

GLOBAL
EDITION



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A World View

ELEVENTH EDITION

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ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON

disturbances around the world have resulted in immigrants who claim asylum as political refugees from troubled areas in the Balkans, the Middle East, and Africa. Some have valid credentials as refugees, whereas others have arrived with false papers or make claims to asylum that courts do not always uphold. In consequence, by the 2011 census, one in eight British residents was foreign-born and less than half the population of London are British-born and white and a substantial fraction have been born outside the United Kingdom.

Public opinion has opposed unlimited immigration, and both Labour and Conservative governments have passed laws trying to limit the number of immigrants. However, these laws contain many exceptions, and EU membership makes it difficult to restrict immigration from the continent of Europe. The government has tried to make deportation of illegal immigrants easier. Nonetheless, it admits that there are hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants in Britain.

Official statistics define the minority population by the one characteristic that they have in common—they are not white. The population in this catchall category has risen from 74,000 in 1951 to approximately 8 million in the latest census. The Electoral Commission now issues information about how to vote in twelve different languages besides English, ranging from Arabic to Urdu.

Nonwhite immigrants are a heterogeneous category of people, divided by culture, race, language, and ethnicity. West Indians speak English as their native language and have a Christian tradition, but this is often not the case for black Africans. Ethnic minorities from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are divided between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, and most speak English as a second language. Chinese from Hong Kong have a distinctive culture. In addition, there are gender differences. There is a tendency for immigrant women not to speak English as well as male immigrants, and this is particularly the case for immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

With the passage of time, the ethnic minority population is becoming increasingly British-born and British-educated. This raises an important issue: What is the position of Britishborn offspring of immigrants? Whatever their country of origin, they differ in how they see themselves: 64 percent of Caribbean origin identify themselves as British, as do more than three-fifths of Pakistanis, Indians, and Bangladeshis, and two-fifths of Chinese. However, some offspring of

immigrants have rejected integration. A coordinated terrorist attack in London on July 7, 2005, killing more than fifty people, was organized by British-born offspring of Pakistani immigrants who had been converted to jihadism at British mosques. British-born jihadists received training in Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan. The government has greatly increased police powers to use in pursuing alleged terrorists and has justified shoot-to-kill practices even when people wrongly suspected of being terrorists are the victims.

In response to terrorist attacks, the government has shifted from promoting multiculturalism to stressing the integration of immigrant families into the British way of life. The government seeks to foster a sense of Britishness by giving lessons about Britishness to immigrants wanting British passports. However, it has found it difficult to decide what being British means. For example, does it require a knowledge of British history, knowing how to claim welfare benefits and meet obligations such as paying taxes, or being able to write in English? British-born offspring of immigrants automatically gain citizenship. Whether they choose to adopt British ways is much influenced by family and ethnic background and by the character of their local community. Almost half live in areas where ethnic minorities are in the majority.

Many immigrants and their offspring are being integrated into electoral politics, since residential concentration makes their votes important in some parliamentary constituencies. A disproportionate number of minority ethnic people have voted Labour. There are now hundreds of elected minority ethnic councillors in local government, and both the Conservative and Labour parties are promoting the nomination of minority ethnic candidates. The twenty-seven minority ethnic MPs in the Commons today come from diverse backgrounds—India, Pakistan, the West Indies, Ghana, and Aden—and include three Muslim women.⁸

The Structure of Government

8.4 Explain the structure of British government and list the duties of Cabinet ministers and civil servants.

The term *government* is used in many different senses in Britain. People may speak of the Queen's government to emphasize enduring and nonpartisan

features; they may refer to a Conservative or Labour government to emphasize partisanship, or to David Cameron's government to stress a personal feature. The departments headed by Cabinet ministers advised by senior civil servants are referred to collectively as Whitehall, after the London street in which many major government departments are located. **Downing Street**, where the prime minister works, is a short street off Whitehall. Parliament—that is, the popularly elected House of Commons and the nonelected House of Lords—is at one end of Whitehall. The term *Parliament* is often used as another way of referring to the House of Commons. Together, all of these institutions are often referred to as **Westminster**, after the district in London in which the principal offices of British government are located. With devolution, separately elected executive institutions are found in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland too (see Figure 8.1).

Descriptions of a government often start with its constitution. However, Britain has never had a written constitution. The **unwritten constitution** is a jumble of Acts of Parliament, judicial pronouncements, customs, and conventions that make up the rules of the political game. The vagueness of the constitution

makes it flexible, a point that political leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair have exploited to increase their own power. In the words of a constitutional lawyer, J. A. G. Griffith, "The Constitution is what happens."⁹

Comparing the written U.S. Constitution and the unwritten British constitution emphasizes how few are the constraints of an unwritten constitution (see Table 8.2). Whereas amendments to the U.S. Constitution must receive the endorsement of well over half the states and members of Congress, the unwritten British constitution can be changed by a majority vote in Parliament, where the government commands a majority. The government of the day can also change it by acting in an unprecedented manner and claiming that this is a new custom. Hence, the policy relevance of the American Constitution is much greater than that of the British constitution.

The U.S. Constitution gives the Supreme Court the final power to decide what the government may or may not do. By contrast, in Britain, the final authority is Parliament. Courts do not have the power to declare an Act of Parliament unconstitutional; judges simply ask whether the executive acts within its authorized powers.

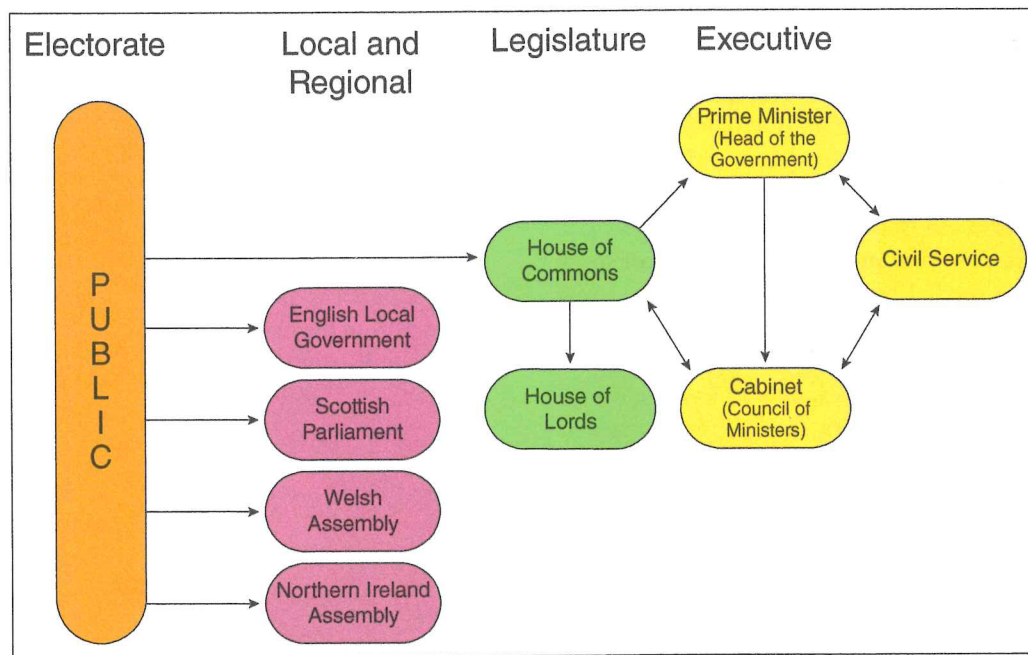


FIGURE 8.1
Popular influence must focus on Westminster
Structure of the British Government.

TABLE 8.2
British and American Constitutions
Comparing an unwritten and a written constitution.

	Britain (unwritten)	United States (written)
Origin	Medieval customs	1787 Constitutional Convention
Form	Unwritten, vague	Written, precise
Final constitutional authority	Majority in Parliament	Supreme Court
Bill of individual rights	Borrowed from Europe	Yes
Amendment	Ordinary vote in Parliament; unprecedented action by government	More than majority vote in Congress, states
Policy relevance	Low	High

Source: Adherents as defined in Encyclopedia Britannica 2009.

Many statutes delegate broad discretion to a Cabinet minister or to a public authority. Even if the courts rule that the government has improperly exercised its authority, the effect can be annulled by a subsequent Act of Parliament retroactively authorizing an action.

The Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution allows anyone to turn to the courts for the protection of their personal rights. Instead of giving written guarantees to citizens, the rights of British people are meant to be secured by trustworthy governors. An individual who believes his or her personal rights have been infringed must seek redress through the courts by invoking the European Convention on Human Rights and the 1998 British Human Rights Act, adopted to give the Convention the effect of law in Britain.

The **Crown** is the abstract concept that Britain uses in place of the continental European idea of the state. It combines dignified parts of the constitution, which sanctify authority by tradition and myth, with efficient parts, which carry out the work of government. Queen Elizabeth II is the ceremonial head of state; having been the monarch since 1952 makes her a symbol of tradition. The heir to the throne is her eldest son, Prince Charles. The Queen does not influence the actions of what is described as Her Majesty's Government; she is expected to respect the will of Parliament, as communicated to her by the leader of the majority in Parliament, the prime minister.

What the Prime Minister Says and Does

Leading a government is a political rather than a managerial task. The preeminence of the prime minister is ambiguous, and this is especially so in a coalition

government. A politician at the apex of government is remote from what is happening on the ground. The more responsibilities attributed to the prime minister, the less time there is to devote to any one task. Like a president, a prime minister is the prisoner of the law of "first things first." The imperatives of the prime minister are as follows.

- **Winning elections:** A prime minister may be self-interested, but he or she is not self-employed. To become prime minister, a politician must first be elected leader of his or her party. Seven prime ministers since 1945—Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas-Home, James Callaghan, John Major, and Gordon Brown—entered Downing Street during the middle of a Parliament rather than after a national election. In the eighteen elections since 1945, the prime minister of the day has ten times led the governing party to victory and eight times to defeat.
- **Campaigning through the media:** A prime minister does not need to attract publicity; it is thrust upon him or her by the curiosity of television and newspaper reporters. Media eminence is a double-edged sword, since bad news puts the prime minister in an unfavorable light. The personality of a prime minister remains relatively constant, but during a term of office, his or her popularity can fluctuate by more than 45 percentage points in public opinion polls.¹⁰
- **Patronage:** To remain prime minister, a politician must keep the confidence of a party, or in the case of coalition leader David Cameron, the confidence of two parties, the Liberal Democrats

as well as Conservatives. The prime minister can silence potential critics by appointing them to posts as government ministers, who sit on front bench seats in the House of Commons. MPs not appointed to a post are backbenchers, some of whom ingratiate themselves with their party leader in hopes of becoming a government minister. In dispensing patronage, a prime minister can use any of four criteria: (1) personal loyalty (rewarding friends), (2) cooption (silencing critics by giving them an office so that they are committed to support the government), (3) representativeness (for example, appointing a woman or a minority ethnic MP), or (4) competence in giving direction to a government department.

■ **Parliamentary performance:** The prime minister appears in the House of Commons weekly for half an hour of questions from MPs that involve the exchange of rapid-fire comments with a highly partisan audience. Unprotected by a speechwriter's script, the prime minister must show that he or she is a good advocate of government policy or suffer a reduction in confidence. Attending important debates in the Commons and occasionally mixing with MPs in its corridors and tea rooms helps the prime minister to judge the mood of the governing party.

■ **Making and balancing policies:** As head of the British government, the prime minister deals with heads of other governments around the world; this makes foreign affairs a special responsibility of Downing Street. When there are conflicts between international and domestic policy priorities, the prime minister must strike a balance between pressures from the world "out there" and pressures from the domestic electorate. The prime minister also makes policy by striking a balance between ministers who want to spend more money to increase their popularity and Treasury ministers who want to cut taxes in order to boost their popularity.

While the formal powers of the office remain constant, individual prime ministers have differed in their electoral success, how they view their job, and their impact on government (see Figure 8.2). Clement Attlee, Labour prime minister from 1945 to 1951, was an unassertive spokesperson for the lowest common denominator of views within a Cabinet consisting of

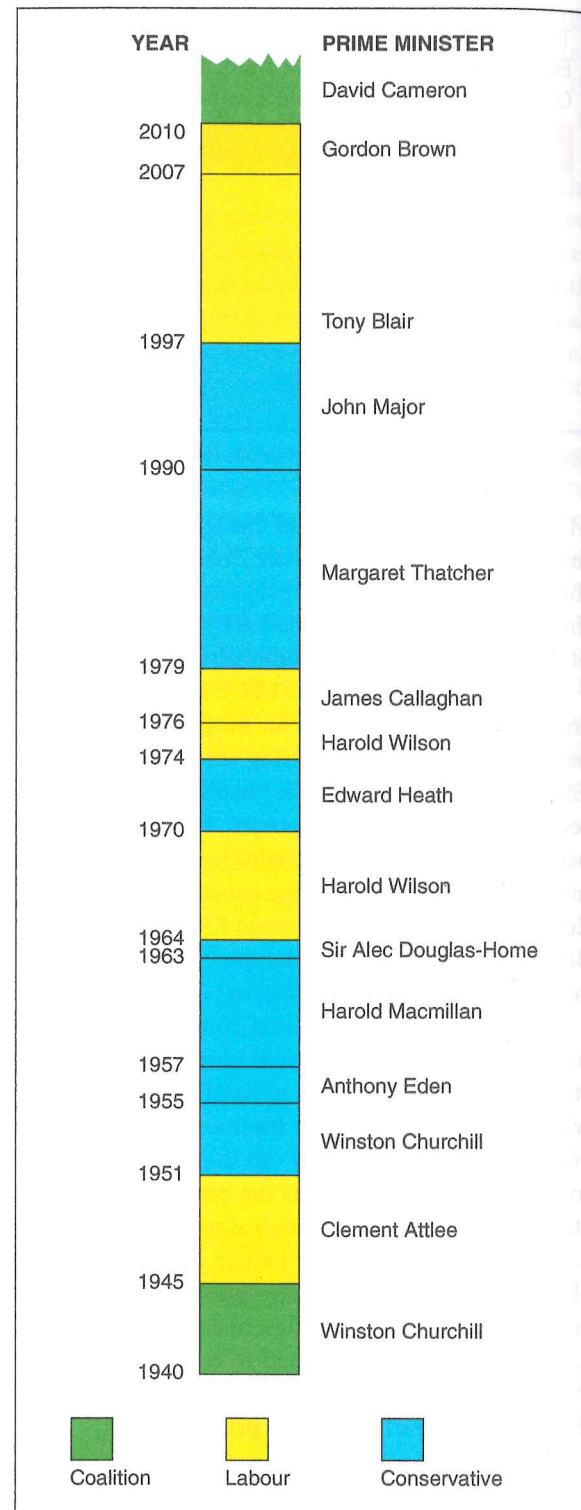


FIGURE 8.2
Long and short-term Tenures at Downing Street
Prime Ministers and Governments since 1940.

very experienced Labour politicians. When an aging Winston Churchill succeeded Attlee in 1951, he concentrated on foreign affairs and took little interest in domestic policy; the same was true of his successor, Anthony Eden. Harold Macmillan intervened strategically on a limited number of domestic and international issues while giving ministers great scope on everyday matters. Alec Douglas-Home was weak because he lacked knowledge of economic affairs, the chief problem during his short time in office. Both Harold Wilson and Edward Heath were initially committed to an activist definition of the prime minister's job. However, Wilson's major initiatives in economic policy were unsuccessful, and in 1974, the electorate rejected Heath's direction of the economy. Wilson won office again by promising to replace confrontation between management and unions with political conciliation. James Callaghan, who succeeded Wilson in 1976, also emphasized cooperation, but economic troubles and strikes continued.

Margaret Thatcher had strong views about many major policies; associates gave her the nickname "Tina" because of her motto: There Is No Alternative. Thatcher was prepared to push her views against the wishes of Cabinet colleagues and civil service advisors. In the end, her "bossiness" caused a revolt of Cabinet colleagues that helped bring about her downfall. Her former colleagues welcomed John Major as a consensus replacement. However, his conciliatory manner was often interpreted as a sign of weakness. Sniping

from ministers led Major to refer to his Cabinet colleagues as "bastards."

Tony Blair won office by campaigning appealingly, and this was his priority in office too. Blair used his status as an election winner and control of ministerial patronage to silence potential critics in Cabinet. As the Treasury minister making decisions about departmental budgets, Gordon Brown used this power of the purse to build up support to secure his succession as prime minister. However, his personal style in that office lost him the support of Cabinet colleagues and of public opinion. Brown's critics were unwilling to mount an open challenge to his position, which is difficult to do under the party rules, and Brown led the government to electoral defeat.

The personalization of campaigning, encouraged by the media, has led to claims that Britain now has a presidential system of government. However, by comparison with a U.S. president, a British prime minister has less formal authority and less security of office (see Table 8.3). The president is directly elected for a fixed four-year term. A prime minister is chosen by his or her party for an indefinite term and is thus vulnerable to losing office if the party's confidence wanes. The president is the undoubted leader of the federal executive branch and can dismiss Cabinet appointees with little fear of the consequences. By contrast, senior colleagues of a prime minister are potential rivals for leadership and may be kept in Cabinet to prevent them from challenging him or her. A prime minister

TABLE 8.3
Prime Minister and President

Comparing the power of and processes for choosing a prime minister and a president.

