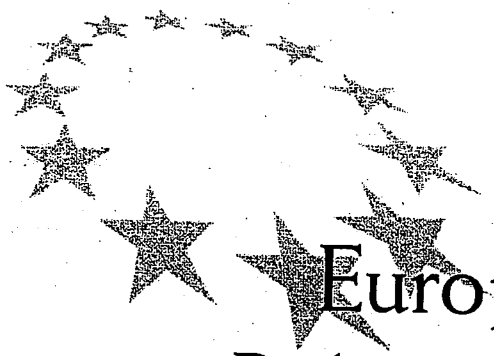


European Politics Today

THIRD EDITION

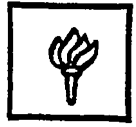
EDITORS

Gabriel A. Almond
Late, Stanford University

Russell J. Dalton
University of California, Irvine

G. Bingham Powell, Jr.
University of Rochester

Kaare Strøm
University of California, San Diego



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The editors and coauthors of the third edition of *European Politics Today* dedicate this book to the memory of Gabriel A. Almond, a giant in the field of comparative politics and a friend, colleague, and leader.

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Cover Images: Courtesy of Getty Images, Inc.
Senior Manufacturing Buyer: Alfred C. Dorsey
Printer and Binder: Hamilton Press Co.
Cover Printer: The Lehigh Press

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

European politics today / editors Gabriel A. Almond . . . [et al.]—3rd ed.
p.cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-321-23652-1
1. Europe, Western—Politics and government. 2. Europe—Politics and government—1989–
3. Democracy—Europe. 4. Europe, Eastern—Politics and government—1989–
5. Democratization—Europe. I. Almond, Gabriel A. (Gabriel Abraham), 1911–2002.
JN94.A58E89 2006
320.94—dc22

2005044320

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ISBN 0-321-23652-1

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10—HT—08 07 06 05

Contributors

GABRIEL A. ALMOND
Late, Stanford University

RUSSELL J. DALTON
University of California, Irvine

G. BINGHAM POWELL, JR.
University of Rochester

KAARE STRØM
University of California, San Diego

KATHLEEN MONTGOMERY
Illinois Wesleyan University

THOMAS F. REMINGTON
Emory University

RICHARD ROSE
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

ALBERTA SBRAGIA
University of Pittsburgh

MARTIN A. SCHAIN
New York University

DONALD SHARE
University of Puget Sound

RAY TARAS
Tulane University

France

Chapter 6

Politics in France

MARTIN A. SCHAIN

Country Bio—France

Population: 60.4 Million
Territory: 211,208 sq. mi
Year of Independence: 486
Year of Current Constitution: 1958
Head of State: President Jacques Chirac
Head of Government: Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin
Language(s): French 100%, rapidly declining regional dialects and languages (Provencal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish)
Religion: Roman Catholic 90%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 1%, Muslim 1%, unaffiliated 6%

The results of the first round of the presidential elections on April 21, 2002 were supposed to be more or less predictable. The two top contenders—the sitting president, Jacques Chirac, and the sitting prime minister, Lionel Jospin—would win the two top spots for the second round two weeks later. In fact, the candidate of the extreme right National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen won the second spot, creating what was called a "political earthquake," and throwing the political system into a state of confusion. In the end, Chirac crushed his opponent, winning more than 82 percent of the vote, with the declared support of both the established left and the established right. Thus, Jacques Chirac, whose presidency had been compromised by serious corruption scandals, became a most unlikely savior of republican values. In every legislative election since 1981, the French electorate has favored the opposition, and the legislative elections in 2002 that followed the bizarre presidential election reaffirmed that pattern. Nevertheless,

French citizens now appear to have more confidence in the key institutions of the Republic than they have had at any time in French history. Increasingly, however, they have little confidence in the politicians who are running them. The stability of the Republic has surprised many of the French as well as the outside world. By combining two models of democratic government, the presidential and the parliamentary, the *Fifth Republic* has succeeded in a constitutional experiment that now serves France well. For the first time since the French Revolution, there is no important political party or sector of public opinion that challenges the legitimacy of the regime.

CURRENT POLICY CHALLENGES

At a time in American history when political parties have been deeply divided and the party system highly polarized, and when national government often seems divided, French politics—at least most of the time—seem almost tranquil by comparison. The French have lived with divided government ("cohabitation") for most of the period since 1986 without impeding decision-making effectiveness and without undermining institutional legitimacy. At the same time, the French electorate is clearly concerned about many of the same issues that have concerned Americans during the past decade.

French voters are most worried about rising crime rates and the problems of urban violence. In France, these problems are frequently referred to as problems of the "suburbs," since impoverished neighborhoods, frequently with large immigrant populations, are often found in the old working-class suburbs that surround large cities. These concerns have been related to the success of the radical right, and its endurance since 1983. The electoral importance of the National Front—an anti-immigrant party that advocates strong nationalism—has tended to undermine the stability of the parties of the center-right and support anti-immigrant and racist sentiments among the electorate as a whole. Although the party has never held power at the national level, it maintains strong influence over the political agenda.

Voters also continue to be concerned with high unemployment rates that are more than twice U.S. rates. Anxiety about unemployment is related to deep concern in France about the consequences of European Union. Finally, voters are disturbed about political corruption at every level. During the past decade, hardly a month has passed without a politician being accused of corrupt practices (including the president of the Republic), or another being tried or jailed.

We should emphasize, however, that many of the issues that have been at the heart of American politics today are of little concern to the French electorate. French voters are barely interested in the private lives of their political leaders. Nor is there much concern among voters about the size of the state. There have been considerable efforts in the past decade to reduce the level of public spending. However, there is little support for massive cuts in welfare state programs, which have always been more extensive in France than in the United States. In fact, surveys indicate that French voters are willing to sacrifice a great deal to maintain these programs as well as high levels of state-subsidized social security and long vacations. On the other hand, unlike their American counterparts, French voters are very concerned about the environmental and health consequences of genetically modified organisms.

French voters are also concerned about issues of multiculturalism related to the integration of a large and growing Muslim population. In 2004 the government passed legislation prohibiting students in public schools from wearing conspicuous religious symbols, including Islamic headscarves worn by women. This legislation was far more controversial in the United States than in France, where surveys indicated support for the legislation among all sectors of the French population, including a majority of women of Muslim origin.

Finally, although there was widespread sympathy with the United States just after the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, there has been a perceptible rise of anti-American sentiment, and distrust of American policy, since then. This distrust has expanded into a major trans-Atlantic crisis, as France took the lead in resisting the American-led military action against Iraq in the Spring of 2003, supported by a broad consensus of public opinion and political party support in favor of French opposition to the war.

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

France is one of the oldest nation-states of Europe. The period of unstable revolutionary regimes that followed the storming of the Bastille in 1789 ended in the seizure of power by *Napoléon Bonaparte* a decade later. The French Revolution began with the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1791 (the First Republic), but the monarchy was overthrown the following year. Three more constitutions preceded Napoléon's seizure of power on the eighteenth day of the revolutionary month of Brumaire (November 10, 1799) and the establishment of the First Empire three years later. The other European powers formed an alliance and forced Napoléon's surrender as well as the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. Another revolution in 1830 drove the last Bourbon from the French throne and replaced him with Louis Philippe of the House of Orléans, who promised a more moderate rule bounded by a new constitution.

Growing dissatisfaction among the rising bourgeoisie and the urban population produced still another Paris revolution in 1848. With it came the proclamation of the Second Republic (1848–1852) and universal male suffrage. Conflict between its middle-class and lower-class components, however, kept the republican government ineffective. Out of the disorder rose another Napoléon, nephew of the first emperor. Louis Napoléon, crowned Napoléon III in 1852, brought stability to France for more than a decade, but his last years were marked by growing indecision and ill-conceived foreign ventures. His defeat and capture in the Franco-Prussian War (1870) began another turbulent period. France was occupied and forced into a humiliating armistice; radicals in Paris proclaimed the Paris Commune, which held out for two months in 1871, until crushed by the conservative French government forces. In the commune's aftermath, the struggle between republicans and monarchists led to the establishment of a conservative Third Republic in 1871 and to a new constitution in 1875. The Third Republic proved to be the longest regime in modern France, surviving World War I and lasting until France's defeat and occupation by Nazi Germany in 1940.

World War II deeply divided France. A defeated France was divided into a zone occupied by the Germans, while a French government sympathetic to the Germans, lead by Marshall Pétain, governed a "free" zone in the southern half of the country from Vichy. From July 1940 until August 1944, the government of France was a dictatorship. Slowly, a resistance movement that rejected the new order began to emerge under the leadership of General *Charles de Gaulle* and gained greater strength and support after the Allied invasion of North Africa and the German occupation of the "free" zone at the end of 1942. When German forces were driven from occupied Paris in 1944, de Gaulle entered the city with the hope that sweeping reforms would give France the viable democracy it had long sought. After less than two years, he resigned as head of the Provisional Government, impatient as he was with the country's return to traditional party politics. In fact, the *Fourth Republic* (1946–1958) disappointed earlier hopes. Governments fell with disturbing regularity—24 governments in 12 years. At the same time, because of the narrowness of government coalitions, the same parties and the same leaders tended to participate in most of these governments. Weak leadership had great difficulty coping with the tensions created first by the Cold War, then the French war in Indochina, and finally the anticolonialist uprising in Algeria.

When a threat of civil war arose over Algeria in 1958, a group of leaders invited de Gaulle to return to power and help the country establish stronger and more stable institutions. Since then France has lived under the constitution of the Fifth Republic, enacted by a referendum in 1958. De Gaulle was the last prime minister of the Fourth Republic, then the first president of the newly established Fifth Republic.

ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Geographically, France is at once Atlantic, Continental, and Mediterranean; hence, it occupies a unique place in Europe. In 2004 a total of 60.4 million people, about one-fourth as many as the population of the United States, lived in an area one-fifteenth the size of the United States. It is estimated

that more than 3.6 million foreigners (noncitizens) live in France, more than half of whom come from outside of Europe, mostly from North Africa and Africa. In addition, nearly 2 million French citizens are foreign-born. Thus almost 10 percent of the French population is foreign-born, about the same proportion as in the United States.

Urbanization has come slowly to France, in contrast to its neighbors, but it is now highly urbanized. In 1936 only 16 French cities had a population of more than 100,000; they now number 36. Five cities have a population of more than 300,000. Compared with European countries with similar population (Britain and Germany), France has relatively few large cities; only Paris has more than a million people. Yet in 2002, 44 million people (three-quarters of the population) lived in urban areas, compared with half that number in 1936.

Almost one-quarter of the urban population—more than one-sixth of the entire nation and growing—lives in the metropolitan region of Paris. This concentration of people creates staggering problems. In a country with centuries-old traditions of administrative, economic, and cultural centralization, it has produced a dramatic gap in human and material resources between Paris and the rest of the country. The Paris region supports a per capita income about 45 percent higher and unemployment 15 to 17 percent lower than the national average. But the Paris region also has the highest concentration of foreigners in the country (twice the national percentage), and there are deep divisions between the wealthier and poorer towns that comprise the region.

Overall, French economic development, compared with other advanced industrial countries, has been respectable in the recent past. In per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 2004, France ranks among the wealthiest nations of the world, behind the Scandinavian countries, Ireland, the United States, and Britain, ahead of Germany and Italy, and ahead of the average for the EU 15 (see Chapter 1). During the 1980s, the French economy grew at about the European average but with an inflation rate at half the European average. During this same period, unemployment hovered around 10 percent, slightly above the European average. After the legislative elections in 1997, unemployment dipped again, as the French economy succeeded in creating new jobs again. Nevertheless, in 2004, with an unemployment rate of 9 percent, France was experiencing some of the same problems as some of the poorer countries of Europe: long-term youth unemployment, homelessness, and a drain on social services. Nevertheless, the level of long-term unemployment (more than one year), still more than 30 percent of those unemployed, had been reduced by almost 25 percent.

The labor force has changed drastically since the end of World War II, in ways that have made France similar to other industrialized countries. During the decade of the 1990s, the labor force grew by more than 1.6 million, continuing a growth trend that was greater than in most European countries. Most of these new arrivals were young people, and an increasing proportion were women. For over a century, the proportion of employed women—mostly in agriculture, artisan shops, and factories—was higher in France than in most European countries. Today, most women work in offices in the service sector of the economy. In 1954 women comprised 35 percent of the labor force; today, they make up 46 percent of a much larger labor force. The proportion of French women working (48 percent) is slightly lower than that of the United States but one of the highest in Western Europe.

In 1938, 37 percent of French labor was employed in agriculture; this proportion was less than 3.5 percent in 2004, and it is still declining. The percentage of the labor force employed in industry was down to about 24 percent, while employment in the service sector rose from 33 percent in 1938 to 71 percent today, somewhat smaller than the United States, and slightly above the average for Western Europe.

By comparison with other highly developed industrial countries, the agricultural sector of France remains important both economically and politically. France has more cultivated acreage than any other country in the European Union. In spite of the sharp decline in the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, agricultural production has increased massively during the past quarter century. Throughout the 1990s, France was a top producer and exporter of key agricultural products in Europe (meat, milk, and cereals, for example). Earnings from agricultural exports grew during the past decade. But this impressive performance hides the fact that, although the average income of farmers is about equal to that of a middle-level executive, the disparity of income between the smallest and largest farms is greater than in any other country in the European Union. Nevertheless, French farm incomes are generally higher and more stable than in most EU countries.

Because the political stability of the Third Republic depended on a large and stable peasantry, the government supported French agriculture with protective tariffs that helped farmers (and small businesses) cling to their established routines. Since 1945 there have been serious efforts to modernize agriculture. More attention was paid to the possible advantages of farm cooperatives; marginal farms were consolidated; technical education has been vastly improved; and further mechanization and experimentation are being used as avenues for long-range structural reforms. Particularly after the development of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in the European Community between 1962 and 1968, consolidation of farmland proceeded rapidly. By 1985 the mean size of a French farm was larger than that of any country in Europe except Britain, Denmark, and Luxembourg.

The European Union has paid a large proportion of the bill for agricultural modernization, and subsidies have increased steadily since 1967. As a result, there are pressures (particularly from the British) to reduce CAP expenditures and to deal with the factors that increase them. With the enlargement of the EU in 2004, and the incorporation of more countries in Eastern Europe with large agricultural sectors, these pressures have increased. In addition to requiring the withdrawal of more land from production, major reforms in 1992, 1994, 1999, and 2003 at the European level have gradually moved subsidies away from price supports (that encourage greater production) and toward direct support of farm income. Nevertheless, total subsidies to French farmers increased substantially in the 1990s.

French business has been both highly dispersed and highly concentrated. Even after three decades of structural reorganization of business, about half of the 2.4 million industrial and commercial enterprises in France belong to individuals. In 1999, 54 percent of the salaried workers in the country worked in small enterprises with fewer than 50 workers, and, as in other advanced industrial societies, this proportion has been slowly increasing, primarily because of the movement of labor into the service sector.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of production, some of the most advanced French industries are highly concentrated, and the few firms at the top account for most of the employment and business sales. Even in some of the older sectors (such as automobile manufacture, ship construction, and rubber), half or more of the employment and sales are concentrated in the top four firms. Among the 200 largest industrial groups in the world in 1997, 21 were located in France, about the same as in Germany.

The organization of industry and commerce in France changed significantly during the decade of the 1990s. In 1997, among the top 20 enterprises in France, only 4 were public, compared with 13 ten years before. During the past 15 years, the process of privatization had reduced the number of public enterprises by 24 percent and the number of those working in those enterprises by 31 percent. To the managerial elite trained in the "grandes écoles" was added a more diverse group of entrepreneurs who had ascended during the period of Socialist governments. Nevertheless, despite a continuing process of privatization, relations between industry and the state remain close.

CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

The *Constitution of 1958* is the sixteenth since the fall of the Bastille in 1789. Past republican regimes, known less for their achievements than for their instability, were invariably based on the principle that Parliament could overturn a government no longer backed by a majority of the elected representatives. Such an arrangement can work satisfactorily, as it does in most of Western Europe, when the country (and Parliament) embrace two—or a few—well-organized parties. The party or the coalition that

gains a majority at the polls forms the government and can count on the almost unconditional support of its members in Parliament until the next elections. At that time, it is either kept in power or replaced by an equally disciplined party or coalition of parties.

The Executive

The constitution that General de Gaulle submitted for popular approval in 1958 offered to remedy previous failings of French political parties and coalition politics. In preceding republics the president was little more than a figurehead. According to the new constitution, the *president of the Republic* became a visible head of state. He was to be placed "above the parties" to represent the unity of the national community. As guardian of the constitution, he was to be an arbiter who would rely on other powers—Parliament, the Cabinet, or the people—for the full weight of government action. He would have the option of appealing to the people in two ways. With the agreement of the government or Parliament, he could submit certain important pieces of legislation to the electorate as a referendum, and, after consulting with the prime minister and the parliamentary leaders, he could dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. In case of grave threat "to the institutions of the Republic," the president also had the option of invoking emergency powers. Virtually all of the most powerful constitutional powers of the president—those that give the president formal power—have been used sparingly. Emergency powers were used only once (by General de Gaulle in 1961), when the rebellion of the generals in Algiers clearly justified such use. The mutiny collapsed after a few days, not because of the constitutional provision, but because de Gaulle's authority was unimpaired and hence left the rebels isolated and impotent. President de Gaulle dissolved Parliament twice (in 1962 and 1968), each time to exploit a political opportunity to strengthen the majority supporting presidential policies (see Figure 6.1).

Upon his election to the presidency in 1981, the Socialist François Mitterrand dissolved the National Assembly. He did so again after his reelection seven years later, in order to open the way for parliamentary elections. Because of the political momentum of Mitterrand's victories as a presidential candidate, he expected that early parliamentary elections would provide him with reliable majorities in the National Assembly. Finally, President Jacques Chirac dissolved the National Assembly in April 1997 in an attempt to extend the conservative majority into the next century and to gain political support for the reduction of public spending. The president lost his gamble.

FIGURE 6.1 French Presidents and Prime Ministers Since 1958

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

The legitimacy and political authority of the president have been greatly augmented by direct popular elections to the office. The 1958 constitution called for the president to be elected indirectly by a college comprised mostly of local government officials. In 1962, however, a constitutional amendment by referendum created a new system of popular election of the president for a renewable term of seven years. In September 2000, the presidential term was reduced to five years—again by constitutional amendment—to coincide with the normal five-year legislative term beginning in 2002. At present, France is one of six countries in Western Europe to select its president by direct popular vote; the others are Portugal, Ireland, Austria, Iceland, and Finland.

President de Gaulle outlined his view of the office when he said that power "emanates directly from the people, which implies that the Head of State, elected by the nation, is the source and holder of this power." Every president who has succeeded de Gaulle has maintained the general's basic interpretation of the office, but there have been some changes in the way the presidency has functioned (for details, see pp. 40–42). The *prime minister* is appointed by the president and has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the government. In actuality, the division of responsibility between the president and his prime minister has varied not only with the personalities of those who hold each of the executive offices but also with the conditions under which the prime minister serves.

