

## Political Reviews

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*Micronesia in Review: Issues and Events, 1 July 2011  
to 30 June 2012*

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#### FRENCH POLYNESIA

During the period under review, political stability slightly improved as, for the first time in many years, no change in government took place and no attempt was made to overthrow the current one through a no-confidence motion. However, the severe economic crisis partly caused by years of instability continued, and no major changes in financial and economic policy to improve the situation appear to be in sight. On the other hand, there were significant advances in the international plea for the country's decolonization by the current government under President Oscar Temaru. At the end of the review period, a change of the executive government and legislative majority in France took place, with the prospect of a new deal in relations between Paris and Papeete in the near future. At the same time, a comeback of Gaston Flosse and his party is happening in local politics, as shown in their surprise win of the elections for local representatives in the French National Assembly.

With Temaru's coalition government of his own Union Pour La Démocratie (UPLD) and the outer islands party Te Mana O Te Mau Motu (TMMM) in power since April 2011, the review period started with

controversies over two projects of the new government: a bill to reform the country's land legislation and a resolution to reinscribe the territory on the United Nations List of Non-Self-Governing Territories (NSGTS).

A bill for a *loi de pays* (country law, ie, an act of the French Polynesia Assembly with legal standing slightly lower than French national law) to regulate the acquisition of landed property by the country government in the case of a landowner dying without heirs met with strong negative reactions as soon as it was introduced in the assembly in mid-August. The bill's opponents—led by heir to the Tahitian royal family Teriihinoiatua Joinville Pomare, land rights activist Monil Tetuanui, and assembly members Sandra Manutahi Lévy-Agami and Sabrina Birk—accused Temaru's government of attempting to acquire private lands in order to resell them for profit (TP, 16 Aug, 19 Aug 2011). Despite reassurances by Vice President Antony Geros that the bill would not be less favorable to landowning families than the current legal situation (TP, 7 Aug 2011), the protests went on and eventually led to an indefinite postponement of the bill (TPM, Sept 2011), even though the issue later reemerged, with Pomare accusing the UPLD of "neo-colonialism" (DT, 2 Nov 2011).

The main focus of Temaru's government throughout the review period, however, was to pursue the country's

reinscription on the UN List of Non-Self-Governing Territories. For the last six decades, the absence of French Polynesia from that list, having been unilaterally removed by France in 1947, has represented a great anomaly in the Pacific, since virtually all other dependent territories in the Pacific have been listed.

On 18 August, after passionate debates, the assembly adopted a resolution asking the French president to reverse the removal of the territory from the list. The vote for the resolution was a historic moment in the country's history, since French Polynesia's government now for the first time had received an explicit mandate to pursue decolonization on an international level. The decolonization issue had always been the fracture point in Temaru's earlier governing coalitions, since they included anti-independence politicians who accused Temaru of breaking assurances of neutrality on the independence question made in coalition agreements. This time, however, Temaru had made support for reinscription an explicit precondition for any coalition agreement, so it passed rather smoothly with support from all but one (who abstained) of the thirty-one member UPLD-TMMM majority (TP, 18 Aug 2011).

On the other hand, members of the three opposition caucuses—Tahoeraa Huiraatira (leader Gaston Flosse), To Tatou Aia (Gaston Tong Sang), and Ia Ora Te Fenua (Jean-Christophe Bouissou)—reacted with fierce hostility bordering on hysteria. Among other issues, opposition leaders argued that the resolution was not legitimate because several of the TMMM

representatives had been elected on pro-French lists and had only recently crossed the floor and therefore lacked the mandate to vote for the country's decolonization (TP, 22 Aug 2011). This line of argument is rather absurd and hypocritical since, first of all, in a representative democracy members of Parliament are free to change their opinions on issues and, second, all three opposition parties had earlier been part of Temaru-led coalition governments and found nothing wrong with working under a pro-independence president as long as it gained them ministerial portfolios.

More reasonable in her approach was TMMM representative Eléanor Parker, who in her speech identified herself as an opponent of independence but argued that only a decolonization process under UN oversight could guarantee a reasonable debate on the topic and a fair vote of self-determination, without fear of manipulation by the French government (TP, 18 Aug 2011). In that sense, it is indeed difficult to understand what local pro-French leaders fear from the territory's re-listing as a non-self-governing territory, since listing does not imply independence unless expressly wished for by the population. The only rational motivation for those ferociously opposed to reinscription might be the fact that almost all of them were members and associates of the corrupt and authoritarian Flosse government before 2004 (see below), and one could assume they might worry about the country being too thoroughly audited and examined by a neutral outside body such as the UN decolonization committee.