	Britain (prime minister)	United States (president)
Media visibility	High	High
Route to top	Parliament	Governor, senator
Chosen by	Party vote	State primaries and caucuses
Elected by	Parliament	National election
Term of office	Flexible, insecure	Four years, secure
Constitution	Unitary	Federal
Domestic influence	High	So-so
International role	Semi-independent	Superpower
Checks	Informal	Congress, Supreme Court

Source: Adapted from Richard Rose, *The Prime Minister in a Shrinking World* (Boston: Polity Press, 2001), 242.

can be confident that a parliamentary majority will endorse the government's legislative proposals, whereas the president is without authority over Congress. Moreover, the prime minister is at the apex of a unitary government, with powers not limited by a federal structure or by the courts and a written constitution.¹¹

In the coalition government created in 2010, the role of deputy prime minister, held by Nick Clegg, is far more important than that of an American vice president because the Conservative prime minister needs the support of Clegg's Liberal Democratic Party to have a parliamentary majority. When disagreements arise between the two parties on policy issues such as the European Union or curbing illegal or unethical media practices, David Cameron must consult with Clegg to agree on measures that both parties can support, or they must decide how to air their differences in public without breaking up the coalition government.

A coalition government gives new meaning to the doctrine of collective responsibility. Coalition leaders who have competed against each other at the previous election and expect to compete at the next election are expected to support each other in the Commons. Equally important, they are expected to persuade backbench Conservative and Liberal Democratic MPs to vote for compromises necessary to maintain the coalition, even if these compromises sometimes depart from previously endorsed party policies. However, political confrontation makes news, and journalists are always looking for signs of disagreement to publicize.

The compromises of coalition government tend to moderate the positions of both parties, and this has been congenial to the electoral strategy of David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The midterm review of their government was entitled "The Coalition: Working Together in the National Interest." However, this approach does not satisfy all their committed partisans. Since backbench Conservative and Liberal Democratic MPs are not bound by collective Cabinet responsibility, they may criticize a coalition policy when they dislike a compromise. Right-wing Conservatives complain that the government has not done enough to cut taxes and spending and to distance Britain from the European Union. Liberal Democrats who incline to the left favor boosting public spending in an effort to stimulate economic growth, and all in the party are disappointed that the coalition has not delivered electoral reform or created an elected House of Lords.

The Cabinet and Cabinet Ministers

The Cabinet consists of senior ministers appointed by the prime minister and, in the coalition government, by sharing offices among coalition partners. In Britain, ministers must be members either of the House of Commons or of the House of Lords. As MPs as well as ministers, they contribute to what Walter Bagehot described as "the close union, the nearly complete fusion of the executive and legislative powers."¹²

The Cabinet is the forum in which leading members of the governing party, many with competing departmental interests and personal ambitions, meet together to ensure agreement about major government policies. A half century ago, there were usually two Cabinet meetings a week, and when there were major disagreements among ministers, it took time to arrive at a political agreement. Tony Blair reduced the frequency of meetings to less than once a week and cut their average length to under an hour. Coalition government has revived the need for the Cabinet to meet in order to air different party views on major issues and arrive at an agreement.

Coalition policy building starts in government departments. In most departments, the minister in charge and a deputy are from different parties. Thus, before a departmental position can be established on issues where party differences are greater than department interests, the ministers must agree between themselves. If there is a disagreement between departments, it may be handled in the conventional way through Cabinet committees. However, if inter-departmental differences reflect partisan differences, competing claims of the coalition partners must be resolved by the Conservative and Liberal Democratic leaders in order to maintain the coalition's unity. The convention of Cabinet responsibility requires that all Cabinet ministers give public support to what the government does or refrain from public criticism even if they oppose a policy in private. However, ministers unwilling to share responsibility may leak their views to the press rather than resign.

Cabinet ministers are important as department heads, because most decisions of government are made within departments, and departments are responsible for overseeing all the services of government, most of which are delivered by public agencies subordinate to and distant from Whitehall (see the

section on Centralized Authority and Decentralized Delivery of Policies: The members of the coalition Cabinet represent the following departments and positions:

- **External affairs:** Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; Defense; International Development
- **Economic affairs:** Treasury; Business, Innovation and Skills; Energy and Climate Change; Transport
- **Legal and constitutional issues:** Lord Chancellor and Justice; Home Office
- **Social services:** Health; Education; Work and Pensions; Culture, Media and Sport
- **Territorial:** Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs; Communities and Local Government; Northern Ireland; Scotland; Wales
- **Managing government business:** Lord President of the Council and deputy prime minister; Leader of the House of Commons; Chief whip in the House of Commons; Paymaster General and Cabinet Office

Government departments vary greatly in their size and in the interests that they affect. The Department of Business, Innovation, and Skills has a larger staff than the Treasury. However, because of the importance of the Treasury's responsibility for taxation and public expenditure, it has more senior civil servants. The Business Department's staff has many concerns, including the competitiveness of industry, trade, employment, and university education. The Treasury concentrates on one big task: the management of the economy. The job of the chancellor of the Exchequer is more important politically, insofar as economic performance affects the governing party's electoral fate. But the head of the Department of Business, Vince Cable, is the Liberal Democratic Party's leading figure on economic affairs, and as a former Labour Party activist, his political background differs from that of the Conservative chancellor.

Cabinet ministers are willing to go along silently with their colleagues' proposals in exchange for endorsement of their own measures. However, ministers often have to compete for scarce resources, creating conflict between departments. Regardless of party, the Defense minister presses for increased spending, while Treasury ministers oppose this. Cabinet ministers resolve many differences in Cabinet committees or by informal talks between the ministers most concerned.

A minister has many roles: initiating policies, selecting among alternatives brought forward from within the department, and avoiding unpopular decisions. A minister is responsible for actions taken by thousands of civil servants nominally acting on the minister's behalf, including agencies to which Whitehall contracts responsibility for delivering public services. In addition, a minister is a department's ambassador to the world outside, including Downing Street, Parliament, the mass media, and interest groups. Not least, Cabinet ministers are individuals with ambitions to rise in politics. The typical minister is not an expert in a subject but an expert in politics. This skill has particular importance when MPs in two coalition parties must support what the minister is doing.

The Civil Service

Government could continue for months without new legislation, but it would collapse overnight if hundreds of thousands of civil servants stopped administering laws and delivering public services authorized by Acts of Parliament. The largest number of civil servants are clerical staff with little discretion; they carry out the routine activities of a large bureaucracy. Only if these duties are executed satisfactorily can ministers have the opportunity to make effective policies.

The most important group of civil servants is the smallest: the few hundred higher civil servants who advise ministers and oversee the work of their departments. Top British civil servants deny they are politicians because of the partisan connotations of the term. However, their work is political because they are involved in formulating and advising on policies. A publication seeking to recruit bright graduates for the higher civil service declares, "You will be involved from the outset in matters of major policy or resource allocation and, under the guidance of experienced administrators, encouraged to put forward your own constructive ideas and to take responsible decisions." In short, top civil servants are not apolitical; they are bipartisan, ready to work for whichever party wins an election. They are expected to be able to think like politicians in order to anticipate what their minister may want and how the opposition party and the media will react.

The relationship between ministers and higher civil servants is critical in giving direction to a

government department. A busy politician does not have time to go into details; he or she wants a brief that can catch a headline or squash criticism. Ministers expect higher civil servants to be responsive to their political views and to give advice consistent with their outlook and that of the governing party or the coalition. Civil servants like working for a minister who has clear views on policy, but they dislike it when a minister grabs a headline by expressing views that will get the department into trouble later because they are impractical. In the words of a senior civil servant, "Just because ministers say to do something does not mean that we can ignore reality."¹³

The Thatcher government introduced a new phenomenon in Whitehall: a prime minister who believed civil servants were inferior to businesspeople because they did not have to "earn" their living, meaning that they did not have to make a profit. Management was made the buzzword in Whitehall. Businessmen were brought in to advise ministers and civil servants about how to get more value for money when administering policies. These changes have continued under subsequent Labour and coalition governments. Parts of government departments have been "hived off" to form separate public agencies, with their own accounts and performance targets.

When an agency's task is politically sensitive, such as the marking of national school examinations, the education minister cannot avoid blame if there are major errors in delivering examination grades to pupils. Moreover, independent agencies can show their independence by criticizing a government department. The Office of Budget Responsibility is expected to produce an independent forecast of the state of the economy before the government announces its annual budget, and its reports publicize when the Treasury is missing its targets for economic growth and cutting the deficit.

Government ministers of all parties want quick changes to satisfy their personal and partisan desire to be seen to be making an immediate impact. Tony Blair has called for civil servants to learn from companies that "reinvent themselves every year, almost month to month" and complained that "Rules of propriety are almost becoming an obstacle."¹⁴ This clashes with the civil service view that their duty is to avoid cutting corners to justify a government policy, as Blair did in mobilizing support for the Iraq war. The politician's desire for instant impact, fed by pressures from

around-the-clock media, also conflicts with the civil service awareness of how many years it can take to turn a pledge given to the media into an Act of Parliament that public officials can implement in order to have an impact on the ground. Politicians seek to resolve the conflict by bringing more outsiders into government in high-level positions, while civil servants have the option of quitting Whitehall to take jobs, often at a higher salary, in the private or not-for-profit sector.

The appointment of political advisors from outside Whitehall has caused difficulties with civil servants. The advisors are loyal to their minister and to the governing party. While experienced in dealing with personalities in the governing party and the media, they lack Whitehall experience. When departmental policies attract criticism, some ministers and even more advisors are now ready to blame civil servants rather than take responsibility themselves (Box 8.4).

Both ministers and senior civil servants have been prepared to mislead Parliament and the public. When accused in court in 1986 of telling a lie about the British government's efforts to suppress an embarrassing memoir by an ex-intelligence officer, the then-head of the civil service, Robert Armstrong, described the government's statements as a misleading impression, not a lie. It was being economical with the truth.

The Role of Parliament

In many parliaments, MPs sit in a half circle, symbolizing degrees of difference from left to right. By contrast, the House of Commons is an oblong chamber in which MPs supporting the government sit on one side and their adversaries sit opposite them on the other side. In the great majority of House of Commons divisions, MPs vote along party lines. The government's state of mind is summed up in the words of a Labour Cabinet minister who declared, "It's carrying democracy too far if you don't know the result of the vote before the meeting."¹⁵ If a bill or a motion identified as a vote of confidence in the government is defeated, coalition government legislation provides for a 14-day period in which the vote may be reversed or a new government formed that does have the confidence of Parliament. The Opposition cannot expect to alter major government decisions because it lacks a majority of votes in the Commons. It accepts the

BOX 8.4

Friction in Whitehall

A newly elected government is full of ambitious ministers impatient to make a name for themselves and their government, and optimistic about changing the way Britain is governed. However, major changes can only occur with the assistance of civil servants in turning election pledges into legislation, organizing the administration of new policies, and training established staff in how new measures ought to be delivered.

The civil service claims to be a Rolls-Royce of government because of the intellectual quickness of its leaders, as demonstrated in the TV series *Yes, Minister*. Both Conservative and Labour ministers reject the comparison of the civil service with a smoothly running Rolls-Royce. Civil servants dislike being attacked in public and bullied in private by ministers who have far less experience of how government works than they do. One complaint is that politics has become too political; that is, ministers are happier looking to media experts for advice on policies

that will win them positive headlines than to civil servants who can detail the faults and risks in notions that make good sound bites.

The friction between ministers of all parties and civil servants reflects long-term structural changes in what government can do. Civil servants lack the experience of managing costly and massive operations, such as installing computer systems in a department, or multi-billion pound contracts for military equipment. Ministers whose lives are bound up in Westminster have little appreciation of the way in which their scope for choice is constrained by their predecessors' choices, a shortage of money, personnel and time, and the interdependence of what they do and what is done in the world beyond Westminster.

Sources: See Richard Rose, "Responsible Party Government in a World of Interdependence," *West European Politics*, in press, 2014; and Rachel Sylvester and Alice Thomson, "Whitehall at War," *The Times* (London), January 14–15, 2013.

frustrations that go with minority status because it hopes to win a majority at the next election.

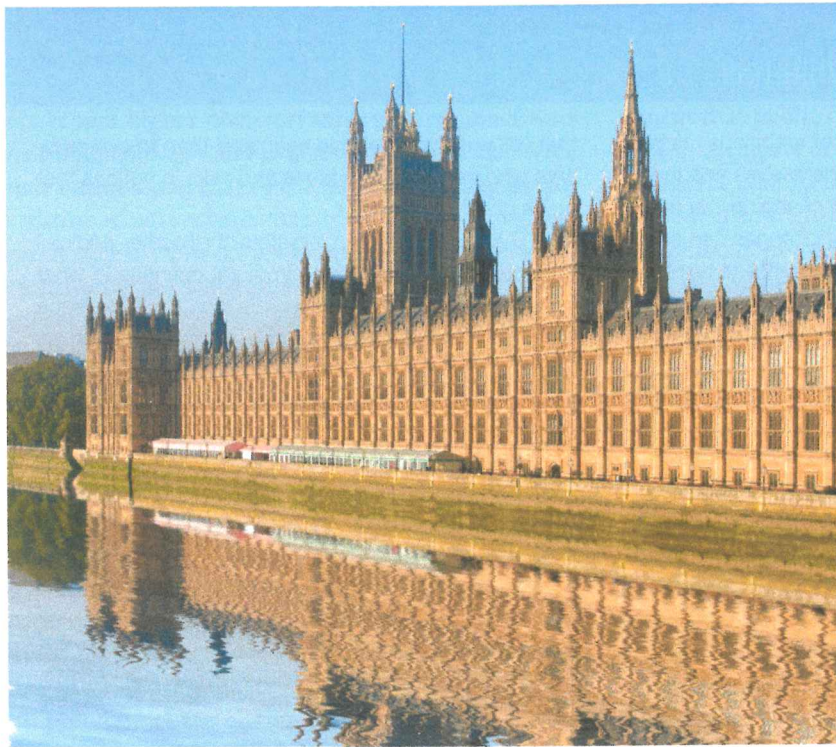
Whitehall departments draft bills that are presented to Parliament, and few amendments to legislation are added without government approval. Laws are described as Acts of Parliament, but it would be more accurate if they were stamped "Made in Whitehall." In addition, the government rather than Parliament sets the budget for government programs. The weakness of Parliament is in marked contrast to the U.S. Congress, where each house controls its own proceedings independent of the White House. Furthermore, even though the U.S. president can ask Congress to legislate, the president cannot determine the language of a bill or the outcome of a vote there.

The first function of the Commons is to weigh political reputations. MPs continually assess their leader's ability to win or lose the next election. They also assess the performance of ministers, potential ministers, and coalition partners. MPs can force a minister to explain and defend what he or she is responsible for. If the minister's answers are unconvincing, the minister will lose political influence or even be dropped by the prime minister.

Second, backbench MPs can demand that the government do something about an issue. The party whip is expected to listen to the views of dissatisfied backbench MPs and to convey their concerns to ministers. In the corridors, dining rooms, and committees of the Commons, backbenchers can tell ministers what they think is wrong with government policy. If the government is unpopular and MPs feel threatened with losing their seats, they will be aggressive in demanding that something be done.

Publicizing issues is a third function of Parliament. MPs can use their position to call the media's attention to issues and to themselves. Television cameras are now in Parliament, and a quick-witted MP can provide the media with sound bites.

Fourth, MPs can examine how Whitehall departments administer public policies. An MP may write to a minister about a departmental responsibility affecting a constituent or interest group. MPs can request that the parliamentary commissioner for administration (also known as the ombudsman, after the Scandinavian original) investigate complaints about improper administration. Committees scrutinize policies by interviewing civil servants and



The Mother of Parliaments

Parliament has met in London by the River Thames for more than 800 years, and the clock tower of Big Ben is famous as a symbol of democracy in Canada and Australia as well as in Europe.

ministers and taking evidence from interested groups and experts. However, as a committee moves from discussing details of administration to issues of government policy, this raises a question of confidence in the government. A committee is then likely to divide along party lines, with MPs in the governing party in the majority.

A newly elected MP contemplating his or her role as one among 650 members of the House of Commons is faced with many choices.¹⁶ An MP may decide to be a party loyalist, voting as the leadership decides without participating in deliberations about policy. The MP who wishes for more attention can make a mark by brilliance in debate, by acting as an acknowledged representative of an interest group, or in a nonpartisan way, for example, as a wit or by having a flamboyant appearance. An MP is expected to speak for constituency interests, but constituents accept that their MP will not vote against party policy if it is in conflict with local interests. The only role that an MP rarely undertakes is that of lawmaker.

To keep the published salary of MPs from rising, they have received generous expense allowances, including the upkeep of a second home, since many divide their time between London and their constituency outside London. Details of claims leaked to the press showed that MPs were claiming expenses for everything from cleaning the moat around their country house to remodeling a London flat that was quickly sold at a large profit. Hundreds of MPs paid back some expenses rather than defend their claims, and a few have been convicted for fraud in claiming expenses.

Backbench MPs perennially demand changes to make their jobs more interesting and to give themselves more influence. However, the power to make major changes rests with the government rather

than the House of Commons. Whatever criticisms MPs make of Parliament while in opposition, once they are in government, party leaders have an interest in maintaining arrangements that greatly limit the power of Parliament to influence or stop what ministers do.

Among modern Parliaments, the House of Lords is unique because it was initially composed of hereditary peers. Today, hereditary peers elect ninety-two of their number to sit there; the remainder retain their title but do not have a seat in Parliament. More than five-sixths of the members of the Lords are life peers appointed for achievement in one or another public sphere. Recognition can be given because of previous service as a government minister, and a prime minister can “fast track” a few exceptional individuals into a ministerial post by making them life peers. Peers may be drawn from business, trade unions, or the not-for-profit sector, or may have been major financial donors to a political party. No party has a majority of seats in the House of Lords; less than one-third of peers are Conservative and one-third Labour. More than

one-quarter of peers are cross-benchers who do not identify with any party.

The government often introduces relatively non-controversial legislation in the Lords, and it uses the Lords as a revising chamber to amend bills. Members of the Lords can raise party political issues or issues that cut across party lines, such as problems of disabled people or pornography. The Lords cannot veto legislation, but it can and does amend or delay the passage of some government bills. The transformation of the Lords into an assembly of people chosen by merit rather than heredity has given its members greater confidence in voting to send bills back to the House of Commons for reconsideration before they can become Acts of Parliament if the House of Commons overrides their opposition.

