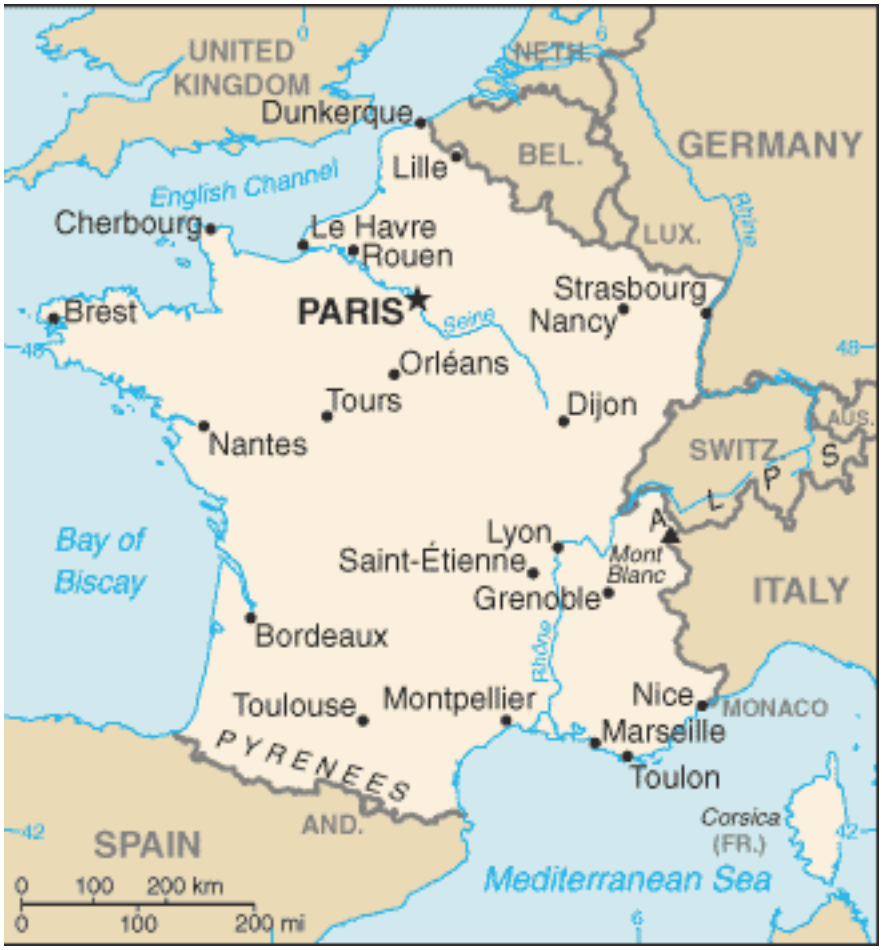
Chapter 19
France



Chapter Outline

- Populism Defeated?
- The Context
- The Evolution of the French State
- Political Culture
- Political Participation
- The State
- Public Policy
- A Country of Wicked Problems?

You don't understand, cher ami, La France is not what it used to be.

--Michel Sapin

My roommate's father was visiting last weekend and asked me what my major was. When I said French and Government, he told me that was a contradiction in terms.

--College Student

The Basics

Size	547,030 sq. km (more than two times the size of the United Kingdom)
Population	67.1 million
GNP per capita	$35,100
Currency	€1.18 = US$1 (October 22, 2017).
Ethnic composition	Over 90 percent white, but with substantial minorities of African, Middle Eastern, Asian, and Caribbean origin
Religion	83–88 percent Catholic, with small minorities of Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and atheists
Capital	Paris
Head of state	President Emmanuel Macron (2017–)
Head of Government	Prime Minister Edouard Philippe (2017–)

Populism Defeated?

This chapter begins with two statements (or epigrams as publishers like to call them) instead of the single one I normally use. And, this first section begins with a questions mark which is also an atypical beginning to a chapter in this book.

So, we'll begin with why this chapter is different, starting with the two statements.

The first and currently the most important of the two was made by former finance minister, Michel Sapin, to his successor just before the 2017 presidential election campaign began. He struck a very different tone than the one that pervaded the first few editions of this book. Well into this century, I had used France as an example of the ways democratic states can (re)shape their economies and societies.

In fact, the 2017 election campaign ended almost all discussion of how successful the country's **Fifth Republic** had been since its creation in 1958 which I described in the subtitling an earlier book, having "coped with chaos." Today, it is hard to count France among the democratic countries on almost any front.

The government may have been the primary force behind the country's rapid economic growth and modernization during what one scholar called *les trente glorieuses* or the thirty glorious years between the late 1940s and the late 1970s. Instead, economic growth had all but stalled to a halt. At the end of the twentieth century, French firms were among the world's most dynamic; by 2017, none figured on any such list. Depending on how you count, as much as a quarter of young adults could not find permanent jobs.

It wasn't just the economy. As we will see in more detail later in the chapter, France is as divided along identity lines as any country in Europe. In particular, the government has not been able to either find ways of integrating the roughly ten percent of its population that is not of French origin in to the mainstream of its society or stop waves of terrorist attacks.

Not surprisingly, support for the system and its main institutions has plummeted. During the first half of this decade, the country's two most important political parties—the left of center ***Parti Socialiste*** (PS-Socialist Party) and the right of center Gaullists, now officially known as ***Les Républicains*** (the Republicans) saw their grassroots support all but disappear in favor of more populist parties, especially the right wing ***Front National*** (FN—National Front).

That set the stage for the remarkable 2017 presidential and legislative elections which will feature prominently in the rest of this chapter. As we will see, the PS and Gaullist both saw much of their support evaporate because of their internal problems and the weak presidential candidates they ended up nominating.

That left the playing field open to three outsiders.

Observers inside and outside of France paid the most attention to **Marine Le Pen** (1968-) of the National Front. The party had been founded by her father, Jean-Marie, in 1972. The elder Le Pen had spent years on far right fringes of French politics and was known for statements that were all but openly anti-semitic and pro-fascist. He had made it to the second round of the 2002 presidential election but barely won 20 percent in the runoff against the incumbent Gaullist, **Jacques Chirac** (1932-).

In 2011, Marine forced her father out of the leadership and began a campaign to what she called "de-demonize" the party. Although she tried to move it into the mainstream by

removing the rabble rousing right wingers of her father's generation, there was little doubt that hers was still a very right wing, nationalistic, and populist party.

Unlike what we saw in some of the other countries covered in Part 2, France has also seen the rise of a populist movement on the left, led by **Jean-Luc Mélenchon** (1951-). As a young man, Mélenchon had been on the left wing of the PS, but left it in 2008 to form a new, small, radical Party of the Left. His movement barely got off the ground until leftist dissatisfaction with the government of Socialist President **François Hollande** (1954-) erupted shortly after the start of his term in 2012 in light of the seemingly intractable set of social and economic problems the country faced.

The at least temporary weakness of the PS and the Republicans also created space for a centrist insurgent. **Emmanuel Macron** had been Minister of the Treasury early in Hollande's presidency but resigned once he realized that the government would not endorse the kind of sweeping reforms he wanted. A few months later, he launched what certainly looked like a long shot campaign for the presidency against far more experienced and entrenched leaders. Once it became clear that most of those other candidacies were imploding, he quickly created a movement and then a political party of his own known initially as ***En Marche*** which can best be translated as "Moving Forward."

The young dynamic Macron (more on that dynamism later in the chapter) came as a breath of fresh air even to observers like me who did find his centrist policies somewhat worrisome. As election day neared, it became clear that the insurgents were likely to take three of the four top spots and that both major parties could be frozen out of the decisive runoff ballot for the first time.

Emmanuel Macron with Donald Trump
Source: Wikimedia Commons

As Tables 19.1 and 19.2 show, that is exactly what happened. For once, the pollsters pretty much got things right in predicting that the three insurgents and Fillon would finish roughly neck and neck. In all, barely four percentage points separated the top four candidates. Turnout was high at almost 78 percent. Macron came in first with just over 24 percent of the vote, followed by Le Pen, Fillon, and Mélenchon in that order.

Candidate	First Round (%)	Second Round (%)
Macron	24.0	66.1
Le Pen	21.3	33.9
Fillon	20.0	
Mélenchon	19.6	
Other	15.1	

Table 19.1
Presidential Election 2017

The second round was pretty much a repeat of what happened fifteen years earlier when Le Pen's father made it to the second round. Whether they said so explicitly or not, most of the candidates who came in third place or below made it clear that they were absolutely opposed to a National Front president of the republic.

In 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen won just under 17 percent of the vote at the first ballot and only added one point to his total at the runoff. In 2017, his daughter did marginally better than he had at the first ballot, but added 12 percentage points to her runoff total. Although she was defeated by a two to one margin, Marine Le Pen still managed to pick up lots of votes from disgruntled conservative *and* France insoumise voters.

Given the peculiarities of France's electoral system (also to be discussed later), new legislative elections were held six weeks later. As everyone expected, Macron's party, renamed *La Répulique en marche* and its allies came in first. Although they only won about a third of the vote, the new movement captured 350 of the 577 seats in the **National Assembly** or all-powerful lower house of the parliament.

Party or Alliance	First Ballot Vote (%)	Seats
En Marche and allies	32.3	350
Parliamentary right	21.6	136
Parliamentary left	9.5	46
France insoumise	11.0	17
National Front	13.2	8
Other	9.2	38

Table 19.2
Legislative Elections 2017

The list of losers included everyone else. As is always the case, the National Front did far worse in the legislative election, winning only 13 percent of the vote and 8 seats. The mainstream left and right did better, but only marginally so. The Republicans and their allies won 22 percent of the vote and 136 seats. The Socialists and Mélenchon's supporters got clobbered with the left as a whole winning a total of only about 20 percent of the vote and 63 seats.

In short, the French electorate did seem to have stopped the spread of support for populist movements that had been on the rise with the victory by the "leave" side in Britain's Brexit referendum, Donald Trump's surprising election in the United States, and more. But, in the end, that may all that Macron accomplished, because his own popularity plummeted during the first six months of his presidency, taking with it much of the hope for sweeping reform in the labor market and everything else he had promised to get the country's stagnant political and economic systems restarted.

Discussing those issues at this point would be the equivalent of putting the intellectual cart before the intellectual horse. It is enough for now to consider the second statement that begins this chapter.

I literally heard it from a student while I was writing the first edition of this book in the late 1980s and used it in all previous editions of in a very different way than I will here. The young woman in question was taking a course on French politics and literature with me and a colleague (in French) and was planning to double major.

Then, her roommate's father visited for parents' weekend and took both of them out for dinner. When he probed my student about her intended major, that statement was his response.

It turns out that he had gone to college in the 1950s when French and government did seem like a contradiction in terms. As we will see in the historical section, govewrnments came and went every nine months or so and accomplished little while in office. The **Third** (1875-1940) and **Fourth Republics** (1946-1958) were classic examples political scientists to use in showing why some parliamentary systems don't work.

Think About It

In 1958, France adopted a new constitution that created its Fifth Republic under the leadership of **Charles de Gaulle** (1890–1970). For the first time, France had a democratic government that could govern effectively. The country has had its ups and downs since then, but next to no one doubts that France deserves its position near the top of any list of the world's most influential democracies.

This chapter focuses on that transition and other changes that came produced in its wake:

- Why did it take so long for a stable democratic regime to take hold in France?
- How did de Gaulle's changes to the country's institutions and social, political, and economic processes contribute to the creation of an effective democratic state that seems all but certain to endure whatever problems it might face in the foreseeable future?
- Why is the bureaucratic elite, of which Hollande is a member, at the heart of its political system?
- Why, despite the rapid growth during the first quarter-century of the Fifth Republic's life, has the French economy proven more resistant to reform over the past twenty years?
- How and why have international forces arising in the European Union and elsewhere turned the successes of the second half of the twentieth century into the uncertainties of this first years of this one?

In the first nine editions of *Comparative Politics*, I argued that his statement did not apply to the **Fifth Republic** which has been in place since 1958. For at least its first thirty years, it served as a model of what I will call **interventionist states** could accomplish along with Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Even after its fortunes declined with the turn of the century, French governments still had significant human and institutional resources at their disposal.

Yet, everything we have seen so far—and most of what we will see in the rest of this chapter—served to undermine the impact of those assets. That led to the uncertainties that made the bizarre nature of the 2017 election possible.

And, it meant that I had to reconsider my student's roommate's father's statement again because, in 2017, he might be right again.

Whether he is right or not, his statement and the realities that eddy around it do help us explain why I reluctantly moved France out of the print edition of *Comparative Politics*. As much as I love the country and as much research as I have done on its politics over the years, there really is no way to justify including it in a book of this length at the expense of, say, Germany or Britain. Indeed, if I did have enough room to include another established democracy, it would be Japan, not France.

The Context

We should not go too far in accepting my student's roommate's father's interpretation of French politics. When he studied French politics, his statement made a lot of sense. It has not for the bulk of the period since then when the center of gravity in French politics swung toward a strong state that helped the country regain its place among the world's leading economic and military powers.

Indeed, even in today's period of self-doubt, the Fifth Republic is a far cry from its predecessors because it marks the first time that France has had a democratic regime that is both effective and legitimate. As we will see, establishing and consolidating the Fifth Republic was no mean feat. Nevertheless, the regime has been so successful that it suffers from the same shortcomings as the United States and Great Britain—the absence of any fundamental criticism of the basic rules and procedures that shape political life.

A Modern but Struggling Economy

France is a big country by European standards. With a population of more than 67 million people, it has about the same number of people as Britain. Among European countries it is smaller only than Germany—assuming you don't count Russia as a purely European country. Geographically, it is almost two-and-a-half times the size of the UK, which means that France has more open space and less-congested cities.

More importantly for our purposes, France was an economic backwater in the 1950s. That is no longer the case.

France is one of the world's richest countries. Most families enjoy a standard of living roughly equivalent to that in the United States. American salaries are a bit higher, but the French make up for that with guaranteed health care, university tuition that still costs between $300 and $700 a year, and a day-care system that is integrated into the public schools and open to all children over the age of two which is provided at no cost to most parents.

The French make the world's fastest trains, the TGV *(trains à grandes vitesses)*, which can travel comfortably at more than two hundred miles an hour. They play a leading role in Airbus, which makes state-of-the-art jumbo jets, and Arianespace, which now surpasses the American NASA in commercial space ventures.

Perhaps most importantly for the rest of this chapter, the French economy has been in a

steep decline since the Great Recession began in 2007-2008. At least 1,000 factories closed in the next five years. About one fourth of all younger workers have not been able to find stable, long-term employment. The government takes much of the blame for the economic slowdown in part because of its traditional economic intervention and because the government directly employs about 20 percent of the workforce and controls more than half of national economic output.

Not everyone ever benefited equally from what the late John Ardagh called the "new French revolution." Three relatively disadvantaged groups, in particular, stand ou, the third of which will feature prominently in the rest of this chapter. First are older people who cannot afford to move out of their isolated villages or dingy urban apartments. Second are women, who have yet to make as much political or professional progress as their counterparts in the United States. Third are members of minority groups, most of whom still work in jobs whites are not willing to take and who are often discriminated against in ways reminiscent of the American South before the civil rights movement.

And, one can make the case that France is struggling economically more than most of its competitors and is at least partially in the doldrums for political reasons. Ardagh's new French revolution began to slow down no later than the 1980s for many of the same reasons all advanced industrialized democracies have struggled. However, there are some peculiarly French reasons for its protracted difficulties that have their roots in the policies that stood the country in such good stead during the boom years after World War II.

A Centralized Country

France is also more **centralized** than any of the democracies included in *Comparative Politics*. Although it is hard to measure such things, no other capital city dominates its country as much as Paris does. Depending on exactly where one draws the boundaries, the Paris region has between a quarter and a third of France's total population.

Paris dominates the rest of the country culturally, politically, and economically, too. Almost all big businesses and government agencies are headquartered there. Road and rail systems were built with Paris as their hub. Paris has long been a thriving metropolis, whereas the major provincial cities were dull and drab, leading one observer to call them the "French desert" in the 1960s. Even now, plenty of "turboprofs" teach at provincial universities but refuse to move from Paris, even though they have to commute as much as eight hours each way on France's high-speed trains.

Throughout this chapter, we will encounter examples of that centralization. Here, it is enough to consider two remarkable examples that have only recently gone by the political wayside.

