff 1987; Assemblée Nationale 1987a; Shineberg 1986; Greilsamer 1987).

Before testing began, French Polynesia could hope to balance its trade and budget and was not heavily dependent on metropolitan France. In 1961, exports covered 70 percent of the cost of imports, but by the early 1970s this ratio had slumped to around 10 percent, and has been even lower since (Léontieff 1987, 3-4). The spending associated with the testing program also accelerated the already strong trend, found elsewhere in the region, for people from the poor, isolated outer islands to migrate to the capital, Papeete. Although the trend slowed in the 1980s, over 70 percent of the territory's population now lives on Tahiti, whereas only 50 percent lived there in 1951 (Deschamps and Guiart 1957, 51-52; Shineberg 1986, 157-158). Compared with neighboring Polynesian countries, French Polynesia has grave social problems: slum areas fringe Papeete, and prostitution and petty crime are prevalent. Sharp inequalities in the distribution of wealth are evident, and, as in other South Pacific countries, unemployment rates are high, with poor employment prospects for young people. The tensions in French Polynesian society were reflected in both the hotel strike and riots of late 1983 and the rioting of October 1987. The latter, which left central Papeete looking like a war zone, began when paramilitary police set out to disperse a dock workers' picket line. The incident followed several months of industrial trouble over plans to reduce, as an economy measure, the number of local jobs associated with the testing program. The striking workers were supported by unemployed youths in a battle with police, and then the disturbances spread through the town (*Realités*, Nov-Dec 1987; *PIM*, Dec 1987, 11).

Despite these problems, the French position remains strong. France contained autonomist and pro-independence pressures in the 1940s and 1950s, in part by dubious means, and in the 1958 referendum over 64 percent of the participants voted for the territory to remain part of the French Republic. Special programs, initiated in response to the 1987 rioting, are providing extra jobs and some cheap housing, and France plans further measures to alleviate social problems. Polynesian traditions and language remain firmly rooted, and many French Polynesians regard their pride in

their heritage as compatible with close connections between the territory and France. Extensive ethnic intermixing has taken place, many French settlers have Polynesian wives, and an elite of part-Polynesians—"demis"—are prominent in business, politics, and administration. The more full-blooded Polynesians, who constitute more than two-thirds of the population, are reasonably well represented in politics and hold some middle-ranking administrative and managerial positions. The notion of Polynesian identity is generally inclusive of all those with some Polynesian ancestry, and sharp political or cultural discontinuities are mostly lacking.

Only some 15 to 20 percent of the electorate has voted for parties that unequivocally support independence and oppose nuclear testing, and only four of the forty-one members of the Territorial Assembly take a clear antinuclear and pro-independence stance. However, concern over testing is more widespread, and the Protestant church, to which 55 percent of the population belongs, is strongly opposed. The majority of Polynesians are aware that additional funds flow to the territory as a result of the testing program, and many accept the argument that only French spending has permitted Tahiti's infrastructure and services to attain a higher standard than those of neighboring independent states. Moreover the Léontieff government, which came to power in November 1987, generally takes a cautious stance. The government represents a spectrum of parties united mainly by their wish for power, by personal associations that cut across party divisions, and by their dislike of Gaston Flosse, formerly the dominant figure in the territory's politics. The government's minority of more radical supporters of independence feel obliged to tread carefully in order to have some influence from the inside. The government supports the "Léontieff Plan" of late 1987, which calls on France to invest more funds to improve French Polynesia's economic self-reliance, in a long-term program to prepare for when testing is wound down (Léontieff 1987). This stance, while favoring the eventual cessation of testing, accepts that it will continue for some time yet and assumes that a high level of French aid should continue.

The change of government in France did not lessen France's commitment to its testing program. French representatives have indicated that testing will continue indefinitely, notwithstanding the Léontieff plan. They continue to state that the tests are essential to French security and involve no health or environmental risks. French prestige comes first. This helps explain why Brice Lalonde, a former Greenpeace campaigner against French atmospheric testing, and now France's minister for the

environment, has said that the underground tests do not cause environmental problems (*SMH*, 4 June 1988, 23; *CT*, 30 July 1988, 4).

Neither is progress in superpower arms limitation likely to bring early changes to French policy. On the contrary, France believes it should do more to provide nuclear security for Western Europe, in view of reduced American strength and what could be a lessened American commitment (see *SMH*, 23 Dec 1987, 27 Feb 1988). France regards deterrence as the "irreplacable guarantee of peace in Europe" (Rocard 1988, 66). Great progress in superpower arms limitation would be required before France would consider winding down its nuclear arsenal. Superpower agreement on a comprehensive test ban would put pressure on France to suspend its tests. But France has consistently argued that the possession of its own deterrent, tested at its own sites, provides an essential independence from the superpowers, along with the ultimate guarantee of French security. France could possibly even continue its underground tests, despite a superpower test ban. Earlier, despite a superpower agreement to stop, it continued atmospheric testing until faced with a definitive prohibition order from the International Court of Justice (Booker 1987). Unless the superpowers conclude the difficult task of negotiating a comprehensive test ban, and maybe even then, France is likely to continue testing, while ignoring suggestions that the tests be shifted to metropolitan France or to Nevada in the United States.

