

The Hague International Model United Nations 2025 – 27th January 2025 – 31st January 2025



The Hague International Model United Nations

Forum: GA4

Issue: The situation in New Caledonia

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Introduction

New Caledonia, a French territory in the South Pacific, is experiencing significant political agitation and upheaval. Since May 13, a controversial electoral reform project has sparked violent protests and riots leading to at least 11 dead and multiple injuries, as well as severe damage. The current crisis stems from the complicated history of New Caledonia's struggle for self-determination. So far, there have been four independence referendums, the last and most rancorous of which occurred in December 2021. Indigenous representatives of the local peoples do not recognize that referendum as legitimate, considering that pro-independence parties did not participate, which ended with a stunning 96.50% voting against independence. In the aftermath of the referendum, the division between those who believe the self-governing process is finished and those who do not has crumbled. The French government's attempts to resolve the electoral rights dispute have exacerbated tensions. French authorities have reacted to the unrest in various ways: the state of emergency was expected to end Tuesday morning; troops have been deployed to the region; and the app was temporarily banned because authorities suspected TikTok was fueling the unrest. The violence has devastated both daily life and tourism in New Caledonia. With its international airport temporarily closed, travelers are being told to delay their trips. The civil unrest has also affected port operations. The situation remains

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unstable, however, with protests continuing and violence erupting sporadically. The French government is encouraging dialogue between Indigenous separatists and pro-Paris loyalists in efforts to reach a peaceful cosmopolitan compromise. While next week, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is considering dispatching a mission to the area. This crisis raises significant questions as to the future of the UN Charter Chapter XI regime and brings to the fore broader challenges for remaining non-self-governing territories.

Definition of Key Terms

Kanak People

New Caledonia's Indigenous Melanesian people account for about 40–45% of the population.

Decolonization

The process by which colonies gain independence from colonial powers. In the context of New Caledonia, this refers to the ongoing movement to determine its political status and relationship with France.

Self-determination:

The principle that people has the right to determine its own political status and pursue its economic, social, and cultural development. This is a central theme in New Caledonia's quest for autonomy or independence.

FLNKS (Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste):

A political coalition representing the Kanak people and advocating for independence from France. It plays a significant role in New Caledonia's political landscape.

Nouméa Accord:

A 1998 agreement between the French government and New Caledonian leaders that outlined a process for greater autonomy and a referendum on independence. It established a framework for political governance and social development.

Referendum:

A direct vote in which an entire electorate is invited to vote on a particular proposal and can result in the adoption of a new law or policy. New Caledonia held several referendums on independence, the most notable ones being in 2018, 2020, and 2021.

Independence Referendum:

A specific type of referendum that allows the population to vote on whether to remain a territory of France or to become an independent nation. The outcomes of the referendums in New Caledonia have shown a divided opinion on this issue.

French Overseas Territories:

Regions that are under French sovereignty but are not part of mainland France. New Caledonia is classified as a special collectivity within this category.

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Cultural Identity:

The identity of a group of people based on shared culture, language, traditions, and history. In New Caledonia, the preservation and promotion of Kanak culture is a significant aspect of the independence movement.

Political Autonomy:

The degree of self-governance that a territory has while still being part of a larger political entity. New Caledonia has been granted varying degrees of autonomy under the Nouméa Accord.

Social Cohesion:

The bonds that bring society together, which can be affected by ethnic, cultural, and political divisions.

New Caledonia faces challenges in achieving social cohesion due to its diverse population and differing views on independence.

International Observers:

Organizations or representatives from other countries or international bodies that monitor and assess the fairness of electoral processes, including referendums.

Background Information

New Caledonia, a French territory in the Pacific, has been grappling with independence aspirations and civil unrest. The situation revolves around three key axes: balancing independence aspirations with French sovereignty, protecting civilians amidst ongoing protests, and managing external influences while maintaining regional stability. These challenges stem from historical grievances, political tensions, and the territory's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific region **Balancing independence aspirations and french sovereignty**

The history leading up to independence movements and colonization has contributed to New Caledonia's complicated relationship with France. The archipelago's status has shifted dramatically since it became a French colony in 1853. It has been led by the indigenous Kanak people, who account for about 40 percent of the population. "Les Événements" (The Events), a period of bloody conflict in the 1980s, led to the Matignon-Oudinot Accords of 1988. It was this framework of greater autonomy, paving the way for future self-determination, that became part of the basis for the agreement. This process was accelerated by the Nouméa Accord of 1998, which laid out a timetable for a series of referendums on independence and a roadmap for the gradual transfer of powers from France to New Caledonia. In 2018, 2020, and 2021, there were three of these referendums, the last of which yielded a vote of 96.5% against independence.

