11 Society, citizenship and welfare

11.1 Introduction

Neither the political institutions appraised in Part II nor the representative forces analysed in Part III of this book can be dissociated from their surrounding social and economic environments. Several interlocking questions are addressed in this chapter. Has the evolution of French society in the post-war period been conflict-ridden or consensual? Is it still pertinent to reason in terms of a statist French economic model? Whither the French social model? We seek answers to these important questions, each of which inform debates about the future direction of French politics and society. The overarching argument centres around the tensions between the expectations of new social groups in terms of public policy and services and the more limited capacity of the state to manage change.

11.2 The evolution of French society: social consensus or social fracture?

Table 11.1 portrays the changing French class structure during the post-war period. Even a cursory glance reveals that the old French class configuration has been greatly modified. The peasantry and the traditional bourgeoisie have virtually disappeared. The popular classes (industrial workers, low-status clerical workers, shop assistants) have declined. There has been a marked expansion of the new middle classes (higher-status clerical workers, managers and related workers in the public and private sectors). If French observers broadly agree on the contours of the evolution of French society, however, they disagree firmly upon the interpretation that should accompany this evolution.

The optimistic school argue that France, like many other advanced industrialised states, has moved towards a happy state of social harmony and prosperity, with the growth of an affluent middle class. They celebrate the emergence of a new national consensus, based on an end of ideology, an enhanced material well-being and a virtual eradication of class conflict. Imitating Daniel Bell in the United States, they refer to the new middle classes as the purveyors of a new focal culture disseminated to the rest of French society. Not only have the middle

Table 11.1 Social change and the evolution of the French workforce (excluding retired and non-active).

Year	1954	1962	1975	1982	1990	1999	2005	2014
Farmers	21	15.5	7.5	6.5	4	2.5	2.5	1.9
Artisans, small business, shopkeepers	13	10.5	8	8	7	6.1	6.3	6.5
Higher management, intellectual and liberal professions	3	4.5	7	8	11	12	15.6	17.1
Intermediary professions (teachers, social workers, middle management, civil servants)	9	11.5	17	18	19	22	23.1	25.6
Non-managerial clerical workers (*employés*)	17	18.5	24	26.5	28	30	29.2	28.3
Industrial workers	37	39.5	36.5	33	31	27	23.5	20.5

Source: INSEE (2016) Tableaux de *l'économie française*, Paris: Documentation Française (2005 and 2014 figures); INSEE (2003), Tableaux de *l'économie française*, Paris: Documentation Française (1999 and 1990 figures); INSEE censuses and employment surveys, 1954–82 figures. Cited in L. Dirn (1990) *l'économie française*, p. 160.

classes expanded in number, but members of the older social classes, such as farmers or industrial workers, have come increasingly to imitate the middle class in their lifestyles, so much so that they have lost many of the specific traits associated with their class of origin. The boundaries between different social classes have become blurred. This extolling of the beneficial effects of social change was pushed furthest by Mendras (1989) who discerned a Second French Revolution. Mendras argued that the structure of French society had been overhauled during the post-war period in a manner just as radical as that following the 1789 French Revolution. There were seven principal characteristics of this Second French Revolution:

1. An unprecedented demographic and economic expansion during the first thirty years of the post-war period, labelled by Jean Fourastié (1980) as *les trente glorieuses*. After a century of demographic stagnation (1840–1940), France's population rose dramatically after the war, from 42 million to 55 million within one generation. Economic production multiplied fivefold within several decades; national wealth increased in an unprecedented manner; the structure of the French economy was radically altered.
2. Economic take-off caused the expansion of tertiary-sector employment, radically changing the nation's social class structure. The two dominant social classes produced by the French Revolution, the peasantry and the bourgeoisie, have disappeared, replaced by a new dominant middle class.
3. Despite the post-war economic boom, industry and the industrial working class are in decline, leading to a weakening of subcultural resistance to national integration.
4. The spread of urbanisation has weakened the traditional opposition between the town and the countryside; an urban lifestyle now prevails everywhere.
5. The great national institutions such as the army, the church and the Republic are no longer challenged in principle by particular sections of French society. They have lost their symbolic importance and ideological character.
6. The uniformity promoted by the French education system and the post-war

development of the mass media have contributed to the sense of a unified national community.

7. Individualism has made such progress that it is no longer considered as an ideology but merely as a manner of living shared by everybody.

Such optimism is challenged by other sociologists and social historians. Emmanuel Todd (1988, 1995), for instance, directly challenged the thesis of the end of ideology and criticised the conformity (*la pensée unique*) that this notion implies. Todd diagnosed a 'social fracture' based on the division of French society into two antagonistic camps of approximately the same numerical weight: the middle classes (*classes moyennes*) and the popular classes (*classes populaires*). The former had benefited from the process of European integration, industrial modernisation and tertiary sector expansion. The latter had been sacrificed, since the 1980s, to the exigencies of economic austerity and capitalist rationalisation. The popular classes were alienated from the more privileged section of French society. Although the middle classes had increased in numbers, the popular classes continued to represent a small majority of the population (Todd 1995). Rather than a broad social consensus, a social fracture had come into existence, with whole swathes of French society being abandoned as victims of the process of social and economic modernisation. The fears of the disadvantaged half of the French population were expressed in the emergence of a new cleavage: one based around national identity and a rejection of cosmopolitanism. This was articulated with particular clarity during the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Traditional left-wing areas were in their majority opposed to ratification of the Maastricht treaty, and among the popular electorate opposition to the ratification of Maastricht reached two-thirds of those voting.

By the time of the 2005 referendum on the draft EU constitutional treaty, such popular rejection of the established European order had become even more apparent. The popular classes – workers, sole traders, clerical workers – had become more resolutely anti-cosmopolitan. The phenomenon of popular drift from the city centres accelerated, with two main political consequences: the embourgoisement of the main city centres (but not those of deprived medium-sized towns) and the flight of the popular classes to the suburbs and the peri-urban areas. The penetration of the FN in rural and semi-urban France, picking up support from displaced former city dwellers as well as from farming and small-town communities, attracted particular attention in the 2012 presidential election (Guilluy 2012). The radicalisation of the farming and rural communities was a significant development. Farmers had become vocally anti-European and lent their support in greater numbers to the FN than ever before.

These two portrayals of the evolution of French society contain alternative visions of social reality, but both would concur that the post-war period has witnessed the development of new social groups of a composite range and nature. As in other European countries, the emergence of new social groups (especially managers and clerical workers) was related to the social and economic transformation of French society during the post-war boom and to the expansion and democratisation of the education system. France's industrial take-off during the 1950s led to changing demands being placed upon the workforce: more

technical and managerial staff were needed to run new industries and services, at the expense first of farmers, latterly of manual workers. The result of these developments was that France became far less of a rigidly class-bound society than it had been in the 1930s.

Social mobility has increased, and class has become less of a structuring element in most people's daily lives; this does not signify that social class has disappeared altogether. The new middle classes are themselves fragmented, especially in relation to whether they work in the public or private sector, but also with regard to their political beliefs, their socio-economic status and their cultural preferences. Among the new middle classes, there is considerable diversity in terms of occupation, lifestyle, income and education. The rise of the new middle classes is in marked contrast with the virtual disappearance of the peasantry and the fragmentation of the industrial working class.

The end of the peasantry?

At the height of the crisis in Franco-American relations occasioned by the GATT agreement in 1993, the French daily *Libération* rebaptised the French Revolutionary slogan to read 'Liberté – Egalité – Fraternité – Ruralité' (freedom, equality, brotherhood, rusticity). Images of France as a traditional rural society continue to permeate the perceptions of the country held by French people and foreign observers alike. As illustrated in Chapter 10, the success of French farmers in imposing their sectoral demands represents one of the constant features of French politics. It is a testament to the historical conscience of a nation whose identity was forged on the land. France of the nineteenth century was sometimes portrayed as an inward-looking autarchy, a rural, believing society, pervaded by an all-encompassing distrust of Paris and the outsider. Outside of the handful of cities, the lives of most French people were confined to their immediate locality and kinship networks. During the nineteenth century, the occupational background of most working Frenchmen was linked to the land: France was still overwhelmingly a rural society at the turn of the twentieth century (Tacet 1992).

At the end of the Second World War, France was the most rural of all Western nations: 45 per cent of the population lived in rural communes, and one-quarter of the labour force worked in agriculture. As Williams put it, 'Agriculture was far more important than in Britain: in 1946, France still had one industrial worker for every agricultural worker, while Britain had nine' (1964: 4). Fifty years later, France had become a heavily urbanised nation in which agriculture directly employed under 5 per cent of the working population. There were as many as 6 million agricultural workers in 1946, but only just over 1 million in 1986, with five times fewer workers producing twice as much as forty years previously. Throughout the course of the twentieth century, France became an industrialised nation comparable with other European industrialised nations. It is today a post-industrial nation comparable with the others. Notwithstanding this evolution, the nation's rural conscience has remained intact. The rural myth is one that continues to motivate political action and to have a major impact

upon political choices. The farming lobby has attracted considerable support from city-dwellers, in part because of the sentiment that the French countryside must be managed rather than left to decay. The process of rural desertification is considered as part of a broader social problem. Protection of farming communities not only protects an endangered economic activity but also helps to preserve the nation's rural patrimony as well.

Working-class radicalism

The structure of protest politics in France is another feature setting the French apart from its North European neighbours. Traditions of direct action stem in part from the consequences of its late industrialisation. By the end of the nineteenth century, France was barely industrialised, outside of a number of geographically specific areas. Throughout the nineteenth century, French industry remained essentially small-scale and rural, concentrated in small companies employing fewer than 100 workers. By the end of the nineteenth century, only iron, steel and mining were beginning to take the shape of modern heavy industries. The great working-class strikes at the beginning of the twentieth century were as much the product of pre-industrial workers, such as winegrowers, shoemakers and woodcutters, as they were of genuine industrial workers (Ridley 1970).

By comparison with the United Kingdom, or Germany, France industrialised in a late and imperfect manner. The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed the growth of a heavily concentrated urban working class, with a strong sense of its own identity. Industrial workers were geographically separated from the rest of French society. They lived in tightly knit communities, where proletarian consciousness was high. Such proletarian communities existed, for instance, in the mining areas of the Nord/Pas-de-Calais, in the Paris industrial suburbs and in the large Mediterranean cities such as Marseilles. Unlike the peasantry, whose ancestry was ancient, the lineage of French industrial working class was far more recent. Indeed, the survival of a large peasantry retarded the development of an industrial working class in France. France's industrial take-off began in earnest from 1900 onwards and continued uninterrupted, despite the war, until 1930. The birth of heavy industry in urban conurbations brought about the creation of the modern working class and the beginnings of a new feeling of class consciousness. The older artisanal pre-industrial working class, which had prevailed until the turn of the century, had prided itself upon its trade consciousness, based on the exercise of skilled occupations which gave it professional autonomy and self-confidence. The new industrial working class of the early twentieth century adopted a more genuine proletarian consciousness based upon poverty, deprivation and the performance of menial, unskilled tasks. Both these rival forms of class consciousness became part of the modern working-class mentality in France. At its height, the PCF was the only party capable of expressing these two different forms of working-class consciousness. The working class could in some senses be considered as a subculture, with a high sense of class consciousness, and belief in its destiny as the harbingers of socialism. Its grandiose demands were in part an extension of its minority

status and its besieged mentality. More than most of their European counterparts, French workers believed in the Marxist-inspired myth that the working class was the class of the future and that it was destined to play a central role in the creation of a Socialist society.

