



TTMUN'24

FORUM: SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE

QUESTION OF: THE STATUS OF NEW CALEDONIA
AND “NOUMEA ACCORD”



INTRODUCTION

On December 12, 2021, New Caledonia, a French colony in the South Pacific, conducted an independence vote. After votes in 2018 and 2020, when liberty was rejected by 57% and 53% of voters, respectively, this was the third and final referendum conducted in accordance with the terms of the Nouméa Accord. Due to the independence groups' boycott of the referendum, the outcome was incredibly lopsided in favor of the status quo: 96% of voters



rejected independence, while only 4% supported it. The indigenous Kanak population boycotted the referendum; their leaders demanded a postponement of the vote in the wake of a massive COVID-19 outbreak that started in September 2021 and resulted in 280 deaths. They also emphasized that Kanak mourning customs could last for up to a year. Anti-independence campaigners emphasized that the outbreak had significantly decreased by mid-November and accused proponents of using the pandemic as an excuse to postpone a referendum they were afraid to lose because it had improved France's image after it sent doctors and vaccine doses and injected ten billion CFP francs into the local economy. The French government sent 2,000 military personnel to New Caledonia in anticipation of rioting, but the referendum was conducted smoothly.

The referendum's outcome was welcomed by French President Emmanuel Macron, who also said that France "is more beautiful because New Caledonia has decided to stay part of it." He said that New Caledonia is now "free from the binary choice of 'Yes' or 'No'" and urged its



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lawmakers to start "building a common project while recognising and respecting the dignity of everyone" in reference to the transition period that is now underway. Supporters of independence demanded to be included in the post-referendum talks about New Caledonia's future status. However, they declined to comply prior to the conclusion of the April 2022 French presidential election. There will be a referendum on the forthcoming status of New Caledonia within France during the transition phase, which is set to run until June 30, 2023.

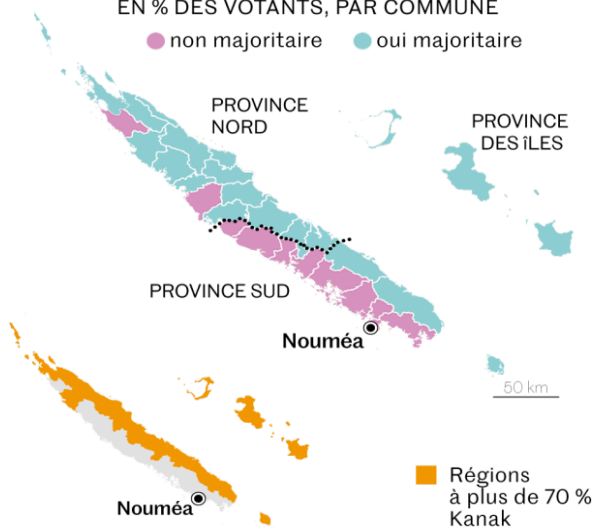
DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

« Voulez-vous que la Nouvelle-Calédonie accède à la pleine souveraineté et devienne indépendante ? »
résultats provisoires, en % des votants



RÉSULTATS PROVISOIRES
EN % DES VOTANTS, PAR COMMUNE

- non majoritaire
- oui majoritaire



INFOGRAPHIE LE MONDE
SOURCE : NOUVELLE-CALÉDONIE PREMIÈRE

The **Noumea Accord** of 1998 is a commitment made by the French Republic to give New Caledonia's native Kanak people more political authority over a twenty-year transitional period. Lionel Jospin signed it on May 5, 1998, and 72% of voters in a referendum held in New Caledonia on November 8, 1998, accepted it. Two more referendum votes on whether to stay a special collaboration of France or become an independent state have been held in accordance with the deal. The first took place in 2018 and the second in 2020. The majority in both polls decided to stick with French. France has maintained authority over immigration, law enforcement, currency, military, and foreign policy under the terms of the Nouméa Accord. France won't stop doing this even after the vote rejected its bid to

become an independent nation in 2021. The Nouméa Accord, so named after the capital and largest city of New Caledonia, was the second accord after the Matignon Agreements (1988). If an anti-independence politician holds the presidency, the Vice President of New Caledonia is required by the terms of the Accord to be a pro-independence politician.



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The native Melanesian people of New Caledonia, a French overseas territory in the southwest Pacific, are known as **Kanak**s (spelt Canaque in French until 1984). As of the 2019 census, the Kanak population constitutes approximately 112,000 individuals or 41.2% of the entire population of New Caledonia. The Kanak people are typically compared to two other ethnic groups of European descent: the Zoreille, who are residents of the region but were born in metropolitan France, and the Caldoche, who were born in New Caledonia. An idea to create an Agency for the Development of Kanak Culture (ADCK) was put forth by Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the head of the Kanak independence movement when the delegations of France and New Caledonia signed the Matignon commitments in 1988 to determine whether they would hold an independence referendum.