Although all parties accept the need for some kind of second chamber to revise legislation, there is no agreement about how it should be composed or what its powers should be. The Liberal Democrats made the popular election of the House of Lords a clause in the coalition agreement with the Conservatives. However, the party's proposals have not been adopted. The last thing the government of the day wants is a reform that gives an upper chamber that it does not control enough electoral legitimacy to challenge government legislation. Likewise, MPs do not want a second chamber to compete with their unique claim to be popularly elected.

In constitutional theory, Parliament can hold prime ministers accountable for abuses of power by the government. In practice, Parliament is an ineffective check on abuses of executive power, because the executive consists of the leaders of the majority in Parliament. When the government is under attack, MPs in the governing party tend to close ranks in its defense.

Whitehall's abuse of powers has been protected from parliamentary scrutiny by legislation on **official secrecy**. The Whitehall view is that “The need to know still dominates the right to know.”¹⁷ A Freedom of Information Act has reduced but has not ended the executive's power to keep secret the exchange of views within the Whitehall network. Information about policy deliberations in departments is often deemed to be not in the “public” interest to disclose, because it can make government appear uncertain or divided. The introduction of a coalition government is loosening these restrictions. The need to consult more widely

and openly among ministers and MPs in two parties makes unauthorized leaks to the media more likely.

The Courts and Abuses of Power

There is tension between the principle that the elected government of the day should do what it thinks best and the judges' view that government should act in accord with the rule of law, whether it be an Act of Parliament or an obligation in a European treaty that the British government has endorsed. When judges hand down decisions that ministers do not like, ministers have publicly attacked them. Judges have replied by declaring that they should not be attacked for enforcing the law. If the government does not like it, judges say that it should pass a new Act of Parliament that changes the law.

The creation of a Supreme Court as the highest judicial authority in the United Kingdom in 2009 replaced the centuries-old practice of the highest court operating as a committee of the House of Lords. The Supreme Court consists of a president and eleven justices appointed by a panel of lawyers. It is the final court of appeal on points of law in cases initially heard by courts in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It also hears some cases from Scotland, which maintains a separate legal system with laws that are not in conflict with those elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Although the new British Supreme Court has the same name as the highest court in the United States, its powers are much more limited. It can nullify government actions if they are deemed to exceed powers granted by an Act of Parliament, but it cannot declare an Act of Parliament unconstitutional. Parliament remains the supreme authority, deciding what government can and cannot do. Britain's membership in the EU offers judges additional criteria for deciding cases, since the United Kingdom is now bound to act in accord with EU laws and plaintiffs can challenge British government actions at the European Court of Justice. The 1998 Human Rights Act of the Westminster Parliament allows citizens to ask British courts to enforce rights conferred by the European Convention on Human Rights.

Terrorist activities challenge conventional norms about individual rights and the collective interests of the state. At times, British government forces have dealt with the violence of the Irish Republican Army and illegal armed Protestant groups by “bending” the

law, including fabricating evidence to produce convictions that courts have much later overturned. However, the government is slow to admit it has erred. For example, it took thirty-eight years before it admitted that the British Army's killing of thirteen Irish demonstrators in Londonderry in 1972 was totally unjustified. In response to jihadist terrorist bombs in London in 2005, the police have been ready to use harsh measures against suspects, including shoot-to-kill responses when pursuing suspects.

Occasional abuses of executive power raise problems for civil servants who believe that their job is not only to serve the elected government of the day but also to maintain the integrity of government. This has led civil servants to leak official documents with the intention of preventing government from carrying out a policy that the leaker believes to be unethical or inadvisable. In one well-publicized case, a Ministry of Defense official leaked to the House of Commons evidence that questioned the accuracy of government statements about the conduct of the Falklands War. He was tried on the charge of violating the Official Secrets Act. The judge asked the jury to think about the issue this way: "Can it then be in the interests of the state to go against the policy of the government of the day?" The jury concluded that it could be; the official was acquitted.¹⁸

Government as a Network

The ship of state has only one tiller, but whenever a major policy decision comes up, many hands reach out to steer it. Policymaking involves a network of prime minister, Cabinet ministers, leading civil servants, and political advisors, all of whom share in what has been described as the "village life" of Whitehall.¹⁹ However, the growth of government has increased specialization, so that policymakers see less and less of each other. For a given issue, a relatively small number of people are involved in the core executive group that makes a decision. However, the people in decision-making networks are a floating population; the core network is not the same for health or education as it is for agriculture or defense.

Within each Whitehall department, the permanent secretary, its highest-ranking civil servant, usually has much more knowledge of a department's problems than does a transitory Cabinet minister. Political advisors brought into a department to put

the best spin on activities know less about the department's work than its career civil servants. However, they have the political advantage of knowing the minister better.

The prime minister is the single most important person in government. Since there is no written constitution, a determined prime minister can challenge the status quo and turn government to fresh ends, as Margaret Thatcher demonstrated. But to say that the prime minister makes the most important decisions invites the question, "What is an important decision?" Decisions on issues in which the prime minister is not involved, such as social security, are more numerous, require more money, and affect more lives than most decisions made in Downing Street. Scarcity of time is a major limitation on the influence of the prime minister. In the words of one Downing Street official, "It's like skating over an enormous globe of thin ice. You have to keep moving fast all the time."²⁰ Moreover, in a coalition government, major decisions cannot be made by a single politician because they require inter-party agreement.

Political Culture and Legitimacy

8.5 Summarize the collectivist and individualist theories of government, using examples from Britain.

Political culture refers to values and beliefs about how the country ought to be governed (see Chapter 3). For example, there is a consensus that Britain ought to have a government accountable to a popularly elected parliament. This view is held not only by the major parties but also by the parties that demand independence, such as the Scottish National Party.

The values of the political culture impose limits on what government should and should not do. Regardless of party preference, the great majority of British people today believe that government ought to provide education, health services, and social security. Cultural norms about freedom of speech prevent censorship of criticism, and liberal laws about sexual relations and abortion allow freedom of choice in sexual matters. Today, the most significant limits on the scope of public policy are practical and political. For example, public expenditure on popular policies such as the health service is limited by the extent to which

the economy grows and the reluctance of government to raise more money to spend on health care by increasing taxes or by imposing some charges for its use, as is done in continental European countries.

The **trusteeship theory of government** assumes that leaders ought to take the initiative in deciding what is collectively in the public interest. This theory is summarized in the epigram, "The government's job is to govern." The trusteeship doctrine is always popular with the party in government because it justifies doing whatever it wants to do. The opposition party rejects this theory while it is not in office.

The **collectivist theory of government** sees government as balancing the competing demands of sectors of society. From this perspective, parties advocating group or class interests are more authoritative than individual voters.²¹ Traditional Conservatives emphasize harmony between different classes in society, each with its own responsibilities and rewards. For socialists, group politics has been about promoting trade union interests. With changes in British society, party leaders have distanced themselves from close identification with collective interests as they realize that votes are cast by individuals rather than by business firms or trade unions.

The **individualist theory of government** postulates that political parties should represent people rather than group interests. In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher proclaimed that personal welfare should be the responsibility of each individual rather than of the state. She went so far as to declare, "There is no such thing as society." David Cameron has amended this view by emphasizing the importance of what he calls a big society, that is, institutions that are broader than the state. Liberal Democrats emphasize the freedom of individuals to live their own lifestyle free from government regulation of social behavior.

The legitimacy of government is shown by the readiness of the British people to conform to basic obligations such as paying taxes and cooperating with public officials. Dissatisfaction with government policies can stimulate popular protest, but the legitimacy of government means that protesters usually act within lawful bounds. The readiness of groups in Northern Ireland to use guns and bombs for political ends makes it the most "un-British" part of the United Kingdom.

British people make many specific criticisms of government. In reaction to changing standards of elite behavior, such as MPs making excessive claims for

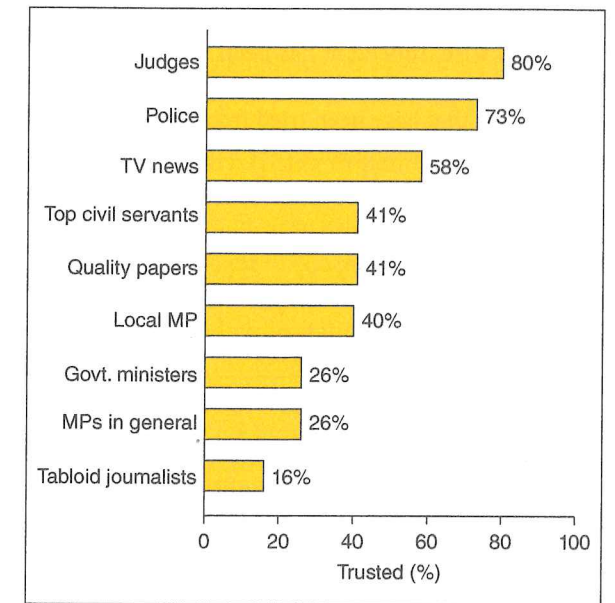


FIGURE 8.3
Most MPs Not Trusted

Source: Committee on Standards in Public Life Survey, 2010. Number of respondents: 1,900.

expenses and Cabinet ministers trashing the reputation of colleagues with whom they compete, citizens have become distrustful of many political institutions. Only one-quarter of Britons trusts MPs in general, and even fewer trust the tabloid press that claims to represent the voice of the people (Figure 8.3). The most trusted public institutions today are those that maintain order. This has been the case since the 2008 economic crisis too.²²

The symbols of a common past, such as the monarchy, are sometimes cited as major determinants of legitimacy. However, surveys of public opinion show that the Queen has little political significance; her popularity derives from the fact that she is nonpolitical. The popularity of a monarch is a consequence, not a cause, of political legitimacy. In Northern Ireland, where the minority denies the legitimacy of British government, the Queen symbolizes divisions between British Unionists and Irish Republicans who reject the Crown. Habit and tradition appear to be the chief explanations for the persisting legitimacy of British government. A survey asking people why they support the government found that the most popular reason was "It's the best form of government we know."

Authority is not without defects. Winston Churchill made this point when he told the House of

Commons: “No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”²³ In the words of the English writer E. M. Forster, people give “two cheers for democracy.”

Political Socialization and Participation

8.6 List the five main influences on political socialization in Britain.

Socialization influences the political division between those who participate in politics and those who do not. Since political socialization is a lifetime learning process, the loyalties of voters are shaped by an accumulation of influences over many decades. Chronologically, the family’s influence comes first; political attitudes learned within the family become intertwined with primary family loyalties. However, social change means that the views parents transmit to their children may not be relevant by the time their offspring have reached middle age. For example, a religious identification learned in childhood, such as Church of England or Catholic, no longer has relevance compared to distinctions between Christians and Muslims.

The electorate at any given point in time combines generations who were socialized in very different circumstances. Today, there are still some who remember World War II and were old enough to vote for or against Winston Churchill. The parents of the median voter by age were socialized when Britain effectively had a two-party system, while the median voter by age has always been offered an effective choice between three or more parties. At the next general election, the youngest voters will have been infants when Tony Blair became prime minister in 1997.

Family and Gender

A child may not know what the Labour, Conservative, or Liberal Democratic Party stands for, but if it is the party of Mom and Dad, this can be enough to create a youthful identification with a party. However, the influence of family on voting is limited, because more than one-third of adults do not know how one or both

of their parents usually voted, or else their parents voted for different parties. Among those who report knowing which party both parents supported, just over half vote as their parents have. In the electorate as a whole, less than one-third know how both parents voted, and vote for the same party.²⁴

As adults, men and women have the same legal right to vote and participate in politics and men and women tend to have similar political attitudes. For example, more than half of women and half of men favor capital punishment, and a substantial minority in each group oppose it. At each general election, the votes of women are divided in much the same way as the votes of men (see Table 8.5). However, socialization into gender roles leads to differences in political participation. Two-thirds of local government councillors are men; one-third are women. Women make up almost half the employees in the civil service but are concentrated in lower-level clerical jobs; women hold about one-third of the top appointments in the civil service. In 2010, a total of 143 women were elected to the House of Commons, but it remains more than three-quarters male. The initial coalition Cabinet had four women Cabinet ministers.

Education

The majority of the population was once considered fit for only a minimum level of education, but the minimum level has steadily risen. In today’s electorate, the oldest voters left school at the age of fourteen and the median voter by the age of seventeen. Only a small percentage of young persons attend “public” schools, that is, fee-paying schools that are actually private. Whereas, half a century ago, Britain had few universities, today, more than two-fifths of young persons enter postsecondary institutions. However, many of the new institutions created in the past two decades lack the facilities of established research universities.

The stratification of English education used to imply that the more education a person had, the more likely a person was to be Conservative. This is no longer the case. People with a university degree or its equivalent now divide their votes between the Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democratic parties (Table 8.5). Education is much more strongly related to active participation in politics: The more education a person has, the greater his or her chances of having a political career. More than one-third of MPs went to

passed legislation in 2004 prohibiting students in public schools from wearing conspicuous religious symbols, including Islamic head scarves worn by women. In 2011, a new law was passed that banned the burqa (a full-body covering worn by few Muslim women in France) in public places. On the other hand, government-promised reforms to address the special needs of immigrants have gone largely unimplemented.

Finally, although there was widespread sympathy for the United States just after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, there was a perceptible rise in anti-American sentiment and distrust of American policy in the wake of these events. This distrust generated a major transatlantic crisis when France took the lead in resisting the American-led military action against Iraq in the spring of 2003. A broad consensus of public opinion and political parties supported French opposition to the war. These tensions have moderated considerably as the Obama administration tilted policy toward greater multilateral collaboration in 2009 and 2010.

Nicolas Sarkozy was swept into office in June 2007 and gained considerable acclaim by appointing both minority women and Socialists to his Cabinet. During his first year in office, however, the government passed relatively little legislation to deal with the problems on which he focused during the presidential campaign. Although François Hollande's popularity declined rapidly, as the economic crisis deepened during his first year in office, he did succeed in enforcing parity between men and women in his government, and, despite pressure (mostly) from the right, passed legislation that legalized gay marriage and adoption for the first time.

A Historical Perspective

9.2 Briefly recount the history of France's 3rd, 4th, and 5th republics.

France is one of the oldest nation-states of Europe. The period of unstable revolutionary regimes that followed the storming of the Bastille in 1789 ended in the seizure of power by **Napoléon Bonaparte** a decade later. The French Revolution began with the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1791 (the First Republic), but the monarchy was overthrown the following year. Three more constitutions preceded

Napoléon's seizure of power on the eighteenth day of the revolutionary month of Brumaire (November 10, 1799) and the establishment of the First Empire three years later. The other European powers formed an alliance and forced Napoléon's surrender, as well as the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. Another revolution in 1830 drove the last Bourbon from the French throne and replaced him with Louis Philippe of the House of Orléans.

Growing dissatisfaction among the rising bourgeoisie and the urban population produced still another Paris revolution in 1848. With it came the proclamation of the Second Republic (1848–1852) and universal male suffrage. Conflict between its middle-class and lower-class components, however, kept the republican government ineffective. Out of the disorder rose another Napoléon, Louis Napoléon, nephew of the first emperor. He was crowned Napoléon III in 1852 and brought stability to France for more than a decade. However, his last years were marked by ill-conceived foreign ventures. After his defeat and capture in the Franco-Prussian War (1870), France was occupied and forced into a humiliating armistice; radicals in Paris proclaimed the Paris Commune, which held out for two months in 1871, until it was crushed by the conservative government forces. In the commune's aftermath, the struggle between republicans and monarchists led to the establishment of a conservative Third Republic in 1871. The Third Republic was the longest regime in modern France, surviving World War I and lasting until France's defeat and occupation by Nazi Germany in 1940.

World War II deeply divided France. A defeated France was divided into a zone occupied by the Germans and a "free" Vichy zone in the southern half of France, where Marshall Pétain led a government sympathetic to the Germans. From July 1940 until August 1944, the government of France was a dictatorship. Slowly, a resistance movement emerged under the leadership of General **Charles de Gaulle**. It gained increased strength and support after the Allied invasion of North Africa and the German occupation of the Vichy zone at the end of 1942. When German forces were driven from occupied Paris in 1944, de Gaulle entered the city with the hope that sweeping reforms would give France the viable democracy it had long sought. After less than two years, he resigned as head of the Provisional Government, impatient with the country's return to traditional party politics.

In fact, the **Fourth Republic** (1946–1958) disappointed many hopes. Governments fell with disturbing regularity—twenty-four governments in twelve years. At the same time, because of the narrowness of government coalitions, the same parties and the same leaders tended to participate in most of these governments. Weak leaders had great difficulty coping with the tensions created first by the Cold War, then by the French war in Indochina, and finally by the anticolonialist uprising in Algeria.

When a threat of civil war arose over Algeria in 1958, a group of leaders invited de Gaulle to return to power and help the country establish stronger and stabler institutions. De Gaulle and his supporters formulated a new constitution for the Fifth Republic, which was enacted by a referendum in 1958. De Gaulle was the last prime minister of the Fourth Republic and then the first president of the newly established Fifth Republic.

Economy and Society

9.3 Describe France's economy in comparison with those of other EU countries.

Geographically, France is at once Atlantic, Continental, and Mediterranean; hence, it occupies a unique place in Europe. In 2010, a total of 64.7 million people, about one-fifth as many as the population of the United States, lived in an area one-fifteenth the size of the United States. More than 3.6 million foreigners (noncitizens) live in France, more than half of whom come from outside of Europe, mostly from North Africa and Africa. In addition, nearly 2 million French citizens are foreign born. Thus, almost 10 percent of the French population is foreign born, slightly less than the percentage of foreign-born people in the United States.

