



POLITICS IN FRANCE

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Country Bio

Population
63.8 million

Territory
211,208 square miles

Year of Independence
486

Year of Current Constitution
1958

Head of State
President Nicolas Sarkozy

Head of Government
Prime Minister François Fillon

Language
French 100%, with rapidly declining regional dialects (Provença, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish)

Religion
Roman Catholic 89.5%, Muslim 7.5%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 1

FRANCE

Attracted by his dynamic image and promises of reform, a large majority of the French public elected Nicolas Sarkozy to the presidency of France in May 2007. A month later Sarkozy's party won a majority in the National Assembly, and he followed the election with a whirlwind of activities and initiatives. Two years later, however, as the economic crisis spread, Sarkozy's approval rating was as low as that of his predecessor, **Jacques Chirac**, and he was struggling to maintain the loyalty of his own majority.

The French electorate has been highly critical of those who have governed them under the **Fifth Republic**. In every legislative election between 1981 and 2007, they have favored the opposition. Nevertheless, French citizens now appear to have more confidence in the key institutions of the Republic than at any time in French history. Increasingly, however, they have little confidence in the politicians who are running them. The stability of the Republic

has surprised many of the French, as well as the outside world. By combining two models of democratic government, the presidential and the parliamentary, the Fifth Republic has succeeded in a constitutional experiment that now serves France well. For the first time since the French Revolution, there is no important political party or sector of public opinion that challenges the legitimacy of the regime.

CURRENT POLICY CHALLENGES

At a time in U.S. history when the party system is highly polarized around fundamental socioeconomic issues and the government is immersed in a war that has divided the country, French politics—at least most of the time—seems almost tranquil by comparison. The French have lived with divided government (*cohabitation*) for most of the period since 1986

without its impeding government effectiveness or undermining institutional legitimacy. At the same time, the French electorate is clearly concerned about many of the same issues that concern Americans.

In 2008 French citizens were most worried about the economy, unemployment, crime, and urban violence. These problems are often considered problems of the "suburbs," since impoverished neighborhoods, frequently with large immigrant populations, are often found in the old working-class suburbs surrounding large cities. In the fall of 2005, suburban youth rioted for three weeks, burning thousands of automobiles and some public buildings. A few months later mostly middle-class students in high schools and universities closed down much of the education system. In 2009, as the economic crisis deepened, vast strike movements, which once again centered on the education system, spread throughout the country.

Unemployment rates in France have recently averaged about a third higher than U.S. rates. Anxiety about unemployment is related to deep concern about the consequences of being a member of the **European Union (EU)**. This, in part, explains the rejection of the European constitutional treaty in 2005. Finally, voters are increasingly disturbed by their relatively new president.

We should emphasize that many of the issues at the heart of contemporary American politics are of little concern to the French. French citizens are not much concerned about the size of the state. Recent conservative governments have tried to reduce the level of public spending, but there is little support for massive cuts in the welfare state programs. Such welfare programs have always been more extensive in France than in the United States. In fact, surveys show that French voters are willing to sacrifice a great deal to maintain these programs, as well as state-subsidized social security and long vacations. Although unemployment rates in France are a third higher than those of the United States, its poverty rate is among the lowest in the advanced industrial democracies and less than half that of the United States.

On the other hand, unlike their American counterparts, French voters are deeply concerned about the environmental and health consequences of genetically modified organisms. Far more than Americans, French citizens are willing to pay for efforts to reduce pollution. Gas prices are more than double those in the United States, and state subsidies for a

growing public transportation network are not challenged by public opinion.

Multiculturalism related to integrating a large and growing Muslim population (the largest in Europe) is another important policy challenge. In an effort to promote civic integration, the government passed legislation in 2004 prohibiting students in public schools from wearing conspicuous religious symbols, including Islamic head scarves worn by women. Since the riots of 2005 and 2006, the government has promised reforms to address the special needs of immigrants. These promises have resulted in few concrete proposals, but they have renewed public debates on public policy toward immigrants.

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 since Sarkozy became president, but the U.S.-French relationship will experience further change with the new American administration that entered office in 2009.

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. An example of the challenges that he faced was the government's difficulty in passing what were widely considered to be uncontroversial constitutional reforms, even though the opposition Socialists generally agreed with Sarkozy's proposed reforms (although they wanted them to go further). The reforms finally passed by a single vote in July 2008. By the end of 2008, the president's program was constrained even further by the emerging economic crisis, and by massive strikes in reaction to presidential proposals to reorganize the education system. Indeed France was the only major industrial society in which the reaction to the declining economy has been growing social unrest.

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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. He promised a more moderate rule bounded by a new constitution.

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 growing indecision and ill-conceived foreign ventures. His defeat and capture in the Franco-Prussian War (1870) began another turbulent period. 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 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 leadership 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 more stable 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

Geographically, France is at once Atlantic, Continental, and Mediterranean; hence, it occupies a unique place in Europe. In 2008 a total of 63.8 million people, about one-fourth 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 proportion of foreign-born in the United States.

Urbanization has come slowly to France, but it is now highly urbanized. In 1936 only sixteen French cities had a population of more than 100,000; they now number thirty-six. Compared with European countries with similar population (Britain and

Germany), France has relatively few large cities; only Paris has more than a million people. Yet in 2002, 44 million people (three-quarters of the population) lived in urban areas, compared with half that number in 1936.

Almost one-quarter of the urban population—more than one-sixth of the entire nation and growing—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 compares well with that of other advanced industrial countries. In per capita gross domestic product (GDP), France ranks among the wealthiest nations of the world, behind the Scandinavian countries, the United States, and Britain; it is ahead of Germany, Japan, and 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 at a little more than half the European average. Nevertheless, with estimates that the economy will contract by almost 3 percent by mid-2009, France now faces its greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression.¹

Unemployment dipped after 1997 as the economy created new jobs, but it 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. More than 40 percent of those unemployed in 2004 were the long-term unemployed (those without work for more than one year), a rate far higher than that of Britain, but less than those of Germany and Italy. Indeed, long-term unemployment rates have crept up, even though youth unemployment has declined significantly during the past fifteen years. All of these problems were projected to grow worse in 2009, as unemployment moved rapidly higher.

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. 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. In 1954 women made up 35 percent of the labor force; today they make up 46 percent. The proportion of French women working (65 percent) is slightly lower than that of the United States, but one of the highest in Western Europe.

In 1938, 37 percent of French labor was employed in agriculture; this proportion was less than 3.5 percent in 2005. The percentage of the labor force employed in industry was down to about 24 percent, while employment in the service sector rose from 33 percent in 1938 to 71 percent today, slightly above the average for Western Europe.

By comparison with other advanced industrial countries, the agricultural sector of France remains important both economically and politically. France has more cultivated acreage than any other country in the EU. In spite of the sharp decline in the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, agricultural production increased massively during the past quarter century.

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 Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in the European Community between 1962 and 1968, consolidation of farmland proceeded rapidly. By 1985 the average French farm was larger than that of any country in Europe except Britain, Denmark, and Luxembourg.

The EU has paid a large proportion of the bill for agricultural modernization, and subsidies have increased steadily. As a result, there are pressures (particularly from the British) to reduce CAP expenditures. With the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and the incorporation of more East European countries with large agricultural sectors, these pressures have increased. In addition to requiring the withdrawal of more land from production, major reforms in 1992,

1994, 1999, and 2003 at the European level have gradually moved subsidies away from price supports (that encourage greater production) and toward direct support of farm income. Nevertheless, total subsidies to French farmers through the CAP are greater than those provided to any other country.

French business is both highly dispersed and highly concentrated. Even after three decades of structural reorganization of business, about half of the 2.4 million industrial and commercial enterprises in France belong to individuals. In 1999, 54 percent of the salaried workers in the country worked in small enterprises with fewer than fifty workers. As in other advanced industrial societies, this proportion has been slowly increasing, primarily because of the movement of labor into the service sector.

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 *Financial Times* reports that among the 500 largest industrial groups in the world in 2008, 31 were in France. France placed fifth in the number of firms on this list, behind the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, and China, but ahead of all other European countries.

The organization of industry and commerce changed significantly during the 1990s. Privatization mandated by the EU has reduced the number of public enterprises by 24 percent and the number of those working in public enterprises by 31 percent. In 1997 among the top twenty enterprises in France, only four were public, compared with thirteen ten years before.

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.

CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

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 invariably based on the principle that Parliament could overturn a government that lacked

a parliamentary majority. Such an arrangement can work satisfactorily, as it does in most of Western Europe, when the country (and the parliament) embraces two—or a few—well-organized parties. The party or the coalition that gains a majority at the polls forms the government and can count on the support of its members in parliament until the next elections. At that time it is either kept in power or replaced by an equally disciplined party or coalition of parties.

The Executive

De Gaulle's constitution for the Fifth Republic offered to remedy previous failings of French political parties and coalition politics. In preceding republics the president was little more than a figurehead. According to the new constitution, the **president of the Republic** is a visible head of state. He is to be placed "above the parties" to represent the unity of the national community. As guardian of the constitution, he is to be an arbiter who would rely on other powers—Parliament, the Cabinet, or the people—for the full weight of government action. 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.

Virtually all of the most powerful constitutional powers of the president—those that give the president formal power—have been used sparingly. Emergency powers were used only once by de Gaulle—in 1961 when the rebellion of the generals in Algiers clearly justified such use. De Gaulle dissolved Parliament twice (in 1962 and 1968), each time to strengthen the majority supporting presidential policies (see Figure 6.1).

Upon his election to the presidency in 1981, Socialist **François Mitterrand** dissolved the National Assembly. He did so again after his reelection seven years later in order to have new parliamentary elections, expecting (correctly) that elections would provide him with a reliable majority. President Jacques Chirac dissolved the National Assembly in April 1997 in an attempt to extend the conservative majority into the next century and to gain political support for reduced public spending. The president lost his gamble.

French Presidents and Prime Ministers Since 1958

FIGURE 6.1

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

Direct popular elections to the office have greatly augmented the legitimacy and political authority of the president. Instead of the indirect election called for by the 1958 constitution, a constitutional amendment approved by referendum in 1962 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.

De Gaulle outlined his view of the office when he said that power “emanates directly from the people, which implies that the Head of State, elected by the nation, is the source and holder of this power.” Every president who has succeeded de Gaulle has maintained the general’s basic interpretation of the office. But, as we shall see, there have been some changes in the way the presidency has functioned. The **prime minister** is appointed by the president and has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the government. In fact, the division of responsibility within the executive, between the president and the prime minister, has varied not only with the personalities of those who hold both offices, but also with the conditions under which they serve.

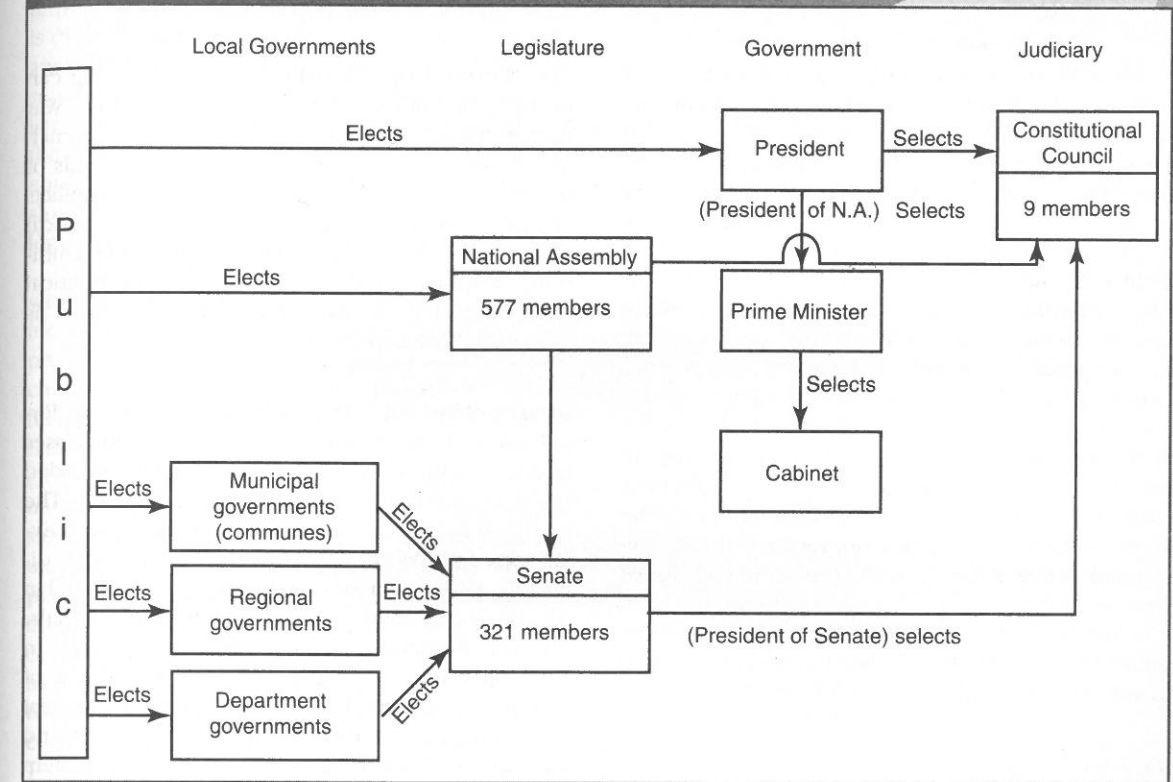
The Legislature

The legislature is composed of two houses: the National Assembly and the Senate (see Figure 6.2). The **National Assembly** of 577 members is elected directly for five years by all citizens over age 18. The government may dissolve the legislature at any time, though not twice within one year. Experts have attributed the instability of previous regimes mostly to the constant meddling of Parliament with the activities of the executive. The 1958 constitution strove to end the subordination of government to Parliament. It imposed strict rules of behavior on each deputy and on Parliament as a body. These requirements, it was hoped, would ensure the needed equilibrium.

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. The president, rather than the prime minister, generally chooses the Cabinet members, although this tends to be merely formal during periods of cohabitation. Parliament still enacts laws, but the

Structure of the French Government

FIGURE 6.2



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 nineteen standing committees of the National Assembly under the Fourth Republic were reduced to six in 1958. The sizes of the committees were enlarged to 73 to 145 members. This prevents 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.

It is not surprising that the new constitution detailed the conditions under which the National Assembly could overthrow a government. More than one-half of the actual members of the house must formulate and pass an explicit motion of censure. 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. During the first year after these elections, a new dissolution of the Assembly is prohibited by the constitution. The vote of censure is the only way Parliament can condemn the conduct of government, but no government has been censured since 1962. Since that time every government has had a working (if not always friendly) majority in the National Assembly.

Thus, the government maintains considerable control over the legislative agenda, the content of legislation, and the conditions under which Parliament can debate legislative proposals. However, amendments to the constitution passed in July 2008 shifted the balance in important ways to the majority party. The National Assembly now has the right to fix its own agenda (half the time), and in the future it may be easier for Parliament to amend legislation. The number of parliamentary committees has been increased from six to eight. The bills considered by Parliament will be those reported out and amended

by these committees, rather than those presented by the government (with a few exceptions).

The National Assembly shares legislative functions with the **Senate**. In all countries without a federal structure, the problem of how to organize a bicameral legislature is complex. How should the membership of the second chamber be defined if there are no territorial units to represent? 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 6.2).

The Judiciary

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.² Because of a constitutional amendment in 1974, however, the council now plays an important role in the legislative process. It is likely to play a more important judicial role as well because a constitutional amendment in 2008 gave the council appeal jurisdiction in cases in which the defendant claims that a law violates "rights and liberties" guaranteed by the constitution.

POLITICAL CULTURE

Themes of Political Culture

There are three ways that we 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 constantly superimposed on the conflicts of the present. This passionate use of historical memories—resulting in seemingly inflexible ambitions, warnings, and taboos—complicates political decisionmaking. 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. They seem to have no real quarrel with each other, but inherited symbols and their political and religious habits have kept them apart.³ 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 a self-reliant individual convinced that he is responsible to himself, and perhaps to his family, for what he was 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.

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 hope to constrain government authority, rather than encouraging 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 feels 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, dramatic conflicts couched in the language of mutually exclusive, radical ideologies—these are the experiences that excite the French at historical moments when their minds are particularly malleable. In fact, what an outsider perceives as permanent instability is a fairly regular alternation between brief crises and prolonged periods of routine. 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—usually more than once—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.