The Legislature

The legislature is composed of two houses: the National Assembly and the Senate (see Figure 6.2).

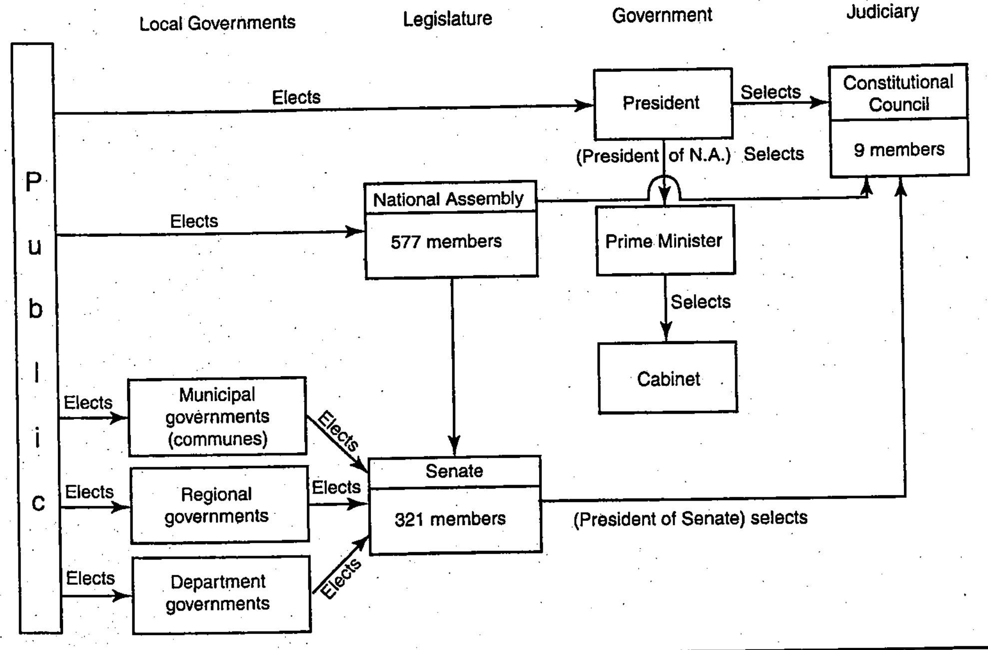
The *National Assembly* of 577 members is elected directly for five years by all citizens over 18. The government may dissolve the legislature at any time, though not twice within one year. The instability of previous regimes had been attributed mostly to the constant meddling of Parliament with the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

Now the government, rather than the legislature, is in control of proceedings in both houses and can require priority for bills it wishes to promote. The president rather than the prime minister generally chooses the Cabinet members, although this prerogative tends to be merely formal during periods of cohabitation (see p. 41). Parliament still enacts laws, but the domain of such laws is strictly defined. Many areas of modern life that in other democracies are regulated by laws debated and approved by Parliament are turned over to rule making by the executive in France.

The 19 standing committees of the National Assembly under the Fourth Republic were reduced to six. The sizes of the committees were enlarged to about 73 to 145 members to prevent interaction among highly specialized deputies who could become effective rivals of the ministers. Each deputy is restricted to one committee, and party groups are represented in each committee in proportion to their size in the National Assembly.

It is not surprising that the new constitution detailed the conditions under which the National Assembly could overthrow a government. An explicit motion of censure must be formulated and passed by more than one-half of the members of the house. Even after a motion of censure is passed, the government may resist the pressure to resign: The president can dissolve the Assembly and call for new elections. During the first year after these elections, a new dissolution of Parliament is prohibited by the constitution. The vote of censure is the only way Parliament can condemn the conduct of government, but no government has been censured since 1962. Since that time every government has

FIGURE 6.2 Structure of the French Government



had a working (if not always friendly) majority in the National Assembly.

The National Assembly shares legislative functions with the *Senate*. Not only in France, but in all countries without a federal structure, the problem of how to organize a bicameral legislature is complex. How should the membership of the second chamber be defined if there are no territorial units to represent? The 321 members of the Senate (the "upper house") are elected indirectly for a term of nine years (one-third every three years) by an electoral college of less than 50,000 representatives from municipal, departmental, and regional councils in which rural constituencies are overrepresented. The upper house has the right to initiate legislation and must consider all bills adopted by the National Assembly. If the two houses disagree on pending legislation, the government can appoint a joint committee to resolve the differences. If the views of the two houses are not reconciled, the government may resubmit the bill (either the original bill or as amended by the Senate) to the National Assembly for a definitive vote (Article 45). Therefore, unlike the United States, the two houses are not equal in either power or influence (see again Figure 6.2).

The Judiciary

Until the Fifth Republic, France had no judicial check on the constitutionality of the actions of its political authorities. The *Constitutional Council* was originally conceived primarily as a safeguard against any legislative erosion of the constraints that the constitution has placed on the prerogatives of Parliament.[1] In part because of a constitutional amendment in 1974, however, the council plays an increasingly important role in the legislative process (see pp. 45–46).

POLITICAL CULTURE

Themes of Political Culture

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

THE BURDEN OF HISTORY Historical thinking can prove both a bond and—as the American Civil War demonstrates—a hindrance to consensus. The French are so fascinated by their own history that feuds of the past are constantly superimposed on the conflicts of the present. This passionate use of historical memories, resulting in seemingly inflexible ambitions, warnings, and taboos, complicates political decision making. In de Gaulle's words, France is "weighed down by history."

ABSTRACTION AND SYMBOLISM In the Age of Enlightenment the monarchy left the educated classes free to voice their views on many topics, provided the discussion remained general and abstract. The urge to discuss a wide range of problems, even trivial ones, in broad philosophical terms has hardly diminished. The exaltation of the abstract is reflected in the significance attributed to symbols and rituals. Rural communities that fought on opposite sides in the French Revolution still pay homage to different heroes, two centuries later. They seem to have no real quarrel with each other, but inherited symbols and their political and religious habits have kept them apart.[2] This tradition helps explain why a nation united by almost universal admiration for a common historical experience holds to conflicting interpretations of its meaning.

DISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS The French have long shared in the widespread ambivalence of modern times that combines distrust of government with high expectations from it. The French citizens' simultaneous distrust of authority and craving for it feed on both individualism and a passion for equality. This attitude produces a self-reliant individual convinced that he is responsible to himself, and perhaps to his family, for what he was and might become. Obstacles are created by the outside world, the "they" who operate beyond the circle of the family, the family firm, and the village. Most of the time, however, "they" are identified with the government.

Memories reaching back to the eighteenth century justify a state of mind that is potentially, if seldom overtly, insubordinate. A strong government is considered reactionary by nature, even if it pretends to be progressive. When citizens participate in public life, they hope to weaken governmental authority rather than encourage change, even when change is overdue. At times this individualism is tainted with anarchism. Yet the French also accommodate themselves rather easily to bureaucratic rule. Since administrative rulings supposedly treat all situations with the same yardstick, they satisfy the sharp sense of equality possessed by a people who have felt forever shortchanged by the government and by the privileges those in power bestow on others.

Although the Revolution of 1789 did not break with the past as completely as is commonly believed, it conditioned the general outlook on crisis and compromise, continuity and change. Sudden change rather than gradual mutation, dramatic conflicts couched in the language of mutually exclusive, radical ideologies—these are the experiences that excite the French at historical moments when their minds are particularly malleable. In fact, what appears to the outsider as permanent instability is a fairly regular alternation between brief violent crises and prolonged periods of routine. The French are accustomed to thinking that no thorough change can ever be brought about except by a major upheaval. Since the great revolution, every French adult has experienced—usually more than once—occasions of political excitement followed by disappointment. This process has led at times to moral exhaustion and widespread skepticism about any possibility of change.

Whether they originated within the country or were brought about by international conflict, most of France's political crises have resulted in a constitutional crisis. Each time, the triumphant forces have codified their norms and philosophy, usually in a comprehensive document. This

history explains why constitutions have never played the role of fundamental charters. Prior to the Fifth Republic, their norms were satisfactory to only one segment of the polity and hotly contested by others.

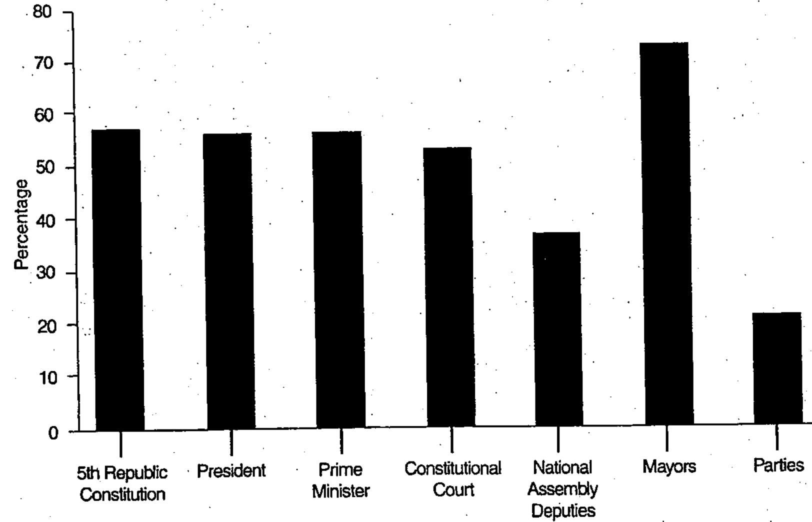
In the years immediately following 1958, the reaction to the constitution of the Fifth Republic resembled that to other constitutions in France. Support for its institutions was generally limited to voters who supported the governments of the day. This began to change after 1962, with the popular election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

Confidence in the Fifth Republic constitutional institutions has been strong, and, despite growing disillusionment with politicians, has grown stronger. Moreover, there is no significant variation among voters by party identity.[3] When French people are asked in which particular institutions they have the most confidence, they invariably give the highest ratings to those closest to them: to local officials, rather than to political parties or national representatives (see Figure 6.3). In recent years distrust in government officials has been high, but expectations of government remain high as well.

Religious and Antireligious Traditions

France is at once a Catholic country—68 percent of the French population identified themselves as Catholic in 2002 (87 percent in 1974)—and a country that the Church itself considers as "dechristianized." Of those who describe themselves as Catholic, only 10 percent attend mass regularly (down from 21 percent in 1974), and 84 percent either never go to church at all or go only occasionally, for such ceremonies as baptism or marriage.[4]

FIGURE 6.3 Feelings of Confidence in Various Political Institutions



Source: Sofres, L'Etat de L'Opinion 2001 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2001), p. 81.

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

French Catholics historically viewed the Revolution of 1789 as the work of satanic men, and enemies of the Church became militant in their opposition to Catholic forms and symbols. This division continued through the nineteenth century. With the establishment of the Third Republic in 1875, differences between the political subcultures of Catholicism and anticlericalism deepened further. After a few years, militant anti-clericalism took firm control of the Republic. Parliament rescinded the centuries-old compact with the Vatican, expelled most Catholic orders, and severed all ties between church and state, so that "the moral unity of the country could be reestablished." The militancy of the Republican regime was matched by the Pope, who excommunicated every deputy who voted for the separation laws in 1905. As in other European Catholic countries, the difference between the political right and left was largely determined by attitudes toward the Catholic Church.

The gap began to narrow during the interwar period and after Catholics and agnostics found themselves side by side, and sometimes joined together, in the resistance movement during World War II. Nevertheless, the depth of religious practice continues to be the best predictor—with remarkable stability—of whether a voter will support an established party of the right.

Religious practice has been declining in France and many other industrialized countries since the 1950s among all social groups, with only 10 to 12 percent of the French population attending church regularly today. The decline has been greatest among those groups that were the most observant. Farmers are the most observant group in France, but their church attendance is only 23 percent. Blue-collar workers, for most of this century, have been the least observant: Now only 4 percent admit to attending church regularly. In addition to secularization trends, important changes have occurred within the Catholic subculture. Today, the vast majority of self-identified Catholics reject some of the most important teachings of the Church, including its positions on abortion, premarital sex, and marriage of priests. Even among regularly practicing Catholics, there is considerable opposition to the positions of the Church. Only 16 percent of identified Catholics perceive the role of the Church as important in political life, and Catholicism no longer functions as a well-integrated community, with a common view of the world and common social values. In 2000, there were half the number of Catholic priests as in 1960, and a 75 percent decline of ordinations. Most private schools in France are Catholic parochial schools, which the state has subsidized since the Fourth Republic. The status of these schools (in a country in which state support for Catholic schools coexists with the separation of church and state) has never been fully settled. In 1998, 10 percent of primary schools, and 32 percent of secondary schools, were private. Although church attendance continues to decline, there remains considerable support for parochial education.

French Jews (numbering about 600,000 or 1 percent of the population since the exodus that followed Algerian independence in 1962) are sufficiently well integrated into French society so that it is not possible to speak of a Jewish vote. One study demonstrates that, like other French voters, Jews tend to vote left or right, according to degree of religious practice. Nevertheless, Jews have consistently supported the Republic. Recent surveys in 2002 indicate a substantially higher rate of synagogue attendance among French who identify as Jewish, compared with Catholics (24 percent). Although anti-Semitic attitudes and behavior are not widespread in France, attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions—mostly by young maghrebian men in mixed areas of large cities—increased dramatically between the end of 2000 and 2002. Linked to the emergence of the second intifada in the Middle East, these incidents were also related to emerging patterns of urban ethnic conflict in France.

Protestants (just under 1 million or 1.7 percent of the population and growing) have lived somewhat apart, with heavy concentrations in Alsace, in Paris, and in some regions of central and

southeastern France. About two-thirds of Protestants belong to the upper bourgeoisie. The proportion of Protestants in high public positions has been very large. Until recently, they usually voted more leftist than others in their socioeconomic position or in the same region. Although many Protestants are prominent in the Socialist Party, since the 1950s their electoral behavior, like their activities in cultural and economic associations, is determined by factors other than religion.

Islam is now France's second religion. It is estimated that there are 4 to 4.5 million *Muslims* in France, two-thirds of whom are immigrants or their descendants from Muslim countries. The emergence of Islamic institutions in France is part of a larger phenomenon of integrating new immigration into France. In the last decade the affirmation of religious identification coincided with (and to some extent was a part of) the social and political mobilization of immigrants from Muslim countries. There are now over a thousand mosques in France, as well as another thousand rooms set aside for prayer. In 2002 the government created an official representative council (CFCM) to represent Islam with public authorities (similar institutions exist for Jews and Catholics). Nevertheless, a survey in 2002 indicates that regular attendance of services at mosques is about the same as church attendance of Catholics, and that more than 40 percent of those who identify as Muslims say that they never attend services.

The emergence of Islam has challenged the traditional French view of the separation of church and state. Unlike Catholics and Jews, who maintain their own schools, or Protestants, who have supported the principle of secular state schools, some Muslim groups have insisted both on the right to attend state schools and to follow practices considered contrary to the French tradition of secularism by state education authorities. Small numbers of Muslims have challenged dress codes, school curriculum, and school requirements, and have more generally questioned more muscular notions of *laicite*. In response to this challenge, and to reaffirm the secular nature of the public schools, the French Parliament passed legislation in 2004 that banned the wearing of "ostentatious" religious symbols in primary and secondary schools. Although the language was neutral about religion, the law was widely seen as an attempt to prevent the wearing of Islamic head scarves by Muslim girls. Although the new law was widely debated, it was also strongly supported by the French public. A sample of Muslim women surveyed two months before the law was passed also supported it.

Class and Status

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

The number of those who are conscious of belonging to a social class is relatively high in France, particularly among workers. One important study, for example, found a far greater intensity of spontaneous class consciousness among French workers in the 1970s than among comparable groups of British workers.[5] Yet, spontaneous class identity has been declining. In 1994, 61 percent of respondents felt that they belonged to a class, compared with 68 percent 18 years earlier. The decline of class commitments is greatest among blue-collar workers (down to 47 percent) and least among white-collar employees and executives. One survey in 1997 revealed that a majority of workers identified themselves as middle class. Among middle managers, feelings of class identity had actually increased. By the 1990s French workers identified themselves as belonging to a class less frequently than any other major salaried group.

Existing evidence indicates that economic and social transformations have reduced the level of class identification but have not eradicated subjective feelings about class differences and class antagonism. Indeed, the strike movements during the past four years seem to have intensified class feelings. In addition, as the number of immigrant workers among the least qualified workers has grown, traditional class differences are reinforced by a growing sense of racial and ethnic differences.

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

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

In an old country like France, agents of political socialization change slowly, even when regimes change rapidly. Socializing agents are carriers of a broader cultural tradition. Like any other teaching process, political socialization passes on from one generation to the next "a mixture of attitudes developed in a mixture of historical periods." But "traditions, everyone agrees, do not form a constituted and fixed set of values, of knowledge and of representations; socialization never functions as a simple mechanism of identical reproduction . . . [but rather as] an important instrument for the reorganization and the reinvention of tradition."[6]

Family

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

Particularly during the last 20 years, the life of the French family, the role of its members, and its relationship to outsiders have undergone fundamental, and sometimes contradictory, changes. Very few people condemn the idea of couples living together without being married. In 2001, 44 percent of all births were outside of marriage (compared with 6.4 percent in 1968), a percentage only slightly lower than in the United States, and higher than almost any other European country. The proportion of births outside of marriage is highest among women outside of the labor force and working-class women (with the notable exception of immigrant women). Almost none of these children are in one-parent families, however, since in virtually all cases they are legally recognized by both parents before their first birthday. Nevertheless, 15 percent of children below the age of 19 live with only one of their natural parents, mostly due to divorce. The number of divorces was more than 40 percent the number of marriages in 2000, and it has almost doubled since 1976, when new and more flexible divorce legislation came into effect.

Legislative changes have only gradually modified the legal restrictions on married women that existed in the Napoléonic legal codes. Not until 1970 did the law proclaim the absolute equality of the two parents in the exercise of parental authority and for the moral and material management of the family. Labor-saving devices for house and farm have been described as the "secret agents of modernity" in the countryside.[7] Almost half of all women over the age of 15 are now employed, and 80 percent of French women between the ages of 25 and 49 are now working continuously during their adult years.