A **referendum on independence** is one in which the people living in a region vote on whether or not to establish the region as an independent sovereign state. Even when a referendum on independence yields a yes vote, independence does not necessarily follow. Usually, an independence referendum follows a territory's nationalists' political victories. This could result from nationalist organizations' pressure or from the election of people or political parties with separatist agendas.

Deep rifts have existed between the native Kanak population and Europeans in **New Caledonia**, a French overseas territory in the Pacific, most notably over the contentious issue of independence.

According to the Australian Trade and Investment Commission, New Caledonia is rich in resources and holds around 10% of the world's nickel reserve in addition to having one of the highest average earnings per capita in the region.

Although New Caledonia has a great deal of autonomy, it is largely dependent on France in areas like education and defense.

Many accords were negotiated in the wake of the 1980s independence-related violence, such as the 1998 Noumea Accord, which outlined a plan for further territory sovereignty.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

New Caledonia is a sui generis region inside the French Republic, governed under the rules of part XIII of the Constitution (“Transitional provisions pertaining to New Caledonia”). With regard to New Caledonia, the French Minister for Overseas Territories is in charge of



coordinating and carrying out the Government of France's initiatives in compliance with the territorial structure and status. The administering Power's sovereign tasks are carried out by the Armed Forces of New Caledonia, who also assist the territory

government in carrying out its duties related to civilian security.

The Territory has certain unique elements, such as the requirement to use customary judges in civil courts for instances involving disputes between people having customary civil status. The Territory is a component of the metropolitan legal system of the governing Power. There are several variations within each camp, but the political parties in New Caledonia are primarily split between those who want the region to remain a part of the French Republic and those who favor independence.

A number of organizations have been founded in compliance with the Nouméa Accord to attest to the complete acknowledgement of Kanak's identity and culture. Eight customary regions are represented by eight customary councils. Furthermore, there is a

16-member customary Senate that is representative of the entire Territory and rotates in its chair. Two members are chosen by each customary council. In reaction to the emancipation of Africa and Oceania as well as



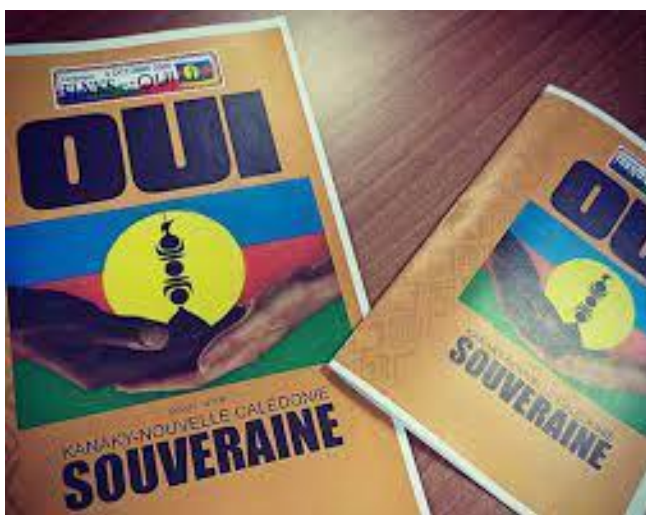


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the mass exodus of people from metropolitan France in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Kanak independence movement was started in the 1970s. The pro-independence parties came together to form the Front de libération nationale Kanak et socialiste in 1984, which went on to form a temporary independent government later that year.

The Nouméa Accord calls for holding one to three referendums on New Caledonia's admission to full statehood. A decision made by the Congress, approved by 33 of 54 members, constitutes the referendum date. In accordance with the Accord, a second referendum on independence may be called at the request of one-third of Congress members within two years of the first vote, should independence be rejected. In accordance with the Accord, a second referendum may be called within two years following the first's outcome at with the approval of one-third of Congress participants, should independence be rejected. A third referendum may be held under the same circumstances within two years following the second poll if independence is once more rejected. The parties to the Accord will then need to get together to discuss the circumstances that have been created if the response is still negative. The transfer of sovereign powers, achieving an international position of full responsibility, and changing citizenship to nationality are the subjects of the referendum in accordance with the Accord.