However, this outcome was disputed because pro-independence groups had boycotted it; turnout was only 43.87%. The legitimacy of this result remains contentious, illustrating ongoing tensions between the claims of French sovereignty and independence aspirations. New Caledonia is viewed by the French government as a strategic asset in its Indo-Pacific strategy, a view promoted especially by

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President Emmanuel Macron. This geopolitical factor muddies the waters around the sovereignty debate even more. After France began transferring powers to New Caledonia in the 1980s, the territory now has considerable autonomy in areas including the negotiation of trade and foreign policy with its neighbors in the Pacific. Yet recent steps taken by France to introduce reforms to the electoral process have sparked

unrest. Pro-independence organizations strongly rejected Macron's proposal to amend the constitution to ensure voting rights in municipal elections. Many saw the action as an attempt to reduce the influence of indigenous votes in future political decisions.

The challenge going forward will be to find a governance model that ensures equitable representation for all ethnic groups in New Caledonia while at the same time ensuring that pro-independence and pro-France factions are appeased. It is precisely the difficulty of achieving this balance that is reflected in the current political deadlock. Finding a compromise that redresses historical grievances, pays respectful attention to the aspirations of the Kanak people, and accommodates France's strategic interests, as New Caledonia works out its ongoing unique relationship within the French Republic's interests, remains a tall order indeed.

Protection of Civilians:

New Caledonia's need for civilian protection has become more urgent due to the recent upheaval and its delicate political landscape. The region has known violence and social unrest from time to time, especially during "Les Événements" in the 1980s, and more recently in response to proposed reforms and political developments. In May 2024, France tried to impose electoral reform but was met with a violent uprising in New Caledonia. These riots were so extensive that six people were killed, and French security forces had to be sent in. The sixty-kilometer (37-mile) road linking Nouméa to the airport is vital for transporting supplies, and the French interior minister has emphasized the need to reopen this vital infrastructure.

Recent unrest has drawn attention to the delicate balance between ensuring public order and preserving the rights and aspirations of different communities in New Caledonia. Security forces should be sent in to protect critical infrastructure and restore order, but if not executed prudently, they risk stoking tensions. Longstanding socioeconomic divisions, particularly between the indigenous Kanak population and other communities, complicate civilian protection in New Caledonia. These disparities perpetuate chronic political instability and social upheaval.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these existing socioeconomic disparities, further straining relations and exacerbating economic hardship. Production cuts are devastating to economically strained countries, where social tensions and unrest have been fueled by existing economic strain — making the job of protecting civilians that much harder. Any efforts to protect civilians must also account for New Caledonia's unique cultural and historical context. This should also ensure that treaties such as the Nouméa Accord take the identity and way of life of the Kanak people into account, enabling them to

assert their rights to land and security.