Divisions produced by France's late industrial revolution of the twentieth century continue to manifest themselves in a variety of forms. The bitter class-against-class confrontation of the 1930s–1950s has given way to a less structured urban *anomie*, where a new type of urban poverty sets immigrants and paupers against the traditional proletariat (Clerc 2008). Unemployment and the shift to a post-industrial society have decimated the ranks of the traditional industrial working class. The structure of the industrial working class has altered as well. It is no longer a male bastion, since 40 per cent of workers are women, often part-time workers. France's large immigrant community is also concentrated within the working class and performs most of those menial tasks that native French workers now refuse to do. In political terms, the weakening solidity of the industrial proletariat has accentuated the decline of the PCF. The breakdown of traditional working-class subcultures has also facilitated the emergence of the FN as a new movement of urban protest of a rather different type.

The competing visions of French society as social fracture and social consensus both correspond to a genuine perception of reality. Without accepting all the tenets of the optimistic school, social change has tended to enhance the sense of national community – up to a point. As old cleavages based on class and subcultural identity have diminished, however, new ones have emerged, notably those tied with the advent of a post-industrial, multicultural society.

What conclusions can we draw from this? France in the third millennium is a pluralistic society that contains a broad range of political orientations and cultural practices within its midst. Social and political change has weakened the influence of traditional institutions such as the church, the state, political parties, the military and the extended family. These social changes have produced a waning of traditional myths, symbols and beliefs of French identity. While many older references appear archaic, it is not clear what has replaced them. French-style Republicanism appears resistant to ideological change and to theorising the diversity that is a fundamental trait of complex, post-modern societies. Consequently, though the traditional French model is unfolding, France's leaders are not quite sure what to put in its place.

11.3 The economy and economic governance

The French model of economic and industrial management has long fascinated foreign observers. We set out in this section to provide a very general overview of processes of economic governance in contemporary France; readers interested primarily in the economy and in France's comparative economic performance should pursue their investigations elsewhere (Schmidt 1996; Bauchet 1999; Clift 2006, 2008; Culpepper 2006; Hall 1986, 1990; Hayward 1986, 1997; Hancke 2001; Vial 2010; Kuisel 2012). After a brief presentation of the structure

of the French economy, we consider the legacy of *dirigisme*, the core feature of the orthodox French model as identified in the varieties of capitalism literature. We then move on to describe the change in economic direction since the 1980s. We conclude the section by highlighting underlying continuities in the practice of French economic management.

The French economy

French presidents used to boast of the French economy being the fourth largest in the world, though the nation has definitively been overtaken by China and, perhaps more temporarily, by the United Kingdom (Vesperini 1993). Thirty years of spectacular economic growth from 1945 to 1974 – *les trente glorieuses* – placed France second in the ranking of European nations, trailing only the Federal Republic of Germany. The French economy was transformed during this period from a partly agricultural to a service economy, with the relative weight of industry (broadly defined) remaining constant (Flockton and Kofman 1989). The French economy performed particularly well in the agricultural and high added-value service sectors (luxury foods and goods especially), with a more mixed manufacturing performance (Bensahel 1998; Bauchet 1999). In recent years, the French economy has demonstrated key manufacturing strength in defence, aerospace, civil engineering, the automotive industry and pharmaceuticals. But there is no real equivalent of the *mittelstand*, the dense web of medium-sized firms that sustain the German and northern Italian economies. The French economy remains a generalist one, which performs moderately well across the range, without many high value-added fields of specialisation except in niche manufacturing, the arms trade, high-end engineering, luxury goods, wine and the food industry. Though it has been challenged in some traditional areas of strength since the year 2000 (agriculture, food, automotive), it has demonstrated a capacity for innovation and excellence in the digital economy.

The agricultural and food sector has provided one important pillar of the French economy in the post-war period. Buoyed by exceptional increases in agricultural productivity and supported by the incentive structure of the CAP, by the year 2000 France had become the world's second largest food exporter, behind the United States. Since the second edition of this book in 2004, France has been overtaken by Germany and challenged by Italy. Alongside its mixed record of success in the high-technology activities such as information technology, computers and consumer electronics, the French economy has performed well in intermediate branches such as car manufacturing, glass, rubber and chemicals. These are sectors where long-term state investments facilitated economies of scale. A decline in the traditional manufacturing sector (textiles, steel, mining) has occurred, but French performance in the service sector has compensated for its mixed industrial performance. France is one of the world's largest exporter of services, with particular strengths in tourism, retailing, transport, banking and insurance. With agricultural and industrial employment in permanent decline, tertiary-sector employment is the source of most new job creation. Service-sector growth has proved sluggish since the early 1980s, however, reflecting lower

Table 11.2 France in the European Union: some comparative data.

Country	Date of entry into EU	Population (2015) (millions)	GDP (standard purchasing power)	Inflation 2014	Unemployed 2014
Austria	1995	8.5	26,450	1.5	5.6
Belgium	1958	11.3	25,950	0.5	8.5
Bulgaria	2007	7.1	12,500	–1.6	11.4
Croatia	2013	4.2	16,100	0.2	17.3
Cyprus	2004	1.1	23,200	0.7	16.1
Czech Republic	2004	10.5	22,900	0.4	6.1
Denmark	1973	5.7	33,900	0.3	6.6
Estonia	2004	1.3	20,300	0.5	7.4
Finland	1995	5.5	30,200	1.2	8.7
France	1958	64.4	29,400	0.6	10.3
Germany	1958 (1990 ex-GDR)	80.7	34,000	0.8	5.0
Greece	1981	11.0	19,600	–1.4	26.5
Ireland	1973	4.7	36,800	0.3	11.3
Italy	1958	59.8	26,400	3.0	12.7
Latvia	2004	2.0	17,200	0.7	10.8
Lithuania	2004	2.9	20,200	0.2	10.7
Luxembourg	1958	0.6	73,500	0.7	6.0
Malta	2004	0.4	23,200	0.8	5.9
Netherlands	1958	16.9	36,000	0.3	7.4
Poland	2004	38.6	18,500	0.1	9.0
Portugal	1986	10.3	16,490	–0.2	14.1
Romania	2007	19.5	14,600	1.4	6.8
Slovakia	2004	5.4	20,900	–0.1	13.2
Slovenia	2004	2.1	22,600	0.4	9.7
Spain	1986	46.1	25,100	0.3	24.5
Sweden	1995	9.8	34,100	0.2	7.9
United Kingdom	1973	64.7	30,000	1.5	6.1

Source: adapted from INSEE (2016), *Tableaux de l'économie française*, Paris: Documentation Française, pp. 11, 13.

growth rates throughout the French economy. (See Table 11.2 for a presentation of comparative data pertaining to France in the European Union.)

The 'thirty glorious years' from 1945 were followed by thirty rather uncomfortable ones, three decades of painful adjustment to depressed conditions in the world economy. The oil crises of 1973 and 1979, the processes of economic globalisation and the march of European integration during the 1980s and 1990s all highlighted the importance of the external constraints weighing upon the French economy and the limited margins of manoeuvre of its governments in inventing new economic policies. The pressures facing French economic policy-makers in 2016 are rather similar to those facing policy-makers in other developed European countries: namely, how to promote economic growth and stimulate employment while retaining a tight control over inflation and limiting budget deficits. These economic priorities have – in theory at least – become institutionally embedded in the architecture of the EMU.

Dirigisme and its limits

France, Germany, Britain, Italy and many other European countries were devastated by the effects of the Second World War. Throughout western Europe, there emerged a broad consensus in favour of adopting new policy instruments to tackle the challenges of post-war reconstruction. The post-war consensus involved a new form of settlement between politics and markets. It implied an acceptance of a higher degree of state interventionism in economic management (especially through the budget); the public ownership or regulation of certain key industries; Keynesian demand management in macro-economic policies; universal social-security provision; and high taxation. What set French post-war capitalism apart from experiences elsewhere was that it was state-driven rather than being managed through social partnership (as in the corporatist Scandinavian states as well as in Austria and Germany) or on a market basis. Indeed, France provided a particular case of interest in the varieties of capitalism literature: neither a liberal market economy of the Anglo-Saxon variety, nor a genuinely coordinated market economy, of the German or Scandinavian type, but a hybrid.

The French model of politics and policy presupposed a rather different equilibrium between state and market than its neighbours. There was more *dirigisme*. But there have always been two faces to French state activity. On the one hand, an interventionist state that actively promoted national champions and engaged in neo-protectionist practices. On the other, French governments in the Fifth Republic pursued a liberal macro-economic policy based on sound money policies and international competitiveness (Dyson and Featherstone 1999; Howarth 2001). The French economy thus developed under the dual impetus of state capitalism and classical liberalism.

State interventionism (*dirigisme*) in economic policy-making formed the core French 'variety of capitalism'. We can identify five characteristic features of *dirigisme* as it operated during *les trente glorieuses*: indicative planning, administered financing, the state as entrepreneur, a skewed pattern of government–industry relations and an active industrial policy. Each will be discussed on its own terms, though in practice there is substantial overlap.

Planning

From 1947 onwards, the French state introduced a series of five-year plans, drawn up, in the main, by ambitious civil servants. Schmidt (1996) points to the independent administrative bureaucracy as an important actor in driving economic modernisation. For Hayward (1986), state interventionism was able to flourish within the French economy because of a combination of active techno-bureaucratic leadership and passive democratic support. These plans fixed goals for particular industrial sectors and singled out priorities for economic development. Heavy state investment in industrial plant helped French industry recover during the early years after the war. In the words of Schmidt, 'Planning was an unquestioned success between 1946 and 1963 when it had a clear set of goals and a limited set of programmes focused on restoring health to a small

number of industries' (1996: 78). But, as Hall puts it, 'as the plans became more grandiose, they became more fragile' (1986: 147).

Most observers now agree that, except in the period of immediate post-war reconstruction, the importance of state planning should not be exaggerated. Over time, the *dirigiste* element of state planning decreased significantly. In 1947, the state budget was directly responsible for 50 per cent of all investment, yet by 1958 this figure had fallen to 22 per cent (Bauchet 1986). Hall (1986) has claimed that, by the Sixth Plan, the French government had lost much of its independence from the social groups that the state was supposed to steer. Only the first plan (1947–52) was of a command nature. Unlike the Soviet plans, which set compulsory targets for industrial sectors, the French plans were indicative: they attempted to influence private investment decisions and to mobilise social actors in favour of economic growth. There was little relationship between the sectoral priorities outlined in French plans and public finance. The French state spent far more on housing, infrastructure and agriculture than it did on industry. The plans were unable to dictate investment decisions even for public-sector industries. Of the greatest importance, the finance ministry was not required to take into account the objectives outlined in the five-year plans, which singularly limited their effectiveness (Flockton and Kofman 1989). The process of national state planning was formally abandoned with the Tenth Plan, signed by Socialist minister Rocard in the 1980s. The legacy remains, in some key respects, in the process of state–region planning that has accompanied the decentralisation process since the early 1980s and in the form of the regional policy planning cycle, the complex negotiations between the regions, governments and European Commission preceding each round of EU regional policy (Europe 2020).