The assembly's resolution had

broad repercussions across the Pacific. The Pacific Conference of Churches, at its fiftieth annual reunion in Apia, Sāmoa, in the presence of President Temaru, passed a resolution supporting French Polynesia's reinscription (TP, 29 Aug 2011). Similarly, Fijian interim Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama declared himself in favor of reinscription during the second "Engaging with the Pacific" meeting in Nadi, Fiji, on 1–2 September. With Senator Richard Ariihau Tuheiva attending as Temaru's special envoy, the Final Communiqué of the meeting includes a resolution in favor of reinscription, which besides those of Fiji and French Polynesia, carries signatures representing the governments of Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Nauru, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia (Government of Fiji 2011).

The French government, on the other hand, showed itself to be hostile toward reinscription and started a vigorous campaign before the annual meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) on 7–8 September in Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand, in order to lobby Forum member states into dropping or watering down the proposal. Apparently alarmed by Temaru's obtaining increasing support for reinscription Pacific-wide, Paris for the first time sent its foreign minister, Alain Juppé, to attend the Forum as an observer alongside a delegation including Gaston Tong Sang.

Despite Temaru's and Tuheiva's efforts as official representatives of their country, French lobbying proved at least partially successful, since the

passage referring to French Polynesia in the 2012 Forum Final Communiqué was visibly reduced from what was originally expected. Instead of supporting reinscription, the communiqué merely mentions recalling the Forum's "2004 decision to support the principle of French Polynesia's right to self-determination" and reiterates an "encouragement to French Polynesia and France to seek an agreed approach on how to realise French Polynesia's right to self-determination" (Pacific Islands Forum 2011, 11). Since, unlike in New Caledonia, France has refused for decades to such an "agreed approach" for French Polynesia, the passage in the Forum Communiqué sounds rather ironic.

A crucial factor in the absence of strong PIF backing was the lack of support from New Zealand and Australia, both of which have abandoned their once strong espousal of decolonization of French territories and are now increasingly cooperating with France in political and military matters. Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs Richard Marles later reiterated that his government only supports a bilateral process between Paris and Papeete but no reinscription at the UN level (ABC Radio Australia, 17 April 2012).

Despite the disappointing outcome of the PIF meeting, individual Pacific Island states continued to support French Polynesia more intensively. In late September, the prime ministers of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, Meltek Sato Kilman Lituvanu and Danny Philip, demanded the country's reinscription in their speeches on the floor of the UN General Assembly (Kilman Lituvanu 2011; Philip 2011),

and Sāmoa's Prime Minister Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi allowed Temaru and Tuheiava to be included in the Samoan UN Delegation. Within the UN organization, no less than Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had shown genuine interest in Temaru's quest for reinscription while attending the Auckland PIF meeting (TP, 7 Sept 2011).

While politics focused on these important issues relating to the international political status and long-term development goals of the country, urgent domestic reforms were neglected and the local economy remained in a precarious state, with no recovery in sight. Due to the logic of clientele politics, no serious reform of the overstuffed and overpaid territorial administration has been attempted by any previous governments, and the UPLD is no exception, despite its noble goals of decolonization. The inaction of the country's government in that respect caused the French national government to enact some reforms in its stead and implement them from above. For instance, on 30 June 2011, the French National Assembly voted to reduce the salaries of French Polynesia Assembly representatives by 10 percent after the local assembly had refused to follow earlier recommendations to do so (TPM, Aug 2011).

While forcing some cuts in the territorial administration, the French State also reduced the amounts of money directly injected into the country. According to a press release by the French High Commission, the amount of money France spent in 2010 within French Polynesia amounted to 179 billion CFP francs (US\$1.79 billion) (TPM, Aug 2011), a significant decrease from

the 239 billion CFP francs spent in 2009.

In September, the French and territorial governments formally announced the construction of a second prison on the south shore of Tahiti, the current one in Nuutania in Faaa being run down and heavily overcrowded. The project, at an estimated cost of 8 billion CFP francs (US\$80 million), is fraught with controversy, especially in the district of Papeari where the complex is to be built. In an editorial comment, *Tahiti Pacifique* editor Alex DuPrel semi-jokingly argued that "the fact that the construction of a prison is currently the only large building project under way in Tahiti could be interpreted as rather symbolic," while the issue's headline dubbed French Polynesia the "Greece of the Pacific," in reference to the current severe financial crisis in the European country (TPM, Oct 2011). Shortly after the prison announcement, Tahiti's infrastructure received a significant improvement; a tunnel bypassing the coastal cliffs at Arahoho Blowhole, hitherto passable only through a narrow winding road that had been a hot spot for traffic accidents, was opened in mid-October (TP, 11 Oct 2011).