Urbanization has come slowly, but France is now highly urbanized. In 1936, only sixteen French cities had a population of more than 100,000; in 2013, there are thirty-nine. More than one-quarter of the urban population (and almost 20 percent of the total population) lives in the metropolitan region of Paris. This concentration of people creates staggering problems. In a country with centuries-old traditions of administrative, economic, and cultural centralization, it has produced a dramatic gap in human and material resources between Paris and the rest of the country.

The Paris region supports a per capita income almost 50 percent higher and unemployment substantially lower than the national average. The Paris region also has the highest concentration of foreigners in the country (twice the national percentage), and there are deep divisions between the wealthier and the poorer towns in the region.

Recent French economic development has compared reasonably well with that of other advanced industrial countries. In per capita GDP (2011), France ranks among the wealthiest nations of the world, behind the Scandinavian countries, the United States, Germany, and Britain; it is ahead of Japan, Italy, and the average for the EU (see Chapter 1). During the period from 1996 to 2006, the French economy grew at about the EU average, but with an inflation rate of a little more than half the European average. After 2008, however, the economy remained stagnant through the beginning of 2013, but avoided some of the worst predictions of decline. However, with the crisis of the euro that emerged in 2010, France's economic fate was tied to that of the rest of Europe, and it now faces its greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Unemployment remains relatively high compared with the averages of the EU and the United States. In 2008, with an unemployment rate of 7.8 percent, France was already experiencing some of the same problems as some of the poorer countries of Europe: long-term youth unemployment, homelessness, and a drain on social services. All of these problems have grown worse since then, as unemployment moved rapidly higher to postwar record highs approaching 11 percent in 2013.

The labor force has changed drastically since the end of World War II, making France similar to other industrialized countries. During the 1990s, the labor force grew by more than 1.6 million, continuing a growth trend that was greater than in most European countries. Most of these new workers were young people, and an increasing proportion consisted of women. The size of the French workforce has grown slowly since 2000, but is projected to decline after 2013 as the population ages.

In 1954, women made up 35 percent of the labor force; today, they make up 47 percent (about two-thirds of French women of working age). For over a century, the proportion of employed women—mostly in agriculture, artisan shops, and factories—was higher in France than in most European countries.

Today, most women work in offices in the service sector of the economy. Overall, employment in the service sector has risen from 33 percent in 1938 to 77 percent today, above the average for the EU.

By comparison with other countries in the EU, the agricultural sector of France is more important economically. In spite of the sharp decline in the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture (it is now 2.6 percent), agricultural production increased massively during the past quarter century. France is the top farm producer and has more cultivated acreage than any other country in the EU. France is also the top recipient of subsidies from the EU Common Agriculture Policy (CAP).

Since 1945, there have been serious efforts to modernize agriculture, such as farm cooperatives, the consolidation of marginal farms, and improvements in technical education. Particularly after the development of the CAP in the European Community between 1962 and 1968, consolidation of farmland proceeded rapidly. By 2013, the average French farm was larger than that of any country in Europe except Britain, Denmark, and Luxembourg.

French business is both highly dispersed and highly concentrated. Even after three decades of structural reorganization of business, almost two-thirds of the 3.5 million industrial and commercial enterprises in France belong to individuals. As in other advanced industrial societies, this proportion has been slowly increasing. From the perspective of production, some of the most advanced French industries are highly concentrated. The few firms at the top account for most of the employment and business sales. Even in some of the older sectors (such as automobile manufacture, ship construction, and rubber), half or more of the employment and sales are concentrated in the top four firms.

The organization of industry and commerce has changed significantly since the 1990s. Privatization, initiated in the 1980s and mandated by the EU in the 1990s, has reduced the number of public enterprises by 75 percent and the number of those working in public enterprises by 67 percent. Despite a continuing process of privatization, relations between industry and the state remain close. In addition, more than 20 percent of the civilian labor force works in the civil service, which has grown about 10 percent during the past fifteen years, and more than a million people work for the Ministry of Education as of 2012, almost 80 percent of them as teachers.

The Constitutional Tradition

9.4 Discuss the governing principles of the French political system.

The **Constitution of 1958** is the sixteenth since the fall of the Bastille in 1789. Past republican regimes, known less for their achievements than for their instability, were parliamentary constitutional systems (see Chapter 6), based on the principle that Parliament could overturn a government that lacked a parliamentary majority. Such an arrangement works best when there are relatively few political parties, and when the institutional arrangements are not deeply challenged by important political parties and their leaders. These assumptions did not apply to the first four republics, and, at least in the early years, the Fifth Republic seemed to be destined to suffer a similar fate.

Nevertheless, direct popular election of the president has greatly augmented the legitimacy and political authority of the office. It has also had an impact on the party system, as the contest for the presidency has dominated party strategies. When **François Mitterrand** won the presidential election of 1981, as the leader of a coalition of the left that included the French Communist Party, and declared his acceptance of the institutional arrangements of the Fifth Republic, the fate of the Republic appeared to be secured (see Figure 9.1).

Beyond the Constitution itself, there are several principles that have become so widely accepted that they can be thought of as constitutional principles. The first of these is that France is a unitary state: a “one and indivisible” French Republic.² A second principle is that France is a secular republic, committed to equality, with no special recognition of any group before the law. These principles have special meaning for democracy in France, since they were regularly violated by the multitude of nondemocratic systems in France after 1789.

Since the First Republic in the eighteenth century, when the Jacobins controlled the revolutionary National Assembly, the French state has been characterized by a high degree of centralized political and administrative authority. Although there have always been forces that have advocated *decentralization* of political authority, as well as deconcentration of administrative authority, the French unitary state remained (formally) unitary. Essentially, this meant

PRIME MINISTER	YEAR	PRESIDENT
Michel Debré	1958	Charles de Gaulle
Georges Pompidou	1962	Georges Pompidou
Maurice Couve de Murville	1968	
Jacques Chaban-Delmas	1969	
Pierre Messmer	1972	Valéry Giscard d'Estaing
Jacques Chirac	1974	
Raymond Barre	1976	
Pierre Mauroy	1981	François Mitterrand
Laurent Fabius	1984	
Jacques Chirac	1986	
Michel Rocard	1988	
Edith Cresson	1991	Jacques Chirac
Pierre Bérégovoy	1992	
Edouard Balladur	1993	
Alain Juppé	1995	
Lionel Jospin	1997	Nicolas Sarkozy
Jean-Pierre Raffarin	2002	
Dominique de Villepin	2005	
François Fillon	2007	François Hollande
Jean-Marc Ayrault	2012	

FIGURE 9.1
The French Executive
 French presidents and prime ministers since 1958.

that subnational territorial units (communes, departments, and regions) had little formal decision-making autonomy. They were dominated by political

and administrative decisions made in Paris. Both state action and territorial organization in France depended on a well-structured administration, which kept the machinery of the state functioning during long periods of political instability and unrest. The reinforcement of departmental governments and the establishment of elected regional governments between 1982 and 1986 decentralized some decision-making power. Nevertheless, these governments do not have any substantial tax power, and have remained overwhelmingly dependent on centralized financing for almost all their projects.

Secularism is a separation of church and state that is quite different from that in the United States. It derives from the militant opposition to the established power of the Catholic Church both before the Revolution and in nondemocratic regimes. Thus, it has a militant and ideological aspect that derives from the deep historical conflicts of the last two centuries, which has not, however, prevented the granting of state subsidies to religious schools in exchange for state controls over many aspects of their curriculum.

Law and tradition in France are also biased against the recognition of special rights and benefits for religious, ethnic, and national groups. In theory, this means that there is no recognition of “minorities” or multicultural rights (as in Britain or the United States). However, in practice, programs favoring special school funding and “positive discrimination” for university entry for students from poorer geographic areas have existed for many years.

Political Culture

9.5 Describe the cultural characteristics that contribute to the French style of government.

Themes of Political Culture

There are three ways in which we can understand political culture in France: History links present values to those of the past, abstraction and symbolism identify a way of thinking about politics, and distrust of government represents a dominant value that crosses class and generational lines.

The Burden of History Historical thinking can prove to be both a bond and—as the U.S. Civil War demonstrates—a hindrance to consensus. The French are so fascinated by their own history that feuds of the past are



The French National Assembly
 The view from the left.

constantly superimposed on the conflicts of the present. This passionate use of historical memories—from the meaning of the French Revolution to the divisions between Vichy collaboration and the Resistance during the Second World War—complicates political decision making. In de Gaulle’s words, France is “weighed down by history.”

Abstraction and Symbolism In the Age of Enlightenment, the monarchy left the educated classes free to voice their views on many topics, provided the discussion remained general and abstract. The urge to discuss a wide range of problems, even trivial ones, in broad philosophical terms has hardly diminished. The exaltation of the abstract is reflected in the significance attributed to symbols and rituals. Rural communities that fought on opposite sides in the French Revolution still pay homage to different heroes two centuries later.³ Street demonstrations of the left and the right take place at different historical corners in Paris—the left in the Place de la Bastille, the right at

the statue of Joan of Arc. This tradition helps explain why a nation united by almost universal admiration for a common historical experience holds to conflicting interpretations of its meaning.

Distrust of Government and Politics The French have long shared the widespread ambivalence of modern times that combines distrust of government with high expectations for it. The French citizens’ simultaneous distrust of authority and craving for it feed on both individualism and a passion for equality. This attitude produces self-reliant individuals convinced that they are responsible to themselves, and perhaps to their families, for what they are and might become. The outside world—the “they” who operate beyond the circle of the family, the family firm, and the village—creates obstacles in life. Most of the time, however, “they” are identified with the government and the state.

Memories reaching back to the eighteenth century justify a state of mind that is potentially, if seldom overtly, insubordinate. A strong government is

considered reactionary by nature, even if it “pretends” to be progressive. When citizens participate in public life, they most often hope to constrain government authority rather than encourage change, even when change is overdue. At times, this individualism is tainted with anarchism. Yet the French also accommodate themselves rather easily to bureaucratic rule. Since administrative rulings supposedly treat all situations with the same yardstick, they satisfy the sharp sense of equality possessed by a people who feel forever shortchanged by the government and by the privileges those in power bestow on others.

Although the Revolution of 1789 did not break with the past as completely as is commonly believed, it conditioned the general outlook on crisis and compromise, and on continuity and change. Sudden change, rather than gradual mutation, and dramatic conflicts that are couched in the language of mutually exclusive, radical ideologies are the experiences that excite the French at historical moments. The French are accustomed to thinking that no thorough change can ever occur except by a major upheaval (although this is not always true). Since the great Revolution, every French

adult has experienced occasions of political excitement followed by disappointment. This process has sometimes led to moral exhaustion and widespread skepticism about any possibility of change.

Whether they originated within the country or were brought about by international conflict, most of France’s political crises have produced a constitutional crisis. Each time, the triumphant forces have codified their norms and philosophy, usually in a comprehensive document. This explains why constitutions have never played the role of fundamental charters. Prior to the Fifth Republic, their norms were satisfactory to only one segment of the polity and hotly contested by others.

The most important change since 1958 is the growing public acceptance of the Fifth Republic’s constitutional institutions. And despite growing disillusionment with governments and politicians, this acceptance has grown stronger. Moreover, there is little significant variation in trust in institutions among voters by their party identity. French people invariably give the highest confidence ratings to institutions closest to them—that is, to local officials rather than to political parties or national representatives (see Figure 9.2). In recent years,

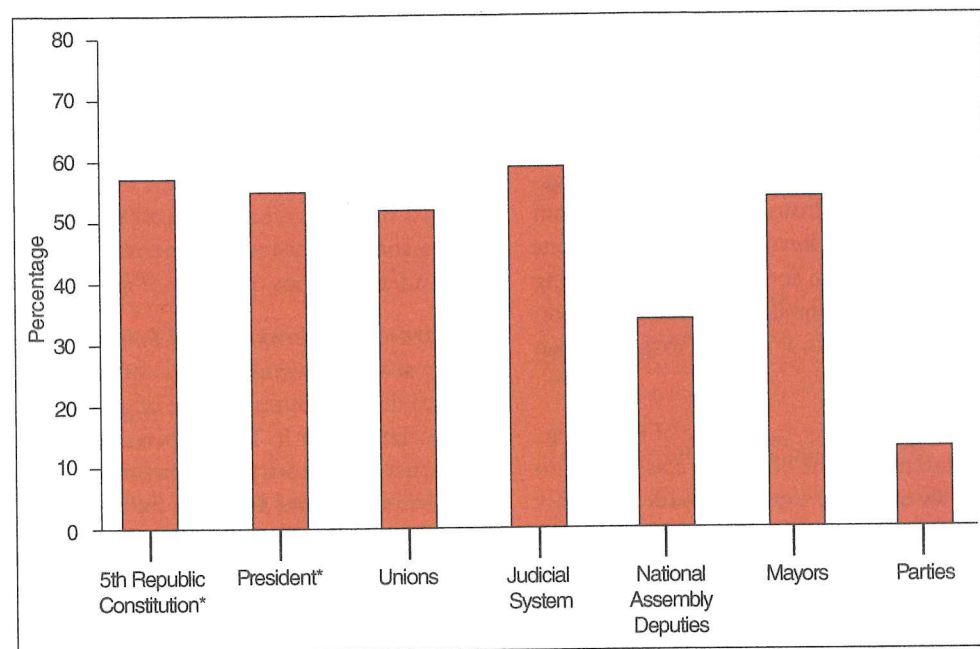


FIGURE 9.2
Feelings of Confidence in Various Political Institutions

People have more confidence in their local mayor than in their National Assembly deputies or political parties.

Sources: *For the first two columns (5th Republic Constitution and President) data are from Sofres, *l'Etat de l'opinion 2001* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 2001), p. 81; For the remaining five columns, the data are from Ronald Hatto, Anne Muxel and Odette Tomescu, Survey for the CEVPOF and the Institut de recherche de l'école militaire (Irsem), released on November 7, 2011.

distrust of government officials has been high, but expectations of government remain high as well.

Religious and Antireligious Traditions

France is at once a Catholic country—65 percent of the French population identified themselves as Catholic in 2012 (down from 87 percent in 1974)—and a country that the Church itself considers “de-Christianized.” Only 5 percent of the population attended church regularly in 2012 (down from 21 percent in 1974), and 87 percent either never go to church or go only occasionally for ceremonies such as baptism or marriage.⁴

Until well into the twentieth century, the mutual hostility between the religious and the secular was one of the main features of the political culture. Since the Revolution, it has divided society and political life at all levels. Even now, there are important differences between the political behavior of practicing Catholics and that of nonbelievers.

French Catholics historically viewed the Revolution of 1789 as the work of satanic men. Conversely, enemies of the Church became militant in their opposition to Catholic forms and symbols. This division continued through the nineteenth century. Differences between the political subcultures of Catholicism and anticlericalism deepened further with the creation of the Third Republic, when militant anticlericalism took firm control of the Republic. Parliament rescinded the centuries-old compact with the Vatican, expelled most Catholic orders, and severed all ties between church and state so that (in a phrase often used at the time) “the moral unity of the country could be reestablished.” The Pope matched the militancy of the Republic’s regime by excommunicating every deputy (member of Parliament) who voted for the separation of church and state laws in 1905. As in other European Catholic countries, the difference between the political right and left was largely determined by attitudes toward the Catholic Church.

The gap between Catholics and agnostics narrowed somewhat during the interwar period and after they found themselves working side by side in the resistance movement during World War II. Religious practice has been declining in France and many other industrialized countries since the 1950s. Less than 5 percent of the population regularly attends church (once a week); farmers are the most observant group and blue-collar workers the least. In addition to secularization trends, important changes have occurred

within the Catholic subculture. Today, the vast majority of self-identified Catholics reject some of the most important teachings of the Church, including its positions on abortion, premarital sex, and marriage of priests. Only 16 percent of identified Catholics perceive the role of the Church as important in political life, and Catholicism no longer functions as a well-integrated community with a common view of the world and common social values. During the two decades from 1990 to 2010, the number of parish priests declined by 50 percent, and even ceremonial events that are more frequently practiced (baptisms, confirmations, and church marriages) have continued to decline; there are now half as many Catholic marriages as in 1990. Nevertheless, among the smaller (and aging) group of practicing Catholics, there has been a tendency to move to the political, even radical, right since 2002. The opposition in the streets to gay marriage legislation passed in 2013 was dominated by groups of traditional Catholics.

Most private schools in France are nominally Catholic parochial schools, which the state subsidizes. The status of these schools (in a country in which state support for Catholic schools coexists with the separation of church and state) has never been fully settled. In 2012, 10 percent of primary schools and 31 percent of secondary schools were private, a decline compared with a decade earlier.

French Jews (numbering about 600,000, or less than 1 percent of the population) are generally well integrated into French society, and it is not possible to speak of a Jewish vote. One study demonstrates that, like other French voters, Jews tend to vote left or right according to degree of religious practice. Anti-Semitic attitudes and behavior are not widespread in France, although there has been an increase during the past decade. Attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions—mostly by young North African men in mixed areas of large cities—increased dramatically in parallel with the emergence of the second intifada in the Middle East (2000–2002), then declined, but have increased once again as the economy has grown worse. These incidents are also related to emerging patterns of urban ethnic conflict in France.

Protestants (1.7 percent of the population and growing) have lived somewhat apart. There are heavy concentrations in Alsace, Paris, and some regions of central and southeastern France. About two-thirds of Protestants belong to the upper bourgeoisie. Protestants hold a large proportion of high public positions.

Until recently, they usually voted more leftist than others in their socioeconomic position or region. Although many Protestants are prominent in the Socialist Party, their electoral behavior, like their activities in cultural and economic associations, is determined by factors other than religion.

Islam is now France's second religion. There are 4 million to 4.5 million people of Islamic origin in France, two-thirds of whom are immigrants or whose descendants are from Islamic countries. The emergence of Islamic institutions in France is part of a larger phenomenon of integrating **new immigrants**. In the last decade, the affirmation of religious identification coincided with (and to some extent was a part of) the social and political mobilization of immigrants from Islamic countries.