The employment of a greater number of married women has affected the role of the family as a vehicle of socialization. Working women differ from those who are not employed in regard to moral concepts, religious practice, political interest, electoral participation, party alignment, and so on. In their general orientations, employed women are far closer to the men of the milieu, the class, or the age group to which they belong, than to women who are not employed.[8]

Although family structure, values, and behavior have changed, the family remains an important structure through which political values broadly conceived are transmitted from generation to generation. Several studies demonstrate a significant influence of parents over the religious socialization and the left-right political choices made by their children.[9]

There is perhaps no greater tribute to the continuing effectiveness of the French family than the results of a survey of French youth taken by the French government in 1994. With 25 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds unemployed, it was hardly surprising that the survey revealed that 78 percent of young people had little confidence in the schools to prepare them for the future. What was more surprising was how much confidence young people had in

their families. More than 75 percent felt that their parents had confidence in them, that they were loved at home, and that their families had prepared them well for the future. In a survey taken in 1999, the family was ranked second only to school as a source of deep and durable friendship. The effectiveness of the family as an agent of socialization for general religious and ideological orientations does not mean that succeeding generations do not have formative experiences of their own or that there are no significant differences in the political commitments of different age cohorts. Therefore, political socialization is a product not only of the family experience but also of childhood experiences with peers, education, and the changing larger world. Thus young people of Algerian origin, born in France, are somewhat more likely than their counterparts of French origin to practice, but are far less likely to practice their faith than their counterparts born in Algeria.[10]

Associations and Socialization

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

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

The number of associations has sharply increased over the past two decades, while the overall percentage of membership among the adult population remained relatively constant. The pattern of association, however, changed considerably. The more traditional advocacy and political groups, politicized unions, and professional associations suffered sharp declines in absolute (and proportional) membership. Sports associations, self-help groups, and newly established ethnic associations now attract larger numbers of people. As more middle-class people have joined associations, working-class people have dropped out.[11] To some extent these changes reflect shifting attitudes about political commitment in France. Although associational life remains strong, *militantisme* (with its implication of deep and abiding commitment) has clearly diminished. Older advocacy and professional associations that were built on this kind of commitment have declined, while newer groups have been built on different and often more limited commitment.

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

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

Education

One of the most important ways a community preserves and transmits its cultural and political values is through education. Napoléon Bonaparte recognized the significance of education. Well into the second half of the twentieth century the French educational system remained an imposing historical monument, in the unmistakable style of the First Empire. The edifice Napoléon erected combined education at all levels, from primary school to postgraduate professional training, into one centralized corporation: the imperial university. Its job was to teach the national doctrine through uniform programs at various levels. As the strict military discipline of the Napoléonic model has been loosened by succeeding regimes, each has discovered that the machinery created by Napoléon was a convenient and coherent instrument for transmitting the values—both changing and permanent—of French civilization. The centralized imperial university has therefore never been truly dismantled. The Minister of Education, who presides over a ministry that employs almost a million people, continues to control curriculum and teaching methods, the criteria for selection and advancement of pupils and teachers, and the content of examinations.

Making advancement at every step dependent on passing an examination is not peculiar to France (it is also a pattern in Japan, as well as other countries). What is distinctly French is an obsessive and quite unrealistic belief that everybody is equal before an examination. The idea that education is an effective weapon for emancipation and social betterment has had popular as well as official recognition. Farmers and workers regard the instruction of their children, a better instruction than they had, as an important weapon in the fight against the others in an oppressive world. The *baccalauréat*—the certificate of completion of the academic secondary school, the lycée—remains almost the sole means of access to higher education. But such a system suits and profits best those self-motivated middle-class children for whom it was designed.

During the Fifth Republic, the structure of the French educational system has undergone significant change. The secondary schools, which trained only 700,000 students as late as 1945, now provide instruction for almost 6 million. Between 1958 and 1998, the number of students in higher education rose from 170,000 to 2.1 million. By 1998 the proportion of 20- to 24-year-olds in higher education (40 percent) was as high as that of any other European country.[12]

The introduction of a comprehensive middle school with a common core curriculum in 1963 basically altered the system of early academic selection, and other reforms eliminated rigid ability tracking. However, implementation of reforms, whether passed by governments of the right or the left, has often been difficult because of opposition from middle-class parents and from teachers' unions of the left.[13] Although more than 60 percent of the young passed the baccalauréat in 2001 (double the proportion of 1980), education reforms have altered only slightly the vast differences in the success of children from different social backgrounds.

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

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

An additional characteristic of the French system of higher education is the parallel system of

grandes écoles, a sector of higher education that functions outside of the network of universities under rules that permit a high degree of selectivity. As university enrollment has multiplied (by more than 500 percent since 1960), the more prestigious grandes écoles have only modestly increased the number of students admitted upon strict entrance examinations.[14] For more than a century the grandes écoles have been the training ground of highly specialized elites. The schools prepare students for careers in engineering, business management, and the top ranks of the civil service. Their different recruitment of students and of teaching staffs as well as their teaching methods influence the outlook and even the temperament of many of their graduates. In contrast to university graduates, virtually all graduates of the grandes écoles are immediately placed and often assume positions of great responsibility (see pp. 19).

Socialization and Communication

In a country such as France, the political effectiveness of the mass media is often determined by the way in which people appraise its integrity and whether they believe that it serves or disturbs the functioning of the political system. In the past, business firms, tycoons, political parties, and governments (both French and foreign) often backed major newspapers. Today, the press operates under the same conditions as it does in other Western democracies, except that daily press revenue from advertising remains lower than elsewhere. Most newspapers and magazines are owned by business enterprises, many of them conglomerates that extend into fields other than periodical publications.

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

Television has replaced all other media as a primary source of political information in France, and to a greater extent than in Germany, Britain, or the United States.[15] Television is increasingly the primary mediator between political forces and individual citizens, and, as in other countries, it has an impact on the organization and substance of politics. First, a personality that plays well on television (not just a unique personality such as Charles de Gaulle) is now an essential ingredient of politics. As in other countries, image and spectacle are important elements of politics. Second, television helps set the agenda of political issues, by choosing among the great variety of themes, problems, and issues dealt with by political and social forces, and by magnifying them for mass publics. Finally, television is the arena within which national electoral campaigns take place, largely displacing mass rallies and meetings. Nevertheless, confidence in various sources of political information varies among different groups. Young people and shopkeepers are most confident in radio information, while managers are more confident in the written press than television for political information.

Until 1982, all broadcasting and television stations that originated programs on French territory were owned by the state and operated by personnel whom the state appointed and remunerated. Since then, the basic system of state monopoly gradually has been dismantled. As a first and quite important step, the (Socialist) government authorized private radio stations. The move attempted to regularize and regulate more than a thousand pirate radio stations already in existence. Inevitably, this vast network of 1,600 stations is becoming increasingly consolidated—not by the state but by private entrepreneurs who provide programming services, and who in some instances are effectively buying control of a large number of local stations.

The 1982 legislation also reorganized the public television system. It granted new rights of reply to government communications and allotted free time to all political parties during electoral campaigns. During the following years, however, these changes were dwarfed by a process of gradual privatization, begun under the Socialists and continued by the conservatives after 1986, and by the globalization of television broadcasting. Today, well more than 100 television channels are available to French viewers, compared with 30 in 1990 and 3 in 1980.

Recruitment and Style of Elites

Until the Fifth Republic, Parliament provided the core of French decision makers. Besides members of Parliament, elected officers of municipalities or departments, some local party leaders, and a few journalists of national renown were counted among what is known in France as the political class, altogether comprising not more than 15,000 or 20,000 persons. All gravitated toward the halls of the National Assembly or the Senate.

Compared with the British House of Commons, the membership of the National Assembly has always been of more modest social origin. From about 1879 on, professionals (lawyers, doctors, and journalists) increasingly dominated the Chamber of Deputies, now called the National Assembly; the vast majority were local notables, trained in law and experienced in local administration.

A substantial change in political recruitment occurred during the Fourth Republic, when for the first time the percentage of self-employed and farmers became a minority. The steadily diminishing share of blue- and white-collar workers during the Fifth Republic is partially due to the professionalization of parliamentary personnel, as well as by the decline of the Communist Party that began in the 1980s.

What is most striking about the professional background of legislators is the number who come from the public sector: almost half the deputies in the 1980s, and 44 percent after the victory of the left in 1997. The number of top civil servants in the National Assembly has risen constantly since 1958, and the left landslide of 1981 only accentuated this process. Although the majority of high civil servants lean toward parties of the right, more than a third of those who sat in the Assembly elected in 1997 were part of the Socialist group. Even more important than their number is the political weight that these deputy-bureaucrats carry in Parliament. Some of the civil servants who run for election to Parliament have previously held positions in the political executive, either as members of the ministerial staffs or as junior ministers. Not surprisingly, in Parliament they are frequently candidates for a post in the Cabinet.

More than in any other Western democracy, the highest ranks of the civil service are the training and recruitment grounds for top positions in both politics and industry. Among the high civil servants, about 2,300 are members of the most important administrative agencies, the *grands corps,* from which the vast majority of the roughly 500 administrators engaged in political decision making are drawn.[16] The recruitment base of the highest levels of the civil service remains extremely narrow. The knowledge and capability required to pass the various examinations gives clear advantages to the children of senior civil servants. As a result, the ranking bureaucracy forms something approaching a hereditary class. There have been several important attempts to develop a system of more open recruitment into the higher civil service, but all of them have been only marginally successful.

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

They might also be engaged in politics either as members of Parliament (46 in the National Assembly elected in 1997) and of local government, or as members of the executive: 11 of the 17 prime ministers who have served since 1959 have been members of a grand corps who attended a grande école. The percentage of ministers in any given government who are members of one of the grand corps has varied between 10 and 60 percent. When Jean-Pierre Raffarin became prime minister in April 2002, he was widely described as an "outsider," in part because his political career had been primarily

in the provinces, and because he had *not* been a student at ENA. One study calculates that 40 percent of those who graduated from ENA between 1960 and 1990 served as ministerial advisers. Thus the grandes écoles—grands corps group, though small in membership, produces a remarkable proportion of the country's political elite.

The same system is also becoming increasingly important in recruiting high business executives. Movement from the public sector to the private sector is facilitated because members of the grands corps can go on leave for years, while they retain their seniority and pension rights, as well as the right to return to their job.[17] (Few who leave do in fact return.) In 1993, 47 percent of the directors of the 200 largest companies in France were from the civil service (up from 41 percent in 1985). In the early 1990s, 17 percent of all ENA graduates were working in French industry. Moreover, though the number of ENA graduates is small (about 170 a year), it is three times larger now than in the early 1960s.

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

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

The Importance of Gender

The representation of women among French political elites is close to the lowest in Western Europe. Women comprise well over half the electorate, but barely 12 percent of the deputies in the National Assembly in 2002 and only 6 percent of the members of the Senate are women. Women fare better at the local level, where they comprised 47.7 percent of the municipal councilors elected in 2001, more than double those elected six years before.

Political parties structure access to political representation far more in France than in the United States, and the left has generally made a greater effort to recruit women than has the right. Thus, when the Socialists and Communists gained a substantial number of seats in the 1997 legislative elections, the proportion of women in the National Assembly almost doubled. In contrast to the United States, political advancement in France has generally required a deep involvement in political parties, with a bias in favor of professional politicians and administrators. However, relatively few women have made this kind of long-term commitment to political life. Nevertheless, despite the losses of the left in the legislative elections of 2002, as a result of the parity legislation passed in 1999 (see following discussion), the number of women in the new assembly actually increased slightly.

Periodically, governments and the political parties recognize this dearth of women's representation, but little has been done. Either the Constitutional Council has rejected the remedies, or the proposed reforms have challenged accepted institutional norms. In 1982, the Constitutional Council overturned legislation that restricted party lists for municipal council elections to no more than 75 percent candidates of one gender. By the 1990s there was a growing consensus among leaders of all political parties in favor of amending the Constitution to permit positive discrimination in favor of greater gender parity in representative institutions. Thus, with support of both the president of the Republic and the prime minister and without dissent, the National Assembly passed an amendment in December 1998 that stipulated that ". . . the law [and not the constitution] determines the conditions for the organization of equal access of men and women to electoral mandates and elective functions." Enforcement legislation requires greater gender parity at least in the selection of candidates. This is a significant departure for the French political system, which has resisted the use of quotas in the name of republican equality.

Perhaps the most important change in the political behavior of French women is in their voting patterns. During the Fourth Republic, a majority of women consistently voted for parties of the right. However, as church attendance among women has declined, their political orientation moved from right to left. In every national election since the 1980s, a clear majority of women have voted for the left.[18]

INTEREST GROUPS

The Expression of Interests

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

Actual memberships in almost all groups engaged in economic production have varied considerably over time by sector, but they are generally much smaller than comparable groups in other industrialized countries. In 1997 no more than 8 percent of workers belonged to trade unions (a decline of half over 25 years—the greatest decline in Western Europe); about 50 percent of French farmers and 75 percent of large industrial enterprises belonged to their respective organizations (see following discussion).[19] Historically, many of the important economic groups have experienced a surge of new members at dramatic moments in the country's social or political history. But membership then declines as conditions have normalized, leaving some associations with too small a membership to justify their claims of representativeness.

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

Interest groups have also been weakened by ideological division. Separate groups that defend the interests of workers, farmers, veterans, schoolchildren, and consumers are divided in France by ideological preferences. The ideological division of representation forces each organization to compete for the same clientele in order to establish their representativeness. Consequently, even established French interest groups exhibit a radicalism in action and goals that is rare in other Western democracies. For groups that lack the means of using the information media, such tactics also become a way to put their case before the public at large. In such a setting, even the defense of purely economic, social, or cultural interests takes on a political color.

The Labor Movement

The French labor movement is divided into national confederations of differing political sympathies, although historical experiences have driven French labor, unlike other European trade unions, to avoid direct organizational ties with political parties.[20] Membership has declined steeply since 1975, but there are indications that the decline has leveled off since 1994. Nevertheless, although union membership is declining in almost every industrialized country, it is now the lowest by far in France (see Chapter 3). Surveys show that the youngest group of salaried workers has virtually deserted the trade union movement. After 1990, candidates supported by nonunion groups in various plant-level elections have attracted more votes than any of the established union organizations.[21] In fact, unions have been losing members and (electoral) support at the very time when the French trade union movement has become better institutionalized at the workplace and better protected by legislation.

Despite these clear weaknesses, French workers still maintain considerable (and increasing) confidence in unions to defend their interests during periods of labor conflict. Strike levels and support for collective action have risen since 1994, as well as confidence in unions and their leadership of strike movements. Indeed, during the massive strikes of public service workers in the fall of 1995, truckers in the fall of 1996, and truckers and taxi drivers (protesting against the rising price of oil) in the fall of 2000, public support for the strikers remained far higher than confidence in the government against which the strikes were directed.[22] However, it is important to keep in mind that, even though there are

occasional massive strikes in France, strike levels are declining over the past 30 years.

French labor has had the most difficulty dealing with ideological fragmentation. Indeed, the decline in membership has not encouraged consolidation, but it has resulted in more fragmentation (see following discussion). Unlike the United States, French workers in the same plant or firm may be represented by several union federations. As a result, there is constant competition among unions at every level for membership and support. Even during periods when the national unions agree to act together, animosities at the plant level sometimes prevent cooperation. Moreover, the weakness of union organization at the plant level—which is where most lengthy strikes are called—means that unions are difficult bargaining partners. Unions at this level maintain only weak control over the strike weapon. Union militants are quite adept at sensitizing workers, and in engendering many of the preconditions for strike action as well as channeling strike movements once they begin. However, the unions have considerable difficulty in effectively calling strikes and ending them. Thus unions are highly dependent on the general environment, what they call the social climate, in order to support their positions at the bargaining table. Because their ability to mobilize workers at any given moment is an essential criterion of their representativeness, union ability to represent workers is frequently in question.

Legislation passed by the government of the left in 1982–1983 (the Auroux laws) sought to strengthen the union's position at the plant level. By creating an "obligation to negotiate" for management and by protecting the right of expression for workers, the government hoped to stimulate collective negotiations. In fact, this type of Wagner Act (the basic law of U.S. industrial relations) of French labor brought about some important changes in industrial relations and stimulated collective negotiations. However, given their increasing weakness, unions have not taken full advantage of the potential benefits of the legislation. This law refocused French industrial relations on the plant level without necessarily increasing the effectiveness of unions. The small number of union representatives, increasingly involved in committees and discussions, appears to have lost much contact with workers on the shop floor.

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

The second strongest labor organization is the *Confédération Française Democratique du Travail* (CFDT, French Democratic Confederation of Labor). In many ways, the CFDT is the most original and the most interesting of all labor movements in Western Europe. An offshoot of a Catholic trade union movement, its earlier calls for worker self-management (*autogestion*) were integrated into the Auroux laws. The leaders of the CFDT see the policy of the confederation as an alternative to the oppositional stance of the CGT. The CFDT now offers itself as a potential partner to modern capitalist management. This movement to the right created splits within several CFDT public service unions, and the establishment of a national rival, the *Solidaire Unitaire et Democratique* (SUD, Solidarity United and Democratic) in 1989. The split was further accentuated by CFDT's opposition to the massive public service strike of 1995. SUD, in turn, was integrated in 1998 into a larger group of militant autonomous unions, *G-10* (le Groupe des dix) in 1998. G-10 now consists of some 27 autonomous unions.

The third major labor confederation, *Force Ouvrière* (FO, Workers' Force), formed at the beginning of the Cold War in 1948 in reaction to the Communist domination of the CGT. It is the only major trade union organization that claims to have gained membership in recent years. This relative success is certainly connected with the steady decline of the Communist Party. The FO adheres to a position that is close to the traditions of American trade unionism and focuses on collective bargaining as a counterweight to employers and the state. Nevertheless, during the strike movements of 1995 and 1996, FO leadership strongly supported the more radical elements of striking workers, and continues to be dominated by trotskyist elements of the left.

One of the most important and influential of the "autonomous" unions is the *Fédération de l'Education Nationale* (FEN, Federation of National Education), the teachers' union. At the end of 1992, as a result of growing internal conflict and declining membership, FEN split. The rump of FEN joined with other independent unions to form the *Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes* (UNSA, National Union of Autonomous Unions), and in October 1994, was officially recognized by the government. In legal terms this means that the government places the UNSA on the same level as the other national confederations. Nevertheless, by 1996, FEN (and UNSA) was substantially weakened, when the rival *La Fédération Syndicale Unitaire* (FSU, United Union Federation)—which is close to the Communist Party—gained greater support in social elections, support that was reaffirmed in 1999.

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

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

Business Interests

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

Since the MEDEF is dominated primarily by big business, shopkeepers and the owners of many small firms feel that they are better defended by more movement-oriented groups than by the streamlined modern lobby of the MEDEF.[23] As a result, a succession of small business and shopkeeper movements have challenged the established organization and evolved into organized associations in their own right.