In the years immediately following 1958, the reaction to the constitution of the Fifth Republic resembled the reaction to previous French constitutions. Support for its institutions was generally limited to voters who supported the governments of the day. This began to change after 1962, with the popular election of the president. The election of Mitterrand to the presidency in 1981 and the peaceful transfer of power from a right to a left majority in the National Assembly laid to rest the 200-year-old constitutional

debate among French elites. It proved to be the capstone of acceptance of the institutions of the Fifth Republic among the masses of French citizens.

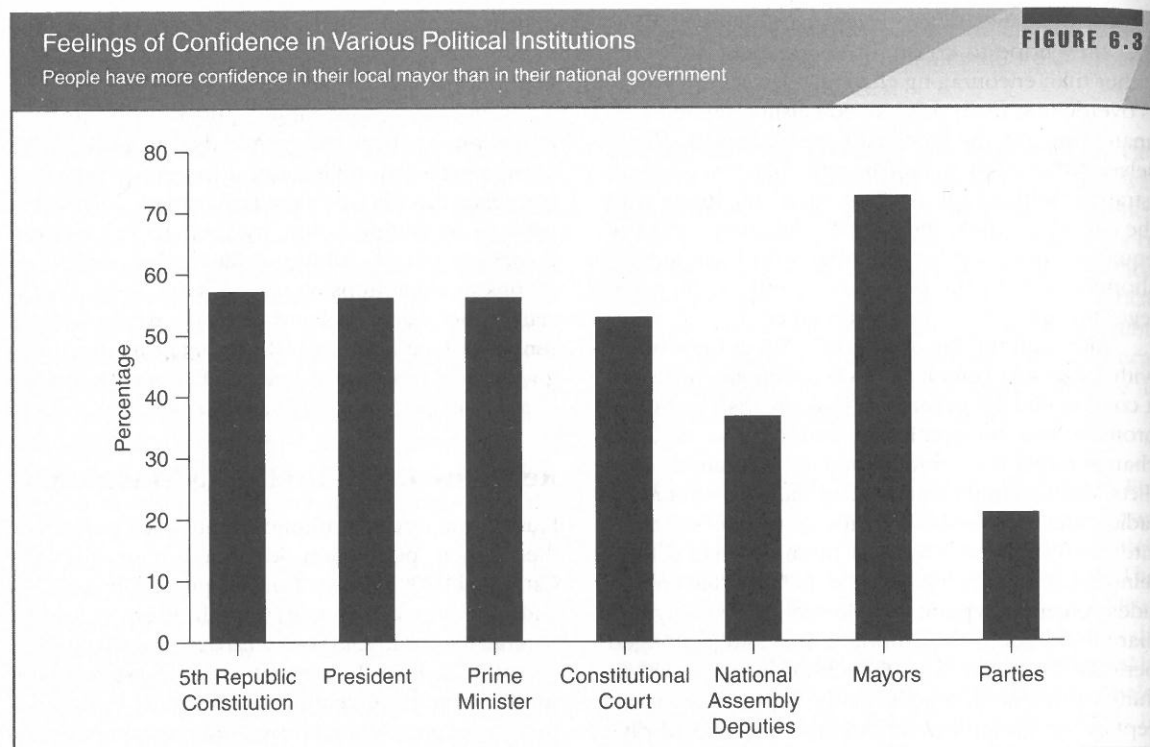
Confidence in the Fifth Republic's constitutional institutions has been strong. And despite growing disillusionment with politicians, it has grown stronger. Moreover, there is little significant variation in trust in institutions among voters by their party identity.⁴ French people invariably give the highest confidence ratings to institutions closest to them: to local officials, rather than to political parties or national representatives (see Figure 6.3). In recent years 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—68 percent of the French population identified themselves as Catholic in 2002 (down from 87 percent in 1974)—and a country that the Church itself considers "dechristianized." Of those who describe themselves as Catholic, only 10 percent attend mass regularly (down from 21 percent in 1974), and 84 percent either never go to church or go only occasionally for ceremonies such as baptism or marriage.⁵

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. After a few years, 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 who voted for the separation laws in 1905. As in other European Catholic countries, the difference between the political right and



Source: Sofres, *LEt et de l'Opinion 2001* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 81.

left was largely determined by attitudes toward the Catholic Church.

The gap between Catholics and agnostics narrowed during the interwar period and after they found themselves working side by side in the resistance movement during World War II. Nevertheless, the depth of religious practice continues to be one of the best predictors of whether a voter will support an established party of the right.

Religious practice has been declining in France and many other industrialized countries since the 1950s. Less than 10 percent of the French population attends church regularly (once a week) today. Farmers are the most observant group, but their church attendance is only 23 percent. Blue-collar workers are the least observant: Now only 4 percent admit to attending church regularly.

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. In 2000 there were half the number of Catholic priests as in 1960 and a 75 percent decline of ordinations. 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 2008, 13 percent of primary schools and 31 percent of secondary schools were private.

French Jews (numbering about 600,000, or about 1 percent of the population) are sufficiently well integrated into French society that 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. However, attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions—mostly by young Maghrebians in mixed areas of large cities—increased dramatically in parallel with the emergence of the second intifada in the Middle East (2000–2002), but have since declined. These incidents were 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, in Paris, and in 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 in the same 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 **Muslims** in France, two-thirds of whom are immigrants or their descendants from Muslim 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 Muslim countries.

There are now over a thousand mosques in France, as well as another thousand prayer rooms. 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 average for the general population. More than 70 percent of those who identify as Muslims say that they attend services only occasionally.⁶

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 widely debated, but it was also strongly supported by the French public. A sample of Muslim women surveyed two months before the law was passed also supported it.

Another response was the 2008 rejection by the administrative court (the Conseil d'Etat) of a citizenship application from a Moroccan woman who wore a burqa (a full-body covering), and was married to a man who was a French citizen. The court based the decision on what it termed practices “incompatible with essential values of the French community, notably with the principle of equality of the sexes.”

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that surveys in 2006 indicated that French Muslims are better integrated than are those in other European countries (Britain and Germany, for example).⁷ They have the strongest primary identity as French, rather than Muslim; the strongest commitment to “adopt national customs,” rather than remaining distinct (78 percent); and the most favorable view of their fellow citizens who are Christian and 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.

The number of citizens who are conscious of belonging to a social class is relatively high in France, particularly among workers. About two-thirds of workers in 2002 self-identified as working class.⁸ There is some evidence that spontaneous class identity has been declining. However, a 1997 study showed an enduring and even a growing sense of class among white-collar workers and middle managers. In 2002 all social groups expressed a sentiment of belonging to a social class that was as high as or higher than that of workers.

Economic and social transformations have not eradicated subjective feelings about class differences and class antagonism. Indeed, periodic strike

movements intensify class feelings and commitments to act. A survey in April 2006 revealed that half of those polled were prepared to participate in a demonstration to defend their ideas. In addition, as the number of immigrant workers among the least qualified workers has grown, traditional class differences are reinforced by a growing sense of racial and ethnic differences.

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

French political attitudes have been shaped through experience with the political system, as well as through some key institutions and agents. Some agents, such as political associations, act to socialize political values quite directly, while others, such as the family and the media, act in a more indirect manner.

In an old country like France, agents of political socialization change slowly, even when regimes change rapidly. Socializing agents are carriers of a broader cultural tradition. Like any other teaching process, political socialization passes on from one generation to the next "a mixture of attitudes developed in a mixture of historical periods." But "traditions, everyone agrees, do not form a constituted and fixed set of values, of knowledge and of representations; socialization never functions as a simple mechanism of identical reproduction [but rather as] an important instrument for the reorganization and the reinvention of tradition."⁹

Family

For those French who view their neighbors and fellow citizens with distrust and the institutions around them with cynicism, the family is a safe haven. Concern for stability, steady income, property, and continuity were common to bourgeois and peasant families, though not to urban or agricultural workers. The training of children in bourgeois and peasant families was often marked by close supervision, incessant correction, and strict sanctions.

Particularly during the last forty years, the life of the French family, the role of its members, and its relationship to outsiders have undergone fundamental, and sometimes contradictory, changes. Very few people condemn the idea of couples living together without being married. In 2001, 44 percent of all births were outside of marriage (compared with 6 percent in 1968), a percentage only slightly lower

than in the United States and higher than almost any other European country. The proportion of births outside of marriage is highest among women outside of the labor force and working-class women (with the notable exception of immigrant women). Very few of these children are in one-parent families, however. In virtually all cases, they are legally recognized by both parents before their first birthday. Nevertheless, 18 percent of young people below age 25 lived with only one of their natural parents in 2005, mostly due to divorce. The number of divorces was more than 40 percent of the number of marriages in 2000, and it has almost doubled since 1976, when new and more flexible divorce legislation came into effect.

Legislative changes have only gradually modified the legal restrictions on married women that existed in the Napoléonic legal codes. Not until 1970 did the law proclaim the absolute equality of the two parents in the exercise of parental authority and for the moral and material management of the family. Labor-saving devices for house and farm are described as the "secret agents of modernity" in the countryside.¹⁰ Almost half of all women over age 15 are now employed, and 80 percent of French women between the ages of 25 and 49 are now working during their adult years.

The employment of more married women has affected the family's role as a vehicle of socialization. Working women differ from those who are not employed in regard to religious practice, political interest, electoral participation, party preference, and so on. In their attitudinal orientations, employed women are far closer to the men of the same milieu, class, or age group to which they belong than to women who are not employed.¹¹

Although family structure, values, and behavior have changed, the family remains an important structure through which political values broadly conceived are transmitted from generation to generation. Several studies demonstrate a significant influence of parents over the religious socialization and the left-right political choices made by their children.¹²

There is perhaps no greater tribute to the continuing effectiveness of the French family than the results of a survey of French youth in 1994. With 25 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds unemployed, it was hardly surprising that 78 percent of young people had little confidence in the schools' ability to prepare them for the future. More surprising, more than 75 percent felt that their parents had confidence in them, that they were loved at home, and that their families had prepared

them well for the future. In a survey taken in 1999, the family was ranked second only to school as a source of deep and durable friendship.

The effectiveness of the family in socializing general religious and ideological orientations does not mean that succeeding generations do not have formative experiences of their own or that there are no significant political differences by age. Therefore, political socialization is a product not only of the family experiences, but also of childhood experiences with peers, education, and the changing larger world. For instance, young people of Algerian origin, born in France, are somewhat more likely than their counterparts of French origin to practice their faith, but far less likely than their counterparts born in Algeria to practice their faith. Nevertheless, young people of Algerian origin were more likely to practice their religion in 2005 than they were in 1995.¹³

Associations and Socialization

The French bias against authority might have encouraged social groups and associations if the egalitarian thrust and the competition among individuals did not work in the opposite direction. The French ambivalence about participation in group life is not merely negativistic apathy, but also reflects a lack of belief in the value of cooperation. On the one hand, this cultural ambivalence is reinforced by legal restrictions on associational life, as well as by a strong republican tradition hostile to groups serving as intermediaries between the people and the state. On the other hand, the state and local governments traditionally subsidize numerous associations (including trade unions). Some associations (not always the same ones that were subsidized) receive privileged access to decisionmaking power.

After World War II, *overall* membership in associations in France was comparable to that in other European countries, but lower than in the United States. However, group membership in France was concentrated in politicized associations that reinforced existing social divisions and was less common for independent social and fraternal groups. Membership in key professional organizations, especially trade unions, was much lower in France than in other European countries.

The number of associations has sharply increased over the past two decades, while the overall percentage of membership among the adult population has remained relatively constant. In a 2002

survey, 36 percent claimed to belong to one or more associations. This percentage has increased during the last thirty years, but has remained about the same for the last decade.

The pattern of association membership, however, has changed considerably. The traditional advocacy and political groups, politicized unions, and professional associations suffered sharp declines in absolute (and proportional) membership. Sports associations, self-help groups, and newly established ethnic associations now attract larger numbers of people. As more middle-class people have joined associations, working-class people have dropped out.¹⁴

To some extent these changes reflect shifting attitudes about political commitment in France. Although associational life remains strong, *militantisme* (voluntary work, with its implication of deep and abiding commitment) has clearly diminished. Older advocacy and professional associations that were built on this kind of commitment have declined. Newer groups are built on different and often more limited commitment.

New legislation has also produced changes. A 1981 law made it possible for immigrant groups to form their own organizations. This encouraged the emergence of thousands of ethnic associations. Decentralization legislation passed a few years later encouraged municipalities to support the creation of local associations, some to perform municipal services.

Even with these changing patterns, there remain uncertainties about the role of associations, old and new, in the socialization process. Some observers seem to confirm that membership in French organizations involves less actual participation than in American or British organizations and hence has less impact on social and political attitudes. Cultural distrust is manifest less in lower overall membership than in the inability of organizational leaders to relate to their members and to mobilize them for action.

Education

One of the most important ways a community preserves and transmits its values is through education. Napoléon Bonaparte recognized the significance of education. Well into the second half of the twentieth century, the French educational system remained an imposing historical monument, in the unmistakable style of the First Empire. The edifice Napoléon erected combined education at all levels, from primary school to postgraduate professional training,

into one centralized corporation: the imperial university. Its job was to teach the national doctrine through uniform programs at various levels.

As the strict military discipline of the Napoléonic model was loosened by succeeding regimes, each has discovered that the machinery created by Napoléon was a convenient and coherent instrument for transmitting the values—both changing and permanent—of French civilization. The centralized imperial university has therefore never been truly dismantled. The minister of education presides over a ministry that employs more than a million people and controls curriculums and teaching methods, the criteria for selection and advancement of pupils and teachers, and the content of examinations.

Making advancement at every step dependent on passing an examination is not peculiar to France (it is also found in Japan and other countries). What is distinctly French is an obsessive belief that everybody is equal before an examination. The idea that education is an effective weapon for emancipation and social betterment has had popular as well as official recognition. The **baccalauréat**—the certificate of completion of the academic secondary school, the *lycée*—remains almost the sole means of access to higher education. Such a system suits and profits best those self-motivated middle-class children for whom it was designed.

Nevertheless, during the Fifth Republic, the structure of the French educational system has undergone significant change. The secondary schools, which trained only 700,000 students as late as 1945, now provide instruction for 5.5 million. Between 1958 and 2007, the number of students in higher education rose from 170,000 to 2.3 million. By 2006 the proportion of 20- to 24-year-olds in higher education (40 percent) was comparable to that in any other European country.¹⁵

The introduction of a comprehensive middle school with a common core curriculum in 1963 basically altered the system of early academic selection. Other reforms eliminated rigid ability tracking. However, the implementation of reforms, whether passed by governments of the right or the left, has often faced difficult opposition from middle-class parents and from teachers' unions of the left.¹⁶ Although more than 80 percent of the students who sat for the examination passed the *baccalauréat* in 2006 (more than double the proportion of 1980), education reforms have altered only slightly the vast differences in the success of children from different social backgrounds.

Because of the principle of open admission, every holder of the *baccalauréat* can gain entrance to a university. There is, as in some American state universities, a rather ruthless elimination at the end of the first year (particularly for students in such fields as medicine) and sometimes later. Students of lower-class backgrounds typically fare worse than the others. In addition, the number of students from such backgrounds is disproportionately large in fields in which diplomas have the lowest value in the professional market and in which unemployment is greatest.

The most ambitious attempt to reform the university system came in the wake of the student rebellion of 1968, followed by other reforms in the 1970s and 1980s. They strove to encourage the autonomy of each university; the participation of teachers, students, and staff in the running of the university; and the collaboration among different disciplines. The government subsequently withdrew some of the reforms. Others failed to be implemented because of widespread resistance by those concerned. Administrative autonomy has remained fragmentary, as the ministry has held the financial purse strings, as well as the right to grant degrees. Today the widely lamented crisis of the university system has hardly been alleviated, although the size of the student population appears to have stabilized.

Since 2003 the most important symbolic change in French higher education has been the introduction of affirmative action programs for students in "priority education zones"—schools in poor areas, generally in or near larger cities. Some of the elite institutions of higher education (Sciences-Po in Paris, for example) have created links to some of these schools and have established special conditions of admission for their best students. Although these programs involve only a handful of students, these experiments are important because they represent the first affirmative effort to integrate potential leaders from immigrant communities into the French system (which we will discuss later).