In order to replenish the treasury and restore budgetary space, New Caledonia has been involved in a reform of its public finance management for the previous five years, according to the administering Power. Due to steadily dropping income, the primary means of accomplishing this has been to reduce overall budgetary appropriations. Primarily, New



Caledonia functions as a redistributive territory, collecting taxes on behalf of public entities and local authorities before redistributing 74.25% of the collected funds. Its budgetary flexibility is limited when considering the amount of structural spending, such as on staff and public institutions, as well as non-discretionary spending, such as payments to local authorities.



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Economic undertakings in the private sector are the focus of overseas tax aid. It enables a taxpayer residing in metropolitan France to invest in a profitable project abroad and receive sizable tax savings in return. For a number of years, fewer applications have been made for funding. The administering Power claims that this is connected to the economic downturn. Originally, it was intended for the tax relief mechanism to expire in late 2017. The mechanism was given project managers more visibility by being prolonged until 2025. As per the administering Power, tax reduction continues to be the primary means of State assistance for the private sector, and its benefits have been enjoyed by all major projects in the recent past. This approach was used to finance 7,500 social housing projects between 2005 and 2015.

CURRENT SITUATION

As requested by the nineteenth Committee of Signatories to the Nouméa Accord, June 4, 2020, provides that the system of individual proxies and the construction of offshore polling sites in Nouméa for voters in the island province would be maintained, but with some procedural adjustments.

Decree No. 2020-127 of February 14, 2020, updated these provisions to address the 2022 referendum on New Caledonia's full sovereignty, which will determine, among other things, the exceptional arrangements for voting by proxy and the procedures for island municipal voters to cast ballots in Nouméa. The Commission in charge of organizing and conducting the referendum on New Caledonia's accession to full sovereignty held its second round of voting on October 5, 2020. A total of 154,918 voters out of 180,799 registered voters cast ballots in 304 polling places, or 85.69 percent of the total. The administering Power said that the full sovereignty and independence option had been rejected as a consequence of the referendum. The Minister for Overseas Territories traveled to New Caledonia from October 8, 2020, to November 2, 2020, after the second vote. During his visit, he notably





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established the 12-member Comité des Sages, which Prime Minister Edouard Philippe had founded in 2017, and he also introduced the "Leprédour" meeting structure, which consists of five elected figures who support independence and five who oppose it. Every year, special administrative commissions led by members of the court update the special electoral rolls of voters qualified to cast ballots for representatives in Congress and local assemblies. 180,640 voters, 89,122 of whom were men and 91,518 of whom were women, were enrolled at the end of the time for the yearly update of the special electoral roll for the referendum on July 4, 2020.

Held in December 2021, the independence movement boycotted it and the majority of people rejected independence. France has maintained authority over immigration, law enforcement, currency, military, and foreign policy under the terms of the Nouméa Accord. France won't stop doing this even after the vote rejected its bid to become an independent nation in 2021.

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

The French Government

The French Government, representing the colonial power in New Caledonia, is a party to the agreement. The agreement proposes a steady and staggered transfer of authorities from France to New Caledonia. It acknowledges the need for more independence and autonomy for the territory.

- The agreement describes a progressive handoff of authority from the French government to New Caledonia. This entails having more authority over municipal matters, political systems, and decision-making procedures. Giving the people of New Caledonia more influence over their own government is the aim.
- The French government promised to help New Caledonia thrive and prosper economically. The goal of this support is to promote stability and sustainable development while advancing the territory's social and economic conditions.

In essence, the French Government's involvement in the Nouméa Accord indicates a commitment to a methodical and deliberate process that respects the aspirations of the citizens of New Caledonia while safeguarding certain strategic and national interests.



Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste, or FLNKS

In New Caledonia, a political coalition advocating independence is known as the **Front de libération nationale Kanak et socialiste**, or **FLNKS**.

- The native Kanak people, who make up a sizable section of the population in New Caledonia, are represented by FLNKS. The Kanak people have long fought for increased political autonomy and acknowledgement of their cultural identity because of their historical ties to the region.
- Since its founding in the 1980s, the FLNKS has led the charge in the fight to free New Caledonia from French domination. The group has worked to have the Kanak people's right to choose their own political path recognized.
- In 1998, the Nouméa Accord was signed thanks in large part to the efforts of the FLNKS. The agreement recognizes the Kanak people's desire for further independence and self-governance. It includes preparations for a possible future independence vote as well as a framework for the progressive transfer of authority from France to New Caledonia.
- The FLNKS has declared its commitment to peaceful cohabitation in addition to its advocacy for independence. The Nouméa Accord represents a compromise that takes into account the interests of both pro- and anti-independence organizations and permits a gradual transition.



Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République, or RPCR

Jacques Lafleur served as the leader of the well-known political party in New Caledonia, the Rally for Caledonia in the Republic (Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République, or RPCR).

The RPCR was created in the 1970s and evolved as a dominant force in New Caledonian politics. Its main political platform consisted of opposing independence movements and promoting the preservation of close relations between New Caledonia and France.



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- The RPCR was headed by Jacques Lafleur, a significant player in New Caledonian politics. Lafleur, who was well-known for his adamant opposition to independence, had a major influence on the political climate at pivotal junctures, such as the 1988 Matignon Agreements.
- The pro-independence FLNKS spearheaded the strong opposition of the RPCR to the independence movement. Rather, it promoted maintaining New Caledonia's status as an essential component of the French Republic.
- RPCR took part in the discussions that resulted in the 1988 Matignon Agreements. These accords served as a prelude to the 1998 Nouméa Accord and attempted to ease tensions in New Caledonia.
- The Republicans (Les Républicains) was the new moniker given to the RPCR in 2004. As it navigated the complications of New Caledonia's political position, the party remained a powerful political force, pushing for a continuation of the country's relationship with France.

It's important to remember that political environments and parties can shift. It is best to check more recent sources on New Caledonian politics for up-to-date information.

SOLUTION ALTERNATIVES

An alternate viewpoint would be to extend the Nouméa Accord's schedule in order to provide for a longer transition period. This might give more time for reaching an agreement, taking care of financial issues, and maintaining a stable political climate.

The Nouméa Accord already calls for a gradual handoff of authority over time. One way to prolong the transition phase would be to slow down this process so that a more measured and progressive approach can be used. This could be carried out in order to allay worries, foster agreement, and guarantee a smooth transition.

A lengthier transition period might give more opportunity to address independence-related economic issues. This could entail putting policies and plans into action to promote economic growth and stability and make sure the local economy is ready for future independence or greater autonomy.

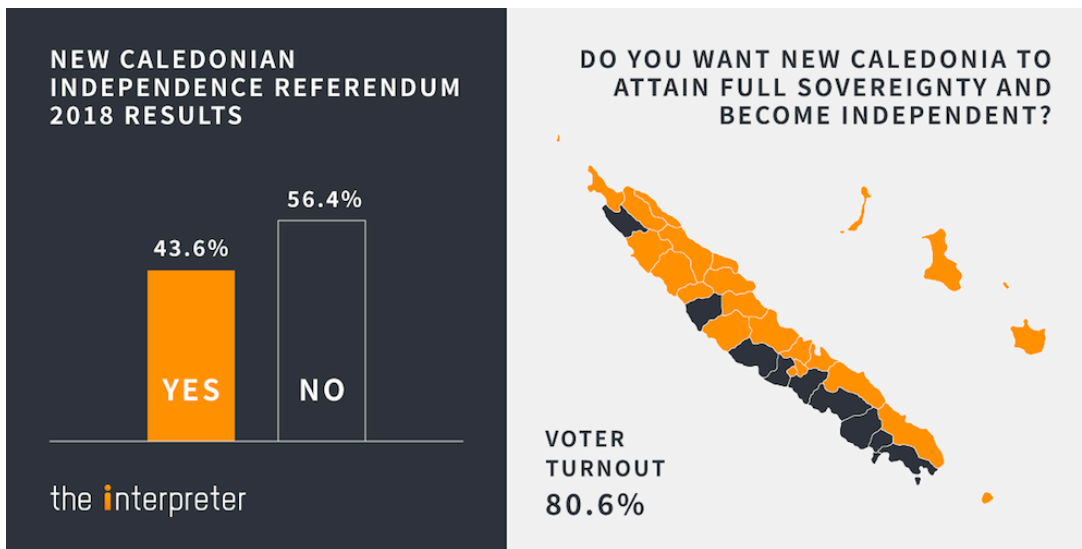


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A longer time of transition might make it easier for various factions to continue their political discussions and agreements. With additional time to consider the opinions of both pro- and anti-independence organizations, the process may be more inclusive and participatory.

The Nouméa Accord calls for the potential holding of an independence vote in the future. The schedule of this referendum may need to be changed in order to extend the transition time and ensure that the majority of participants feel sufficiently educated and prepared.

It's crucial to remember that, although a longer transition period would give everyone involved more time to think things through and plan ahead, it would also mean that stability would need to be maintained and agreement on New Caledonia's political future would need to be reached.



USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kanak-Socialist-National-Liberation-Front>

https://cooperation-regionale.gouv.nc/sites/default/files/atoms/files/working_paper_on_new_caledonia_2021.pdf

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<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25169446>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_referendum