An economy of administered financing

A related feature evoked by Schmidt (1996: 78) is that of a 'strict and detailed supervision of credit by the state', what Cohen (1995) refers to as capitalism without capital. The French model looked to the state as the main investor in firms rather than the Paris Stock Exchange or the international financial markets (Cohen 1995; Kassim 1997). There was a common consensus in the post-war period, shared by the state and social partners, that socio-economic change could be induced through the use of state control. As the private sector depended, by and large, upon the state for capital, governments had the upper hand in their relationships with French firms (Hayward 1997). With control over the Bank of France and the banking and insurance systems, the state controlled the flow of credit.

This account of the dependency of French firms is questioned in some other accounts (Howarth 2001). Moves to more integrated European rules from the 1980s signalled the end of the era of administered financing, especially with the abolition of capital controls in the late 1980s. French firms have become successful international players, raising money on the domestic and international money markets. Until 2014, French firms were much more likely to be predators than prey, though the most recent evidence suggests a reversing of the trend. The opening up of international money markets (and the Paris stock market in

particular) has produced a majority foreign ownership of the capital of the CAC 40 companies, with Anglo-Saxon pension funds, US equity firms and Chinese firms being increasingly important players.

The state as entrepreneur

In the words of Zysman (1977: 51), writing in the 1970s, 'the anti-market tradition in France has its origins in the very process of industrialisation, which was initiated by a strong and centralised state . . . Closed borders, active entrepreneurial intervention by the state, and negotiation rather than competition between business within France have all served to insulate the economy from the market.'

Dirigisme refers both to direct state management of important industrial sectors and indirect state involvement with the decisions taken by private companies. This interventionism was decidedly a post-war phenomenon. From the perspective of the left, nationalisation was ideologically suspect in the inter-war period. During the Popular Front government (1936–7), no major nationalisations were programmed, except in the specific cases of the arms industry and the Bank of France. State economic ownership was feared as a tool of fascist governments. State ownership was given a massive boost, however, in the changed climate of the immediate post-war period. The nationalisation programme of 1946 created large state firms in key sectors such as energy (GDF, EDF, Commissariat à l'Énergie Atomique, Charbonnages de France), transport (Air France), industry (Renault), banking and insurance. Through its control over the banking system and the distribution of credit, the French state occupied a powerful position to influence the investment choices of French firms. The state was thus simultaneously a gatekeeper, a mobiliser and an agent of economic development.

At its height, the French state justified its economic activism with the argument that it intervened directly in areas where private capital was absent and where the national interest was at stake. Gaullist policy-makers in the 1960s interpreted the national interest in terms of giving France a lead in the most technologically advanced industrial sectors. Likewise, Socialist ministers justified nationalisation in 1982 as a means of giving the state a lead in major infrastructure projects unattractive to private capital. The success of state investment depended upon the sector involved: massive financial investment gave France a technological edge in sectors such as aerospace, nuclear energy and transport, but it had less impact elsewhere (as with the steel plans of the 1970s, or the failed bio-technology, satellite or cable plans).

In addition to the extension of direct state ownership in 1946, the Socialist government's 1982 Nationalisation Act took into public ownership all large private banks, several of France's largest industrial groups and a number of smaller concerns. The result was that the public sector increased from around 8 per cent to around a quarter of French industrial capacity and 50 per cent of industrial investment, while the nationalisation of the main banks left the state in control of virtually all credit. The Socialist nationalisation programme represented the apogee of French economic interventionism. Direct state involvement in economic

development has subsequently diminished. The retreat of the state has occurred partly as a result of budgetary constraints, but also because of European policy rules, promoting greater marketisation and privatisation. Whatever its industrial logic, nationalisation proved expensive. Within two years of their 1982 Act, the Socialist government began backtracking. In 1984, state firms were allowed to issue 'investment certificates' to private-sector investors in an attempt to raise capital. This preceded the large-scale privatisation programme of the Gaullist Chirac, Balladur and Juppé governments from 1986 onwards (Bauer 1988; Dumez and Jeunemaitre 1993; MacClean 1995, 2006). But it was the PS-dominated Jospin government (1997–2002) that engaged in the most far-reaching privatisation programme, at least as measured in terms of the total sell-off of state assets.

French governments of left and right remain committed to a larger measure of state economic interventionism than Anglo-Saxon economic liberals consider appropriate. The nature of the French privatisation programme in 1986–8 illustrated this. The French state preserved a powerful oversight role for itself through the policy of creating a 'hard core' of institutional shareholders close to the state's economic interests (Dumez and Jeunemaitre 1993; MacClean 1997). The Jospin government (1997–2002) reinvented privatisation as a tool of industrial policy. The left for long resisted privatisation in any form. In the 1997 election campaign, the Socialists pledged to 'stop' the privatisation programme launched by the Balladur and Juppé administrations. Once in power, the Jospin government was less categorical. In July 1997, Jospin declared 'pragmatism' to be the guiding principle in its attitude towards privatisations: everything would depend upon the interests of the firm concerned and the finances of the state. There was a clear industrial strategy underpinning Jospin's 'privatisations'. In one or two instances, 'privatisation' was forced upon the French government by past commitments or by EU competition policy adjudication, as in the case of GAN-CIC and Crédit Lyonnais. These cases were relatively rare. Most 'privatisations' were undertaken with a view to strengthening the strategic role of the state in an age of economic interdependence and globalisation. There were three main types of instrument under Jospin: (1) partial privatisations, designed to prepare state firms for competition; (2) majority sell-offs, where the state retained an important blocking influence; and (3) sell-offs strengthening the cooperative sector (Cole 2008).

Three decades of partial privatisation notwithstanding, the French state remains a consequential industrial player. It has majority shareholdings in the national railway company, the SNCF; in the energy giant EDF (84.94 per cent), as well as in the Paris airport authority (Aéroports de Paris-ADP) (50.63 per cent), which controls the main Paris airports and has stakes in several international and regional airports. The state retains minority shareholdings in most of its former jewels, firms such as car-maker Renault-Nissan (19.74 per cent), mobile phone operator Orange (13.45 per cent), the airline Air-France-KLM (17.58 per cent), the nuclear power constructor Areva (28.83 per cent), defence firm Thales (26.36 per cent), the pan-European aircraft builder Airbus (10.94 per cent) and engine-maker Safran (15.39 per cent) (Bezet 2016). Through using the instruments at their disposal, the French state has continued to attempt to steer companies, prevent unwelcome takeovers and protect what are deemed to be key interests. There are several recent examples of the survival of *dirigiste* instincts. Recent cases (at the

time of writing) included the decision by the economics ministry to bail out the nuclear power-station operator Areva (to the tune of €5 billion) and to insist on merging the nuclear activities of Areva and EDF. At least in this case, the state had a majority shareholding in the larger group, EDF. The state also intervenes where it no longer holds a majority shareholding. For example, in 2015, the state raised its stake in Renault from 15 to 20 per cent in order to strengthen its veto rights over certain industrial choices: this decision, taken directly by Macron, the industry minister, created a crisis in relations with the Japanese partner Nissan. In 2016, Macron intervened very closely in the (failed) merger between Bouygues Telecom and Orange; the intervention of the public authorities did not allow these two companies to create a national champion in the field of mobile phones and, indeed, might have been an obstacle to a successful agreement.

The state is an engaged and activist stakeholder. In 2004, a new agency (Agence des Participations de l'État, APE) was created to manage the various state investments and to ensure the state obtains best value returns for its investments. In an overall context of declining revenues, the state is as ambitious as ever in terms of the objectives to be set by those firms where it holds minority shareholdings. It has insisted on the payment of generous dividends and attempted to enforce voting rules favourable to its own interests. But in 2016 France's public corporations are faced with the consequences of expensive past choices and the prevailing context of competition in those areas where the French state has retained a significant presence. The national railway firm, the SNCF, is under particular pressure. The state is insisting on an SNCF investment of €3–4 billion per annum in order to finance new LGV lines (especially Lyon–Turin). The energy conglomerate EDF can no longer finance the thirty nuclear reactors that will be necessary to replace ageing stock. Old habits die hard, both in terms of the state's *dirigiste* instincts and in the anticipatory behaviour of the remaining 'national champions' that rely on the French state to bail out and protect their core interests.

An active industrial policy

French industrial policy was traditionally built upon the belief in the failure of perfect competition and the right to protect industries. In a *dirigiste* sense, governments should be able to direct market competition. Governments should protect their industries against disloyal competition and social dumping and engineer industrial change in the long-term national strategic interest. Here we should sound a note of caution. The original features of French post-war economic management (such as planning) had faded in importance long before French governments attempted to harmonise economic policy with EU partners in the 1980s and 1990s (Cohen 1996). On the other hand, within the limits of EU competition policy, the French economic model still looks to an active industrial policy (see Chapter 13). State activism is directed to encouraging and financing extensive research and training, bringing under-performing regions into national productivity (*aménagement du territoire*), promoting collaboration (rather than competition) between leading French firms, pursuing prestige projects (*grands projets*) and building essential economic infrastructure.

During the *dirigiste* phase, various types of instrument were used to attempt to promote French industry. These involved first and foremost the promotion of state-led prestige projects (*grands projets*) in sectors considered vital for national independence such as nuclear power, space exploration, the railways, the defence industry, aerospace and telecommunications. The *grands projets* were/are multi-billion euro investment projects, designed to channel funds into the industries of the future. Many of these had politico-military origins (in aerospace, or atomic energy, for example). They were often state-driven conglomerates designed to retain and develop French scientific expertise. Public ownership was not a condition for state involvement. Private-sector actors (for example, the aerospace firm Dassault or the conglomerate Alcatel-Alsthom) could also benefit from state aid, notably by indirect protectionist forms of assistance in the form of state procurement policies, low-interest credits, tax breaks and export credits. In all cases, there was a strong desire that French firms avoid foreign influence (making them more dependent upon the French state).

Under governments of the Gaullist right, as well as of the Socialist left from 1981 to 1983, the official aim of industrial policy was to promote national champions in technically advanced sectors, especially in the sphere of transport and energy. The policy of creating national champions depended upon fulfilling certain criteria that assumed a strong (if flexible) state and a high degree of national economic sovereignty. According to Cohen (1995), the preconditions were offensive protectionism, technical innovation, public procurement policies, direct state aid and long-term political support (but weak political interference). Apart from the *grands projets*, industrial policy also involved direct government grants to industrial sectors in difficulty, such as coal, textiles, machine tools and shipbuilding. Such state grants and sectoral plans have become more difficult since the Single European Act (SEA) (Hayward 1997).