Also in October, the topic of post-colonial nation building once more filled the headlines when President Temaru suggested using the primary elections of the French Socialist Party (of which Temaru's Tavini Huiraatira, the chief component of the UPLD, is the local partner) as an unofficial referendum to change the country's name from French Polynesia to "Maohi Nui" (Greater Maohi, referring to the Tahitian term for native Polynesian).

Already during the PIF meeting in August, Temaru had designated himself as “President of Maohi Nui.” The president’s suggested name change sparked an intense debate and led once more to the pro-French opposition bringing forward all sorts of charges against the president, including alleged racism since the term “Maohi Nui” would supposedly exclude non-Polynesians (TP, 4 Oct, 7 Oct 2011).

“French Polynesia” is, of course, an anachronistic colonial name, akin to such obsolete entities as “French Indochina,” “British East Africa,” or “Netherlands Indies.” In addition, the name is imprecise since there are other Polynesian islands under French rule not included in the territory (ie, Wallis and Futuna). The name “French Polynesia” was imposed by Paris in 1957 to replace the earlier name “French Establishments of Oceania” against the will of local leaders at the time. Given these facts, a change of the country’s official name is overdue. However, one of the problems is that French Polynesia, unlike most other modern Polynesian polities, is an artificial entity created through French colonization that does not correspond to any precolonial political, cultural, or linguistic unit and, therefore, there is no original native name for the entire country. While the majority of local politicians in 1957 opposed “French Polynesia” and suggested to simply rename the territory “Tahiti” (Regnault 2006, 200–204), the most common suggestions for a name change in recent times have been “Tahiti Nui” (Greater Tahiti) and “Maohi Nui.” “Tahiti Nui” has been criticized as too Tahiti-centric, as it could be construed as denying the

other islands any importance, but at a closer look, “Maohi Nui” is hardly less problematic. Even though from a Tahitian point of view inclusive of other Polynesians, it is nevertheless also a Tahiti-centric term, since the word “Maohi” is uniquely Tahitian and not found in many of the outer islands languages. Overall, “Tahiti Nui” appears more preferable, since it has already been used in the names of several semi-governmental institutions, such as the country’s airline (Air Tahiti Nui) and TV station (Tahiti Nui Television), as well as the national anthem (“Ia Ora O Tahiti Nui”) and order of merit (Order of Tahiti Nui). While it was initially championed only by Gaston Flosse, during the middle of the past decade there was a short-lived consensus on “Tahiti Nui” when Temaru for a while settled for that name as well. In addition, of all suggested names, “Tahiti Nui” is the most internationally recognizable, an important factor for a largely tourism-based economy. In terms of name recognition, “Tahiti Nui” actually scores higher than “French Polynesia”—most tourists vacationing in “Tahiti” only learn of the existence of the name “French Polynesia” at immigration—and it scores far higher than the rather obscure “Maohi Nui.”

While “Maohi Nui” might be impractical internationally, making charges that the term is “racist” is very much baseless. It remains unclear what would be racist about replacing a colonial name with one in a native language referring to the native people, a practice that has been common in processes of decolonization elsewhere, often long before actual independence.

While the debate on the name change went on—albeit with no substantial consequences, since an official name change would require a complex French legislative process (TP, 4 Oct 2011)—attention focused again on former President Gaston Flosse’s troubles with the law. In early October, Flosse was sentenced to four years in jail for the so-called fictional employments affair, while several of his former associates, including leading politicians such as Jean-Christophe Bouissou, Justin Arapari, Bruno Sandras, and Michel Buillard, were sentenced to prison or suspended prison sentences and high fines (TP, 4 Oct 2011). During his presidency between 1991 and 2004, Flosse had employed the codefendants at the president’s office as “consultants,” or “task officers,” for which they were paid high salaries, while in reality none of them ever worked there. All of them filed appeals, so the trial will drag on for a long time and none of them will go to jail unless and until their sentences are confirmed by the appellate court.

Another notoriously corrupt politician, Emile Vernaudeau, who had previously been convicted of massive embezzlement of public funds, was released from prison in the first week of June (TPM, June–July 2012). Vernaudeau was the first local politician in a long time to actually serve a long prison sentence for corruption, and one can only hope that his case will serve as a precedent for the various other corruption cases currently ongoing.