An additional characteristic of the French system of higher education is the parallel system of **grandes écoles**, a sector of higher education that functions outside of the network of universities under rules that permit a high degree of selectivity. As university enrollment has multiplied, the more prestigious *grandes écoles* have only modestly increased the number of students admitted upon strict entrance examinations.¹⁷ For more than a century, the *grandes écoles* have been the training ground of highly specialized elites. These schools prepare students for

careers in engineering, business management, and the top ranks of the civil service. Their different recruitment of students and of teaching staffs, as well as their teaching methods, influences the outlook and even the temperament of many of their graduates. In contrast to university graduates, virtually all graduates of the *grandes écoles* find employment and often assume positions of great responsibility.

Socialization and Communication

The political effectiveness of the mass media is often determined by the way in which people appraise the media's integrity and whether they believe that the media serve or disturb the functioning of the political system. In the past business firms, political parties, and governments (both French and foreign) often backed major newspapers. Today the press operates under the same conditions as it does in other Western democracies. Most newspapers and magazines are owned by business enterprises, many of them conglomerates that extend into fields other than periodical publications.

In spite of a growth in population, the number of daily newspapers and their circulation have declined since World War II. The decline in readership, a common phenomenon in most European democracies, is due to competition from other media, such as television, radio, and the Internet.

Television has replaced all other media as a primary source of political information in France and other Western democracies.¹⁸ It is increasingly the primary mediator between political forces and individual citizens, and it has an impact on the organization and substance of politics. First, a personality that plays well on television (not just a unique personality such as Charles de Gaulle) is now an essential ingredient of politics. As in other countries, image and spectacle are important elements of politics. Second, television helps set the agenda of political issues by choosing among the great variety of themes, problems, and issues dealt with by political and social forces and by magnifying them for the public. Finally, television now provides the arena for national electoral campaigns, largely displacing mass rallies and meetings.

Confidence in various sources of political information varies among different groups. Young people and shopkeepers are most confident in radio and television information, while managers are more confident in the written press than television for political information.

Until 1982 all radio and television stations that originated programs on French territory were owned by the state and operated by personnel whom the state appointed and remunerated. Since then the system of state monopoly gradually has been dismantled. As a first and quite important step, the Socialist government authorized private radio stations. This move attempted to regularize and regulate more than a thousand existing pirate radio stations. Inevitably, this vast network of 1,600 stations was consolidated by private entrepreneurs who provide programming services and in some instances control of a large number of local stations.

The 1982 legislation also reorganized the public television system. It granted new rights of reply to government communications and allotted free time to all political parties during electoral campaigns. During the following years, however, even greater changes were produced by a process of gradual privatization and globalization of television broadcasting. Today as many as 900 television channels from throughout the world are available to French viewers (depending on the system that they choose), compared with 3 in 1980 and 30 in 1990.

RECRUITMENT AND STYLE OF ELITES

Until the Fifth Republic, Parliament provided the core of French decisionmakers. Besides members of Parliament, elected officers of municipalities or departments, some local party leaders, and a few journalists of national renown are counted among what is known in France as the **political class**. Altogether they comprise not more than 15,000 or 20,000 people. All gravitated toward the halls of the National Assembly or the Senate. From about 1879 on, professionals (lawyers, doctors, and journalists) dominated the Chamber of Deputies, now called the National Assembly. The vast majority were local notables, trained in law and experienced in local administration.

A substantial change in political recruitment occurred during the Fourth Republic, when the percentages of self-employed and farmers became a minority. The steadily diminishing share of blue- and white-collar workers during the Fifth Republic is due partially to the professionalization of parliamentary personnel, as well as to the decline of the Communist Party.

Strikingly, a large number of legislators now come from the public sector: almost half the deputies in the 1980s and 32 percent after the victory of the right in 2007. The number of top civil servants in the

National Assembly has risen constantly since 1958, and the left landslide of 1981 accentuated this process. Although the majority of high civil servants usually lean toward parties of the right, more than half of those who sat in the National Assembly elected in 2007 were part of the Socialist group.

Even more important than their number is the political weight that these deputy-bureaucrats carry in Parliament. Some of the civil servants who run for election to Parliament have previously held positions in the political executive, either as members of the ministerial staffs or as junior ministers. Not surprisingly, they are frequently candidates for a post in the Cabinet.

More than in any other Western democracy, the highest ranks of the civil service are the training and recruitment grounds for top positions in both politics and industry. Among the high civil servants, about 3,400 are members of the most important administrative agencies, the five **grands corps**, from which the vast majority of the roughly 500 administrators engaged in political decisionmaking are drawn.¹⁹ The recruitment base of the highest levels of the civil service remains extremely narrow. The knowledge and capability required to pass the various examinations give clear advantages to the children of senior civil servants. As a result, the ranking bureaucracy forms something approaching a hereditary class. Past attempts to develop a system of more open recruitment into the higher civil service have been only marginally successful.

The **École Nationale d'Administration (ENA)** and the **École Polytechnique**, together with the other *grandes écoles*, play an essential role in the recruitment of administrative, political, and business elites. Virtually all the members of the *grands corps* are recruited directly from the graduating classes of the ENA and the Polytechnique. What differentiates the members of the *grands corps* from other ranking administrators is their general competence and mobility. At any one time, as many as two-thirds of the members of these corps might be on leave or on special missions to other administrative agencies or special assignments to positions of influence.

They might also be engaged in politics as members of Parliament (thirty-seven in the National Assembly elected in 2007), local government, or the executive. Twelve of the eighteen prime ministers who have served since 1959 were members of a *grand corps* and attended a *grande école*. The percentage of ministers in any given government who belong to the *grands corps* has varied between 10 and 60 percent. When Jean-Pierre Raffarin became prime minister in

April 2002, he was widely described as an "outsider," in part because his political career had been primarily in the provinces and in part because he had *not* been a student at the ENA. One study calculates that 40 percent of those who graduated from the ENA between 1960 and 1990 served as ministerial advisors. Thus, the *grandes écoles*–*grands corps* group, though small in membership, produces a remarkable proportion of the country's political elite.

The same system is increasingly important in recruiting top-level business executives. Members of the *grands corps* can move from the public sector to the private sector because they can go on leave for years, while they retain their seniority, their pension rights, and the right to return to their job. (Few who leave do in fact return to serve as civil servants.)²⁰ In 2007, 75 percent of the members of the executive boards of the 40 largest companies in France were graduates of a *grande école*. In the early 1990s, 17 percent of all ENA graduates were working in French industry. Moreover, though the number of ENA graduates is small (about 170 a year), it is three times larger now than in the early 1960s.

The relationship between the *grandes écoles* and the *grands corps*, on the one hand, and politics and business, on the other hand, provides structure for an influential elite and survives changes in the political orientation of governments. While this system is not politically monolithic, the narrowness of its recruitment contributes to a persistent similarity of style and operation and to the fairly stable—at times rigid—value system of its operators.

For outsiders this tight network is difficult to penetrate. Even during the 1980s—the period when industrial restructuring and privatization of state-run enterprises encouraged a new breed of freewheeling businesspeople in the United States and in Britain—a similar process had a very limited impact on the recruitment of new elites in France.

The Importance of Gender

The representation of women among French political elites is almost the lowest in Western Europe. Women make up well over half the electorate, but were barely 18.5 percent of the deputies in the National Assembly in 2007 and only 18.2 percent of Senate members in 2008. Women fare better at the local level, where they made up 32 percent of the municipal councilors and 12 percent of the mayors elected in 2001, 50 percent more than six years before.

Political parties structure access to political representation far more in France than in the United States. The left has generally made a greater effort to recruit women than has the right. Thus, when the Socialists and Communists gained a substantial number of seats in the 1997 legislative elections, the proportion of women in the National Assembly almost doubled.

In contrast to the United States, political advancement in France generally requires a deep involvement in political parties, with a bias in favor of professional politicians and administrators. However, relatively few women have made this kind of long-term commitment to political life.

One woman who has is **Ségolène Royal**. A graduate of the ENA and a member of the Council of State (one of the five *grands corps*), she has also been a Socialist government minister, a deputy in the National Assembly, and president of one of the regions of France. She was the (defeated) Socialist candidate for the presidential elections in 2007. In addition, the present national secretary (and 2007 presidential candidate) of the French Communist Party is a woman, as is the president of the employers' confederation, the *Mouvement des Entreprises de France* (MEDEF).

Periodically, governments and the political parties recognize this dearth of women in representative institutions, but little has been done about it. The Constitutional Council has rejected some remedies, and some proposed reforms have challenged accepted institutional norms. By the 1990s leaders of all political parties favored amending the constitution to permit positive discrimination to produce greater gender parity in representative institutions. Thus, with support of both the president of the Republic and the prime minister and without dissent, the National Assembly passed an amendment in December 1998 stipulating that "the law [and not the constitution] determines the conditions for the organization of equal access of men and women to electoral mandates and elective functions." Enforcement legislation requires greater gender parity, at least in the selection of candidates. This is a significant departure for the French political system, which has resisted the use of quotas in the name of equality. As a result of this parity legislation, the number of women in the 2007 National Assembly actually increased modestly, from 10.2 percent in 2000 to 18.5 in 2007.

Perhaps the most important change in the political behavior of French women is in the way they vote. During the Fourth Republic, a majority of women consistently voted for parties of the right. However, as

church attendance among women has declined, their political orientation has moved from right to left. In every national election between 1986 and 1997, a clear majority of women voted for the left. By 2002, however, the pattern of voting among women changed. In both 2002 and 2007, women supported both Chirac and Sarkozy more than men, even though Sarkozy's opponent in 2007 was a woman. On the other hand, women have given far less support than men to the extreme right.²¹

INTEREST GROUPS

The Expression of Interests

As in many other European countries, the organization of French political life is largely defined within the historical cleavages of class and religious traditions. Interest groups have therefore frequently shared ideological commitments with the political parties with which they have organizational connections.

Actual memberships in most economic associations have varied considerably over time by sector, but they are generally much smaller than comparable groups in other industrialized countries. In 2005 no more than 8 percent of workers belonged to trade unions (the largest decline in Western Europe over the past twenty-five years). About 50 percent of French farmers and 75 percent of large industrial enterprises belong to their respective organizations.²²

Historically, many of the important economic groups have experienced a surge of new members at dramatic moments in the country's social or political history. But membership then declines as conditions normalize, leaving some associations with a membership too small to justify their claims of representativeness.

Many groups lack the resources to employ a competent staff, or they depend on direct and indirect forms of state support. The modern interest group official is a fairly recent phenomenon that is found only in certain sectors of the group system, such as business associations.

Interest groups are also weakened by ideological division. Separate groups defending the interests of workers, farmers, veterans, schoolchildren, and consumers are divided by ideological preferences. The ideological division of representation forces each organization to compete for the same clientele in order to establish its representativeness. Consequently, even

established French interest groups exhibit a radicalism in action and goals that is rare in other Western democracies. For groups that lack the means of using the information media, such tactics also become a way to put their case before the public at large. In such a setting, even the defense of purely economic, social, or cultural interests takes on a political color.

The Labor Movement

The French labor movement is divided into national confederations of differing political sympathies, although historical experiences have driven labor to avoid direct organizational ties with political parties.²³ Union membership has declined steeply since 1975, but there are indications that the decline has leveled off. Although union membership is declining in almost every industrialized country, it is now the lowest by far in France (see Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3). The youngest salaried workers virtually deserted the trade union movement in the 1990s. Although the decline in membership has slowed slightly in recent years, recruitment of young workers has lagged. In addition, after 1990, candidates supported by nonunion groups in various plant-level elections have attracted more votes than any of the established union organizations.²⁴ In fact, unions lost members and (electoral) support at the very time when the French trade union movement was becoming better institutionalized at the workplace and better protected by legislation.

Despite these clear weaknesses, workers still maintain considerable confidence in unions to defend their interests during periods of labor conflict. Support for collective action and confidence in unions and their leadership of strike movements remain strong. Indeed, during the massive strikes—strikes of truckers and taxi drivers in 2000 and strikes against changes in civil service pensions in 2003, youth contracts in 2006 and long strikes in education in 2009—public support for the strikers was far higher than confidence in the government against which the strikes were directed.²⁵ However, even though there are occasional massive strikes in France, strike levels have declined over the past thirty years.

French labor has had the most difficulty dealing with ideological fragmentation. Indeed, the decline in union membership has not encouraged consolidation; rather, it has produced more fragmentation (as we will see in the following discussion). Unlike workers in the United States, French workers in the

same plant or firm may be represented by several union federations. As a result, there is constant competition among unions at every level for membership and support. Even during periods when the national unions agree to act together, animosities at the plant level sometimes prevent cooperation.

Moreover, the weakness of union organization at the plant level—which is where most lengthy strikes are called—means that unions are difficult bargaining partners. Unions at this level maintain only weak control over the strike weapon. Union militants are quite adept at sensitizing workers, producing the preconditions for strike action, and channeling strike movements once they begin. However, the unions have considerable difficulty in effectively calling strikes and ending them. Thus, unions depend heavily on the general environment, what they call the “social climate,” in order to support their positions at the bargaining table. Because their ability to mobilize workers at any given moment is an essential criterion of their representativeness, union ability to represent workers is frequently in question.

The left government passed legislation in 1982–1983 (the Auroux laws) to strengthen the unions' position at the plant level. By creating an “obligation to negotiate” for management and by protecting the right of expression for workers, the government hoped to stimulate collective negotiations. In fact, this act brought about important changes in industrial relations and stimulated collective negotiations. However, given their increasing weakness, unions have not taken full advantage of the potential benefits of the legislation. This law refocused French industrial relations on the plant level without necessarily increasing the effectiveness of unions.

The oldest and the largest of the union confederations is the **Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)** (General Confederation of Labor). Since World War II, the CGT has been identified closely with the Communist Party, with which it maintains a considerable overlap of leadership. Yet by tradition and by its relative effectiveness as a labor organization, it enrolls many non-Communists among its members. Its domination diminished in the 1990s, however, mostly because the CGT lost more members and support than all other unions.

The second largest labor organization in terms of membership is now the **Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT)** (French Democratic Confederation of Labor). In many ways the CFDT is the most original and the most interesting of

all labor movements in Western Europe. An offshoot of a Catholic trade union movement, the CFDT's earlier calls for worker self-management (*autogestion*) were integrated into the Auroux laws. The leaders of the CFDT see the policy of the confederation as an alternative to the oppositional stance of the CGT. The CFDT now offers itself as a potential partner to modern capitalist management.

This movement to the right created splits within several CFDT public service unions and resulted in the establishment of a national rival, the **Solidaire Unitaire et Démocratique (SUD)** (Solidarity United and Democratic), in 1989. The split was further accentuated by the CFDT's opposition to the massive public service strike of 1995. The SUD, in turn, was integrated into a larger group of twenty-seven militant autonomous civil service unions, **G-10** (le Groupe des dix), in 1998.

The third major labor confederation, **Force Ouvrière (FO)** (Workers' Force), was formed in 1948 in reaction to the Communist domination of the CGT. Although its membership is barely half that of the two other major confederations, the FO made gains in the 1990s. As the state moved to cut back benefits for civil servants, teachers, and railway workers, FO leadership adopted a more confrontational position with the state. During the strike movements of 1995 and 1996, FO leadership strongly supported the more radical elements of striking workers. Trotskyist elements of the left continue to hold considerable influence in the organization.

One of the most important and influential of the “autonomous” unions is the **Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale (FEN)** (Federation of National Education), the teachers' union. At the end of 1992, as a result of growing internal conflict and declining membership, the FEN split. The core FEN group continued. The rump of the FEN joined with other independent unions to form the **Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes (UNSA)** (National Union of Autonomous Unions). In October 1994 the UNSA was officially recognized by the government. In legal terms this means that the government placed the UNSA on the same level as the other national confederations. Nevertheless, by 1996 the FEN (and the UNSA) was substantially weakened when the rival **La Fédération Syndicale Unitaire (FSU)** (United Union Federation)—which is close to the Communist Party—gained greater support in social elections (elections for shop stewards, shop committees and union representatives), support that has been reaffirmed since then.

In addition to the fragmentation that results from differences within existing organizations, there are challenges from the outside. In 1995 the National Front organized several new unions. When the government and the courts blocked these initiatives, the extreme-right party began to penetrate existing unions.

Thus, at a time when strong opposition to government action seems to give union organizations an opportunity to increase both their organizational strength and their support, the trade union movement is more fragmented than ever. As in the past, massive strike movements have accentuated divisions and rivalries, rather than provoking unity.