France is one of the few countries with an official agency that determines which new words can be added to its language. In recent years, it has struggled to keep foreign—mostly English—words out. People may well want to refer to le one-man show, disc jockey, or hit parade, but the High Commission for the French Language insists on *spectacle solo*, *animateur*, and *palmares*. Not that long ago, the commission fined American Airlines for issuing English-language boarding passes at Charles de Gaulle Airport and hauled a furniture store owner into court for advertising his showroom rather than his *salle d'exposition*.

Until the early 1990s, the government insisted that children be given the name of a saint or a figure from classical history in order to qualify for the extensive benefits families

receive. Breton, Occitan, and German names were forbidden. Richard Bernstein tells of a friend whose first and middle names were Mignon Florence, which was double trouble. Not only was Mignon not on the list of approved names, but the registry office staff was convinced that, as a girl, she should have been Mignonne. Later, her teachers insisted that she spell her name that way. Officially, she had to be Florence, which she remained until the rules were relaxed when she was an adult.[1]

A Diverse Country

France was a relatively homogeneous country until the 1950s. Almost everyone spoke French. Many still spoke with noticeable local accents and some older people only spoke Breton, Occitan, or a regional dialect. Nonetheless, the spread of radio and television, had already made standard French as widely used and understood as English is in Great Britain.

Well over 90 percent of the population was at least nominally Catholic, although only about five percent of the population attends church on a regular basis. Roughly two percent of the population was Protestants and 1 percent Jewish.

All that has changed in the last half century. Somewhere around ten percent of the population—mostly postwar immigrants from former French colonies and their children—are Muslim. A slightly larger proportion of the population is neither White nor ethnically French, however you choose to define those terms.

The changing "face" of the French population is hard to miss. More than half of the players on the team that won the 1998 World Cup were either born in or were first-generation immigrants from Armenia, Algeria, Guadeloupe, New Caledonia, Argentina, Ghana, Senegal, Italy, French Guyana, Portugal, Spain, Martinique, and the Basque Country. The team competing for the 2018 cup will be at least as diverse.

A Woman in a Burkini
Source Wikimedia Commons

On December 31, 2012, the top nine songs on the French hit parade were by singers who weren't French. Number 10 was by a French singer, but Matt Pakora's father was born of Polish parents. The only artist on the list with a name my student's roommate's father would have recognized as French was Canadian—Céline Dion. Among first names for boys, François was in 313th place in 2010, trailing Matheo, Mohamed, Amine, Diego, and Ibrahim, among others.

Of all the countries considered in Part 2, identity politics has the most visible impact in France today. It was the first European country to have a major political party whose electoral appeals are all but openly racist in tone and that has had the most significant and uncontrollable violence based on racial, religious, and cultural issues. It also has had a disproportionate number of terrorist attacks in recent years, most notably the ones against the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, the Bataclan nightclub, and a crowd of people celebrating independence or Bastille day.

Generally speaking, diversity is a more vexing political issue than in Great Britain or Germany. Members of minority groups are less well integrated into French society in part because governments of the left and right have both tried to get immigrants to assimilate into

[1]Richard Bernstein, *Fragile Glory*: *A Portrait of France and the French* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 110ff.

French culture.

Those efforts take multiple forms, many of which will seem unusual to readers who are used to the freedoms of what the French would call "Anglo-Saxon" cultures. No one is allowed to wear clothing or display other such symbols of religious faith. While that includes yarmulkes and large crucifixes, those policies have gained the most attention in recent years because Muslim headscarves, burqas, and the like have been banned in public places. Some resort towns have gone so far as to try to ban the so-called burkini, all the while allowing topless bathers to have unhindered access to the beaches.

In France, concerns about diversity are now seen more in religious than racial or ethnic terms given the ban the government has imposed on wearing everything from burkas to yarmulkes.

But it is also the European country that has most integrated foreign cultural values and tastes into its cultural mainstream. Recent immigrants are to be found in all the major political parties—even the National Front. Although it is almost impossible to define or measure, France has the highest mixed marriage rate (defined as a native-born French person marrying someone born outside the country) among the larger European countries. Most importantly for our purposes, France has the most active political movements consciously trying to reduce the role of racism and other forms of intolerance.

The Evolution of the French State

Comparativists usually use Great Britain as their model when they describe the ways a democratic state can evolve relatively smoothly over a number of centuries. They turn to France to illustrate the more difficult--but far more common—trajectory in which state building is a long and wrenching process. Nowhere is that easier to see than in the fact that France has had eleven regimes since the revolution that began in 1789. The United States and Great Britain have had one each (see Table 19.3).

Transformations and Divisions

To see why state building was so arduous in France, it makes sense to ask the same question we can ask of any European democracy. How did the four transformations discussed in Chapter 3 help shape French history and, in turn, the nature of its state today? Unlike the UK, those conflicts were never fully resolved and ended up leaving deep scars that continue to affect French politics today.

The first transformation led to the formation of France itself. Although centralization did not leave the country politically divided, it is arguably the tradition that defines French politics the most.

As early as 1500, there was an entity which a modern-day observer could identify as France. Its government was headed by a king, but his power was limited, especially the farther one travelled from Paris.

Because France was not as isolated as the British Isles, it was unable to avoid the wars of religion and national expansion that ravaged Europe for much of the next two centuries. In order to fight them, France created one of the first strong states in Europe, which most historians date from the reign of **Louis XIV** (1643–1715).

The revolution of 1789 further centralized power in Paris and made France by far the

most uniformly administered country in Europe. Some revolutionary groups did want to drastically scale back state power. By 1792, they had lost out to the Jacobins, who were, if anything, more supportive of centralization than the Bourbon monarchs they overthrew--and beheaded. For instance, they divided the country into departments that were controlled from Paris rather than by local officials.

YEAR	REGIME
Until 1792	Bourbon Monarchy
1792–1804	First Republic
1804–15	First Empire
1815–30	Bourbon Restoration
1830–48	July Monarchy
1848–51	Second Republic
1851–70	Second Empire
1875–1940	Third Republic
1940–44	Vichy Regime
1944–46	Liberation Government
1946–58	Fourth Republic
1958–	Fifth Republic

Table 19.3
French Regimes since 1789

However, centralization also led many to view the state as a distant and arbitrary political stone wall that frustrated them everywhere they turned. In that sense, centralization at least contributed to the intensification of the other three transformations and did leave deep and lasting divisions of its own.

For a century and a half, French politics was shaken to its very core by the second and third transformations regarding religion and democracy. While disputes over the role of religion were by no means new, the ones involving democracy only hitt the country in earnest with the revolution. To complicate matters even further and to help explain why French history is so hard to follow, the two fed off and reinforced each other.

The church had been the monarchy's strongest ally. Many of the best-known leaders of the *ancien régime*, including Armand Jean du Plessis Richelieu, Jules Mazarin, and Jean-Baptiste Colbert, were cardinals as well as ministers to the king. The revolution of 1789, therefore, not only overturned the monarchy but also reinforced already heated disputes over the political role that the Catholic Church should—or should not—play.

Louis XIV: *Source Wikimedia*

More often than not, the most intense confrontations pitted an **anticlerical** Left against a **proclerical** Right. Groups that came to be known as liberals and radicals claimed that the France could not democratize without total separation of church and state. On the other side, royalists and other conservatives believed the clergy should play a leading role in a restored monarchy or other conservative regime. The decision to separate church and state and thus undermine ecclesiastical wealth and power provoked such resistance from proclerical groups that the **Third Republic** (1875–1940) nearly collapsed. It should be noted that this commitment to what the French call ***laicité*** has a lot to do with why many liberal-minded French are opposed to wearing burkinis, yarmulkes, and crucifixes in public to this day.

The clashes between pro- and anti-clerical French citizens occurred despite the fact that the country has one of the world's oldest and strongest democratic traditions. It was the first country to formally endorse human rights with the adoption of the declaration of the rights of man in 1789. France was also the first country to extend the right to vote to all men (but not women) after the revolution of 1848.

Nonetheless, France could not democratize gradually the way the British did where, among other things, traditional elites grudgingly acquiesced to their loss of power. Instead, the transition toward democracy in France came in fits and starts, many of which did not last.

Finally, the industrial revolution divided France in more complex ways than it did in Britain. Many workers were social democrats who believed that fundamental change in social and economic life could be achieved by working through the parliamentary system, much as Labour did in Great Britain. Others insisted that meaningful change could only be achieved by revolution. In 1920, their differences led to their division into two parties, the reformist *SFIO* and the **Communist Party (PCF)**, which was inspired by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Yet others were practicing Catholics who opposed both wings of the socialist Left.

Also unlike Britain, the capitalists were divided, too. Most small shopkeepers, merchants, and farmers had qualms about the industrial revolution. They used free-market rhetoric to help prop up the traditional economy under which they prospered. Because they supported the political parties that resisted social and economic change which were often in power, capitalists who wanted to modernize and industrialize argued that concerted state action was needed to overcome the market's biases toward stability. The growth-oriented industrialists got some of what they wanted when de Gaulle briefly returned to power at the end of World War II, but they lost most of their political access under the **Fourth Republic** (1846–1958),

Traditional Republican Politics: A Vicious Circle

The sad history of the Third and Fourth Republics is complicated and depressing. On average, governments lasted nine months. Prime ministers rarely lost a vote of confidence

because they usually resigned as soon as they realized they were about to lose one.

I could go through those events in chronological order. However, because governments came and went at such dizzying speed, it makes more sense to focus on what I call the traditional republican syndrome. I chose the word *syndrome* intentionally, because physicians use it to refer to a pattern of symptoms that occur together and often have disastrous consequences.

At its heart were the ideological divisions left by the four transformations, which spawned six major "political families" of roughly equal size as can be seen in the results of the 1951 election (see Table 19.4).

PARTY	SEATS
Communists	101
Socialists	106
Christian Democrats	88
Radicals	76
Minor parties	40
Independents and Peasants	95
Gaullists	120

Table 19.4
Seats in the French Chamber of Deputies, 1951

As we just saw, the Socialists and Communists represented the two halves of the socialist left and had been bitter rivals ever since their political divorce in 1920. Much like the Socialists, the Catholic Popular Republican Movement (MRP) supported the welfare state and European integration, but the two had a hard time working together because of their sharp disagreement over church-related issues.

The **Radicals** got their name in the nineteenth century, when support for liberal democracy, anticlericalism, and free-market capitalism squarely placed people on the left. The Independents and Peasants shared many of the Radicals' economic beliefs but were staunchly proclerical.

Finally, the **Gaullists** were the most recent in a long line of groups that demanded strong leadership, and they had deep roots in monarchism and Bonapartism. The Gaullists claimed to be loyal republicans. They simply wanted to replace the Fourth Republic with a stronger one!

The existence of so many antagonistic parties made the second component of the

vicious circle—a deadlocked parliament as reflected in Table 19.4—all but inevitable. As in most parliamentary systems, the president was little more than a figurehead. Real power was shared by the parliament and cabinet and supposedly exercised by the prime minister or *premier ministre*.[2]

Because no party ever came close to winning a majority, members of parliament (MPs) had little choice but to form coalition governments that included members of three or four parties who had little or nothing in common. Often, tiny parties held the balance of power. Members of the coalition routinely found themselves on both sides of most important issues. As a result, almost every government rapidly saw its majority evaporate and resigned before a vote of confidence was held that would have thrown it out. The ensuing cabinet "crisis" would last until the parties were able to reach a compromise on the issues that brought the old government down and find a way to form a new one. That cabinet, in turn, would survive only until it had to confront its first tough question. Not surprisingly, most of France's pressing and enduring problems went unsolved.

There was one tool that many prime ministers in other states have at their disposal that French leaders could not use—dissolving parliament in order to hold new elections. Marshal Macmahon, the first president of the Third Republic, had done just that in 1877 in the hope that in the election would produce a monarchist majority. Instead, the republican parties won a resounding victory. They immediately forced Macmahon to resign. From then on, there was an unwritten rule that neither the president nor the prime minister could dissolve parliament before the end of its term.

The Macmahon fiasco was the first of many episodes that convinced politicians that ambitious colleagues were dangerous. Reform-minded leaders were routinely passed over whenever a new cabinet had to be formed. The king makers preferred politicians whom they could count on, which meant those who were happy with the deadlocked system.

Matters were made even worse by the fact that politicians were willing to sacrifice just about everything else in order to advance their own careers. Most political scientists at the time believed that their ideological rhetoric was little more than a veneer to hide their self-serving goals. Many were willing to sabotage cabinets and to destroy other politicians' reputations to enhance their prestige and power.

Last, but by no means least, there was a "negative" consensus on what the state should do, which Stanley Hoffmann called a republican synthesis that sustained a stalemate society. The dominant centrist politicians represented the peasantry and the petite bourgeoisie of the small towns, who were particularly resistant to social and economic change. Although these politicians could rarely agree on what to do about the "big issues," they had little trouble seeing eye to eye on what France should *not* do, which was just about everything.

In the absence of effective parliamentary government, what power there was devolved onto the third part of the syndrome: the bureaucracy. Extreme centralization and bureaucratic inflexibility rippled throughout society. All schools, for example, followed the same curriculum so that the teachers could best prepare students for national examinations that determined if they had done well enough that year to pass and continue on to the next

[2] French-speaking readers will realize that the two terms are literally interchangeable, since *premier minister* literally means first or prime minister. English speakers often simply use the term "premier" interchangeably with prime minister.

grade or graduate as the case may be.

Centralization also contributed to the final component of the vicious circle—an alienated political culture. Political scientists did not gather systematic evidence on French values until the 1960s. Nonetheless, the French were almost certainly as frustrated and ideologically divided as any mass public in the industrialized world. Unlike the British, they frequently questioned the regime's basic structures and practices. Many were defensive individualists, convinced that there was little they could do to protect themselves from government officials and all other outsiders, who, they "knew," were out to do them in.

Consequently, the French suppressed their anger until something triggered an explosion. This was not merely a feature of national politics. What Michel Crozier called the "bureaucratic phenomenon" was the defining characteristic of an entire society that was built upon centralized, unresponsive institutions. Students, for instance, hated the rigid rules of the national education system, but they grudgingly accepted a classroom experience they disliked as long as they felt that the teacher was doing a good job preparing them for the exams that determined their academic future. If, however, the students felt that a teacher was not doing a good job, it was a different story. Then the students might suddenly break out into a wild demonstration or *chahut* (from the words for screaming cat), which William Schonfeld graphically described:

> **Students might constantly talk with one another, get up and walk around the room whenever they feel like it, and if the teacher should call on them to respond to a question, they would answer disrespectfully—e.g., Teacher: "When you mix two atoms of hydrogen with one atom of oxygen, what do you get?" Pupil: "It rains," or "*merde*." Or the students might jeer at the teacher in unison, call him nasty names and run around the classroom. In certain classes, wet wads of paper will be thrown across the room, landing and then sticking on the wall behind the teacher's desk. Or there might be a fistfight, with the winner ejecting the loser from the room, while the other pupils stand around cheering for one or the other of the pugilists. With some teachers, the students might bring small glass sulfur bombs into class, which would be simultaneously broken, creating such a stench that the teacher is usually driven into the hall while the pupils stay in class, happily suffering the odor. Finally, students might bring a tent, camping equipment, and food into their class and, during the lesson, set up the tent, prepare lunch for each other, and then eat it—the teacher being powerless to help.**[3]

In the terms of systems analysis, that alienation fed back into the party and parliamentary morass to complete the vicious circle. Nathan Leites titled one of his books about parliament in those days *The House Without Windows*. The main section of the Parliament building actually is windowless, but he did not choose the title because of the Hôtel Matignon's peculiar architecture. If he was right, its political windowlessness went in both directions. There is little evidence that the elected officials cared a lot about what their voters wanted so they didn't look "out" much. The French people did not try to look "in" all that often either. Even though they complained about the irresponsible politicians and their ideological squabbles, they consistently reelected the MPs who enacted pork barrel legislation but could not get the bureaucracy or anyone else to move on an

[3]William Schonfeld, *Obedience and Revolt* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1976), 30–31.

individual's or a community's problems.

De Gaulle's Republic

The Third and Fourth Republics were not abject failures. The church-state issue receded from center stage. There was more ministerial stability than one might expect because most of the same parties and politicians appeared in government after government.