Another judicial controversy was resolved in late October, when the French Council of State (highest court)

found the budget plan Gaston Tong Sang had attempted to enact by decree in February of 2011 to be unconstitutional. The decision had no immediate effect, since the government has since changed, but it increased Temaru’s legitimacy by denouncing his predecessor’s handling of the country’s financial affairs (PIR, 28 Oct 2011).

Meanwhile, Senator Tuheiava is emerging as a new leader in local politics. Over the last few years, Tuheiava has increasingly become one of the public faces of the UPLD, besides Temaru and his longtime lieutenants such as Jacqui Drollet and Antony Geros. In October, Tahiti-based French journalist Serge Massau published a book of collected interviews with the senator (the youngest in the entire French Senate) and his innovative political ideas (Massau 2011). In *Paroles d’un autochtone* (Words of an indigenous man), Tuheiava presents his long-term social and political visions of sovereignty (preferring that word over “independence”), indigenous rights, and pan-Pacific solidarity. In the latter respect, Tuheiava has been indeed very active, promoting the inscription of Raiatea’s Marae Taputapuatea (a historic temple of great significance throughout Eastern Polynesia) on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, while also actively supporting the rights of other Polynesian countries under foreign rule, such as Rapa Nui during the violent crackdown by Chilean forces on the island’s people in 2010.

In the same context, on 29 September, Tuheiava posed an official question to French Prime Minister François Fillon about the legal status of relations between France and Hawai‘i.

Since Hawai'i was not acquired by the United States in conformity with international law through a treaty of annexation but was unilaterally occupied in 1898, and previous executive agreements between the Hawaiian Kingdom and the United States were never carried out, the current legal status of the international treaties between Hawai'i and third countries, none of which were ever formally terminated, is unclear. In his written question, Tuheiava referred to a treaty made in 1857 between French Emperor Napoleon III and Hawaiian King Kamehameha IV, referring to the importance of clarifying the status of that treaty for French Polynesia, since Hawai'i is an important economic partner for the country today, as it was in the 1850s when Tahiti was a French Protectorate (Government of France 2011).

While engaged in assisting his own and other Polynesian countries under foreign rule, Tuheiava also came under attack for questionable dealings in his profession as a lawyer. In mid-March 2012, a judicial indictment against the senator was initiated, charging him with breach of trust, forgery, and use of forgeries, as he was accused of taking payment from clients but not properly serving them. Tuheiava, however, considered this a politically motivated conspiracy attempting to remove him from office because of his pro-sovereignty convictions (*TPM*, April 2012).

In November 2011, two ceremonies marking important historical eras took place. In Papara, a monument honoring Opuhara, the leader of the traditionalist party slain in the decisive 1815 battle between Christians

and traditionalists, was dedicated in front of the town hall by a group of political leaders (*TP*, 12 Nov 2011). As the leader of resistance against both Christianization and Pomare hegemony, Opuhara is regarded as a hero by movements to revive the traditional religion as well as by Pomare critics, thus making the ceremony, attended by practicing Christians and Pomare descendants, a symbolic gesture of reconciliation between the two religions and between rival lineages.

Late November also saw the rededication of historic St Michael's Cathedral on Mangareva, the largest nineteenth-century church building and one of the oldest in the Pacific. Built in 1846 with a length of 55 meters and a steeple height of 25 meters, the historic monument had fallen into disrepair by the early 2000s and was threatened with collapse. The restoration, which began in 2008, cost 537 million CFP francs (US\$5.4 million) and was jointly funded by the Catholic Church, the French State, the government of French Polynesia, and private donors (*TPM*, Dec 2011; *TP*, 12 Nov 2011).

Around the same time, another political controversy gained attention when Jean-Paul Barral, a long-term independence activist, high school teacher, and government official, resigned in disgust from his office as advisor to assembly Speaker Jacqui Drollet and harshly criticized the politicians of all parties. While arguing that the pro-French territorial government under Gaston Flosse from 1991 to 2004 "in complicity with the French State had created the largest corruption machine ever existing in the territory of the French Republic,"

the succeeding governments led by Temaru, Drollet, and other independence supporters, despite their slogan of “*Tauī Roa*” (Great Change) had done nothing substantial to do away with that corrupt system. On the contrary, during Temaru’s presidency, a single politician (Emile Vernaudon) had embezzled hitherto unparalleled amounts of public funds, and the political culture had fallen to such a low level that some politicians were now changing their party affiliation every few months, just to be on the side of the government majority. When Barral had recently suggested to Speaker Drollet to work out a new consensus-based project inclusive of all political camps and wider elements of society in order to enable the credible and responsible conduct of government, Drollet and other UPLD colleagues reportedly advised him to postpone his suggestions until after the next elections. Barral took this as another indicator of how politics continue to operate on the short-term logic of power strategies (*TPM*, Dec 2011).