Managing External Influences and Regional Stability

New Caledonia is a pawn for regional and international powers because of its location in the South Pacific and its natural resources, particularly nickel. A major external challenge for both France and New Caledonia was the need to control outside influences while securing regional stability. China's growing presence in the Pacific worries France and its allies. There are two main reasons for Beijing's interest in New Caledonia: the region's large nickel reserves and the chance to offend France to advance its own geostrategic expansion. In turn, China is more politically and economically engaged in the region today. France has reacted by increasing its alliances and presence in the Indo-Pacific. This strategy is also contingent on New Caledonia, which France views as crucial to its ability to be a Pacific power. Supporting regional security in the South China Sea and the Strait of Taiwan is the French-integrated Armed Forces of New Caledonia (FANC). The New Caledonia developments are being keenly watched by other regional powers — notably Australia and New Zealand. These countries have a vested interest in countering growing Chinese influence and preserving stability in the South Pacific. So rapidly has New Caledonia's geostrategic value in global geopolitics been recognized that Japan recently opened a consulate in Nouméa. The AUKUS partnership with Australia and the United Kingdom has also heightened U.S. focus on the Indo-Pacific region. Even though New Caledonia is not directly involved in its home affairs, this alliance inevitably impacts the broader geopolitical landscape in which New Caledonia is embedded. Furthermore, Russia has also shown interest in New Caledonia, particularly at the pro-independence level. This involvement is not new — it predates the Soviet period — but has increased since 2014. With international tensions running high — particularly with Russia's war in Ukraine — the Kremlin may see instability in New Caledonia as an opportunity to position itself against Western influence in the region. It requires careful balancing to manage those outside influences. As it obtains more autonomy, New Caledonia has the right to negotiate its own trade and foreign policy with its neighbors in the Pacific. This provides both opportunities and difficulties in managing ties with regional and international powers. The challenge for France is keeping its influence over New Caledonia while allowing it to develop its own regional relationships. It is this fine balancing act that will continue to maintain regional stability and mitigate the influence of countries like China and Russia. Such external relationships, however, are complicated by New Caledonia's ongoing political uncertainty regarding its future status. The outcome of the independence debate would dramatically change the geopolitical environment of the South Pacific.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

France:

The administering power, France has direct involvement in New Caledonian governance and status. It has aimed to find a balance between the territory's autonomy and its strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

Australia:

Australia is New Caledonia's closest neighbor by land, and Australia has a long history of diplomatic relations and strategic interests in the region. The country has been paying attention to the situation and has lately dispatched planes to extricate its own nationals during the unrest.

New Zealand:

New Zealand is another close neighbor of New Caledonia that has been actively involved in the situation, providing evacuation flights and retaining diplomatic relations. China: Though not directly implicated, China's expanding role in the Pacific is hugely relevant to concerns in France and to its allies. China has coveted New Caledonia's nickel reserves and potential strategic location.

United states:

Interest from the United States in New Caledonia has notably increased in recent years, with the US Ambassador to France recently visiting the territory in 2023. This indicates a willingness to push back against Chinese influence in the Pacific.

Pacific islands forum (PIF):

The PIF is an intergovernmental organization made up of 18 member states and governs much of the South Pacific area. As of 2016, New Caledonia is a full member. It has also proposed a

mission to New Caledonia to promote a "lasting resolution to the political crisis."

Melanesian spearhead group (MSG):

A sub-regional body that includes Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and New Caledonia (represented by FLNKS). The MSG has bolstered the pro-independence movement in New Caledonia. New Caledonia is classified by the United Nations Special

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Committee on Decolonization as a non-self-governing territory administered by France since 1986.

Russia:

The support of Moscow for pro-independence movements in New Caledonia, which has been active since 2014.

Azerbaijan, the baku initiative group (BIG):

The government of the Republic of Azerbaijan has given support to liberation movements in New Caledonia and against French colonialism.

Timeline of Events

Date (start - end)	Name	Description
1853	Conquest of New caledonia	New Caledonia is annexed by France under Napoleon III.

1864-97	Penal Colony	France establishes a penal colony in New Caledonia, shipping 22,000 convicts and political prisoners (including revolutionary Communards) to the islands.
1878	Kanak Revolt	The indigenous Kanak of the islands revolt against French

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		troops for land loss. Two hundred Europeans and a minimum of 600 people killed. Approximately 1,500 Kanaks have gone into exile.
1878-1921	Population Decline	Kanak population, brought down from about 60,000 to 27,000, as Europeans introduce diseases such as measles.

1946	French Overseas Territory	The archipelago becomes a French overseas territory, leading to citizenship and voting rights for Kanak people.
1976-88	Independence Movement Conflict	Fighting between French authorities and the Kanak independence movement.
1984	Formation of FLNKS	The Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), an alliance of pro-independence political parties, is established in New Caledonia.
1986-87	Land Disputes and Violence	The French centre-right government's unequal distribution of land — with

