

Political Reviews

*Micronesia in Review: Issues and Events, 1 July 2012
to 30 June 2013*

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Reviews of American Sāmoa, the Cook Islands, Hawai‘i, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga, and Tuvalu are not included in this issue.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

The period under review saw great changes taking place in French Polynesia. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voted to relist the country as a non-self-governing territory, the first instance for that body to do so since it relisted New Caledonia in 1986 (France had unilaterally delisted both countries in 1947). However, the people whose lobbying led to this decision—pro-independence politician Oscar Temaru and his supporters—lost the leadership of the country to their former (temporary) ally and now once again archenemy Gaston Flosse, whose party swept the territorial elections in May 2013. After Flosse won a two-thirds majority in the French Polynesia Assembly under the new voting system, his return to power as a quasi-absolute ruler also drew to a close a decade of political instability.

At the start of the review period, the international lobbying efforts by the Temaru government had been going on intensively for months and culminated in the hosting of two major international meetings. On 5 July 2012, Temaru hosted the meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum of the Club of Madrid, a group of former government leaders and businessmen predominantly from Western countries. A

week later, from 12 to 13 July, Temaru’s Tavini Huiraatira party hosted an international forum of experts from other governments, the United Nations, and academia on the topic of postcolonial nation building, appropriately named “Build Me a Nation” (left untranslated into French or Tahitian). The open workshop, which was well attended by the public, featured presentations by Algerian diplomat Mourad Ahmia, executive secretary of the G-77 (the caucus of developing countries within the United Nations); the roving ambassador of Fiji to the Pacific Island countries, Litia Mawi; Hawaiian political scientist Keanu Sai, leader of the acting government of the Hawaiian Kingdom since 1996 (Hawaiian Government blog); two Kanak leaders from New Caledonia; and a Canadian economist. These invited experts shared their knowledge and experience with various aspects of decolonization in other countries in order to help French Polynesia develop a way to function as a nation-state in the future (TI, 13 July 2013).

As usual, both meetings were strongly criticized by the pro-French opposition, especially the leading opposition party Tahoeraa Huiraatira (in English, “Popular Rally”), led by Gaston Flosse. Concerning the Club of Madrid meeting, Tahoeraa accused the Temaru government of selling out the country to Australian multimillionaire businessman Clive Palmer, one of the most prominent and publicly visible participants in the meeting, who made

promises to invest in the country (TI, 18 July 2013). As for the “Build Me a Nation” forum, Flosse’s party once more focused their criticism on the close relations of Temaru’s government, especially Senator Richard Tuheiava, with the current government of Fiji. A military dictatorship, Flosse argued, could not be a good ally in a struggle to achieve freedom. Tuheiava countered, however, that the government of Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama was not comparable with typical dictatorships since unlike in most military-ruled nations—and unlike in French Polynesia—the Fiji tourism industry was booming. He jokingly said that this meant it could not be such a bad dictatorship (TI, 11 July 2013). In line with this reasoning, Tuheiava attended the third “Engaging with the Pacific” leaders meeting from 23 to 24 August in Nadi, Fiji, to represent the government of French Polynesia (TI, 24 Aug 2012).

International awareness-raising and lobbying events like the “Build Me a Nation” forum achieved visible success, when the Non-Aligned Movement (the political counterpart to the economically focused G-77) voted unanimously to support the reinscription of French Polynesia as a non-self-governing territory. This success at the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Iran from 26 to 31 August was achieved in large part thanks to support from Fiji and other Melanesian member states.

On the other hand, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), which held its annual meeting from 28 to 30 August in Rarotonga, in its communiqué “reiterated their support for the principle of French Polynesia’s right

to self-determination”—but instead of unambiguously supporting reinscription, it once more merely supported “positive dialogue between French Polynesia and France on how best to realise French Polynesia’s right to self-determination” (PIF 2012). Forum members were apparently under massive pressure from Australia and New Zealand, both of which have abandoned their once strong support for decolonization and now accept the continuation of French colonialism in the region. In contrast, on 30 August, also in Rarotonga, the second meeting of the newly formed Polynesian Leaders Group (in which Australia and New Zealand are not included) strongly endorsed French Polynesia’s reinscription (PIR, 30 Aug 2012).

On the global level, the Forum’s unclear attitude counted much less than the Non-Aligned Movement’s full-fledged support. Since the Non-Aligned Movement includes a large majority of UN member states, after their endorsement it appeared to be only a matter of time before the issue would come up in the UN General Assembly. Still, however, some insecurity about a UN vote remained, especially as France and allied Western countries were still expected to counter lobby. At the plenary session of the General Assembly in September, reinscription of French Polynesia was once more brought up by Fijian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ratu Inoke Kubuabola and the prime ministers of Solomon Islands and Sāmoa (Kubuabola 2012; Lilo 2012; Malielegaoi 2012). There was no immediate follow-up, however, and months passed without a draft resolution being introduced in the General Assembly.