In 2002, the government created the French Council of the Muslim Religion (CFCM) to represent Islam with public authorities (similar institutions exist for Jews and Catholics). A survey in 2005 notes that regular attendance of services at mosques is just above 20 percent—somewhat higher than the average for the general population. More than 70 percent of those who identify as **Muslims** say that they attend services only occasionally.

The growth of Muslim interests has challenged the traditional French view of the separation of church and state. Unlike Catholics and Jews, who maintain their own schools, or Protestants, who have supported the principle of secular state schools, some Muslim groups insist on the right both to attend state schools and to follow practices that education authorities consider contrary to the French tradition of secularism. Small numbers of Muslims have challenged dress codes, school curriculums, and school requirements and have more generally questioned stronger notions of *laïcité* (antireligious atheism).

In response to this challenge, the French Parliament passed legislation in 2004 that banned the wearing of “ostentatious” religious symbols in primary and secondary schools. Although the language is neutral about religion, the law is widely seen as an attempt to prevent the wearing of Islamic head scarves. The new law was strongly supported by the French public, with surprisingly strong support among Muslims. In 2011, at the end of a long and confusing public debate about French identity in the context of a regional election campaign, the government passed a ban on public wearing of any garment that was “designed to hide the

face,” a reference to the burqa, worn by few Muslims in France.

In this context, it is important to point out that surveys indicate that French Muslims are better integrated than are those in other European countries (Britain and Germany, for example).⁵ They identify most strongly as French, have the strongest commitment to “adopt national customs” rather than remaining distinct (78 percent), and have the most favorable view of their fellow citizens who are Christian or Jewish.

Class and Status

Feelings about class differences shape a society's authority pattern and the style in which authority is exercised. The French, like the English, are conscious of living in a society divided into classes. But since equality is valued more highly in France than in England, deference toward the upper classes is far less developed, and resentful antagonism is widespread.⁶

The number of citizens who are conscious of belonging to a social class is relatively high in France. About two-thirds of those surveyed in 2010 claimed to belong to a social class, higher than in 1966. However, specific class identity had changed. Most respondents in 1966 claimed working-class identity, while most in 2010 claimed to be middle class. Class identity is a poor predictor of political patterns in France. Among workers in 2010, 45 percent (far higher than any other group) identified with neither the left nor the right; young workers were the most likely to have moved away from identifying with the left.

Economic and social transformations have not eradicated industrial and social conflict. Indeed, periodic strike movements intensify class feelings and commitments to act. However, as the number of immigrant workers among the least qualified workers has grown, traditional class differences are crosscut by a growing sense of racial and ethnic differences.

Political Socialization

9.6 Identify the agents of political socialization in France and describe the ways they have changed in recent years.

French political attitudes have been shaped through experience with the political system as well as through some key institutions and agents. Some agents, such

system itself. During the Fifth Republic, the party remained, until 1978, electorally dominant on the left, although it trailed the Gaullists on the right. In addition to its successes in national elections, the party commanded significant strength at the local level until the early 1980s.

The seemingly impressive edifice of the PCF and of its numerous organizations of sympathizers was badly shaken, first by the rejuvenation of the PS under Mitterrand's leadership in the 1970s and then by the collapse of international communism and the Soviet Union in the 1980s. The party's defeats in 1981 were only the beginning of a tailspin of electoral decline.²⁵ By 2007, its presidential candidate attracted a mere 2 percent of the vote and just 2 percent of the working-class vote. By 2012, the party was too weak to run its own candidate for president, and instead joined with a group of dissident socialists, who had left the PS in 2008 to form the Parti de Gauche (PG, the Left Party), in the Left Front. The Left Front then supported the PG leader, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, as its presidential candidate. Mélenchon did relatively well in the first round; he placed fourth, behind Marine Le Pen, with 11 percent of the vote.

Thus, to win elections, the Communists have grown increasingly dependent on alliances with other small groups of the left (Front de gauche), continued (and often difficult) cooperation with the Socialists, and the personal popularity of some of the party's long-established mayors. In 2010, disappointed by the evolution of the party, some 200 members of the "renewal" group within the party resigned en masse, which deprived the party of some of its most effective leaders, including numerous mayors and members of Parliament. In 2012, about half of the members of the Left Front parliamentary group were Communists, but the balance of power was clearly with the dissident Socialists.

The marginalization of the PCF has had an important impact on the French party system. It has healed the division that had enfeebled the left since the split of the Socialist Party in 1920, but a price has been paid—weakened political representation of the French working class. Although the fortunes of the PCF have fallen in inverse relation to the PS's electoral strength, the proportion of workers actually voting for both parties combined has declined by 30 percent since the 1970s, and more workers now vote for the right than for the left. Perhaps most

important, it appears that many young workers, who previously would have been mobilized by Communist militants, are now being mobilized to vote for the FN.

Patterns of Voting

9.10 Compare and contrast the French system of elections with that of the United States.

Although France is a unitary state, elections are held with considerable frequency at every territorial level. Councilors are elected for each of the more than 36,000 **communes** in France, for each of the 101 departments (counties), and for each of the twenty-six regions. Deputies to the National Assembly are elected at least once every five years, and the president of the Republic is elected (or reelected) every five years (since 2002; every seven years before that). In addition, France elects representatives to the European Parliament every five years.

France was the first European country to enfranchise a mass electorate, and France was also the first European country to demonstrate that a mass electorate does not preclude the possibility of authoritarian government. The electoral law of 1848 enfranchised all male citizens over age twenty-one. However, within five years, this same mass electorate had ratified Louis Napoléon's *coup d'état* and his establishment of the Second Empire. Rather than restricting the electorate, Napoléon perfected modern techniques for manipulating it by gerrymandering districts, skillfully using public works as patronage for official candidates, and exerting pressure through the administrative hierarchy.

From the Second Empire to the end of World War II, the size of the electorate remained more or less stable. It suddenly more than doubled when women aged twenty-one and older were granted the vote in 1944. After the voting age was lowered to eighteen in 1974, 2.5 million voters were added to the rolls. By 2012, there were more than 46 million people over the age of 18 who were registered to vote in France.

Electoral Participation and Abstention

Voting participation in elections of the Fifth Republic has undergone a significant change and fluctuates far more than during previous republics. Abstention tends to be highest in referendums and European



Protest Politics
A demonstration in Paris.

elections and lowest in presidential contests, with other elections falling somewhere in between (see again Table 9.2). In the presidential election of 2007, a trend toward growing abstention was broken when 84 percent of registered voters voted in the first round, but the percentage voting declined once again in 2012 to 80 percent.²⁶ The elections for the European Parliament always attract relatively few voters; in 2009, more than 59 percent of the registered voters stayed home (slightly more than in 2004). For referendums, a new record was set in 2000: Almost 70 percent of the registered voters chose not to vote on a (successful) referendum to reduce the presidential term from seven to five years (after the elections of 2002).

In the two rounds of the legislative elections in 2012, more than 43 percent of registered voters abstained, a record for the Fifth Republic. Rising abstention seems linked to a larger phenomenon of change in the party system. Since the late 1970s, voters' confidence in all parties has declined, and the highest abstention rates are usually among those voters who express no preference between parties of the right and left. Nevertheless, in contrast with the United States, among the 90 percent of the electorate that is

registered to vote, individual abstention appears to be cyclical and there are few permanent abstainers.²⁷ In this sense, it is possible to see abstention in an election as a political choice (42 percent of abstainers in 2002 said that they abstained because they had no confidence in politicians).²⁸ Nevertheless, as in other countries, the least educated, the lowest income groups, and the youngest and oldest groups vote less frequently.

Voting in Parliamentary Elections

France has experimented with a great number of electoral systems and devices without obtaining more satisfactory results in terms of government coherence. The stability of the Fifth Republic cannot be attributed to the method of electing National Assembly deputies, because the system is essentially the same one used during the most troubled years of the Third Republic.

As in the United States, electoral districts (577) are represented by a single member (deputy) who is selected through two rounds of elections. On the first election day, candidates who obtain a majority of all votes cast are elected to Parliament. This is a relatively

rare occurrence (about 6 percent in 2012) because of the abundance of candidates. Candidates who obtain support of less than 12.5 percent of the registered voters are dropped from the "second round" a week later. Other candidates voluntarily withdraw in favor of a better-placed candidate close to their party on the political spectrum. For instance, pre-election agreements between Communists and Socialists (and, more recently, the Greens) usually lead to the withdrawal of the weaker candidate(s) after the first round. Similar arrangements have existed between the UMP and other parties of the center-right. As a result, generally three (or at most four) candidates face each other in the second round, in which a plurality of votes ensures election.

This means that the first round is similar to American primary elections except that, in the French case, the primary is among candidates of parties allied in coalitions of the left or center-right. There is considerable pressure on political parties to develop electoral alliances, since those that do not are at a strong disadvantage in terms of representation.

The FN has been more or less isolated from coalition arrangements with the parties of the center-right in national elections (though less so at the subnational level). Consequently, in 2012, with electoral support of 4 percent in the second round, two of the FN candidates were elected. In comparison, the Left Front benefited from an electoral agreement with the Socialists: With just over 1 percent of the vote, ten of their candidates were elected. Not surprisingly, the leading party (or coalition of parties) generally ends up with a considerably larger number of seats than is justified by its share in the popular vote.

Voting in Referendums

Between 1958 and 1969, the French electorate voted five times on **referendums** (see Table 9.3). In 1958, a vote against the new constitution might have involved the country in a civil war, which it had narrowly escaped a few months earlier. The two referendums that followed endorsed the peace settlement in the Algerian War. In 1962, hardly four years after he had enacted by referendum his "own" constitution, General de Gaulle asked the electorate to endorse a constitutional amendment of great significance: to elect the president of the Republic by direct popular suffrage. Favorable attitudes toward the referendum

and the popular election of the president, however, did not prevent the electorate from voting down another proposal submitted by de Gaulle in 1969, thereby provoking his resignation.

President Georges Pompidou called a referendum in 1972 for the admission of Britain to the Common Market. The first referendum during the Mitterrand period, in 1988, dealt with approval for an accord between warring parties on the future of New Caledonia; the referendum was a condition of the agreement. Sixty-three percent of the voters stayed home, but the accord was approved. The electorate was far more mobilized when the question of ratifying the **Maastricht Treaty** on the EU was submitted to referendum in 1992. The results were far more significant for the future of French political life. The 2000 referendum—on the reduction of the presidential term from seven to five years—was overwhelmingly approved (by 73 percent of those who voted), but the referendum was most notable for the record rate of abstention—almost 70 percent.

In contrast, the most recent referendum, in 2005 on a European constitutional treaty, attracted far more voter interest. As in a similar referendum in 1992 on the Maastricht Treaty, the campaign deeply divided both the right and the left (although the largest parties of both supported the "yes" vote), and abstention was relatively low. In contrast with 1992, however, the government decisively lost its gamble, and the majority voted no. When the Netherlands also rejected the document a few days later, the treaty was effectively killed.

Public opinion polls indicate that the electorate is positive toward the referendum as a form of public participation. It ranked just behind the popularly elected presidency and the Constitutional Council among the most highly approved institutional innovations of the Fifth Republic. In one of its first moves, the new government under President Jacques Chirac in 1995 passed a constitutional amendment that expanded the use of the referendum in the areas of social and economic policy.

Voting in Presidential Elections

Presidential elections rank as the most important elections for French voters. After the presidential elections of 1965, it was evident that French voters received great satisfaction from knowing that, unlike in past

TABLE 9.3
French Presidential Elections (Second Round) and Referendums

Date	Abstained (%)	Voted for: Winner (%)	Winning Candidate	Losing Candidate
Presidential Elections				
12/19/65	15.4	54.5	de Gaulle	Mitterrand
6/15/69	30.9	57.5	Pompidou	Poher
5/19/74	12.1	50.7	Giscard d'Estaing	Mitterrand
5/10/81	13.6	52.2	Mitterrand	Giscard d'Estaing
5/8/88	15.9	54.0	Mitterrand	Chirac
5/7/95	20.1	52.6	Chirac	Jospin
6/5/02	20.3	82.2	Chirac	Le Pen
5/10/07	16.0	53.1	Sarkozy	Royal
5/6/12	19.6	51.6	Hollande	Sarkozy
	Abstained (%)	% Voted Yes	Outcome	
Referendums				
9/28/58	15.1	79.2	Constitution passed	
1/8/61	23.5	75.3	Algeria settlement	
4/8/62	24.4	90.7	Algeria settlement	
10/28/62	22.7	61.7	Direct election of president	
4/18/69	19.6	46.7	Defeat reform package	
4/23/72	39.5	67.7	Britain joins Common Market	
11/6/88	63.0	80.0	New Caledonia agreement	
9/20/92	28.9	50.8	Maastricht Treaty	
9/24/00	69.7	73.2	Reduction of presidential term	
5/29/05	30.7	45.3	Defeat EU Constitution	

Source: Official results from the Ministry of the Interior for each election and referendum, www.interieur.gouv.fr/misill/sections/a_votre_service/elections/resultats/accueil-resultats/view.

parliamentary elections, national and not parochial alignments were at stake and that they could use their vote to focus on national issues. The traditional attitude, that the only useful vote was against the government, no longer made sense when people knew that the task was to elect an executive endowed with strong powers. Accordingly, turnout in presidential elections, with one exception, has been the highest of all elections (80 percent in 2012).

The nomination procedures for presidential candidates make it very easy to put a candidate on the first ballot, far easier than in presidential primaries in the United States. So far, however, no presidential candidate, not even de Gaulle in 1965, has obtained the absolute majority needed to ensure election on the first ballot. In runoffs, held two weeks after the

first ballot, only the two most successful candidates face each other. All serious candidates are backed by a party or a coalition of parties, but ten candidates were on the ballot in 2012.

Because the formal campaigns are short and concentrated, radio, television, and newspapers grant candidates and commentators considerable time and space. The televised duels between the presidential candidates in the last five elections—patterned after debates between presidential candidates in the United States, but longer and of far higher quality—were viewed by at least half of the population.

Informal campaigns, however, are long and arduous. The fixed term of the French presidency means that, unless the president dies or resigns, there are no snap elections for the chief executive. As a result, the

informal campaign is quite intense years before the election. In many ways, the presidential campaign of 2012 began soon after the elections of 2007, intensified by a closely contested open primary in the Socialist Party in 2011. Although the 2007 presidential election deeply divided all of the major parties, the process of coalition building around presidential elections has probably been the key element in political party consolidation and in the development of party coalitions since 1968. The prize of the presidency is so significant that it has preoccupied the parties of both the right and the left. It influences their organization, their tactics, and their relations with one another.

Just as in the United States, coalitions that elect a president are different from those that secure a legislative majority for a government. This means that any candidate for the presidency who owes his nomination to his position as party leader must appeal to an audience broader than a single party. Once elected, the candidate seeks to establish political distance from his party origins. François Mitterrand was the first president in the history of the Fifth Republic to have been elected twice in popular elections. Jacques Chirac accomplished this same achievement, but served two years less because of the reduction in the length of the presidential term.

Policy Processes

9.11 Which institutions in France have the capacity to check the actions of a government?

The Executive

The French Constitution has a two-headed executive. As in other parliamentary regimes, the prime minister presides over the government. But unlike in other parliamentary regimes, the president is far from being a figurehead. A dominant role for the president was ensured by a constitutional amendment approved by referendum in 1962, which provided for the popular election of the president for a renewable term of seven years. In September 2000, the presidential term was reduced to five years—again by constitutional amendment—to coincide with the normal five-year legislative term. France is one of six countries in Western Europe to select its president by direct popular vote.

Under the Constitution, the president is given limited but important powers. He can appeal to the

people in two ways. With the agreement of the government or Parliament, he can submit certain important legislation to the electorate as a referendum. In addition, after consulting with the prime minister and the parliamentary leaders, he can dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. In case of grave threat “to the institutions of the Republic,” the president also has the option of invoking emergency powers. All of these powers have been used sparingly. Emergency powers have been used only once, for example, and dissolution was generally used by newly elected presidents, when the presidential and legislative terms were different. (Figure 9.4)

The exercise of presidential powers in all their fullness was made possible, however, not so much by the constitutional text as by a political fact: Between 1958 and 1981, the president and the prime minister derived their legitimacy from the same Gaullist majority in the electorate—the president by direct popular elections, the prime minister by the majority support in the National Assembly. In 1981, the electorate shifted its allegiance from the right to the left, yet for the ensuing five years, the president and Parliament were still on the same side of the political divide.

The long years of political affinity between the holders of the two offices solidified and amplified presidential powers and shaped constitutional practices in ways that appear to have a lasting impact. From the very beginning of the Fifth Republic, the president not only *formally appointed* to Parliament the prime minister proposed to him (as the presidents of the previous republics had done, and as the Queen of England does), but also *chose* the prime minister and the other **Cabinet** ministers. In some cases, the president also dismissed a prime minister who clearly enjoyed the confidence of a majority in Parliament.