Despite the testing, French Polynesia and especially Tahiti retain an idyllic image in the popular mind. But French observers are concerned by the potential for heightened racial tensions in a society formerly presented as a model of pluriethnic harmony, notwithstanding underlying tensions. They are equally apprehensive about the potential for increased strikes, riots, disturbances, gang violence, and crime, and possibly also for violence by some of the tiny but ultramilitant radical parties that operate on the fringe of the political system. They lack the confidence that France can do more than merely alleviate some of the symptoms of the underlying problems.

In the longer term, French Polynesia's social and economic problems could strengthen antitesting and pro-independence pressure (O'Callaghan 1988). Whereas in New Caledonia, France has a political ballast in the form of a majority settler population, such a ballast does not exist in French Polynesia, where ethnic Polynesians form the majority. The Polynesians are also economically disadvantaged, relative to the European,

Chinese, and mixed-race segments of the population. Accordingly the nationalist movement, which already has a sound base and some capable leaders, could grow rapidly in strength in certain circumstances. However, the Rocard government could go some way in response to demands for greater autonomy or independence, while maintaining a strong commitment to the testing program. During the mid-1980s the then president of the territory, Gaston Flosse, suggested on several occasions that French Polynesia's constitutional status should become like that of the Cook Islands, which is a sovereign state in free association with New Zealand. A possible longer-term outcome would be a form of independence-in-association, similar to that proposed for New Caledonia by the Fabius government in early 1985, that would permit continued testing after "independence" in return for a guarantee of continued massive funding. Such an arrangement could be facilitated because in 1964 the territorial government ceded possession of the testing sites to the French state (*Dépêche*, 27 June 1986, 19-20; *PIM*, March 1964, 18).

WALLIS AND FUTUNA: THE CINDERELLA TERRITORY

France's other possession in the Polynesian cultural region is the small territory of Wallis and Futuna, which lies in the central South Pacific about an hour's flight northeast of Fiji. Regional attention has been directed to Wallis and Futuna only briefly in recent years, during the short-lived state of emergency declared in late 1986. The incident was an overreaction, characteristic of the Chirac era, to a conflict between the French state, anxious to uphold its authority, and the traditional "customary" authorities on Wallis, who wanted the second-ranking French official in the territory expelled. The official in question, a highly-strung, difficult man, had not adjusted to the pressures of small island life and had offended Wallisian sensitivities by his abrasive style and comments. To uphold its power, France flew in thirty paramilitary police from Noumea, but no incidents took place and the police left within twenty-six hours. After talks, and a visit by Bernard Pons, the minister for Overseas Departments and Territories, tensions decreased, and the controversial official departed a few weeks later, although some bitterness persisted (*Nouvelles*, 15 Dec 1986, 45).

French officials shrug off this incident as a storm in a cup of *café au lait*, but it illustrated the continuing uneasiness between the French administra-

tion and the local "customary" authorities. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Catholic church ran Wallis and Futuna as a virtual theocracy, with the assent of the traditional "monarchs" and "chiefs," although the islands were nominally a French protectorate. Later on, the French resident commissioners strengthened their authority, and Wallis and Futuna became a French territory in 1959, following an overwhelming vote for this status in the September 1958 referendum. The French administration, advised by the Territorial Assembly, has exercised formal control since then, although the informal influence of both the church and the chiefs and elders remains strong.

The two inhabited islands of Wallis and Futuna depend completely on France for modern infrastructure and services. As well as some small islands fringing the lagoon of Wallis, a third large island, Alofi, lies to the southeast of Futuna, but is not permanently inhabited because it lacks a water supply. Apart from a few dozen tonnes per year of trochus shell, the territory's main export has been its people. The resident population is 13,500, but more Wallisians now live elsewhere. About 800 live in France, 1000 in Fiji, and some 13,000 in New Caledonia. Only 900 members of the territory's workforce earn salaries or wages, mostly in the administration or in public works, with the remainder engaged in subsistence fishing and agriculture. This economic dualism between the subsistence and monetized sectors is characteristic of all three French territories (and their Pacific Island neighbors), but is especially marked in Wallis and Futuna. Remittances from relatives overseas, especially those in New Caledonia, contribute to fair living standards (Rensch 1983; W & F Interviews 1988).