Business Interests

Since the end of World War II, most trade associations and employers' organizations have kept within one dominant and exceptionally well staffed confederation, renamed in 1998 the **Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF)** (Movement of French Business). However, divergent interests, differing economic concepts, and conflicting ideologies frequently prevent the national organization from acting forcefully. At times this division hampers its representativeness in negotiations with government or trade unions. Nevertheless, the MEDEF weathered the difficult years of the **nationalization** introduced by the Socialists and the restructuring of social legislation and industrial relations without lessening its status as an influential interest group.

Since the MEDEF is dominated primarily by big business, shopkeepers and the owners of many small firms feel that they are better defended by more movement-oriented groups.²⁶ As a result, a succession of small business and shopkeeper movements has challenged the established organization and has evolved into organized associations in their own right.

Agricultural Interests

The defense of agricultural interests has a long record of internal strife. However, under the Fifth Republic, the **Fédération Nationale des Syndicats Agricoles (FNSEA)** (National Federation of Agricultural Unions) is the dominant group among several farm organizations. The FNSEA has also served as an effective instrument for modernizing French agriculture.

The rural reform legislation of the 1960s provided for the “collaboration of the professional agricultural organizations,” and from the outset real

collaboration was offered only to the FNSEA. From this privileged position, the federation gained both patronage and control over key institutions that were transforming agriculture. It used these instruments to organize a large proportion of French farmers. After establishing its domination over the farming sector with the support of the government, it then periodically demonstrated opposition to government policy with the support of the vast majority of a declining number of farmers.²⁷

The principal challenges to the FNSEA in recent years are external, rather than internal. The agricultural sector has suffered from the fruits of its own productive success. Under pressure from the EU, France agreed in 1992 to major reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that took substantial amounts of land out of production and replaced some price supports with direct payments to farmers. That same year the EU reached an agreement with the United States that the EU would reduce subsidized grain exports and cut back cultivation of oilseed products. France is the largest exporter of these products in the EU. FNSEA protests (some of them violent) were joined by farm unions from throughout the EU. This ultimately resulted in a face-saving General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) accord in 1994. The enlargement of the EU toward the East has heightened pressures to further reduce the budget of CAP. The substantial opposition in France (and other parts of Europe) to the importation of genetically modified agricultural products has increased the tensions within the World Trade Organization (WTO) (formerly GATT).

However, the more substantial issue for the WTO is agreement on the reduction of export subsidies for European and American agricultural products. Poorer countries have demanded the reduction of such subsidies for a long time. In 2007 and again in 2008, the Doha Round of trade negotiations broke down in part over this issue, the first time such multilateral trade negotiations have failed since World War II. The breakdown has been blamed on several factors, but specifically on the influence of agricultural groups in both France and the United States.

French organized interests are expressed through an impressive range of different kinds of organizations, from the weak and fragmented trade union movement to the well-organized FNSEA. Overall, what seems to differentiate French groups from those of other industrial countries is their style of expression and their forms of activity.

Means of Access and Styles of Action

In preceding regimes organized interests saw Parliament as the most convenient means of access to political power. During the Third and Fourth Republics, the highly specialized and powerful parliamentary committees often seemed to be little more than institutional facades for interest groups that frequently substituted bills of their own design for those submitted by the government.

Among the reasons given in 1958 for reforming and rationalizing Parliament was the desire to reduce the role of organized interests in the legislative process. By and large this has been accomplished. But interest groups have not lost all influence on rulemaking and policy formation. To be effective groups now use the channels that the best-equipped groups have long found most rewarding, channels that give them direct access to the administration. The indispensable collaboration between organized private interests and the state is institutionalized in advisory committees that are attached to most administrative agencies. These committees are composed mainly of civil servants and group representatives. Nonetheless, tendencies toward privileged access, sometimes called **neocorporatism** (democratic corporatism) (see Chapter 3), have, except in the areas of agriculture and big business, remained weak in France.

The weak organization of labor and small business means that these organizations are often regarded as unreliable partners. Organized interests also attempt to pressure the political executive. The ministerial staffs—those circles of personal collaborators who support every minister—are an important target. The strengthened position of the political executive enables both the prime minister and the president to function more effectively as arbiters between competing claims and to exercise stricter control over many agencies and ministries.

It is not surprising that some interests have easier access to government bureaus than others. An affinity of views between group representatives and public administrators might be based on common outlook, common social origin, or education. The official of an important trade association or its national association who sorts out the raw demands of constituents and submits them in rational fashion easily gets a more sympathetic hearing than the official of an organization that defends atomistic interests by mobilizing latent resentment.

High civil servants tend to distinguish between “professional organizations,” which they consider serious enough to listen to, and “interest groups,” which should be kept at a distance. The perspectives of interest representatives tend to reflect their own strength, as well as their experience in collaborating with different parts of the state and government. Trade union representatives acknowledge their reliance on the social climate (essentially the level of strike activity) to bargain effectively with the state. Representatives of business rely more on contacts with civil servants. Agricultural interests say that they rely more on contacts at the ministerial level.²⁸

Central to the state interest group collaboration described as neocorporatism is the notion that the state plays a key role in both shaping and defining the legitimacy of the interest group universe. The state also establishes the rules by which the collaboration takes place. The French state, at various levels, strongly influences the relationship among groups and even their existence in key areas through official recognition and subsidies. Although representative organizations may exist with or without official recognition, this designation gives them access to consultative bodies, the right to sign collective agreements (especially important in the case of trade unions), and the right to obtain certain subsidies. Therefore, recognition is an important tool that both conservative and Socialist governments have used to influence the group universe.

The French state subsidizes interest groups, both indirectly and directly. By favoring some groups over others in these ways, the state seems to conform to neocorporatist criteria. However, in other ways the neocorporatist model is less applicable in France than in other European countries. Neocorporatist policy-making presumes close collaboration between the state administration and a dominant interest group (or coalition of groups) in major socioeconomic sectors. Yet, what stands out in the French case is the unevenness of this pattern of collaboration.²⁹

If the neocorporatist pattern calls for interest group leaders to control organizational action and coordinate bargaining, the French interest groups’ mass actions—such as street demonstrations, “wild-cat” strikes, and attacks on government property—are often poorly controlled by group leadership. Indeed, it can be argued that group protest is more effective in France (at least negatively) than in other industrialized countries because it is part of a pattern of group-state relations.

Protests are limited in scope and intensity, but the government recognizes them as a valid expression of interest. In April 2006 half of those surveyed said that they were prepared to take part in such direct action. This explains why governments backed by a majority in Parliament frequently make concessions to weakly organized interest groups. In the spring of 2006, for example, legislation that created a new labor contract was passed by Parliament and signed by the president, but withdrawn after weeks of growing protests and occupations by students that threatened the stability of the government (see Box 6.1).³⁰

POLITICAL PARTIES

The Traditional Party System

Some analysts of elections see a chronic and seemingly unalterable division of the French into two large political families, each motivated by a different mood or temperament and usually classified as the right and the left. If we view elections from this perspective, political alignments have remained surprisingly stable over long periods of history. As late as 1962, the opposition to de Gaulle was strongest in departments where republican traditions had a solid foundation for more than a century. The alignments in the presidential contest of 1974 and the parliamentary elections of 1978 mirrored the same divisions. Soon thereafter, however, the left’s inroads into formerly conservative strongholds changed the traditional geographic distribution of votes. Majorities changed at each legislative election between 1981 and 2002, and few departments now remain solid bastions for either the right or the left.

The electoral system of the Fifth Republic favors a simplification of political alignments. In most constituencies runoff elections result in the confrontation of two candidates, each typically representing one of the two camps. A simple and stable division could have resulted long ago in a pattern of two parties or coalitions alternating in having power and being in opposition—and hence giving valid expression to the voters’ opinions. Why has this not occurred?

Except for the Socialists and the Communists, and more recently the RPR (Rally for the Republic—now the UMP—see below), French political parties have mostly remained weakly organized. French parties developed in a mainly preindustrial and preurban environment, catering at first to upper-middle-class and

Protest in France

BOX 6.1

During the Socialist governments of the 1980s, more and more people—farmers, artisans, people in small businesses, truckers, doctors, medical students—took to the streets to protest impending legislation, often out of fear for their status. The demonstrations frequently led to violence and near riots. The same scenario took place later under conservative governments. Demonstrations by college and high school students forced the withdrawal of a planned university reform in 1987. A planned imposition of a “youth” minimum wage in 1994, ostensibly to encourage more employment of young people, was dropped when high school students opposed it in the streets of Paris and other large cities. After a month of public service strikes and massive demonstrations in 1995, the new Chirac government abandoned a plan to reorganize the nationalized railway system

later to middle-class voters. Their foremost and sometimes only function was to provide a framework for selecting and electing candidates for local, departmental, and national offices. Even among the better organized parties, party organization has been both fragmentary at the national level and local in orientation, with only modest linkage between the two levels.

This form of representation and party organization survives largely because voters support it. An electorate that distrusts authority and wants protection against arbitrary government is likely to be suspicious of parties organized for political reform. For all their antagonism, the republican and antirepublican traditions have one thing in common: their aversion to well-established and strongly organized parties.

Party membership has always been low except during short and dramatic situations. As late as the 1960s, no more than 2 percent of registered voters were party members. In Britain and Germany, for example, some parties have had more than a million members, a membership level never achieved by any French political party. Organizational weakness contributes to the endurance of a multiparty system.

In a two- or three-party system, major parties normally move toward the political center in order to gain stability and cohesion. But where extreme party plurality prevails, the center is unable to become a political force. In France centrist coalitions were an

and revised a plan to reorganize the civil service. A year later striking truckers won major concessions from a still weakened government. In the autumn of 2000, a protest led by truckers and taxi drivers (that spread to England) against the rising price of oil and gasoline forced the government to lower consumer taxes on fuel. Finally, in 2006 the government passed legislation to establish a work contract (one among many) meant to encourage employers to hire young people under the age of 25 by making it easier to fire them during the first two years of their employment. After a three-month struggle of street demonstrations and school occupations by many of the same young people who were supposed to be the beneficiaries of the law (which was supported by all of the major trade unions and the major parties of the left—at least initially), the law was withdrawn.

effective, if limited, means of maintaining a regime in the Third and Fourth Republics, but an ineffective means of developing coherent policy.

The Fifth Republic created a new political framework that has had a major, if gradual and mostly unforeseen, influence on all parties and on their relationships to each other. The emerging party system, in turn, influenced the way that political institutions actually worked.³¹ The strengthening of parliamentary party discipline in the 1970s gave meaning to the strong executive leadership of president and prime minister and stabilized the political process. The main political parties also became the principal arenas in which to develop and debate alternative policies.

The main political parties still dominate the organization of parliamentary work and the selection of candidates, but they have become far less important as mass membership organizations. In 2002 at least seventy-nine parties or groups presented 8,424 candidates for 577 seats in the National Assembly, a record for the Fifth Republic. In 2007 the four main parties were supported by 78 percent of the electorate, with the National Front and the Greens attracting an additional 15 percent. If we include the National Front and the Greens, less than 10 percent of the electorate supported an array of issue-based and personality-based parties in 2007, a sharp decline compared with 2002. Nine parties are represented in the National

Assembly in four parliamentary groups, two in the right majority, two allied in the left opposition.

The Main Parties: The Right and Center

Union for a Popular Movement The **Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)** is the most recent direct lineal descendant of the Gaullist party. The original Gaullist party was hastily thrown together after de Gaulle's return to power in 1958. Only weeks after its birth, it won almost 18 percent of the vote and about 38 percent of the seats in the first Parliament of the new Republic in 1958 (see Table 6.1).

In several respects the new Gaullist party differed from the traditional conservative parties of the right. It appealed directly to a broad coalition of groups and classes, including a part of the working class. The party's leadership successfully built a membership that at one time reached several hundred thousand. Yet the membership's role was generally limited to appearing at mass meetings and assisting in propaganda efforts at election time. An important novelty was that the party's representatives in Parliament followed strict discipline in voting on policy. Electoral success increased with each contest until the landslide election—held after the massive strikes and student **demonstrations of May–June 1968**—enabled the Gaullists to hold a majority in the National Assembly. This achievement was never before attained under a republican regime in France.

For sixteen years (from 1958 to 1974) both the presidency and the prime ministership were in Gaullist hands. In 1974, after the death of both Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou, Valéry Giscard-d'Estaing was elected president. He was a prominent conservative who was not a Gaullist; thus, the Gaullist party's status deteriorated and electoral support declined.

For a time Jacques Chirac reversed the party's decline by restructuring it and renaming it the **Rally for the Republic (RPR)**. In fact, the RPR was quite different from its Gaullist predecessors. Although Chirac frequently invoked Gaullism as his inspiration, he avoided the populist language that had served the movement at its beginnings. The RPR appealed to a restricted, well-defined constituency of the right, similar to the classic conservative clientele. Its electorate overrepresented older, wealthier voters, as well as farmers (now included as the dominant part of the UMP electorate in Table 6.2). Its voters were most likely to define themselves as being on the right, antileft, positive

toward business and parochial schools, more likely to vote for personality than for ideas, and least supportive of a woman's right to abortion. After presiding over a government that dubbed itself neoliberal and that engaged in a round of privatization of previously nationalized industries between 1986 and 1988, Chirac set out to assure those who feared change.

The party's electoral level remained more or less stagnant in the 1980s. Even in the massive electoral victory for the right in 1993, when the conservative coalition gained 80 percent of the parliamentary seats, the RPR just edged out its conservative rivals with less than 20 percent of the vote in the first round of the elections. In 1997 its vote declined to 16.8 percent, less than 2 percentage points more than the National Front. Nevertheless, with an estimated 100,000 members in 1997 (relatively low by European standards), the RPR was the largest party in France.³²

By 2002 the RPR was a long way from the party once dominated with a firm hand by Gaullist “barons” and defined by the organizing discourse of Gaullism. Jacques Chirac's victory in the 1995 presidential elections should have given him an opportunity to rebuild the RPR as a party of government. However, a seemingly unending series of political crises after the summer of 1995 and the disastrous losses in the June 1997 legislative elections only intensified the divisions within the party and with its partners. In 1999 Chirac (still president of the Republic) lost control over the party when his chosen candidate was defeated in an election for party president.

In the fall of 2000, Chirac's candidacy for reelection in 2002 seemed to be undermined by dramatic new evidence of massive corruption in the Paris party machine that directly implicated the president (and former mayor of Paris). However, the unexpected match against Jean-Marie Le Pen (leader of the National Front—see below) in the presidential race of 2002 gave both Chirac and the party a new lease on life.

Chirac's massive victory in the second round of the 2002 presidential election created the basis for the organization of the UMP, a new successor to the RPR. (The UMP was originally called the Union for a Presidential Majority in 2002.) The party included deputies from the RPR, some from the **Union for French Democracy (UDF)**, and some from other small parties of the right. With more than 60 percent of the new National Assembly, the UMP united the

Parliamentary Elections in the Fifth Republic

TABLE 6.1

Shifting party vote shares and parliamentary seats since 1981—percentage of votes cast, first ballot

	1981	1986 ^a	1988	1993	1997	2002	2007
Registered voters (in millions)	35.5	36.6	37.9	37.0	39.2	41.0	43.9
Abstentions (%)	29.1	21.5	34.3	31.0	32.0	35.6	39.6
Party Seats	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Communists (PCF)	16.2	9.7	11.3	9.1	10.0	4.8	4.6
Socialists (PS)	37.6	31.6	34.8	19.2	23.7	25.3	27.7
*Left Radicals	14	3.0	1.1	8	1.5	8	7
Majority (UMP)	—	—	—	—	—	33.3 ^f	45.5
*UDF (RI and other centrists)	19.2	63	18.5	18.8	14.8	22	4
Gaullists (RPR)	20.8	87	19.2	19.7	16.8	—	—
National Front (FN)	—	—	9.8	12.7	0	11.3	4.7
Others	6.2	16	5.3	20.5 ^b	18.7 ^d	16.3 ^e	6.3
						13	12 ^g

^aVotes for the Left Radicals in 1981, 1993, 2002, and 2007 are included with those of the Socialists; votes for the UDF in 1986 are included with those of the Gaullists.^bThe 1986 election was by proportional representation.^cIncludes the three Green parties, which received 10.9 percent of the vote.^dIncludes 36 unaffiliated deputies of the right.^eIncludes the Green parties' vote of 6.3 percent, as well as votes for smaller movements of the right and the left.^fIncludes eight ecologists (Greens), seven dissident Socialists, and other unaffiliated deputies.^gUMP (Union of the Presidential Majority)—new center-right party organized for the 2002 legislative election).^hIncludes ecologists (Greens) and dissidents of the right and left, as well as the extreme right party (MNR) in 2002.ⁱIncludes affiliated independent deputies.Source: Official results from the Ministry of the Interior, found on www.assemblee-nationale.fr/elections.