Hence, the sometimes frequent reshuffling of Cabinet posts and personnel in the Fifth Republic is different from similar happenings in the Third and Fourth Republics. In those systems, the changes occurred in response to shifts in parliamentary support and, frequently, in order to forestall, at least for a short time, the government's fall from power. In the present system, the president or the prime minister—depending on the circumstances—may decide to appoint, move, or dismiss a Cabinet officer on the basis of his or her own appreciation of the member's worth (or lack of it). This does not mean that considerations of the executive are merely technical. They may be

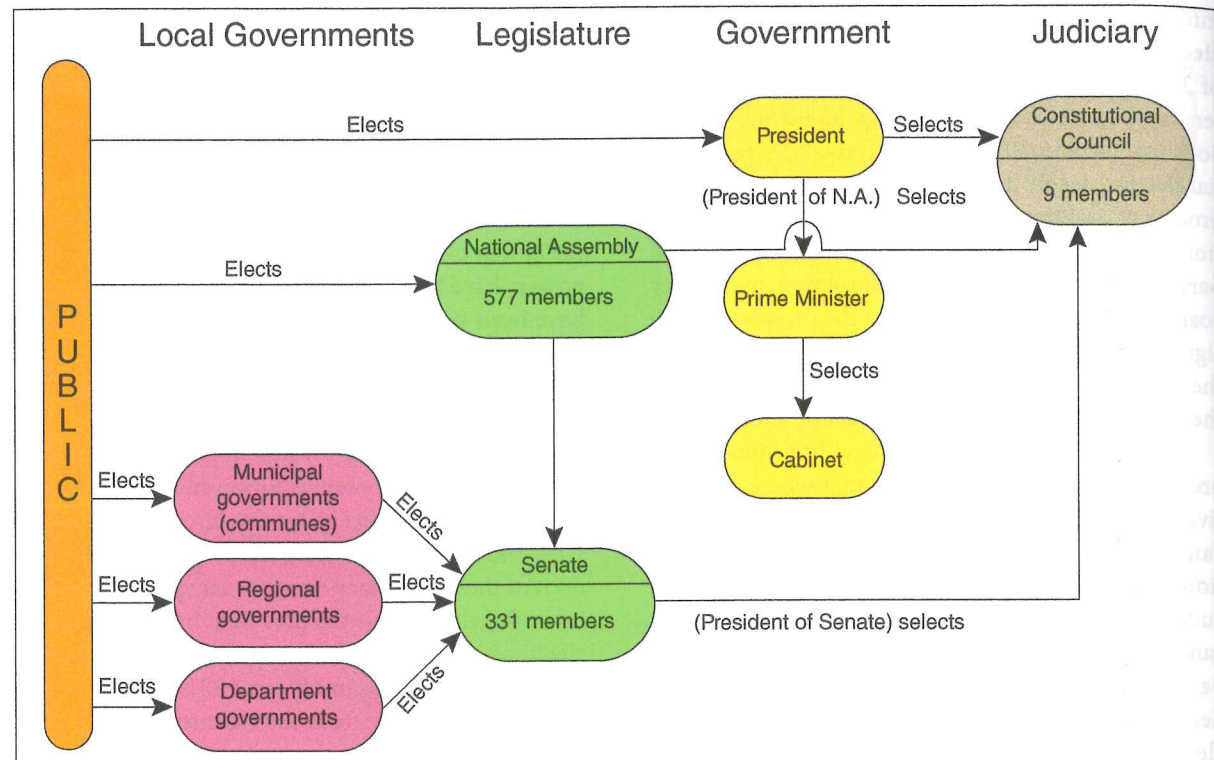


FIGURE 9.4
Structure of the French Government
The Process of Election and Selection.

highly political, but they are exclusively those of the executive.

Since all powers proceeded from the president, the government headed by the prime minister became essentially an administrative body, until 1986, despite constitutional stipulations to the contrary. The prime minister's chief function was to provide whatever direction or resources were needed to implement the policies conceived by the president. The primary task of the government was to develop legislative proposals and present an executive budget. In many respects, the government's position resembled that of the Cabinet in a presidential regime such as the United States, rather than that of a government in a parliamentary system such as Britain and the earlier French republics (see Figure 9.4).

Regardless of the political circumstances, weekly meetings of the Cabinet are chaired by the president and are officially called the **Council of Ministers**. They are not generally a forum for deliberation and confrontation. Although Cabinet decisions and decrees

officially emanate from the council, real decisions are in fact made elsewhere.

The **prime minister** is more than first among equals in relation to Cabinet colleagues (see again Figure 9.1). Among the prime minister's many functions is the harnessing of a parliamentary majority for presidential policies, since, according to the Constitution, the government must resign when a majority in Parliament adopts a motion of censure or rejects the government program. This provision distinguishes France from a truly presidential regime, such as the United States or Mexico.

The relationship between the president and the prime minister, however, has operated quite differently during the periods of so-called "cohabitation." From 1986 to 1988 and from 1993 to 1995, a conservative majority controlled Parliament, and the president was a Socialist. From 1997 to 2002, the left held a parliamentary majority, and the president was from a conservative party. Without claiming any domain exclusively as his own, the president (Mitterrand in

the first two cases and Chirac from 1997 to 2002) continued to occupy the foreground in foreign and military affairs, in accordance with his interpretation of his mandate under the Constitution. The prime minister became the effective leader of the executive and pursued government objectives, but avoided interfering with presidential prerogatives.²⁹

In part because of the experiences of cohabitation, the president's role is now less imposing than it was before 1986. Even during the interlude of Socialist government between 1988 and 1993, the Socialist prime minister was largely responsible for the main options for government action, with the president setting the limits and the tone. The relationship between President Sarkozy and his prime minister, **François Fillon**, indicated a reassertion of presidential prerogatives, however, and this pattern has continued under President Hollande and Prime Minister **Jean-Marc Ayrault**.

Thus, after the 1990s, the relationship between the president and the prime minister was more complicated than during the earlier period of the Fifth Republic and varied according to the political circumstances in which each had assumed office. The prime minister has a parallel network for developing and implementing policy decisions. The most important method is the so-called *interministerial meetings*, regular gatherings of high civil servants attached to various ministries. The frequency of these sessions, chaired by a member of the prime minister's personal staff, reflects the growing centralization of administrative and decision-making authority within the office of the prime minister and the growing importance of the prime minister's policy network in everyday policymaking within the executive.

Since the early days of the de Gaulle administration, the office of the chief of state has been organized to maximize the ability of the president to initiate, elaborate, and frequently execute policy. In terms of function, the staff at the Elysée Palace (the French White House), composed of a general secretariat and the presidential staff, is somewhat similar to the Executive Office staff of the U.S. president. Yet it is much smaller, comprising only forty to fifty people, with an additional support staff of several hundred people.

As the president's eyes and ears, his staff members are indispensable for the exercise of presidential powers. They are in constant contact not only with the prime minister's collaborators but also directly with

individual ministries. Through these contacts, the president can initiate, impede, interfere, and attempt to assure himself that presidential policies are followed.

Parliament

Parliament is composed of two houses: the National Assembly and the Senate (see again Figure 9.4). The **National Assembly** of 577 members is elected directly for five years by all citizens over age eighteen. The government may dissolve the legislature at any time, though not twice within one year. Under the 1958 rules, the government, rather than the legislature, controls proceedings in both houses and can require priority for bills it wishes to promote. Parliament still enacts laws, but the domain of such laws is strictly defined. Many areas that in other democracies are regulated by laws debated and approved by Parliament are turned over to rulemaking by the executive in France.

The number of standing committees was reduced to six in 1958, and then increased to eight by reforms in 2008. The size of the committees, however, remains sufficiently large (well over 70) to prevent interaction among highly specialized deputies who could become effective rivals of the ministers. Each deputy is restricted to one committee, and party groups are represented in each committee in proportion to their size in the National Assembly. Several "special" committees have been created in recent years, and the National Assembly has asserted some independent power as well, by creating committees of enquiry. One novelty of the French system in recent years has been to give the opposition the chairs of a few committees.

Under the Constitution, more than one-half of the actual members of the National Assembly must formulate and pass an explicit motion of censure in order to dismiss a government. Even after a motion of censure is passed, the government may resist the pressure to resign; the president can dissolve the National Assembly and call for new elections. No government has been censured since 1962, and, since that time, every government has had a working (if not always friendly) majority in the National Assembly.

Despite restrictions on parliamentary activity, the legislative output of the Parliament in the Fifth Republic has been quite respectable. The average of about 100 laws per year enacted during the years of the Fifth Republic is double the British average for the same period. Although either the government or

Parliament may propose bills, almost all legislation is proposed by the government. The government effectively controls the proceedings in both houses and can require priority for those bills that it wishes to see adopted (see Figure 9.5). Article 44 of the Constitution empowers the government to force Parliament by the so-called **blocked vote** to accept a bill in its entirety with only the amendments agreed to by the government. In recent years, the government has used the blocked vote to maintain discipline within the majority, rather than to impose the will of the executive over a chaotic Parliament. Its use became an index of conflict within the governing party or coalition.³⁰

Article 38 invites Parliament to abandon “for a limited time” its legislative function to the government

if the government wishes to act as legislator “for the implementation of its program.” Once Parliament votes a broad enabling law, the government enacts legislation by way of so-called **ordinances**. The government used this possibility of executive lawmaking twenty-two times between 1958 and 1986—often for important legislation and sometimes simply to expedite the legislative process. Decisions of the Constitutional Council have now limited the use of enabling laws, requiring that the enabling act spell out the limits of executive lawmaking with some precision.

Another constitutional provision gives the government a unique tool to ensure parliamentary support for any bill that it introduces. According to Article 49, Section 3, the prime minister may pledge

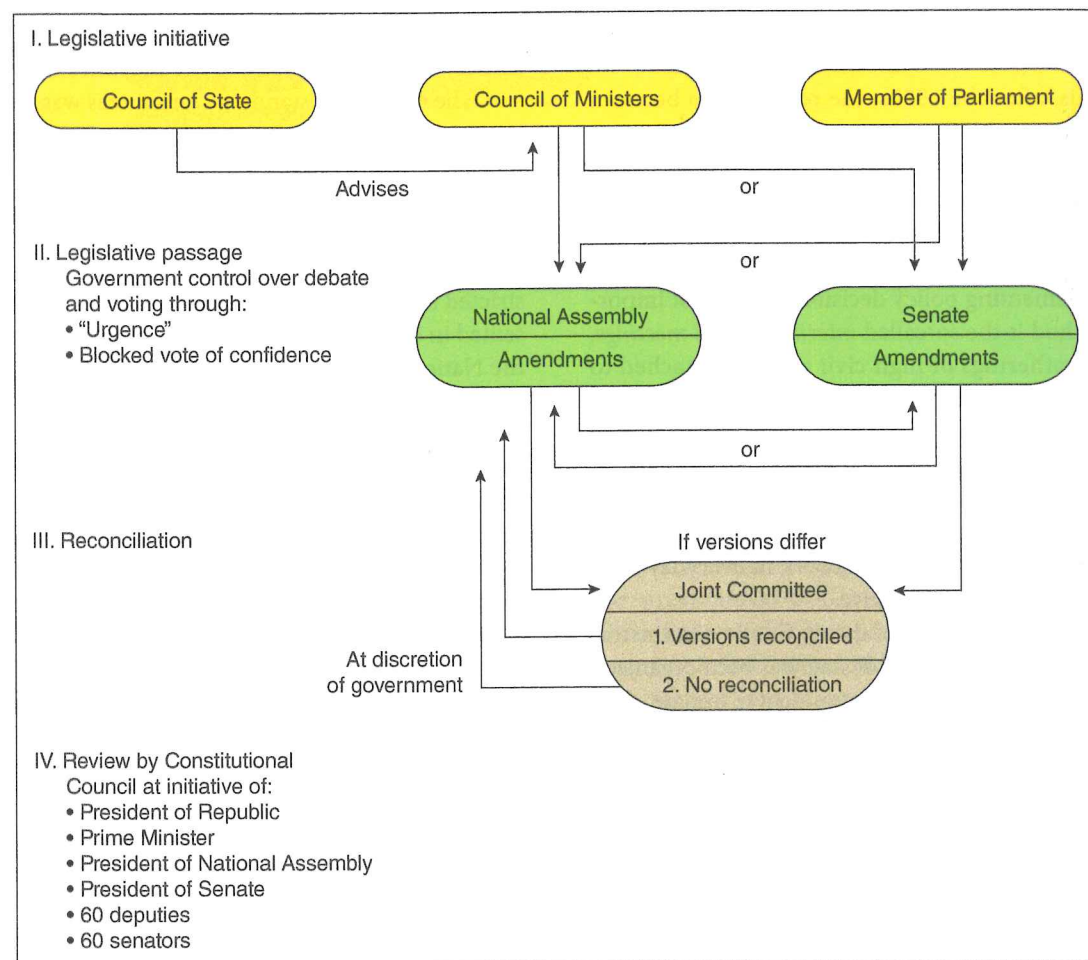


FIGURE 9.5
How a Bill Becomes a Law
The Legislative Process.

the “government’s responsibility” on any finance bill or a bill (or section of a bill) dealing with social security legislation submitted to the National Assembly. In such a case, the bill is automatically “considered as adopted,” without further vote, unless the deputies succeed in a **motion of censure** against the government according to the strict requirements discussed earlier (which in fact did not happen after 1962). The success of this motion would likely result in new elections. This section was of considerable importance for keeping majorities together, or speeding the legislative process along, before it was amended and limited to only a few instances in 2008, and when it applied to all legislation.

Other devices for enhancing the role of Parliament have become somewhat more effective over the years. In the 1970s, the National Assembly instituted a weekly question period that is similar to the British (and German) version, a process that was expanded by amendments in 2008. In 2012–2013, almost 20,000 written questions were presented to government ministers, and almost 12,000 evoked published results. The presence of television cameras in the chamber (since 1974) creates additional public interest and records the dialogue between the government representatives and the deputies.

By using its power to amend, Parliament has vastly expanded its role in the legislative process during the past decades. During the 1980s, proposed amendments averaged almost 5,000 a year. Since 1990, the number has increased to well over 20,000 a year (26,000 in 2012–2013), which coincides with the doubling of hours devoted to legislative debate each year. About two-thirds of the 10 percent of this total number of amendments that are eventually adopted are proposed by parliamentary committees working with the government. Thus, committees help shape legislation, and governments have all but abandoned their constitutionally guaranteed prerogative to declare amendments out of order. The long parliamentary session introduced in 1995 has enhanced the role of committee leaders in the legislative process. The amendments to the constitution passed in 2008 bring parliamentary committees directly into the legislative process by making the legislation reported out of committees the basis for parliamentary approval.

Finally, the role of Parliament is strengthened by the general support that French citizens give their elected deputies. Better-organized parties since the

1970s both add to the deputy’s role as part of a group and somewhat diminish his or her role as an independent actor, capable of influencing the legislative process merely for narrow parochial interests. Nevertheless, individual deputies still command a considerable following within their constituencies. This pattern is enhanced because more than 80 percent of the deputies in the National Assembly in 2013 held local office, most of them municipal councilors or mayors. Large numbers were also on departmental or regional councils, and some were both municipal and departmental or regional councilors.

The National Assembly shares legislative functions with the **Senate**. The 331 members of the Senate (the “upper house”) are elected indirectly from department constituencies for a term of six years (half are elected every three years—according to a new system adopted in 2003). They are selected by an electoral college of about 150,000, which includes municipal, departmental, and regional councilors. Rural constituencies are overrepresented. The Senate has the right to initiate legislation and must consider all bills adopted by the National Assembly. If the two houses disagree on pending legislation, the government can appoint a joint committee to resolve the differences. If the views of the two houses are not reconciled, the government may resubmit the bill (either in its original form or as amended by the Senate) to the National Assembly for a definitive vote (Article 45). Therefore, unlike the United States, the two houses are not equal in either power or influence (see again Figure 9.4).

In 2013, the Senate was controlled by a majority of the left, for the first time under the Fifth Republic. The Socialists are the second-largest group (just behind the UMP), a result of the PS’s strong roots at the local level. The Communists continue to be well represented for the same reason. Together with the Ecologists and the Left Radicals, they now form a small majority since 2011. Although the Senate, prior to 2011, tended to be socially conservative, this was balanced by a forthright defense of traditional republican liberties and by a stand against demagogic appeals to latent antiparliamentary feelings.

The Senate, in the normal legislative process, is a weak institution that can do little more than delay legislation approved by the government and passed by the National Assembly. However, there are several situations in which the accord of the Senate is necessary. The most important is that any constitutional

amendment needs the approval of either a simple or a three-fifths majority of senators (Article 89).

Some legislation of great importance—such as the nuclear strike force, the organization of military tribunals in cases involving high treason, and the change in the system of departmental representation—was enacted in spite of senatorial dissent. Nonetheless, until 1981, relations between the Senate and the National Assembly were relatively harmonious. The real clash with the Senate over legislation came during the years of Socialist government between 1981 and 1986, when many key bills were passed over the objections of the Senate. However, leftist government bills that dismantled some of the “law and order” measures enacted under de Gaulle, Pompidou, and Giscard d’Estaing were supported by the Senate. The upper house also played an active role when it modified the comprehensive decentralization statute passed by the Socialist majority in the Assembly. Most of the changes were accepted in joint committee. Of course, now, with a left majority in both houses of parliament, these conflicts can be avoided, at least for the moment.

Criticisms of the Senate as an unrepresentative body, and proposals for its reform, have come from Gaullists and Socialists alike. All of these proposals for reforming the Senate have failed, though some minor modifications in its composition and mode of election have been passed.

Checks and Balances

France has no tradition of judicial review. As in other countries with civil law systems, the sovereignty of Parliament has meant that the legislature has the last word. Until the Fifth Republic, France had no judicial check on the constitutionality of the actions of its political authorities. The **Constitutional Council** was originally conceived primarily as a safeguard against any legislative erosion of the constraints that the Constitution had placed on the prerogatives of Parliament.

The presidents of the National Assembly and Senate each choose three of the council’s members, and the president of the Republic chooses another three for a (nonrenewable) nine-year term. Those who nominate the council’s members were, until 1974, together with the prime minister, the only ones entitled to apply to the council for constitutional scrutiny. In 1974, an amendment to the Constitution made it possible for sixty deputies or sixty senators to submit cases to the Constitutional Council. Since then, appeals

to the council by the opposition, and at times by members of the majority, have become a regular feature of the French legislative process.