Agricultural Interests

The defense of agricultural interests has a long record of internal strife. However, under the Fifth Republic, the *Fédération Nationale des Syndicats Agricoles* (FNSEA, National Federation of Agricultural Unions), though one of several farm organizations, has dominated this sector. The FNSEA has also served as an effective instrument for modernizing French agriculture. The rural reform legislation of the 1960s provided for the "collaboration of the professional agricultural organizations," and from the outset real collaboration was offered only to the FNSEA. From this privileged position the federation gained both patronage and control over key institutions that were transforming agriculture. It used these instruments to organize a large proportion of French farmers. Thus, having established its domination over the farming sector with the support of a succession of governments, it then periodically demonstrated opposition to government policy with the support of the vast majority of a declining number of farmers.[24]

The principal challenges to the FNSEA in recent years are external rather than internal, as the agricultural sector has suffered from the fruits of its

own productive success. Under pressure from the *European Union (EU)*, France agreed in 1992 to major reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy. These reforms took substantial amounts of land out of production and replaced some price supports with direct payments to farmers. That same year, the European Union reached an agreement with the United States to reduce subsidized grain exports and cut back cultivation of oilseed products. France is the largest exporter of these products in the EU, and FNSEA protests (some of them violent) were joined by farm unions from throughout the EU, which ultimately resulted in a face-saving GATT accord in 1994. Pressures to further reduce the budget of CAP have only increased with the process of expansion of the EU toward the east. The substantial opposition in France (and other parts of Europe) to the importation of genetically modified agricultural products has increased the tensions with WTO (formerly GATT).

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

Means of Access and Styles of Action

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

Among the reasons given in 1958 for reforming and rationalizing Parliament was the desire to reduce the role of organized interests in the legislative process. By and large this has been accomplished. But interest groups have not lost all influence on rule making and policy formation. To be effective, groups now use the channels that the best equipped groups have long found most rewarding, channels that give them direct access to the administration. The indispensable collaboration between organized private interests and the state is institutionalized in advisory committees that are attached to most administrative agencies. These committees are composed mainly of civil servants and group representatives. Nonetheless, tendencies toward privileged access, sometimes called *neocorporatism* (see following discussion and Chapter 3), have, with the exception of agriculture and big business, remained weak in France. The weak organization of the labor and small business sectors means that organizations in these sectors are often regarded as unreliable partners. Organized interests also attempt to pressure the political executive. The ministerial staffs—the circle of personal collaborators who support every French minister—are an important target. Inasmuch as the present regime strengthened the position of the political executive, it also enabled both the prime minister and the president to function more effectively as arbiters between competing claims and to exercise stricter control over many agencies and ministries.

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

High civil servants tend to distinguish between "professional organizations," which they consider serious or dynamic enough to listen to, and "interest groups," which should be kept at a distance. The perspectives of interest representatives tend to reflect their own strength as well as their experience in collaborating with different parts of the state and government. Trade union representatives acknowledge their reliance on the social climate (the level of strike activity) to determine their ability to bargain effectively with the state. Representatives of business claim to rely more on contacts with civil servants, compared with those of agriculture who say that they rely more on contacts at the ministerial level.[25]

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

The French state subsidizes interest groups, both indirectly and directly. By favoring some groups over others through recognition and subsidization, the role of the state seems to conform to neocorporatist criteria. However, in other ways the neocorporatist model is less applicable in France than in other European countries. Neocorporatist policymaking presumes close collaboration between the state administration and a dominant interest group (or coalition of groups) in major socioeconomic sectors (agriculture, labor, and employers). Yet, what stands out in the French case, as noted previously, is the unevenness of this pattern of collaboration.[26]

If the neocorporatist pattern calls for interest group leaders to control organizational action and coordinate bargaining, for French interest groups mass action such as street demonstrations, wildcat strikes, and attacks on government property are often poorly controlled by group leadership. Indeed, it can be argued that group protest is more effective in France (at least negatively) than in other industrialized countries because it is part of a pattern of group-state relations. Protests remain limited in scope and intensity, but the government recognizes them as a valid expression of interest. Only in this way can we understand why quite frequently governments backed by a majority in parliament were ready to make concessions to weakly organized interest groups[27] (See Box 6.1.)

Box 6.1 Protest in France

During the early years of Socialist governments, more and more people—farmers, artisans, small businesspeople, truckers, doctors, medical students, all of them organized either by old-established or newly formed interest groups—took to the streets to protest impending legislation or just out of fear for their status. In quite a few cases, the demonstrations led to violence and near riots. The same scenario took place under later conservative governments. Demonstrations by college and high school students forced the withdrawal of a planned university reform under the Chirac government in 1987. A planned imposition of a "youth" minimum wage by the Balladur government in 1994 (with an 80 percent majority in the National Assembly), ostensibly to encourage greater employment of young people, was dropped when high school students opposed it in the streets of Paris and other large cities. After a month of public service strikes, and massive demonstrations in November and December 1995, the new Chirac government abandoned a plan to reorganize the nationalized railway system and revised a plan to reorganize the civil service. A year later, striking truckers won major concessions from a still weakened government. In the autumn of 2000, a protest led by truckers and taxi drivers (that spread to England) against the rising price of oil and gasoline forced the Jospin government to lower consumer taxes on fuel. Until the summer of 2000, the government benefited from unprecedented support in public opinion.

Sources: 1986—*Les Elections législatives du mars 1986* (Paris: *Le Monde*/Supplément aux dossiers et documents du Monde, 1986); 1988—*Les Elections législative du 5 juin et 12 juin 1988*(Paris: *Le Monde*/Supplément aux dossiers et documents du Monde, 1988). *Les Elections législatives du mars 1993* (Paris: *Le Monde*/Supplément aux dossiers du Monde, 1993). CSA, "Les elections legislatives du 25 mai 1997," p. 18. *Le Monde* May 27 and June 3, 1997. *The Economist*, September 16, 2000.

POLITICAL PARTIES

The Traditional Party System

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

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

Except for the Socialists and the Communists, and more recently the RPR, French party organizations have mostly remained as skeletal as political parties were in other democracies in the early nineteenth century. French parties developed in a mainly preindustrial and preurban environment, catering at first to upper-middle-class and later to middle-class elements. Their foremost and sometimes only function was to provide an organizational framework for selecting and electing candidates for local, departmental, and national offices. Even among the better-organized parties, party organization tends to be both fragmentary at the national level, and local in orientation, with only modest linkage between the two levels.

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

Party membership has always been low, except during short and dramatic situations. As late as the 1960s no more than 2 percent of registered voters were party members. In Britain and Germany, for example, some parties have more than a million members, a membership level never achieved by any French political party. Organizational weakness contributes to the endurance of a multiparty system, and a weak multiparty system feeds into the abstract and ideological style of French politics. To avoid the suggestion that they represent no more than limited interests or personalities, these weak parties phrase even the narrowest political issues in lofty ideological terms.

During the Third and Fourth Republics, neither the right nor the left could govern by itself for any length of time, because both lacked a majority and both included extreme parties that contested the legitimacy of the political order. As a normal consequence of this party system, an unstable center coalition was in control of the government most of the time, no matter what the outcome of the preceding elections. Between 1789 and the advent of the Fifth Republic, governments of the center ruled republican France for all but 30 years. In a two- or three-party system, major parties normally move toward the political center in order to gain stability and cohesion. But where extreme party plurality prevails, the center is unable to become a political force. In France, centrist coalitions were an effective, if limited, means of maintaining a regime, but an ineffective means of developing coherent policy.

The Fifth Republic created a new political framework that had a major, if gradual and mostly unforeseen, influence on all parties and on their relationships to each other. The emerging party system, in turn, had an important impact on the way that the institutions of the system actually worked.[28]

The strengthening of parliamentary party discipline in the 1970s gave meaning to strong executive leadership of president and prime minister (who were leaders of the reconstructed parties) and stabilized the political process. The main political parties also became the principal arenas to develop and debate alternative policies.

However, as the national political system became more competitive in the 1980s, the locus of policy debate shifted to political leaders, on one hand, and marginal political organizations, on the other. The main political parties continue to dominate the organization of parliamentary work and the selection of candidates, but are far less important as mass membership organizations. Thus in 2002, at least 79 parties or groups presented 8,424 candidates for 577 seats in the National Assembly, a record for the Fifth Republic. The four main parties were supported by 68 percent of the electorate, with the National Front and the Greens attracting an additional 15 percent. Thus, even if we include the National Front and the Greens, almost 18 percent of the electorate supported an array of issue-based and personality-based parties in 2002. However, only seven parties are represented in the National Assembly in four parliamentary groups, three in the right majority, four allied in the left opposition.

The Main Parties: The Right and Center

UNION FOR A POPULAR MOVEMENT *The Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)* is the most recent direct lineal descendant of the Gaullist party. The original Gaullist party was hastily thrown together after de Gaulle's return to power in 1958. Only weeks after its birth, it won more than 20 percent of the vote and almost 40 percent of the seats in the first Parliament of the new republic in 1958 (see Table 6.1).

De Gaulle himself, preferring the methods of direct democracy, had little use for any party including his own. But his advisers, foremost among them Georges Pompidou, one of his prime ministers and later his successor, saw the need for a better organized party to win future elections and an orderly succession from the charismatic leader to Gaullism *sans* de Gaulle. In several respects the new party differed from the traditional conservative parties of the right. It appealed directly to a broad coalition of groups and classes, including a part of the working class. The party's leadership successfully built a membership that, according to claims, at one time reached several hundred thousand. Yet the membership's role was generally limited to appearing at mass meetings and assisting in propaganda efforts at election time. An important novelty was that the party's representatives in Parliament followed strict discipline in voting on policy. Electoral success increased with each contest until the landslide election, held after the *events of 1968*—the massive strikes and student demonstrations of May and June—enabled the Gaullists to hold a majority of seats in the National Assembly, a record never before attained under a republican regime in France.

For 16 years (from 1958 to 1974) both the presidency and the premiership were in Gaullist hands. In 1974, after the death of both Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou, with the election of Valéry Giscard-d'Estaing—a prominent conservative who was not a Gaullist—to the presidency (with the help of part of the Gaullist leadership), the party's status deteriorated and electoral support declined.

For a time, Jacques Chirac turned around the decline of the party by restructuring it and renaming it the Rally for the Republic (RPR). His career is typical of the young generation of French political leaders. A graduate of the ENA, he entered on a political rather than a bureaucratic career. He was elected to Parliament at 34 years of age and had occupied important Cabinet posts under Pompidou. After the elections of 1974, he transformed the old Gaullist party into the *Rally for the Republic (RPR)*.

The RPR was quite different from its Gaullist predecessors. Although Chirac frequently invoked Gaullism as his inspiration, he avoided the populist language that had served the movement at its beginnings. The RPR directed its appeal to a more restricted, well-defined constituency of the right, similar to the classic conservative clientele. Its electorate overrepresents older, wealthier voters, as well as farmers (see Table 6.2); its voters are most likely to define themselves as being on the right, anti-left, positive toward business and parochial schools,

TABLE 6.1 First Ballot of French Parliamentary Elections in the Fifth Republic and Seats Won in the National Assembly in Both Ballots[a] (voting in metropolitan France)

Party	1958 %	1958 Seats	1962 %	1962 Seats	1967 %	1967 Seats	1968 %	1968 Seats	1973 %	1973 Seats	1978 %	1978 Seats	1981 %	1981 Seats	1986[a] %	1986[a] Seats	1988 %	1988 Seats	1993 %	1993 Seats	1997 %	1997 Seats	2002 %	2002 Seats
Registered Voters (in millions)	27.2		27.5		28.3		28.3		29.9		34.4		35.5		36.6		37.9		37.0		39.2		41.0	
Abstentions (%)	22.9		31.3		19.1		19.9		18.7		16.6		29.1		21.5		34.3		31.0		32.0		35.6	
Communists (PCF)	19.1	10	21.8	41	22.5	73	20.0	34	21.2	73	20.5	86	16.2	44	9.7	35	11.3	27	9.1	24	10	37	4.8	21
Socialists (PS)	15.5	47	12.5	66	19.0 }	121 }	16.5 }	41	18.9	89	22.6	107	37.6 }	267	31.6	208	34.8	274	19.2 }	61	23.7	245	25.3 }	141
Left Radicals	—	—	—	—				8	1.5	12	2.1	10		14	3.0	2	1.1	2		8	1.5	13		8
Radicals	7.3	33	7.8 }	39 }	12.6 }	41 }	10.3 }	33 }	12.4 }	31 }														
Center Outside Government Majority											—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	33.3[f]	362[f]
Majority	22.1	118	9.6								—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
MRP	11.6	64	9.1	55	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
UDF (RI and other centrists in government majority)	—	—	4.4	36	37.7 }	42	43.65 }	61	10.6	77	21.4	119	19.2	63	42.0 }	129	18.5	130	18.8	207	14.8	109	4.9	22
Gaullists (RPR)	17.6	212	32.0	233		200		293	23.9	184	22.5	155	20.8	87		145	19.2	128	19.7	242	16.8	140	—	—
National Front (FN)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9.9	35	9.8	1	12.7	0	15.1	1	11.3	—
Others	6.8	0	2.8	17	8.2	10	9.5	16	11.5	24	10.9	14	6.2	16	6.6	23	5.3	15	20.5[b]	37[c]	18.7[d]	32[c]	16.3[g]	13

[a]The 1986 election was by proportional representation.
[b]Includes the three Green parties which received 10.9 percent of the vote.
[c]Includes 36 unaffiliated deputies of the right.
[d]Includes the Green parties vote of 6.3 percent, as well as votes for smaller movements of the right and the left.
[e]Includes eight ecologists, seven dissident Socialists, and other unaffiliated deputies.
[f]UMP (Union of the Presidential Majority—new party of center-right organized for 2002 legislative election.
[g]Includes ecologists, dissidents of the right and left, as well as the extreme right party—MNR.
Source: Official results from the Ministry of the Interior.

TABLE 6.2 Sociological Analysis of the Electorate in the First Ballot Legislative Elections of 2002 (percentage of category voting)

	PS/PC/Greens	UMP/UDF + Other Right	FN/MNR
Sex			
Men	38%	42%	13%
Women	40	43	11
Age			
18–24	40	39	6
25–34	45	26	16
35–49	49	35	11
50–64	35	49	13
65+	28	57	13
Profession			
Shopkeepers, craftsmen, and business	31	51	9
Executives, professionals, and intellectuals	43	48	3
Middle management	53	39	3
White collar	38	38	12
Workers	49	21	18
Inactive/retired	30	51	16
Level of Education			
No degree	33	46	16
Vocational degree	41	33	19
High School (academic)	39	43	7
Higher education	41	48	8
Do you feel that you are:			
Socially mobile	42	44	9
In social decline	34	46	16
Total	39	43	12

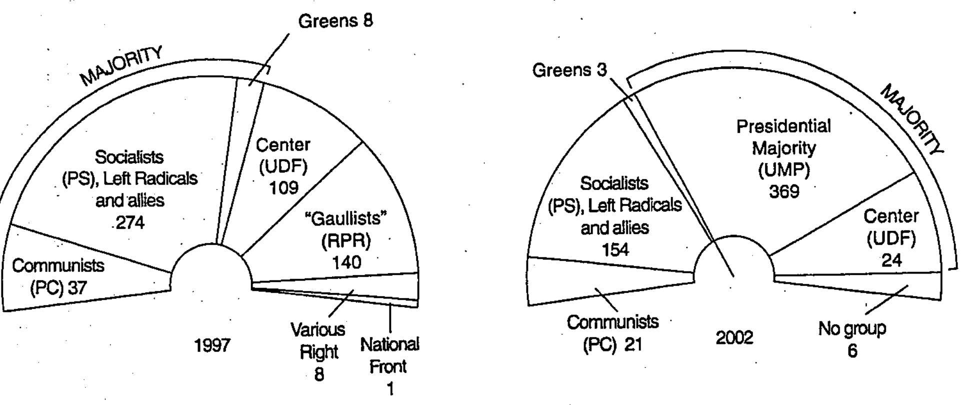
Source: Louis Harris/Libération Sondage postélectoral, June 10, 2002, p. 8.

more likely to vote for personality rather than ideas, and least supportive of a woman's right to abortion.

Neither as party leader, nor as unsuccessful presidential candidate running against Mitterrand in 1981 and 1988, nor as prime minister between 1986 and 1988 did Chirac show any of the earlier concerns of Gaullism for the role of the state in modernizing the economy and society. Instead, after presiding over a government that dubbed itself neoliberal and that engaged in a round of privatization of previously nationalized industries between 1986 and 1988, he set out to assure those who feared change. Nevertheless, the party's electoral level slumped after 1973, and in the 1980s its vote remained more or less stagnant. Even in the massive electoral victory for the right in 1993, when the conservative coalition gained 80 percent of the parliamentary seats, the RPR just edged out their conservative rivals with less than 20 percent of the vote in the first round of the elections. In 1997, its vote declined to 16.8 percent, less than two points more than the National Front.

Nevertheless, with an estimated 100,000 members in 1997 (relatively low by European standards), the RPR was the largest party in France.[29] By 2002, the RPR was a long way from the party once dominated

FIGURE 6.4 Political Representation in the National Assembly After the Elections of 1997 and 2002



vith a firm hand by Gaullist "barons," and defined by he organizing discourse of Gaullism. The victory of acques Chirac in the 1995 presidential elections hould have given the new president an opportunity o rebuild the RPR as a party of government. However, the seeming unending series of political crises afer the summer of 1995, and the disastrous losses in he June 1997 legislative elections, only encouraged and intensified the divisions within the party, and between the RPR and its partners. In 1999, Chirac lost control over the party, when his chosen candidate was defeated in an election for party president. Then, in the fall of 2000, Chirac's candidacy for reelection in 2002 seemed to be undermined by dramatic new evidence of massive corruption in the Paris party machine that directly implicated the president (and former mayor of Paris).

However, the unexpected match against Le Pen in the presidential race of 2002 gave both Chirac and the party a new lease on life. Chirac's massive victory in the second round of the presidential election created the basis for the organization of what became a new successor to the RPR—the *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, UMP* (originally called the Union for a Presidential Majority (Figure 6.4). The party includes deputies from the RPR, some from the UDF, and some from other small parties of the right. With more than 60 percent of the new assembly, UMP united the fragmented groups of the right behind the victorious president. However, within two years, the unity began to break down in the run-up to the regional elections of 2004, as the rump of the UDF insisted on maintaining its own lists in the first round of the elections.

THE UNION FOR FRENCH DEMOCRACY (UDF) Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's foremost concern was to prevent the center's exclusion from power in the Gaullist republic. His small party, the Parti Républicain, the Republican Party (PR), was the typical party, or rather non-party, of French conservatism. It came into existence in 1962, when Giscard and a few other conservative deputies opposed de Gaulle's strictures against European unity and his referendum on direct elections for the presidency. From that time on, the group provided a small complement for the majority in Parliament. Giscard himself, a scion of families long prominent in business, banking, and public service, was finance minister under both de Gaulle and Pompidou before his election to the presidency in 1974. His party never aspired to be a mass party but rather derived its political strength from its representatives in Parliament, many of whom moved in and out of Cabinet posts, and from local leaders who occupied fairly important posts in municipal and departmental councils.

In order to increase the weight of the PR when Chirac was giving a new elan to Gaullism, Giscard, as President of the Republic, chose the way that parties of the right and center have always found opportune: a heterogeneous alliance among groups and personalities organized to support the president in anticipation of the 1978 legislative elections. The result was the *Union for French Democracy (UDF)*, which included, in addition to Giscard's Republicans, remnants of a Catholic party (CDS), the once militant anti-Catholic Radicals, and some former Socialists. The ideological battles of the past within the center had become meaningless, but the parties that formed the UDF found it inopportune to abandon their own weak organizational structures. It is estimated that all of the parties of the UDF combined had no more than 38,000 members in 1995.