But neither these nor their other accomplishments should obscure the basic point. The two republics failed to meet France's pressing problems.

Comparative Emphasis
Democratization

France's difficulties in building any kind of legitimate state, let alone a democratic one, illustrate just how fortunate the United States and Great Britain were.

By 1900, both the American and British states had broadly based support. The basic contours of democracy were established as well, although it would be a generation before women in either country could vote and sixty years before most African Americans could do so.

Meanwhile, the Third Republic was teetering on the brink of collapse. Though it somehow managed to weather a long string of crises, it survived only because, as one-time president and prime minister Georges Clémenceau put it, it was the form of government that divided the French the least. The Third Republic accomplished very little other than surviving, which is one of the reasons that France developed the reputation epitomized by the statement that begins this chapter.

After its liberation from German occupation in 1944, France did have one brief flirtation with effective government. The old political guard had been discredited by the depression, defeat, and collaboration with the Nazis. Few people wanted to go back to the *status quo ante*. The provisional government headed by de Gaulle nationalized major industrial and financial firms and established a planning commission to supervise economic recovery. Even the bureaucracy changed with the establishment of the **Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA)** to train civil servants who would be committed to democracy and modernization and whose graduates have dominated political life for the last half century.

Unfortunately, that flirtation *was* brief. When the politicians finally agreed on a constitution for the Fourth Republic, it was essentially a carbon copy of the one in use before the war. De Gaulle resigned in protest.

The history of the Fourth Republic was a sorry one indeed. The mismatch between an unchanging, ineffective government and a society facing unsolved problems was more serious than ever. At home, successive governments failed to build the social infrastructure a rapidly urbanizing population needed. Abroad, French colonies were beginning to demand their freedom, which put even more pressure on the beleaguered state.

Support for politicians was at an all-time low. Young people were so turned off that they did not even bother to learn who their leaders were. One public opinion poll showed that 95 percent of the men drafted into the army in 1956 knew who had won the

Tour de France that year, but only 17 percent could name the prime minister.

Although domestic issues were the undoing of most governments, it was a foreign policy crisis that brought the Fourth Republic's short life to an end. In 1954, a revolution broke out in Algeria, where the majority Arab population demanded independence. By 1958, many of the European settlers were in revolt as well, blaming Paris for failing to put down the insurgency.

Profiles
Charles de Gaulle

Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970) was one of the most prominent and influential leaders of the twentieth century. He began his career in the army, where he built a reputation as a visionary who urged his superiors (while often irritating them) to modernize their armaments to meet the growing challenge from Nazi Germany.

Despite the fact that he was largely unknown outside of military circles, de Gaulle led the resistance against Nazi occupation during World War II and headed the Liberation government from 1944 to 1946. He then retired because the establishment politicians refused to heed his calls for a strong executive.

Brought back to power during the Algerian crisis in 1958, de Gaulle created the Fifth Republic. He led France for the next eleven years until he resigned following a defeat in a referendum on minor constitutional reforms. De Gaulle died the following year, but his new regime was firmly in place as the first stable and popular democracy in French history.

In spring 1958, the Fourth Republic's seventeenth prime minister resigned. It soon became clear that the little-known Pierre Pflimlin would be the next man to hold the job, and he was expected to begin negotiations with the Algerian Arabs.

That proved to be the last straw for the army and the white colonists. On the night of May 12–13, soldiers seized Algiers. Rumors quickly spread that the military was getting ready to invade the mainland. Finally, on June 1, the politicians turned to de Gaulle, who agreed to become prime minister again on the condition that they grant him extraordinary powers not only to deal with the rebellion but to revise the constitution (see Table 19.5).

Nonetheless, most politicians expected de Gaulle to be what historians call a typical heroic leader. On several earlier occasions, the parliament had turned to exceptional men to deal with crises and then had gotten rid of them as soon as the immediate danger passed. They had every reason to expect the same would happen with de Gaulle. He was already sixty-eight years old. Even after the 1958 elections, he had, at most, the reluctant support from the politicians in Parliament, the majority of whom were waiting for him to leave so they could return to business as usual.

De Gaulle proved them wrong.

In his decade as president, he and his colleagues ended the war in Algeria, introduced the direct election of the president, created a majority party, and survived the 1968 upheaval.

When he lost a referendum on two seemingly trivial constitutional reforms and resigned, the Fifth Republic was securely in place.

YEAR	EVENT
1958	Creation of the Fifth Republic
1961	End of Algerian War
1962	Referendum on direct election of president First parliamentary majority elected
1965	De Gaulle reelected
1968	Events of May and June
1969	De Gaulle's resignation
1970	De Gaulle's death
1973–74	OPEC oil embargo
1981	Mitterrand and Socialists elected
1986	First period of cohabitation
1993	Second period of cohabitation
1995	Chirac elected
2017	Election of Macron

Table 19.5
Key Events in French Politics since 1958

Routinized Charisma: The Fifth Republic since de Gaulle

As can be seen in the chapters on China, India, and Iran, charismatic leaders have a hard time making extraordinary leadership ordinary in ways that "normal" politicians can in more routine times and in more routine ways. The Fifth Republic is very much an exception to that rule. No president since de Gaulle could be called charismatic. However, each of

them—with the possible exception of Nicolas Sarkozy—has helped make the presidency the most powerful chief executive in any of the industrialized democracies.

As we will see in the rest of this chapter, there were many reasons why this happened. For now, it is enough to spend a paragraph on each of the first four men (there have not been any women presidents yet) who held the presidency after de Gaulle under whose leadership the Fifth Republic achieved the same kind of bedrock stability we saw in the United States and the United Kingdom, all of which helps show why my student's roommate's father didn't get things right when he came to campus which just about at the mid-point of this period.

Georges Pompidou (1911–1974) won the election held after de Gaulle resigned. Because he was rather bland and colorless, Pompidou had no choice but to govern as a "normal" leader. His most enduring legacy was the creation of a well-oiled Gaullist party machine. He died of cancer five years into his term.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1926–) was never an orthodox Gaullist. He served as the General's popular Minister of Finance and convinced a small group of Independents to join him as part of the Gaullist coalition. Though by no means charismatic, he used all the tools the constitution gave the presidency. He also had the misfortune of governing during the first post-war recession following the 1973–74 OPEC oil embargo which, some argue, France has yet to fully recover from.

He was followed by the Fifth Republic's first president from outside the Gaullist camp, **François Mitterrand** (1916–1996). In order to get elected president, Mitterrand had had to rebuild the Socialist Party from the top down. His rather imperious manner also reinforced the fact that the president would dominate the Fifth Republic, whoever was in power. Mitterrand's first government tried—and failed—to move France dramatically leftward. From 1983 until the end of the term, global economic conditions ruled out radical economic initiatives. His election marked the first time the Fifth Republic had a true alternation in power, which is an important turning point in the history of any democratic regime. In addition, Mitterrand had to share power with a National Assembly with a Gaullist majority and prime minister after the 1986 legislative election, which the French (and perhaps only the French) refer to as **cohabitation**. The sense that the political stakes were no longer all that high was reinforced after the 1993 and 1997 elections, when Left and Right had to cohabit again and again did so with surprising ease.

The Gaullist **Jacques Chirac** (1932–) followed Mitterrand and epitomized the Gaullist machine. He began his career as a bureaucrat only later embarking on a political career as has been the case with most prominent French politicians ever since. Before being elected president, he held a succession of elected positions, including cabinet minister, head of the Gaullist party, prime minister, and mayor of Paris. Chirac reflected the nearly larger than life nature of the French presidency despite his rather bland personality. He used the levers of power from the "distance" that by then had come to be the norm for French presidents who tried to stand above the hurly burly of everyday political life.

And Today

The two presidents who succeeded Chirac, Nicolas Sarkozy (1955-) and François Hollande had the misfortune to govern while the French model of effective state leadership began to unravel. We can defer discussing those issues until later in the chapter. For now, it is enough to

see that the partisan system and much more disintegrated to such a point that both men started the 2017 campaign as candidates. Sarkozy was defeated badly in the Republican primaries and Hollande decided not to face the voters at all once his support levels dropped and stayed in the single digits.

Political Culture

Stereotypes about French culture abound. The French are arrogant and rude. They love to argue. Their erratic and deadly driving habits are a sign of their reluctance to follow any rules, values that somehow led to the protests that have occurred on and off throughout French history.

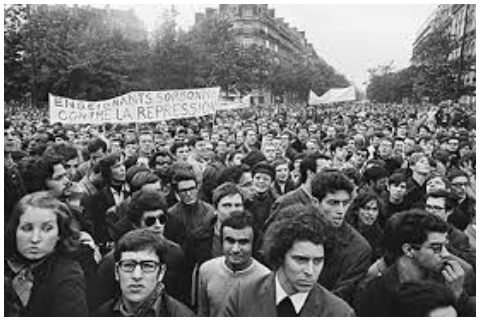
Stereotypes aside, there is no question that the French were more divided and less civic-minded than the British or Americans until the 1970s. The past forty years, however, have brought a dramatic easing of ideological tensions. Widespread protests still occur, but, on balance, it is safe to say that the success most French governments have enjoyed since 1958 is now mirrored in popular attitudes and beliefs. Virtually no one now talks about moving on to a Sixth Republic, let alone returning to a monarchy or empire.

That said, much of the support has evaporated in recent years, a point we will return to at the end of this section on French political culture. First, however, it is important to see how the Fifth Republic turned things around.

Taming Political Protest

Return for a moment to the distinction between the government of the day and the regime as a whole I made in Chapter 2. Public opinion polls in the United States and Great Britain suggest that, however intense opposition might be to a Donald Trump or Theresa May, it stops at opposition to individual leaders and their policies but does not extend to the regime or the constitutional order.

The same is true in France today.



A Typical Protest in 1968: *Source University of California*

The turning point occurred no later than May 1968, when a wave of strikes and demonstrations paralyzed the country. The movement started innocently enough. Facilities at the suburban branch of the University of Paris in Nanterre were shoddy. Students chafed under strict rules regarding dormitory life at what had been billed as France's first American-style campus. To protest what they believed were intolerable conditions on these and other fronts, a small group of student organized a demonstration that had next to no impact beyond the campus.

When the university authorities decided to discipline the students who led the demonstration, the hearing was held at the Sorbonne in the Latin Quarter, because it was the home of the sprawling University of Paris of which Nanterre was a part. While university officials were interrogating the students, a small group of their supporters staged a demonstration in solidarity with the hitherto unknown group from Nanterre. The police responded by entering the Sorbonne, the first time that this had happened in centuries, which sparked another demonstration in the surrounding neighborhood.

During the night of May 10–11, the demonstrators erected barricades reminiscent of those used in earlier revolutions. The authorities sent in antiriot police who intervened with such force that many middle-class onlookers were outraged by what they felt was the government's overreaction. By the next morning, leaders of the major trade unions and other left-leaning interest groups had come to realize that they had the same adversary as the students—the Gaullist state.

After a joint rally two days later, students seized the Sorbonne and other buildings in the Latin Quarter. Without the authorization of union leaders, workers followed suit and began occupying factories around the country. Within days, eight million people were on strike, and more than two million had taken part in a demonstration.

Many of them were particularly upset by the concentration of power under the Gaullists. Along with personal attacks on de Gaulle (*Dix ans, ça suffit!*—Ten years, that's enough!) came demands for increased participation, freedom of speech, decentralization, labor reform, an improved quality of life, and *autogestion*, a participatory, decentralized form of self-managed socialism.

The government and the regime held, however. At the end of May, de Gaulle used one of the new presidential powers and dissolved the National Assembly. The Gaullists played on the growing fear of disorder to win the legislative elections by a landslide and put an end to the crisis.

The most diverse coalition of the 1960s, new Left came together because the strikers and demonstrators could see that they had a common adversary in the state. The spontaneity and size of the protests reflected the breadth and depth of dissatisfaction that was anything but trivial or traditional.

Many observers (myself included) believed that the **events of May** suggested that this new kind of alienation could bring about the end of both capitalism and the Gaullist regime.

We were wrong.

Virtually no one questioned the legitimacy of the Fifth Republic. Even the most outspoken veterans of the "events of May" I interviewed four years later were convinced that their goals could be reached without altering its institutional arrangements in any appreciable way. The next year, Mitterrand took over the Socialist Party and, among other things, brought the ideas raised in 1968 into the political mainstream.

Public opinion polls since then have consistently shown a public that is satisfied with French political institutions. Depending on the year, between 55 and 71 percent of the voters stated the institutions of the Fifth Republic "functioned well" during the last quarter of the twentieth century (see Table 19.6). Other polls typically found that two-thirds of the population express confidence in the president's judgment, and a similar number believe that elections make politicians pay attention to what average citizens think.

We cannot attribute all of the changes in French political culture to the aftermath of 1968. Whatever uncertainty there may be on the reasons the change occurred, one conclusion is clear. If there is such a thing as a civic culture, France had one by the end of the twentieth century. There is perhaps no better evidence of this than the fact that most pollsters have stopped asking questions about support for the regime.

YEAR	FUNCTION WELL (%)	DO NOT FUNCTION WELL (%)
1978	56	27
1983	57	25
1992	61	32
2000	71	21

Table 19.6
Support for the Fifth Republic's Institutions

Source: Adapted from Olivier Duhamel, "Confiance institutionnelle et défiance politique: la démocratie française," in *L'état de l'opinion* 2001, Olivier Duhamel and Philippe Méchet (eds.) (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2001), 75.

The Unraveling

Although the survival of the Fifth Republic is no longer in jeopardy, France is divided in two ways that reflect the new issues in postindustrial society discussed in Chapter 3: race and Europe. Together, the reduced support for the politicians and policies of the Fifth Republic, if not for the regime itself.

Until the economic downturn of the 1970s, few people objected to the presence of a growing number of immigrants. That is not the case today.

It is hard to tell how prejudiced many French men and women have become. No matter how one measures it, there are significant pockets of racism, nationalism, and/or xenophobia, primarily among poorly educated, underemployed men. There is no denying the resentment against non-whites who hold jobs while the unemployment rate among "French" people is at near-record levels. We will see the new racially tinged conservatism more clearly in the discussion of the all but openly racist National Front in the next section. We also should not make too much of the new French racism. There are probably as many people who oppose racism and who embrace the more multicultural and diverse France.

European integration became controversial with the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty on European Union in 1992 (see Chapter 16). It reappeared when French voters became the first to reject the proposed European constitution in 2005. For our purposes here, it is more important to see that anti-immigrant and anti-European attitudes overlap, because the fault lines cut across traditional left-right divisions in three ways.

First, when I did my first research in France in 1972, few observers would have expected that public opinion would move so sharply to the right. For good or ill, the Left in industrialized democracies has had a hard time coming up with creative new ideas, at least

since the heyday of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton. If anyone has the initiative today, it is the Right, especially when it can combine support for free-market capitalism with this kind of nationalist, if not racist, appeal.

Second, these values are not limited to France. As we saw in the previous two chapters, they have given rise to the American Tea Party, British euroskepticism, and more. However, because of the way political life is structured in France, they have had a longer and stronger impact on political life there.

Third, no matter how much one may oppose the emergence of these attitudes, there is little or few signs that they will lead to a neofascist or other type of authoritarian regime any time soon. Still, frustration with the elites and the way they wield power is growing at least as fast in France as in any country covered in *Comparative Politics*. To see that, we have to dig more deeply into the entirety of the French political system, starting with its disintegrating party system whose resilience—not its fragility—was at the heart of most earlier editions of this book.

Trends such as these suggest that the civic-like culture I described in the previous section seems to be unraveling but not to the point of threatening democracy itself—at least not yet.

Political Participation

In 1988, a leading authority on French politics, Frank L. Wilson wrote an article for an anthology on political parties in western democracies. Most of the articles and the book as a whole dealt with the then-popular theory that political parties were failing throughout the democratic world. Wilson, by contrast, made the case that French parties had "refused to fail" and were thus bucking an otherwise global trend.

As we are about to see, Wilson was largely right at the time for reasons that have a lot to do with the changes that accompanied the creation of the Fifth Republic. But as we are also about to see, their refusal to fail did not last. If anything, the French party system today has more built-in and seemingly insurmountable problems than those in most other industrialize democracies—and that is saying a lot.