Meanwhile, for the rest of the year, the country was preoccupied with various domestic issues. In November, a passionate debate was fought about marijuana, likely sparked by media reports about the successful plebiscites in two American states during the US general elections to legalize the substance. As in many Pacific Islands, the consumption of paka (the local term for cannabis) is becoming increasingly popular in French Polynesia, while the illegal but lucrative cultivation and sale of it has become a not insignificant sector of the economy. While many people see this as a dangerous social phenomenon, and an ever-increasing number of people are arrested for paka-related charges, President Temaru and other members of Tavini stated that it was time for a serious debate throughout society about legalization. When the opposition criticized this initiative as irresponsible, Tavini leaders underlined that the party was neither endorsing nor opposing legalization but simply wanted to facilitate discussion of this complex issue (TI, 8 Nov 12; RNZI, 15 Nov 12).

As in the previous few years, the justice system dealt with several high-profile political corruption cases and pronounced sentences potentially carrying severe consequences for several politicians. In early October, local trade union leaders Cyril Legayic and Gaston Tetuanui and French ship magnate Bill Ravel were indicted and detained, with Ravel being accused of paying bribes to the union leaders in order for them to let him operate his ships without constant threat of strikes. For many years, several unions in the country have been accused of

operating like a mafia, using strikes not as a genuine tool to obtain improved working conditions and better pay but rather as a sort of protection racket in order to extort bribes from business leaders and politicians (TPM, Dec 2012).

The most attention, however, was drawn to the trials of senator and opposition leader Gaston Flosse, who was being tried in two different cases, both dating back to Flosse's earlier term as president of the local government from 1991 to 2004. In one of them, Flosse had already been found guilty and sentenced to several years in prison in 2011, but he and all of his codefendants had appealed the verdicts. After the trial on the other case started in mid-September, Flosse got into even more trouble. Because of his criminal conviction, he was denied visa-free entry to the United States, and, on 19 November, while he was at the US Embassy in New Zealand in order to obtain a visa, his residence in Vetea, a luxury subdivision in Pirae, was completely destroyed in a fire. Flosse aggressively used the media to portray these events as evidence of his being a victim of a vast conspiracy, accusing his political opponents of supplying information on him to US authorities and of setting fire to his home (TPM, Dec 2012).

On 15 January 2013, the verdict in the "Post Office" affair was pronounced. Flosse was found guilty of having received several tens of millions of CFP francs in bribes between 1994 and 2005 from French advertising executive Hubert Haddad in order to secure a monopoly on the sale of advertising space in phone books and other publications of the French

Polynesia Post and Telecommunications Office. Flosse was sentenced to a prison term of five years, a fine of 10 million CFP francs (US\$100,000), and five years of ineligibility for political office, while Haddad received an identical prison term and fine, on top of a five-year ban on operating a business. Various codefendants were sentenced to prison terms, suspended prison terms, or fines, depending on their individual responsibility in the affair. Among those convicted were former Minister for Postal Services Émile Vernaudeau; Flosse's secretary, Melba Ortas; and politician Noa Tetuanui, a former member of Temaru's Tavini party who had switched sides in October 2004 after Flosse channeled some of Haddad's bribes to him (TI, 15 Jan 2013).

Barely a month later, on 7 February, the appellate court confirmed the conviction of Flosse and the other defendants in the "Fictional Employment" affair and sentenced the former president to four years in prison, a fine of 15 million CFP francs (US\$150,000), and three years of suspended political rights. Seventeen of his codefendants—fellow Tahoeraa members and trade union leaders who had received enormous salaries as collaborators in the president's office without ever actually working there—received shorter prison terms or fines, while twenty-five others were acquitted (TI, 7 Feb 2013).

Unsurprisingly, all convicted parties in both cases, advised by high-profile French lawyers, contested their convictions. In the "Post Office" case, this means that the case will be newly tried by an appellate court up to a year later, and until then, the sentences

will be suspended. The verdict in the "Fictional Employment" case, which itself had already been appealed to no avail, is being contested at the Court of Cassation in Paris (a supreme judicial institution that checks court cases for judicial or procedural errors). Until the latter has made its decision on the case (expected to take at least half a year), the sentences in this case are also suspended, meaning that Flosse and other leading politicians of Tahoeraa faced no impediments to their participation in the upcoming territorial elections.

Senator Tuheiava was also having trouble with the law. In mid-October 2012, the Court of Cassation confirmed a civil penalty prohibiting the senator from exercising his profession as a lawyer for two years for not properly serving some of his clients when he was still practicing law but already engaged in politics (TI, 17 Oct 2012). Since he is now no longer practicing law, the civil penalty has no practical consequences for him. In February 2013, Tuheiava was cleared of all criminal charges arising from the case (TI, 13 Feb 2013).

After months of no news on the decolonization project, in early 2013 more action was finally forthcoming. Months of lobbying behind the scenes by President Temaru and Senator Tuheiava finally proved successful on 7 February when Solomon Islands, Nauru, and Tuvalu officially sponsored a draft resolution calling for French Polynesia's reinscription. After publication in the UN journal on 14 February, the draft was further amended and definitively put on the agenda of the UN General Assembly in a streamlined version as Draft

Resolution A/67/L.56/Rev.1 on 1 March (UN 2013a).