Since 1981, the UDF and the RPR had generally cooperated in elections at all levels. However, as the National Front gained in electoral support after 1983, RPR and UDF were compelled to present more and more joint candidates in the first round of parliamentary elections to avoid being defeated by the FN. Nevertheless, even combined, they were incapable of increasing the percentage of their vote beyond 45 percent, even though they won majorities in Parliament in 1986, 1993, and 2002. The two governments organized after the election of Jacques Chirac (in 1995) under Prime Minister *Alain Juppé* were double coalitions: first coalitions of factions within the RPR and the UDF, then coalitions between RPR and UDF. Thus the representatives of the UDF exercised considerable influence over the policymaking process, both as members of the cabinet and as chairs of three of the six permanent committees of the National Assembly. The new government in 2002 was also a double coalition. Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin is a longtime member of UDF, but with the integration of most of the UDF deputies into the UMP, the UDF as a party appears to have lost most of its independent influence.

The divisions within the UDF deepened after both the 1997 legislative elections, when the UDF became the third party of the right in voter support (just behind the National Front), and the 1998 regional elections, when five (UDF) regional parties accepted the support of the *National Front*. The party split two months later. The liberal (conservative in U.S. terms) minority of the deputies formed a new parliamentary group, Démocratie Libérale (DL, Liberal Democracy), while the RPR, UDF, and DL joined in a loose intergroup in the National Assembly, which they called *L'Alliance* (which has now been restructured into UMP). Only 7 percent of the electorate supported the UDF candidate in the presidential elections in 2002, François Bayrou. In the regional elections of 2004, the party lists attracted a disappointing 8.5 percent of the vote.

THE NATIONAL FRONT Divisions within the right result in part from different reactions to the rise of the *National Front (FN)* during the Mitterrand presidency. Until the 1980s, the FN, founded by *Jean-Marie Le Pen* in 1972, was one of a number of relatively obscure parties of the far right. In none of the elections before 1983 did FN attract more than 1 percent of the national vote. In the 1984 elections for the European Parliament, the National Front built on support in local elections the year before and attracted almost 10 percent of the vote, to the consternation of the established parties of the right and the left.

In the parliamentary elections of 1986 the FN again won almost 10 percent (about 2.7 million votes) of the total vote (and in metropolitan France, more votes than the Communists) and established itself as a substantial political force. Two-thirds of these votes came from voters who previously supported established parties of the right, but the remainder came from some former left voters (mostly Socialists) or from new voters and former abstainers. Profiting from the change to proportional representation elections in 1986, which Mitterrand had introduced partly in order to divide the right, 35 FN deputies entered Parliament. In the 1993 legislative elections, National Front candidates attracted almost 13 percent of the vote in the first round. Because the electoral system was then based on single-member districts, the party elected no deputies. In the 1997 legislative elections, with over 15 percent

of the vote, FN became the second conservative party in France and sent a record number of candidates into the second round. However, only one of these candidates was elected.

Nevertheless, FN seemed well on its way to developing a network of local bases. In 1992, the right depended on the party for its majority in 14 out of 22 regions. In 1998 this dependency was translated into a political breakthrough for the National Front when five UDF regional leaders formally accepted FN support to maintain their regional presidencies. In 1995, for the first time FN won municipal elections in three cities and gained some representation in almost half of the larger towns in France. It gained one additional city in a special election in 1997. However this series of breakthroughs brought to a head a growing rivalry between party leader Le Pen and the architect of the party organization, Bruno Mégret, whose coalition strategy was successful in the 1998 regional elections. By the end of 1998, Mégret and his supporters were expelled from the party. In 1999, the two factions became two separate parties, reducing the influence and electoral strength of both. Therefore, the ability of Jean-Marie Le Pen to come in second, with a 17 percent of the vote (and more votes than he had ever attracted) in the first round of the presidential elections of 2002, was a considerable shock to the political system. The FN results in the legislative elections two months later (11 percent) were far lower, but a confirmation that the party—and not simply Le Pen—remained a political force.

The National Front is often compared to a shopkeeper movement that attracted 2.5 million votes in the legislative elections of 1956 (the Poujadist movement) and then faded from the scene.[30] But the FN draws its electoral and organizational support from big-city, rather than small-town, France, and its supporters come more from transfers from the right than had those of Poujade. In addition, the National Front is far more successful than the Poujadist movement in building a strong organizational network. Because of changes in the electoral system, FN has never had more than one deputy in the National Assembly after 1988, but there are still altogether hundreds of elected representatives on the regional, departmental, and local levels (as well as in the European Parliament). On the eve of the 1998 split, it was estimated that the National Front had 50,000 members (compared with 10,000 in 1985).

Although the influence of the FN has waned since 1998, the party was seemingly given new life by Le Pen's success in 2002, generally confirmed by the results of the regional and European parliamentary elections in 2004. In addition, the process of party emergence and construction over a 15-year period has affected voters of all parties, especially those who would normally vote for the right and young workers who had formerly been mobilized by the now weakened French Communist Party (see following discussion). Approval of the ideas favored by the FN increased dramatically among *all* voters in the 1980s, and, since mid-1999, has increased again. Moreover, the dynamics of party competition systematically force other political parties to place FN issues high on their political agenda.

Although the right now appears to be united behind the president in the UMP alliance, this alliance is a strategic umbrella that papers over the growing fragmentation of party elites. In fact, this tendency toward fragmentation favors the continued influence of the National Front.

The Left

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

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

The emergence of the French Communist Party in 1920 effectively deprived the Socialists of core working-class support. Most of the Socialists' working-class following was concentrated in a few regions of traditional strength, such as the industrial north and urban agglomeration in the center. However, the party had some strongholds elsewhere—among the wine-growers of the south, devotees of republican ideals, of anticlericalism, and of producers' cooperatives. The proportion of civil servants, especially teachers, and of people living on fixed income has been far higher among Socialist voters than in the population at large. This support made for a stable but not particularly dynamic following.

The party encountered considerable difficulties under the changed conditions in the Fifth Republic. After several false starts, the old party dissolved and a new Socialist Party was organized in the summer of 1969, which had considerable success in attracting new members and in reversing its electoral decline. Incipient public disenchantment with conservative governments and new conservative leadership combined with the strong leadership of François Mitterrand to bring about this reversal in Socialist fortunes. Compared with the past, the party membership reached respectable heights in the 1980s (about 180,000 by 1983), though it was still not comparable to the large labor parties of Britain and the continent. In terms of social origin the new membership came predominantly from the salaried middle classes, the professions, the civil service, and especially the teaching profession. Workers rallied to the PS in large numbers in the 1970s, but they were still represented rather sparsely in the party's leadership. But the PS did in the 1970s what other European Socialist parties were unable to do: It attracted leaders of some of the new social movements that emerged in the late 1960s, among them ecologists and regionalists, as well as leaders of small parties of the non-Communist left.[31]

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

Indeed, by most measures, the Socialist Party was to the 1980s what Gaullists were to the 1960s: a party of government with broad support among most social groups throughout the country (see again Table 6.2). When reelected for a second seven-year term in 1988, Mitterrand carried 77 of the 96 departments of metropolitan France. The Socialists remained strong in most of their areas of traditional geographic strength, and they made inroads in traditionally conservative areas in the west and east of the country. One consequence of this nationalization of Socialist electoral strength, however, was that the party's legislative majority depended on constituencies where voter support was far more conditional. In the legislative elections of 1993 the PS lost a third of its electorate compared with 1988, but far more than that in areas outside of its traditional bastions.

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

Recent studies reveal, however, that the basis of loyalty of large numbers of voters, especially younger voters, was evolving during the 1980s. Voter loyalty became more related to individual attitudes toward specific issues than to collective loyalties based on group or class. Thus the rise of unemployment rates, the growing sense among even Socialist voters that party leadership was worn out, and the

mobilization of large numbers of traditional Socialist voters against the government during the campaign for the Maastricht referendum all undermined Socialist support between 1992 and 1994.

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

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

Although party leader Jospin and his colleagues were clearly unprepared for the short campaign, they benefited from the rapidly deteriorating popularity and the lack of efficacy of Chirac's majority. After electoral agreements with the Communists and the Greens for the second round, Jospin put together a 31-seat majority (called the *plural left*), was named prime minister, and formed the first cohabitation government of the left in June 1997. The government benefited from declining unemployment and passed a set of important but controversial reforms, including a 35-hour workweek, domestic partnership legislation, and a constitutional amendment requiring parity for women candidacies for elective office. Under pressure from the European Union, the government also passed legislation establishing a presumption of innocence for those accused in criminal cases, and further limited the French practice of multiple office-holding (*cumul des mandats*). Finally, there were major structural reforms: the presidential term was reduced to five years (with the agreement of the president), and a process began to radically alter the relationship between Corsica and the French state.

Then, with breathtaking rapidity in September 2000, the government lost what appeared to be unusually secure footing. As a result of widespread demonstrations in the streets against rising oil prices and dramatic corruption charges against the RPR that spread to the Socialist and Communist parties, the popularity of Jospin fell to an historic low for the Fifth Republic.

Nevertheless, the elimination of Jospin in the first round of the 2002 presidential elections (by less than 1 percent) was entirely unexpected, and largely resulted from the defection of PS voters to more marginal candidates of the left alliance. Jospin quickly resigned as party leader, leaving the PS without effective leadership. This resulted in the defeat of the left in the legislative elections that followed, as PS representation was cut in half.

However, following a well-established rhythm under the Fifth Republic, the Socialists—together with their allies on the left—rebounded two years later, and swept the regional elections in 2004. They won control of all but one of the 22 regional governments in France. They accomplished this impressive victory without strong leadership at the national level. The victory represented profound public disappointment with—and opposition to—the right, which had used the majority it had gained in 2002 to push through cuts in welfare state benefits.

THE COMMUNISTS Until the late 1970s *le Parti Communist Français*, the *French Communist Party (PCF)*, was a major force in French politics. This was despite the fact that, except for a short interlude after the war (1944–1947), the party had been excluded since its beginning in 1920 from any participation in the national government. During most of the Fourth Republic, it received more electoral support than any other single party (with an average of just over 25 percent of the electorate). During the Fifth Republic, the party remained, until 1978, electorally dominant on the left, although it trailed the Gaullists on the right (see Table 6.1). In addition to its successes in national elections, the party commanded significant strength at the local level until the early 1980s. Between 1977 and 1983, Communist mayors governed in about 1,500 towns in France, with a total population of about 10 million people.

Over several decades, the party's very existence constantly impinged nationally, as well as locally, on the rules of the political game and thereby on the system itself. The Communists defined (more or less) what left meant, while the Socialists debated the acceptability of that definition. For the parties of the right, the hegemony of the PCF provided an issue (anti-communism) around which they could unite and on which they could attack both the Socialists and the Communists.

The seemingly impressive edifice of the Communists and of its numerous organizations of sympathizers was badly shaken, first by the rejuvenation of the PS under Mitterrand's leadership in the 1970s, and then by the collapse of international communism and the Soviet Union in the 1980s. The association of the French Communist Party with the international communist movement dominated by the Soviet Union had sharply divided communists from socialists in France since 1920, but it provided an important part of the revolutionary identity of the party, especially for its most devoted militants. The international movement also provided considerable financial support for the party organization and its activities, support that disappeared after 1989.

The PCF fielded its leader *Georges Marchais* as a candidate in the first ballot of the presidential election of 1981 with disastrous results: With 15 percent of the vote, the PCF lost one-fourth of its electorate. In the parliamentary elections that followed, the number of its deputies was cut in half.

It turned out that the party's defeats in 1981 were only the beginning of a tailspin of electoral decline.[32] The voters who left the party in 1981 never came back.

Since the legislative elections of 1993, the party has responded to these pressures. In 1994 the PCF revised its statutes to eliminate the principle of democratic centralism and to accept the presence of dissenting factions within the party. Georges Marchais, party leader since 1972, stepped down in favor of *Robert Hue*. Younger, and seemingly more open, Hue apologized to those who were forced out of the party in the past and promoted dialogue and discussion. Nevertheless, the dissidents have not returned, and their numbers have continued to grow.

By 2002, its presidential candidate attracted a mere 3.4 percent of the vote, and just 4 percent of the working-class vote. In the legislative elections, with 4.7 percent of the vote nationally, the PCF was clearly marginal to the left. To win elections, it has grown increasingly dependent on continued (and often difficult) cooperation with the Socialists, as well as on the personal popularity of some of its long-established mayors. Twenty-one of the 37 Communist deputies elected in 1997 were mayors, and others were municipal council members. With their (ever-shrinking) local bases, and the support of PS, the Communists managed to elect 21 deputies in 2002, just enough to maintain their own parliamentary group.

Between 1979 and 1987 the party lost at least 40 percent of its membership. Although claimed membership remains large by French standards, 275,000 according to 1996 party documents—but probably closer to 200,000—the PCF remains the largest mass membership party in the country. However, its organization is increasingly divided, ineffective, and challenged by successive waves of dissidence from within.

What does the marginalization of the PCF mean for the French party system? It has healed the division that had enfeebled the left since the split of the Socialist Party in 1920, in the wake of the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia. But a price has been paid: The political representation of the French working class has been weakened. Although the fortunes of the PCF have fallen in inverse relation to the rise of the electoral strength of the PS, the proportion of workers actually voting for both parties combined has declined by 30 percent since the 1970s. Perhaps most important, it appears that many young workers, who previously would have been mobilized by Communist militants, are now being mobilized to vote for the National Front.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND PATTERNS OF VOTING

Although France is a unitary state, elections are held with considerable frequency at every territorial level. Councilors are elected for each of the more than 36,000 communes in France, for each of the 100 departments (counties), and for each of the 22 regions. Deputies to the National Assembly are elected at least once every five years, and the president of the Republic is elected (or reelected) at least once every seven years (every five years after 2002). In addition, there are elections for French representatives to the European Parliament every five years since 1979.

France was the first European country to enfranchise a mass electorate, and France was also the first European country to demonstrate that a mass electorate did not preclude the possibility of authoritarian government. The electoral law of 1848 enfranchised all male citizens over the age of 21, but within five years this same mass electorate had ratified Louis Napoléon's coup d'état and his establishment of the Second Empire. Rather than restrict the electorate, Napoléon perfected new modern techniques for manipulating a mass electorate by gerrymandering districts, skillfully using public works as patronage for official candidates, and exerting pressure through the administrative hierarchy.

From the Second Empire to the end of World War II, the size of the electorate remained more or less stable, but it suddenly more than doubled when women 21 years of age and older were granted the vote in 1944. After the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1974, 2.5 million voters were added to the rolls. By 2002, there were more than 40 million voters in France.

Electoral Participation and Abstention

Voting participation in elections of the Fifth Republic has undergone a significant change and fluctuates far more than during previous republics. Abstention tends to be highest in referendums and European elections, and lowest in presidential contests, with other elections falling somewhere in between (see Table 6.1). In 2002, a new record was set for abstention in a presidential election, when 27.9 percent of the registered voters stayed home.[33] During the 1980s, the normal level of abstention in legislative elections increased substantially, and remains high. In the 2002 legislative election, an abstention rate of 35.6 percent set a record for legislative elections for any of the French republics. The elections for the European Parliament always attract relatively few voters, but in 2004 more than 57 percent of the registered voters stayed home (slightly more than in 1999). For referendums, a new record was set in 2000: almost 70 percent of the registered voters chose not to vote in a (successful) referendum to reduce the presidential term from seven to five years (after the elections of 2002).

Rising abstention seems linked to a larger phenomenon of change in the party system. Since the late 1970s, voters' confidence in all parties has declined, and the highest abstention rates in 2002 were among those voters who expressed no preference between parties of the right and left. Nevertheless, in contrast with the United States, among the 90 percent of the electorate that is registered to vote, individual abstention appears to be cyclical and there are few permanent abstainers.[34] In this sense, it is possible to see abstention in an election as a political choice (42 percent of them in 2002 said that they abstained because they had no confidence in politicians).[35] As in other countries, the least educated, the lowest income groups, and the youngest and oldest age groups vote less frequently.

Voting in Parliamentary Elections

Since the early days of the Third Republic, France has experimented with a great number of electoral systems and devices without obtaining more satisfactory results in terms of government coherence. The stability of the Fifth Republic cannot be attributed to the method of electing National Assembly deputies, for the system is essentially the same one used during the most troubled years of the Third Republic. As in the United States, electoral districts (577) are represented by a single deputy who is selected through two rounds of elections. On the first election day, candidates who obtain a majority of all votes cast are elected to parliament; this is a relatively rare occurrence because of the abundance of candidates. Candidates who obtain support of less than 12.5 percent of the registered voters are dropped from the "second round" a week later. Other candidates voluntarily withdraw in favor of a better-placed candidate close to their party on the political spectrum. For instance, pre-election agreements between Communists and Socialists (and, more recently, the Greens) usually lead to the weaker candidate withdrawing after the first round, if both survive. Similar arrangements have existed between the Rally for the Republic (RPR) and the Union for French Democracy (UDF). Although more recently, the two conservative parties have not competed in the same district even on the first round, and have presented a unified candidate as the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP). As a result, generally three (or at most four) candidates face each other in the second round, in which a plurality of votes ensures election.

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

The National Front is more or less isolated from coalition arrangements with the parties of the center-right in national elections (though less at the subnational level). Consequently, in 2002, with electoral support of 11.1 percent, none of the Front candidates was finally elected. In comparison, the Communist Party benefited from an electoral agreement with the Socialists: with a mere 4.7 percent of the vote, 21 of their candidates were elected. Not surprisingly, the leading party (or coalition of parties) generally ends up with a considerably larger number of seats than is justified by its share in the popular vote.

Voting in Referendums

Between 1958 and 1969 the French electorate voted five times on referendums (see Table 6.3). In 1958 a vote against the new constitution might have involved the country in a civil war, which it had narrowly escaped a few months earlier. The two referendums that followed endorsed the peace settlement in the Algerian War. In 1962, hardly four years after he had enacted by referendum his "own" constitution, General de Gaulle asked the electorate to endorse a constitutional amendment of great significance: to elect the president of the Republic by direct popular suffrage. Favorable attitudes toward the referendum and the popular election of the president, however, did not prevent the electorate from voting down another proposal submitted by de Gaulle in 1969, thereby provoking his resignation.