In 2015, three leading French groups (each in the CAC 40) fell into foreign ownership: the cement maker Lafarge, the energy and transport conglomerate Alstom and the telephone-maker Alcatel-Lucent. Such a reversal was interpreted by leading economists, such as Elie Cohen, or industrialists, such as Loïk Le Floch-Pringent (2016) as a sign of industrial decline and the failure of 'Hi-Tech Colbertism'. For a long time, French groups were efficient international predators. There were few examples of French firms being taken over by foreign rivals. When such occasions occurred – the case of Pechiney, bought by the Canadian Alcan in 2003, or Arcelor, taken over by India steel-maker Mittal in 2006 – these were experienced as national dramas. As industry minister, Sarkozy had intervened to prevent the takeover of Alstom by Siemens in 2004. French groups have been far more acquisitive over the past two decades in relation to foreign targets than the objects of foreign takeovers. But there has been a reversal (Cosnard 2015). In 2014, Alstom, a former national champion in the field of energy and transport, negotiated the sale of all its energy activities to the American General Electric. The minister, Montebourg, had not been forewarned and attempted to resist, but to no avail. The case of Alcatel-Lucent provides another example. Alcatel had originally emerged from the Compagnie Générale d'Électricité (CGE), one of the large groups nationalised under the Socialists in 1982. It was taken over in 2016 by the Finnish firm Nokia (having made losses in nine of the previous ten

years). Finally, cement-maker Lafarge fell to the Swiss firm Holcim. In these three cases of major CAC 40 firms, the groups had been greatly weakened, and they had lost their industrial logic. These three cases allow a reflection on the fate of national champions: in the words of Cohen (2016), these symbols of modern Colbertism have fallen one after another because they are not well adapted to the global environment, in part because of the general lack of competitiveness of the country, in part because of the lack of pension funds, removing a source of endogenous investment.

A skewed pattern of government–industry relations

During the *dirigiste* phase, there was a widespread belief that the market needed to be regulated by a central state vested with an unchallenged political legitimacy. The state represented the general will of the people, over and above the particularistic interests of business, unions and voluntary groups. Moreover, in the economic sphere, the state was vested with the duty of public service. The public sector was responsible for providing essential services (and ensuring essential investment) that private capital interests were unwilling (or incapable) of assuming. This produced a pattern of close interlocking relationships between the civil service, political elites and the boards of the leading French firms, which depended to some extent on public procurement policies.

Government–industry relations were complex. While state planners could orientate the activities of private-sector firms in sensitive industrial spheres (notably by procurement policies), there was evidence that large private firms were able to exert subtle influence over the government machinery in order to promote their objectives (Cohen 1995). Once established in the international market place, the most successful French firms demanded greater autonomy from the state, including in their detailed investment decisions, whether they were owned by the public or the private sector. In the course of the late 1980s and 1990s, the French state acceded to these demands, in order to assist the transformation of French firms into global players.

The high economic growth rates of *les trente glorieuses* facilitated the type of interventionist policies adopted by French governments. In her major study of French economic management, Schmidt (1996) refers to the 'inflationist social compromise' as one of the underpinnings of the post-war French economic model. Under the guise of social partnership, there was a convergence between the state, the trade unions and the employers not to control nominal changes in income. The model relied upon inflation to finance growth, an option that became untenable from the late 1970s onwards.

Challenges to the traditional model

The orthodox model was challenged on all fronts from the mid to late 1970s. The 'inflationist social compromise' led to the franc being devalued on several occasions. The massive French firms created by industrial engineering were ill

adapted to the changing international environment. Firms needed to become less dependent on the state, more on the markets. Forged during the prolonged post-war period of growth and prosperity (1950–74), Keynesian demand-management policies proved incapable of addressing the crises of the early 1970s (namely, the ending of the Bretton Woods fixed parities system in 1971, and the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) oil-price rises of 1973–4). The basic assumption of Keynesianism was that an interventionist state could control the economic cycle through the use of demand-management techniques. With the move to global recession after 1973–4, Keynesian policies, where applied, increased public expenditure and aggravated inflation. Growth management faltered under the accumulated pressures of stagflation, unemployment, balance of trade crises and state debt. These pressures proved at least as challenging to France as to any other advanced economy.

11.4 Social policy, the welfare state and the French social model

If the *dirigiste* state was irremediably weakened after 1983, Levy (2005) identifies the emergence in the 1980s of the 'social anaesthesia state' which undertook a substantial expansion of welfare and labour market measures in order to protect French workers from the harshest effects of the move to the market. Other writers, such as Smith (2004, 2013), have similarly emphasised the trade-off between economic liberalisation and social protection. Though unable to direct the economy, the French state has enhanced its intervention in social, welfare and labour market policy in the past three decades.

It lies beyond the boundaries of the current study to comment in detail the functioning of social welfare in France, a theme the interested reader will find amply developed elsewhere (Smith 2004, 2013; Palier 2006; Revauger 2006; Hassenteufal 2008). It is difficult to portray welfare as a single policy sector; rather, it encompasses health care, old-age pensions, family policy, unemployment insurance, even education, fields that each have their own dynamics. When the scope is broadened to include the elusive 'French social model', the unit of analysis is still more difficult to define. Some basic definitions do help. In France, social security refers primarily to the contributions-based system of health insurance. There are also separate old-age pensions and family allowances schemes, as well as funds for the unemployed. Health care, family allowances and old-age pensions are managed by insurance funds (*caisses*), which are administered by the social partners (the trade unions and the employer's federations). The principle of social partnership spills over into related areas such as unemployment insurance and training which are also governed on the basis of self-managing funds. Though these funds (*caisses*) enter into contractual agreements with the state, they are managed in a semi-autonomous way. The union Force Ouvrière for long controlled the main health-insurance fund, for example, and was reputed for its independent style of management. *A priori*, the policy style in welfare is that of steering by social partners and the professions and limited state capacity, whether in terms of directing institutions, controlling outcomes or limiting

expenditure. Social policy has some key features of a self-regulating network, shaped by strong professional pressures. Though the state aspires to exercise a directive influence, it has proven very difficult to implement reforms.

Political scientists and sociologists have been drawing welfare maps of Europe for the past twenty years. In his seminal study, Esping Anderson (1990) identified the three main welfare models as: (1) the social-democratic universalistic welfare states (prevalent in Scandinavia); (2) minimal welfare states (the Anglo-Saxon model); and (3) corporatist welfare states, the norm throughout much of western Europe. Subsequent writers have included new categories such as the Mediterranean model. In terms of basic principles, however, there are two main types. The Bismarckien model is a system of social insurance based on contributions and administered by the representatives of the insured (workers and employers). The Beveridge model provides for a system of universal cover, financed mainly by general taxation and only partly by contributions. France falls uneasily within these general typologies, but it is closer to the Bismarkien corporatist model than to others. This incremental mix is important for understanding policy dynamics in this sphere (Hassenteufal and Palier 2005).

The French welfare model is an institutional hybrid that emerged in a sedimentary manner in response to social challenges. Post-war social reformers looked closely at the Beveridge report and the model of a universalistic welfare state. As Smith (2004: 32) points out, however, the idea of universalism was rejected by the workforce itself in 1945, as layer upon layer of occupational pension and health schemes had already been established during the inter-war period. French trade unions fought for a large administrative role in managing any social-insurance system. The system created in 1945 granted the trade unions and employers' federations a central role in co-managing the social-security regime. Though essentially contributions-based, since the late 1980s most new welfare measures – *couverture maladie universelle* (universal medical cover), *revenu minimum d'insertion* – have been financed by general taxation and have been designed to provide a safety net to prevent the most vulnerable people in society from falling into destitution (Palier 2006). The French welfare state is thus a patchwork, combining contributions, universal benefits and charity and encompassing a subset of distinct policy fields, the two most important of which we now briefly survey.

The French health-care system is by and large an insurance-based model, unlike the National Health Service (NHS) in Britain. All employees contribute to health funds that are administered by the unions and employers. Health benefits are usually reserved to those who are working: until the introduction of the *couverture maladie universelle* programme by the Jospin government, there had been no available health care provided for the non-working poor. The system is complex. There is one general health fund – the Caisse Nationale d'Assurance-Maladie – but there are also many profession-specific ones, which provide top-up benefits. Health care provides a good example of British dogmatism and French pragmatism. There is little trace of the social engineering so prevalent in the case of the NHS in Britain. The NHS was created against the fierce opposition of organised medical profession; in the French case, the system of social security established in 1945 was superimposed upon a set of pre-existing arrangements and compromises, first and foremost with the medical profession. There is little opposition

in France to the private management of public goods in health care. Within limits, consumers are free to choose between public and private and are entitled to social-security coverage, whoever the provider. The governance of health care has a strongly corporatist flavour. There is a consensus among social partners to retain a high level of health expenditure that escapes in the main from central government control.

The contributions-based system also underpins the French system of old-age pensions. As with health care, there is one overarching state pension scheme and a morass of profession-specific ones. The fundamental principle of the pay-as-you-go (*repartition*) regime is that those in work pay for the pensions of those who have retired. The idea is deeply rooted in the governance structure of old-age pensions, and there has been hostility to private equity-based pensions within the policy community (from the trade unions in particular) (Natali and Rhodes 2004).

There are a number of problems with pay-as-you-go schemes. First, the principle of intergenerational solidarity is tested by demographic trends (Chauvel 2006). With a ratio of three workers for one pensioner in 1970, the figure is expected to fall to 1:1 in 2030. Governments have slowly recognised that the current generous system of pension provision is unsustainable. There are only a limited number of solutions. One option is that employees need to work longer: Premier Balladur managed to equalise the treatment of public- and private-sector workers in 1993, with both required to work for forty years before being able to retire. After a bitter conflict, in 2003, the Raffarin government was able to prolong the normal working life to forty-two years.

The other feature of the French case is the large number of special regimes effectively underwritten by the public purse. The French state guarantees the delivery of highly advantageous pension benefits to a number of key public-sector workers, especially those in the power industry (EDF, GDF), the national railways (SNCF) and the Paris metro (RATP), as well as those with civil-servant status working for France Télécom, previously a government department. These pension schemes are heavily in deficit and always rescued by the state.

Back in 1995, Juppé ran against tough opposition in his forlorn quest to reform the special regimes. Though the Raffarin government introduced a fairly far-reaching pension reform in 2003, it did not affect the special regimes. President Sarkozy introduced a modest reform in 2008, but the special regimes remain in deficit, and their funding is largely assumed by the taxpayer. Not only was there no major reform of pensions during the Hollande presidency, but the Socialist president decreed that those in the most dangerous professions could retire at sixty.

The difficulties of implementing reform in the social policy sector have been repeatedly demonstrated since the mid-1990s and the failure of the Juppé Plan. The Juppé Plan of 1995, which sought to contain spiralling health care and pension costs, provoked massive opposition that led to reforms being either abandoned or watered down (Darnault 1999). The French social model refers to a set of values that are much more deeply embedded than health and old-age provision. For one observer, the French have an 'ideological' attachment to public service, with the mobilising myth of social progress by public service coming

to form part of modern French political culture (Cohen 1996). The adversary is clearly identified – Anglo-Saxon neo-liberalism – though it is rarely defined in any detail (Chabal 2015). Mobilisation against the perceived ravages of neo-liberalism is strongest in the field of employment policy, where a dual labour market ensures a high level of social protection for those in work but offers limited prospects for those outside of contributory social protection networks.

The French social model prefers a high level of social protection over the free operation of labour markets and labour flexibility. French governments, especially Socialist-led ones, have favoured state-led employment creation and protection schemes and adopted 'active' employment policies. Active employment policy takes a number of forms: from apprenticeships and work placements to state-subsidised jobs and employers' social security exemptions. The Hollande administration (2012–17) centred its policy on reducing unemployment on subsidised jobs for young people (*emplois d'avenir*), as well as on the so-called generational contracts (*contrats de génération*), according to which, in return for tax breaks, older workers would act as mentors to younger apprentices who would eventually replace them in the labour force.