After years of neglect, France began spending substantial funds in the territory early in the 1980s (Assemblée Nationale 1987*a*, 45-49; 1987*b*, 29-31). The years from 1983 to 1988 were marked by the construction of more and better roads, the expansion of electrification, the growth of the school system, and a sharp upturn in students completing secondary education (W & F Interviews 1988; personal observations). Potential exists for the export of small quantities of timber and for small-scale commercial deep-sea fishing. Tourism is unlikely to develop much because of high costs and social conservatism. French development advisers and technicians are seeking to improve traditional methods of fishing and agriculture to ensure that the booming population can be fed (*Nowelles*, 14 March 1988, 30). Church and traditional influences contribute to a high birth rate, and the average family has eight children.

The people of the territory are almost one hundred percent Roman Catholic, with 70 to 80 percent of them regular churchgoers; they are strongly conservative. Personal rivalries and demands for further development spending in particular localities form the substance of Wallisian politics, but the local parties are associated with the parties of the right and the center-right in France. The left is all but nonexistent: the Socialist candidate gained less than 4 percent of the vote in the first round of the June 1988 National Assembly elections, while in the second round Brial (of the right-wing RPR) won with 52 percent of the vote against Gata (of the center-right UDF) with 48 percent.

The politicians of Wallis and Futuna regard independence as unviable and instead see the territory evolving gradually to greater local autonomy, while remaining firmly within the French state. Their nightmare is that conflict in New Caledonia could lead to the return of large numbers of their compatriots, which would pose big land, economic, and cultural problems. They already have an inkling of what could be involved, following the return of some Wallisians from Vanuatu since independence there. With new generations of high-school leavers finding almost no job opportunities within Wallis and Futuna, continued out-migration is likely, along with sharpening criticism of France's stewardship and calls for increased spending. Yet, not least because its options are so limited, Wallis and Futuna is likely to remain a loyal French overseas possession indefinitely.

FRENCH DIPLOMACY IN THE CENTRAL SOUTH PACIFIC

France's image and prestige in the South Pacific suffered in the mid-1980s from continued concern over nuclear testing, from the bitter conflict in New Caledonia, and from the revelation that French agents had been responsible for bombing the *Rainbow Warrior*. President Mitterrand distanced himself from the *Rainbow Warrior* affair, but also visited the Moruroa testing site in late 1985 to reaffirm France's commitment to its testing program (Firth 1987, 89; *Le Monde*, 19 Sept 1986; *Age*, 22 Sept 1986). On his return, he made a commitment to increased French spending and diplomatic activity in the region and breathed new life into the moribund proposal for a French university in the Pacific (French Embassy 1986). As well as having a Pacific context, these initiatives reflected a renewed commitment by France, evident from the early 1980s, to assert its

presence and expand its influence throughout the developing world, both in its own possessions and with independent countries (Levy 1987; *PIM*, Sept 1984; *Le Monde*, 19 Sept 1986; Rocard 1988, 65–66). France faces constraints of finances and resources, but increased aid spending on the South Pacific has been at levels acceptable to the French public, and has attracted no criticism in parliament or press. An estimated A\$25–30 million (c. US\$20–24 m) per year has been required for France's new aid initiatives in the South Pacific, a modest amount compared with the sum of over A\$1450 million that France already spends on its own Pacific territories (Table 1). The central importance to France of its nuclear testing program has encouraged a readiness to invest resources to help allay criticism. The heightened French commitment was highlighted by the 1987 decision to open a consulate-general in Honolulu, with accreditation to the American Micronesian entities, even though several similar posts had been closed down elsewhere, as an economy measure, in the preceding few years (*Letter*, Nov 1987, 7). The mission would be able to pursue links with the American Micronesian entities, which were becoming eligible for membership in the South Pacific Forum, and to liaise, stressing common French and American interests, with the Honolulu-based headquarters of the United States Pacific Command.

Mitterrand's approach was endorsed and pursued by the Chirac government, which won power in March 1986. In addition the Chirac government strongly criticized Australian policies, under the misapprehension that Australia was behind regional criticisms of France. France suffered two diplomatic reversals in late 1986: At the behest of the South Pacific Forum, the United Nations Committee of twenty-four on Decolonization reinscribed New Caledonia on its list of colonial territories subject to United Nations review. In addition, by the end of the year most South Pacific countries had ratified the Treaty of Rarotonga (South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty), which among other things opposed nuclear testing in the region. These diplomatic initiatives raised the international profile of the Forum countries and confirmed that they had some capacity to put diplomatic pressure on France. French commentators tended to belittle the influence of the South Pacific Forum. However, the validity of their assessment was belied by the money and effort that the Chirac government devoted to seeking to head off criticism at the United Nations in 1986 and 1987. Moreover, the diplomatic reverses suffered over the treaty and New Caledonia confirmed the view of the French government that

France should do more to seek to allay Islander concerns and to improve its image.