		more than two-thirds for Europeans and less than a third for Kanaks — ignites roadblocks, armed clashes, and destruction of property.
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1987	Independence Referendum	A referendum on independence produces an overwhelming (98 percent) win to stay part of France. Voter turnout is 59 percent.
1988	Ouvéa Cave Hostage Crisis	Ouvéa cave hostage crisis (22 April to 5 May): pro-independence militants kill four gendarmes and take 27 others hostage. Military: French Forces Storm Police Station, Freeing Hostages. Nineteen Kanak hostage takers and two soldiers killed.
1988	Matignon Accord	Matignon Accord signed on 26 June between Jean-Marie Tjibaou (head of FLNKS) and Jacques Lafleur (Loyalist) for reconciliation between Kanak and French European communities. The agreement ends direct rule from Paris and promises a vote on independence in 1998,

		beginning a gradual process of self-determination and decolonization.
1989	Assassination of Tjibaou	Tjibaou assassination by Kanak separatist protesting against the Matignon Accord.
1998	Nouméa Accord	signed on 5 May by the government of France, FLNKS, and conservative settler party RPCR; sets a 20-year timetable for gradual autonomy for the territory. Ratified by 71.86 percent of New Caledonians, it mandates that the Vice President of New Caledonia must be pro-independence if the Presidency is held by an anti-independence politician. The agreement provides for three referendums on independence.

2006	Voting Rights Limitation	<p>In a move long sought by Kanak leaders, the French parliament votes to limit voting rights in the provincial elections to people who resided in New Caledonia before 1998 – and their children – as part of the</p>
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		Nouméa Accord.
2018	First Independence Referendum	<p>The first referendum in November rejects independence from France by 56 percent to 43 percent.</p>

<p>2020</p>	<p>Second Independence Referendum</p>	<p>Independence rejected in the second referendum but only by a narrower margin – 53 percent against, 46 percent in favor.</p>
<p>2021</p>	<p>Third Independence Referendum</p>	<p>Third referendum – 96.5 percent vote to stay French but turnout is 44 percent as pro-independence forces, who had wanted it delayed due to the Covid pandemic, boycotted the vote. They rejected the results.</p>
<p>2024</p>	<p>Riots and Political Unrest</p>	<p>Rioting erupts in New Caledonia on 13 May as France’s legislators start to debate a constitutional amendment to widen the electorate to include people who have lived in the territory for 10 years or longer (instead of since 1998). The Kanak added, “is a way to</p>

dilute their vote.”

Violence escalates after lawmakers vote to pass the amendment. State of emergency was declared in France. At least six people have been killed in five days of unrest, including two gendarmes.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- UN Charter Chapter XI: This chapter establishes the legal framework for non-self-governing territories, under which New Caledonia was re-listed in 1986.
- UN Special Committee on Decolonization: New Caledonia has been listed as a non-self-governing territory under French administration since 1986.
- UN General Assembly Resolutions: In 2023, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the peaceful, fair, and transparent conduct of the self-determination process in New Caledonia.
- UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples: In 2011, the Special Rapporteur noted the under-representation of Kanak people in politics and leadership positions, as well as their limited access to economic, social, and cultural rights.
- UN Human Rights Committee Reviews: The committee recently reviewed France's actions in New Caledonia, focusing on security operations and decolonization approaches.
- Nouméa Accord (1998): While not a UN treaty, this agreement is recognized by the UN and outlines the process for increased autonomy and potential independence for New Caledonia.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

1. 1958 Constitutional Referendum: The majority of New Caledonians (98%) voted to remain a territory of France⁸.
2. Matignon Accords (1988): Negotiated by Michel Rocard's government to end violent inter-communal conflicts. It established new local institutions and guaranteed an independence vote by 1998³⁸.
3. Nouméa Accord (1998): Signed on May 5, 1998, by the French government, pro-independence

FLNKS, and anti-independence RPCR. Key provisions included:

- A 20-year transition period for gradual transfer of powers from France to New Caledonia
 - Recognition of Kanak identity and culture
 - Provisions for up to three independence referendums
 - Restriction of voting rights in provincial elections to long-term residents¹³⁶⁹ 4.
5. First Independence Referendum (2018): Held in November, with 56.7% rejecting independence⁷. 6. Second Independence Referendum (2020): Resulted in 53% voting to remain with France⁶. 7. Third Independence Referendum (2021): Held on December 12, with 96.5% voting against independence. However, this result is controversial due to a boycott by pro-independence groups⁶⁷.