While a definite date for the discussion of the draft resolution in the General Assembly had not yet been set, the campaign for the upcoming territorial elections was taking off, sparking another reconfiguration of the country's ever-changing political landscape. On one hand there was the governing Union pour la Démocratie (UPLD) umbrella group, dominated by Temaru's Tavini Huiraatira party, forming a coalition government with the outer islands interest group Te Mana O Te Mau Motu (an assembly caucus formed by several outer island representatives elected on the lists of various parties). In power since April 2011, this government had been one of the most stable in the last decade, but its popularity was declining due to the country's steadily deteriorating economic situation and the growing perception of Temaru as economically incompetent and too focused on only one issue: UN reinscription.

Among the so-called autonomist (ie, pro-French in the local political discourse) opposition parties, Flosse's Tahoeraa, having gained all three seats representing the country in the French National Assembly in the legislative elections of June 2012, was regaining its strength as the main pro-French political force, a position it had temporarily lost to various splinter groups after 2007. In contrast to Flosse's temporary reconciliation and political alliance with Temaru between 2007 and 2009, recently Tahoeraa had once more employed a confrontational discourse against the Temaru government, pushing for a polarization of society into pro- and anti-indepen-

dence camps. This strategy won back for Flosse some former allies who had maintained that ideological stance during his reconciliation with Temaru, such as Jean-Christophe Bouissou's Rautahi party, the ethnic Chinese-dominated Taatira No Te Hau party, and Sandra Levy-Agami's splinter group Te Mana Toa, all of which merged under the banner of Tahoeraa for the 2013 elections. Several other politicians, among them Papeete Mayor Michel Buillard and former Minister of Education Tearii Alpha, rejoined Tahoeraa as well. These and other floor crossings made Tahoeraa once more the leading opposition group in the assembly, disposing of fourteen seats, while the conglomerate of pro-French splinter groups of the "third way" (which, under the banner of To Tatou Aia [TTA; "Our Country"] had collectively won a relative majority in the assembly at the last territorial elections of 2008) was reduced to a small remnant, with their leader, former President Gaston Tong Sang, now essentially a backbencher. For a while, the remaining "third way" (that is, neither pro-independence nor pro-Flosse) politicians, including those with and without assembly representation, were in turn divided into two groups. One of these, led by Nicole Bouteau, Philip Schyle, Beatrice Vernaudon, and Teiva Manutahi, considered themselves "progressive autonomists" by claiming to be less corrupt and opportunistic than some of the others (TI, 2 July 2012).

By the beginning of the new year, however, most of the "third way" splinter groups had overcome their differences, and on 31 January, they announced their merger into a new

party called A Tia Porinetia (ATP; in English, “Stand Up Polynesia”), led by Teva Rohfritsch, a young former Tahoeraa member who had served as cabinet minister with various portfolios under Flosse, Temaru, and Tong Sang. The new party, essentially a remake of Tong Sang’s moribund TTA, encompassed all remaining “autonomist” splinter parties in the assembly, giving it a caucus of twelve. Among the “third way” political leaders without assembly representation, only two significant ones did not join ATP: Teiva Manutahi, who, considering Rohfritsch too much of an opportunist, declined to join (TI, 4 Feb 2013), and Bruno Sandras, mayor of Papara and former French National Assembly member, who was excluded from the party, ironically for being himself considered too much of an opportunist by Rohfritsch and the other party founders (TI, 19 Feb 2013).

While UPLD’s campaign strongly focused on the merits of UN reinscription (arguing, for instance, that New Caledonia’s significantly better economic situation could be linked to that territory’s being back on the list since 1986), ATP made vicious and polemic attacks on the decolonization campaign a cornerstone of its political discourse, much more so than Tahoeraa. While engaged in their diatribe against decolonization, Rohfritsch and his supporters also displayed their blatant ignorance of the UN process and their lack of research skills when, after the release of the streamlined version of the draft UNGA resolution on 1 March, ATP in a press release boasted that Temaru’s campaign for reinscription had supposedly failed (TI, 7 March 2013). They based this

assertion merely on the fact that the verb “to reinscribe” was no longer in the draft, when in fact the project had advanced one step further by adapting the language of the draft to UN standards and the precedent 1986 resolution on New Caledonia.

Furthermore, Rohfritsch and Gaston Tong Sang contested the legality of President Temaru’s travels abroad to promote reinscription (citing the political statutes of French Polynesia, according to which foreign policy is the responsibility of France, not the local government) and filed a complaint with the French High Commission. The high commission responded, however, that Temaru’s approaches and overseas travels, while contradicting French policies and not having any legal effects, were legal within the framework of his prerogatives as president (TI, 8 March 2013). This was in line with an earlier decision of the administrative court that had upheld the August 2011 vote of the assembly that called for reinscription, which had been similarly challenged by the pro-French opposition at the time (RNZI, 10 Feb 2012).