TABLE 6.2

Voting Patterns in the 2007 Legislative Elections

Leftist parties disproportionately gain support from the young and white-collar employees, while UMP/UDF draw more votes from older voters and the bourgeoisie

	PS/PC/Greens + Other Left	UMP/UDF + Other Right	Extreme Right FN/MNR
Sex			
Men	36%	50%	7%
Women	38	56	2
Age			
18–29	43	49	1
30–49	39	52	5
50+	32	56	6
Profession			
Shopkeepers, craftsmen, and businesspeople	21	62	1
Executives, professionals, and intellectuals	41	44	1
Middle management	45	47	1
White-collar	39	49	6
Workers	32	48	16
Unemployed	43	40	15
Level of Education			
No degree	34	52	9
Vocational degree	36	55	6
High School (academic)	45	49	3
Higher education	38	55	2
All Voters	37	53	4

Source: CSA-CISCO, *Les Elections Legislatives: Explication du Vote et Perspectives Politiques, Sondage Jour du vote*, June 2007, p. 10.

fragmented groups of the right behind the victorious president. By 2006 Chirac's detested rival within the party, **Nicolas Sarkozy**, had become party leader, minister of the interior, and virtually unchallenged party candidate for the presidency in 2007.

Union for French Democracy (UDF) Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's foremost concern was to prevent the center's exclusion from power in the Gaullist Republic. His small party, the Independent Republican Party (RI), was the typical party, or rather nonparty, of French conservatism. It came into existence in 1962, when Giscard and a few other conservative deputies opposed de Gaulle's strictures against European unity and his referendum on direct elections for the presidency.

From that time on, the group provided a small complement for the conservative majority in Parliament.

Giscard himself, a scion of families long prominent in business, banking, and public service, was finance minister under both de Gaulle and Pompidou before his election to the presidency in 1974. His party derived its political strength from its representatives in Parliament, many of whom held Cabinet posts, and from local leaders who occupied important posts in municipal and departmental councils.

To increase the weight of the party (the name was changed to the Parti Républicain [PR] in 1977), President Giscard chose the path that parties of the right and center have always found opportune: a heterogeneous alliance among groups and personalities organized to support the president in the 1978 legislative elections. The result was the Union for French Democracy (UDF). In addition to Giscard's Republicans, it included remnants of a Catholic party (CDS), the once militant anti-Catholic radicals, and some

former Socialists. It is estimated that all of the parties of the UDF combined had no more than 38,000 members as the party moved into the 2002 elections.

After 1981 the UDF and the RPR generally cooperated in elections. As the National Front gained in electoral support after 1983, the UDF and the RPR presented more joint candidates in the first round of parliamentary elections to avoid being defeated by the National Front. Nevertheless, even combined, they were incapable of increasing their vote percentage beyond 45 percent. Still, they won majorities in Parliament in 1986, 1993, and 2002 (see Figure 6.4). The two governments organized after Chirac's election in 1995 under Prime Minister **Alain Juppé** were double coalitions: first, coalitions of factions within the RPR and the UDF and, second, coalitions between the RPR and the UDF. Thus, the representatives of the UDF exercised considerable influence over the policymaking process, both as members of the Cabinet and as chairs of three of the six permanent committees of the National Assembly. The government in 2002 was also a double coalition. Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin (who served until 2005) was a longtime member of the UDF. With the integration of most of the UDF deputies into the UMP, the UDF as a party lost most of its independent influence.

National Front Divisions within the right result in part from different reactions to the electoral rise of the **National Front (FN)**. **Jean-Marie Le Pen** founded the FN in 1972. Until the 1980s it was a relatively obscure

party of the far right. In none of the elections before 1983 did the FN attract more than 1 percent of the national vote. In the 1984 European Parliament elections, the FN built on support in local elections and attracted almost 10 percent of the vote, to the consternation of the established parties of the right and the left.

Then, in the parliamentary elections of 1986, the FN won almost 10 percent of the vote (about 2.7 million votes—and in metropolitan France, more votes than the Communists). This established it as a substantial political force. Two-thirds of the FN's votes came from voters who previously supported established parties of the right, but the remainder came from some former left voters (mostly Socialists) or from new voters and former abstainers.

Profiting from the change to proportional representation elections in 1986, thirty-five FN deputies entered Parliament. In the 1993 legislative elections, FN candidates attracted almost 13 percent of the vote in the first round. Because the electoral system was once again based on single-member districts, the party elected no deputies. With over 15 percent of the vote in the first round of the 1997 legislative elections, the FN sent a record number of candidates into the second round. However, only one of these candidates was elected.

Nevertheless, the FN seemed well on its way to developing a network of local bases. In 1992 the right depended on the party for its majority in fourteen out of twenty-two regions. In 1998 this dependency was translated into a political breakthrough when five

UDF regional leaders formally accepted FN support to maintain their regional presidencies. In 1995, for the first time, the FN won municipal elections in three cities and gained some representation in almost half of the larger towns in France. It gained one additional city in a special election in 1997.

The ability of Le Pen to come in second—with 17 percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential elections of 2002—was a considerable shock to the political system. The FN results in the legislative elections two months later (11 percent) were far lower, but a confirmation that the party—and not simply Le Pen—remained a political force.

The National Front is often compared to the shopkeeper movement (the Poujadist movement), which attracted 2.5 million votes in the 1956 legislative elections and then faded from the scene.³³ But the FN draws its electoral and organizational support from big-city, rather than small-town, voters. Its supporters come more from transfers from the right than did those of Poujade. In addition, the FN has been far more successful than the Poujadist movement in building a strong organizational network.

Because of the electoral system, the FN never had more than one deputy in the National Assembly after 1988. But it has hundreds of elected representatives on the regional, departmental, and local levels (as well as in the European Parliament). By 1998 it was estimated that the FN had 50,000 members (compared with 10,000 in 1985).

The National Front was seemingly given new life by Le Pen's success in 2002, success that was generally confirmed by the results of the regional and European parliamentary elections in 2004. In addition, the process of party development has affected voters of all parties, especially those who would normally vote for the right and young workers who had formerly been mobilized by the Communist Party.

Approval of the FN's issues increased dramatically among *all* voters in the 1980s and, after mid-1999, increased again. Moreover, the dynamics of party competition have forced other political parties to place FN issues high on their political agenda. Thus, Nicolas Sarkozy, in an attempt to attract FN supporters, used his position as minister of the interior to confront illegal immigration and deal with issues of law and order.

Although this strategy had been tried before, Sarkozy's efforts showed some indications of success. In fact, it proved to be remarkably successful in the presidential elections of 2007. Jean-Marie Le Pen received 800,000 fewer votes than in 2002, and almost

all of them went to Sarkozy. This stunning loss weakened the party, as confirmed by the local election results in March 2008.

The Left

Socialist Party In comparison with the solid social-democratic parties in other European countries, the French **Socialist Party (PS)** lacked muscle almost since its beginnings in 1905. Slow and uneven industrialization and reluctance to organize not only blocked the development of labor unions, but also deprived the PS of the working-class strength that other European labor parties gained from their trade union affiliations.

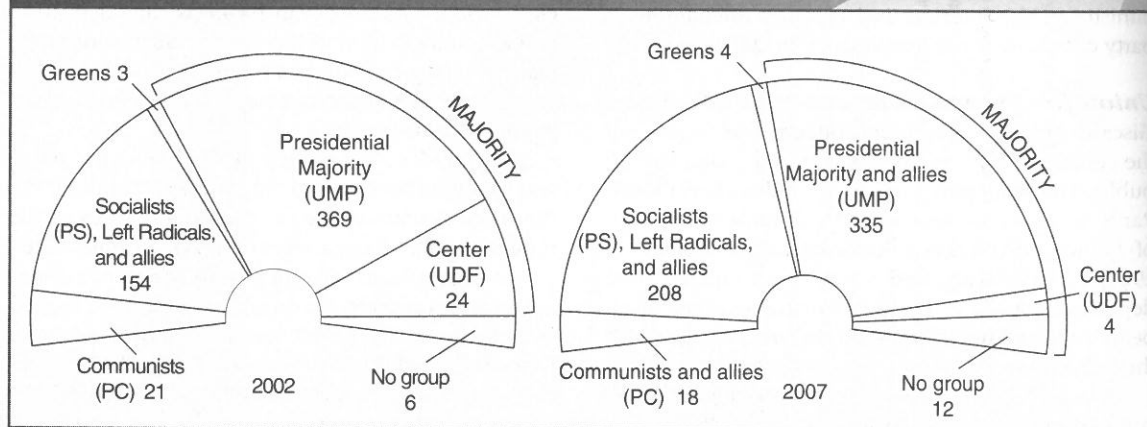
Unlike the British Labour Party, the early PS also failed to absorb middle-class radicals, the equivalent of the Liberals in England. The Socialist program, formulated in terms of doctrinaire Marxism, prevented inroads into the electorate of the left-of-center middle-class parties for a long time. The pre-Fifth Republic party was never strong enough to assume control of the government by itself. Its weakness reduced it to being, at best, one of several partners in the unstable coalition governments of the Third and Fourth Republics.

The emergence of the French Communist Party in 1920 effectively deprived the Socialists of core working-class support. Most of the Socialists' working-class following was concentrated in a few regions of traditional strength, such as the industrial north and urban agglomeration in the center. However, the party had some strongholds elsewhere—among the winegrowers of the south, devotees of republican ideals of anticlericalism, and producers' cooperatives. The proportion of civil servants, especially teachers, and people living on fixed incomes has been far higher among Socialist voters than in the population at large.

The party encountered considerable difficulties under the changed conditions in the Fifth Republic. After several false starts, the old party dissolved, and a new Socialist Party emerged in 1969. The new party successfully attracted new members and reversed its electoral decline. Incipient public disenchantment with conservative governments combined with the strong party leadership of François Mitterrand brought about this reversal in party fortunes. Compared with the past, the party membership reached respectable heights in the 1980s (about 180,000 by 1983), though it was still not comparable to the large labor parties of Britain and the Continent.

Political Representation in the National Assembly After the Elections of 2002, and 2007

FIGURE 6.4



The new members came predominantly from the salaried middle classes, the professions, the civil service, and especially the teaching profession. Workers rallied to the PS in large numbers in the 1970s, but they were still sparsely represented in the party's leadership. In the 1970s the PS did what other European Socialist parties were unable to do: It attracted leaders of some of the new social movements of the late 1960s—among them, ecologists and regionalists, as well as leaders of small parties of the non-Communist left.³⁴

Mitterrand reaped the benefits of the elections of 1981. With Mitterrand as president of the Republic and a Socialist majority in Parliament (but also supported by the Communists), the PS found itself in a situation it had never known—and for which it was ill-prepared. The following years of undivided power affected the party's image and outlook. The years in office between 1981 and 1986 were an intense, and painful, learning experience for the PS at all levels. Under pressure from Mitterrand and a succession of Socialist governments, the classical socialist ideology was dismantled. What the German Social Democrats had done by adopting a new program at Bad Godesberg in 1959 the French PS did in the early 1980s by its daily practice.

Indeed, by most measures the Socialist Party was to the 1980s what Gaullists were to the 1960s: a party of government with broad support among most social groups throughout the country. When reelected for a second seven-year term in 1988, Mitterrand carried seventy-seven of the ninety-six departments of metropolitan France. The Socialists made inroads in the traditionally conservative western and eastern areas of the country. However, this nationalization of Socialist electoral strength meant that the party's legislative majority depended on constituencies where voter support was far more conditional. In the legislative elections of 1993, the PS lost a third of its electorate, compared with 1988, but far more than that in areas outside of its traditional bastions.

Social trends favored the left for a time. The decline of religious observance, urbanization, the growth of the salaried middle classes (technicians, middle management, etc.) and the service sector of the economy, and the massive entry of women into the labor market all weakened the groups that provided the right's stable strength. This included farmers, people in small businesses, the traditional bourgeoisie, and the nonemployed housewives.

However, the party loyalty of large numbers of voters, especially younger voters, was evolving during the 1980s. Voter loyalty became more related to individual attitudes toward specific issues than to

collective loyalties based on group or class. Thus, rising unemployment rates, the growing sense among even Socialist voters that the party leadership was worn out, and the mobilization of large numbers of traditional Socialist voters against the government during the campaign for the Maastricht referendum all undermined Socialist support between 1992 and 1994.

During ten years as a governing party (broken by two years of opposition from 1986 to 1988), Socialist leadership cohesion depended on the prerogatives of power. If the Fifth Republic became normalized during the 1980s—in the sense that the left and the right alternated in government with each legislative election—the PS became like other governing parties in its dependence on governing power. One index of this normalization was the increased incidence of political corruption within the party. Accusations, investigations, and convictions for corruption swept all parties beginning in the late 1980s. For the Socialists, however, this corruption undermined the party's image and contributed to the voters' desertion of the party. Estimated membership dropped to about 100,000 by 1995.

Under these circumstances PS leader **Lionel Jospin** was a remarkably effective presidential candidate in 1995, winning the first round before being defeated in the second round by Chirac. After the elections the PS gained in the municipal elections, performed well in by-elections, and made significant gains in the (indirect) 1995 Senate elections. The real test for Socialist leadership came when President Chirac called surprise legislative elections in April 1997.

Although Jospin and his colleagues were clearly unprepared for the short campaign, they benefited from Chirac's rapidly deteriorating popularity and the lack of efficacy of his majority, as well as from the electorate's tendency to vote against the majority in power. Jospin put together a thirty-one-seat majority (called the *plural left*), became prime minister, and formed the first cohabitation government of the left in June 1997.

The government passed a set of important, but controversial reforms, including a thirty-five-hour workweek, domestic partnership legislation, and a constitutional amendment requiring parity for women candidacies for elective office. Finally, there were major structural reforms: The presidential term was reduced to five years (with the agreement of the president), and a process began to radically alter the relationship between Corsica and the French state.

Although the government's popularity had been declining, the elimination of Jospin in the first round of the 2002 presidential elections (by less than 1 percent) was entirely unexpected. It largely resulted from the

defection of PS voters to marginal candidates of the left alliance. Jospin quickly resigned as party leader, leaving the PS without effective leadership. This resulted in the left's defeat in the legislative elections that followed, as PS representation was cut in half.

Following a well-established rhythm, the Socialists—together with their allies on the left—rebounded two years later and swept the regional elections in 2004. They won control of all but one of the twenty-two regional governments in France. They accomplished this impressive victory without strong leadership at the national level. The victory represented profound public disappointment with—and opposition to—the right, which had used the majority it had gained in 2002 to push through cuts in welfare state benefits.

Without strong leadership, however, the PS appeared engaged in a self-destructive struggle to choose a presidential candidate for the elections of 2007. In this environment Ségolène Royal initiated a well-orchestrated and well-financed campaign for the nomination a full year and a half before the elections. The campaign was to convince members of the party—who would select her by a large majority in the fall of 2006—that her candidacy was a *fait accompli*. What made her campaign interesting is that it was directed toward the voters, rather than the party members who vote for the nominee.

Royal, the first woman candidate for a major political party, was a well-established political leader of the Socialist Party. A graduate of the ENA, she rose through the party ranks, first as a deputy, then with various ministerial posts, and then as president of the Poitou-Charantes region. Her campaign substantially increased the membership of the PS. With a claimed membership of 133,000 in December 2005, the PS's paid membership increased by 54,000 in three months; membership in Paris alone doubled during this period. Therefore, it was even more disappointing when Royal lost the election to Nicolas Sarkozy in May 2007, once again leaving the party without leadership.

French Communist Party Until the late 1970s, the **French Communist Party (PCF)** was a major force in French politics. This was so despite the fact that, except for a short interlude after World War II (1944–1947), the party was rejected as a coalition partner in national government until 1981.

During most of the Fourth Republic, the PCF received more electoral support than any other single party (with an average of just over 25 percent of the electorate). 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. Between 1977 and 1983, Communist mayors governed in about 1,500 towns in France, with a total population of about 10 million people.