In a landmark decision rendered in 1971, the council declared unconstitutional a statute adopted by a large majority in Parliament that authorized the prefects to declare illegal any association that they thought might engage in illegal activities. According to the decision, to require any advance authorization violated the freedom of association, one of “the fundamental principles recognized by the laws of the Republic and solemnly reaffirmed in the preamble of the Constitution.” The invocation of the preamble greatly expanded the scope of constitutional law, since the preamble incorporated in its wording broad “principles of national sovereignty,” the “attachment to The Declaration of Rights of Man,” and an extensive bill of rights from the Fourth Republic constitution. For introducing a broad view of judicial review into constitutional law, the decision was greeted as the French equivalent of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Marbury v. Madison* (see Box 9.3).

Whichever side is in opposition, conservative or left, routinely refers all major (and sometimes minor) pieces of legislation to the council. In a given year, as much as 28 percent of laws passed by Parliament have been submitted for review. A surprisingly high percentage of appeals lead to a declaration of unconstitutionality (70 percent in 2012). Few decisions declare entire statutes unconstitutional, and those that declare parts of legislation unconstitutional (sometimes trivial parts) effectively invite Parliament to rewrite the text in an acceptable way. The Constitutional Council’s decisions have considerable impact and have sometimes modified short-term, and occasionally long-term, objectives of governments.³¹

The approval of the council’s activities by a large sector of public opinion, as shown in Figure 9.2, has encouraged the council to enlarge its powers. These efforts were partially successful in 2008, as an amendment gave the council a role in the judicial system. Cases in which the defendant claims that a law violates “rights and liberties” guaranteed by the Constitution can now be appealed to the Constitutional Council, once the appeal is vetted by either the appeals court or the Conseil d’État (**Council of State**). The new provisions came into effect in March 2010, and were invoked in two cases within three months. There were twenty-nine such cases in 2012–2013.

BOX 9.3

Judicial Review in France and the United States

Judicial review has become part of the French legislative process, but in important ways, it is still quite different from judicial review in the United States. Direct access is limited, although citizens now have the right to bring appeals based on some constitutional issues before the constitutional council. The council, unlike the U.S. Supreme Court, considers legislation before it is promulgated. Since 1981, virtually all constitutional challenges have been initiated by legislative petition, a process that does not exist in the United States. A time element precludes the possibility of extensive

deliberation: Rulings must be made within a month or, in emergency situations, within eight days. This is surely speedy justice, but the verdicts cannot be as explanatory as those rendered by constitutional courts in other countries. Dissenting opinions are never made public. Since 2008, there is a process in place for appealing court cases that involve a “priority constitutional question,” as decided by either the Council of State or the Cour de Cassation, the highest court of appeal in France. This appeal process has been invoked with increased frequency since 2010.

Thus, the judicial appeal and the development of a judicial check on policymaking enhance the role of the much older Council of State, which in its present form dates back to 1799. The government now consults this council more extensively on all bills before they are submitted to Parliament and, as it has always done, on all government decrees and regulations before they are enacted. The council also gives advice on the interpretation of constitutional texts. While its advice is never binding, its prestige is so high that its recommendations are seldom ignored.

Unlike the Constitutional Council, the Council of State provides recourse to individual citizens and organized groups who have claims against the administration. The judicial section of the Council of State, acting either as a court of appeal or as the court of first instance, is the apex within a hierarchy of administrative courts. Whenever the council finds official acts to be devoid of a legal basis, whether those of a Cabinet minister or a village mayor, the council will annul them and grant damages to the aggrieved plaintiff.

The State and Territorial Relations

9.12 Discuss the decentralization of government that took place in France in the 1980s.

France is divided into 101 **departments** (including four overseas departments), each about the size of an American county. Each is under the administrative

responsibility of a **prefect** and has a directly elected general council. Since 1955, departments have been grouped into twenty-two metropolitan **regions**, and now four additional overseas regions, each with its own appointed prefect (in addition to the departmental prefects). Since 1986, each region has an elected assembly and president as well as a prefect (see Figure 9.6). There are more than half a million elected municipal councilors in France, 4,000 departmental councilors, and 2,000 regional representatives. Legislation that was passed in 2010 will gradually reduce the number of departmental and regional representatives to a total of 3,000 beginning in 2014, by merging regional and departmental councilors, and will rename them “territorial councilors.”

Centralization has always been more impressive in its formal and legal aspects than it has been in practice. The practical and political reality has always been more complex. Although France is renowned for its administratively centralized state, what is often ignored is that political localism dilutes centralized decision making (see Box 9.4).

The process of decentralization initiated by the government of the left between 1982 and 1986 was undoubtedly the most important and effective reform passed during that period. The reform built on the long-established system of interlocking relationships between central and local authorities, as well as on the previous patterns of change. The reform altered the formal roles of all the local actors, but the greatest change was that it formalized the previously informal power of these actors.

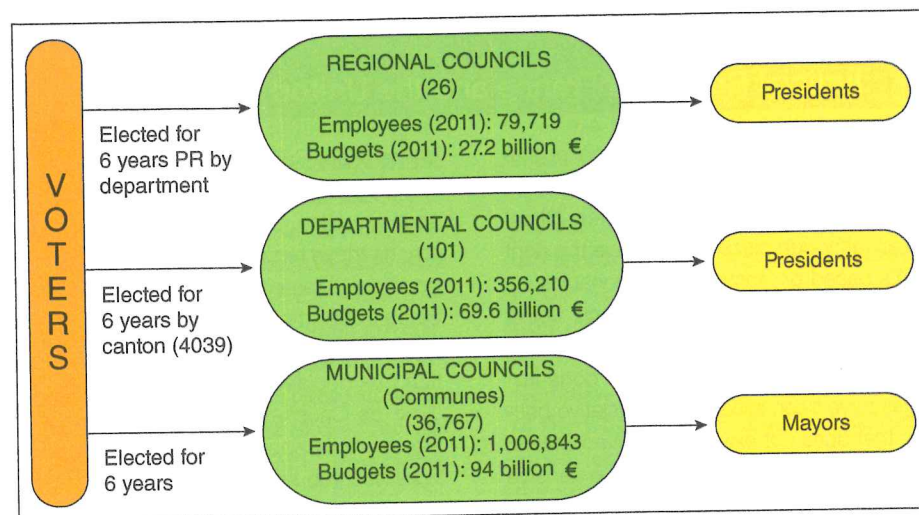


FIGURE 9.6

Subnational Governments in France

How They Are Elected.

Source: Ministère de l'Intérieur, DGCL, www.dgcl.interieur.gouv.fr/.

These powers are based on a system of mutual dependency between local political actors and the prefects, as well as field services of the national ministries. The administrators of the national ministries had the formal power to implement laws, rules, and regulations at the local level. However, they needed the cooperation of local elected officials, who had the confidence of their constituents, to facilitate the acceptance of the authority of the central state and to provide information to operate the administration effectively at the local level. Local officials, in turn, needed the resources and aid of the administration to help their constituents and keep their political promises. As in any relationship based on permanent interaction and on cross-functioning controls, it was not always clear

who controlled whom. Both the autonomy and the relational power of municipalities were conditioned by the extent of the mayor's contacts within the political and administrative network, reinforced by the linkage to national decision making that mayors had established through *cumul des mandats*—the ability to hold several electoral offices at the same time (since 2000, deputies are prohibited from holding a local executive office, including mayor of a larger city).

The decentralization legislation transferred most of the formal powers of the departmental and regional prefects to the elected presidents of the departmental and regional councils. In March 1986, *regional councils* were elected for the first time (by a system of proportional representation). In one stroke, the remnants of

formal prefectural authorization of local government decisions were abandoned in favor of the decisions of local officials. The department presidents, elected by their department councils, are now the chief departmental executive officers, and they, rather than the prefects, control the department bureaucracy.

What, then, is left of the role of the central bureaucracy in controlling the periphery? The greatest loss of authority has probably been that of the prefects. Their role now seems limited to security (law and order) matters, to the promotion of the government's industrial policies, and to the coordination of the state bureaucracy at the departmental level.

In matters of financing, the principal mechanisms through which the state influences local government decisions (financial dependency and standards) have been weakened, but have not been abandoned. Particularly at the commune level, local taxes provide only 40 percent of the annual budget (collected by the state). The price for financial assistance from above is enforced compliance with standards set by the state. In areas in which the state retains decision-making power—police, education, a large area of welfare, and social security, as well as a great deal of construction—administrative discretion and central control remain important.

Decentralization in the 1980s, combined with the system of *cumul des mandats*, gave a new impetus to local officials to expand what they previously had done in a more limited way: to trade influence for private money, to direct kickbacks into party-funding operations, and to use their public office for private advantage. The pressures that led to corruption also led to more expensive political campaigns and an often poorly demarcated frontier between the public and private arenas in a country in which people frequently move easily between the two.

benefits of economic growth. France has a mediocre record for spreading the benefits of the postwar boom and prosperity among all its citizens. In terms of income and wealth, discrepancies between the rich and the poor remain somewhat less in France than in other countries in Europe (refer back to Table 1.2). The income gap narrowed significantly between 1976 and 1981, and then even more during the first years of Socialist government. Yet subsequent austerity measures, especially the government's successful effort to hold down wages, have widened the gap again.

The emergence of long-term unemployment has increased the number of the new poor, who are concentrated among those who are poorly trained for a rapidly evolving employment market. As opposed to the past, the majority of the lowest-income group is no longer the elderly, the retired, and the heads of households with marginal jobs. Particularly since 1990, the unemployed are younger people, many of them long-term unemployed, especially younger single parents. Youth unemployment rates remain double the national average.

Since large incomes permit the accumulation of wealth, the concentration of wealth is even more conspicuous than the steepness of the income pyramid. In the 1970s, the richest 10 percent controlled between 35 and 50 percent of all wealth in France; the poorest 10 percent owned not more than 5 percent. In the 1990s, after a decade of socialist government, it was estimated that the richest 10 percent of the families in the country owned 50 percent of the wealth, while the richest 20 percent owned 67 percent. On the other hand, during the decade 2000–2010, income inequality declined marginally, and remained relatively low, compared to the United States and the United Kingdom.³²

In spite of some assertions to the contrary, it is not true in 2013 (according to Eurostat) that the French economy is burdened with higher taxes than other countries of similar development in Europe. What is special about France is the distribution of its taxes. The share of indirect taxes—such as the value-added tax (VAT) and excise taxes—remains far higher in France than in other industrialized countries. Indirect taxes not only drive up prices but also weigh most heavily on the poor. The percentage of revenue collected through regressive indirect taxation was the same in 1986—after five years of Socialist government—as it had been in 1980, and remains about the

BOX

9.4

The Political Durability of Local Governments

One manifestation of the political importance of local government in France has been the ability of local units to endure. It is no accident that even after recent consolidations, there are still 36,551 communes (the basic area of local administration), each with a mayor and council, or about as many as in the original six Common Market countries and Britain together. Almost 33,000 French

communes have fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, and of these, more than 22,000 have fewer than 500. What is most remarkable, however, is that since 1851, the number of communes in France has been reduced by only 400. Thus, unlike every other industrialized country, the consolidation of population in urban areas has resulted in almost no consolidation of towns and villages.

Performance and Prospects

9.13 Identify the accomplishments and shortcomings of France as a welfare state.

9.14 Describe the effects of globalization on France, especially as an EU member.

A Welfare State

The overall performance of democracies can be measured by their commitment and ability to distribute the

needed to win parliamentary seats. The Social Democrats did increase their vote share, but they saw no way to assemble a center-left coalition.

This fragmented election result produced a months-long negotiation to create a new governing coalition. Eventually the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats agreed to share power in a new grand coalition. This will be an uncertain alliance, since the parties hold markedly different policy goals. Moreover, it leaves only a small minority in the parliament to serve as a loyal opposition debating and questioning government policy.

Germans pride themselves on the efficiency of the economy and the effectiveness of government. The outcome of the 2013 election reflects the uncertainty that has followed the 2008 recession. The German economy has performed better than most in Europe but has begun to slow, and the Merkel government vacillated in responding to the economic crises at home and throughout the European Union. The crisis over the euro and the worsening economic situation in Southern Europe have divided the public and the political parties over how to respond to these challenges. The new government has the votes to address Germany's policy challenges, but because of the divisions it is unclear whether it has the common will to act.

Current Policy Challenges

10.1 Describe the economic and social challenges currently faced by Germany's government.

What political problems do Germans typically read about when they open the daily newspaper or watch their favorite television newscast—and what political problems preoccupy policymakers in Berlin? Often, the answer is the same as in most other industrial democracies. When voters were asked to identify the most important problems at the time of the 2013 elections, the top five issues were unemployment, wages and the cost of living, the euro crisis, pensions, and social equality.

Economic issues are a recurring source of political debate. The economic challenges worsened with the worldwide recession that began in late 2008. When the recession decreased international trade and consumption within Europe, this created new economic strains. In 2009, Germany's GDP decreased by 5 percent and exports decreased by 14 percent. After a

rebound in 2010, growth rates have slowly fallen. The recession ended plans for broad structural reforms of the economic system and social programs, and created major new challenges for the economy and policy system. The Federal Republic faces greater economic uncertainty than perhaps at any other time in its history. Joint European efforts to strengthen the banking and credit system, and ward off government defaults in Southern Europe, have created new economic costs and growing skepticism among the German public. The common euro currency is vital to Germany's export economy, but the public is divided on how far Germany should go to protect the euro. Since the depths of the recession, the German economy has grown more than its neighbors, but its future economic prospects are still very uncertain.

Germany still faces a series of economic and social problems that emerged from unification. Because the economic infrastructure of East Germany lagged far behind that of West Germany, the eastern economy has struggled to compete in the globalized economic system. Eastern plants lacked the technology and management of western firms, eastern workers lacked the training and experience of their western counterparts, and the economic infrastructure of the East was crumbling under the Communist regime. Consequently, government agencies and the European Union have invested more than 1,000 billion euros (€) in the East since unification—raising taxes for all Germans in the process. Still, the nightly news routinely chronicles the continuing economic difficulties in the East, which still affect the entire nation (see Box 10.1).

Social services are another area of policy debate. Pensions, health, and other social welfare costs have spiraled upward, but there is little agreement on how to manage these costs. As the German population ages, the demands being placed on the social welfare system are predictably increasing. Few economists believe that the present system of social benefits is sustainable in the future, especially as Germany competes in a global economic system and works to improve conditions in the East.

The process of becoming a multicultural nation creates another new source of political tension. Germany had a sizeable foreign-born population because of its foreign-worker programs of the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1990s, a large influx of refugees from the Balkan conflict, asylum seekers, and ethnic

BOX 10.1

The Curse of Unification?

The Federal Republic's efforts to rebuild its once-Communist East has required massive financial transfers from the West, extra taxes for the average citizen, and a drag on the nation's.

In 2004 a panel of experts, headed by former Hamburg mayor Klaus von Dohnanyi, examined the reconstruction of Germany's Eastern states. The panel concluded that the estimated €1.25 trillion (\$1.54 trillion) in government aid has done little to help the economically

depressed region. The experts also fear the €90 billion spent by the government each year was weakening the national economy. Now, a decade later, there is still a substantial gap in living standards between East and West; the government subsidies to the East are continuing, and the citizens still pay the solidarity tax to support these programs.

Source: *The Deutsche Welle Report*, April 4, 2004, 62.

Germans from East Europe expanded this population. Policy reforms restricted further immigration, and the government changed citizenship and immigration laws in the 2000s. However, the public is divided on the appropriate policies. Some people argue that “the boat is full” and new immigration should be limited, while others claim that immigration is essential for the nation's future. Germany struggles to address these issues, which are particularly difficult because of the legacy of Germany's past.

Finally, foreign policies are another source of public debate. The **European Union (EU)** is an increasingly visible part of political reporting, and everyday life is increasingly affected by EU decisions. The expansion of the EU to twenty-seven member states also reforms the terms of unification efforts. EU policies, such as protecting the euro and dealing with the budget problems of some EU states, are creating internal divisions over the nation's relationship to the EU. The public backlash to Merkel's efforts to protect the euro stimulated the challenge by the Alternative for Germany party (AfD) in the 2013 elections. Germany's allies ask it to contribute more to these efforts, while many German citizens think they have contributed enough.

In addition, Germany is trying to define its role in the post-Cold War world. For the first time since World War II, German troops took part in a military action outside of German territory—in Kosovo in 1999 and in Afghanistan in 2001. However, Germany actively opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, and public opposition to involvement in Afghanistan has grown. Nevertheless, Merkel has worked to strengthen Germany's ties to the United States

through NATO military alliance and other foreign policy activities.

The Federal Republic is one of the most successful and vibrant democracies in the world today. It has made substantial progress in improving the quality of life of its citizens, strengthening democracy, and developing a secure nation, and it has become an important member of the international community. But the continuing burdens of German unification and the lack of consensus on future policy directions mean that recent governments have managed current policy challenges but have not taken decisive action to address them fully.

The Historical Legacy

10.2 Discuss whether Germany's historical experiences contributed to the rise of the Third Reich.

The German historical experience differs considerably from most other European democracies. The social and political forces that modernized the rest of Europe came much later in Germany and had a less certain effect. By the nineteenth century, when most nations had defined their borders, German territory was still divided among dozens of political units. Although most European states had developed a dominant national culture, Germany was split by sharp religious, regional, and economic divisions. Industrialization generally stimulated social modernization in Europe, but German industrialization came late and did not overturn the old feudal and aristocratic order. German history, even to the present, represents a difficult and protracted process of nation-building.

The Second German Empire

Through a combination of military and diplomatic victories, Otto von Bismarck, the Prussian chancellor, enlarged the territory of Prussia and established a unified Second German Empire in 1871.¹ The empire was an authoritarian state, with only the superficial trappings of a democracy. Political power flowed from the monarch—the **Kaiser**—and the government at times bitterly suppressed potential opposition groups, especially the Roman Catholic Church and the Social Democratic party. The government expected little of its citizens; they were to pay their taxes, serve in the army, and keep their mouths shut.