Renewing the Party System

Even more than is the case in other democracies, any analysis of political participation in French political life has to begin with its political parties. They were one of the main reasons the Third and Fourth Republics were so dysfunctional. And, as Wilson and his colleagues pointed out, the catch-all parties that dominated electoral life for most of the last half century have deservedly gotten much of the blame for the broader difficulties most industrialized democracies have gone through up to the rise of populism in the last decade or so.

For at least the first 50 years of the Fifth Republic including 20 after Wilson wrote his article, French political parties overcame both their own historical legacy and broader global trends. Although they have relied on media-based campaigns and telegenic leaders like the other catch-all parties, that has not kept them from presenting clear alternatives for voters to choose from or emphasizing strong leadership when they have been in office.

Instead of the fragmentation reflected in Table 19.3, the party system came to revolve around reasonably coherent coalitions on the Left and Right. From 1962 on, one or the

other of them has won the presidency as well as a majority of seats in the National Assembly—at least until 2017 (see Tables 19.6 and 19.7).

It is not an easy story to tell. Despite these clear trends, lots of political parties came and went. To make things even more complicated, many of the organizations that did survive changed their names and their coalition partners so often that even those of us who study French politics for a living have a hard time keeping the name and acronyms straight!

The Gaullists

The Gaullists are the main reason why the French party system did so well in comparative terms. Although they have never won a majority of the vote in a legislative election, they liked to refer to themselves as the majority, because they were in power or shared it for 44 of the first 59 years of the Fifth Republic.

I will use the generic term *Gaullist* in the rest of this because it is the party that has changed its name the most often. The one common denominator is that it has never called itself a political party! Under de Gaulle and Pompidou, the name always included the terms *union* and *republic*. After Chirac took over in 1974, it became the **Rally for the Republic (RPR)**. In 2002, it became the Union for a Presidential Majority. Afterward, it renamed itself the **Union for a Popular Movement (UMP),** before becoming The Republicans as they are known today (www.republicains.fr).

The Republicans *Source www.republicain,sfr*

The Gaullists are a relatively new phenomenon. No Gaullist party existed in 1958. The General disliked parties and disbanded the one he created after it failed to win in 1951. Seven years later it was hard to tell what being a Gaullist meant because a wide variety of candidates ran under a number of labels all claiming to be his loyal supporters.

By the mid-1960s, the Gaullists had created the first disciplined conservative party in French history. Since then, the Gaullists have regularly won at least a quarter of the vote, which has been distributed fairly evenly across all segments of French society.

The Gaullists have always insisted that they are above ideology. Such claims notwithstanding, they have consistently stood for two things:

- An unwavering commitment to General de Gaulle's legacy, which has led them to focus all incarnations of their party around a single leader.
- A resolutely procapitalist stance, although rarely one that has a free market as its intellectual starting point.

Even under de Gaulle, the party was a loose coalition that drew its leaders from two very different parts of the political elite. First were local conservative politicians who shared the general's ideological goals and wanted to change France accordingly. Second, and more prominent, are members of the bureaucratic elite who graduated from ENA and other elite schools and will be discussed in more detail in the rest of this chapter.

The balance between the two has ebbed and flowed ever since. Other than under Sarkozy, the majority had a patrician public face based on the leader's roots in the bureaucratic elite.

Everything from their family backgrounds to their educations to their careers before they entered politics predisposed them to support a version of capitalism in which the state and its allies in the biggest companies (many of which are state owned or controlled) dominated. At the same time, the party's electoral machine was able to tap public support for a strong state at home and abroad. The Majority rarely needed to use the populist appeals that worked so well for conservatives in the United States and Great Britain, although it certainly was willing to draw on concerns about the pace and cost of social and economic change when they felt they had to, as in the 1968 election.

YEAR	LEFT VOTES (%) AND SEATS	GAULLISTS AND ALLIES VOTES (%) AND SEATS	NATIONAL FRONT--VOTES (%) AND SEATS
1978	45.1/203	43.9/274	—
1981	51.8/325	40.0/150	—
1986	41.6/245	42.0/274	9.9/35
1988	35.2/276	37.7/258	9.8/1
1993	29.5/70	39.5/460	12.4/0
1998	38.5/319	39.5/257	15.1/1
2002	25.9/161	38.5/386	11.3/0
2007	37.9/227	45.6/345	4.3/0
2012	36.3/316	27.1/229	13.6/2
2017	20.5/63	21.6/136	13.2/8

Table 19.7
Parliamentary Elections, 1958–2017: Major Parties Only

That balance changed a bit under Sarkozy, the last Gaullist president. His brash, populist (by those days' standards) style undoubtedly won him support just before and after the 2007 election. It is also clear that it cost him votes—along with his failure to forge a French response to the global recession—five years later.

As the 2017 election neared, it seemed all but certain the Republicans would win—once they agreed on a candidate. That's where the problems began. Sarkozy wanted to run again. Former Prime Minister Alain Juppé threw his hat in the ring. Both were seen as "yesterday's" candidates and had their own baggage. Eventually, the party's membership chose former Prime Minister François Fillon (1954-) as its standard bearer, but his campaign, too, was plagued by scandals once word got out that his wife and child had been

on the government payroll and had done next to nothing to earn their lucrative salaries. He refused to withdraw his flawed candidacy and only won 20 percent of the vote. They did even worse in the subsequent legislative elections, winning about the same shareof the vote but only 138 of the 577 seats in the National Assumbly.

As of this writing, its future is in doubt. Macron named three Republicans—including Prime Minister Philippe—to his cabinet. The Republicans also have had trouble find a new leader now that the Sarkozy-Juppé-Fillon generation has been all but forced off the political stage and only plan to name one in December 2017.

Still, 2022 is a long ways away.

PARTY	2007 1ST ROUND (%)	2007 2ND ROUND (%)	2012 2ND ROUND (%)	2012 1ST ROUND (%)	2017 1ST ROUND (%)	2017 2ND ROUND (%)
Gaullist	31.2	53.1	27.2	48.4	20.0	
Socialist	25.9	46.9	28.6	51.6	8.3	
Democratic Movement	9.1		18.3			
National Front	10.4		17.9		21.3	33.9
Far left	1.9		11.1		19.6	
Major independent					24.0	66.1

Table 19.8
French Presidential Elections, 2007 to 2017: Major Candidates Only

In conclusion, note that the majority has never been exclusively Gaullist. Even at their peak, they had to depend on allies to end up with enough seats to form a legislative majority and, usually, to win enough votes to win the second or run-off round of presidential elections.

The second component of the conservative coalition got its start when Giscard broke ranks with most moderate politicians and supported the 1962 referendum on the direct election of the president. Giscard then formed his own small party, the Independent Republicans (RI), which did well enough to provide the Gaullists with their first stable parliamentary majority in the legislative elections that fall. After his defeat in 1981, the RI merged with a number of other moderate parties to form an even looser coalition which then joined the UMP in the 2002 election to help defeat Le Pen's second ballot candidacy (see the section on the National Front).

A small group continued the effort to retain a non-Gaullist conservative force under the leadership of François Bayrou (1951–), who formed a new party, the Democratic Movement (http://www.mouvementdemocrate.fr/) in 2007. The new MoDem, as it is known, is the closest equivalent of a liberal party in either the British or German senses of the term. Bayrou just about doubled his vote in the 2012 election and came in a respectable third. Many of his votes came from moderates who were not willing to support Sarkozy again but also could not bring themselves to choose Hollande.

In 2017, MoDem turned its back on the Gaullists and supported Macro and En Marche from the beginning. It is by no means clear if the voters that Bayrou has maintained from Giscard's old base will stay with Macron or return to the Republicans. Nonetheless, there are not enough of them to determine if the Republicans can recover or not.

The Left

The Left offers even clearer evidence of the extent to which the party system changed during the second half of the twentieth century. By the mid-1960s, it had coalesced into an electoral alliance including the Communists, Socialists, and others which has had a chance of winning just about every election since then with the PS clearly the dominant partner in an otherwise constantly shifting coalition.

That was not the prediction most political scientists made in 1958. To see that, we will begin with the socialists even though they were far weaker than the communists when de Gaulle returned to power.

The PS *Source www.parti-socialiste.fr*

What was then the SFIO had been in decline since World War II before bottoming out at barely 5 percent of the vote in 1969. When Mitterrand took over and renamed it the PS (www.parti-socialiste.fr) two years later, he took the party in two seemingly contradictory directions. Nonetheless, within a decade it was in power.

First, Mitterrand succeeded in large part because he broke with socialist tradition and formed an electoral alliance with the PCF that helped the PS dominate a reasonably unified Left for the last 50 years. Second, after a brief period in the 1980s when it tried to start a "rupture with capitalism," Mitterrand and his successors left little doubt that the PS is a party of the center left.

After two failed attempts, Mitterrand finally won the presidency in 1981, but mostly because Giscard took the blame for the post-OPEC recession. He immediately dissolved the National Assembly, and the PS also won an overwhelming parliamentary majority in the elections that followed. The government adopted policies that authorized new social service programs, altered the tax code in favor of the poor, and nationalized key banks and other large, privately owned companies. Unfortunately for the PS, they had to abandon further reform because they took power at the height of a recession during which its left-leaning policies had all but catastrophic economic consequences. Ever since, the PS has dropped all talk of policies that would radically redistribute income or nationalize more industries.

Mitterrand stepped down at the end of his second seven-year term in 1995, and the party's fortunes foundered until Hollande's victory which only temporarily stemmed a 20 year decline in which its vote has been cut in half—or more.

One reason for that decline is a lack of quality leadership that rivals that among the Republicans of which Hollande is the prime example. A few years before he became president, few people even knew who Hollande was. If they did, it was because he was the recently spurned partner of the 2007 Socialist presidential candidate, Ségolène Royal. As the 2012 election neared, Hollande was not on most people's lists of serious socialist candidates, which included Royal and the initial front runner, Dominique Strauss-Kahn (DSK as he is known), who was then the president of the International Monetary Fund.

Then disaster struck DSK's campaign. He was accused of being involved in a sexual incident with a worker in a New York hotel. Although criminal charges against him were eventually dropped, his presidential campaign was ruined. Hollande entered the race and easily defeated a number of socialist rivals, including his former partner.

It turned out that Hollande himself was anything but scandal free. He and his new partner went through a messy separation shortly after he took office. Later, he was spotted being driven from his mistress' home while riding on the back of a motor scooter driven by one of his security guards.

But Hollande's and the PS's most important problem was that it had run out of ideas even more than was the case for center-left politicians elsewhere in Europe. Despite its comfortable parliamentary majority, Hollande's government failed to address any of the country's pressing problems, including unemployment, sluggish growth, and terrorism, all of which we will return to in the section on public policy below. Put simply, the global recession and the crisis that has shaken the entire western world have made it difficult for any French leader to solve the significant policy problems he or she has to deal with, starting with a history of uneven economic growth that has defied solution for forty years.

The rest of the Left is in deeper disarray, beginning with the Communists (www.pcf.fr). The Party was born on Christmas night 1920, when socialists who supported the Bolshevik revolution in Russia split from the SFIO. From the end of World War II until the late 1970s, the PCF normally won between 20 and 25 percent of the vote. However, few of its voters were committed Marxists. Rather, the PCF thrived because it gained a disproportionate share of the country's large protest vote and had a well-organized subculture within the working class.

The PCF was already in trouble when the end of the cold war removed socialism as a politically viable alternative to capitalism. Support for the PCF had steadily declined from the 1960s onward. The increasingly well-off working class was no longer drawn to a party whose most widely touted goal was a total break with capitalism. Moreover, the size of the working class itself continued to shrink, which further diminished the appeal of a party that claimed to speak on its behalf. By the early 2000s, winning even 10 percent of the presidential or legislative vote would have been considered a remarkable achievement.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon *Source Wikimedia Commons*

The party had deteriorated so much that it did not even run a presidential candidate in 2012. Instead, it supported Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who quit the PS to form the Left Front in 2009. He did significantly better than the PCF's

candidate in 2007, but the Left Front as a whole only elected eleven deputies to the National Assembly. The PCF did provide the new Union with the bulk of its organizational and financial support and is generally given credit for its limited success.

By 2017, Mélenchon had eclipsed what's left of the PCF. His presidential candidacy and the ***France Insoumise*** (often translated as Rogue or Rebellious France) movement he launched did surprisingly well. He came in a respectable fourth in the first round of the presidential election winning 40 percent of the youth vote. France Insoumise and the PCF ran separate slates in the legislative elections and did far worse winning only about 14 percent of the vote and a total of 27 seats (www.lafranceinsoumise.fr).

At this point, the future of the far left in either its Marxist or populist versions is up for grabs. The new left I studied in the 1970s has all but disappeared. The PCF retains a foothold in the working class, primarily through the CGT trade union (see the section on interest groups). It is by no means clear if France Insoumise can maintain the momentum among angry young voters and build a permanent organization.

The National Front

The final party to have done well enough for long enough to warrant attention here and the only far right organization covered in Part 2 is the National Front (www.frontnational.com). France has long had organizations that actively opposed democracy, including, most recently, the neo-Nazis and others who collaborated with the Germans during World War II. Although the FN is able to draw on some of those traditions, it is very much a new party in the sense that it reflects the issues and divisions of postindustrial society more clearly than any group covered in this book, including the Trump wing of the American Republican Party.

The FN was founded in the 1970s and was led by **Jean-Marie Le Pen** (1928–) until he retired and turned the leadership over to his daughter Marine. The FN struggled until it scored a breakthrough in 1983 and won control of Dreux, a city about sixty miles west of Paris with a large immigrant population. The next year, the FN won 11 percent of the vote in balloting for the European Parliament and has done that well or better in most elections since then. In other words, it had done well enough that its total vote in 2002 did not come as a surprise—only the fact that Le Pen came in second did.

Marine and Jean-Marie Le Pen *Source: Wikimedia Commons*

The elder le Pen is a colorful character, known for making outrageous statements, including one questioning challenging whether the Holocaust ever occurred. However, on balance, his party did a good job of presenting its racist ideas with a more acceptable pro-family and patriotic veneer. As a result, it has been able to make inroads in most socioeconomic groups, especially those whose security is most threatened by the changes sweeping the Western world.

The transition away from a charismatic leader is as difficult for political parties as it is for

countries as a whole, especially when one leader passes the "baton" to one of his children. Despite her lack of leadership experience, the Front did exceptionally well, coming in a strong third in the presidential race and winning almost as many votes and two seats in the National Assembly.

That set the stage for her total takeover the party. She forced her father out altogether as part of what she called her effort to "de-demonize" the party. Most of the hard-right and neo-Nazi rhetoric disappeared. Nonetheless, the Front remained the one party that consistently opposed immigration, France's membership in the EU, and anything that smacked of an assault on traditional French values. In other words, it continued to take the same kinds of positions it always had but now does so in a more subtle way.

The changes paid off at the ballot box. She did only marginally better than either she or her father had done in the past at the first ballot. However, the fact that she won a third of the second ballot vote suggests that more and more voters are willing to at least countenance the possibility of a government led by the Front. Le Pen herself did particularly well among young voters and took more than sixty percent of the working class vote, much of which had gone to the PCF and the rest of the left in earlier elections. Because of France's unusual electoral system, the Front did not do anywhere near as well in the legislative elections and remains a pariah that neither the center-left nor the center-right coalitions are willing to work with.

Profiles
Marine Le Pen

Marine le Pen was born in the posh Parisian suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1968, four years before her father cofoundsed the FN. Like her father, she is a lawyer.

She joined the party at age 18 shortly after it had made its first breakthrough in municipal elections in Dreux. Since then, she has been part of the Front's inner circle and has generally been seen as more sophisticated and nuanced than her often cantankerous father. That said, she has not shied away from statements that many have seen as racist, including one in which she likened the closing of a Parisian street on Fridays to ease access to a mosque to a form of foreign occupation.

She succeeded her father as head of the National Front in 2011 and ran in the presidential election the following year, when she won almost 18 percent of the vote followed by over 20 percent in 2017.

Minor Parties and the Newly Fluid Party System

France also has an ever-changing array of small parties of little political significance. For instance, it has two main groups of Greens and three small parties to the left of the Communists, all of which compete for about 5 percent of the vote. There are also "flash" parties that burst onto the scene for an election or two before disappearing. Some can be intriguing, such as the oddly named Extreme Center Party that ran four candidates in 1967 or Hunting, Fishing, Nature, Traditions, which has contested most elections in this century. Exploring these groups in any detail would not add much to any understanding of French

politics. In 2017, minor party and independent candidates combined less than 10 percent of the first ballot vote and 11 seats.