In addition, Rohfritsch accused Flosse of once more secretly planning an alliance with Temaru, thereby selling out the “autonomist” cause (TI, 1 April 2013). Rohfritsch could hardly have said anything more hypocritical, since he himself was part of Tahoeraa when the alliance was concluded in 2007, and he held ministerial portfolios under the two governments created through that alliance.

While ATP was thus attempting to drum up support from the French settlers and pro-French locals by trying to surpass even the French govern-

ment in pro-French rhetoric, Tahoeraa's campaign was more focused on nostalgia for the period before 2004, when Flosse had been the all-powerful president, the economy had been in good shape, and everybody supposedly had had a better life. Of course, they conveniently omitted the facts that at the time there was no global economic crisis, and Flosse's close friend Jacques Chirac had been in power in Paris, guaranteeing a steady flow of official and unofficial subsidies to the territory. Clearly also targeting pro-independence voters disillusioned with Temaru's poor economic performance, Tahoeraa's campaign featured visibly less pro-French symbolism: Unlike rallies of ATP and smaller "autonomist" parties, Tahoeraa's great electoral march of 23 March with an estimated 10,000 participants displayed thousands of orange Tahoeraa party flags but not a single French tricolor (*TPM*, April 2012).

A few weeks earlier, a UPLD electoral march focusing on support for the ongoing UN reinscription process gathered around 3,000 participants. Coinciding with the second anniversary of the March 2011 nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima, the march also featured a group of visiting Japanese peace activists (*TI*, 9 March 2013; *RNZI*, 11 March 2013).

While Tahiti's politicians were busy campaigning, a Tahitian-born politician made international headlines in another Pacific country on 23 March when Moana Carcasses Kalosil was elected prime minister of Vanuatu (*TI*, 23 March 2013; *NT*, 25 March 2013). Born in Tahiti of a French father and a Tahitian mother, Carcasses is not only the first naturalized ni-Vanuatu citizen

to become prime minister but also the first non-native-born head of government in any independent Pacific Island country. Furthermore, as the leader of Vanuatu's Green Coalition, Carcasses is the first member of a "Green" (ie, environmentalist) party to head the government of any country worldwide. As the first Tahitian to lead an independent country, Carcasses's successful career in Vanuatu exemplifies the ability and perseverance of Tahitians overseas. Importantly for politics back home in French Polynesia, Carcasses passionately supported reinscription for his home country at the United Nations, with Vanuatu under his leadership adding itself to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution alongside Sāmoa and Timor-Leste (UN 2013c).

As the elections drew nearer, people began taking a closer look at the new electoral system created by the French legislature in 2011, which was designed to increase political stability in French Polynesia. By now people must have become used to having each election conducted under a different system, as the last two consecutive territorial elections conducted under the same system happened in 1991 and 1996. Unlike all previous elections, in which the country was divided into five or six constituencies (one or two per archipelago), under the most recent rules all of French Polynesia is a single constituency, with the overall percentages of votes determining the composition of the assembly. Each party creates a list of 57 candidates, and two rounds of elections are held for the parties on the ballot. Those parties who receive at least 12.5 percent (1/8th) of the total vote in round

one appear on the second-round ballot, although unsuccessful parties that have won at least 5 percent can enter into coalitions with successful ones to contest round two. After the second round, 19 of the 57 seats (one-third of the total) are assigned to the party that receives the highest percentage of the votes. The other 38 seats are assigned proportionally among all parties that have gained at least 5 percent of the overall votes.

From the point of view of the smaller outer islands, the new rules are indeed quite strange. Since about two-thirds of the population lives on Tahiti, the representation of the sparsely populated outer islands has always been an issue of concern. In the new system, outer islands representation in the assembly is guaranteed (since party lists must be distributed throughout eight geographic sections), but not necessarily in proportion to the outer islands' votes. The proportion of outer islands seats distributed to party list candidates is dictated by the overall result of each party, not by the results within each archipelago. As University of French Polynesia political science professor Sémir Al-Wardi explained, outer islands candidates who win only a small minority in their geographic section can win seats if their party performs well on Tahiti, while a party winning 80 percent (for example) in an outer archipelago might end up without any representation if it does not also have strong support in Tahiti (TI, 26 March 2013). Obviously targeted by these new rules were the representatives of *Te Mana o te Mau Motu*, also known as the "islanders," who had become notorious for their constant opportunistic

switching of alliance in the assembly. Because they were no longer useful under the new system, no party included any of them on its list.

The election results confirmed the tendencies already seen at the French National Assembly elections one year previously, with Flosse's *Tahoeraa Huiraatira* gaining a landslide victory. Already in the first round on 21 April, Flosse's party led the vote with 40.16 percent, while UPLD won only 24.6 percent, with ATP barely behind, gaining 19.92 percent. The list *Maohi Tatou*—a coalition of *Manutahi's* *Porinetia Ora* and a section of the formerly important, now marginal *Here Aia* party (the other half of *Here Aia* being part of UPLD)—scored fourth, but achieved only 5.71 percent, while the rest of the votes were distributed among five small splinter parties gaining less than 4 percent each. Participation was at a significant low of only 67.45 percent of registered voters.