There is a widely diffused yet contested belief that government intervention works, the paradigm for which was the Jospin government's state orchestrated shift to a thirty-five-hour week in 1998 (Milner 2002). The thirty-five-hour-week legislation emphasised job creation through negotiated reductions in the working week (for all firms employing over twenty employees). Implementing the thirty-five-hour week would not only create jobs but would also further the aims of an egalitarian social-democratic employment policy. In practice, the enforced reduction to a thirty-five-hour week restrained wage growth and was deeply unpopular in the 2002 presidential election among the Socialists' traditional electoral clientele.

There were numerous unintended consequences. The branch-level negotiations led to national agreements being signed that allowed for the annual calculation of hours worked (*annualisation*) and improved labour flexibility. The effects on employment, however, were deeply controversial and probably impossible to measure. The law assumed that there is a fixed employment total, with any reduction in the working week automatically creating new employment. This 'adequationist' belief was contested by many. The Socialist minister, Aubry, claimed the legislation had created 600,000 new jobs, a claim challenged not only by political opponents but also by most economists. In ideological terms, the thirty-five-hour-week policy was presented by the ruling PS as an attempt to define social-democratic employment policies that would combine an activist role for the state with an open economy in a globalising world. The Socialists thus explicitly rejected the 'neo-liberal' interpretation, according to which globalisation requires the structural reform of labour markets. Though critical of the thirty-five-hour working week, President Sarkozy introduced only incremental changes, notably by removing corporate and income taxes paid on overtime worked up to thirty-nine hours a week (taxes which were promptly reintroduced by the Socialist Hollande once elected in 2012).

For Howell (2011), only the state can handle the task of reshaping industrial relations. Social partners cannot by themselves reform complex systems. The

state alone has the ability to narrate crisis and can solve collective action problems that social partners (with sunk costs) cannot do. The state can make laws; the state can also use the public sector as a laboratory. The state can legitimise new actors and interests. The state cannot afford not to intervene in industrial relations systems. It cannot stand aside from strikes, industrial breakdown and labour-market rigidities. In his comparative work on France and Britain, Howell (2006, 2011) has demonstrated how the state has consistently intervened to expand labour-market flexibility and expand decentralised collective bargaining.

When attempting to reform labour markets, however, French governments run against widely diffused beliefs about the role of work, the search for security and social protection. The mass protests of France's youth against the CPE of 2006 were highly revealing of the ideational context within which governments must operate. The CPE was intended as a bold policy to respond to the high rate of youth unemployment. After implementing a new short-term labour contract for the adult unemployed (the *contrat nouvelles embauches*), the Villepin government in early 2006 proposed to introduce a new labour contract for under twenty-six year olds, introducing a two-year flexible contract that would allow employers to hire and fire with minimal notice. The measure was presented as a trade-off between enhanced employment prospects against a time-limited weakening of labour protection. The terms of the debate were rejected by the mass protesters. France's student population made clear its preference for secure, well-paid jobs rather than flexible short-term contracts, even at the expense of a high rate of young unemployment.

One decade later, under the Socialist government of Manuel Valls (2016), the stakes were remarkably similar. The 2016 El Khomri law revealed how difficult it can be for any government, including a Socialist-led one, to maintain a constructive relationship with young people on the verge of entering the labour market. The merits of the El Khomri law (which initially set out to reform [modestly] the labour code, to liberalise [somewhat] the conditions under which firms could lay off workers and to limit job-loss payments) might be debated. The employer's association, the MEDEF, has long argued that the French labour code is impossibly complex and has posited a clear link between excessive regulation and the stubborn refusal of the unemployment curve to begin its movement downwards. In drafting the initial project, Premier Valls listened closely to be MEDEF (and rather less closely to PS deputies or traditional support organisations such as the student union, the Union Nationale des Étudiants de France). In rather typical style, weak consultation produced a social movement which, in turn, led the government to abandon key elements of the proposed legislation. Rather like the Macron Law in 2015, the proposals that eventually emerged fell far short of their initial ambition. A number of contentious issues were abandoned before the law had been introduced in the Council of Ministers. In its Article 2, however, the El Khomri law contributed to the long-term trend (Lalliement 2006) of the decentralisation of labour relations, by making firm-level, rather than branch negotiations, the norm.

The mobilisation of students and school pupils against the proposed El Khomri law recalled that one decade earlier against the CPE of the Villepin government. The merits of the respective cases need not be reviewed extensively here. That the

dual labour market might be responsible for the high level of youth employment does not figure as part of the mental map of the protesters against labour-market insecurity. Rather like Premier Villepin in 2006, neither Minister El Khomri nor Premier Valls were able to reassure and satisfy a youth fearful of labour flexibility and desirous of the full-time permanent contracts that their parents enjoyed.

11.5 Concluding remarks

Though the French social model enjoys broad public support, the welfare state is remarkably difficult to reform (Cahuc and Algan 2007). Palier (2000) famously argued that the French welfare state is frozen. The heavy underlying variables are resistant to change. The structures of the French social model were designed with a full employment society in mind. Though France is no longer a full employment society, expectations of high social protection and well-paid jobs have endured. Likewise, in terms of economic management, the *dirigiste* instincts of the state in economic management remain alive though the capacity to accompany change has diminished. In both social and economic policy, a capability–expectations gap has emerged that represents a formidable challenge for France's governors. The next chapter considers whether the Republican model offers a solution.

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12 The Republican model of citizenship and its limits

12.1 Introduction

French politicians of all guises – and especially presidential incumbents – invariably finish their speeches with the rallying call *Vive la République, vive la France!* The Nation and the Republic are taken to be synonymous. This essential communion is sometimes expressed in terms of the Republican tradition. But what, exactly, does this signify? Several interlocking questions are addressed in this chapter, each of which elucidates important aspects of the French Republican tradition. How is identity construction experienced among minority 'ethnic' groups in an overarching state environment where citizenship is framed in terms of conformity and formal equality? Why are regional languages sometimes seen as a threat to the French Republic? What evidence is there of multiple and overlapping identities in contemporary France? The chapter is divided into four main sections. After an initial analytical section, the Republican tradition is used as a frame to discuss contemporary challenges of immigration and multiculturalism, minority languages and contemporary French identities.

12.2 The French Republican tradition

The French Revolution gave rise to a 'universalist' concept of citizenship and nationhood, postulating equal rights and duties for all French citizens. The 1789 charter of the rights of man and citizen guaranteed a number of fundamental rights and granted citizens equal treatment under the law. For the period, ascribing rights and duties was indeed revolutionary, laying the foundations for the development of the French model of the nation-state. The classic Republican tradition modelled France as a nation which is one and indivisible, made up of a politically homogeneous citizenry (Hayward 1973; Silverman 1992; Amiraux and Simon 2006). As the Republic was for long a fragile edifice, menaced by counter-revolution and clerical reaction, universalism developed a defensive character. The fundamental paradox addressed in Chapter 12 turns around the interplay between formal equality and societal diversity. As it emerged historically, the French Republican tradition did not easily accommodate difference. The most ardent Republicans are suspicious of any deviation from the ideal of

equality, a belief – almost an official doctrine – that has had an impact upon the development of particular identity-based social movements, such as the women's movement or the gay movement (Duvendjak 1995). Equality is a formal requirement of the French Republican tradition, however, rather than a substantive outcome. Is this model of formal equality in crisis? (Simon 2006).

The centrality of the Republican narrative in French political culture has been the object of several major recent works, in particular that of Chabal (2015). As Berstein (2003) recalls, however, different versions of Republicanism have been in the ascendancy at different stages of French history: the conservative Republicanism of the late nineteenth century, the progressive Republicanism of the immediate post-wat period, the 'souverainiste' Republicanism of the late twentieth century. Is Republicanism little more than an essentially contested concept? Or an empty signifier used by politicians in search of a renewed sense of national community?

The most basic definition of Republicanism is support for the political regime known as the Republic. We saw in Chapter 1 that there was a lack of consensus in relation to the political regime for the first 150 years after the French Revolution. The Republic was enduringly established as the natural form of French government in the late 1870s and early 1880s and has prevailed for most of the period since then (the wartime Vichy regime providing the major exception). Counter-revolutionary currents were historically important on the right (the anti-Dreyfusards in the early twentieth century, then Action Française and the leagues in the 1920s and 1930s, Petain's national revolution of 1940–4) but, as Chapter 9 demonstrated, Marine Le Pen's FN, today's inheritor of the far-right tradition, frames its message in terms of Republicanism as a form of anti-cosmopolitanism. The revolutionary tradition on the left (see Chapter 3) never really materialised into a revolutionary challenge to the established bourgeois republic. That Republicanism has become politically banal does not signify that it is merely an empty signifier.

The Republic means much more than acceptance of the Republican form of government. Republicanism also signifies support for a lay political regime, and, by extension, for a rigorous distinction between public and private spheres (Baudérot 2009; Baudérot 2000). The particular form of French secularism is best understood as the heritage of post-Revolutionary French history, where the Catholic Church resisted, and was persecuted by, the Revolution and in turn erected itself as the bulwark against godless secularism (see Chapter 3). The core traits of the French Republican tradition were established as the result of the church–state conflict that culminated in the separation of church and state in 1905. Henceforth, the Republic was a lay one. Matters of personal beliefs were to be given constitutional recognition, but they were to be kept to the private sphere. The public sphere was to be neutral: no ties to religion, and no public ties to the Church, no public funding for priests or church buildings. The Catholic–anticlerical cleavage retains a capacity to divide French people into rival camps. In the most contemporary turn, however, the lay secular tradition has been embraced by the political right (Republicans, FN) to condemn public manifestations of religious beliefs and practices (such as mass prayers, dietary and clothing choices) associated with the Muslim community. In an interesting case of the

transfer of values from left to right, politicians such as Marine Le Pen have called upon the Muslim communities to conform to a strict lay Republican model and kept their religious practice away from the public eye.

The third dimension of the lay Republican model is enlightenment through education in secular public schools. Education has a particular ideological resonance in France. No other policy arena is so redolent of the French Republican tradition. The founding fathers of the Third Republic (1870–1940) viewed schools as the means to integrate young citizens into the universal, lay and modern values of French Republicanism. This ambition was consolidated from 1881–2 by Jules Ferry and the creation of a system of lay, obligatory public schools for boys to isolate the Republic from clerical, ultramontane influences. A national education system was valued as a means of disseminating Republican ideals and subordinating France's provinces to an enlightened central state. The spread of national education through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries gradually broke down older regional barriers and inculcated a well-defined sense of Frenchness, not least through imposing the use of French over minority languages and regional dialects (see below). There remains a close linkage today between a national education system and a centralised conception of French citizenship. The role performed by church schools has been a constant source of controversy between Catholics and Republicans: conflicts between supporters of Church and public schools could still paralyse the country in 1984, as supporters of the *écoles libres* demonstrated in mass against the plans of the Socialist government (1981–6) to incorporate the contracted-in Catholics schools fully into the national education system. On this occasion, the supporters of religious schools won the day. But this issue has somewhat lost the power to divide, as successive Socialist-led governments have abandoned the 1981 commitment to create a single, secular national education system.