Since 1969 there have been only four referendums. President Georges Pompidou called a referendum for the admission of Britain to the Common Market. (For the results of referendums and presidential elections between 1958 and 2002, see Table 6.3.) The first referendum during the Mitterrand period, in 1988, dealt with approval for an accord between warring parties on the future of New Caledonia; the referendum was a condition of the agreement. Sixty-three percent of the voters stayed home, but the accord was approved. The electorate was far more extensively mobilized when the question of ratifying the so-called *Maastricht Treaty* on the European Union was submitted to referendum in September 1992, and the results were far more significant for the future of French political life (see Box 6.2). The 2000 referendum—on reduction of the presidential term from seven to five years—was overwhelmingly approved (by 73 percent of those who voted), but the referendum was most notable for the record number of abstentions—almost 70 percent. Finally, 55 percent of those who voted rejected the EU constitutional treaty in May 2005. Public opinion polls indicate that the referendum as a form of public participation is regarded favorably by the electorate. It ranked just behind the popularly elected presidency and the Constitutional Council, among the most highly approved institutional innovations of the Fifth Republic. In one of its first moves, the new government under President Jacques Chirac in 1995 passed a constitutional amendment that expanded the use of the referendum in the areas of social and economic policy.

Voting in Presidential Elections

Presidential elections by direct popular suffrage are for French voters the most important expressions of the general will. After the presidential elections of 1965, it became evident that French voters derived great satisfaction from knowing that, unlike past parliamentary elections, national and not parochial alignments were at stake, and that they were invited

TABLE 6.3 French Referendums (R) and Second Ballots of Presidential Elections (P), 1958–2002 (Voting in Metropolitan France)

Date	Registered Voters (millions)	Abstentions (percentage registered)	"Yes" Votes / Votes for Winning Candidate (percentage registered)	"Yes" Votes / Votes for Winning Candidate (percentage cast)	Winner	"No" Votes / Votes for Losing Candidate (percentage registered)	"No" Votes / Votes for Losing Candidate (percentage cast)	Loser
9/28/58(R)	26.6	15.1	66.4	79.2		17.4	20.7	
1/8/61(R)	27.2	23.5	55.9	75.3		18.4	24.7	
4/8/62(R)	27.0	24.4	64.9	90.7		6.6	9.3	
10/28/62(R)	27.6	22.7	46.4	61.7		28.8	38.2	
12/19/65(P)	28.2	15.4	44.8	54.5	de Gaulle	37.4	45.5	Mitterrand
4/18/69(R)	28.7	19.4	36.7	46.7		41.6	53.2	
6/15/69(P)	28.8	30.9	37.2	57.5	Pompidou	27.4	42.4	Poher
4/23/72(R)	29.1	39.5	36.1	67.7		17.2	32.3	
5/19/74(P)	29.8	12.1	43.9	50.7	Giscard d'Estaing	42.8	49.3	Mitterrand
5/10/81(P)	35.5	13.6	43.8	52.2	Mitterrand	40.1	47.8	Giscard d'Estaing
5/8/88(P)	38.2	15.9	43.8	54.0	Mitterrand	37.3	46.0	Chirac
11/6/88(R)	37.8	63.0	26.1	80.0		6.5	20.0	
9/20/92(R)	37.1	28.9	34.9	50.8		33.8	49.2	
5/7/95(P)	39.9	20.1	39.5	52.6	Chirac	35.6	47.4	Jospin
9/24/00(R)	39.6	69.7	18.6	73.2		6.8	26.8	
6/5/02(P)	41.2	20.3	62.0	82.2	Chirac	13.4	17.8	Le Pen
05/29/05 (R)	41.3	30.3	30.7	45.1		37.3	54.9	

Source: Official results from the Ministry of the Interior.

Box 6.2 French Parties and the Maastricht Referendum of 1992

With the support of the president of the Republic, the leaders of the Socialist Party, most (but not all) of the leaders of the conservative opposition, as well as two-thirds of the electorate before the summer, the proposition approving of the treaty to establish a European Union, with European citizenship and (eventually) a single European currency, was expected to achieve an impressive majority in the September referendum. It was also expected to give a boost of support for the Socialist president and government in anticipation of the 1993 legislative elections. The results were far different. The proposed treaty split the electorates of each of the major political parties in unanticipated ways and the summer campaign proved particularly bitter. The Gaullist opposition to the treaty was partly a revolt against the leadership of Jacques Chirac, and it was supported by a clear majority of RPR deputies and voters. The campaign of the Centrist opponents was also an attack against their leader, former president Giscard d'Estaing, but it did not gain widespread support. Within the left, the Communists proved to be weak but bitter opponents to the approval of the treaty, and Socialist leaders less than enthusiastic proponents. The National Front was united in its opposition. In the end, the treaty was approved on September 20 by a slim majority of the voters, but the results were a political disaster for those who won. For each of the major parties, their "natural" electorates split badly, and the results—in which opposition to the treaty was concentrated among the less privileged voters and in the poorest regions of the country—were widely viewed as a broad rejection of established political leadership.*

*On the referendum, see Andrew Appleton, "The Maastricht Referendum and the Party System," in Keeler and Schain, eds., *Chirac's Challenge*.

to pronounce themselves effectively on such issues. The traditional and once deeply rooted attitude that the only useful vote was against the government no longer made sense when almost everybody knew that the task was to elect an executive endowed with strong powers for seven years. Accordingly, turnout in presidential elections, with one exception, has been the highest of all elections.

The nomination procedures for presidential candidates make it very easy to put a candidate on the first ballot, far easier than in presidential primaries in the United States. So far, however, no presidential candidate, not even de Gaulle in 1965, has obtained the absolute majority needed to ensure election on the first ballot. In runoffs, held two weeks after the first ballot, only the two most successful candidates face each other. All serious candidates are backed by a party or a coalition of parties, the provisions of the law notwithstanding. Nevertheless, with a record number of candidates in 2002 (16), this proposition was stretched to the limit.

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

Informal campaigns, however, are long and arduous. The fixed term of the French presidency means that, unless the president dies or resigns, there are no snap elections for the chief executive as there are from time to time in Britain and Germany. As a result, even in the absence of primaries, the informal campaign begins to get quite intense years before the election. In many ways, the presidential campaign of 2002 began well before the new millennium.

Just as in the United States, electoral coalitions that elect a president are different from those that secure a legislative majority for a government. This means that any candidate for the presidency who owes his nomination to his position as party leader must appeal to an audience broader than a single party. Once elected, the candidate seeks to establish political distance from his party origins. François Mitterrand was the first president in the history of

Box 6.3 The Accidental President

On May 5, 2002, Jacques Chirac was reelected president of France by the largest majority ever obtained by a presidential candidate in a popular election during the Fifth Republic. Yet, until the results of the first round of the presidential elections were tabulated two weeks before, this victory was wholly unexpected. Chirac's first term was marked first by the largest strike movement since 1968, then by an ill-conceived decision to call early legislative elections in 1997 at a time when he controlled an 80 percent majority in the National Assembly. The victory of the left resulted in the installation of a Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin, and a new round of cohabitation. After 1997 his leadership of the RPR was challenged, first by fragmentation then by loss of control of the party machine. This was followed by revelations of dramatic new evidence of massive corruption in the Paris party machine that directly implicated the president (the former mayor of Paris). He appeared to be headed for likely defeat in 2002.

Then came the divine surprise of April 2002. With the worst result of any outgoing president in the first round (less than 20 percent of the vote), he edged out his Socialist rival, Lionel Jospin; but Jospin himself was edged out by the resurgent candidate of the extreme right, Jean-Marie Le Pen. With 16 candidates in the first round, Le Pen's considerable achievement was in part an accident of the electoral system, and the inability of voters of the left to anticipate the consequences of their dispersed votes. As a result, the shocked and leaderless left (Jospin resigned from political life) rallied to the support of Chirac to block Le Pen. Confronted with an unhappy choice between one candidate who had been accused of corruption, and a candidate of the extreme right, more than 82 percent of the electorate voted for the former.

the Fifth Republic to have been elected twice in popular elections. Jacques Chirac has now accomplished this same achievement. (See Box 6.3)

Although the 2002 presidential election deeply divided all of the major parties, the process of coalition building around presidential elections has probably been the key element in political party consolidation and in the development of party coalitions since 1968. The prize of the presidency is so significant that it has preoccupied the parties of both the right and the left since the 1960s and influences their organization, their tactics, and their relations with one another.

POLICY PROCESSES

The Executive

As we have seen, the French constitution has a two-headed executive: As in other parliamentary regimes, the prime minister presides over the government but unlike other parliamentary regimes, the president is far from being a figurehead. It was widely predicted that such an arrangement would necessarily lead to frequent political crises. During the first 28 years of the Fifth Republic, four presidents, and each of the prime ministers who have served under them, left no doubt that the executive had only one head, the president (see again Figure 6.1).

The exercise of presidential powers in all their fullness was made possible not so much by the constitutional text as by a political fact: Between 1958 and 1986 the president and prime minister derived their legitimacy from the same Gaullist majority in the electorate—the president by direct popular elections, the prime minister by the support of a majority of deputies in the National Assembly. In 1981 the electorate shifted its allegiance from the right to the left, yet for the ensuing five years the president and Parliament were still on the same side of the political divide. The long years of political affinity between the holders of the two offices solidified and amplified presidential powers and shaped constitutional practices in ways that appear to have a lasting impact. From the very beginning of the Fifth Republic, the president not only *formally appoints* the prime minister proposed to him to Parliament (as the presidents of the previous republics had also done, and as the queen of England does), but he also *chooses* the prime minister and the other Cabinet ministers. In some cases the president has also dismissed a prime minister who was clearly enjoying the continuing confidence of a majority in Parliament.

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

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

Regardless of the political circumstances (see following discussion), weekly meetings of the Cabinet always are chaired by the president and are officially called the *Council of Ministers*. They are sometimes a forum for deliberation and confrontation of different points of view, and Cabinet decisions and decrees officially emanate from the council, but in fact real decisions are made elsewhere.

The prime minister, in relation to Cabinet colleagues, is more than first among equals. Among his or her many functions is the harnessing of a parliamentary majority for presidential policies, since according to the constitution the government must resign when a majority in Parliament adopts a motion of censure or rejects the governmental program. This provision distinguishes France from a truly presidential regime such as the United States or Mexico.

The relationship between president and prime minister, however, has operated quite differently during the periods of so-called cohabitation: from 1986 to 1988; between 1993 and 1995 a conservative majority controlled Parliament and the president was a Socialist; and between 1997 and 2002, the left held a parliamentary majority and the president was from a conservative party. Without claiming any domain exclusively as his own, the president (Mitterrand in the first two cases, and Chirac from 1997 to 2002) continued to occupy the foreground in foreign and military affairs, in accordance with his interpretation of his mandate under the constitution. The prime minister became the effective leader of the executive and pursued government objectives, but avoided interfering with presidential prerogatives.

In part because of the experiences of cohabitation, the role of the presidency is now less imposing than it had been before 1986. Even during the interlude of Socialist government between 1988 and 1993, the Socialist prime minister was largely responsible for the main options that were slowly developed for governmental action, with the president setting the limits and the tone. Thus, by the 1990s, the relationship between the president and prime minister was more complicated than during the earlier period of the Fifth Republic, and varied according to the political circumstances in which each had assumed office.

Since the early days of the de Gaulle administration, the office of the chief of state is organized to maximize the ability of the president to initiate, elaborate, and frequently execute policy. In terms of function, the staff at the Elysée Palace, the French White House, composed of a general secretariat and the presidential staff, is somewhat similar to the Executive Office of the U.S. president. Yet it is much smaller, comprising only 40 to 50 persons, with an additional support staff of several hundred people.

As the president's eyes and ears, his staff members are indispensable for the exercise of presidential powers. They are in constant contact not only with the prime minister's collaborators but also directly with individual ministries. Through these contacts the president can initiate, impede, interfere, and assure himself that presidential policies are followed.

The prime minister has a parallel network for developing and implementing policy decisions. The most important method are the so-called interministerial meetings, regular gatherings of high civil

servants attached to various ministries. The frequency of these sessions, chaired by a member of the prime minister's personal staff, reflects the growing centralization of administrative and decision-making authority within the office of the prime minister, and the growing importance of the prime minister's policy network in everyday policymaking within the executive.

As we have seen, two different patterns exist for the sharing of executive power. When the presidential and parliamentary majorities are identical (as was the case in 1962–1986, 1988–1993, 1995, 1997, and 2002–), the prime minister is clearly subordinate to the president.[36] Even in this case, however, the president's power is always limited by the fact that he does not control the administrative machinery directly and must work through the prime minister's office and the ministries. Cooperation between the two is thus essential for effective government. Between 1974 and 1981, and again from 1988 to 1993, the prime minister's power was further enhanced by a very narrow majority in the National Assembly, giving him the opportunity to act as a legislative coalition-builder for the executive. Under conditions of cohabitation, the prime minister clearly gains dominant authority at the expense of the president. The power to set the political agenda and to command within the executive is largely transferred to the prime minister. But the president retains the power to bargain, based on his prerogatives to make appointments, to sign ordinances, and to participate in decisions on defense and foreign policy.

Parliament

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

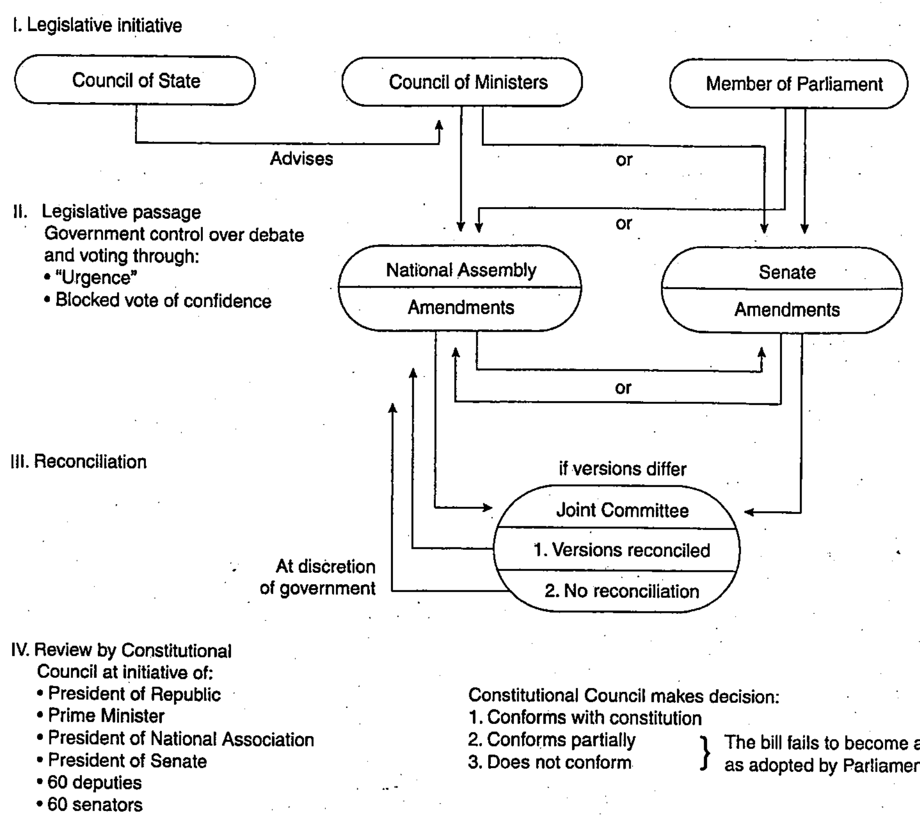
Despite restrictions on parliamentary activity, the legislative output of the parliaments in the Fifth Republic is quite respectable. The average of only 98 laws per year enacted during the first 35 years of the Fifth Republic (125 per year during the reform period between 1981 and 1986, and down to 72 per year since 1997) is much lower than that during the Fourth Republic. However, it is double the British average for the first 35 years after World War II. Although either the government or Parliament may propose bills, almost all legislation is proposed by the government. The government effectively controls the proceedings in both houses and can require priority for those bills that it wishes to see adopted (see Figure 6.5). Article 44 of the constitution empowers the government to force Parliament by the so-called blocked vote to accept a bill in its entirety with only the amendments agreed to by the government. In recent years the blocked vote is generally used to maintain discipline within the majority, rather than to impose the will of the executive over a chaotic Parliament. Its use has become an index of conflict within the governing party or coalition.[37] After 1986, the conservative government of Jacques Chirac and the Socialist governments of Cresson, Rocard, and Bérégovoy were all tempted to use the blocked vote more often and for the same reason: to make up for their slim majority, and hence their weak support in the National Assembly. For the Jospin government, the blocked vote was a useful tool to maintain a sometimes raucous plural coalition.

Article 38 invites Parliament to abandon "for a limited time" its legislative function to the government if the government wishes to act as legislator "for the implementation of its program." Once Parliament votes a broad enabling law, the government enacts legislation by way of so-called *ordinances*. The government used this possibility of executive lawmaking 22 times between 1958 and 1986, and often for important legislation, sometimes simply to expedite the legislative process. The use of enabling laws is now limited by decisions of the Constitutional Council, which requires that the enabling act spell out the limits of executive lawmaking with some precision.

Another constitutional provision gives the government a unique tool to ensure parliamentary support for any bill that it introduces. According to Article 49, Section 3, the prime minister may pledge the "government's responsibility" on any bill (or section of a bill) submitted to the National Assembly. In such a case, the bill is automatically "considered as adopted," without further vote, unless the deputies succeed in a *motion of censure* against the government according to the strict requirements discussed earlier. The success of this motion would likely result in new elections, but so far the threat of having to face new elections has always put sufficient pressure on the incumbent deputies not to support a motion of censure. As a consequence, whenever the government pledges its responsibility to a bill it introduced, the bill has become law without any parliamentary vote.

Earlier in the Fifth Republic, little use was made of this provision. Between 1981 and 1986, the governments of the left used it for reasons of expediency. It permitted them to enact important legislation quickly, without laying bare conflicts within the ranks of the governing majority. After 1986, governments of both the right and left resorted to this procedure with considerable frequency when they needed to overcome the precariousness of their

FIGURE 6.5 How a Bill Becomes a Law



majorities in Parliament. During the five years between 1988 and 1993, prime ministers engaged the responsibility of their governments 39 times, 9 times each year in 1990 and 1991 alone.

Between June 1997 and the election of a new parliament in 2002, this procedure was not used. This method virtually excludes Parliament from meaningful participation in the legislative process, and is now a permanent, though variable, fixture of governance. The government used it to adopt some of the most important pieces of legislation: France's nuclear strike force, nationalization under the Socialists, and privatization under the conservatives, as well as annual budgets, military planning laws, social security legislation, economic plans—all have become law in this manner.

Some devices for enhancing the role of Parliament, however, are somewhat more effective over the years. In the 1970s, the National Assembly made room for a weekly session devoted to a question period that is similar to the British (and German) version. Two days a week, the party groups select and submit a dozen or more written questions an hour in advance, in rough proportion to membership of each group, and then the relevant minister answers them. The presence of television cameras in the chamber (since 1974) creates additional public interest, and records the dialogue between the government representatives and the deputies.