Possible Solutions

Balancing independence aspirations and french sovereignty

Moving forward for New Caledonia is a journey that will take place over nuances, respecting the complexity of its historical and cultural relationship with France. One possibility is to provide a negotiated autonomy sustainable beyond the existing framework of the Nouméa Accord. Doing so likely means designing a bespoke governance setup that affords New Caledonia a level of self-governance like no other while retaining the strategic ties with France. The gradual handover of powers would enable New Caledonia to develop its own institutional capacity; its gradual implementation would entail a sequential transfer of administrative competences, maybe even diplomacy, along with well-defined milestones and continuous communication between the local leaders and Paris. The aim would be to build a model of voluntary association that recognizes the aspirations of both pro-independence groups and those who want to stay close to France. A critical point of this solution is to put in place a shared governance model that truly represents all ethnic groups. This would require establishing political institutions containing obligatory power-sharing arrangements, with Kanak and non-Kanak communities ensuring significant participation in decision-making processes.

Protection of Civilians:

It should be noted that New Caledonia's systematic approach to the protection of civilians must go beyond the nature of security. This should be addressed first in a structured

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plan for increasing temporary Community Hub jobs and economic opportunities. Such an approach would include introducing the principles of community policing, which would operate based on trust-building and a cultural sensitivity training program across all levels of the justice system. That will also allow for targeted specialist training for law enforcement in de-escalation in conflict, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement. The aim is to change security forces from possible sources of tension to allies in community safety. At the same time, there is a need for a strong socioeconomic development program. This could include specific investments in education, health care, and economic opportunities for marginalized communities, including those in the Kanak population. Such initiatives might include scholarship funds, vocational training, and economic development funds aimed at addressing historical disparities. The creation of local mechanisms to resolve conflicts would offer alternative avenues for solutions to differences. Such bodies would unite community leaders, traditional Kanak authorities, and representatives of other ethnic groups to mediate disputes and avert escalation.

Managing External Influences and Regional Stability

As a smaller island nation in the Indo-Pacific, New Caledonia is at the front lines of effectively managing external powers and preserving stability in the region. Essentially, the approach would be to craft a multi-faceted framework, involving both diplomacy and economics, to pursue this future trajectory where the upstart territory's interests blend into the regional web. Central to this would be expanding strategic partnerships with regional powers such as Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Island nations. This might include negotiating economic and security arrangements that would cast New Caledonia as a cooperative partner rather than a flashpoint of geopolitical tension. It is critical to reduce vulnerability to external pressures through economic diversification. Aside from nickel extraction, New Caledonia might further develop sectors like sustainable tourism, marine resources, renewable energy, and digital technologies. The resultant economic diversification would create even greater resilience to external shocks

and reduce dependency on any single economic or geopolitical actor. More active engagement in regional forums such as the Pacific Islands Forum would provide more diplomatic cover. New Caledonia's active membership in regional networks would allow it to find collective security solutions and limit the risk of external manipulation. France would have to play that supportive role, maintaining — in the spirit of its Paris-based Fonds pour l'Innovation et l'Industrie — a diplomatic presence that belies a level of autonomy in New Caledonia while also providing strategic backstopping. This could mean transforming the relationship from one of

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colonial domination to one based on mutual interests. The long-term goal is to turn New Caledonia from a potential geopolitical powder keg into a zone of cooperation, economic opportunity, and regional stability.

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****If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask the DSGs, PGA or SG****

Please be aware that you are expected to only use the sections mentioned (below is a summary which you could use as an outline).

1. Introduction
2. Definition of Key Terms
3. Background Information (including 2 subtopics)
4. Major Parties Involved and Their Views
5. Timeline of Events
6. UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events
7. Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue
8. Possible Solutions
9. Bibliography
10. Appendix or Appendices

To end with an important note:

- Plagiarism will NOT be tolerated at THIMUN and can lead to serious repercussions. - If the use of AI is permitted within your MUN at your school, you may use it as a tool to help you along. AI is not a source, and all information must be critically evaluated and checked. Once you have checked the information, you will have the proper corresponding source to cite.

- All facts/charts/diagrams/maps must be clearly referenced and accurate.