At the runoff election on 5 May, significantly more people participated (72.79 percent), and the results of the first round were mostly confirmed, with the votes of the splinter groups and the nonvoters from the first round almost evenly distributed among the three large parties. *Tahoeraa* achieved 45.11 percent; UPLD 29.25 percent, and ATP 25.63 percent. For *Temaru's* ruling party, the results were a significant loss, compared to its score of 37.18 percent in the second round of the last territorial elections in 2008, while *Tahoeraa* dramatically increased its score, having received only 17.16 percent in 2008. ATP's proponents of the "third way" can also be counted among the big losers of the election, given its predecessor *To Tatou Aia's*

remarkable 2008 performance of 45.12 percent (TI, 6 May 2013).

Tahoeraa thus clearly won the election in terms of votes, but because of the majority bonus system, its score translated into a two-thirds majority in the assembly. Flosse's party ended up with 38 out of 57 seats (compared to 10 seats proportionally assigned in 2008). In contrast, the two opposition parties—UPLD with merely 11 seats (20 in 2008) and ATP with 8 (27 for TTA in 2008)—are in no position to challenge the majority in any form, even in the unlikely case of their bonding together. While the results clearly provide political stability for the near future, critics are worried that, if unchecked by significant opposition, Flosse might once more establish an authoritarian regime rife with the kinds of corruption and abuse of power that he had put in place when he lead a similar majority government before 2004.

A further analysis of the elections on the regional and municipal level shows that Flosse was indeed successful in rebuilding his party to full strength on the ground. Tahoeraa had the highest number of votes in virtually all municipalities, even in places where the mayor was from another party. On the other hand, UPLD was leading only in its traditional stronghold of Fa'aa (where Temaru has been mayor since 1983) as well as on the island of Raivavae in the Austral archipelago. Even in Fa'aa, UPLD failed to reach its hitherto secure overall majority, scoring only 47.99 percent. The other divergence from the overall election results was the Leeward Islands archipelago, in which ATP was leading the vote, particularly in

Uturoa on Raiatea as well as on the islands of Bora-Bora (where Gaston Tong Sang has been mayor since 1989) and Huahine (NT, 7 May 2013).

Since the election result was overwhelmingly clear, there were no post-election surprises like there had been in 2008, and the constituting session of the new assembly on 16 May was mostly a formality. Flosse's son-in-law and designated successor Edouard Fritch was elected Speaker of the assembly by Tahoeraa's thirty-eight representatives as planned, and the next day, Flosse (at age 81 the oldest representative; he had initially presided over the first session as Father of the House) was elected president of French Polynesia by the same majority. On the same day, Flosse presented his cabinet of eight ministers (a massive reduction from earlier cabinets consisting of up to sixteen). Nuihau Laurey, an economist and information technology expert who has published a book on renewable energy (Laurey 2009), was appointed vice president, and the cabinet includes several other young professionals who are newcomers to politics (TI, 17 May 2013). Besides downsizing the cabinet, President Flosse also announced a reduction of his presidential salary by 50 percent and that of the ministers by 10 percent, which was approved at the first cabinet meeting (TI, 22 May 2013).

While the assumption of power by the new government was a smooth process in institutional terms, it was overshadowed by the sudden announcement by the UN General Assembly on 15 May that finally a date had been scheduled for the vote on draft resolution L.56/Rev.1 on

French Polynesia's reinscription on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Two days later, the same day Flosse was scheduled to be elected president, the United Nations took up the resolution. President Temaru, still formally in office, flew to New York to attend the historic occasion, while his vice president, Antony Geros, hoisted the UN flag in front of the president's office in Papeete. During the constituting session on 16 May, Flosse, as Father of the House (whose normal job is merely to give a short ceremonial speech and conduct the election of the Speaker), took the unprecedented steps of not only ordering the restoration of a portrait of the French president and the display of the French and European Union flags at the assembly building (they had been removed by previous speaker Jacqui Drollet of UPLD) but also announcing that the "UN flag will never be displayed in this assembly." Flosse also proceeded to hold a vote on a resolution denouncing the proceedings at the UN General Assembly and calling on all UN member states to stop them, claiming that the election results show an absence of support for reinscription from the people of the country. The resolution passed with the combined votes of Tahoeraa and ATP. Since the new assembly had not been formally constituted, Flosse was clearly overstepping his duties, and the validity of the resolution was contested by UPLD. To avoid a legal challenge, the majority agreed to change the item voted on from a formal "resolution" to a legally irrelevant, symbolic "wish" (TI and *Polynésie Première*, 16 May 2007).