Fourth, the lay Republican model also posits an unmediated relationship between the citizen and the state. In the Republican conception, all citizens are created equal and are members of a national political community. Matters of personal and especially religious belief are guaranteed by the constitution, but they are expected to be confined to the private sphere. If the French political community is open to all, regardless of ethnicity or origin, central to becoming 'French' is socialisation into French values, including a respect of the neutrality of the public sphere (Schnapper 1994). In the Republican conception, all citizens are created equal and are members of a national political community. They owe their allegiance to the nation as a whole rather than to regions, ethnic groups or intermediary associations. The public sphere ought to be neutral (François and Neveu 1999). Specific group or community identities are considered a threat to the direct relationship between citizens and the nation, an idea that unites Republicans from the left and the right. There is some sign that France is changing here: the parity reforms have forbidden sexual discrimination and created quotas for women on party lists (Mazur 2005; Lepinard 2008). Measures in the field of education (*zones d'education prioritaires*) have also targeted resources to underprivileged areas and sought to create equal outcomes rather than just formal equality of opportunity (van Zanten 2004). But such reforms have been successful because they have been framed in general terms of

improving equality rather than recognising specific group rights (or enshrining diversity as a principle).

Fifth, Republicanism might be understood as a political construction. The Republic has provided a convenient ideological canvass, particularly for politicians on the left of French politics disorientated by the failure of the 1981–3 Socialist experiment. The most prominent 'Republicans' at the turn of the century were Socialist politicians disorientated by the failure of the traditional left, individuals such as Chevènement, who fought as a Citizens' candidate during the 2012 presidential campaign and, with 5.1 per cent, prevented PS candidate Jospin from reaching the second ballot (Cole 2002). The relative success of the Republican frame represented, first and foremost, a transfer of values within the left. During the 1970s, a powerful faction within the French left was decentralised, experimental, emphasising new social movements and the right to difference. By 2000, the centre of gravity on the left had become Jacobin, centralising and suspicious of diversity, a position well articulated by Premier Valls from 2014 to 2016. The Republic was viewed as the guarantor of a protective state in economic policy, as the purveyor of traditional civic values in education and as a bulwark against multiculturalism and regional diversity. Republicanism also represented a transfer of values from left to right. The positioning of right-wing politicians, such as the FN's Marine Le Pen and former President Nicolas Sarkozy, as hard-line defenders of lay Republicanism represented a thinly disguised instrumental use of the Republic to promote a populist message based on identifying multicultural enemies (the Muslim community in particular) and reviving ethnic nationalism.

Notwithstanding superficial elements of convergence, attempts to promote a Republican party that transcends left and right have failed: neither Chevènement's MDC nor Nicolas Aignon-Dupont's Debout la République (Stand Up for the Republic) achieved more than episodic successes.

Political Republicanism has transcended barriers between left and right on specific issues, however, notably European integration. In the post-Maastricht period, political Republicanism defined itself principally as a political defence of the state and national sovereignty against European integration. The Maastricht referendum campaign of 1992 saw convergence between social Gaullists such as Séguin and Republican Socialists such as Chevènement. A similar campaign united Socialist Euro-sceptics (Laurent Fabius, Mélenchon, Chevènement) and social Gaullists (Fillon) in the 2005 referendum campaign. This European cleavage continues to cut across left and right and divide the main parties. The Republican frame of reference has a powerful appeal. In the next section, we investigate at some length how the Republican model copes with the challenges of multiculturalism.

12.3 The Republican model and the challenges of multiculturalism

France can lay a plausible claim to be the 'crossroads of Europe'. It shares a land border with six European countries (Belgium, Germany, Switzerland,

Luxembourg, Italy and Spain) and is connected to England by underground tunnel. Its proximity to former colonies, especially in the Maghreb, makes it an attractive destination for would-be immigrants. Its population has consistently been the most cosmopolitan of any European nation. Initially immigrants into France came from neighbouring European countries such as Belgium, Italy, Poland and Spain. However, since 1945, most immigrants have been of North African Arab origin. There has been a marked shift away from countries bordering France to those on the extremes of the Mediterranean basin (the countries comprising the Maghreb in particular) and further afield in central Africa and more recently south-east Asia.

At the end of the Second World War, for a combination of demographic and economic reasons, France needed to supplement its existing workforce. Immigration was one of the easiest ways to achieve this, and a policy of recruiting migrant workers was begun. The policy laid down that immigrants would work and reside in France for a fixed period of time, contributing to economic development, at the end of which they would return to their country of origin. In order to achieve this end, a strictly controlled policy of entries and departures was to be put in place. This included the establishing of an official body regulating migratory flows, the Office National d'Immigration (ONI, National Immigration Office) and the prioritising of single male migrants who would be housed separately from French nationals in foyers (Hollifield 1991). The sheer volume of immigrants overwhelmed the ONI, and, in practice, it proved impossible to halt the flow of illegal immigrants, much sought after by employers since they did not have to pay them the same wages as native French workers. French governments were able to exert relatively little control over the number of foreign nationals entering France.

Since 1974, several types of policy response have been adopted to deal with the complex phenomena of immigration, cultural assimilation and ethnicity. Giscard d'Estaing was elected president at a time of major economic and social instability. The effects of the economic crisis, set off by the oil embargo in 1973, began to be felt, and in July 1974 France decided to suspend all further immigration. The Chirac (1974–6) and Barre (1976–81) governments embarked upon a series of repressive reforms aimed at reducing the presence of foreigners in French society. In 1980, the Bonnet law enabled procedures to be put in place for the immediate expulsion of immigrants, reinforcing the existing control that the state exerted over foreign nationals. Elected president in 1981, the Socialist Mitterrand immediately cancelled the previous laws of the right and introduced a series of new measures. Three in particular were noteworthy. First, those foreign nationals without official documentation could 'regularise' their status. Second, the policy of family reuniting was re-established. Third, the 1939 law governing foreign associations was repealed. Henceforth, foreign nationals would no longer require prior government authorisation in order to create their own associations. This measure provided a useful framework within which youths, particularly of Maghrebian origin, were able to gain associational experience and resulted in a considerable increase in new associations being created. One of these, SOS Racisme, would gain national notoriety (Steinhouse 1996).

Public opinion in France has remained sensitive to the permanent settlement of immigrants in French society, especially since the breakthrough of the FN in 1983. The issue of immigration and national identity bears testament to the powerful agenda-shaping role performed by the FN. President Mitterrand himself stressed the limits of French willingness to accept the presence of foreign nationals by evoking the notion of the 'threshold of tolerance' to justify limitations. The agenda-shaping impact of the breakthrough of the FN on the mainstream parties was most obvious in terms of the tryptic of national identity (What is it to be French?), immigration (How should they migrants be integrated?) and insecurity (economic, but above all physical). The responses of the mainstream parties and politicians oscillated between the opportunistic (Mitterrand's tactics to divide the parties of the right and mobilise support on the left against the FN in 1986) to the instrumental (for example, Sarkozy's 2007 campaign on the challenges of immigration for French national identity). These shifts were apparent in the presidential campaigns of 2002, 2007 and 2012. In 2002, Chirac complained in a televised interview about the smell and the noise coming from the housing estates. In 2007, Sarkozy went a step further, using imagery of Muslim families killing sheep within their apartments. By 2012, Sarkozy's presidential campaign focused on the core 'values' of lifestyle, culture, national identity and security rather than on the hard socio-economic issues that the polls suggested were at the forefront of the electorate's preoccupations (Lewis-Beck et al. 2013). Sarkozy's strategy backfired in 2012. Centring the campaign on issues such as halal meat and limiting welfare rights for immigrants appeared withdrawn from the preoccupations of the popular electorate, destabilised by the crisis.

All governments since 1974 have been torn between projecting an outwardly tough stance on immigration and facilitating the settlement and 'integration' of migrant groups into French society. Assimilation has been the preferred term in France since historically it has been allied with the Jacobin concept of the 'one and indivisible' Republic (Stenhouse 1996). According to this doctrine, immigrants became part of French society by adhering to its values, rules and institutions on an individual basis. In this sense, assimilation refers to a rapprochement between French nationals and immigrants but with the latter eventually adopting the identity of the former. While questions of assimilation, immigration and integration have become the focus of national debate in France, the media, politicians and social scientists have all been wary about discussing ethnicity (Hargreaves 1995; Favell 2001; Bleich 2003). In the Jacobin tradition, the concept of ethnicity evokes images of a segregated society, with parallels with the United States often being cited (Schnapper 1994). Traditionally influenced by Republican ideals, social scientists in France are near unanimous in their rejection of and opposition to the emergence of potentially divisive 'community' or – worse – 'communitarian' mentalities in their own country. The reluctance and even refusal to acknowledge the existence of the notion of ethnicity is rooted in French history as well as the ideological foundations of Republicanism. Distinguishing citizens on the basis of ethnic criteria was a core feature of government policy during the Vichy period, when French citizens of the Jewish faith were discriminated against, murdered and sent off to Nazi concentration camps. Consequently, the study of ethnicity has, to a great extent, been discredited, and the parallel with

discrimination against Jews by a French administration has not been lost upon French academics. Unlike in most other European countries, collecting 'ethnic' statistics remains illegal in France, which has the effect of making it much more difficult to introduce measures of positive discrimination or targeted assistance in favour of specific communities. There is no equivalent body in France to the British Commission for Racial Equality, with responsibility for ethnic monitoring of job applications.

One of the paradoxes of this field is that formal public policies – such as the creation under Sarkozy of the ministry for national identity and immigration (2007–10) – have been developed on the basis of a (subliminal) linkage between nationality and origins in a manner that challenges one of the fundamental tenets of the Republican model: that nationality and national identity is a question of willingness to conform with a national project (*droit du sol*) rather than a birthright (*droit du sang*). The turn of the debate has cast doubt on the capacity of the Republic to integrate certain groups in society, those of Muslim origin in particular. The above discussion throws up broader questions of citizenship and in particular of the participation of migrant groups in the political process.

The 'headscarf' affairs and the place of Muslims in French society

The notion of the Jacobin state and its continued relevance to French society was, perhaps, never more clearly illustrated than during the repeated headscarf affairs, which arose in 1989 and have resurfaced regularly since (Stenhouse 1996; Bowen 2007; Heine 2009). In 2004, a law was passed barring the wearing of 'ostentatious religious symbols' in public schools, a reform clearly aimed at headscarves worn by Muslim girls. Controversies continued in the 2017 presidential campaign, where candidates contesting for the Republican Party nomination vied with each other in their restrictive proposals; Sarkozy, for example, pledged to extend the prohibition of headscarves to university students, while a number of Republican mayors issued decrees banning 'burkhinis' from France's beaches.

We focus here mainly on the 1989 affair. On the surface it may have appeared to be a somewhat banal refusal by two French schoolgirls of the Muslim faith to remove the *foulard* or veil while at school. However, underlying the whole debate were two diametrically opposing views of French society. On the one hand there were those who championed the Jacobin notion of the one and indivisible Republic and the concept of secularity, embodied in the separation of church and state in 1905. According to the partisans of this vision of society, the Muslim girls wearing the veil at school were negating Republican values since they were visibly differentiating themselves from other pupils and in so doing drawing attention to their religion. The secular school should permit no distinctive sign indicating the religious denomination of the pupil. Instead, the defenders of the Jacobin vision argued that Islam and indeed any religion should be practised in private. The supporters of the secular state and society included Socialist MPs and intellectuals of the left such as Elisabeth Badinter. In the opposing camp were those who had forged close links with minority groups in French society or who believed that the Jacobin vision no longer corresponded to the realities

of life in contemporary French society and most certainly did not reflect the diversity of its population (Wieviorka 1997). According to the proponents of this vision, Islam was not considered incompatible with the rules, institutions and values of French society. The then education minister, Jospin, appeared at first sight to be an ally of the second school of thought. He stressed the importance of dialogue with the Muslim girls, arguing that French society was pluralistic and that secularity no longer needed to be one of an antagonistic nature.