Why Change Happened: The French Electoral System

There are many reasons why the French party system changed so dramatically from the 1960s until the start of this century and why the fragmentation seen in the raw results have not been reflected in a similar fragmentation in Parliament. In all likelihood, the electoral system adopted in 1958 and used in every National Assembly election since then other than in 1986 was the most important.

The Fourth Republic used a form of **proportional representation** that gave each party the same share of seats in parliament that it won at the polls. As a result, it was easy for small parties to gain a toehold in the Chamber of Deputies, thereby reinforcing ideological fragmentation and division.

The founders of the Fifth Republic switched to a **single-member district**, **two-ballot system** *(scrutin uninominal à deux tours)* which no other major country uses. France is divided into districts, as are Britain and the United States. Anyone who gets a minimal number of signatures can run at a first ballot in any of those 577 *circonsriptions*. If one of them wins a majority, he or she wins the seat. First ballot victories are rare; there were only 36 of them in 2012 and four in the more tumultuous race in 2017 If no one gets a majority at that point, a second ballot is held one week later. Any candidate winning at least 12.5 percent of the vote at the first ballot can stay on the ballot for the runoff. A candidate who has the right to continue, however, may decide to withdraw and support someone else who has a better chance of winning.

Therein lies the electoral system's significance.

In 1958, a single pro-Gaullist candidate contested the second ballot in most districts. Because Communist and Socialist candidates often both remained in the race, the Gaullists won a much higher percentage of the seats than their share of first ballot votes alone might have suggested. In 1962, the Communists, Socialists, and other left-wing parties realized that they were actually helping the Gaullists by competing with each other in the second round. As a result, between 1962 and 1967, they negotiated deals in which only the left-wing candidate with the best chance of winning ran at the second ballot, which they have renewed for each election using the single-member district system ever since. In other words, almost every decisive ballot in almost every district now pits a single candidate from the left against a single one from the right.

The electoral system also froze out the centrist parties that had dominated the Fourth Republic. As early as 1962, their voters realized that they would have to choose between Left and Right on the second ballot and therefore began voting for one or the other coalition in the first round. The centrist parties vainly tried to stem the tide, but by 1974 they had disappeared as a viable political force.

Today, the same system hurts the National Front, France Insoumise, and any other party that cannot or will not strike a deal to form a coalition that can win a majority at the second ballot. The electoral system has not reduced the number of first-ballot candidates. However, only candidates who are affiliated with the two broad coalitions have a reasonable chance of winning a seat unless they can command a majority of the vote on their own. As a result, a party or coalition that wins far less than a majority of the vote can end up with a substantial

majority of the seats in the National Assembly as was the case most recently for En Marche in 2017.

The shift toward two coalitions has been reinforced by the system used in presidential races although in a slightly different way. Anyone who obtains the signatures of a few hundred local officials can run on the first ballot. If a candidate wins a majority at that point, the election is over. However, no candidate has ever come close to doing so. Therefore, there has always been a second ballot. Unlike legislative elections, only two candidates can stay in the race, thereby magnifying the trend toward a more bipolar and consolidated party system.

Parity: A Victory for Feminism?

France does not have a good track record when it comes to including women in politics. The first country to grant the vote to all men (1848) was one of the last to give it to any women (1944). In the 1993 National Assembly election, fewer women were elected than in 1946. France did little better in later elections. Thus, not quite 19 percent of the National Assembly members elected in 2012 members were women, which left France in fifty-ninth place worldwide, between Tajikistan and Mauritius.

Much changed in 2017 when Macron emphasized the recruitment of electable women in his fledgling party. As a result, 225 or 39 percent of the Assembly's members are women, putting France in 16th place worldwide.

The visible presence of women in politics began to increase long before Macron entered political life, however. In 1995, the new Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, appointed twelve women to his cabinet. But, in a sign of lingering sexism, they were immediately dubbed the *juppettes* (French for *miniskirt*). Then, in an attempt to solidify his right-wing support, Juppé dismissed half of them (referring to them as "old biddies"), in so doing inadvertently launching support for a more equitable role for women in political life which culminated in passage of the **parity law**.

In 1997, activists issued the Manifesto of 577 with one signee for each National Assembly member. Of the total, 289 were women, and 288 men. The Manifesto called for a constitutional amendment that would require parties to run slates of candidates with equal numbers of men and women candidates in all elections conducted using proportional representation. Support for parity built slowly and only received significant public attention in 1997 when the PS surprisingly won the legislative elections and introduced a constitutional amendment on parity that passed parliament and went into effect two years later.

For some, passage of the constitutional amendment was a major victory for women. For others, it was a sign of their weakness, because, without it, women would never have gained any meaningful political impact. And perhaps most important of all, the law does not cover legislative or presidential elections, but its provisions do cover local, regional, and European elections.

France is also a country known for its political humor, although it was sorely lacking in feminist politics until 2008, when *La Barbe* was formed. The name is a pun because it means both "beard" and, in slang, "enough is enough." The women of La Barbe have a history of showing up at male-dominated events while, of course, wearing fake beards. In 2012, Barbe activists disrupted the Cannes Film festival, which had no women nominees for its

prestigious *Palme d'or*, and a public lecture at the all-male lodge of the Parisian masonic order. Their home page has a delightful video in French, but you don't need to be bilingual to get a feel for what they do (www.labarbelabarbe.org).

Interest Groups

It is hard to reach firm conclusions about French interest groups. The limited data available to us suggest that the French are not joiners. Only about 10 percent of the population belongs to an environmental group, and an even smaller percentage belongs to the antinuclear or the peace movement. France's organized women's movement is among the weakest in Europe. Racial minorities are also poorly represented in the interest group arena.

Political scientists have paid the most attention to the trade unions, perhaps because of their role in fomenting protests since they were first created in the nineteenth century. The unions claim that about 25 percent of all nonagricultural workers belong to one or another of them, but most observers think that the real figure is closer to 10 percent. Moreover, there is no equivalent to the British Trades Union Congress (TUC), which brings together most individual unions in a single peak association.

Instead, French unions are fragmented, with three main ones competing for members in most factories and offices. The **Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)** was the largest one for most of the twentieth century and is affiliated with the Communist Party. During the1960s, however, it faced a challenge from the **Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT)**. The CFDT began as a Catholic union but dropped its links to the church and moved dramatically to the left in the aftermath of 1968. It now has close ties to the PS. **Force ouvrière** (Workers' Force) broke away from the CGT at the beginning of the cold war. It was then the most moderate of the three, but it has become more aggressive in recent years. It, too, has a working relationship with the PS.

There are separate unions for teachers and most professional groups, including business managers. Even students have unions.

Until the 1980s, the unions epitomized the radicalism that fueled so many stereotypes about French political life. In the 1960s, for instance, the CGT demanded the nationalization of all major industrial firms, a ban on layoffs that did not also fund the retraining of the affected workers, and a reduction in the work week without a pay cut. In the early 1970s, the CFDT added support for autogestion to its list of demands.

The unions also practiced what they preached. From 1963 through 1973 (even without counting 1968), an average of 2.5 to 3 million work days were lost to strikes each year. After the economic downturn of the mid-1970s, union membership and militancy both declined and have not recovered. The CGT has dropped its demands for more nationalization and mandatory retraining. For the CFDT, autogestion has become a slogan with little or no meaning.

The unions have enjoyed something of a renaissance since 1995, when a massive wave of strikes and demonstrations forced the government to roll back some of its plans to cut social services and raise taxes. In 1997, unions occupied employment offices to protest the Socialist government's failure to move fast enough in creating jobs for the eighth of the workforce that was unemployed. Truck drivers engaged in wildcat strikes that brought parts of the country's commercial life to a halt for as long as a week or two. In 2010, the unions led a doomed effort to block passage of the law that raised the age at which retirees could collect a

full pension.

On balance, the unions are struggling to protect the gains they made over the years and are, at most, a disruptive, rather than a potentially revolutionary, force. In fact, France now loses fewer days to work stoppages each year than Spain, Italy, or Great Britain, and the unions have largely been ineffective in opposing austerity policies imposed by the EU and the last two Gaullist governments in Paris.

There is one exception to this picture of divided and weakening interest groups: big business. As we will see in the next section, corporate executives have had such easy access to the upper levels of the civil service and to elected officials that it has often been hard to tell where one ended and the other began. Big business does not wield its influence primarily through its main association, the **Movement of French Enterprises (MEDEF**, www.medef.fr), but through informal ties that link them to politicians and civil servants, which we will be exploring in the discussion of the state.

The French State

Louis XIV was one of the inventors of the modern state. His creation fell on hard times between the revolution of 1789 and de Gaulle's return to power when he combined a strong state with the institutions and practices of a liberal democracy.

The contemporary French state is a hybrid. Unlike most parliamentary systems based on the Westminster model, it has a directly elected president. At the same time, the prime minister and cabinet have to retain the confidence of the National Assembly in order to stay in office, which means the state also has important parliamentary features.

But make no mistake. The Fifth Republic has always been dominated by the president. No president has been as charismatic as de Gaulle, but none has had to be. De Gaulle succeeded in doing something few other charismatic leaders have done by "routinizing" his authority so that more conventional leaders could govern effectively using the institutions he created.

And, as e are about to see, the once powerful state is no longer able to incubate the kind of sweeping change that let me use the phrase "coping with chaos" in the subtitle I wrote on the Gaullist regime in the late 1980s. Indeed, a brief look at Table 19.9 will suggest that it is at best in the middle of the pack as far as most indicators of state performance are concerned.

Toward a Presidential Republic

Any understanding of the strong French state has to combine the institutions created by the Fifth Republic's constitution and the way de Gaulle and his successors made it a decidedly presidential regime. In that sense, the French state underscores one of the most important points in all of comparative politics. Institutions as laid out in constitutions and other organic laws are important building blocks that go a long way toward determining what a state will be like. However, they are *only* building blocks, for institutions and practices whose day-to-day functioning emerges as a result of what political leaders and average citizens do in the years after the constitution goes into effect.

Country	Democratization (Country Rank)	Governance	Control of Corruption	Positive Peace (country rank)
United States	21	89	94	19
United Kingdom	16	93	90	14
Germany	13	94	93	11
France	24	89	88	16
Japan	20	96	91	17
Canada	6	95	94	12

Table 19.9
Political Indicators

The Constitution

Recall that the twin uprisings in Algeria left the Fourth Republic's political leaders with a choice between two bad alternatives as they saw it. They could either succumb to a likely military coup or bring de Gaulle back. They chose the latter.

The General insisted that the parliamentary leaders give him emergency powers for six months. During that time, he would be free to govern without any meaningful oversight and appoint a commission to revise the constitution, which was led by the prominent but little-known lawyer **Michel Debré** (1912–1996). The two of them quickly decided that the current constitution was beyond repair and that they had to start from scratch and create a Fifth Republic.

Debré had long been an admirer of British party government. Because he assumed the country was too divided to ever elect a disciplined majority, the constitution gave the executive comparable powers that it could use even if it did not have a loyal (and docile) majority. Those provisions were designed to simultaneously strengthen the president and prime minister while weakening the parliament (www.elysee.fr).

The president would be much stronger than the figureheads who held that office during the Third and Fourth Republics. The constitution listed the powers of the president ahead of those of the cabinet and parliament, thereby sending a signal that the office was to take on new importance and could even exercise the most draconian of all measures—dissolving parliament and calling new elections. He (so far, all have been men) was granted emergency powers to rule as a de facto dictator for up to six months (Article 16) and to call a referendum (Article 11) on matters related to the "organization of governmental authority."

A new electoral system was also expected to strengthen the presidency. Until the Third and Fourth Republics, the two houses of parliament met together to choose the president. After his election, he could not be removed through a vote of confidence and was almost completely beyond the reach of parliament. The parliament got around any possibility that a president might have threatened their prerogatives by routinely choosing elderly, incompetent, or unambitious men to hold what turned into little more than a ceremonial position.

The Fifth Republic's president was to be chosen by an electoral college of more than eighty thousand voters that would give him a far broader mandate and, with it, far more legitimacy. It did include the members of both houses of parliament. The other electors, who made up 98 percent of the college and were chosen by local and departmental councils, however, dwarfed their potential impact.

The Constitution also strengthened the cabinet and weakened the lower house, now called the **National Assembly**. It retained the principle of cabinet responsibility to parliament. However, in order to reduce the odds that France could return to the days of revolving door prime ministers, the constitution included a number of provisions that strengthened the government's hand in legislative–executive relations (www.assemblee-nationale.fr/english/index.asp).

For example, a new cabinet no longer had to win a vote of investiture as soon as the president appointed it. Similarly, it could not be defeated in a vote of confidence unless the opposition won an absolute majority of the deputies, not a simple majority of those present and voting, as had been the case under the Third and Fourth Republics. These may seem like minor differences, but under the Fourth Republic several cabinets lost those initial investiture votes, and almost half were defeated by relative, not absolute, majorities.

The **incompatibility clause** (Article 23) required members of parliament to give up their seats in the legislature as soon as they are appointed to a cabinet. No longer could ministers undermine a government they served in, knowing they had a legislative seat to return to.

The National Assembly was not allowed to either raise the expenditure levels or lower the tax rates proposed in the government's budget. The government also could demand a **bloc vote** in which the National Assembly had to vote up or down on a bill without even proposing any amendments to it. Much of economic and foreign policy making was placed in a "domain of regulation," which meant that the government could rule by decree, without parliamentary approval. The government could even determine when the parliament met and what would be on its agenda.

The Presidency

Although the constitution shifted the balance of power toward the executive, it did not spell everything out, including whether the president or prime minister would dominate. It did not take long before it became clear that only the president was going to count. In ways that resemble the United States and Russia, the French president is the fulcrum around which most of political life revolves.

The signs of that were obvious from the moment Debré became the new republic's first prime ministe. Debré was neither a popular politician nor a member of the elite that had led the country for three-quarters of a century. He was always de Gaulle's lieutenant who did what the president wanted, which has been the case for every prime minister since then other than the three who served during periods of cohabitation.

De Gaulle used all the new powers the constitution gave the presidency and more. He held two referenda on Algerian independence in order to bypass the National Assembly on measures it would never have approved. He invoked emergency powers so the government could act decisively against a rebellion by white settlers and soldiers from Algeria. Most importantly, after a failed assassination attempt by one of those groups in 1962, he initiated a

referendum that authorized the direct election of the president, which has been in use ever since.

De Gaulle also clarified the unequal relationship between the president and prime minister. At the height of the political uncertainty in 1962, he asked for and received Debré's resignation and replaced him with Georges Pompidou (1911–1974), who was even more of a lightning rod for the political establishment since he had never even run for political office before.

He also began a tradition that all presidents and prime ministers have followed ever since. He and his prime ministers issued decrees that effectively bypassed Parliament. Technically, they can only do so on minor matters that are not normally under parliamentary control. Nonetheless, the presidents have interpreted these constitutional provisions liberally and used decrees to introduce some of the most sweeping reforms with minimal legislative oversight.

Similarly, the constitution mentioned a "reserved domain" in which the president would dominate, but it did not specify what it covered. Within the first few years, de Gaulle made it clear that it included anything he thought was important in domestic as well as foreign policy making.

Thus, the decision to build the first atomic bombs was made without parliamentary approval. More recently one of Hollande's first actions was to issue a decree rolling back provisions of one of Sarkozy's least popular laws that raised the retirement age for most workers.

The president can also draw on a much larger team of personal advisors than the British prime minister. Currently, the Elysée staff numbers over seven hundred and includes the president's closest advisers, many of whom are drawn from France's remarkable civil service.

At first, many thought this combination of the two kinds of democratic systems would become the Fifth Republic's Achilles heel if and when the president was controlled by one coalition and the parliament by its opposition, and the two coalitions would have to share power. That happened after the 1986, 1993, and 1997 legislative elections.

None of those earlier concerns materialized, however, when the French had to cohabit. To be sure, the president and prime minister had to share power more than under "normal" circumstances. Nonetheless, even under cohabitation, the Fifth Republic has remained a regime in which the president is the dominant official. The modus vivendi under cohabitation made the president the key leader in foreign policy, while the prime minister took the lead domestically. Typically, too, periods of cohabitation are not ones in which the government embarks on bold new initiatives unless a consensus bringing the Left and Right together has emerged. A constitutional amendment shortened the president's term to five years for the 2007 election, which means that contests for both offices normally occur within a few weeks of each other thus reducing the likely need to return to cohabitation at least for now.