Unimpressed with Flosse's awkward moves, on the morning of 17

May (ie, in the early morning hours in Tahiti, which is six hours behind New York), while Temaru was still president, the UN General Assembly unanimously voted to reinscribe French Polynesia as a non-self-governing territory (NSGT), increasing the list of NSGTs from 16 to 17. Published as UNGA Resolution 67/265, the resolution "confirms the unalienable right of the people of French Polynesia to self-determination and independence," as outlined in the UN Charter as well as in UNGA resolution 1514 of 1960, as a NSGT under the responsibility of the UN Special Committee on Decolonization. Furthermore, the resolution calls on France to "intensify its dialogue with French Polynesia in order to facilitate rapid progress towards a fair and effective self-determination process" (UN 2013b). Literally in the last hours of his presidency, Temaru had thus "lost the battle but won the war," as Australian scholar and journalist Nic Maclellan put it (2013).

Unlike in the precedent-setting case of New Caledonia's reinscription in 1986, and unlike the controversial resolutions on Syria and Israel/Palestine earlier in the current UNGA session, the resolution on French Polynesia was passed unanimously without a vote. However, France boycotted the session, and five other UN member countries—the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States, and Mexico—dissociated themselves from the consensus. The representatives from Germany and the United States explicitly referred to the recent election victory of pro-French parties and the wish expressed by the new majority of the assembly of French Polynesia. On closer examina-

tion, however, the opinion expressed by the pro-French local politicians as well as by the pro-French UN member states is illogical, as reinscription does not lead to a unilateral imposition of independence on the country. On the contrary, it guarantees the right of the people of the territory to self-determination and protects them against arbitrary actions of the French government, as have been experienced all too often in the near past.

Temaru and his supporters were particularly disappointed with the attitude of the French government, since the French Socialist Party of current President François Hollande is in a partnership agreement with Temaru's pro-independence Tavini Huiraatira party. In the agreement, signed by Hollande himself in 2004 and renewed in 2011, the Socialists had pledged to support the right of the territory to self-determination within the UN framework (Socialist Party and Tavini Huiraatira 2004, 2011). By positioning himself against the reinscription resolution, Hollande not only acted like a good old colonialist in the mold of his right-wing predecessors but also broke his word and bitterly disappointed Temaru and his party.

Unsurprisingly, Flosse's new pro-French government continues to fight the United Nations and hopes to have the country removed once more from the list as soon as possible. On 30 May, Tahoeraa and ATP, its "fifth column" in the opposition, voted on a resolution calling on France to immediately conduct a referendum on independence. UPLD abstained from the vote, arguing that a process of self-determination should not be implemented precipitously but must be

developed through dialogue among all local political parties, the French government, and the United Nations, in a way similar to the proceedings happening in New Caledonia under the Nouméa Accord of 1998 (TI, 30 May 2013).

At the same time, French Socialist Party Senator Richard Tuheiava attended the regional seminar of the UN decolonization committee in Quito, Ecuador, where French Polynesia was for the first time officially discussed as a NSGT. Referring to the Flosse government's resolution, the senator pointed out that before any self-determination referendum could take place, a reform of the voter eligibility criteria must be undertaken, as currently any French citizen living in the territory is entitled to participate in local elections. As in New Caledonia, Tuheiava argued that the right to participate in a referendum be limited to persons who have resided in the territory for several decades; otherwise it could not be considered an exercise of the right of self-determination (Tuheiava 2013). Currently, there is a significant population of French expatriates in the territory, and there are indications that most of them tend toward a political attitude against independence. As many of them are short-term residents, having them vote in local elections, let alone in a referendum determining the future status of the country, would indeed be highly problematic, as it would distort the results in a major way.

While reinscription and the resulting possibility of participating in UN institutions marks the achievement of a long-sought goal of Temaru and the independence movement at-large,

it came as a consolation prize for their undeniable loss in the territorial elections. Flosse's return to the presidential palace marks the end, for the time being, of the so-called *Tau'i* (in English, "change"), the political project of Oscar Temaru and UPLD to use their control of the political institutions of the government to set the country on a course toward long-term independence. While he was in and out of power between 2004 and 2013, due to instable majorities in the assembly, the 2013 elections have definitely ended Temaru's current ambitions. At least in terms of electoral strategy, the *Tau'i* has thus clearly failed, with UPLD having proven to be unable to permanently extend its vote beyond its core group of supporters. One of the reasons for this was the ill-organized campaign, which consisted of rather haphazard moves, random visionary statements by Temaru, and little substance in the party's platform aside from support for UN reinscription. A coherent social, financial, and economic policy was hard to identify. Since the country has been in a prolonged economic crisis for several years, and social issues like unemployment, homelessness, crime, and domestic violence are increasing rampantly, it is understandable that most people have more pressing worries than the country's international status at the United Nations, as important as that may be for long-term goals. *Tahoeraa*, with its discourse of nostalgia for the "good old times" before 2004, paired with a few solid promises to alleviate social and economic ills, was evidently a more attractive choice to many voters. Immediately after the election debacle,

the smaller parties within UPLD, especially *Heiura les Verts* (the local Green party), criticized Temaru's style of leading the coalition and contemplated a reform of the alliance to make it more efficient (*DT*, 7 May 2012).