Despite France's reverses in 1986, French efforts began to yield some results in Fiji and Polynesia, and to some extent in Micronesia, in 1987, although in Melanesia they were mostly abortive. French diplomacy centered on Gaston Flosse, president of French Polynesia until February 1987. In early 1986, Chirac appointed the energetic, urbane Flosse as secretary of state (i.e., a junior minister) for the South Pacific and gave him a special grant, known as the "Flosse fund," of about US\$4 million to offer as aid, along with the authority to commit larger amounts through normal channels (*Assemblée Nationale* 1987a; Rothwell 1987; Danielsson and Danielsson 1987). Flosse played on his part-Polynesian ancestry to project himself and French interests in a series of visits to South Pacific countries and entities, addressing Polynesian audiences in Tahitian and making a favorable impression on speakers of the other Polynesian tongues. He also gave strong support to the proposal that the Polynesian countries and entities form a Polynesian "community" or confederation, which the French government presumably saw as a potential counterweight to the Melanesian Spearhead bloc in the South Pacific Forum (*NZH*, 23 Jan 1988; *Letter*, Nov 1987, 5; Robie 1988).

French diplomats were bemused by Flosse's flamboyance and shuttle diplomacy, but conceded that he had considerable impact. One of his advisers recalled that after the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing, France's standing had been at the nadir, but that thanks to Flosse it had recovered greatly (Brot 1988). Some of the bilateral projects negotiated directly by Flosse were funded through French Polynesia, while other funds were channeled through the French embassies in Suva and Wellington. The aid included a soft loan of A\$10 million to the Cook Islands for cyclone reconstruction (*Dominion*, 22 Feb 1987), agreed on in August-September 1987, but was mostly on a smaller scale. In Western Samoa, France funded several projects during 1987, including a surgical theater, schools, upgrading airstrips, and renovating the residence of the head of state (*AAP* 1987). The aid and associated spending covered a wide range of activities (see Appendix). Direct French aid to Fiji, Polynesia, and Micronesia was a new initiative, although France previously had contributed indirectly to some of these countries via European Community grants. In Melanesia, as discussed later, France gave Vanuatu, formerly the Anglo-French Condominium of the New Hebrides, some A\$8 million per year in bilateral aid prior

to the breakdown in relations in late 1987. Gaston Flosse lost his position as secretary of state following the fall of the Chirac government in May 1988 and lost his seat in the French Parliament in the June 1988 elections. Earlier he had been displaced as president of French Polynesia. His prospects are clouded, with cases involving claims of malpractice and corruption before the courts. The decline in his political fortunes may have resulted in part from his absences from Tahiti while fulfilling his ministerial role. However, the Rocard government has continued efforts to win friends in the central South Pacific, if in a more low-key way and by more routine diplomatic means.

In 1988–1989, France is to fund community halls and water cisterns in several villages, as well as a small freezer plant to assist the domestic fishing industry in the traditional monarchy of Tonga. France will also spend around A\$2 million to build a stadium in Tonga for the 1989 South Pacific games, which should help France win friends in both Tonga and the wider region (Josephe 1988a, 1988b). France has also offered specialized sports coaching to island countries (AFP 1988). In addition, the French government is encouraging improved liaison and cooperation between French research and scientific organizations and island governments and regional organizations, and plans in due course to offer language and technical training to Islander students at the French University of the Pacific, which began operation in late 1988. France has provided a sophisticated computer center for the headquarters of the Committee for the Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in South Pacific Offshore Areas (CCOP/SOPAC), a regional organization based in Suva (Keith-Reid 1988). France has continued to be active in the South Pacific Commission, not least by increasing its contributions, and has expanded its program of naval visits to Fiji and the Polynesian countries (*Letter*, Nov 1987; Jan 1988). France is encouraging French business and investment to move into the anglophone Pacific, a trend facilitated by the tied character of French aid. In Fiji, Renault is already well established; the Sofrana shipping line has recently expanded its operation; and Air Pacific is purchasing two ATR42 turbo-prop aircraft. The French government is sponsoring the activities of the Alliance Française, which opened branches in Tonga in 1987 and Suva in late 1988, the latter presided over by Filipe Bole, minister for education (Josephe 1988b).

Assisted by such initiatives, France has improved its image among politicians and officials in Fiji and the Polynesian countries. French standing

has also benefited from the cultivation of personal contacts. Several Polynesian leaders have accepted invitations to visit French Polynesia and Moruroa or France in recent years. For example, visitors in late 1987 included senior government officials from the Cook Islands, Western Samoa, American Samoa, and Tonga, as well as the Apia manager of the Pacific Forum Line (*Letter*, Nov 1987). In 1987, not long after the first Fiji coup, interim Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was favorably impressed when the French government turned what he had expected to be a low-key visit to Paris into virtually a state visit, featuring meetings with the prime minister and the president of France (FFA Interview 1988).