What does the whole issue tell us about how Muslims are perceived in French society? The debate on distinctive headwear intruded upon the question of the presence of ethnic minority groups in French society. The two issues were confused. They resulted in the misleading image that to be Muslim implicitly inferred that one could not be French. However erroneous, the image persists. It is a view cultivated by the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the fundamentalist image projected, by the activities of certain French Muslims in the 11 September 2001 outrage and, more recently, by the terrorist attacks of 2015 and 2016. The increasing visibility of Maghrebians in French society has compounded this representation, illustrated by the emergence of the so-called 'second' and 'third' generation of youths largely born and bred in France (Kiwan 2003; Brouard and Tiberj 2005). The headscarf affair was a litmus test of the acceptance or not of a diversity of cultures in French society. The vociferous defence of the Jacobin concept suggested, perhaps, that large sections of the French public were not yet prepared to accept the reality of a permanent Muslim presence.

Assimilationist patterns have proved stronger in France than in most other European countries. This is tied up with a particular conception of Frenchness, predicated on a long experience of assimilating different regions and peoples into a single entity and the persistence of a Jacobin tradition distrustful of distinct cultural identities. Assimilation proved successful in relation to the pre-1940 European immigrant communities, who shared common religious and political beliefs. Muslim immigrants have been less easy to assimilate. Increasingly, government efforts to promote the assimilation of Muslim communities into mainstream French culture have coexisted alongside an acceptance of the cultural specificity of France's Muslim population. In fact, there has been a renegotiation of the specific place of Muslims in French society. This has taken the form neither of outright assimilation, as was the case for previous waves of immigrants, nor an acceptance of multicultural pluralism where diverse cultural systems are able to co-exist (Hargreaves 1995; Kiwan 2003). Instead, there has been a policy of co-option where differences have been tolerated but where the government has sought to limit divergent behavioural patterns in order that they are compatible with the cultural norms of the dominant society. This is, perhaps, best exemplified by the manner in which French government have attempted to provide an organisational framework for Islam in France, similar to that of the Judaeo-Christian religions. By creating organisational structures such as the Conseil Français de Culte Musulman (French Council of Muslims), and by supporting mosque-building programmes, governments have aspired to prevent external forces from exerting influence over the French Maghrebian community. They have also attempted to exert a greater degree of control over this community themselves.

The Muslim case study revealed the difficulty of coping with visible minorities. The case of regional languages, now to be considered, also illustrated the unease of the main Republican institutions at regulating practices inherited from France's rich cultural patrimony.

12.4 The Republican tradition and the challenge of territory: the case of lesser used languages

France is usually considered not only as the archetype of a centralised nation-state but also as the paradigmatic case of language centralisation. This centralising ambition was not initially directed against regional languages. During the *ancien régime*, the core aim of the language policy implemented by monarchy consisted in substituting Latin with French in order to reinforce the influence of the Crown on administrative issues, an objective reached in 1539 with the Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterets (Elias 1982). The rupture provoked by the French Revolution profoundly modified the linguistic aims of the state. An ambitious programme of language centralisation was launched from the capital in order to promote the French language – the symbol of modernity – against local *patois* – that is regional languages assimilated to reaction, the Church and the aristocracy. A decisive step towards French linguistic hegemony was reached under the Third Republic, through an important effort realised in the field of education (the Ferry laws of 1881 and 1882) when regional languages were banned from schools. The supremacy of French was facilitated by the diffusion of French newspapers, military conscription, the construction of a modern Paris-centred transportation system, the standardisation of weights and measures and the emergence of a modern capitalist market centred in Paris. By the First World War, French had imposed itself as the main language of the nation-state in the cities, with regional languages finally succumbing to French during the Second World War in rural areas (Weber 1977). Meanwhile, the first laws promoting 'dialectal languages' were adopted in 1941 and 1942 by the authoritarian government led by Marshal Pétain. Such laws were inspired by the ideology of the reactionary Catholic monarchist and anti-Semitic writer Charles Maurras, a defender of provincial traditions of 'real France' (as opposed to 'legal France' created by the institutions of the Revolution). For many, that historical episode made illegitimate the defence of these tongues after the war (Barral 1974: 911–39).

Whether by accident or design, regional languages were a major causality of the process of nation-building. On the ground, the most ardent persecutors of regional languages were not national politicians but middle-ranking state officials. Primary schoolteachers, serving their communities, practised regional languages themselves, but they were called to order by the state officials (the Inspecteurs d'Académie) who were the real agents of centralisation and French language monopoly. The Catholic Church, deeply rooted in areas such as Brittany where regional languages prospered, opposed the spread of French throughout the nineteenth century (Poignant 1998). Once the Republicans won back control of the (Third) Republic in the late 1870s, they were determined to break the

power of the Catholic Church. In spite of centralising tendencies, the French nation remained extremely diverse prior to the Second World War, and French remained a minority language in some regions until the twentieth century. The weakening of regional languages such as Breton can also be traced to economic change in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to the impact of the First World War that forged a unified French national consciousness (Hoare 2000; Cole and Harguindéguy 2013).

There are a number of regional languages in France today and a larger number of dialects. The main regional languages are Alsatien, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corse, Occitan and Creole. There are many dialects and several linguistic registers between dialects and languages. Certain languages have disappeared or survive only as dialects. This is the case, for example, for the dialects of the *Langues Oïl*: Gallo, Picard, Poitevin, Saintongeais, Normand and Morvandiau. The main languages that survive are those that enjoy geographical density. The various languages that are taught in French schools are Alsatien and Breton (both of which now have publicly funded teacher-training programmes), Basque, Catalan, Créole, Flamand and Corsican. Each language has specific characteristics and a different relationship to French. A number of these are 'border languages'; this is the case for Alsatien (close to German), Flemish (spoken across the border in Belgium) and Catalan (vigorously supported by the Catalan provincial government in Spain). Others, such as Corsican and Creole, are island languages. Breton is a Celtic language that is separated from the British Isles from which it originated.

The contemporary French Republican model maintains a complex relationship with languages other than French. France is sometimes portrayed as the exemplar of a country that restricts the linguistic rights of its 'minorities'. Such a vision belies a more complex situation, where there is a mix of a Republican-inspired linguistic uniformity and empirical adaptability to uneven territorial situations and social mobilisations. Empirical research undertaken by the author and colleagues demonstrates both the emergence of a variety of ethnolinguistic social movements and territorial representative institutions mobilising in support of a new deal for regional languages and the taking into consideration of this issue by the central government (Cole and Williams 2004; Cole and Harguindeguy 2013).

Nowadays, Republican institutions adopt a deeply ambivalent attitude towards regional languages. They sometimes tolerate non-French languages but rarely do they totally support them. A number of important laws have been passed in the post-war period that gave some form of official recognition to regional languages. The first one was the Deixonne law (11 January 1951), which allowed regional languages to be taught for three hours a week in public schools. In 1975, the Haby law confirmed this provision and listed the regional languages which could be legally taught; these were Breton, Basque, Catalan, the Oc languages and Corsican, a core to which other languages were added during the 1970s. In 1982, following Mitterrand's election as president in 1981, the Savary Decree allowed private, 'contracted-in' schools to teach regional languages if public schools were not able to do so. Following this reasoning, in 1995, the ministry of national education granted a 'contracted-in' status to

those associative schools (such as Diwan in Brittany) which taught through the medium of the regional languages, the method known as immersion. Moreover, the 1995 decree also legalised the teaching of regional languages throughout the whole educational system, namely in monolingual (French) and bilingual (French and regional language) schools, belonging to public, private or associative sectors. At the same time, the Deixonne law was repealed in 2000 and replaced by the new Article 4 of the Education Code which extended the right to teach regional languages to the whole educational programme (from primary to secondary school). One year later, the academic councils for regional languages were created to oversee this new system. A further sign of toleration was offered in 2001, when the General Delegation for the French Language of the Ministry of Culture was transformed into the General Delegation for the French Language and the Languages of France. Finally, a new article (75–1), stating that 'regional languages belong to the France's cultural heritage', was introduced in the French constitution in 2008.

At the same time, there are limits to accepting linguistic pluralism. The French government has ratified neither the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination at School (1980) nor the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (1992) (Wright 2000: 414). French language regulation strictly forbids activities which could endanger the monopoly of the French language: it reaffirmed the importance of French in 1992 adding that 'the language of Republic is French' to the Constitution as Article 2 and, in 1994 through the Toubon Law, implementing measures to defend French against English in the public sphere. As France has become ever more deeply embedded in multilateral and international structures, French state actors and politicians have sought to defend what they deem to be the core of French sovereignty: namely, the French language. There was an explicit linkage between identity and language in the constitutional amendment following the Maastricht referendum of 1992, where France simultaneously committed itself to an enhanced degree of European integration and the codification of French as the official language of the Republic. The proclamation in 1992 of French as the official language of the Republic was purportedly as a means of defending French as an international language against English. In practice, Article 2 has mainly been used to stifle the development of regional languages.

The Maastricht referendum provides the backdrop for France's continuing inability to ratify the European Charter of Lesser Used Languages. The Charter was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1992. Though France initially abstained, the Jospin government rallied to the charter in 1997. Article 7 of the Charter set out several general principles with which France's state-centric institutions could take offence, most notably the public use of another language apart from French. The Council of State ruled in 1996 that France could not ratify the charter. There was no problem with provisions for teaching regional languages in schools, as long as there was no element of compulsion. But the Council of State challenged Articles 9 and 10 of the European charter: the right to use a lesser used language in dealing with administrative and judicial authorities was deemed unconstitutional in the light of Article 2 ('the language of the republic is French'). On 15 June 1999, the Constitutional Council also declared the European Charter

of Regional Languages to be contrary to the French constitution. The inside view was that the public use of another language apart from French was what really worried the council (personal interview). The Council of State repeated its opposition in 2015, when faced with a proposed (subsequently abandoned) constitutional amendment to amend the constitution to allow ratification of the European Charter of Lesser Used Languages.

The episode of the non-ratification of the European Charter recalled the dualism in French Republicanism: whereby the negotiation of exceptions to rules is permitted on condition that there is respect for formal rules. Though remaining centralised from a linguistic viewpoint, the French state has been forced to adapt as a result of the mobilisation of ethnolinguistic activists since the late 1960s. Our evidence from Corsica, Brittany and Picardy cautions in favour of the need to accommodate place-specific explanations within any framework of analysis (Cole and Harguindéguy 2013). The untidy reality is one where place-specific social movements are more or less effective in mobilising the support of broad advocacy coalitions and in achieving degrees of institutionalisation (Cole and Harduindeguy 2013).