By using its power to amend, Parliament has vastly expanded its role in the legislative process during the past decades. During the 1980s, proposed amendments averaged almost 5,000 a year. Since 1990, however, this average has more than doubled, which coincides with the doubling of hours devoted to legislative debate each year. About two-thirds of the amendments that are eventually adopted (33 percent of those proposed in 1997–2002) are proposed by parliamentary committees working with the government. Thus committees help shape legislation, and governments have all but abandoned their constitutionally guaranteed prerogative to declare amendments out of order.[38] The long parliamentary session introduced in 1995 has enhanced the role of committee leaders in the legislative process, and will probably increase the bargaining power of the president of the National Assembly.

Finally, the role of Parliament is strengthened by the general support that French citizens give their elected deputies. Better-organized parties both add to the deputy's role as part of a group and somewhat diminish his or her role as an independent actor, capable of influencing the legislative process merely for narrow parochial interests. Nevertheless, individual deputies still command a considerable following within their constituencies. This pattern is enhanced by the fact that 56 percent of the deputies in the National Assembly elected in 1997 were also mayors, while others held other local offices. In 2000, when confidence in political parties was at 24 percent, confidence in deputies had risen to 36 percent, and in mayors to 70 percent (see again Figure 6.3).

Because the electoral college that elects the members of the Senate is composed almost entirely of people selected by small-town mayors, the parties of the center, which are most influential in small towns, are best represented in the Upper House. In 2002, the parties of the center (UDF and DL) still had a few more seats than their RPR rivals in the National Assembly, but RPR is the largest single group within the Senate. The Socialists are the second largest group, a result of the strong roots that the PS has developed at the local level, as well as the initiation of limited proportional representation in senatorial elections. Although the right remains dominant in the Upper House, the Senate has not always been on the right of the political spectrum. Its hostility to social and economic change is balanced by a forthright defense of traditional republican liberties and by a stand against demagogic appeals to latent anti-parliamentary feelings. The Senate, in the normal legislative process, can do little more than delay legislation approved by the government and passed by the National Assembly. There is, however, one constitutional situation in which a majority in the Upper House cannot be overruled: Any constitutional amendment needs the approval of either a simple or a three-fifths majority of senators (Article 89). In the year 2000, lack of support in the Senate forced the president (and prime minister) to withdraw an amendment to create an independent judiciary and to modify significantly the amendment on parity for women (that was passed).

Some legislation of great importance, such as the nuclear strike force, the organization of military tribunals in cases involving high treason, and the reorganization of local government in Corsica and the change in the system of departmental representation (in 1991), was enacted in spite of senatorial dissent. Nonetheless, until 1981 relations between the Senate and the National Assembly were relatively harmonious. The real clash with the Senate over legislation came during the years of Socialist government between 1981 and 1986, when many key bills were passed over the objections of the Senate. However, bills proposed by the government of the left that dismantled some of the "law and order" measures enacted under de Gaulle, Pompidou, and Giscard were supported by the Senate, and the Upper House played an active role when it modified the comprehensive decentralization statute passed by the Socialist majority in the Assembly. Most of the changes were accepted in joint committee.

Criticism of the Senate as an unrepresentative body, and proposals for its reform, have come from Gaullists and Socialists alike (most recently in 1998). All of these proposals for reforming the Senate have failed, though some minor modifications in its composition were passed in 1976 and 1983.

Checks and Balances

France has no tradition of judicial review. As in other countries with civil law systems, and in Britain as well, the sovereignty of Parliament has meant that the legislature has the last word and that a law enacted in constitutionally prescribed forms is not subject to further scrutiny. This principle seemed to be infringed upon when the Constitution of 1958 brought forth an institutional novelty, the Constitutional Council. The council in certain cases must, and in other cases may upon request, examine legislation and decide whether it conforms to the constitution. A legal provision declared unconstitutional may not be promulgated. Each of the presidents of the two houses of Parliament chooses three of the council's members, and the president of the Republic chooses another three for a (nonrenewable) nine-year term. Those who nominate the council's members were until 1974, together with the prime minister, the only ones entitled to apply to the council for constitutional scrutiny. In 1974 an amendment to Article 61 of the constitution made it possible for 60 deputies or 60 senators also to submit cases to the Constitutional Council. Since then, appeals to the council by the opposition, and at times by members of the majority, are a regular feature of the French legislative process.

Whichever side is in opposition, conservative or Socialist, routinely refers all major (sometimes minor as well) pieces of legislation to the council. In a given year, as many as 28 percent of laws passed by parliament have been submitted for review. A surprisingly high percentage of appeals lead to a declaration of unconstitutionality (see following discussion). Few decisions declare entire statutes unconstitutional, and those that declare parts of legislation unconstitutional (sometimes trivial parts) effectively invite parliament to rewrite the text in an acceptable way.

The impact of the Constitutional Council's decisions is considerable and has sometimes modified short-term, and occasionally long-term, objectives of governments. The council assumes in its practice the role of a constitutional court. By doing so, it places itself at the juncture of law and politics, in a way similar to the U.S. Supreme Court when it reviews the constitutionality of legislation.

In a landmark decision, rendered in 1971, the council declared unconstitutional a statute, adopted by a large majority in Parliament, authorizing the prefects to refuse authorization (needed under the Law on Associations of 1901) to any association which they thought might engage in illegal activities. According to the decision, to require any advance authorization violated the freedom of association, one of "the fundamental principles recognized by the laws of the Republic and solemnly reaffirmed in the preamble of the Constitution." The invocation of the preamble greatly expanded the scope of constitutional law, since the preamble incorporated in its wording broad "principles of national sovereignty" as well as the "attachment to The Declaration of Rights of Man," and an extensive Bill of Rights from the Fourth Republic constitution.

Box 6.4 Judicial Review in France and the United States

Judicial review has become part of the French legislative process, but in a way that is still quite different from that of the United States.* Access remains limited, since citizens have no right to bring complaints before the council. The Constitutional Council, unlike the Supreme Court, considers legislation before it is promulgated. Since 1981, virtually all constitutional challenges have been initiated by legislative petition, a process that does not exist in the United States. A time element precludes the possibility of extensive deliberation: Rulings must be made within a month, and in emergency situations, within eight days. This is surely speedy justice, but the verdicts cannot be as explanatory as those rendered by constitutional courts in other countries. Dissenting opinions are never made public.

*Alec Stone, *The Birth of Judicial Politics in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

For introducing a broad view of judicial review into French constitutional law, the decision was greeted as the French equivalent of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Marbury v. Madison*. Some of the Constitutional Council's most important decisions, such as those on the nationalization of private enterprises (under the Socialists), on the privatization of parts of the public sector (under the conservatives), or on government control over the media (under both), conform to an attitude which in the United States is called judicial restraint. A few can be qualified as activist, since they directly alter the intent of the law. But as a nonelected body, the council generally avoids interference with the major political choices of the governmental majority. In recent years, the council has nevertheless reviewed about 10 percent of legislation that is passed each year and has found that, on average, 50 percent of this legislation at least in part violates the constitution (63 percent in 1999–2000). In a period in which alternation of governments has often resulted in sharp policy changes, the council decisions have helped define an emerging consensus. By smoothing out the raw edges of new legislation in judicial language, it often makes changes ultimately more acceptable (see Box 6.4).

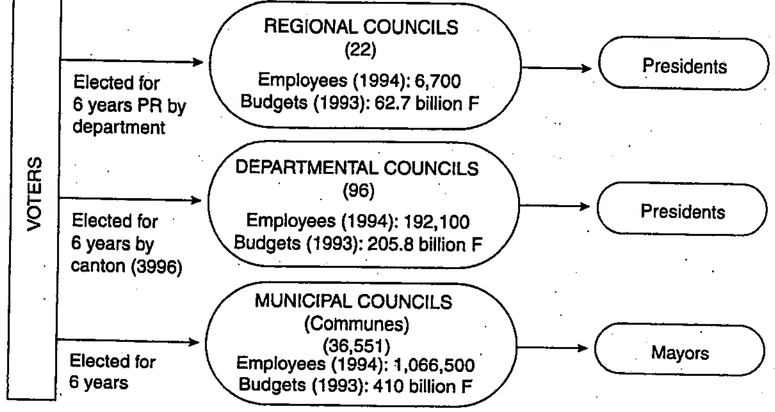
The approval of the council's activities by a large sector of public opinion (52 percent in 2001, slightly below the popular election of the president and the popular referendum) encourages efforts to enlarge its powers. The proposals aimed at facilitating citizens' direct access to its jurisdiction, greater openness of its procedures, and a strengthening of the council's role in the defense of civil liberties have never succeeded in overcoming opposition to them in the Senate.

The judicial check on policymaking enhances the role of the much older *Council of State*, which in its present form dates back to 1799. The government now consults this council more extensively on all bills before they are submitted to Parliament, and, as it has always done, on all government decrees and regulations before they are enacted. The council also gives advice on the interpretation of constitutional texts. While its advice is never binding, its prestige is so high that its recommendations are seldom ignored. Unlike the Constitutional Council, the Council of State provides recourse to individual citizens who have claims against the administration. The judicial section of the Council of State, acting either as a court of appeal or, in more important cases, as the court of first instance, is the apex of a hierarchy of administrative tribunals. Whenever official acts are found to be devoid of a legal basis, whether those of a Cabinet minister or a village mayor, the council will annul them and grant damages to the aggrieved plaintiff.

THE STATE AND TERRITORIAL RELATIONS

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

FIGURE 6.6 Subnational Governments in France



well as deconcentration (of administrative authority), the French unitary state remained (formally) "one and indivisible."[39] Essentially, this meant that subnational territorial units (communes, departments, and regions) had little formal decision-making autonomy. They were dominated by political and administrative decisions made in Paris. Both state action and territorial organization in France depended on a well-structured administration, which during long periods of political instability and unrest was relied on to keep the machinery of the state functioning.

Since the Revolution, France has been divided into 100 *departments* (four of them overseas departments), each about the size of an American county, each under the administrative responsibility of a *prefect*, and (since the Third Republic) with a directly elected general council. Since 1955, departments have been grouped into 22 *regions*, each with its own appointed prefect and, since 1986, with an elected assembly and president (see Figure 6.6).

Centralization has always been more impressive in its formal and legal aspects than it has been in practice, and the practical and political reality has always been more complex. Although France is renowned for its centralized state, what is often ignored is that political localism dilutes centralized decision making (see Box 6.5).

The process of decentralization initiated by the government of the left between 1982 and 1986 was undoubtedly the most important and effective reform passed during that period. The reform reaffirmed, reinforced, and built on the long-established system of interlocking relationships, between central and local authorities, as well as on the patterns of change during the past 25 years. To be sure, the reform altered the formal roles of all the local actors, but the greatest change was that the previously informal power of these actors was formalized.[40]

These powers are based on a system of mutual dependency between them and the prefects, as well as field services of the national ministries, which has existed since the Third Republic. The administrators of the national ministries had the formal power to implement laws, rules, and regulations at the local level. However, they needed the cooperation of local officials, who had the confidence of their constituents, to facilitate the acceptance of the authority of the central state and to provide information to operate the administration effectively at the local level. Local officials, in turn, needed the resources and aid of the administration to help their

Box 6.5 The Political Durability of Local Governments

One manifestation of the political importance of local government in France has been the ability of local units to endure. It is no accident that even after recent consolidations there are still 36,551 *communes* (the basic area of local administration), each with a mayor and council, or about as many as in the original five Common Market countries and Britain together. Almost 33,000 French communes have fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, and of these more than 22,000 have fewer than 500. What is most remarkable, however, is that since 1851 the number of communes in France has been reduced by only 400. Thus, unlike every other industrialized country, the consolidation of population in urban areas has resulted in virtually no consolidation of towns and villages.

constituents and keep their political promises.[41] As in any relationship based on permanent interaction and on cross-functioning controls, it was not always clear who controlled whom. Both the autonomy and the relational power of municipalities were conditioned by the extent of the mayor's contacts within the political and administrative network. These contacts were certainly reinforced by the linkage to national decision making that mayors had established through cumul des mandats—the ability to hold several electoral offices at the same time (limited in 1985 to two major offices, and then in 2000 to prohibit a deputy from holding a local executive office, including mayor). The change in 2000 was particularly important, since combining of the functions of a deputy or senator with those of a mayor or of a member of a departmental council (or both) was traditionally important for a political career. Similarly, a government minister may be, and usually is, a local official as well. Before 2000, this sometimes meant that a mayor's influence in Paris was greater than that of the prefect who held formal administrative authority over him. In 1997, almost 60 percent of the deputies in the National Assembly were also mayors, and perhaps two-thirds or more (and 95 percent of senators) were local officeholders at various levels.

The decentralization legislation transferred most of the formal powers of the departmental and regional prefects to the elected presidents of the departmental and regional councils. In March 1986 *regional councils* were elected for the first time (by a system of proportional representation). In one stroke, the remnants of formal prior administrative authorization of the decisions by local government were abandoned in favor of the decisions of local officials. The department presidents, elected by their department councils, are now the chief departmental executive officers, and they, rather than the prefects, control the department bureaucracy.[42] This accentuates the power of mayors of small and middle-sized towns, who control the departmental councils, to continue to protect the interests of diverse French communes. The representation of the interests of larger French cities is also enhanced by the establishment of elected regional councils, within which big-city mayors have considerable influence.

More broadly, decentralization is replacing the old dependency, which often amounted to complicity, between prefects and mayors, with a new interdependency—this time among elected officials. Interdependence also grows because there is almost no policy area over which one level of government has complete control. What then is left of the role of the central bureaucracy in controlling the periphery? The greatest loss of authority has probably been that of the prefects. Their role now seems to be limited to security (law and order) matters, to the promotion of the government's industrial policies, and to the coordination of the state bureaucracy at the departmental level.

In matters of financing, the principal mechanisms through which the state keeps its hand in local government decisions (financial dependency and standards) have weakened but have not been abandoned. There is still overall financial dependence of subnational governments on the state. Particularly at the commune level, local taxes provide only 40 percent of the annual budget (collected by the state). The price for financial assistance from above is enforced compliance with standards set by the state.

In areas in which the state retains decision-making power—police, education, a large area of welfare, and social security, as well as a great deal of construction—administrative discretion and central control remain important. There is now a consensus in France that the great project of decentralization is a success. This success is marred, however, by financial scandals that exploded in the 1990s. By the fall of 1994, one government minister was in jail, another was on the same path, and 29 members of Parliament had either been convicted or indicted. This total does not include additional local politicians and businesspeople who were in the same predicament. Although each case is somewhat different, the common thread is the corrupt link between public and private complicity at the local level, and the financing of elections and political parties at the local and national levels. Indeed, this corruption is a natural outgrowth of what one scholar terms "the ignorance of conflict of interest, the will, more or less disguised, not to raise problems with regard to situations that are in themselves incompatible."[43]

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

It is hardly surprising that, confronted with this crisis of corrupt practices, increasingly revealed by a more independent judiciary, there were widespread proposals to limit cumul des mandats, to open the books on party finance, and to impose better controls over public spending and finance at all levels. However, scholars seem to agree that the emphasis must be on major reforms (that seem unlikely) that would better separate private from public interests.

PERFORMANCE AND PROSPECTS

A Welfare State

The overall performance of democracies can be measured by their commitment and ability to distribute the benefits of economic growth. France has a mediocre record for spreading the benefits of the postwar boom and prosperity among all its citizens. In terms of income and of wealth, discrepancies between the rich and the poor remain somewhat greater in France than in other countries of equal development. In 2001 the percentage of income-earners in the top 10 percent of incomes (25 percent) was higher than in Sweden, but lower than in Germany, the UK, or the United States. The percentage in the lowest 10 percent of incomes, on the other hand, was lower than Germany or Sweden, but higher than the UK or the United States. The income gap narrowed significantly between 1976 and 1981, and then even more during the first year of Socialist government. Yet subsequent austerity measures, especially the government's successful effort to hold down wages, have widened the gap again. The emergence of long-term unemployment has increased the number of the new poor, who are concentrated among those who are poorly trained for a rapidly evolving employment market. As opposed to the past, the majority of the lowest income group are no longer the elderly and retired, and heads of households with marginal jobs, but increasingly (particularly since 1990) younger people, many of them long-term unemployed, especially younger single parents.

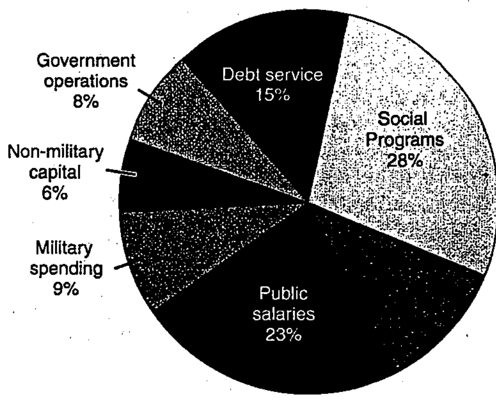
Since large incomes permit the accumulation of wealth, the concentration of wealth is even more conspicuous than the steepness of the income pyramid. In the 1970s the richest 10 percent controlled between 35 and 50 percent of all wealth in France;

the poorest 10 percent owned not more than 5 percent. In the 1990s it is estimated that the richest 10 percent of the families in the country owned 50 percent of the wealth, while the richest 20 percent owned 67 percent. While income disparities narrowed somewhat until the early 1990s, the gap between the lowest and highest income groups began to grow once again during the past decade.[44]

In spite of some assertions to the contrary, it is not true that the French economy as a whole is burdened with higher taxes than other countries of similar development. Overall tax rates were higher, in 2001, than those in the UK or the United States, but lower than those in Sweden or Germany. What is special about France is the distribution of its taxes: The share of indirect taxes remains far higher in France than in other industrialized countries. Indirect taxes not only drive up prices but also weigh most heavily on the poor. The percentage of revenue collected through regressive indirect taxation was the same in 1986, after five years of Socialist government, as it had been in 1980, and remains about the same now (75 percent in 2001). The French welfare state is most effective in the area of social transfers. Their total amount has risen from 18 percent of GDP in 1970 to 29 percent in 1993, which puts France at about the same level as Germany and Denmark, but ahead of Sweden, Britain, and most other European democracies, and far ahead of the United States. A comprehensive health and social security system, established after World War II and extended since then, and a variety of programs assisting the aged, large families, the handicapped, and other such groups, disburse substantial benefits (Figure 6.7). When unemployment benefits, the cost of job-training programs, and housing subsidies are added, total costs are as high as the remainder of the public budget, with three-fourths of them borne by employers and employees.

In contrast to the United States, there have been fewer cutbacks in welfare state programs in France in recent years—even after the cutbacks of pension benefits in 2003. Indeed the population covered by health insurance has expanded, but financing for these programs has been at the heart of government concerns since 1995 (see Table 6.4). Although, as a percentage of GDP, spending on social programs has remained stable since 1984, the government cut public spending to reduce its budget deficit in a successful effort to conform to criteria for the common European currency. In 2003 there were important changes in pension entitlements. In addition, some important gaps in benefits remain. For example, full health benefits depend on supplementary insurance coverage generally provided to most (but not all) in the active workforce. In 1994, only 59 percent of unemployed workers and 58 percent of foreign workers had this additional but necessary coverage.