The Parliament

The National Assembly is the more important of the two houses of parliament. Its 577

members are directly elected from single-member districts.[4] The districts are supposed to be of roughly the same size, but significant disparities occurred in the early part of this century because district boundaries were not redrawn between 1982 and 2009.

Only the National Assembly can cast a vote of no confidence against a sitting government. It only did so once during the controversy surrounding Debré's resignation, Pompidou's appointment, and the referendum on the direct election of the president. Ever since, either the Left or the Right has had a firm majority, and no vote of confidence has come close to passing.

When key initiatives have come before the National Assembly, the majority now swings into line in much the same way and for many of the same reasons it does in the British House of Commons. Backbench revolts have occasionally delayed passage of legislation, but such incidents are rare, and the president and prime minister almost always prevail. Indeed, the best book on economic planning through the 1970s devotes only a two-page chapter to parliament's role because it had so little influence over one of the most important policy-making arenas during the Fifth Republic's early years.

There are now some significant question marks that should be raised about the preceding paragraphs since the National Assembly has an En Marche majority. It has stuck together for the first few months of the Macron presidency. However, the party and its legislative delegation were thrown together in a matter of weeks. What's more, the parliament has not (yet) had to vote on the president's key initiatives, including labor market reform. In other words, there is some reason to believe that his majority might show signs of coming apart at the seams, especially if his personal popularity continues to decline.

The **Senate** is slightly more influential than the British House of Lords, although that is not saying much. The Senate has 348 members who serve six-year terms, half of whom are elected every three years. Twenty-six of the senators represent either France's remaining overseas departments and territories or French citizens currently living abroad.

The senators from "mainland" France represent 326 *cantons*, which are otherwise unimportant subdivisions of its ninety-six departments. They are indirectly elected by about 150,000 "grand electors," 90 percent of whom are local, departmental, or regional councilors. Given the way the district boundaries are drawn, the Senate had a strong conservative majority until 2011 when the PS won control of it for the first time.

The Senate has the right to initiate legislation. However, because the government controls the agenda of both the Assembly and the Senate, its bills take priority and routinely are first passed by the lower house. If the two houses do not pass the same version of a bill, a complicated process known as "the shuttle" begins which the government controls. If the Assembly and Senate remain deadlocked, the Assembly's version prevails.

The Integrated Elite

There is an obvious question to ask given what we have seen so far. If its legislative–executive mechanisms work in much the same way as Britain's, how can the French state be

[4]Seven districts are reserved for the overseas departments and territories. In 2012, one of those on the island of Réunion was won by Corinne Nassiguin, who is a long-time resident of New York City. She and her handful of New York–based supporters watched the returns at an Irish-Mexican pub in Manhattan.

stronger?

The answers lie in the distinction between the government and the state, introduced in Chapter 1, in which the latter includes more than constitutional provisions or elected officials. Put simply, the latter includes more than the elected officials and the bureaucrats.

For France, that means extending our analysis to the bureaucracy, which has been the linchpin of the strong state since 1958. Not only are civil servants themselves powerful, but former bureaucrats dominate the political parties and big business and serve as the glue holding a remarkably integrated elite together.

Comparative Emphasis
Empathy and the State

Readers in most English-speaking countries have a hard time understanding—let alone accepting—France's use of a strong or *dirigiste* state.

In some ways, it goes back to French political culture and centuries of highly centralized governments of all ideological stripes. Even the 1960s era leftists I interviewed had a hard time envisioning a truly decentralized country that did not, for example, have some kind of standardized examination system at the end of each school year. Of course, many of the leftist leaders I interviewed had themselves done quite well under the old system….

Moreover, the French state—like the comparable one in Japan—did work extremely well for an extended period of time. So, it makes some sense that the best and brightest young people in France seek to go to ENA and join the bureaucracy to start their careers as we will see below.

So, watch this video from the television series *L'école du pouvoir.* (with subtitles if you don't speak French well) and try to figure out why these young people want to follow just that path. Then, imagine what a comparable series on American or British television would be like.:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wl0a7zdC5As

As part of their attempt to limit the power of the traditional political elite, De Gaulle and Debré appointed a number of bureaucrats to the first cabinet. On average, about a third of all subsequent cabinet members started their careers in the civil service.

Some of them are chosen for their expertise. Pompidou for instance, became prime minister after a career as an investment banker. Similarly, Bernard Kouchner joined one of the later Mitterrand governments after building a worldwide reputation as head of Doctors without Borders *(Médecins sans frontières)*, a group of physicians that provides humanitarian aid in war-torn areas. In one of the more unusual twists in the history of the Fifth Republic, the conservative Sarkozy later named the Socialist Kouchner as his first foreign minister.

Former President Chirac's case is typical. He began his career as a civil servant and worked on a number of ministerial staffs in the early 1960s before being appointed agriculture minister in one of Pompidou's first governments. Only later, in 1967, did he run for electoral office.

The fact that so many key leaders are not career politicians is just the tip of the iceberg. Current and former civil servants have made a major contribution to the French state's dynamism because of the close and informal ties between them and other key decision makers. Some observers call this either an **integrated elite** or an **iron triangle**.

The reality of this integrated elite is probably the most important reason why France scores a bit below the average for industrialized democracies on both the governance and corruption indices. There may not be many more instances of clearly illegal activity on the part of government officials than there are in the U.S. or the UK. However, the concentration of power makes it relatively easy for office holders to ignore the wishes of the people they disagree with, as we are about to see.

It is an integrated elite because so many powerful people in all walks of social, political, and economic life share a common background and worldview. Many are sons (and now increasingly daughters) of the Parisian elite. Many of those who aren't Parisian born and bred spent their high school years at one of the city's prestigious *lycées*.

Almost all of them went on to ENA (www.ena.fr/en/accueil.php). It is one of the prestigious **grandes écoles**, the specialized and highly selective institutions of higher education that were created to train high-level civil servants.

ENA stands head and shoulders above the others as a stepping stone to a political career. In fact, there is no other school in the world quite like ENA. It is a small institution that admits about a hundred students each year and has fewer than five thousand living graduates. Founded after World War II, ENA was designed to train civil servants committed both to democracy and the use of the state to spur economic growth.

For the first half century of its life, it was located in the heart of Paris in a building directly behind the equally influential *Institut d'études politiques* (Sciences Po) which many of its students attended while they prepared to take the entrance exam for ENA. In 2005 it merged with other schools and moved most of its operations to Strasbourg.

Its first generation of graduates reached the peaks of their careers at about the time de Gaulle returned to power, and their views on economic modernization meshed with his on restoring France's international prestige. As we will see in the section on public policy, the civil servants and the politicians had an easy time finding common ground in using the state to stimulate what had long been a moribund economy.

The influence of the ENArques (as its graduates are known) extends far beyond the advice civil servants give their political bosses. Grandes écoles graduates only owe the state ten years of service and in some cases can buy their way out sooner. Then they can resign and move into big business or politics. Most of them have done just that in a process known as **pantouflage**—literally putting on soft, comfortable slippers.

Some become politicians. The leadership of both the UMP and the PS is filled with ENArques. They first gained prominence with Chirac's generation that dominated the center-right from the 1960s onward. Former President Giscard d'Estaing was a double member of this elite group, having graduated from both ENA and the equally prestigious *Ecole polytechnique*. The Socialists, too, have attracted more than their share of ENArques, including President Hollande. Only a handful of the leading politicians in the last few decades were not ENA graduates, most notably Mitterrand, who was too old to have gone there, and Sarkozy, who failed the admissions exam.

Four of the 2012 presidential candidates were ENA graduates. Two of them (Hollande and former Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin) were from the same eighty-member Promotion Voltaire that entered in 1980. So, too, were Ségolène Royale, Hollande's ex-partner and the defeated PS candidate from 2007, the head of France's financial regulation agency, several other former ministers and ambassadors, and Hollande's chief of staff. The ENA in general and that class in particular had such an impact that one of the cable television networks made a loosely fictionalized series about it, *l'Ecole du pouvoir—The Power School.*

ENArques are at least as prominent a force in French business. One recent study found that 46 percent of the chief executives of the biggest French companies graduated from ENA or one of the other two top *grandes écoles*.

Because so many of them share the same background, training, and values, elite integration has facilitated coherent policy making for most of the last half century. This tightly knit elite had a lot to do with the sweeping changes during the first quarter century after 1958, which will be discussed in the public policy section. Paris, for example, was transformed. Real estate speculators bought up old buildings that housed workers, small shopkeepers, and artisans and replaced them with expensive office and apartment complexes. Businesses and families were displaced by the thousands and forced into dreary, working-class suburbs that one urban activist I interviewed referred to as "people silos." New neighborhoods with tens of thousands of inhabitants had few cafés or other public places where people could gather.

In interviews with Ezra Suleiman, bureaucrat after bureaucrat tried to put their newfound power in the best possible light. Most claimed that they did not have this kind of relationship with any interest groups. As three of them put it:

> **The contact with groups is mostly to inform them, to explain to them. It's true that they can't influence policy.**
>
> —*Ministry of Industry*
>
> **We always consult. It doesn't mean we listen, but we consult. We don't always reveal our intentions. We reveal only as much as we think it is necessary to reveal.**
>
> —*Ministry of Education*
>
> **First, we make out a report or draw up a text, then we pass it around discreetly within the administration. Once everyone concerned within the administration is agreed on the final version, then we pass this version around outside the administration. Of course, by then it's a fait accompli *and pressure cannot have any effect.* [emphasis added]**
>
> —*Ministry of Industry*[5]

Their comments then—and they would not be terribly different today—were somewhat misleading because they most definitely did not ignore people they considered "serious,"

[5]Ezra Suleiman, *Politics, Power, and Bureaucracy in France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 335–36.

including representatives of big business and other groups who shared their aspirations for France's future. They simply did not think of them as interest groups. As a result, a narrow elite made the most important decisions about the allocation of economic resources. And it has not mattered much whether the Left or the Right was in office. Perhaps most importantly of all, this decision making has remained the norm even though it has been decidedly less effective in the past two or three decades, which we will also see in more detail below.

People outside the integrated elite do not the same such privileged access to policy-making circles. Under the Gaullists, workers had a hard time getting decision makers to take their views on ending France's chronic youth unemployment seriously. Immigrants were not able to do much about either the racism or the horrible living and working conditions they endured, leading to the frustrations that have erupted repeatedly in suburban streets.

New admissions procedures have made it easier for underprivileged young people to get into the grandes écoles. In the current business climate that stresses the importance of small business and entrepreneurial skills, schools like ENA have lost some of their luster. Still, it will take a generation before these new leaders reach the top. And even then, their attitudes and behavior may not change. After all, many frontline leaders of the 1968 movement ended up as "members" of the integrated elite.

Whatever your ideological preferences, the integrated elite has to be seen as a mixed blessing. There is little doubt that it has helped spark France's dramatic social and economic turnaround since 1958. At the same time, the criticisms often made of the iron triangle of interest group lobbyists, bureaucrats, and members of Congress in the United States hold even more for France. The closed nature of the elite does lead to policy making that favors some groups over others. There is no denying, too, that it keeps France from living up to any of the "thicker" definitions of democracy discussed in Chapter 2.

The Rest of the State

Local Government

France was the most centralized country in Europe before the socialist victory in 1981. Until then, the closest the French came to American governors were the **prefects**, who were civil servants appointed to their jobs by the minister of the interior. In addition to not being elected officials, prefects never came from the department they managed and were transferred to a new one every two or three years so they would not get too close to the local population. Prefects also could use the **tutelle**, which gave them de facto veto power over almost all local and departmental decisions, down to naming schools or streets and approving all major local expenditures in advance.

By the 1970s, this degree of centralization had become a burden on local and national leaders alike. Departments, cities, and towns simply had too many responsibilities for the central bureaucracy to manage them all. Moreover, even if they could not formally make many final decisions, their administrative duties and local connections gave the mayors considerable leverage over the prefect. The mayor's power was reinforced by the fact that most big city mayors were also members of parliament and some were even cabinet ministers under a peculiar tradition that allows French citizens to hold several elected positions at once.

Socialist mayors, who chafed under the tutelle, convinced the PS to make

decentralization a major plank in the party's program. When the Socialists finally won in 1981, decentralization was the first major piece of legislation they passed. The tutelle was abolished, though it was later restored for the smallest towns, which actually benefit from the services the prefectural offices provide. The authority of the central government was cut significantly. Cities and towns (*communes*) gained control of urban planning, the departments assumed jurisdiction over most social service programs, and the regions got responsibility for economic planning. The central government now issues block grants to fund long-term investment programs and gives local authorities the revenue from annual automobile registration fees. Communes also have the freedom to set real estate and other local tax rates. The heads of the elected departmental and regional councils are at least as important as the prefects were.

The Courts

The Fifth Republic has a large and strong judiciary. The *Cour des comptes*, which is the country's chief financial investigator, and the *Conseil d'état*, which has jurisdiction over the state and its actions, have long been prestigious bodies and now attract more than their share of grandes écoles graduates.

As in Britain, the Third and Fourth Republics' tradition of parliamentary sovereignty meant that the courts did not have the power of judicial review and therefore could not rule on the constitutionality of laws or other governmental acts. The Fifth Republic constitution created the **Constitutional Council** (http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/english/homepage.14.html) with the power to rule on the constitutionality of bills passed by the National Assembly sometimes even before they formally become law. Its nine judges serve staggered nine-year terms. The president and the leaders of the two houses of parliament each appoint three of them. Former presidents are also members of the council, but they rarely take part in its deliberations.

Under de Gaulle, the council was little more than a political after thought. The one time it tried to assert its power by ruling his decision to hold a referendum on the direct election of the president unconstitutional, de Gaulle simply ignored its judgment.

In the 1980s, however, it became more assertive. For the first few years of the Mitterrand presidency, the council was still dominated by judges appointed by the Gaullists, and it forced the Socialists to modify a number of their reforms—among other things, dramatically increasing the compensation paid to the former owners of nationalized firms. After 1986, the new conservative government faced a court with a Socialist majority, which overturned four of the fourteen laws that would have sold off much of the state sector. The Council's most recent major decision came on December 29, 2012, when it ruled that portions of the Hollande government's new tax on the wealthiest citizens was unconstitutional because it was based on individual rather than total household earnings.

One should not, however, draw too many parallels between the French and the American or even the German courts, which will be covered in the next chapter. The French judiciary's powers are far more limited both by the constitution and by tradition.

Public Policy: The Pursuit of Grandeur

So far, it would be tempting to read this chapter as saying that the Fifth Republic created a strong, dynamic, and democratic state that is capable of reaching its goals. That

interpretation largely held true for the twenty years after 1958. It has been less and less accurate since then, because of the implications of this book's subtitle. Whatever levers it has at its disposal, no state can come close to shaping its own destiny in the early twenty-first century because of social, economic, technological, cultural, and political forces that are beyond its control, as we will see in each of the three following policy arenas.

Economic Policy

In the eighteenth century, the French coined a word to describe state management of a capitalist economy: **dirigisme**. Between 1789 and 1958, however, republican governments rarely used the policy levers available to them. That began to change under the provisional government after the end of World War II. However, given the paralysis of most Fourth Republic governments, it was another twelve years before the state could truly help lead the transformation of the country that rendered the statement that begins this chapter obsolete.

Les Trentes Glorieuses

From the end of World War II until the recession after the OPEC oil embargo of 1973–74, France enjoyed a period of unprecedented economic growth, which one historian called *les trentes glorieuses* (the thirty glorious years). Economists do not know how much each causal factor contributed to this unexpected prosperity. However, the policies pursued by the Gaullists during their years in power after both World War II and 1958 have to be near the top of any such list.

Right after World war II, the provisional government nationalized a number of firms, including the Renault automobile company and the three largest savings banks. De Gaulle also created the General Planning Commission to speed the recovery by bringing business leaders and civil servants together to rebuild key industries, including electricity generation, cement production, and the railroads. Meanwhile, a number of business leaders realized that they had to modernize, which they decided could best be done by cooperating with the planning commission and the government in general.