Mostly concurring with Barral, Tahiti-based political scientist Sémir Al-Wardi and historian Jean-Marc Regnault in late 2011 published a book with the appropriate title *Tahiti en crise durable* (Tahiti in a sustainable crisis), deploring the seemingly irresolvable political and economic impasse in which the country has been stuck for almost a decade (Al-Wardi and Regnault 2011).

With no changes in sight within the formal political system, it should not come as a surprise that alternative political projects are flourishing. In mid-December, French police

arrested Teatuaura Temataru, the self-proclaimed “King of Tahiti,” as well as several supporters of his “government.” Hailing from the island of Maupiti, Temataru had attracted attention when he first proclaimed himself king of his home island and then created a Pacific confederation with representatives of other self-proclaimed “kingdoms” on other Polynesian islands. Eventually, in late 2011 he opened his own tribunal in Papeete and appeared with a guard of twenty uniformed bodyguards and a service vehicle inscribed “Police Royale.” The last two steps provoked police intervention because, according to the 2004 organic law of French Polynesia, the judiciary and internal security are responsibilities of the French state, which does not tolerate messing with its prerogatives (*TPM*, Jan 2012). For similar reasons, in early July 2012, police cracked down on another self-proclaimed government, “Hau Pakumotu,” and arrested its leaders (*TNTV news*, 13 July 2012). These and other, similarly bizarre-looking fantasy states founded recently in Tahiti might seem to be merely comic operas, but there are deeper reasons for the increasing popularity of these movements. Growing numbers especially among the poorer rural Tahitian population have lost confidence in the pro-independence political parties they traditionally voted for, because the latter have increasingly become part of the political establishment, while an improvement of social and economic conditions for the lower classes is nowhere in sight.

The New Year started with the closure of Tahitipresse, the country’s official news agency, which,

being staffed with rather few people in comparison to other government agencies, fell victim to the hesitant, unsystematic, and rather symbolic cuts in government expenditure. Tahitipresse had usually been a reliable source of information for this review. Also during the review period, the French Pacific territories lost an important figure in the development of print media when in September 2011, journalist and printer Daniel Tardieu passed away in Nouméa at age ninety. Tardieu cofounded the oldest currently existing newspaper of the country, *Les Nouvelles de Tahiti*, in 1948, then moved to New Caledonia where he created *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, which is still the major daily newspaper there (*TPM*, Oct 2011).

The first major political event in the New Year was the visit by French Minister for Overseas Territories Marie-Luce Penchard from 5 to 14 February. During the visit, Vice President Geros signed a contract with the minister, pledging to sell the building that houses the French Polynesia office in Paris in order to be eligible for an advance in funds from the French treasury. On 19 February, however, Geros announced that the country government would not sell the building, since this would constitute a gesture of self-humiliation by Tahiti vis-à-vis Paris. The French government subsequently blocked release of the promised funds (*TPM*, March 2012).

In March, another infrastructural pet project was inaugurated: a new harbor station intended to facilitate ferry traffic to Moorea. Typical for official buildings in Tahiti, the station is an impressive display of architecture but not very practical and, with

a price tag of 2.5 billion CFP francs (US\$25 million), very costly (*TPM*, April 2012, May 2012).

While the government keeps wasting funds for ill-conceived prestige projects such as this, the private sector continues to stagnate. Among the few exceptions was the purchase of the luxury hotel Le Méridien in Punaauia by the Samoan Hotel company Aggie Grey's in January, one of the few recent instances of foreign investment in the country's tourism industry and, interestingly enough, by a small company from a neighboring Island nation (*TPM*, Feb 2012).

In late April, President Temaru announced another giant economic project, a large-scale tuna farm in Hao atoll, to be financed by Chinese investors (*TPM*, May 2012, June–July 2012; *TI*, 2 June 2012). Similar projects to take advantage of the infrastructure leftover from the former French military base on Hao and of the atoll's huge lagoon had been announced by several preceding governments, so it remains to be seen whether the project will indeed be implemented.