Over several decades the party's very existence constantly impinged nationally, as well as locally, on the rules of the political game and thereby on the system itself. The seemingly impressive edifice of the Communists and of its numerous organizations of sympathizers was badly shaken, however—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 PCF fielded its leader, **Georges Marchais**, as a candidate in the first ballot of the presidential election of 1981 with disastrous results: With 15 percent of the vote, the PCF lost one-fourth of its electorate. In the parliamentary elections that followed, the number of its deputies was cut in half. The party's defeats in 1981 were only the beginning of a tailspin of electoral decline.³⁵ The voters who left the party in 1981 never came back.

By 2007 its presidential candidate attracted a mere 2 percent of the vote (about half that of far-left candidate Olivier Besancenot) and just 2 percent of the working-class vote. In the legislative elections that followed, the PCF was clearly marginal to the left. To win elections, it has grown increasingly dependent on continued (and often difficult) cooperation with the Socialists, as well as on the personal popularity of some of its long-established mayors. Nineteen of the twenty-four Communist deputies, and those associated with them, elected in 2007 were municipal council members. In 2003 the party selected **Marie-George Buffet** as its national secretary.

Although the party's claimed membership remains large by French standards, more than 200,000—but certainly less—its organization is increasingly divided, ineffective, and challenged by successive waves of dissidence from within.

What does the marginalization of the PCF mean for the French party system? It has healed the division that had enfeebled the left since the split of the Socialist Party in 1920, in the wake of the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia. But a price has been paid: This has weakened political representation of the French working class. Although the fortunes of the PCF have fallen in inverse relation to the PS's rising electoral

strength, the proportion of workers actually voting for both parties combined has declined by 30 percent since the 1970s. 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 National Front.

PATTERNS OF VOTING

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 100 departments (counties), and for each of the twenty-two 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 21. 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 age 21 and older were granted the vote in 1944. After the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1974, 2.5 million voters were added to the rolls. By 2007 there were more than 42 million voters 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 elections and lowest in presidential contests, with other elections falling somewhere in between (see Table 6.1). In the presidential election of 2007, a

trend toward growing abstention was broken when 84 percent of registered voters voted in the first round.³⁶ The elections for the European Parliament always attract relatively few voters, but in 2004 more than 57 percent of the registered voters stayed home (slightly more than in 1999). For referendums a new record was set in 2000: Almost 70 percent of the registered voters chose not to vote in a (successful) referendum to reduce the presidential term from seven to five years (after the elections of 2002).

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.³⁷ In this sense it is possible to see abstention in an election as a political choice (42 percent of them in 2002 said that they abstained because they had no confidence in politicians).³⁸ Nevertheless, as in other countries, the least educated, the lowest income groups, and the youngest and oldest age 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, for 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 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 (less than 20 percent in 2007) 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, preelection 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 National Front 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 2007, with electoral support of 4.4 percent, none of the FN candidates

was elected. In comparison, the Communist Party benefited from an electoral agreement with the Socialists: With the same 4.4 percent of the vote, fifteen 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 6.3). 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

Election Results

French Presidential Elections (second round) and Referendums

TABLE 6.3

Date	Abstained (%)	Winner (%)	Voted for:	
			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
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:
http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/misill/sections/a_votre_service/elections/resultats/accueil-resultats/view

French Parties: The Maastricht Referendum of 1992 and the European Constitution Referendum of 2005

BOX 6.2

The loss of the referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty in 2005 was in many ways a repeat of what had happened in 1992, but with a key difference. In 1992 the president of the Republic, the leaders of the Socialist Party, most (but not all) of the leaders of the conservative opposition, and (before the summer) two-thirds of the electorate supported the referendum. It would establish the European Union, with European citizenship and (within a decade) a single European currency. It was expected to achieve an impressive majority and give a boost of support for the Socialist president and government in anticipation of the 1993 legislative elections. The results were far different. The proposed treaty split the electorates of each of the major political parties in unanticipated ways, and the summer campaign proved particularly bitter. The Gaullist opposition to the treaty was partly a revolt against the leadership of Jacques Chirac, and it was supported by a majority of RPR deputies and voters. Within the left the Communists were

weak, but bitter opponents to the approval of the treaty, and Socialist leaders were less than enthusiastic proponents. The National Front was united in its opposition. In the end the treaty was approved by a slim majority of the voters, but the results were a political disaster for those who won. For each of the major parties, their "natural" electorates split badly, and the results—in which opposition to the treaty was concentrated among the less privileged voters and in the poorest regions of the country—were widely viewed as a broad rejection of established political leadership, particularly that of the governing coalition. In 1992, with the exception of the Communists, the voters of the left strongly supported the "yes" vote, while the voters of the right generally voted "no." In 2005 the French electorate rejected the proposed new European "constitution." This time, however, the pattern was the reverse—voters of the right strongly voted "yes," while those of the left generally voted "no."

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.

Since 1969 there have been only five referendums (see Table 6.3). President Georges Pompidou called a referendum 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 extensively mobilized when the question of ratifying the **Maastricht Treaty** on the European Union was submitted to referendum in 1992. The results were far more significant for the future of French political life (see Box 6.2). 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 number of abstentions—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 are for French voters the most important expressions of the general will. After the presidential elections of 1965, it was evident that French voters got great satisfaction from knowing that, unlike in past parliamentary elections, national and not parochial alignments were at stake and that they could pronounce themselves on such issues. The traditional and once deeply rooted 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 (84 percent in 2007).

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. Nevertheless, with a record number of candidates in 2002 (sixteen—twelve in 2007), this proposition was stretched to the limit.

The Accidental President

BOX 6.3

On May 5, 2002, Jacques Chirac was reelected president of France by the largest majority ever obtained by a presidential candidate in a popular election during the Fifth Republic. Yet, when the results of the first round of the presidential elections were tabulated two weeks before, this victory was wholly unexpected. Chirac's first term was marked by the largest strike movement since 1968 and then by an ill-conceived decision to call early legislative elections in 1997, which were won by the left. After 1997 his leadership of the RPR was challenged by fragmentation and then by loss of control of the party machine (eventually to his rival, Nicolas Sarkozy). This was followed by revelations of dramatic new evidence of massive corruption in the Paris party machine that directly implicated the president (the former mayor of Paris). He appeared to be headed for likely defeat in 2002.

Then came the "divine surprise" of April 2002. With the worst result of any outgoing president in the first round (less than 20 percent of the vote), Chirac edged out his Socialist rival, Lionel Jospin. But Jospin himself was edged out by the resurgent candidate of the extreme right, Jean-Marie Le Pen. With sixteen candidates in the first round, Le Pen's considerable achievement was due in part to an accident of the electoral system and in part to the inability of leftist voters to anticipate the consequences of their dispersed votes. As a result, the shocked and leaderless left rallied to the support of Chirac to block Le Pen. Confronted with an unhappy choice between a candidate who had been accused of corruption and a candidate of the extreme right, more than 82 percent of the electorate voted for the former.

the reduction in the length of the presidential term. (See Box 6.3.)

Although the 2002 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.

POLICY PROCESSES

The Executive

As we have seen, 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. It was widely predicted that such an arrangement would necessarily lead to frequent political crises. Each of the four presidents of the Fifth Republic, and each of the prime ministers who have served under them, left no doubt that the executive has only one head: the president.

The exercise of presidential powers in all their fullness was made possible 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 rather 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 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.

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, in fact real decisions are made elsewhere.

The prime minister is more than first among equals in relation to Cabinet colleagues. 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 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.

In part because of the experiences of cohabitation, the president's role is now less imposing than it had been 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, indicates a reassertion of presidential prerogatives.

Another limit to executive power became clear in the spring of 2006. The effective authority of both the president and the prime minister was diminished by important policy failures (the loss of the referendum in May 2005, the urban riots the following fall, and strikes in the spring of 2006). Support for the government within the large parliamentary majority began to fray. The minister of the interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, introduced policy proposals often opposed by President Chirac and Prime Minister de Villepin, but sometimes supported by parliamentary leaders.

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. By 2006 the relationship between the executive and the parliamentary majority showed signs of changing as well.

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 assure himself that presidential policies are followed.

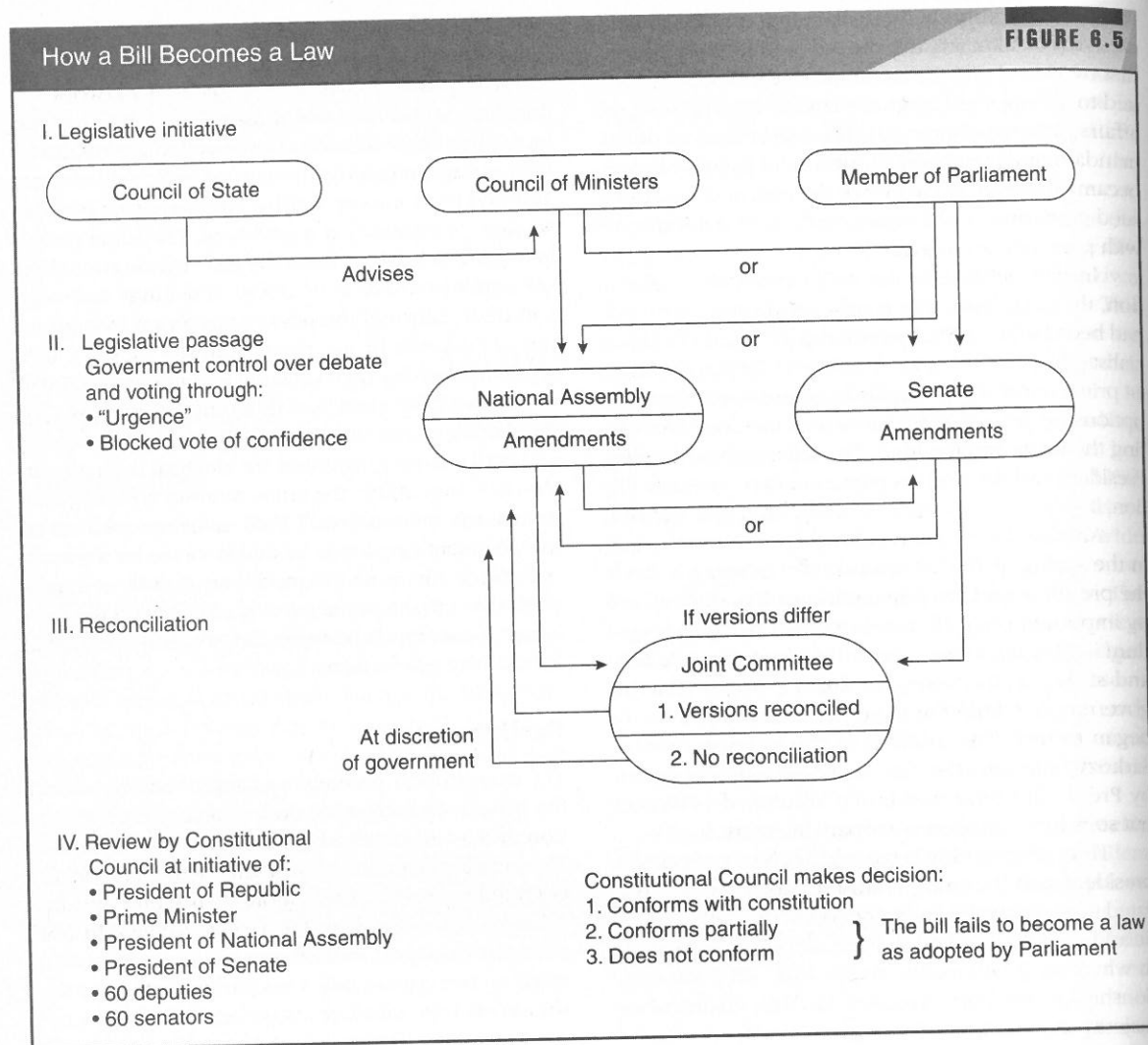
The prime minister has a parallel network for developing and implementing policy decisions. The most important method is the so-called interministerial meetings, regular gatherings of high civil servants attached to various ministries. The frequency of these sessions, chaired by a member of the prime minister's personal staff, reflects the growing centralization of administrative and decisionmaking 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.

As we have seen, two different patterns exist for the sharing of executive power. When the presidential and parliamentary majorities are identical (as has been the case since 2008), the prime minister is clearly subordinate to the president.³⁹ Even in this case, however, the president's power is limited because he does not control the administrative machinery directly and must work through the prime minister's office and the ministries. Cooperation between the two is thus essential for effective government.

Parliament

The constitution severely and intentionally curtails the powers of Parliament both as a source of legislation and as an organ of control over the executive. The fact that both houses of Parliament were initially confined to sessions of no more than six months in a calendar year severely reduced effectiveness. In 1995 maximum sessions were increased to nine months, opening new possibilities for parliamentary leadership to exercise initiative and control.

Despite restrictions on parliamentary activity, the legislative output of the Parliament in the Fifth Republic has been quite respectable. The average of only 98 laws per year enacted during the years of the Fifth Republic (125 per year during the reform period between 1981 and 1986) is much lower than that during the Fourth Republic. However, it 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 6.5). 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 has become an index of conflict within the governing party or coalition.⁴⁰ Now the amendments of 2008 have constrained the use of the blocked vote, and its use has been linked to the parliamentary majority.

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 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 the "government's responsibility" on any bill (or section of a bill)

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. The success of this motion would likely result in new elections. So far, however, the threat of having to face new elections has always put sufficient pressure on the incumbent deputies not to support a motion of censure. As a consequence, whenever the government pledges its responsibility to a bill it has introduced, the bill has become law without any parliamentary vote.

Earlier in the Fifth Republic, little use was made of this provision. Between 1981 and 1986, the governments of the left used it for reasons of expediency. It permitted them to enact important legislation quickly, without laying bare conflicts within the ranks of the governing majority. After 1986 governments of both the right and the left resorted to this procedure with considerable frequency when they needed to overcome the precariousness of their majorities in Parliament. During the five years between 1988 and 1993, prime ministers engaged the responsibility of their governments thirty-nine times, nine times each year in 1990 and 1991 alone. Between June 1997 and the election of a new parliament in 2002, this procedure was not used, but it was used three times between 2002 and 2007. The 2008 amendments to finance laws have now limited its use.

Other devices for enhancing the role of Parliament have become somewhat more effective over the years, even before the 2008 amendments. In the 1970s the National Assembly instituted a weekly question period that is similar to the British (and German) version. Two days a week the party groups submit a dozen or more written questions an hour in advance, in rough proportion to the membership of each group, and then the relevant minister answers them. This process has been expanded by the amendments of 2008. 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 this average has more than doubled, which coincides with the doubling of hours devoted to legislative debate each year. About two-thirds of the amendments that are eventually adopted (33 percent of those proposed in 1997–2002) 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.⁴¹ The long parliamentary session introduced in 1995 has enhanced the role of committee leaders in the legislative process. The amendments 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 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 87 percent of the deputies in the National Assembly in 2008 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.⁴² In 2001, when confidence in political parties was at 24 percent, confidence stood at 36 percent for deputies and 70 percent for mayors (see again Figure 6.3).

Because the electoral college that elects the members of the Senate is composed almost entirely of people selected by small-town elected officials, the parties of the center that are most influential in small towns are best represented in the upper house. Not surprisingly, 61 percent of senators also held local office in 2008. In 2008 the Senate was dominated by the governing majority party, the UMP, which is dependent, however, on the UDF for its majority. The Socialists are the second largest group, a result of the PS's strong roots at the local level. The Communists continue to be well represented for the same reason. Although the right remains dominant in the upper house, the Senate has not always been on the right of the political spectrum. Its hostility to social and economic change is 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, 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). In 2000 lack of support in the Senate forced the president (and prime minister) to withdraw an amendment to create an independent judiciary and to modify the amendment on parity for women (that was passed).

Some legislation of great importance—such as the nuclear strike force, the organization of military tribunals in cases involving high treason, the reorganization of local government in Corsica, 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 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.

Criticism of the Senate as an unrepresentative body and proposals for its reform have come from Gaullists and Socialists alike (most recently in 2008). 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. A law enacted in a constitutionally prescribed form is not subject to further scrutiny.

This principle seemed to be infringed upon when the Constitution of 1958 brought forth an institutional novelty, the Constitutional Council. The council in certain cases must, and in other cases may upon request, examine legislation and decide whether it conforms to the constitution. A legal provision declared unconstitutional may not be promulgated.