The benefits to France of its active diplomacy were illustrated in comments made by Deputy Prime Minister Tupuola Efi of Western Samoa in Auckland in late October 1987. After calling for a calm dialogue rather than the maintenance of rhetorical positions on New Caledonia, he commented that "the French, who have a Polynesian Minister, which in itself is a considerable step . . . are talking with states of the South Pacific outside their traditional sphere of influence, in a way they did not before. In the Cook Islands and in other countries, they are offering their aid constructively." He added that differences over nuclear testing and other issues remained, but that France, if it intended to play a more positive role in the region, should be permitted to do so (Radio NZ interview, reported in *Letter*, Nov 1987). In a similar vein, Le Tagaloa Pita, Western Samoa's minister for economic affairs, told Parliament in December 1987 that despite Western Samoa's strong opposition to French nuclear testing, French aid should be accepted, that political issues should be separated from economics and trade, and that as a developing country Western Samoa needed all the assistance it could get (AAP 1987).

The countries of the central South Pacific have usually taken a moderate stance on New Caledonia and testing. In Fiji, the Bavadra government envisaged taking a different tack, but held office only briefly before being deposed by the coup. The monarchy in Tonga has conservative views: for example, Tonga refused to sign the Treaty of Rarotonga, taking its cue from the Reagan administration, which opposed nuclear-free zones in principle because of their potential to inhibit United States maritime mobility. In the Cook Islands, attitudes are influenced by close kinship and cultural ties with French Polynesia, and by some dissatisfaction over New Zealand's policy on nuclear ship visits and its implications for the ANZUS agreement (Short 1985).

French diplomacy has been especially successful in Fiji. France “neither condemned nor condoned” the 1987 coups (Josephé 1988*b*; see also Johnstone 1987). This stance was similar to that taken in francophone Africa (Levy 1987), where, while pursuing diplomatic advantages, France has turned a blind eye to human rights abuses and economic mismanagement on a scale far worse than that in Fiji. The French government presumably was aware that in terms of population Fiji is the second-largest South Pacific state after Papua New Guinea, with an important role in regional affairs because of its central location, its relative wealth and level of economic development, and its cultural affinities with both Melanesia and Polynesia. France took advantage of the uncertainties following the coups, when Fiji’s relations with traditional friends such as Australia and New Zealand became frosty. The Fijian administration resented that frostiness and was keen to accept French aid to offset the postcoup economic downturn (FFA Interview 1988).

France also benefited from the ambivalence of regional responses. Although the Forum country governments deplored the coup, most of them took the view that Fiji should not be subject to external pressures. In several countries the coup was perceived—and attracted sympathy—as a reassertion of indigenous rights and interests. A prominent Papua New Guinea official named his newborn son after coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka. To a considerable extent this reassertion was regarded as taking precedence over democratic principle and the rights of nationals from immigrant stock.

As well as profiting from the coups, French initiatives in Fiji benefited from Fiji’s long-term association with France in the negotiation of the Lomé Convention, which gives Fiji, as part of a grouping of African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries, privileged access and prices for sugar, its major export to the European Community market. Ratu Mara has impressed French officials and played a key role in the regular Lomé negotiations. Receptiveness to French initiatives had also been increased by French-Fijian cooperation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (FFA Interview 1988).

The Rocard government has gone ahead with the implementation of a A\$16-million (c. US\$12.8m) aid package to Fiji, agreed in early 1988 on the basis of groundwork laid by Flosse. The package consists of A\$8.6 million in loan funds, half in a soft loan and half at commercial but low rates, along with a grant of A\$8 million (c. US\$6.4m). The loan money is to be

spent on equipment, technical assistance, and training for civil aviation, the sugar industry, and rural telecommunications, while the grant is to buy 53 Renault Mack-type trucks, one small helicopter, and civil emergency equipment. All purchases will be from French suppliers (Joseph 1988b). The infrastructure and equipment are said to be primarily for civil use, but presumably could be used by the military under certain circumstances. The civil-military distinction will remain blurred while the army remains a key political player.