Growth continued under the Fourth Republic. Little of it could be attributed to concerted state action, because most political leaders were opposed to dirigisme, and its supporters were too far removed from power to have an impact on domestic policy.

That changed when de Gaulle came back to office. From 1958 until 1973, the economy, on average, grew faster each year than it did during the entire interwar period. Its growth rate also outstripped that of its main competitors other than Japan. Growth was concentrated in the large firms that produced automobiles, machinery, electronics, chemicals, and other durable goods.

In the late 1950s, none of the world's most profitable hundred firms were French. By 1972, France had sixteen of them, whereas West Germany had only five. That was not an accident. The government encouraged firms to merge, creating larger companies that would be more competitive in the increasingly important European and global markets. During the 1950s, companies responsible for an average of 85 million francs a year in revenues merged. By 1965, that figure had topped one billion, and by 1970 it reached five billion. Typical of that growth was the consolidation of five relatively weak automobile manufacturers into two then highly profitable giants: Renault and Citroën-Peugeot, the first of which was state-owned.

Economic growth also had a human side. The improved standard of living was easy to see in the new houses, larger cars, and even the changed diets that produced a generation of taller, thinner people. The *hypermarché* (a combination supermarket and department store that was a common feature in France a quarter century before Wal-Mart) all but wiped out the quaint but inefficient corner shops in most urban neighborhoods.

This economic growth did not appear out of thin air. It was in large part a product of the new Gaullist state. It relied primarily on discretionary tax rates, investment credits, subsidies, and other state programs that encouraged the formation of larger and more competitive firms. Five giant corporations received about half of the subsidies granted in the mid-1970s, a figure that reached 80 percent by the end of the decade. In all, an average of 2.7 percent of the gross national product went to support industry. Under President Giscard d'Estaing, the government's explicit goal became the creation of one or two large firms in each industrial sector to produce what he called "national champions" that could lead in world markets.

I am not claiming that there was a one-to-one correspondence between elite integration and economic success, only that there was a strong connection between them. Other advanced industrialized countries also did well after the end of World War II. Of them, only Japan had anything like this kind of integrated elite. However, all stressed some version of close cooperation between the state and the private sector, whereas the countries that relied most heavily on market forces—including Great Britain and the United States—did not fare as well for most of that period.

Stagnation

The French economy went into a tailspin after the OPEC oil embargo from which it has never fully recovered (see Table 5.8). The economy has never come close to collapsing. Nonetheless, it has never recovered the sustained growth or dynamism of les trentes glorieuses, which has been translated into sluggish growth and high unemployment, especially among younger workers.

When the Left came to power in 1981, the effects of the second of the 1970s oil shocks were wearing off. The Mitterrand government immediately nationalized nine major industrial and financial conglomerates, redistributed more of the income toward the poorest groups in French society, and expanded social services. The new nationalization, in particular, put the government in control of about 60 percent of France's industry and even more of its investment capital, which the PS and its ENArques assumed would enhance their ability to steer the way the entire economy evolved.

That is not what happened.

The Socialists soon had to abandon their most ambitious goals because, to make a long story short, they wanted to expand the economy during a steep and sudden recession. Within a year, the Mitterrand team faced growing unemployment and inflation rates. The budget deficit skyrocketed in large part because many of the newly nationalized firms lost money. In 1983, the Socialists did a U-turn, adopting a policy of economic austerity and abandoning all talk of further radical reform.

The first cohabitation government controlled by the Gaullists returned fourteen of those companies to private ownership. Another ten followed in the 1990s. The Gaullists have **privatized** state assets more quickly and more often than the Socialists, although the PS did preside over the partial privatization of such high-visibility companies as Air France and

France Telecom.

YEAR	UNEMPLOYMENT (%)	GROWTH IN GDP (%)
1979	5.9	3.2
1981	7.4	1.2
1983	8.3	1.7
1986	10.4	2.5
1988	10.0	4.5
1993	11.7	2.9
1995	11.7	2.0
1998	11.5	0.3
2001	12.2	0.3
2006	9.5	2.2
2008	7.4	0.2
2011	9.2	1.7

Table 19.10
The French Economy in Decline

Source: Adapted from David Cameron, "Economic Policy in the Era of the EMS," in *Remaking the Hexagon*, Gregory Flynn (ed.). (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 145; and *The Economist*, February 10, 1999, 134. For 2001–2008, various online sources.

By 1988, a rough consensus had emerged on both the Left and Right that took a dramatic expansion or reduction of the state's economic role off the political agenda. Recent Gaullist governments have wanted to move sharply toward a greater reliance on the market, but they were largely prevented from doing so by international economic forces that drastically reduced their maneuvering room (see Table 19.10).

That consensus has not helped France restart its stagnant economy. Since then, average industrial growth has hovered around 1 percent per year, while unemployment has rarely dipped much below 10 percent. During the 1990s, France lost an average of 150,000 industrial jobs each year as corporate failures increasingly replaced the success stories. The shipbuilding sector all but collapsed. The steel industry was in so much trouble that the government had to restructure it in the late 1970s and was forced to take it over altogether in

the 1980s. French automobile companies saw their share of the European market cut by a third while the number of imported cars grew by more than half.

We should not confuse French privatization with what happened in Great Britain under Prime Ministers Thatcher and Major or with any broader adoption of market principles. Despite this wave of privatizations, the government still employed more than a quarter of the workforce as recently as 2007. Because they provide a public service and are what economists call natural monopolies, the government still owns most public utilities. Thus, the generation and distribution of electricity and natural gas, the railroads, and the postal service remain publicly owned. Some utilities have been privatized, most notably the telephone system and airlines, but these had already come under intense international competition, which meant that they had to be run like private corporations no matter who owned them.

Gaullist rhetoric has emphasized a shift toward a freer market especially under Sarkozy. In practice, their behavior in government reflects the continued importance of dirigiste ideas in both the public and private sectors.

Few of the newly privatized firms are truly private. The Gaullists left the government and its political allies with de facto control of many of them through what is called a *noyau dur* (hard core) of stock. Sometimes, the government itself retains a significant ownership stake. Thus, the United States did not allow France Telecom to bid for the cell phone contract in postwar Iraq because the state still held more than a 5 percent stake in it. Sometimes the state made sure that "friends" in the business community gained a controlling interest. At other times, it refused to allow foreigners to buy any stock in a privatized company, claiming doing so would jeopardize national security.

Lionel Jospin's Socialist government used its significant financial influence to try to convince three banks to merge and create one firm that could compete with British, German, and American financial giants. In 2004, the government bailed out the industrial giant Alsthom (which, among other things, builds the high speed trains) to prevent its takeover by Siemens.

That consensus, however, belies a largely stagnant economy. Since then, average industrial growth has hovered around one percent per year, while unemployment has rarely dipped much below 10 percent. During the 1990s, France lost an average of 150,000 industrial jobs each year as corporate failures increasingly replaced the success stories. The shipbuilding sector all but collapsed. The steel industry was in so much trouble that the government had to restructure it in the late 1970s and was forced to take it over altogether in the 1980s. French automobile companies saw their share of the European market cut by a third while the number of imported cars grew by more than half.

It is true that Hollande came to power with a sizeable majority and could have resurrected some version of Mitterrand's "rupture with capitalism." In fact, the Socialist agenda of thirty years ago—especially nationalizing industry—is long gone. Nonetheless, his government did take some symbolic steps to demonstrate that his government's policies would help the poor more than those formulated under his predecessor. Salaries of cabinet members and the heads of public corporations were cut so that they would not be more than about thirty times that of the organization's lowest paid workers. Senior officials gave up their most luxurious cars, private jet travel, and (shockingly at least in France) champagne at public receptions. As flashy as they might have seemed, they would do little to redistribute

income or meet any other leftist policy goal by themselves.

In fact, very little of what Hollande did improved matters on any policy front, which is one of the reasons why his popularity had fallen so much that he did not run for reelection. His problems combined with those facing the Gaullists opened the door to the Macron candidacy and its emphasis on rejuvenating the economy.

Few serious observers doubt that France's rigid labor law (*code du travail*) has been on of the reason that the country lags on almost all indicators of economic innovation. Its nine *books* laid out detailed rules regulating everything from hiring and firing procedures to the way workers are represented at the work place. It was filled with once well-intentioned policies that now tended to impede economic growth.

To see that, consider two examples. The minute a company hired its fiftieth employee, it had to adopt a variety of organizational structures which meant that thousands of companies never crossed that threshold which startups routinely burst through early in their corporate lives. Similarly, workers on long-term contracts received more generous benefits than those who were hired using fixed-term and other temporary arrangements which obviously contributed to the country's massive youth unemployment.

The first major initiative undertaken by the Macron government was to rewrite the labor code which it was able to do by decree rather than through legislation. Although the National Assembly will have had to vote on it by the time you read these words, the content of the new code was worked out in closed-door discussions involving the government, civil servants, and representatives of business and labor in which the unions did not fare very well.

The new code is designed to give employers more flexibility in a number of ways. For example, it is now easier for them to negotiate with unions on a company-by-company rather than an industry-by-industry basis which will dilute the leverage workers can have over corporate policy. Penalties companies have to pay for illegally firing workers were drastically reduced. Business did not get everything it wanted. It is now illegal to hire workers on more than two short term contracts without then offering them a long-term one.

It is far too early to tell if the labor law will unblock the French economy. Nonetheless, if nothing else, Macron and his team hope that this initiative will lead to the creation of more entrepreneurial firms along the likes of those that have made Silicon Valley famous. It is hard to see how that can happen when so much of the system is still run by people trained at the grandes ecoles who still believe in the kinds of values discussed above. It is true, of course, that anyone can change his or her mind even about their most basic beliefs.

Social Services

There is less controversy surrounding France's generous—and expensive--social service system. As is the case throughout western Europe, French social services cover most French citizens from cradle to grave. Thus, the national health care system covers almost all normal medical expenses. The government also offers extensive pensions, unemployment benefits, and subsidized housing and public transportation.

The social service system has some distinctively French features. In the 1930s, France introduced family allocations to help parents meet the cost of raising children and boost the overall population to meet the looming threat from Germany. The German threat is long

gone, but the payment scheme remains on the books. France also has one of the world's most extensive government-run preschool programs, which guarantees almost every child a spot in a program staffed by trained teachers. Finally, France is one of the few governments that still cover virtually all tuition costs for higher education in addition to funding the grandes écoles which actually pay their students, because they officially become government employees when they enroll.

A Typical Ecole maternelle: Source Wikimedia commons

French social service programs are also so popular that they have proved very hard to roll back despite financial pressures to do so. For instance, massive protests came close to blocking President Sarkozy's proposal to raise the retirement age in a country in which some public employees could retire before they turned sixty. Although the protests could not block enactment of the legislation at the time, one of Hollande's first initiatives was to return the retirement age for most government employees to sixty. The social services will only grow costlier as the population ages and, most notably, health care costs continue to soar.

Some French leaders—including those close to President Macron—have been exploring way their country could adopt a version of what has come to be known as **flexicurity** in Scandinavia. After Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland experienced financial pressures on their extensive social service programs in the 1970s and 1980s, their governments have been a new consensus around a mix of programs that allow more labor market flexibility (as anticipated in the Macron reforms discussed earlier), continued funding of the social safety net through more funding directly to people even including a guaranteed minimum income, and policies designed to retrain and, if necessary, relocate workers whose jobs become technologically obsolete. Unions, in particular, worry that Macron is primarily interested in giving owners more flexibility and will not follow through on reforms that would help the working class and others who fear they are being left behind by globalization.

The Politics of Headscarves and Burkinis

When I wrote this chapter for the previous edition in 2012, France had not yet become one of terrorism's epicenters in Europe. There had been plenty of riots in the suburbs (*banlieux*) where poor people of all races increasingly live. There had also been occasional terrorist attacks.

There had not, however, been the kinds of attacks we later saw on the headquarters of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, the Bataclan nightclub, or on pedestrians in Nice on Bastille Day 2015. Hollande's government reacted to the events by restricting some civil liberties through use of the Emergency Powers provisions of the Constitution.

Rather than focus on those policies here, we can learn more about the broader political implications for the country's political life as a whole by stepping back from the events and considering why a handful of young French Muslims have turned to terrorism and how long-standing public policies have contributed to the wave of terrorist attacks. There is no agreement about why France has suffered more attacks than its neighbors, but most respected analysts point to a mixture of factors that include at least the following.

There are many reasons why this geopolitical powder keg was created. Near the top of any such list is the set of policies that have defined cultural integration in purely French terms. To be sure, France has added couscous to its cuisine in much the same way that the British have made curry its most popular dish.

At the same time, France has done little to integrate its Muslim population, especially its young men, on anything but its own terms. More than most European countries, the United States, or Canada, France has traditionally expected immigrants to adopt its cultural norms. Yet, there are few signs that many people in its non-white community which, remember, amounts to about ten percent of the population, wants to become "more French than the French." Furthermore, note that the vast majority of the young men and women who have turned to terrorism in France or gone to fight with ISIS in the Middle East are themselves immigrants. Most come from families that have been in France for a generation or, in some cases, even two. Few, too, come from families that have traditionally been particularly religious, and even fewer have roots in Wahhabism or other strict versions of Islam.

Instead, they are more likely to fit the profile of alienated youth that have turned to violence in other countries for reasons that had nothing to do with Islam. France now has a generation of poorly educated, unskilled, young men who feel that they have no chance of finding a meaningful job, having a decent home, and the like. Many young Muslims also feel themselves culturally isolated in a country that builds its entire educational system, for example, around traditional French values and norms.

It is by no means surprising that some small percentage of these frustrated young men lash out. It is also by no means surprising that Wahhabist and other radical clerics have found French prisons to be a fertile place to recruit new activists since as many as 70 percent (this figure is disputed) of the country's inmates are Muslims.

However, other than that, France has not been all that welcoming of cultural diversity *and* its governments have couched its policies in an unusual interpretation of what liberty, equality, and fraternity mean that has its roots in the anti-clerical protests of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and its even older tradition of centralization. In this case, two overlapping issues came to the fore early in this century. First, many immigrants and their children have refused to learn French or adopt mainstream French values. Second, many conservatives began to object to the fact that more and more Muslim women were wearing headscarves, burkas, and other items of clothing that they believe are required by their faith.

The government's response has been ambiguous. On the one hand, in keeping with French tradition, every government has insisted that immigrants enjoy the same rights and privileges as native-born French men and women once they become citizens. Blatant acts of racism have been dealt with sternly.

On the other hand, governments on the Left and Right alike have refrained from introducing policies that would address some of the specific problems faced by non-whites because politicians believe they have to treat everyone in exactly the same way. That coincides with French policies about the separation of church and state that date from 1906. In the century since that time, the separation of church and state has been one of the most widely agreed on principles in French politics. However, the French approach to such issues is not to ban most forms of religious expression in public spaces altogether in yet another attempt to treat everyone the same.

In this case, it first led some school administrators to prohibit girls from wearing headscarves, arguing that it introduced religion into the schools. A number of girls were expelled and enrolled in private Muslim academies, which are not recognized by the government. Many Muslims were, not surprisingly, incensed because no such effort was made to keep Christians from wearing crosses.

The issue came to a head in 2004 when President Chirac announced a plan to introduce legislation to ban "conspicuous" religious symbols from the schools. Small crosses or stars of David would be allowed, but not yarmulkes or headscarves. Public opinion polls found that almost 60 percent of the public supported the ban and a similar one that already existed for civil servants. Three days after Chirac's declaration, massive protests were held across the country in which, among other things, girls marched wearing red, white, and blue headscarves.

The bill on the schools easily passed the National Assembly early the next year, with 494 votes for it, 36 against, and 31 abstentions. The law by no means settled the issue. In fact, it only reinforced the anger many Muslims feel toward a society they believe treats them as second-class citizens.

The issue did not go away under Sarkozy, who argued that immigrants have to conform to French cultural norms just as his family did. His government passed a law forbidding women to wear the burka or any other clothing that covered their face in public. Ostensibly, this was passed for security reasons; presumably police officers could not identify anyone whose face was hidden. Many Muslims reacted to this law as yet another example of racism and discrimination. In short, if you combine this particular approach to integration with the festering unmet social needs of young people in the banlieux, it is tempting to ask why *more* young Muslim men haven't turned to terrorism or other forms of protest.