During the remaining period under review, the country was mainly preoccupied with the French national elections. During the presidential elections on 21 April and 5 May, the majority of French Polynesia's voters, contrary to the metropolitan trend, voted for incumbent President Nicolas Sarkozy. During the first election round, Sarkozy received 45.21 percent of the votes (27.18 percent in France), against 32.43 percent for Socialist candidate François Hollande (28.63 percent in France). Marine Le Pen of the extreme right-wing Front National, who polled third in France

with 17.90 percent, reached only 5.73 percent in French Polynesia. Fourth place was claimed by François Bayrou of the liberal Mouvement Démocrate party, with 5.72 percent locally (9.13 percent in France). All other candidates received insignificant local results, including Philippe Poutou of the radical left Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste; although he was the only French presidential candidate to have unambiguously declared himself in favor of French Polynesia's independence, he gained only 0.59 percent of the local vote (1.15 percent in France). Local participation was a record low of 49.35 percent, as opposed to 79.48 percent of the voters in France.

In the runoff, won nationally by Hollande with 51.64 percent, Sarkozy still led the local vote with 53.26 percent (48.36 percent in France) against 48.11 percent for Hollande. Compared to the last presidential election, the local vote for Sarkozy even increased, since in the 2007 runoff, Sarkozy had received 51.90 percent. Hollande led the vote only in the Marquesas Islands, some of the Tuamotu and Austral Islands, the islands of Tahaa and Moorea, as well as in the municipalities of Faaa and West Taïarapu on Tahiti. At 58.94 percent, local participation in the runoff was still much lower than in France (80.35 percent) but relatively high for local standards. Irregularities in the counting of votes compelled the French Constitutional Council to declare the election in the municipality of Papeete to be void, but because of the overall insignificance of those votes, this had no effect on the results of the presidential election as a whole (RNZI, 10 May 2012).

The specifics of the local results, and their divergence from French national trends, can be best explained by looking back at the positioning of the local political parties in the preceding electoral campaign. A large front encompassing virtually all of the otherwise divided local pro-French parties, including Flosse's Tahoeraa and Tong Sang's To Tatou Aia, had declared themselves in favor of Sarkozy, which explains the latter's surprisingly good score. Temaru's formal partnership with the French Socialist party explains why Hollande won in UPLD-ruled municipalities. Bayrou scored third, since he had the local support of Nicole Bouteau's minor centrist party No Oe E Te Nunaa. The negligible scores of all other candidates, including the nationally strong Le Pen and even Poutou, the only candidate specifically engaged for a local political topic, are the results of their lack of a local political party supporting their campaign.

Especially interesting from a political point of view was the local campaign for Sarkozy, since in his case, several competing parties had rallied behind one French candidate from the first round, a strategy that allowed them to conceal their individual strength and make it possible for each of them to count Sarkozy's votes as theirs. This strategy was most evidently used by Gaston Flosse, whose once all-powerful Tahoeraa had suffered extreme losses during the last territorial election in 2008 and had subsequently lost the endorsement from Sarkozy's Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) party as its local partner to Tong Sang's To Tatou Aia. To rally behind Sarkozy

despite all of that was thus a brilliant move for Flosse to save face and at the same time outmaneuver Tong Sang and other recently created pro-French splinter groups (*NT*, 22 Apr 2012).

When on 12 April, Sarkozy's Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs François Baroin visited Tahiti for a campaign speech, he was supposed to be hosted by representatives of all local parties that had declared support for Sarkozy, but at first Flosse was conspicuously absent. After Tong Sang and other leaders of small pro-French splinter parties had waited for a while, Flosse suddenly showed up with 5,000 of his party members, all uniformed in orange, the Tahoeraa party color, and crowded the hall where Baroin was to speak, making an overwhelming impression on both the minister and the local party leaders (*TPM*, May 2012).

The election of Hollande might mark the beginning of a new era. The five years of Sarkozy brought no visible change in the French attitude toward Tahiti. Essentially, Sarkozy had continued Chirac's policy of cultivating special relations with a local pro-French client leader (Flosse for Chirac, Tong Sang for Sarkozy) and had manipulated the political process in that client's favor, while maintaining an overall arrogant and chauvinistic attitude against independence in general and Oscar Temaru's party in particular. The active campaign of the Sarkozy government against reinscription once again was evidence for that continuing colonialist attitude.