The French aid initiative had immediate diplomatic repercussions, assisting the Fiji administration in its efforts to gain acceptance. Until it suspended aid in response to the coup, Australia was Fiji's most important donor. Australia provided nearly A\$9 million (c. US\$7.2m) in 1983-84, A\$11 million (c. US\$8.8m) in both 1984-85 and 1985-86, and was scheduled to provide A\$14 million (c. US\$11.2m) in 1986-87 (AIDAB 1987). However, European Community and Japanese aid to Fiji had continued without interruption. Shortly after the aid deal between France and Fiji was announced, Australia decided henceforth to recognize states rather than governments, a policy that had been pursued for several years by Britain, France, the United States, and other countries. This change permitted the recognition of Fiji and the reduction of diplomatic tensions. Australia resumed providing aid, while keeping the defense cooperation program in suspension, on the broad understanding that Fiji would be returning to constitutional rule. Australia's policy shift was denounced by Dr Bavadra (WA, 16-17 Jan and 13-14 Feb 1988; AFR, 19 Jan 1988, SMH, 30 Jan, 7 Sept 1988; CT, 25 Jan, 1 Feb 1988). The gratitude of the Fiji administration toward France was shown in the following months: senior Fijian Foreign Affairs officials believe that Fiji made an important contribution to ensuring that the Forum submission on New Caledonia to the early August 1988 meeting of the UN Decolonization committee was moderate. They also were pleased that the discussion of this issue permitted Fiji to resume its position as a key member of the South Pacific Forum.

Fiji expects to maintain its positions on New Caledonia and testing, but its stance is likely to reflect an effort to ensure that differences over New Caledonia and testing do not conflict with good relations in other areas. The Polynesian countries and entities are likely to take a similar line, although Tonga could take a more conservative position. France's aid and associated cultural policies traditionally have been mounted with a view to the longer term: they set out to create local constituencies and to ensure

that French views get a full hearing and some local support. France presumably would not expect to be able to “buy” the foreign policies of the proudly independent Pacific Island states so as to bring about a complete reversal of policies, but would hope to contain and mute criticisms.

France is attaining some success in achieving this objective, although antinuclear sentiment in the South Pacific is strong, in part because of the legacy in some areas of health and environmental damage as well as social and cultural disruption from atmospheric testing. With church and trade union support, the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement, which takes an unqualified stance on nuclear issues, has helped keep criticism of French testing high on the regional political agenda (Firth 1987, 133–147). French representatives do not expect to reverse opposition to testing, but have set out to allay concerns and to raise doubts about the accuracy of antinuclear criticisms (Brot 1988). Their efforts were assisted to some extent by the report of the Australian, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea scientific mission, led by H. R. Atkinson, which visited the test site in 1983 (NZMFA 1984). The mission concluded that underground testing posed no health risks, but that leakage of radioactive materials could occur after some hundreds of years. However, the scope and findings of the mission have been questioned (Firth 1987, 106–107).

In the unlikely event that island leaders become fully reassured that underground testing bears no health or environmental risks, many of them would still argue that the tests should take place in France, not in an overseas territory on the other side of the globe. For example, in his address to the United Nations in October 1988, the Fiji representative said, “if, as France maintains, the testing is safe and poses no danger to human or marine life, then France should have no fears in conducting the tests in their own backyard [*sic*]” (*FT*, 17 Oct 1988). Despite continuing differences, particularly over testing, the French diplomatic offensive seems to be securing broader acceptance in the central South Pacific of France’s view that it has a legitimate role to play there and contributions to make to the region’s economic welfare, stability, and security.

In Melanesia, however, French diplomacy traditionally has had little success. Melanesian leaders feel a strong sense of brotherhood with the Kanaks of New Caledonia, and strongly oppose French nuclear testing. In mid-1986 the three Melanesian countries formed the Melanesian Spearhead group, to express Melanesian solidarity and to lobby for a strong line on New Caledonia in the South Pacific Forum. Flosse’s efforts to win

favor in the Solomon Islands in 1986 backfired. When his promise of cyclone reconstruction funds from the "Flosse fund" to the village of Prime Minister Peter Kenilorea became known in late 1986, Kenilorea was ousted from office. Kenilorea's colleagues had strong reservations about accepting French aid, especially outside normal diplomatic channels and for what seemed a self-interested project. However, the new Papua New Guinea government, which assumed power in July 1988 with Michael Somare as foreign minister, may be more reserved in its comments on French policy than its predecessors. French relations with all three Melanesian countries began to improve following the acceptance by the FLNKS of an interim settlement in New Caledonia.

French relations with Vanuatu were soured by French obstruction of independence and the support of local French officials for the Santo secession attempt in 1980 (Beasant 1984). Relations have been sporadically difficult throughout the 1980s, and deteriorated sharply in late 1987, when the Vanuatu government stated that it had proof that France was funding the opposition, francophone-based, Union of Moderate Parties (UMP) (*Age*, 9 Oct 1987, 6). Vanuatu expelled the French ambassador, France cut its aid spending, Vanuatu expelled further diplomats, and France reduced its aid even further. The size of the French mission shrank from over thirty expatriate staff to only two, with the head of the mission not accorded diplomatic status. The Vanuatu government contends, however, that French language and culture will remain important in Vanuatu and that educational and cultural bilingualism will persist (Natuman 1988), superimposed on the bedrock of traditional culture and the national language of Bislama. A "normalization" of the relationship was delayed by a bitter political conflict between the governing Vanua'aku Pati (VP), led by Father Walter Lini, and an alliance between the UMP and a small, dissident group of former VP legislators led by Barak Sope.

