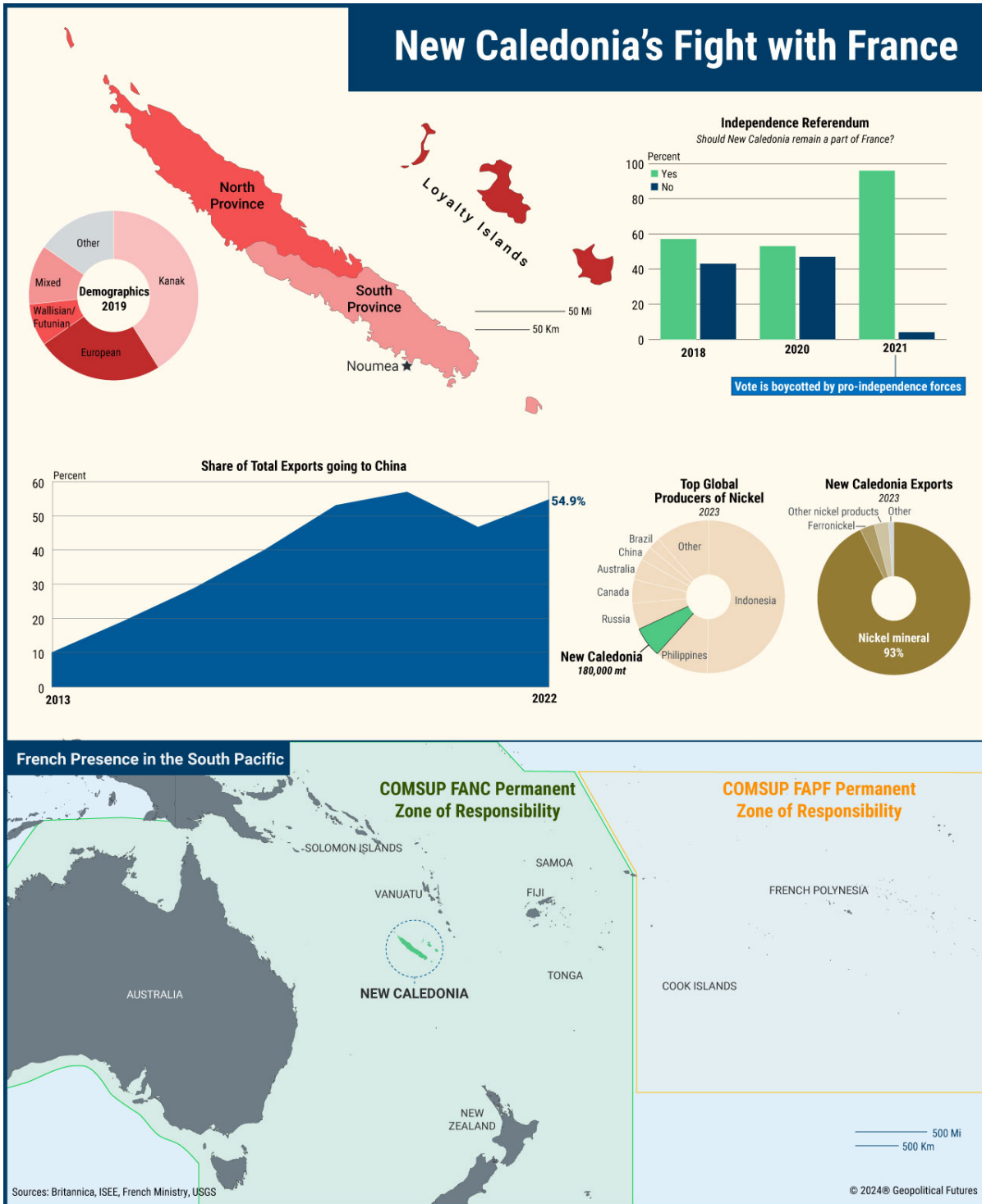


France Battles Rioters in New Caledonia

by Geopolitical Futures - May 17, 2024



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Mass protests and riots erupted this week across New Caledonia, a French overseas territory in the South Pacific, as French lawmakers discussed a constitutional reform that would extend voting rights to some 25,000 long-term residents. The proposal outraged members of the indigenous Kanak population, who tend to support independence from France and fear that the reform will dilute their vote in favor of pro-French Europeans. Supporters of independence lost two referendums on the matter in 2018 and 2020 and boycotted a third in 2021, resulting in a lopsided defeat.

A prolific nickel producer and distant base for the French navy, New Caledonia is a vital part of French geopolitical ambitions in the Pacific. In a bid to restore order, Paris declared a state of emergency and sent an additional 1,000 police and gendarmes to the capital, Noumea, bringing the total French security presence to 2,700. Heading into the weekend, the rioting appears to have subsided for now.

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