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.

Whichever side is in opposition, conservative or Socialist, routinely refers all major (sometimes minor) pieces of legislation to the council. In a given year, as many 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. 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. The council assumes the role of a constitutional court. By doing so, it places itself at the juncture of law and politics, in a way similar to the U.S. Supreme Court when it reviews the constitutionality of legislation.

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 refuse authorization to 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*.

Some of the Constitutional Council's most important decisions—such as those on the nationalization of private enterprises (under the Socialists), on the privatization of parts of the public sector (under the conservatives), and on government control over the media (under both)—conform to an attitude that in

Judicial Review in France and the United States

BOX 6.4

Judicial review has become part of the French legislative process, but in a way it is still quite different from judicial review in of the United States. Direct access is limited, although citizens will have the right to bring appeals based on some constitutional issues before the Constitutional Council after 2008. 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 and, 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.

the United States is called judicial restraint. A few decisions can be qualified as activist, since they directly alter the intent of the law. But as a nonelected body, the council generally avoids interference with the major political choices of the government majority. In recent years the council has nevertheless reviewed 10 percent or more of legislation that is passed each year. On average it has found 50 percent of this legislation at least partially violates the constitution. In 2007 almost 80 percent of the laws that came before the council were declared unconstitutional in part.

In a period in which alternation of governments has often resulted in sharp policy changes, the council decisions have helped to define an emerging consensus. By smoothing out the raw edges of new legislation in judicial language, it often makes changes ultimately more acceptable (see Box 6.4).

The approval of the council's activities by a large sector of public opinion (52 percent in 2001, as shown in Figure 6.3) 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'Etat.

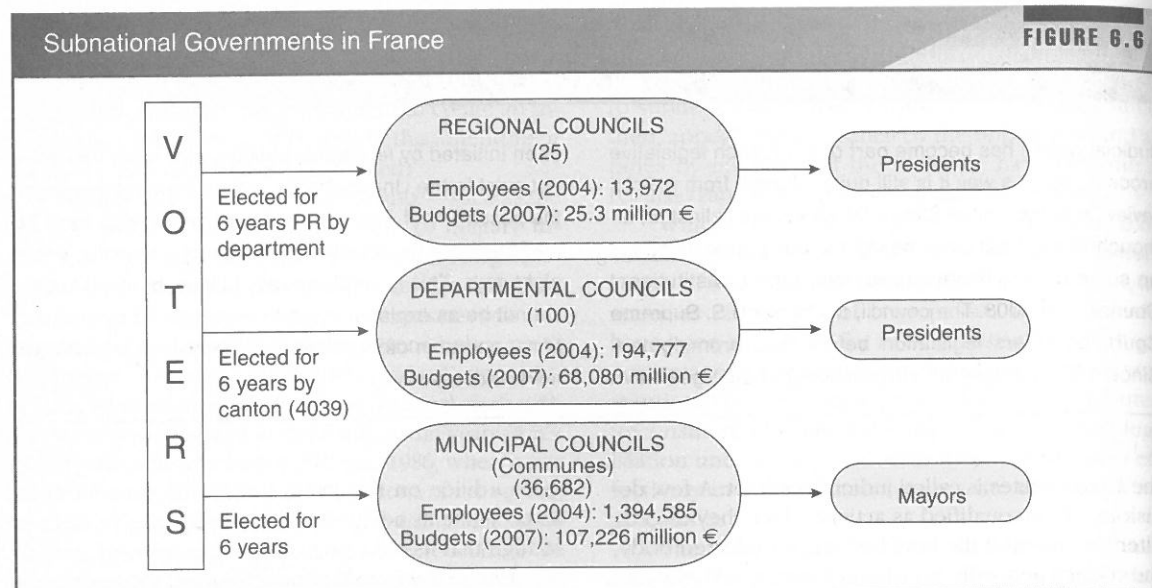
Thus, the judicial appeal and the development of a judicial check on policymaking enhance the role of the much older **Council of State**, which in its present form dates back to 1799. The government now consults this council more extensively on all bills before they are submitted to Parliament and, 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 of 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

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) “one and indivisible.”⁴³ Essentially, this meant that subnational territorial units (communes, departments, and regions) had little formal decisionmaking 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 during long periods of political instability and unrest kept the machinery of the state functioning.



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

France is divided into 100 **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 **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 6.6).

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 centralized state, what is often ignored is that political localism dilutes centralized decisionmaking (see Box 6.5).

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.⁴⁴

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.

These powers are based on a system of mutual dependency between local 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 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.⁴⁵ 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. These contacts were 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.⁴⁶

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. There is still overall financial dependence of subnational governments on the state. 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 who emerge from the *grandes écoles*—*grands corps* system move easily between the two.

PERFORMANCE AND PROSPECTS

A Welfare State

The overall performance of democracies can be measured by their commitment and ability to distribute the 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 of wealth, discrepancies between the rich and the poor remain somewhat less in France than in other countries in Europe (see also Table 1.2 in Chapter 1). In 2001 the percentage of income earners in the top 10 percent of incomes (25 percent) was higher than in Sweden, but lower than in Germany, the United Kingdom, or the United States.⁴⁷ The percentage in the lowest 10 percent of incomes was lower than in Germany or Sweden, but slightly higher than in the United Kingdom or the United States. The income gap narrowed significantly between 1976 and 1981, and then even more during the first year 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 (about 40 percent of those unemployed in 2004) 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 and 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. Although youth unemployment rates have come down during the past decade, they 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 it is 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.⁴⁸

In spite of some assertions to the contrary, it is not true that the French economy is burdened with higher taxes than other countries of similar development. Overall tax rates in 2008 were higher than those in the United Kingdom or the United States, but lower than those in Sweden or Germany. What is special about France is the distribution of its taxes. The share of indi-

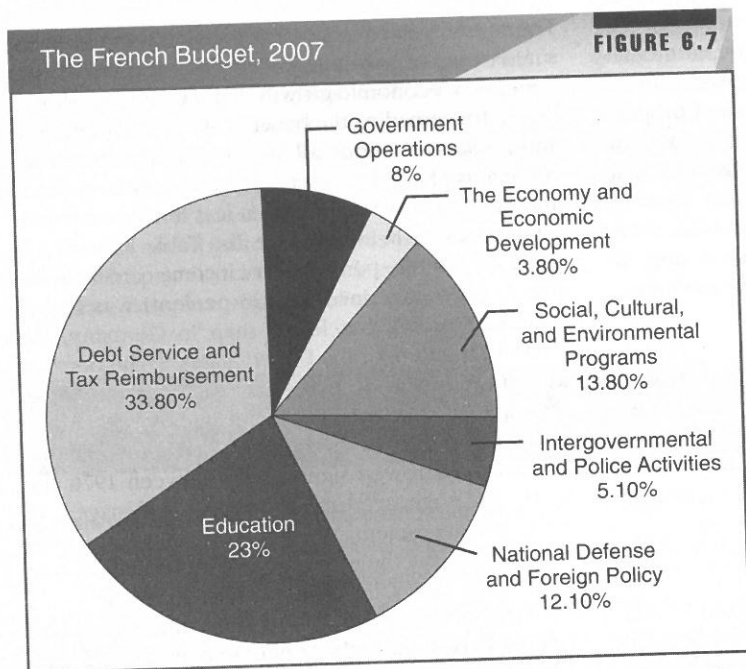
rect taxes—such as the value-added tax (VAT) and excise taxes—remains far higher in France than in other industrialized countries. Indirect taxes not only drive up prices, but also weigh most heavily on the poor. The percentage of revenue collected through regressive indirect taxation was the same in 1986, after five years of Socialist government, as it had been in 1980, and remains about the same now (77 percent in 2004).

The French welfare state is most effective in the area of social transfers. These transfers are at about the same level as in Germany and Denmark, but ahead of most other European democracies, and far ahead of the United States. A comprehensive health and social security system, established after World War II and extended since then, and a variety of programs assisting the aged, large families, persons with disabilities, and other such groups, disburses substantial benefits (Figure 6.7). When unemployment benefits, the cost of job-training programs, and housing subsidies are added in, total costs are as high as the remainder of the public budget, with three-fourths of them borne by employers and employees.

The effectiveness of the French welfare state is most evident in the relatively low poverty rates—slightly higher than in Sweden, but lower than in

Germany, and far lower than in the United Kingdom and the United States. France has also maintained a high level of quality medical services and public services. High spending for welfare programs has also cushioned the worst impact of the economic crisis in 2008-2009. Much of the ad hoc stimulus spending in the United States is already built into the way the welfare state functions in France.

In contrast with the United States, there have been fewer cutbacks in welfare state programs in France in recent years—even after the cutbacks of pension benefits in 2003. Indeed, the population covered by health insurance has expanded, but financing for these programs has been at the heart of government concerns since 1995 (see Table 6.4). Although spending on social programs has remained stable as a percentage of the gross national product (GNP) since 1984, the government cut public spending to reduce its



Source: Ministry of Finance, *Projet de loi de finances, 2008, Tableau de comparaison, à structure 2008, par mission et programme, des crédits proposés pour 2008 à ceux votés pour 2007*.

Welfare State Spending

France ranks relatively high in government spending as a share of the GDP and social service programs

TABLE 6.4

	General Government Expenditure as Percentage of GDP 2006	Government Employment as Percentage of Total Employment 1996-2000	State Contributions to Protection Programs as Percentage of GDP 2001	State Health Expenses as Percentage of GDP	
				1994-1995	2005-2006
Britain	45.0	18.7	27.2	5.2	8.4
France	53.4	20.1	30.0	6.6	11.1
Germany	45.7	12.3	29.8	6.3	10.6
Italy	50.1	20.5	25.6	5.3	8.9
Spain	38.5	11.6	20.6	4.7	8.2
Sweden	55.5	6.6	31.3	8.1	9.1
United States	36.6	15.6	16.0	13.3	15.3

Source: OECD 2008 (www.oecd.org), French Ministry of Finance, 2004 (www.finances.gouv.fr), Eurostat, 2004 (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/>), OECD Public Sector Pay and Employment Database (www.oecd.org).

budget deficit in a successful effort to conform to criteria for the common European currency.

In addition, some important gaps in benefits remain. As in other systems where outcomes have been compared with socioeconomic status, studies of the French system indicate that there are important inequalities in France in access to services and in health outcomes. These disparities have grown since 1980, even as financial barriers to health care have diminished.⁴⁹ High levels of unemployment, social problems, and problems of homelessness create pressures to expand social programs, while diminishing the revenue base that finances them. Since 1998 the French government has confronted many of the same social service problems facing the United States, but resistance to the American-type solutions is widespread. In 1999, for example, as part of the campaign to fight "social exclusion" in France, the Socialist government passed legislation instituting universal medical coverage. This means-tested, tax-financed, and targeted health insurance program represents a departure from the tradition of social insurance in France.

In reaction to the riots of November 2005 in the "suburbs" of large French cities (the equivalent of inner-city neighborhoods), the government vowed to increase social spending in these areas and to increase employment and educational opportunities for youth. These promises were placed on hold, however, until

after the presidential and legislative elections of 2007, and several years later still remain on hold.

Nationalization and Regulation

Government-operated business enterprises have long existed in France in fields that are under private ownership in other Western European countries. After several waves of nationalization in the 1930s and after the end of World War II, the government owned and operated all or part of the following: railroads, energy production (mining, electricity, nuclear energy), telecommunication (radio and television), air and maritime transport, the aeronautic industry, 85 percent of bank deposits, 40 percent of insurance premiums, one-third of the automobile industry, and one-third of the housing industry. All this was in addition to the old state monopolies of mail services, telephone, telegraph, tobacco, match manufacture, and various less important activities.

By the 1970s public enterprises accounted for about 11 percent of the GNP. Fifteen percent of the total active population, or 27 percent of all salary and wage earners (excluding agricultural labor), were paid directly by the state as civil servants, either as salaried workers or on a contractual basis. Their income came close to one-third of the total sum of wages and salaries.

Legislation enacted during the first governments of the left in 1981–1982 completed the nationalization of the banking sector and expanded state ownership to thirteen of the twenty largest firms in France and controlling interest in many other firms in such fields as machine tools, chemistry (including pharmaceutical products), glass, metals, and electrical power. In addition, the government obtained majority control of two important armaments firms and several ailing steel companies.

The conservative government that held power in 1986–1988 substantially altered the structure of the nationalized sector in France, accelerating a trend of partial privatization begun during the previous government of the left. Its ambitious plans for **privatization** were halted (40 percent completed) only a year after their implementation began, partially because of the stock market collapse in 1987.⁵⁰ Thus some, but not all, of the companies that were nationalized by the Socialist government in 1982 were returned to private stockholders. The conservative government also privatized some companies that the state had long controlled. However, both the companies that were privatized and those that remained in the hands of the state were quite different from what they had been a few years before. Recapitalized, restructured, and modernized, for the most part, they were, in 1988, the leading edge of the French industrial machine.⁵¹

After the wave of privatization, the percentage of salary and wage earners receiving their checks directly or indirectly from the French state was reduced to about 22 percent in 1997. While this was high compared with the U.S. percentage, it was not out of line with other European countries. If one out of five French citizens depended on the state for his or her paychecks in the 1990s, so did about the same proportion of British and Italian citizens (see again Table 6.4). Moreover, under pressure of EU directives on competition and globalization trends, privatization is a continuing process, which is most controversial in the service sector. The state maintains only small minority interests in France Télécom and Air France, and discussions continue about selling off the few remaining state monopolies (notably the railroads and gas and electricity).

For the actual operation of French business, the move toward deregulation of the economy begun by the Socialists and continued by conservative governments was probably more important than privatization. The deregulation of the stock market, the banking system, telecommunications, and prices fundamentally changed the way business is conducted in both the private and public sectors.⁵² The combina-

tion of budgetary rigor, pressures from the EU, and state disengagement meant a real reduction of aid to industry. Sectors in difficulty—including steel, chemicals, shipbuilding, and automobile manufacturing—were therefore forced to accelerate their rationalization plans and their cutbacks in workers.

As a result, the interventionist and regulatory weight of the state in industry is less important now than it was before the Socialists came to power in 1981. The old issue of nationalization and ownership has been bypassed and replaced by more subtle issues of control and regulation in the context of global competition.

In other areas, the regulatory weight of the state has not diminished, but has changed during the past twenty-five years. During the 1970s France expanded individual rights by fully establishing the rights to divorce and abortion. Under the Socialist governments of the 1980s, capital punishment was abolished, the rights of those accused of crimes were strengthened, and detention without trial was checked by new procedures. After much wrangling, in 1994 the Parliament replaced the obsolete Criminal Code dating from the time of Napoléon. The new code is generally hailed as expressing a consensus across the political spectrum on questions of crime and punishment. Moreover, individual rights in France must now conform to the decisions of the European courts under the general umbrella of the EU. Finally, in conformity with the Maastricht Treaty, citizenship rights of EU residents in France have increased during the 1990s, and in 2006 a right to the presumption of innocence in criminal cases was created under French law.

Finally, in still other areas, the regulatory weight of the state has increased. One of the most obvious is environmental controls. Beginning in the 1990s, the French state made its first significant efforts to regulate individual behavior that has an impact on the environment. The first limitations on smoking, for example, came into effect in the late 1980s and expanded after that. In February 2007 smoking was banned in most public spaces and was extended to restaurants and bars in December 2007.

In an effort to deal with the politics of immigration, particularly after 1993, the state increased the regulation of all residents of foreign origin in ways that have diminished individual rights. In 2004 France moved to regulate “ostentatious” religious symbols worn by students in public schools in response to the wearing of Islamic head scarves.

The “war on terror” had begun in France more than a decade before the September 11, 2001, attacks

in the United States. However, a group of investigating judges controls the process. Although actions by the police are therefore scrutinized by judges and are undertaken under law, the challenge to civil liberties remains important nevertheless.

Outlook: France and the New Architecture of Europe

The main concerns that dominate French politics have changed dramatically from three decades ago. In the 1980s, a coalition of Socialists and Communists was promising a “rupture” with capitalism, and the ideological distance between left and right appeared to be enormous. Today none of the major parties—including the National Front—is proposing dramatic change in society or the political system. As in the United States, political parties are making their commitments as vague and as flexible as possible (with the exception of the National Front). After an experiment with socialism, followed by a reaction of conservative neoliberalism, political parties appear to lack fresh ideas on how to deal with the major problems of the French economy and society. The transition away from a smokestack economy has been difficult and painful, and the resulting unemployment continues to dominate public concerns.