In late 1988, having consolidated its position, the Lini government set out to reduce tensions with France, although Vanuatu remained critical of French testing. But at the United Nations General Assembly in October, Vanuatu commended France on reaching a settlement in New Caledonia, and a few weeks later the Vanuatu foreign minister traveled to France for talks (*PR*, 29 Sept 1988; *CT*, 31 Oct 1988, 8). Vanuatu needs French aid money, and the Vanuatu government wanted to avoid the charge of being anti-French in the December 1988 by-elections in order to reduce local francophone opposition. Despite this "normalization," relations between

France and Vanuatu under a VP government are likely to remain difficult. On the other hand, if the UMP, perhaps allied with Sope's group, eventually gained power, then Vanuatu would have closer and more cordial relations with France, which would be a major breakthrough for France in the Melanesian part of the Pacific.

Australia and New Zealand reserve the right to differ on particular issues, but are likely to continue to seek constructive relations with France, and have welcomed the fresh approach of the Rocard government. On Australia's behalf, Foreign Minister Evans underlined this stance during his successful mid-September visit to New Caledonia. As the full integration of the European Community into a single market proceeds during the early 1990s, EC market access, and France's influence on it, will become an even more important consideration for Australia and, especially, New Zealand.

CONCLUSION: THE FRENCH PACIFIC INTO THE 1990S

France's presence in the South Pacific has remained strong, but has undergone some changes. Fully fledged colonialism came to an end in the French Pacific during the first two decades after the Second World War. Suffrage became universal, after several piecemeal advances. The people of all three territories chose to remain with France in the 1958 referendum, rejecting the bleak alternative of immediate, complete independence with no further aid. Under the present French constitution, established in 1958, independence is provided for in response to a majority vote of a territory's inhabitants. France has granted the territories a modest degree of internal autonomy, as well as the right to send representatives to the French Parliament. Yet politically, economically, socially, and psychologically, many colonial characteristics have endured, especially in New Caledonia (Kohler 1987a, 1987b; Spencer, Ward, and Connell 1987; see also Christnacht 1987). In French Polynesia, the establishment of the nuclear testing facilities subordinated local to French national interests and greatly strengthened France's commitment to remaining. During the 1980s, chronic economic difficulties and a rise in French spending increased the dependence of the territories even further.

Although France's will to maintain sovereignty remains strong, the trend over the next decade or so in the two larger territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia seems to be toward some form of indepen-

dence, whereas Wallis and Futuna is likely to remain politically integrated with France. In New Caledonia, a form of independence could come either through the Rocard plan, or, more traumatically, following renewed militant mobilization by the independence movement. Partition also remains possible, if the rival blocs fail to find a way of working together. A version of independence-in-association could be implemented in French Polynesia, permitting continued testing in a neocolonial context in which France would pay a large "rent" for the use of the testing facilities. But whatever the final constitutional arrangements, France is likely to maintain close links with, and strong influence over, the new states. As with the francophone African states (Chipman 1985; Bernstein 1987), but even more decisively because of the settler majority in New Caledonia, as well as the small scale and the economic weakness of the French Pacific territories, the longer-term transition is likely to be from colonialism to neocolonialism. In some respects this dependence would resemble that of most of the other island entities of the region (AIDAB 1987; Connell 1988), except that it would be very heavily accentuated. If they attain a form of independence, New Caledonia and French Polynesia could be comparable to Belau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, where the former administering power has continued to provide massive funding in return for political and strategic benefits.

By negotiating a settlement in New Caledonia, the new French government has reduced tensions between France and the South Pacific Forum. France also is profiting from the momentum of a diplomatic (including aid) offensive, begun under Chirac and directed especially at Fiji and the other states and entities in the central South Pacific. Accordingly, despite strong concern over nuclear testing, and doubts about whether the Rocard plan will work, the French presence in the South Pacific seems likely to attract less criticism in the early 1990s than it has during most of the 1980s. Overall, there seems to be an increased readiness among the Forum governments to accept the likelihood of a continuing French presence and to believe that benefits could flow from that presence. The evolution in regional attitudes was reflected during the late September 1988 meeting of the South Pacific Forum, when a resolution commending the settlement in New Caledonia complemented a condemnation of testing, as well as in the overall tenor of comments by the representatives of Forum countries at the October 1988 General Assembly of the United Nations.