FIGURE 6.7 The French Budget, 2002



Source: Lois de Reglement, Budget de 2002, AN 24 September 2003.
Note: Military spending excludes pensions.

High levels of unemployment and poverty, and problems of homelessness create pressures to expand social programs while diminishing the revenue base that finances them. Since 1998 the French government has confronted many of the same social service problems facing the United States, but resistance to the American-type solutions is widespread. In 1999, for example, as part of the campaign to fight "social exclusion" in France, the Socialist government passed legislation instituting universal medical coverage. This means-tested, tax-financed, and targeted health insurance program represents a departure from the tradition of social insurance in France.

TABLE 6.4 State Spending and Welfare State Spending

	Government Expenditure as Percent of GDP 2001	Government Employment as Percent of Total Employment 1996–2000	State Contributions to Protection Programs as Percent of GDP 2001	State Health Expenses as Percentage of GDP	
				1994	2001
Britain	40.2	18.7	27.2	5.2	6.2
France	52.5	20.1	30.0	6.6	7.2
Germany	48.3	12.3	29.8	6.3	8.0
Italy	48.5	20.5	25.6	5.3	6.4
Spain	39.3	11.6	20.6	4.7	5.6
Sweden	57.2	6.6	31.3	–	7.4
U.S.	34.9	15.6	16.0	5.2	6.2

Source: OECD, 2003, French Ministry of Finance, 2004, Eurostat 2004, OECD Public Sector Pay and Employment Database.

Nationalization and Regulation

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

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

Legislation enacted in 1981 and 1982, during the first governments of the left, completed the nationalization of the banking sector, expanded state ownership to 13 of the 20 largest firms in France, and controlled interest to many others in such fields as machine tools, chemistry (including pharmaceutical products), glass, metals, and electrical power. In addition, the government obtained majority control of two important armaments firms and several ailing steel companies.

The conservative government that held power in 1986–1988 substantially altered the structure of the nationalized sector in France, accelerating a trend of partial privatization begun during the government of the left. But its ambitious plans for *privatization* were halted (40 percent completed) only a year after their implementation began, in part because of the collapse of the stock market in 1987.[45] Thus some, but not all, of the companies that were nationalized by the Socialist government in 1982 were returned to private stockholders. The conservative government also privatized some companies that had long been controlled by the state. However, both the companies that were returned to private hands and those that remained in the hands of the state were quite different from what they had been a few years before. Recapitalized, restructured, and modernized, for the most part they were, in 1988, the leading edge of the French industrial machine.[46]

Even after privatization, however, about 22 percent of all salary and wage earners received their checks directly or indirectly from the French state in 1997. While this was high compared with the U.S. percentage, it was not out of line from other European countries. If one out of five French citizens depended on the state for their paychecks in the 1990s, so did almost one out of five Britons and one out of eight Germans (see again Table 6.4).

For the actual operation of French business, the move begun by the Socialists and continued by the conservative government toward deregulation of the economy was probably more important than privatization. The deregulation of the stock market, the banking system, telecommunications, and prices has fundamentally changed the way business is conducted in both the private and public sectors.[47] The combination of budgetary rigor and state disengagement meant a real reduction of aid to industry. Sectors in difficulty, including steel, chemicals, shipbuilding, and automobile manufacturing, were therefore forced to accelerate their rationalization plans and their cutbacks in workers.

The conservative government elected in 1993 continued to diminish state holdings in some companies and privatize others, without, however, altering the main lines of industrial and economic policy. As a result, the interventionist and regulatory weight of the state in industry is less important now than it was before the Socialists came to power in 1981. Today, all of the major remaining nationalized industries are either in the process of, or being proposed for, at least partial privatization. In addition, shares have been sold in Air France, and it now competes with other airlines within the French and European markets. The old issue of nationalization and ownership has been bypassed and replaced by more subtle issues of control and regulation in the context of global competition.

In other areas, the regulatory weight of the state has not diminished but has changed during the past 25 years. During the 1970s France expanded individual rights by fully establishing the rights to divorce and abortion. Under the Socialist governments of the 1980s, capital punishment was abolished, the rights of those accused of crimes were strengthened, and detention without trial was checked by new procedures. After much wrangling, in 1994 the Parliament replaced the obsolete Criminal Code dating from the time of Napoléon. The new code is generally hailed as expressing a consensus across the political spectrum on questions of crime and punishment. Moreover, individual rights in France must now conform to the decisions of the European courts under the general umbrella of the European Union. Finally, in conformity with the Maastricht Treaty, citizenship rights of EU residents in France have increased during the 1990s; a right to the presumption of innocence in criminal cases now exists.

In still other areas, the regulatory weight of the state has increased. One of the most obvious is environmental controls. In the 1990s the French state was making its first significant efforts to regulate individual behavior that has an impact on the environment: The first limitations on smoking, for example, came into effect in the late 1980s and expanded after that. In an effort to deal with the politics of immigration, particularly after 1993, the state increased the regulation of all residents of foreign origin in ways that have diminished individual rights, and most recently France has moved to regulate "ostentatious" religious symbols worn by students in public schools.

Outlook: France and the New Architecture of Europe

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

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

Immigration has given way to ethnic consciousness, particularly among the children of immigrants from North Africa. Unlike most of the immigrant communities in the past, those of today are more reluctant to assume French cultural values as their own. This, in turn, leads to questioning the rules of naturalization for citizenship, integration into French society, and (in the end) what it means to be French.[48] During the 1980s growing ethnic tensions were given a political voice by the National Front, which mobilized voters and solidified support based on racist appeals. In part because of the growing role of the FN, ethnic consciousness and diversity have grown in France and altered the context of French politics.

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

Coincidentally, this process of Eastern European disintegration has accelerated at the same time that the countries of the European Union have reinvigorated the process of European integration, with France in the lead. Membership in the European Union shapes almost every aspect of policy and policy planning and provides the context for the expansion and restructuring of the economy during the Fifth Republic (also see Chapter 12).[49]

At the beginning of his presidency in the early 1980s, François Mitterrand expressed his satisfaction with the existing structures of the Common Market. Having experienced their weakness, however, he increasingly felt that some form of federalism—a federalist finality—was necessary to enable Western Europe to use its considerable resources more effectively. Thus, during the Mitterrand presidency, France supported a larger and a more tightly integrated Europe, including efforts to increase the powers of European institutions and the establishment of a European monetary and political union as outlined in the Maastricht Treaty, approved somewhat reluctantly in 1992. French commitment to a common European currency generated most of the plans to cut public spending plans that many French citizens ferociously resisted. Nevertheless, in 1998 France met all key requirements for European monetary union and is now firmly part of the Euro-12 within the European Union.

The opening of French borders, not only to the products of other countries but increasingly to their people and values (all citizens of the European Union had the right to vote and run for office in the French local elections in 2001), feeds into the more general uneasiness about French national identity. The integration of French economic and social institutions with those of its neighbors will progressively remove key decisions from the French government acting alone. In the past, the French economy reacted to joint decisions made in Brussels. In the future, a broader range of institutions will be forced to do the same. Rumblings of resistance are no longer limited to the fringe parties (the parties of the extreme right and the Communists); opposition exists within all of the major political parties, especially the UMP. Here, too, there is considerable potential for new political divisions.

This chapter, written at the beginning of the twentieth-first century, during the second presidential term of Jacques Chirac, presents a story of a

strong and stable political system with an increasingly volatile and unstable party system. The forces that appear to be destabilizing the party system are the major challenges now confronting all of the members of the European Union: the problem of identity in an expanding European union and an independent world; the problem of democratic legitimacy among voters who are less ideologically committed, increasingly skeptical of government and politicians, but who expect more from government.

Key Terms

baccalauréat
blocked vote
Napoléon Bonaparte
Cabinet (government)
Jacques Chirac
communes
Confédération Française Democratique du Travail (CFDT)
Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)
Constitution of 1958
Constitutional Council
Council of Ministers
Council of State
cumul des mandats (accumulation of electoral offices)
Charles de Gaulle
departments
Ecole Nationale d' Administration (ENA)
Ecole Polytechnique
European Union (European Community before 1992)
events of 1968
Fédération de' Education Nationale (FEN)
Fédération Nationale des Syndicats Agricoles (FNSEA)
Fifth Republic
Force Ouvrière (FO)
Fourth Republic
French Communist Party (PCF)
G-10
grandes écoles
grands corps
Robert Hue
Lionel Jospin
Alain Juppé
Jean-Marie Le Pen
Maastricht Treaty
Georges Marchais
François Mitterrand
motion of censure
Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF)
Muslims
National Assembly
National Front (FN)
nationalization
neocorporatism
"new" immigration
ordinances
political class
prefects
president of the Republic
prime minister
privatization
Rally for the Republic (RPR)
referendum
regions
Senate
Socialist Party (PS)
Union for French Democracy (UDF)
Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)

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Endnotes

1. The best recent book in English on the Constitutional Council is Alec Stone, *The Birth of Judicial Politics in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
2. Laurence Wylie, "Social Change at the Grass Roots," in Stanley Hoffmann, Charles P. Kindleberger, Jesse R. Pitts, et al., *In Search of France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 230.
3. See Olivier Duhamel, "Confance institutionnelle et défrance politique: *la démocratic* française," in Sofres, *L'État de l'opinion 2001* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2001), p. 75.
4. Interesting data on religious practice can be found in extensive opinion polls published in Sofres, *L'Etat de l'opinion 1994* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994), pp. 179–99. These data are taken from an unpublished exit poll dated May 26, 1997.
5. Duncan Gallie, *Social Inequality and Class Radicalism in France and Britain* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 34.
6. Annick Percheron, "Socialization et tradition: transmission et invention du politique," *Pouvoirs* 42 (1988): 43.
7. Edgar Morin, *The Red and the White* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), Ch. 8, discusses the noisy revolution of the teenagers and the silent one of women.
8. This is the amply documented thesis of Janine Mossuz-Lavau and Mariette Sineau, *Les Femmes françaises en 1978: Insertion sociale, Insertion politique* (Paris: Centre de Documentation Sciences Humaine de CNRS, 1980). The authors also found that women who were no longer working but had been employed previously were likely to express opinions closer to those of working than of non-working women.
9. Annick Percheron and M. Kent Jennings, "Political Continuities in French Families: A New Perspective on an Old Controversy," *Comparative Politics* 13, No. 4 (July 1981).
10. Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), Chs. 1–3 and Table 2.4, and Tribalat, *Faire France* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995), pp. 93–98.
11. The best summary of the evolution of group membership in France is found in Laurence Haeusler, "Le monde associatif de 1978 1986," in INSEE, *Données Sociales 1990*

(Paris: INSEE, 1990), pp. 369–70. See also Henry Ehrmann and Martin Schain, *Politics in France*, 5th ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), Table 3.6, p. 103.

12. Data on education are taken from *Données Sociales 1996* (Paris: INSEE, 1996), pp. 40–47; *L'Etat de la France 97–98* (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1997), p. 113; *The Economist*, September 18, 1993, p. 52; *Le Monde*, October 16, 1994, p. 16; and Tableaux de—l'conomie française, 1999–2000 (Paris: INSEE, 2000), pp. 52–57.
13. John Ambler, "Constraints on Policy Innovation in Education: Thatcher's Britain and Mitterrand's France," *Comparative Politics* 20, No. 1 (October 1987). See also John Ambler, "Conflict and Consensus in French Education," in John T. S. Keeler and Martin A. Schain, eds., *Chirac's Challenge: Liberalization, Europeanization and Malaise in France* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1996).
14. The restrictive recruitment of the grandes écoles is confirmed by a recent study: "Le recruitment social de l élite scholaire depuis quarante ans," *Education et Formations*, No. 41 (June 1995). Which institutions qualify as grandes écoles is controversial. But among the 140 or so designated as such in some estimates, only 15 or 20, with an enrollment of 2,000 to 2,500, are considered important, prestige schools. The number of engineering and business schools that are generally considered to be grandes écoles has increased in recent years. Therefore the total enrollment of all these schools has increased significantly to well over 100,000.
15. These results are taken from various sources and have been compiled by Russell J. Dalton in *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2002), Ch. 2. See Sofres, *L'Etat de l'opinion 1994* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), p. 232.
16. There is no legal definition for any of these terms (nor is there any legal definition for a grande école), although they are widely used by citizens, journalists, and scholars. Thus the figures given here for the early 1980s are approximations, based on positional and reputational definitions given by J-T Bodiguel and J-L Quermonne in *La Haute fonction publique sous la Ve République* (Paris: PUF, 1983), pp. 12–25, 83–94.
17. This system has now been called into question by the *Conseil d'Etat*, the highest French administrative court. In a decision rendered in December 1996, the court annulled the appointment of a high civil servant as the assistant director of a semipublic bank on the grounds of conflict of interest. Indeed the law that was being interpreted dated back to 1919(!), amended in 1994. If broadly applied, this decision would undermine part of the basis of overlap of public and private elites; see "Pantouflage: l'onde de choc," *L'Express*, December 19, 1996, pp. 50–52.
18. Nancy J. Walker, "What We Know About Voters in Britain, France and West Germany," *Public Opinion* (May–June 1988).
19. These percentages are only approximations, since interest groups in France either refuse to publish membership figures or publish figures that are universally viewed as highly questionable. For estimates of interest group memberships, see Peter Hall, "Pluralism and Pressure Politics," in Peter Hall, Jack Hayward, and Howard Machin, *Developments in French Politics*, rev. ed. (London: Macmillan, 1994). For the most recent estimates of trade union membership, see Antoine Bevort, "Les effectifs syndiqués à la CGT et à la CFDT 1945–1990," *Communisme*, No. 35–37, 1994. Data indicate that membership decline is continuing. See also the recent study by Dominique Labbé, *La Syndicalisation en France depuis 1945* (Grenoble, France: CERAP, 1995).
20. Herrick Chapman, Mark Kesselman, and Martin Schain, *A Century of Organized Labor in France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).
21. The most recent studies are reported in *Communisme*, 35–37, 1994, p. 77, and Sofres, *L'Etat de l'opinion 1994*, pp. 264–65. See also Mark Kesselman, "Does the French Labor Movement Have a Future?" in Keeler and Schain, *Chirac's Challenge*.
22. Sofres, *L'Etat de l'opinion 1996*, p. 246; *The Economist*, September 16, 2000; and Roland Cayrol "Unions and French Public Opinion" in Chapman, Kesselman, and Schain, *A Century of Organized Labor*.
23. The most recent serious study of the CNPF and its affiliates by Henri Weber, *Le Parti des patrons: Le CNPF 184–86* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1986), analyzes various trends within the patronat and is based on much detailed inside information. One of the earliest studies of the CNPF was written by Henry W. Ehrmann. *Organized Business in France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957) presents case studies about the contacts between the administration and the employers organizations, but it is now dated of course.
24. John Keeler, *The Politics of Neocorporatism in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
25. Frank Wilson, *Interest-Group Politics in France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 151, 153, 162, 164.
26. John T. S. Keeler, "Situating France on the Pluralism-Corporatism Continuum," *Comparative Politics* 17 (January 1985): 229–49.
27. See the articles by John Ambler, Frank Baumgartner, Martin Schain, and Frank Wilson in *French Politics and Society* 12, (Spring/Summer 1994).
28. For a good survey of party developments between 1958 and 1981, see Frank L. Wilson, *French Political Parties Under the Fifth Republic* (New York: Praeger, 1982).
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30. Stanley Hoffmann, *Le Mouvement Poujode* (Paris: A. Colin, 1956).
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33. It must be noted—and this is true for all figures on electoral participation throughout this chapter—that French statistics calculate electoral participation on the basis of registered voters, while American statistics take as a basis the total number of people of voting age. About 9 percent of French citizens entitled to vote are not registered. This percentage must therefore be added to the published figures when one wishes to estimate the true rate of abstention and to compare it with the American record.
34. On abstention, see Françoise Subileau and Marie-France Toinet, *Les chemins de l'abstention* (Editions de la découverte, 1993), and Marie-France Toinet, "The Limits of Malaise in France," in Keeler and Schain, *Chirac's Challenge*, pp. 289–91.
35. *Le Monde*, June 15, 2002, p. 8.
36. This analysis is taken from John T. S. Keeler and Martin A. Schain, "Presidents, Premiers and Models of Democracy in France," in Keeler and Schain, eds., *Chirac's Challenge*.
37. One of the very few analyses of the use of the blocked vote, as well as the use by the government of Article 49.3, can be found in John Huber, "Restrictive Legislative Procedures in France and the United States," *American Political Science Review* 86, No. 3 (September 1992); 675–87. Huber's article is also the only attempt to compare such tools with similar procedures in the U.S. Congress.
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39. This phrase refers to the first article of the constitution of 1793, which proclaims that "The French Republic is one and indivisible." The constitution of the Fifth Republic repeats it.
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41. The now classic statement of this relationship was written by Jean-Pierre Worms, who years later had major responsibilities for developing the decentralization reforms for the government of the left. See "Le Préfet et ses notables," *Sociologie du Travail* 8, No. 3 (1966): 249–75.
42. Mark Kesselman, "The Tranquil Revolution at Clochemerle: Socialist Decentralization in France," in Philip G. Cerny and Martin A. Schain, *Socialism, the State, and Public Policy in France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 176.
43. Yves Mény, "Les formes discrètes de la corruption," in *French Politics and Society* 11, No. 4 (Fall 1993), special issue on "Etats de la corruption." Mény has also written *La Corruption et la République* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), where he develops many of these ideas on systemic contributions to corruption. In the same issue of *French Politics and Society*, Dominique Lorrain writes about the contribution of local finance to corruption, and Jean-Pierre Worms, the architect of the decentralization legislation, comments on the relationship between corruption and decentralization. See also Ezra N. Suleiman, "The Politics of Corruption and the Corruption of Politics," *French Politics and Society* 9, No. 1 (Winter 1991).
44. See *Le Monde*, October 7, 1999, p. 6.
45. As a result, the number of workers paid indirectly by the state declined. Nevertheless, the proportion of the workforce paid directly by the state (government employment) remained stable at about 23 percent, about a third higher than the United States, Germany, and Italy, but lower than the Scandinavian countries. See Vincent Wright, "Reshaping the State: The Implications for Public Administration," *West European Politics* 17, No. 3 (July 1994).
46. They were also controlled by the same people as when they were nationalized. None of the newly privatized firms changed managing directors. See Michel Bauer, "The Politics of State-Directed Privatization: The Case of France 1986–1988," *West European Politics* 11, No. 4 (October 1988): 59.
47. Philip G. Cerny, "The 'Little Big Bang' in Paris," *European Journal of Political Research* 17, No. 2 (1989).
48. Martin Baldwin Edwards and Martin A. Schain, eds., *The Politics of Immigration in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 1994).
49. See Alain Gayomarch, Howard Machin, and Ella Ritchie, *France and the European Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).