One such empirical example was provided in the case of the Diwan association of Breton-medium schools in Brittany. On 29 April 2001, the Socialist premier Jospin's education minister, Jack Lang, signed an agreement with Andrew Lincoln, the president of the Diwan association of Breton-medium schools. Under the terms of the agreement, the twenty-nine Diwan schools (and their 2,300 pupils) would enter the public education service, an offer that was open to other immersive language education movements (representing Basque, Corsican, Occitan, Catalan, Creole and Alsatien). This was radical, especially for a Socialist minister. For the most part, these schools already enjoyed 'contracted-in' status rather similar to the denominational (mainly Catholic) schools. Becoming part of the public education service would give the schools much greater financial security. In return, they would be expected to teach as much as French as other schools in the state sector.

Lang referred openly to the languages of France as a source of richness for the nation, a part of France's patrimony that must be preserved. The details of the Lang plan to integrate the regional language schools into the public education service need not concern us here. The incident is principally interesting for demonstrating the depth of opposition it provoked. Opposition to the Diwan agreement came from movements generally associated with the left. The teaching unions were mainly against, as were the lay pressure groups, especially the Comité National d'Action Laïque (CNAL, National Secular Committee, powerful among teachers) and the main parents' association, the Fédération Nationale des Parents d'Élèves). In bringing a court action, the CNAL complained that the agreement 'went against the principle of equality that underpins the Republic'. The education ministry itself was clearly divided between a sympathetic minister on the one hand and a reluctant top administration on the other. In November 2001, the Council of State advised against implementing the ministerial decree; in 2002, the Constitutional Council declared the agreement to be unconstitutional, on account of the immersive teaching method whereby the language of instruction would not be Breton, not French.

If the case of education is one of developing capacity, outside of the classroom the space for developing and using regional languages is limited. First – and however peculiar this might seem – the Villers-Cotterêts decree still regulates the use of language in the administrative and legal systems. French remains the only written language allowed in official correspondence, though regional languages can be used by citizens if civil servants understand them. In some regions, road signs and postal addresses can also be written in the vernacular language if the state administrations give their agreement. Since the 22 July 1982 and 1 August 2000 laws, moreover, public broadcasters can diffuse programmes in regional languages, a practice promoted by the local stations of Radio France's network, the Radio France Outre-Mer company and the TV channel France 3.

In sum, France faces an ambivalent situation. While the Republican credo of the state remains profoundly anchored in Jacobin traditions and public declarations, local arrangements between decentralised authorities and ethnolinguistic activists have modified linguistic practice in an incremental 'Girondin' manner. This unsung aspect of the Republic deserves to be recognised. A place-specific policy of recognising linguistic pluralism has gathered momentum alongside the persistence of an overarching centralising ideological framework. This dualism demonstrates the flexibility, or perhaps the schizophrenia of the French Republic.

12.5 Multiple identities in contemporary France: a case study from Brittany

In the opinion of one Breton autonomist interviewed in the summer of 2001, the French nation-state had been imposed by 'blood, sweat and tears'. Through a gradual and uneven process of territorial aggrandisement and military conquest, France was constructed as a state-nation, with a determined central authority attempting to impose (with some success) a single national identity upon the various territorial, linguistic and religious identities of the peoples that came together to form France. The Republican model formally contests the existence of identities other than French. The problem of political and national identity is revealed as an essential problem throughout most of French history. Identity is a compound, not to say a nebulous concept. Identity can be personal, social or collective. Political identity can be understood as 'common purpose', something that persists through time. It consists of a combination of myths, symbols, rituals and ideology (McKenzie 1972). In the French case, several centuries of political engineering were required to create the myths, symbols, rituals and ideologies that underpin contemporary French identity. In this section, we present some empirical evidence about multiple identities in a historic French region. The data presented are drawn from a mass survey and interviews carried out in the French region of Brittany in 1995, 2001 and 2013.

One of the most distinctive regions of France, Brittany has a strong sense of its specific position within French society. Formerly an independent duchy (818–1532), then a French province with special prerogatives (1532–1789), reduced for long to being a collection of disparate departments before becoming

an administrative then political region, modern Brittany is a French region with a difference. Unlike many other French regions, it can look to its past existence as an independent political entity, with its own founding myths and political institutions. Though the symbols of statehood have long been repressed, the region retains many distinctive characteristics. The Breton language is the European continent's only Celtic language. The enduring symbolic importance of the Catholic religion is ever present physically in the architecture of Breton villages as well in higher than average rates of religious practice. The spectacular growth of Breton cultural movements (dance, theatre, costume and music) is testament to a revival of Breton values and self-consciousness.

Brittany is sometimes taken as a litmus test for the health of regional identity within France (Le Coadic 1998; Cole and Loughlin 2003; Cole and Pasquier 2015). In post-war Brittany, there has been a strong political consensus among the regional elites in favour of enhanced regionalisation.

Interviews by the author with politicians, officials and representatives of the policy community took place in the Brittany region at three stages in recent French history: in 1995, from 2001 to 2002 and in 2013. Interviewees across the three periods referred to a Brittany effect, particularly in relation to the outside world. Though conflicts within Brittany could be fierce, there was a common front presented to the outside, whether the French state, the EU or other regions and countries. Politicians from all parties, including the UMP, have a tradition of joining forces and defending the Breton interest in Paris (and Brussels). Some evidence of this was provided in interviews, notably concerning the common cause of all Breton parties to obtain central government investment in the high-speed train project or in relation to the role of Breton language teaching as part of the normal school curriculum (Cole and Pasquier 2015).

There is, in Brittany, a tradition of cross-partisan regional advocacy that sometimes assumes political overtones. From the state's point of view, the logic of massively investing in Brittany was an instrumental one: to bring a backward region into national productivity. For the most regionally minded politicians, entering into a dialogue with the French state was the only way forward after the bitter divisions of the inter-war and wartime period. Breton-style identity politics were discredited by the collaborationist activities of a minority of Breton activists during the war. The prevailing post-war model of political activism has been one of territorial solidarity aimed at procuring material advantages for Brittany, namely through raising living standards in what had been France's poorest region in 1945.

Interviews with surviving actors and published historical accounts demonstrate that instrumentalist ends coexisted within the Comité d'Études et de Liaison des Intérêts Bretons with a high degree of regional consciousness and a desire for powerful regional political institutions. Whether or not to affirm Breton identity continues to be a source of division within Brittany. The mainstream view has been to lobby for increased state and EU resources to rescue Brittany from its isolated geographical position and to assure its integration with the rest of France (and Europe). Looking to the State, whether for industrial investment or for support to a fledgling intensive agriculture, has been a favoured position. The autonomist minority, more concerned to safeguard and strengthen Breton identity than to

assure its integration within the French nation, has always contested this integrationist position. This dichotomy was illustrated in the 2001 interviews by the case of the fast-speed train (TGV): while most interlocutors favoured extending the fast-speed train to Brest, in the far-west of Brittany, a minority of cultural activists was opposed in the name of defending Breton identity.

The dominant political culture is one of political accommodation. Breton politicians of all parties, however divided they are internally, will tend to close ranks against threats from the outside. Despite a strong regional identity, however, Brittany has not produced significant regionalist parties, or at least parties that have been capable of winning seats in departmental, regional or national elections. Only one left-wing regionalist party, the Union Démocratique Bretonne has managed some victories at the municipal level and then usually in collaboration with the PS. We should note that the mainstream political parties in Brittany, especially the PS, have adopted regionalist themes and are more 'regionalist' than their national counterparts. Although Breton regionalism has, at times, been violent, this never reached the levels experienced in Corsica, the Spanish Basque country or Northern Ireland.

Does identity matter? We carried out a mass survey with a representative sample of Breton public opinion in June 2001. We asked respondents in the survey to state whether they considered themselves to be Breton, not French; more Breton than French; equally Breton and French; more French than Breton; or French, not Breton. The results are presented in Table 12.1. The table is highly revealing. In Brittany, the sense of regional identity is strong, but this is not considered as being in opposition to an overarching French nationhood (Cole and Loughlin 2003). Regional identity is not a surrogate nationality. Interestingly, these findings were backed up by interviews and by a questionnaire we distributed to members of the Breton policy community. Our findings highlighted the paradoxes and limitations of the Breton autonomist cause. Even those working for greater Breton autonomy (the case for many of our sample) felt a deep sense of their French identity and declared themselves proud to be French. The French state-building enterprise has been thorough.

These findings are consistent with a more recent survey was carried out as part of the Citizenship After the Nation State (CANS) project (Henderson et al. 2013). In the CANS project, around three-quarters of Bretons expressed a sense of regional (Breton) identity that was at least as powerful as their pride in being

Table 12.1 Multiple identities in Brittany.

Q: 'Do you feel yourself to be . . .	**%**
Breton, not French	2
More Breton than French	15
Equally Breton and French	57
More French than Breton	17
French, not Breton	8
Don't know/Other	1

Source: Mass survey carried out by the polling organisation Efficience 3 in Brittany in June and July 2001, with a representative sample of 1,007 individuals.

French (Cole and Pasquier 2015). These survey findings suggest that there is a comfortable linkage between regional identity and regional and national political institutions in the case of Brittany, testament in the long run to the efficacy of the French state project.

12.6 Concluding remarks

The Republican frame of reference has a powerful appeal. The symbols of the French Revolution – the rights of man and citizen; liberty, equality, fraternity; even the Republican tradition – are more widespread, less controversial and less meaningful than ever before. One might observe that as the French Revolution has finally passed into collective French identity, it has lost its obsessional, divisive quality in the process. A demand for equal treatment underpins the French Republican model, the glue that binds the rich diversity of territories that together constitute contemporary France.

On the other hand, the core intellectual arguments of Republicanism find it difficult to account for, explain or recognise societal change. Specifically, the French model of Republican citizenship has great difficulties in accepting diversity and hence in adapting to the reality of a multiethnic, regionally differentiated society (Wieviorka 1997; Kiwan 2003; Cole and Raymond 2006). The myth of Republican equality has presented formidable obstacles to designing policies to help those who are substantively disadvantaged. State and local authorities have been extremely resistant to allowing any public displays of faith by France's sizeable Muslim community, in particular by blocking the construction of mosques and refusing (until recently) to recognise the status of Islamic religious institutions. As Duchesne (2005) observes, the headscarf affair attests to an enduring resistance to pluralism, where diversity is seen as threatening Republican egalitarianism and equality is confused with uniformity. More than any of its neighbours, France demands respect for 'thin universalist' Republican principles as a condition of citizenship.

The argument is counterbalanced by the persistent difficulties of France's democracy in embracing the diversity of French society. The evidence we presented in our public-opinion survey was eloquent on this point. Though Bretons are supportive of a more thoroughgoing regionalisation, this choice in no sense limits their attachment to the broader French nation. As there is little or no conflict between local, regional and national identities (with the exception of Corsica), the French government ought to be able to devolve more responsibilities to localities and regions with a clear conscience. The same conclusion holds true for regional languages. If the survival of endangered regional languages is a threat to the Republic, this invites reflection on the solidity of the Republican edifice. France's legalistic culture is best demonstrated in the case of *laïcité* and the veil. For two decades, there was a legalistic void, following a Council of State ruling that fudged the issue. In late 2003, the Raffarin government announced that a law would be drafted to forbid wearing any religiously ostentatious symbols. For the first time, the veil, the *kippa* and the cross would

be treated as the same. Turning to the law allowed the Republican forms to be respected while postponing decisions of how to accommodate diversity in contemporary French society.

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