Besides unprofessional campaigning, UPLD never undertook concrete steps to cut back the wasteful government apparatus and the lifestyles of its members to realistic dimensions appropriate for a small-island developing country. As Tahiti-based French teacher and journalist Marc Frémy, a critical intellectual generally supportive of UPLD, commented, "One has seen that too many of the newly arrived copied from the old guard a behavior of *nomenklatura* and *apparatchiks*, greedy for power and wealth" (Frémy 2011, 85; author's translation). Furthermore, since UPLD never held a clear majority in the assembly, it was somewhat obligated to bribe opportunistic representatives with high government positions for them and their friends and family in order to stabilize the majority, even though a denunciation of those very practices had been at the core of UPLD's platform. This had been true even more so for TTA, the predecessor of ATP, whose campaigns for a "moralization" of politics proved similarly hypocritical.

The vast majority of voters, however, continue to switch back and forth between these mainstream political parties, and political newcomers with innovative ideas have no chance for success. Economist and entrepreneur Enrique "Quito" Braun-Ortega's party, *Te Hiti Tau Api*, which presented an excellent program to redress the country's finances and economy,

and trade unionist Emile Vernier's party Rassemblement pour le Respect du Peuple Polynésien, which advocates a dissolution of the autonomous country government and full integration into France as a département like the French Caribbean Islands, achieved only a few hundred votes each.

While the "Tau'i" might be over, it would be premature to see the election loss as a deathblow to the independence movement, as Flosse and his allies have been touting. In a country whose final political status remains unsettled, the only party with a long-term nation-building project, which lost the majority but retains the support of almost one-third of the voters, is still extremely relevant. This is all the more so since the "autonomist" majority parties' goals are purely materialistic, limited to securing a perpetual flow of French subsidies to keep the illusionary bubble of a high per capita income from bursting (Frémy 2011, 146). The project of building a "Polynesian or Maohi Nation," as Frémy (2013) has termed it, remains open-ended.

Ironically, Tahoeraa and ATP, with their obsessive enmity to a UN-supervised decolonization process, are actually helping to keep the independence issue a front page news item. Having accused UPLD, not without some merit, of using the decolonization campaign to distract from Temaru's domestic political incompetence, Flosse and the pro-French "opposition" did almost the same thing after the election, touting their opposition to decolonization, in order to hide their similar incompetence and unwillingness to implement necessary drastic reforms.

As Tahiti-based French historian Jean-Marc Regnault has aptly described (2013), the reinscription of French Polynesia on the decolonization list "raises phantasms: irrational fears and excessive confidences."

This is markedly different from New Caledonia, where the pro-French parties have long accepted the listing of their territory and welcome working with the UN decolonization committee on their country's development, merely differing with independence supporters regarding the final outcome of the decolonization process. Interviewed amid the controversial debate on the issue in Tahiti, Harold Martin, the pro-French current president of the government of New Caledonia, expressed his astonishment at the attitude of pro-French Tahitians, stating that "being on the list is an advantage" (NT, 30 Aug 2012).

The other cloud hanging over Flosse's new pro-French utopia is the ongoing corruption trials against him and several members of the new government. When it became evident that Tahoeraa was on its way to winning the elections, Paris newspapers expressed their surprise and disgust. Influential Paris daily *Le Monde* commented that "the devil is back in Paradise" (22 March 2013). In March, *Le Monde* journalists Gerard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme published a book titled "The Man Who Wanted to Be King" (2013), recounting the corrupt nature of Flosse's "reign" during the 1990s and early 2000s, considering those "crazy years, smelling of sex, blood and money," and referring to Flosse-ruled French Polynesia as a "Tropical East Germany" in reference to the spy scandals involving Flosse's

presidential intelligence service and militia.

The most sinister of these scandals, the 1997 unexplained disappearance of anti-Flosse journalist Jean-Pascal Couraud, keeps haunting the present. After various rumors about Couraud's disappearance being an assassination plot involving people connected to Flosse have been circulating for a long time, on 25 June 2013 two members of the Groupement d'Intervention de la Polynésie (GIP), Flosse's now defunct presidential militia, were indicted for Couraud's murder. On 16 July, charges were also brought against former GIP commander Léonard Puputauki, who is already serving a prison term for homicide in another case (TI, 25 June, 16 July 2013).

Some of the new government's actions are worrisome as well. On 3 June, Bruno Barillot, was fired from his position as the government's official delegate for the follow-up on nuclear testing consequences. Since Barillot is an internationally renowned expert on nuclear testing who had received the Nuclear-Free Future Award in New York in 2010 and who had represented the rights of nuclear testing victims very effectively, his firing provoked an outcry of indignation, not only by local nuclear testing victims association Moruroa e Tatou but also from various anti-nuclear organizations worldwide (TI, 4 June 2013).