Hollande's position on these questions remains to be seen. Even though on 25 February the Socialist presidential candidate had replied to a provoc-

atively asked question by a journalist that he was not for the independence of French Polynesia, he has also stated that this is a personal disagreement between him and his partner Oscar Temaru (*TPM*, March 2012), implying that he was not intending to limit the country's right to self-determination as Sarkozy had done. Since his election as president, Hollande has thus far avoided making any further explicit statements on the issue.

With the change of power in Paris thus raising significant hope for a new deal with Tahiti, the bid for reinscription as a non-self-governing territory received a new boost at the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. On 9 May the representatives of Papua New Guinea and Fiji introduced a resolution, which was approved and included in the meeting's communiqué, stating that the organization, consisting of 120 member states, "affirmed the inalienable right of the people of French Polynesia–Ma'ohi Nui to self-determination in accordance with Chapter XI of the United Nations and the UN General Assembly Resolution 1514(xv)" (Fiji Ministry of Information, 11 May 2012). Representing two-thirds of the UN member states, in the words of a Fijian journalist reporting on the issue, "the support by the 120 members of the movement will greatly assist the advancement of the issue in the United Nations," referring to the next General Assembly meeting in September 2012 (*Fiji Sun*, 13 May 2012).

The news once more drew sharp criticism from the pro-French opposition parties. In a press statement,

Tahoeraa called the resolution of the Non-Aligned Movement an “inacceptable interference in the internal affairs of France,” while Tong Sang denied the legitimacy of Fiji’s and Papua New Guinea’s activism, based on their governments’ poor democratic performance (TI, 15 May 2012). This reaction by Tahoeraa and its former member was rather hypocritical, since Flosse had been one of the chief outside supporters of the earlier Fijian military dictatorship of Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka in the 1980s (Regnault 2011). What makes Tahoeraa’s position even more ironic is the fact that Rabuka’s regime was based on indigenous ethno-nationalism and Christian fundamentalism, the very ideologies pro-French Tahitians have constantly accused Temaru of harboring, while the current Fijian military government under Bainimarama advocates a secular and multiethnic Fijian state.

If the campaign for the French presidential election gave some indications of Tahoeraa’s comeback, the subsequent French legislative elections, held in French Polynesia on 2 and 16 June, restored Flosse’s party to a position of strength not seen since 2004. Due to the increase in population, the number of deputies to represent the country in the French National Assembly, each to be elected in a single-member constituency in two rounds, was increased from two to three.

Already in the first round of voting, Tahoeraa candidate Edouard Fritch (Flosse’s son-in-law and leader of the Tahoeraa caucus in the assembly) led the vote in the first constituency (municipalities of Papeete, Pirae, and

Arue on Tahiti as well as the island of Moorea and the Tuamotu and Marquesas Islands) with 36.62 percent, a significant advance over UPLD candidate and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Pierre Frébault, who gained only 18.30 percent. The incumbent, Papeete Mayor Michel Buillard (To Tatou Aia), was not running again. The balance of the votes went to several candidates of small splinter parties.

In the second constituency (rural municipalities on Tahiti as well as the Austral Islands), Tahoeraa candidate Jonas Tahuaitu (assistant mayor of Papeari) scored highest with 29.18 percent of the votes, but the UPLD candidate, attorney and political newcomer Philippe Neuffer, who obtained 24.34 percent, scored significantly higher than Frébault did in his race. Incumbent Bruno Sandras, the mayor of Papara who had recently left Tahoeraa to found his own party and who received official support from the French UMP, came in fourth with 9.44 percent, overtaken by Teiva Manutahi (of the small independent party Pori-netia Ora), who received a surprising 10.28 percent.

Only in the third constituency was UPLD leading the vote in the first round, where its candidate, Minister of Education, Youth, and Sports Tauhiti Nena, received 30.52 percent against Tahoeraa candidate Jean Paul Tuaiva (a young businessman and political newcomer) with 23.90 percent. Former President and Bora-Bora Mayor Gaston Tong Sang, whose party To Tatou Aia had won the last territorial elections in 2008, scored third with only 16.45 percent. At 45.79 percent, local participation was

significantly lower than the French national turnout of 57.23 percent.

In the runoff election, Fritch virtually doubled his votes and won the first constituency with a solid majority of 63.36 percent. In the second constituency, the trend of the first round was also reinforced, with Tahuaitu scoring 53.42 percent in a clear victory over Neuffer, even though the latter had the support of Sandras as well as several small splinter candidates from the first round (TI, 13 June, 16 June 2012). In the third constituency, however, the runoff went against the trend of the first round, and Tuaiva won a bare majority of 50.24 percent against Nena (TI, 16 June 2012). Since the difference between the two was only 152 votes and there were rumors about irregularities in Tahoeraa-controlled municipalities, Nena challenged the results in the third constituency (DT, 4 July 2012). The complaint, however, had no injunctive consequences, and Tuaiva has been declared winner until proven otherwise. At 53.99 percent, local turnout for the runoff drew closer to the French national figure of 55.41 percent.