Political cleavages based on new conflicts are emerging, even if their outlines are still unclear. Indeed, the issues of the first decade of the twenty-first century may very well be more profound and untenable than those of the past. The political stakes have moved away from questioning the nature of the regime: They are focused much more intensely on the nature of the political community. Between 1986 and the present, this has become evident in a variety of ways.

Immigration has given way to ethnic consciousness, particularly among the children of immigrants from North Africa. Unlike most of the immigrant communities in the past, those of today are more reluctant to assume French cultural values as their own. This, in turn, leads to questioning the rules of naturalization for citizenship, integration into French society, and (in the end) what it means to be French.⁵³ During the 1980s, the National Front gave a political voice to growing ethnic tensions, which mobilized voters and solidified support based on racist appeals. In part because of the growing role of the FN, ethnic consciousness and diversity have grown in France and altered the context of French politics.

Twenty years ago the Cold War and the division of Europe were the basis for much of French foreign,

defense, and, to some extent, domestic policy. The Cold War is long over. As a result, Eastern European ethnic consciousness and conflicts previously held in check by Soviet power, and in any case insulated from Western Europe by the Iron Curtain, now have been suddenly liberated. The disintegration of the Soviet Communist experiment (and the Soviet Union) has also undermined the legitimacy of classic socialism and has thus removed from French (and European) politics many of the issues that have long separated left from right. Parties of the right have lost the anti-Communist glue that contributed to their cohesiveness, but parties of the left have lost much of their purpose.

Coincidentally, the disintegration of the Communist bloc has occurred at the same time that the countries of the European Union have reinvigorated the process of European enlargement and integration, with France in the lead. Membership in the EU shapes almost every aspect of policy and provides the context for the expansion and restructuring of the economy during the Fifth Republic.⁵⁴

At the beginning of his presidency in the early 1980s, François Mitterrand expressed his satisfaction with the existing structures of the Common Market. Having experienced their weakness, however, he increasingly felt that some form of federalism—a federalist finality—was necessary to enable Western Europe to use its considerable resources more effectively. Thus, during the Mitterrand presidency, France supported a larger and a more tightly integrated Europe. This included efforts to increase the powers of European institutions and the establishment of a European monetary and political union as outlined in the Maastricht Treaty, approved somewhat reluctantly in 1992. French commitment to a common European currency generated plans to cut public spending, plans that many French citizens ferociously resisted. Nevertheless, in 1998 France met all key requirements for and is now firmly part of the European Monetary Union.

The opening of French borders, not only to the products of other countries, but increasingly to their people and values (all citizens of the EU had the right to vote and run for office in the French local elections in 2001), feeds into the more general uneasiness about French national identity.

The integration of French economic and social institutions with those of its neighbors will progressively remove key decisions from the French government acting alone. In the past the French economy reacted to joint decisions made in Brussels. In the future, a broader range of institutions will be forced to

do the same. Rumblings of resistance are no longer limited to the fringe parties (the parties of the extreme right and the Communists). Opposition exists within all of the major political parties, especially the UMP. Here, too, there is considerable potential for new political divisions.

The rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty in 2005 was what one scholar has called "an event waiting to happen." It reflected a deep questioning of two aspects of European development. First, the enlargement of Europe, particularly the candidacy of Turkey, has raised questions of both French and European identity, particularly among voters of the center-right. Second, the rapidly growing regulatory power of the EU and its liberal use of this power have deeply troubled voters of the left.

KEY TERMS

baccalauréat	departments	G-10	political class
blocked vote	demonstrations of May–June 1968	grands corps	prefect
Bonaparte, Napoléon	Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA)	grandes écoles	president of the Republic
Buffet, Marie-George	Ecole Polytechnique	Jospin, Lionel	prime minister
Cabinet	European Union (EU) (European Community before 1992)	Juppé, Alain	privatization
Chirac, Jacques	Fédération de l'Education Nationale (FEN)	Le Pen, Jean-Marie	Rally for the Republic (RPR)
communes	Fédération Nationale des Syndicats Agricoles (FNSEA)	Maastricht Treaty	referendums
Confédération Française Democratique du Travail (CFDT)	Fifth Republic	Marchais, Georges	regions
Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)	Force Ouvrière (FO)	Mitterrand, François	Royal, Ségolène
Constitution of 1958	Fourth Republic	Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF)	Sarkozy, Nicolas
Constitutional Council	French Communist Party (PCF)	Muslims	Senate
Council of Ministers		National Assembly	Socialist Party (PS)
Council of State		National Front (FN)	Union for French Democracy (UDF)
<i>cumul des mandats</i> (accumulation of electoral offices)		nationalization	Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)
de Gaulle, Charles		neocorporatism	
		new immigrants	

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The divisions evoked by the referendum of 2005 were not new, but reflected the same ones revealed in the 1992 Maastricht referendum.

Nevertheless, this chapter, completed at the end of the first year of the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, presents a story of a strong and stable political system with an increasingly volatile and unstable party system. The forces destabilizing the party system are the major challenges now confronting all of the members of the European Union: the problem of identity in an expanding European Union and an independent world; the problem of democratic legitimacy among voters who are less ideologically committed, and an increasing skepticism of government and politicians, by those who expect more from government.

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National Assembly: www.assemblee-nat.fr

Senate: www.senat.fr

Collection of websites to French institutions: www.assemblee-nationale.fr/liens.asp

Embassy of France in the United States: www.info-france-usa.org

ENDNOTES

1. Claire Guéland, "La France s'enfoncé dans une récession d'une ampleur jamais vue," *Le Monde*, March 21, 2009, p. 12.
2. The best book in English on the Constitutional Council is Alec Stone, *The Birth of Judicial Politics in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
3. Laurence Wylie, "Social Change at the Grass Roots," in *In Search of France*, ed. Stanley Hoffmann, Charles Kindleberger, Laurence Wylie, Jesse R. Pitts, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle and François Goguel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 230.
4. See Olivier Duhamel, "Confiance institutionnelle et défiance politique: la démocratie française," in Sofres, *L'État de l'opinion 2001* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 75.
5. Interesting data on religious practice can be found in Sofres, *L'État de l'opinion 1994* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), pp. 179–199. These data are taken from an unpublished exit poll dated 26 May 1997.
6. See Sylvain Brouard and Vincent Tiberj, *Français comme les autres? Enquête sur les citoyens d'origine maghrébine, africaine et turque* (Paris: Presses de Sciences-Po, 2006).
7. See the Pew Global Attitudes Project, 6 July 2006. Retrieved July, 2006 from pewglobal.org/reports.
8. One important study found greater spontaneous class consciousness among French workers in the 1970s than among comparable groups of British workers. Duncan Gallie, *Social Inequality and Class Radicalism*

- in *France and Britain* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 34.
9. Annick Percheron, "Socialization et tradition: transmission et invention du politique," *Pouvoirs* 42 (1988): 43.
 10. Edgar Morin, *The Red and the White* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), discusses the noisy revolution of the teenagers and the silent one of women.
 11. See Janine Mossuz-Lavau and Mariette Sineau, *Les Femmes françaises en 1978: Insertion sociale, Insertion politique* (Paris: Centre de Documentation Sciences Humaine de CNRS, 1980). The authors also found that women who were previously employed were likely to express opinions closer to those of working women than of nonworking women.
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 13. Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), chs. 1–3 and tab. 2.4; Michele Tribalat, *Faire France* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995), pp. 93–98; Sylvain Brouard and Vincent Tiberj, *Français com les autres? Enquête sur les citoyens d'origine maghrébine, africaine, et turque* (Paris: Presses de Sciences-Po, 2006), pp. 30–32.
 14. See Laurence Haeusler, "Le monde associatif de 1978–1986," in *Données Sociales 1990*, ed. INSEE (Paris: INSEE, 1990), pp. 369–370. See also Henry Ehrmann and Martin Schain, *Politics in France*, 5th ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), tab. 3.6.
 15. Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques, *Tableaux de l'économie française* (Paris: INSEE, 2008).
 16. John Ambler, "Constraints on Policy Innovation in Education: Thatcher's Britain and Mitterrand's France," *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 1 (October 1987): 85–105. See also John Ambler, "Conflict and Consensus in French Education," in *Chirac's Challenge: Liberalization, Europeanization, and Malaise in France*, ed. John T. S. Keeler and Martin A. Schain (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).
 17. The restrictive recruitment of the grandes écoles is confirmed by a study: "Le recrutement social de l'élite scolaire depuis quarante ans," *Education et Formations* 41 (June 1995). Which institutions qualify as grandes écoles is controversial. But among the 140 or so designated as such in some estimates, only 15 or 20, with an enrollment of 2,000 to 2,500, are considered important, prestige schools. The number of private engineering and business schools that are generally considered to be grandes écoles has increased in recent years. Therefore, the total enrollment of all these schools has increased significantly to well over 100,000.
 18. These results are taken from Russell J. Dalton, *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2008), ch. 2. See Sofres, *L'Etat de l'opinion 1994*, p. 232.
 19. There is no legal definition for a grande école, although it is widely alluded to by citizens, journalists, and scholars. On these issues, see J.-T. Bodiguel and J.-L. Quermonne, *La Haute fonction publique sous la Ve République* (Paris: PUF, 1983), pp. 12–25, 83–94. The figures given here for grands corps (the elite administrative agencies) are approximations, based on a series of articles in *Les Echos*, 20–22 June 2006.
 20. See *le Figaro*, March 25, 2008.
 21. Janine Mossuz-Levau, "Les Femmes," in *Présidentielle 2007: Atlas électoral*, ed. Pascal Perrineau (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2007), pp. 75–78.
 22. These percentages are only approximations, since interest groups in France either refuse to publish membership figures or publish figures that are universally viewed as highly questionable. For estimates of interest group memberships, see Peter Hall, "Pluralism and Pressure Politics," in *Developments in French Politics*, rev. ed. Peter Hall, Jack Hayward, and Howard Machin (London: Macmillan, 1994). For recent estimates of trade union membership, see Antoine Bevort, "Les effectifs syndiqués à la CGT et à la CFDT 1945–1990," *Communisme* 35–37 (1994): 87–90. See also the recent study by Dominique Andolfatto and Dominique Labbé, *Histoire des Syndicats* (Paris: Seuil, 2006).
 23. Herrick Chapman, Mark Kesselman, and Martin Schain, *A Century of Organized Labor in France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).
 24. Mark Kesselman, "Does the French Labor Movement Have a Future?" in *Chirac's Challenge*, ed. Keeler and Schain. The reports of the congresses of the two largest union confederations in 2006 confirm that less than 5 percent of their members are under age 30. See *Le Monde*, 12 June 2006.
 25. See Martin A. Schain, "French Unions: Myths and Realities," *Dissent* (Summer 2008), pp. 11–15.
 26. The most interesting recent study is Sylvie Guillaume, *Le Petit et moyen patronat dans la nation française, de Pinay à Raffarin, 1944–2004* (Pessac, France: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2004). An earlier study by Henry W. Ehrmann, *Organized Business in France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), presents case studies about the contacts between the administration and the employers' organizations, but it is now dated.
 27. John Keeler, *The Politics of Neocorporatism in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
 28. Frank Wilson, *Interest-Group Politics in France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 151, 153, 162, and 164.
 29. John T. S. Keeler, "Situating France on the Pluralism-Corporatism Continuum," *Comparative Politics* 17 (January 1985): 229–249. On subsidies, see "Patronat et organisations syndicales: un système a bout de souffle," dossier special, *Le Monde*, 30 October 2007.

30. See the articles by John Ambler, Frank Baumgartner, Martin Schain, and Frank Wilson in *French Politics and Society* 12 (Spring/Summer 1994).
31. For a good survey of party developments between 1958 and 1981, see Frank L. Wilson, *French Political Parties Under the Fifth Republic* (New York: Praeger, 1982).
32. See Colette Ysmal, "Transformations du militantisme et déclin des partis," in *L'Engagement Politique, déclin ou mutation?* ed. Pascal Perrineau (Paris: Presses de la FNSP, 1994), p. 48. See also *L'Etat de la France* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997), pp. 521–526.
33. Stanley Hoffmann, *Le Mouvement Pujade* (Paris: A. Colin, 1956).
34. D. S. Bell and Byron Criddle, *The French Socialist Party: The Emergence of a Party of Government*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, England: Clarendon, 1988).
35. For an analysis of the decline of the Communist vote, see Martin Schain, "The French Communist Party: The Seeds of Its Own Decline," in *Comparative Theory and Political Experience*, ed. Peter Katzenstein, Theodore Lowi, and Sidney Tarrow (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990). Also see Jane Jensen and George Ross, *View from the Inside: A French Communist Cell in Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 5.
36. It must be noted—and this is true for all figures on electoral participation throughout this chapter—that French statistics calculate electoral participation based on registered voters, while American statistics take as a basis the total number of people of voting age. About 9 percent of French citizens entitled to vote are not registered. This percentage must therefore be added to the published figures when one wishes to estimate the true rate of abstention and to compare it with the American record.
37. See Françoise Subileau and Marie-France Toinet, *Les chemins de l'abstention* (Paris: La Découverte, 1993), and Marie-France Toinet, "The Limits of Malaise in France," in *Chirac's Challenge*, ed. Keeler and Schain, pp. 289–91.
38. *Le Monde*, 15 June 2002, p. 8.
39. John T. S. Keeler and Martin A. Schain, "Presidents, Premiers and Models of Democracy in France," in *Chirac's Challenge*, ed. Keeler and Schain.
40. One of the very few analyses of the use of the blocked vote, as well as the use by the government of Article 49.3, is found in John Huber, "Restrictive Legislative Procedures in France and the United States," *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 3 (September 1992): 675–687. Huber also compares such tools with similar procedures in the U.S. Congress.
41. Didier Maus, "Parliament in the Fifth Republic: 1958–1988," in *Policy-Making in France*, ed. Paul Godt (New York: Pinter, 1989), 17; Didier Maus, *Les grands textes de la pratique institutionnelle de la Ve République* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992).
42. These figures are taken from *cumul des mandats* presented by a committee of the French National Assembly: "Rapport fait au nom de la Commissions des lois constitutionnelles, de la législation et de l'administration générale de la République sur le projet de loi organiques (no. 827) limitant le cumul des mandats électoraux et fonctions électives," par M. Bernard Roman. 2008 figures were retrieved 3 January 2009 from www.assemblée-nationale.
43. This description refers to the first article of the Constitution of 1793, which proclaims: "The French Republic is one and indivisible." The Constitution of the Fifth Republic repeats it.
44. Vivien A. Schmidt, *Democratizing France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
45. The now classic statement of this relationship was written by Jean-Pierre Worms, who years later had major responsibilities for developing the decentralization reforms for the government of the left. See "Le Préfet et ses notables," *Sociologie du Travail* 8, no. 3 (1966): 249–275.
46. Mark Kesselman, "The Tranquil Revolution in France," in *Socialism, the State, and Public Policy in France*, ed. Philip G. Cerny and Martin A. Schain (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 176.
47. *OECD Factbook 2008* (Washington, DC: OECD, 2008), pp. 248–249.
48. See *Le Monde*, 7 October 1999, p. 6.
49. Victor Rodwin and Contributors, *Universal Health Insurance in France: How Sustainable?* (Washington, DC: Embassy of France, 2006), p. 187.
50. As a result, the number of workers paid indirectly by the state declined. Nevertheless, the proportion of the workforce paid directly by the state (government employment) remained stable at about 23 percent, about a third higher than in the United States, Germany, and Italy, but lower than in the Scandinavian countries. See Vincent Wright, "Reshaping the State: The Implications for Public Administration," *West European Politics* 17, no. 3 (July 1994).
51. They were also controlled by the same people as when they were nationalized. None of the newly privatized firms changed managing directors. See Michel Bauer, "The Politics of State-Directed Privatization: The Case of France 1986–1988," *West European Politics* 11, no. 4 (October 1988): 59.
52. Philip G. Cerny, "The 'Little Big Bang' in Paris," *European Journal of Political Research* 17, no. 2 (1989).
53. Martin A. Schain, *The Politics of Immigration in France, Britain and the United States: A Comparative Study* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008).
54. See Alain Gayomarch, Howard Machin, and Ella Ritchie, *France and the European Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).