The central government encouraged national development during this period. Industrialization finally occurred, and German influence in international affairs grew steadily. The force of industrialization was not sufficient to modernize and liberalize society and the political system, however. Economic and political power remained concentrated in the hands of the traditional aristocratic elites and the bureaucracy. The authoritarian state was strong enough to resist the democratic demands of a weak middle class. The state was supreme; its needs took precedence over those of individuals and society.

Failures of government leadership, coupled with a blindly obedient public, led Germany into World War I (1914–1918). The war devastated the nation. Almost 3 million German soldiers and civilians lost their lives, the economy was strained beyond the breaking point, and the government of the empire collapsed under the weight of its own incapacity to govern. The war ended with Germany a defeated and exhausted nation.

The Weimar Republic

In 1919, a popularly elected constitutional assembly established the new democratic system of the **Weimar Republic**. The constitution granted all citizens, including women, the right to vote and guaranteed basic human rights. A directly elected parliament and president held political power, and political parties became legitimate political actors. Belatedly, the Germans had their first real experience with democracy.

From the outset, however, severe problems plagued the Weimar government. In the Versailles peace treaty ending World War I, Germany lost all its overseas colonies and a large amount of its European territory. The treaty further burdened Germany with

the moral guilt for the war and the financial cost of postwar reparations to the victorious Allies. A series of radical uprisings threatened the political system. Wartime destruction and the reparations produced continuing economic problems that finally led to an economic catastrophe in 1923. In less than a year, the inflation rate was an unimaginable 26 billion percent! Ironically, the Kaiser's government, which had produced these problems, was not blamed for these developments. Instead, many people criticized the empire's democratic successor—the Weimar Republic.

The fatal blow came with the Great Depression in 1929. The Depression struck Germany harder than most other European nations or the United States. Almost a third of the labor force became unemployed, and people were frustrated by the government's inability to deal with the crisis. Political tensions increased, and parliamentary democracy began to fail. **Adolf Hitler** and his **National Socialist German Workers' Party (the Nazis)** were the major beneficiaries. Their vote share grew from a mere 2 percent in 1928 to 18 percent in 1930 and 33 percent in November 1932.

Increasingly, the machinery of the democratic system malfunctioned or was bypassed. In a final attempt to restore political order, President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Hitler chancellor of the Weimar Republic in January 1933. This was democracy's death knell.

Weimar's failure resulted from a mix of factors.² The lack of support from political elites and the public was a basic weakness of Weimar. Democracy depended on an administrative and military elite who often longed for the old authoritarian political system. Elite criticism of Weimar encouraged similar sentiments among the public. The fledgling state then faced a series of severe economic and political crises. These crises further eroded public support for Weimar and opened the door to Hitler's authoritarian and nationalistic appeals. The institutional weaknesses of the political system contributed to Weimar's political vulnerability. Finally, most Germans drastically underestimated Hitler's ambitions, intentions, and political abilities. This underestimation, perhaps, was Weimar's greatest failure.

The Third Reich

The Nazis' rise to power reflected a bizarre mixture of ruthless behavior and concern for legal procedures.

Hitler called for a new election in March 1933 and then suppressed the opposition parties. Although the Nazis failed to capture an absolute majority of the votes, they used their domination of the parliament to enact laws granting Hitler dictatorial powers. Democracy was replaced by the new authoritarian "leader state" of the **Third Reich**.

Once entrenched in power, Hitler followed extremist policies. Social and political groups that might challenge the government were destroyed, taken over by Nazi agents, or co-opted into accepting the Nazi regime. The powers of the police state grew and choked off opposition. Attacks on Jews and other minorities steadily became more violent. Massive public works projects lessened unemployment, but also built the infrastructure for a wartime economy. The government enlarged and rearmed the military in violation of the Versailles treaty. The Reich's expansionist foreign policy challenged the international peace.

Hitler's unrestrained political ambitions finally plunged Europe into World War II in 1939. After initial victories, a series of military defeats beginning in 1942 led to the total collapse of the Third Reich in May 1945. A total of 60 million lives were lost worldwide in the war, including 6 million European Jews who were murdered in a Nazi campaign of systematic genocide.³ Germany lay in ruins; its industry and transportation systems were destroyed, its cities were rubble, millions were homeless, and food was scarce. Hitler's grand design for a new German Reich had instead destroyed the nation in a Wagnerian *Götterdämmerung*.

The Occupation Period

The political division of postwar Germany began as foreign troops advanced onto German soil. At the end of the war, the Western Allies—the United States, Britain, and France—controlled Germany's western zone, and the Soviet Union occupied the eastern zone. This was to be an interim division, but growing frictions between Western and Soviet leaders increased tensions between the regions.

In the western zone, the Allied military government began a denazification program to remove Nazi officials and sympathizers from positions of authority. The occupation authorities licensed new political parties, and democratic political institutions started to develop. The economic system was reorganized along capitalist lines. Currency and market economy

reforms in 1948 revitalized the western zone, but also deepened divisions between the eastern and western zones.

Political change followed a much different course in the eastern zone. The new **Socialist Unity Party (SED)** was a tool for the Soviets to control the political process. Since the Soviets saw capitalism as responsible for the Third Reich, they tried to destroy the capitalist system and replace it with a new socialist order. By 1948, the eastern zone was essentially a copy of the Soviet political and economic systems.

As the political gap between occupation zones widened, the Western allies favored creation of a separate German state in the West. In Bonn, a small university town along the banks of the Rhine, Germans created a new democratic system. In 1948, a parliamentary council drafted an interim constitution that was to last until the entire nation was reunited. In May 1949, the state governments in the western zone agreed on the **Basic Law (Grundgesetz)** that created the **Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)**, or West Germany.

These developments greatly worried the Soviets. The Soviet blockade of Berlin in 1948, for example, partially sought to halt the formation of a separate West German state—though it actually strengthened Western resolve. Once it was apparent that West Germany would follow its own course, preparations began for a separate East German state. A week after the formation of the FRG, the People's Congress in the East approved a draft constitution. On October 7, 1949, the **German Democratic Republic (GDR)**, or East Germany, was formed. As in earlier periods of German history, a divided nation was following different paths (see Figure 10.1). It would be more than forty years before these paths converged.

Following Two Paths

10.3 Compare and contrast conditions in the two Germanies, both before and after reunification.

Although they had chosen different paths (or had these paths chosen for them), the two German states faced many of the same initial problems. The economic picture was bleak on both sides of the border. Unemployment remained high in West Germany, and average wages were minimal. In 1950, almost

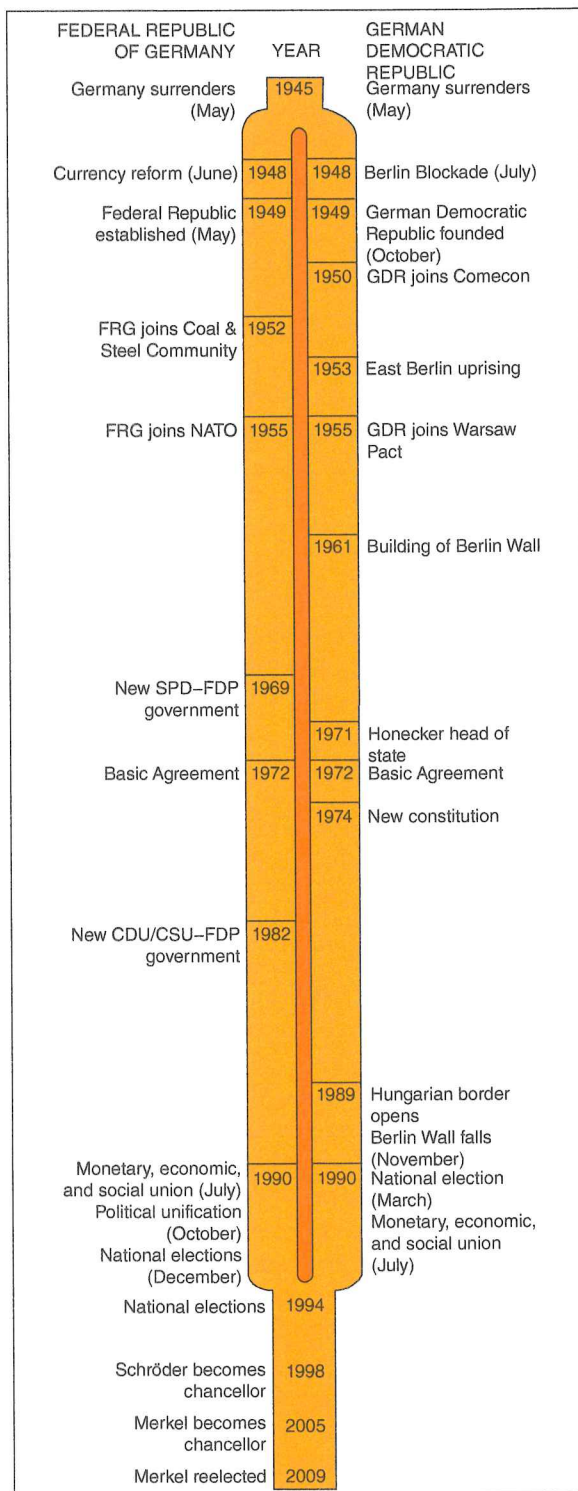


FIGURE 10.1
The Two Paths of Postwar Germany
 The history of the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic since 1949.

two-thirds of the West German public felt they had been better off before the war, and severe economic hardships were still common. The situation was even worse in East Germany.

West Germany was phenomenally successful in meeting this economic challenge.⁴ Relying on a free enterprise system championed by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the country experienced sustained and unprecedented economic growth. By the early 1950s, incomes had reached the prewar level, and growth had just begun. Over the next two decades, per capita wealth nearly tripled, average hourly industrial wages increased nearly fivefold, and average incomes grew nearly sevenfold. By most economic indicators, the public in the West was several times more affluent than at any time in its entire history. This phenomenal economic growth is known as the **Economic Miracle (Wirtschaftswunder)**.

East Germany's postwar economic miracle was almost as impressive. Its economic system was based on collectivized agriculture, nationalized industry, and centralized planning.⁵ From 1950 until 1970, industrial production and per capita national income increased nearly fivefold. Although still lagging behind its more affluent relatives in the West, the GDR was the model of prosperity among socialist states.

The problem of nation-building posed another challenge. The FRG initially was viewed as a provisional state until both Germanies could be reunited. The GDR struggled to develop its own identity in the shadow of the FRG, while expressing a commitment to eventual reunification. In addition, the occupation authorities retained the right to intervene in the two Germanies even after 1949. Thus, both states struggled to define their identity—as separate states or as parts of a larger Germany—and regain national sovereignty.

West Germany's first chancellor, **Konrad Adenauer**, followed a course of gaining national sovereignty by integrating the FRG into the Western alliance. The Western Allies would be more likely to grant greater autonomy to West Germany if it was exercised within the framework of an international body. For example, economic redevelopment was channeled through the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community. West Germany's military rearmament occurred within NATO.

The Communist regime in the GDR countered the FRG's integration into the Western alliance with

calls for German unification, yet the GDR was simultaneously establishing itself as a separate German state. In 1952, the GDR transformed the East-West boundary into a fortified border, restricting Western access to the East and limiting Easterners' ability to go to the West. The GDR joined the Soviet economic bloc (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, COMECON), and it was a charter member of the Warsaw Pact military alliance. The Soviet Union recognized the sovereignty of the GDR in 1954. The practical and symbolic division of Germany became official with the GDR's construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. More than a physical barrier between East and West, it marked the formal existence of two separate German states.

Intra-German relations took a dramatically different course after the Social Democratic Party (SPD) won control of West Germany's government after the 1969 elections. The new SPD chancellor, Willy Brandt, followed a policy toward the East (**Ostpolitik**) that sought reconciliation with Eastern European nations, including the GDR. West Germany signed treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland to resolve disagreements dating back to the war and established new economic and political ties. In 1971, Brandt received the Nobel Peace Prize for his actions. The following year, the two Germanies adopted the Basic Agreement, which formalized their relationship as two states within one nation.

To the East German regime, *Ostpolitik* was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it legitimized the GDR through its recognition by the FRG and the normalization of East-West relations. On the other hand, economic and social exchanges increased East Germans' exposure to western values and ideas, which many GDR politicians worried would undermine their closed system. The eventual revolution of 1989 seemingly confirmed their fears.

After reconciliation between the two German states, both spent most of the next two decades addressing their internal needs. SPD policy reforms in the West expanded social services and equalized access to the benefits of the Economic Miracle. Total social spending nearly doubled between 1969 and 1975. As global economic problems grew in the mid-1970s, Helmut Schmidt of the SPD became chancellor and slowed the pace of reform and government spending.

The problems of unrealized reforms and renewed economic difficulties continued into the 1980s.

In 1982, the CDU enticed the Free Democratic Party (FDP) to form a new government under the leadership of **Helmut Kohl**, head of the Christian Democratic Union. Kohl presided over a dramatic improvement in economic conditions. The public returned Kohl's coalition to office in the 1987 elections.

Worldwide economic recession also buffeted the GDR's economy starting in the late 1970s. The competitiveness of East German products declined in international markets, and trade deficits with the West grew steadily. Moreover, long-delayed investment in the country's infrastructure began to show in a deteriorating highway system, an aging housing stock, and an outdated communications system. Although East Germans heard frequent government reports about the nation's economic success, their living standards evidenced a widening gap between official pronouncements and reality.

In the late 1980s, East German government officials were concerned by the winds of change rising in the East. Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* seemed to undermine the pillars supporting the East German system (see Chapter 12). At one point, an official GDR newspaper even censored news from the Soviet Union in order to downplay Gorbachev's reforms. Indeed, the stimulus for political change in East Germany came not from within but from the events sweeping across the rest of Eastern Europe.

In early 1989, the first cracks in the Communist monolith appeared. Poland's Communist government accepted a series of democratic reforms, and the Hungarian Communist Party endorsed democratic and market reforms. When Hungary opened its border with neutral Austria, a stream of East Germans vacationing in Hungary started leaving for the West. East Germans were voting with their feet. Almost 2 percent of the East German population emigrated to the FRG over the next six months. The exodus stimulated mass public demonstrations against the regime within East Germany.

Gorbachev played a crucial role in directing the flow of events in Germany. He encouraged the GDR leadership to undertake internal reforms with the cautious advice that "life itself punishes those who delay." Without Soviet military and ideological support, the end of the old GDR system was inevitable. Growing public protests increased the pressure on the government, and the continuing exodus to the West brought

the East's economy to a near standstill. The government did not govern; it barely existed, struggling from crisis to crisis. In early November, the government and the SED Politburo resigned. On the evening of November 9, 1989, a GDR official announced the opening of the border between East and West Berlin. In the former no-man's-land of the Berlin Wall, Berliners from East and West joyously celebrated together.

Once the euphoria of the Berlin Wall's opening had passed, East Germany had to address the question of "What next?" The GDR government initially tried a strategy of damage control, appointing new leaders and attempting to court public support. However, the power of the state and the vitality of the economy had already suffered mortal wounds. Protesters who had chanted "We are the people" when opposing the Communist government in October took up the call for unification with a new refrain: "We are one people." The only apparent source of stability was unification with the FRG, and the rush toward German unity began.

In March 1990, the GDR had its first truly free elections since 1932. The Alliance for Germany, which included the eastern branch of the Christian Democrats, won control of the government. Helmut Kohl and Lothar de Maiziere, the new GDR leader, moved toward unification. On July 1, an intra-German treaty gave the two nations one currency and essentially one economy. On October 3, 1990, after more than four decades of separation, the two German paths again converged.

Unification largely occurred on western terms. Easterners sarcastically claim that the only trace of the old regime is one law kept from the GDR: Automobiles can turn right on a red light. Otherwise, the western political structures, western interest groups, western political parties, and western economic and social systems were exported to the East.

Unification was supposed to be the answer to a dream, but during the next few years, it must have occasionally seemed like a nightmare. The eastern economy collapsed with the end of the GDR; at times, unemployment rates in the East exceeded the worst years of the Great Depression. The burden of unification led to inflation and tax increases in the West and weakened the western economy. The social strains of unification stimulated violent attacks against foreigners in both halves of Germany. At the end of 1994, Kohl's coalition won a razor-thin majority in national elections.

Tremendous progress had been made by 1998, but the economy still struggled and necessary policy reforms went unaddressed. When the Germans went to the polls in 1998, they voted for a new government headed by **Gerhard Schröder** and the Social Democrats in alliance with the Greens (*Die Grünen*). The new government made some progress on addressing the nation's major policy challenges—such as a major reform of the tax system and continued investments in the East—but not enough progress. The coalition won the 2002 election, but with a reduced margin.

Mounting political pressures prompted Schröder to call for early elections in 2005, in which the SPD and the CDU/CSU gained the same share of the vote. Merkel eventually convinced a Schröder-less SPD to join the CDU/CSU in forming a Grand Coalition. The two parties struggled with their governing partnership for four years, but they did not enact significant new policy reforms, and then the recession struck in 2008. These events prompted the electorate's shift to the right in 2009, and the election of a new CDU/CSU-and-FDP governing coalition.

The uncertainty of the policy problems facing Germany following the 2008 recession produced the ambiguous results of the 2013 election. Without an effective governing majority on the Right or Left, Merkel eventually negotiated a new coalition agreement with the SPD. She would continue to serve as chancellor, and the SPD would share cabinet posts and the position of vice chancellor. This repeats the earlier experiment with a grand coalition in 2005-09, which struggled to respond decisively to the nation's needs. It is unclear whether the new grand coalition will be more effective.

Social Forces

10.4 Describe five aspects of the social system in unified Germany.

The new unified Germany is the largest state in the EU. It has about 81 million people, 68 million in the West and 13 million in the East, located in Europe's heartland. The total German economy is Europe's largest. The combined territory of the new Germany is also large by European standards, although it is small in comparison to the United States—a bit smaller than Montana.