We can see the peculiarities—and perhaps the counterproductive—nature of these policies by briefly returning to the debate over the burkini discussed toward the beginning of this chapter. As we saw then, a number of beachfront cities tried to prevent women from wearing this garment which supposedly meets Islamic standards of female decency. In the end, there is little in any Muslim text that makes any kind of statement about garments like burkinis, one way or the other.

However, it is hard not to view the city administrators of cities like Cannes as being at least a bit hypocritical since they do allow women to sunbathe on their beaches topless.

Foreign Policy

French social and economic policy is controversial, especially for British and American students who tend to think in terms of (relatively) free markets and limited states. If anything, its international role since 1958 has been even more controversial. Many American observers, in particular, have been critical of what they see as an irrational and unacceptable streak of independence in its international relations, from de Gaulle's flamboyant search for **grandeur** to its refusal to support the United States in its invasion of Iraq in 2003.

This section will make the very different case that French foreign policy should not be seen as irrational if one uses de Gaulle's notion of grandeur and his broader political strategy as an analytical starting point. Rather, Fifth French presidents have tried to pursue what they saw as their national interest in ways that its constitution now allows them to do, whether one agrees with their actions or not.

The Gaullist Years

Before World War I, France was one of the world's great powers. It had the largest and best-equipped army in Europe. Its empire was second only to Great Britain's.

France's world standing deteriorated badly over the next thirty years. It emerged from the second world war with its economy in tatters, its leaders discredited, its empire threatened, and its fate largely in American hands.

De Gaulle succeeded in stemming that decline. That is why he got involved in politics in the first place and made restoring France to its "proper" place among the world's major powers his primary mission. The general believed that all countries have an inherent national interest akin to what the eighteenth century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau called the general will. In de Gaulle's terms, that meant grandeur or the restoration of the country to its traditional position among the world's great powers.

De Gaulle is frequently accused of having acted in excessively nationalistic, bombastic, and even dangerous ways. However, he was neither a romantic nor a utopian. De Gaulle combined his own charisma with the institutional levers at his disposal in the unbending but normally pragmatic pursuit of grandeur. His form of pragmatism was unusual, because everything he did was undertaken to produce symbolic as well as substantive prestige even if doing so seemed at odds with the way the superpower rivalry defined international relations during the decade he was in office.

De Gaulle ended the Fourth Republic's policy of all but blindly following America's lead. He rejected proposals by Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy to integrate French forces more fully into the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** because this would have meant surrendering part of French sovereignty. In 1964 and 1965, he responded favorably to Soviet proposals for improving Franco-Soviet relations. The next year, de Gaulle withdrew French forces from NATO control.

Much the same can be said of France's nuclear weapons program. De Gaulle harbored no illusion that the bomb would make France the equal of either superpower. He only hoped that having even a small nuclear arsenal would give the country a more powerful presence in international affairs. It was also clear that he thought the bomb would symbolize France's geopolitical renaissance and instill a sense of national pride that could spill over into other policy areas.

That same desire to maximize French power and prestige lay behind his position on European integration. De Gaulle agreed that the countries of western Europe had to cooperate to meet the challenges posed by American economic and political might. Therefore, de Gaulle firmly supported the elimination of tariff barriers and the provisions of the Common Market that unquestionably worked in France's interest.

There were limits, however, to how much cooperation he would tolerate. As he saw it, French grandeur was incompatible with a multinational, integrated, homogeneous Europe. He preferred a loose community of sovereign states that cooperated in ways that were beneficial to France. Consequently, he opposed British membership in the Common Market because the UK did not share his values and might challenge France's influence in the still-young European institutions.

After de Gaulle, After OPEC

If de Gaulle was normally protrayed as a visionary nationalist, Pompidou was seen as a moderate pragmatic practitioner of realpolitik. In fact, Pompidou continued the quest for grandeur, though he did it in more conventional ways. He was not as brash or as flamboyant as de Gaulle. Because he had firmer parliamentary support than de Gaulle did in the early 1960s and because France's position in the world had improved substantially, he did not have to.

Pompidou did not question the central tenets of Gaullist grandeur. He never considered integrating French forces into NATO. Getting rid of nuclear weapons or submitting them to international control were never options. France continued trying to play its self-defined role as an intermediary between East and West, most notably doing what it could to settle disputes in Indochina and the Middle East.

Pompidou died during the OPEC oil embargo of 1973–74 and therefore did not have to deal with the worldwide recession it helped spark. For the rest of the century, French foreign policy was noticeably less successful as the forces, reflected in the arrows of Figure 1.1, intensified, which is reproduced here since you may not have access to the printed edition of *Comparative Politics*.

Figure 1.1 here

French leaders occasionally reverted to the independent and anti-American tone of the Gaullist years. All of them agreed that France had to keep its nuclear arsenal. Gaullist and Socialist officials were critical of what they saw as American cultural hegemony and led efforts to limit American imports, including curved bananas on the pretext that straight ones (grown in former French colonies) are better. But overall, France edged toward a foreign policy that was indistinguishable from those of the other major Western powers especially regarding the end of the cold war and the EU.

As the chapters on Germany and Russia show, the end of the cold war took almost everyone by surprise, including the French. France was only a minor player in the negotiations that led to the reunification of Germany in 1990. As one of the four powers that occupied Germany after World War II, France was a participant in the "four-plus-two" negotiations that officially ratified the merger of the two countries. The two superpowers and the two Germanys, however, made all the decisions that really counted.

Since then, French leaders from the left and right alike have vainly tried to find a way to pursue grandeur in a suddenly uncertain world. France has played an active role in most of the international crises since the 1990s, most notably the first Gulf War, the efforts to stop the fighting in the former Yugoslavia, and the campaign to combat terrorism following the attacks on 9/11. But France has not been able to play the kind of role it did at the height of the cold war when it wielded an influence greater than one might expect from a country with its geopolitical resources.

Almost all politicians have stopped talking about grandeur. France has turned into a loyal NATO ally. The differences between Washington and Paris seemed to have moved to the margins at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Iraq

In the eyes of its critics, the one obvious exception to this trend was Iraq. Many Americans

thought that France went back to its old ways when it refused to support the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

France was by no means the only country to oppose what it saw as a rush to war by the George W. Bush administration. Russia and China also used their veto power on the United Nations Security Council in refusing to authorize the use of force in Iraq.

France alone became the object of American fury. Sales of French wine and cheese plummeted. Some of New York's most famous French restaurants had to close because diners boycotted them.

One of the most bizarre American reactions to French opposition to the war in Iraq was the boycott of french fries and french toast that many Republicans endorsed. It turns out that the French do not call them french fries. They refer to them as *frites* and they were most likely invented in Belgium. Likewise, what Americans know as French toast is *pain perdu* in French and is almost unknown there except as a dessert served at Christmas dinners. Instead, rumor has it that Americans call it french toast because the dish was first introduced at French's Tavern near Albany, New York, at the time of the American Revolution.

On closer inspection, the French position does not seem to have been all that irrational or anything like a visceral rejection of American policy. From the beginning, France made it clear that it welcomed a regime change in Iraq. What it objected to was the way the United States managed the planning of the war. As late as his New Year's Eve address to the French people in 2002, Chirac warned that France's sons and daughters could be heading into war.

However, Chirac and the other critics insisted that United Nations inspectors should be allowed to finish their work and determine once and for all if Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Of course, there were other issues involved. France had closer commercial and diplomatic ties to Iraq than the other major Western powers. Many in France also felt insulted when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld made statements that seemed to belittle France, its power, and its priorities.

It is not clear if Chirac would ever have endorsed an invasion. In retrospect, it seems that his government understood more clearly than the Bush administration did that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program had been shut down and that the invasion would launch a long and bloody insurgency.

In other words, the French may have been right.

That said, the point is not to question whether either the war in Iraq or France's response to it was appropriate. Rather, the key here is that the French reacted out of what they perceived to be their national interest, something they have done consistently since 1958.

The EU: The Merger of Domestic and Foreign Policy?

European integration is now the lightning rod for the dissatisfaction that has been brewing in French politics in the twenty-first century (see Chapter 16 of the printed version of *Comparative Politics*). Even though most mainstream politicians continue to support European integration, it has been controversial among voters for a generation, a point Marine Le Pen made consistently during the 2017 presidential election campaign.

After de Gaulle stepped down, France joined Germany as the strongest champions of a more united Europe. As with so much in the Fifth Republic, the growing consensus on Europe was confirmed under the Socialists, especially when President Mitterrand nominated his former finance minister, Jacques Delors, to be president of the European Commission in 1984. Delors was the chief architect of the expansion of what is now the EU to then fifteen members and the leading force behind the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty.

In other words, even before the end of the cold war, Europe had become one of the defining issues in French foreign policy. France had become the strongest proponent of the efforts to deepen and broaden European institutions. It parlayed its presence in Europe into expanded markets for its goods and as a vehicle to help strengthen its currency. In the first post–cold war years, many French politicians also saw Europe as a way of diluting unified Germany's power.

Comparative Emphasis
Globalization

Recent French governments have taken relatively ambiguous positions on globalization. For example, they have tried to promote international rules that would restrict the number of foreign television programs and movies that could be shown in the country. But they have also been among the most resolute supporters of the European Union. In particular, they recognize that France's economic success is inextricably intertwined with that of the EU and have thus firmly supported the single currency and other attempts to deepen integration. Conversely, public opposition to the EU and other "foreign" influences has risen noticeably since the mid-1990s.

The consensus on European policy began to unravel after the Maastricht Treaty was signed in late 1991. It strengthened existing European institutions, renamed them the EU, and paved the way for the euro. When the treaty was signed, all leading French politicians supported it, and it was assumed it would pass easily even after the Constitutional Council ruled that it had to voted on in a referendum. As the campaign unfolded, it turned out that the treaty divided the three largest parties, while the PCF and the FN—unusual political bedfellows, to say the least—both opposed it. Despite the growing opposition, most observers assumed that the treaty would be passed overwhelmingly. When the vote was held, the French came within a whisker of turning it down.

Part of the opposition to the EU has roots in French nationalism and concerns about its increasingly diverse population that have little directly to do with European integration. However, there is now ample evidence that adoption of the euro and other steps to strengthen the EU have failed to breathe new life into France's still-stagnant economy, cost it jobs, and made opposition to further European integrating appealing to parts of the left as well.

All of this has taken place at a time when international trade and globalization in general are an inescapable fact of political life. The raw statistics in Table 19.12 have real meaning for people's lives. The fact that imports and exports account for almost a third of French consumption and production means that more people eat at McDonald's, drive Nissans, and, shockingly, drink Italian or German wine. By the same token, France's prosperity is ever more dependent on its ability to sell Renaults, Airbus jets, and gastronomical treasures abroad. It also means that people who lack the education or skills to shift from the dying

heavy industries to more high-tech ones are losing out and, not surprisingly, becoming increasingly dissatisfied.

Frankly, European issues will matter more for the daily lives of French citizens than what their government did about Iraq or how it responds to almost any future global hotspot. As such, European policy is a sign of how important the global forces sketched in Figure 1.1 are in the politics of almost every country today. France's European policy is yet another of the domestic political implications of Colonel Christopher Holshek's statement that I quoted at the end of Chapter 1. What happens "over there" truly influences what happens "back here," often by shaking up domestic political life and the coalitions that have dominated events for decades if not longer.

YEAR	EXPORTS AS PERCENT OF GDP	IMPORTS AS PERCENT OF GDP
1962	12	11
1974	20	22
1980	22	23
1992	23	22
1999	26	24
2002	27	25
2004	26	26
2008	22	24
2012	26	28
2016	29	31

Table 19.12
France and the Global Economy

Source: Data from 1962–1992 from David Cameron, "Economic Policy in the Era for the EMS," in *Remaking the Hexagon*, Gregory Flynn (ed.). (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 121; data for 1999 from the World Bank (www.worldbank.org, accessed July 20, 2001); data for 2002 and 2004 from the United Nations Development Programme (www.undp.org, accessed November 15, 2004); and for 2008 through 2016 from the World Bank (accessed

November 20, 2016).

France and Wicked Problems

France helps us see the integrated nature of today's wicked problems more clearly thanany country covered in Part 2 other than the United States—and that may only be the case because I am an American and am therefore forced to confront my own country's difficulties every day. It may not have been clear in the body of this chapter just how interconnected France's urban, economic, racial, and governance problems are. It may also be less than clear why a state dominated by an integrated elite did so well for the first thirty years after the creation of the Fifth Republic but has struggled since then.

So, we will end the chapter by pulling those loose threads together in a way that also suggests why they are important for the other industrialized democracies considered in this book. To do so, put those two points into a context defined by Figures 1.2 and 1.3 on the printed edition of *Comparative Politics*, which are also included here in case you do not have access to the book itself.

They are intended to convey the idea that today's world is characterized largely by the accelerating rates of change and interconnection among all facets of social, economic, and political life. Prior to the mid-1970s, strong states such as the one created by the Gaullists that were led by well-trained elites who shared a common point of view could set and reach many domestic policy priorities.

That has simply become more difficult in the last 40 years as I have been suggesting throughout this book. No one knows exactly what "political formula" will work best in today's transitional times. However, all the signs suggest that systems that offer the most flexibility, provide the most opportunities for new initiatives to bubble up "from below" (however you choose to define below), and make it easiest for leaders to pursue cooperative solutions are most likely to "succeed" (again, however, you choose to define succeed).

And, given what we have seen in this chapter, the Fifth Republic and its leaders are not ideally suited for any of those challenges. That's largely why the 2017 elections turned out the way that they did and, perhaps, why support for Macron's continued technocratic approach to addressing France's problems has met with mixed reviews less than six months after his stunning victory at the polls.

KEY TERMS

Concepts

anticlerical

bloc vote

centralization

cohabitation

dirigisme

flexicurity

grandeur

incompatibility clause

integrated elite

iron triangle

pantouflage

parity law

prefect

privatization

proclerical

proportional representation

single-member district

sovereign debt

tutelle

two-ballot system

People

Chirac, Jacques

de Gaulle, Charles

Debré, Michel

Giscard d'Estaing, Valéry

Hollande, François

Le Pen, Jean-Marie

Louis XIV

l Marine

Mitterrand, François

Pompidou, Georges

Royal, Ségolène

Sarkozy, Nicolas

Strauss-Kahn, Dominique

Acronyms

CFDT

CGT

ENA

FN

MEDEF

NATO

PCF

PS

UDF

UMP

Organizations, Places, and Events

Communist Party (PCF)

Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT)

Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)

Constitutional Council

École Nationale d'Administration (ENA)

events of May

Fifth Republic

Force ouvrière

Fourth Republic

Gaullists

grandes écoles

Movement of French Enterprises (MEDEF)

National Assembly

National Front (FN)

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Radicals

Senate

Socialist Party (SP)

Third Republic

Union for French Democracy (UDF)

Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)

FURTHER READING

Allwood, Gill, and Khursheed Wadia. *Women and Politics in France: 1958–2000*. London: Routledge, 2000. A fine overview of the role women play (and do not play) in French politics.

Elgie, Robert, ed. *The Changing French Political System*. London: Routledge, 2013. An excellent anthology by some of the best French, British, and American academic analysts of French politics.

Fenby, John. *France: A Modern History from the Revolution to the War with Terror*. London: Simon and Schuster, 2016. The best recent overview of French history.

_____ *The General: Charles de Gaulle and the France He Saved*. New York: Skyhorse Publishers, 2012. The newest and one of the best biographies that focuses on his political impact.

Gaffney, John. *Political Leadership in France: From Charles de Gaulle to Nicolas Sarkozy*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2012. A good overview of presidential leadership styles.

Gumbel, Peter, *France's Got Talent: The Woeful Consequences of French Elitism*. Seattle: Amazon Web Services, 2016. An intriguing short book on problems at Sciences Po and in the elite in general by a British journalist who worked there.

Hauss, Charles. *Politics in France*. Washington: CQ Press, 2008. The newest full-length text on French politics. I will not claim that it is the best.

Hussey, Andrew, *The French Intifada: The Long War Between France and its Arabs*. New York: Macmillan, 2014. One of many useful books on the crisis between the French state and its growing Muslim population.

Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. A thoughtful book by one of France's leading academic experts.

Robb, Graham. *The Discovery of France*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007. Not the most popular book among academics, but probably the best overview of the country covering the last two hundred years. Written in the form of a travelogue by someone who toured the country on his bicycle.