Tahoeraa is not officially supported by any French party after having been dumped by the UMP in 2008, so it was at first unclear in which parliamentary caucus the three Tahoeraa deputies would sit. Eventually, they decided to become members of the Union des Démocrates et Indépendants Caucus, which groups the deputies of various small center-right parties in opposition to Hollande, under the leadership of Jean-Louis Borloo of the Parti Radical (TI, 20 June 2012)

An analysis of the election results

shows that the majority of local voters, similar to the presidential elections, did not follow the French trend—the Socialist Party and its center-left allies won an overall majority of 331 of 577 seats in the National Assembly—but continued to vote for the local pro-French parties affiliated with the center-right French opposition. Temaru's Socialist-allied UPLD was not able to capitalize on the political change in France and reach out to voters outside of its traditional support base. At the same time, within the pro-French camp, voters' support is shifting from To Tatou Aia and other Tahoeraa breakaway groups back to Tahoeraa.

However, as is usual in French Polynesian elections, gerrymandering had a part in the election results as well. Previously, the first of the two constituencies had included the western half of Tahiti plus the western outer islands, while the second constituency covered the eastern half of the main island and the archipelagos to the east. Since roughly two-thirds of the population live on Tahiti and one-third on the outer islands, a logical redistricting would have split Tahiti into two and made the outer islands one constituency, thus giving the outer archipelagos their own voice in Paris. Instead, the French government decided to make each constituency once more consist of a slice of Tahiti and lump each of them together with a few outer islands, a system that could hardly be more absurd. Besides, the gerrymandering was also clearly designed to minimize the chances of Temaru's party gaining a seat, since the third constituency lumped together Temaru's main stronghold of Faaa

with the neighboring, largely pro-French district of Punaauia, home to many French settlers, while excluding the nearby island of Moorea, another UPLD stronghold. Moorea is located nearest to Faaa and Punaauia but against all logic was included in the first constituency.

Undeniable, however, is the fact that Tong Sang and his party have fallen back among the ranks of minor splinter groups, as if their 2008 election victory had never happened. Their comet-like rise and fall may be explained through the obvious manipulations by the then French government under Sarkozy, who wanted to build up Tong Sang as a loyal and complacent client leader, while the latter apparently lacks both the charisma and the organizational talent of Temaru and Flosse. The local political scene has thus largely reverted from a triangular configuration of Temaru versus Flosse versus Tong Sang (with permanently shifting alliances between two of the three) back to a bipolarization between Temaru (pro-independence) and Flosse (anti-independence). In view of the 2013 territorial elections, however, a new third force is currently in formation by politicians hitherto in the background, led by Teiva Manutahi, Nicole Bouteau, and Philip Schyle (TI, 2 July 2012). The latter two scored between 8 and 9 percent each in the first constituency and have been known for a long time as proponents of a moderate “middle path.”

The review period ended on a positive note when the Administrative Court in Papeete decided in favor of six nuclear-test veterans whose request for compensation for

radiation-induced disease had been rejected by the French Ministry of Defense. Nuclear test victims' association *Moruroa e Tatou* considered the verdict an important breakthrough (TI, 25 June 2012). On the negative side, the end of the period under review was again marked by a strike at the airport at the beginning of the school holiday season, an initiative by trade union leaders to defend their members' privileges without consideration of the overall impact of such actions on the country's already severely affected economy (TPM, June–July 2012).

While all these troubles continued at home, at least one small group of Tahitians were able to fulfill a lifetime dream when the voyaging canoe *Faa-faite*, having made previous voyages to Hawai'i and other Polynesian islands, traveled via Sāmoa, Fiji, and Vanuatu to Solomon Islands to attend the 11th Festival of Pacific Arts in Honiara, the first modern voyage of a Tahitian canoe to Western Polynesia and Melanesia (TI, 30 June 2012).

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## MĀORI ISSUES

In a year when tensions between Māori and the government were increasing, hosting the Rugby World Cup was a welcome albeit temporary distraction. Despite a strong Māori presence at the opening and on the New Zealand All Blacks team, displays of racism marred the event on more than one occasion. This very