Equally widespread indignation came about in reaction to Flosse's appointment of Brigitte Girardin as the "special representative of French Polynesia" in Paris. As the former French minister for overseas territories under Chirac in the early 2000s,

Girardin became a notorious symbol of French colonialism and arrogance when she played a major role in subverting the first Temaru government in order to bring electorally defeated Flosse back to power in 2004. Besides her lack of impartiality, which clearly disqualified her from representing the territory in Paris, the appointment of a French bureaucrat into a position of the local government contradicts the policy of "Oceanisation" (ie, the preferred hiring of locals as officials to gradually replace expatriates). On top of all this, Girardin's made-to-measure "special representative" position is superfluous, since there already exists a well-staffed French Polynesia liaison office that occupies an entire building in Paris.

The Flosse government's neocolonial moves are not the only worrisome aspect making UN-supervised decolonization extremely urgent. More direct proof that French colonialism is alive and well in the country was given on 13 June when the Council of State (France's highest administrative court) declared invalid two local laws dealing with pensions and social security because parts of the debates in the assembly when the laws were passed had been held in Tahitian, not in French. The imposition of French as the only official language is nothing new, but it is unprecedented that French courts now target the mere use of Tahitian by assembly members on the assembly floor (the laws themselves were drafted and published in French). This is indeed extremely worrisome and reminiscent of the worst colonial regimes of the past. An anonymous reader commented quite appropriately that "frankly, it is deci-

sions like this that make people want to become pro-independence” (TI, 15 June 2013).

As important as debates over the political status of the country may be, many ordinary citizens are first and foremost concerned with their quality of life, which for many is deteriorating. In February, an increase in violent crime was revealed in the annual police report for 2012 (TI, 4 Feb 2013), while a report released by the statistics office noted a significant increase in unemployment (TI, 17 Feb 2013). These two tendencies have been developing over the last few years. A few months after the release of the police report, it was announced that a weapons dealership would open on Raiatea (TI, 26 June 2013). With the rise of violent crime, such a store is the last thing the country needs, and it is thus absolutely incomprehensible that authorization was given for it. Even if the establishment of the store was not legally preventable, in a country notorious for its complex administrative bureaucracy, surely authorization for the store could easily have been repeatedly delayed and made so hard to obtain that the owner would have eventually abandoned the project, as has all too frequently happened to other businesses that would have been far more beneficial to the community.

A report by the public health service disclosed that only one-third of the population has access to clean water (TI, 21 Feb 2013). This might be excusable for an independent developing country with limited resources, but for a dependent territory with a high per capita income due to enormous financial subsidies from France, these figures are simply scandalous and pro-

vide implicit evidence of massive misappropriation of funds over decades in most municipalities.

On a positive note, the year under review finally saw the mobile phone market opened up to competition. After years of negotiation, in February 2013, Vodafone obtained permission to operate in the country (TI, 23 Feb 2013), and in June it began selling mobile phone services. This ended the decades-long monopoly of the government’s Postal and Telecommunications Office, which had made mobile phone service in French Polynesia among the most expensive in the world (TI, 11 June, 15 June 2013).

LORENZ GONSCHOR

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MĀORI ISSUES

This has been a year in which ongoing tensions between Māori and the government have been exacerbated by a number of unhelpful judicial decisions. Most widely reported were the actions of Māori groups who sought judicial intervention as the government intensified its drive to legislate the extinguishment of all Māori claims under the Treaty of Waitangi. Self-congratulatory government propaganda belies the increasingly bitter divisions this process has created between claimant groups. Many have turned to the courts, the Waitangi Tribunal, and other Pākehā (European) judicial bodies, not only to seek justice for our treaty claims but also to prevent

the despoliation and desecration of our lands, sacred places, waters, and culture and to prevent the New Zealand Police from terrorizing us. In the past year, we have found that little relief is available to us through those channels. Yet in the face of ongoing adversity, we were still able to celebrate Māori achievement and performance, although we were saddened by the passing of an internationally renowned Māori artist and of a sitting Māori member of Parliament.

In February 2013, our leading contemporary artist, Ralph Hotere, passed away at the age of eighty-one. He was Te Tao Maui hapū (group of extended families) of Te Aupōuri iwi (grouping of hapū), with strong links to Te Rarawa iwi. He was born near Mitimiti on the Hokianga harbor. He had received numerous awards for his prolific artworks and for his leadership and service to Māori arts. Ralph was shy, retiring, and very humble, and he let his works do their own talking (Fox 2013, 4; Muru 2013, 26). “Ralph’s artworks encapsulated much of the struggle that tangata whenua (Māori) were facing during his time. He was an activist; he was a thought provoking philosopher; and he was an advocate for Māori rights” (Sharples 2013). Although he lived most of his life in the south in Otago, he was taken home to Mitimiti to be buried with his ancestors.

At the end of April, Parekura Horomia, Māori member of Parliament and minister of Māori Affairs from 2000 to 2008, passed away at his home in Tolaga Bay on the East Coast at the age of sixty-two. A popular Parliamentarian in his own Māori electorate of Ikaroa-Rāwhiti, he was well liked