Compared to the early 1980s, there are now a greater number of press-

ing issues that preoccupy, and at times divide, the countries of the region. These issues include intractable problems of economic development, post-coup circumstances in Fiji, political uncertainties in Vanuatu, the question of how best to handle increased outside interest in the region, intermittent Libyan and recurrent Soviet initiatives, and the potentially disastrous impact of the "greenhouse effect." As a result, questions relating to the French presence could attract less attention than previously. The new salience of other issues has made some island governments more receptive to French presentations about the prospective aid and security benefits of an enduring French presence.

Renewed unrest in New Caledonia or French Polynesia would embarrass France and strengthen regional concerns. Condemnation of nuclear testing in French Polynesia will continue, although its intensity will vary over time and from country to country. In 1975, France bowed to regional diplomatic pressure, spearheaded by Australia and New Zealand, and halted atmospheric testing, but nowadays is adamant that underground testing is essential to French security and poses no health or environmental risks. France seems likely to shrug off criticism and keep on testing for some years, perhaps into the next century. Despite criticisms and difficulties, and despite the changes in French attitudes and institutions flowing from European economic integration around 1992, France can be expected to continue to uphold its presence in the South Pacific. At present the Rocard government is succeeding in blunting criticism by taking some account of Forum country concerns and by demonstrating that the French presence can bring aid and other benefits. Yet because of the broad continuities in French objectives and policy, underlying tensions will surface intermittently and will persist between France and the countries of the region.

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THIS ARTICLE DRAWS in part on interviews and discussions held during a research visit, funded by the Australian National University, to Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and Fiji in July-August 1988. Although these exchanges have been documented as fully as possible, some comments were not for direct attribution. Earlier versions of the article were presented at the Africa-Pacific Comparative Conference at La Trobe University on 25 August 1988, and to a meeting of the Canberra branch of the Australian Institute for International Affairs on 20

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APPENDIX

Aid Projects and Associated Activities Directed through the French Embassy in Suva, 1987

| Project or Activity | Expenditure (French francs) | Explanation |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| MULTILATERAL | | |
| Ethnology | 50,000 | |
| Two lecturers in French at USP | 1,140,000 | 1 in Vanuatu, 1 in Fiji |
| Fellowships or training for students | 100,000 | In-training courses (French)— Noumea |
| Three experts in various fields | 432,900 | 2 marine biology, 1 electronics for USP |
| One lecturer in sciences | 667,200 | For USP center in Vanuatu |
| Fellowships in geology | 35,000 | Student trips to New Caledonia or Vanuatu |
| Equipment and training | 350,000 | For or during experts' tours |
| Two experts for CCOP/SOPAC | 850,000 | For marine geology data management |
| Equipment and funds for CCOP/SOPAC | 660,000 | Co-financed with IFREMER (French Marine Research Organization) |
| Invitation CCOP/SOPAC | 65,460 | Visit to France by director |
| Books for schools and libraries | 15,000 | |

(continued)

APPENDIX (continued)

| Project or Activity | Expenditure (French francs) | Explanation |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| FIJI | | |
| Coconut expert | 969,500 | 1 expert and provision for equipment |
| Expert mission to Fiji | 56,760 | Study trip: Yaqara project onion field |
| Cyclone relief—Red Cross | 200,000 | Housing assistance for cyclone victims |
| Miscellaneous cultural activities | 25,000 | |
| <i>Alliance Française</i> in Suva | 12,000 | Audiovisual equipment |
| Health professional visit | 45,000 | To France for Health permanent secretary, for AIDS Conference |
| TONGA | | |
| Scientific cruise | 600,000 | By oceanic vessel <i>Jean Charcot</i> |
| Two teachers of French | 306,300 | 2 teachers and equipment |
| Two experts in agronomy | 829,040 | 1 in vanilla growing, 1 in renewable energy, plus expenses |
| One fellowship in French studies | 53,400 | |
| French language laboratory | 430,000 | |
| Audiovisual equipment | 157,000 | Equipment for outer islands |
| Fisheries | 100,000 | Solar kits for refrigeration |
| Study trip | 35,000 | Research by experts from CNRS |
| TUVALU | | |
| Solar kit | 300,000 | |
| TOTAL | 8,484,560 | (c. A\$1.7 m or US\$1.4 m) |

Source: French Embassy, Suva.

Note: As of 16 September 1988 A\$1 was equal to approximately 5 French francs.

Notes

1 The other possessions comprise the Territorial Collective of St Pierre and Miquelon in the North Atlantic, the Departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique in the West Indies, the Department of French Guiana (Guyana) in South America, the Department of Réunion and the Territorial Collective of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean, the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (including Kerguelen Island) in the Antarctic, and Clipperton Island in the North Pacific, south of Mexico.

2 Aldrich n.d.; Aldrich and Connell n.d.; FCJP 1987; Connell 1987; Dalton 1981; Guillebard 1976; Herodote 1985; Montbrial et al 1987; Moutoussamy 1987.

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