

Thirteenth Amendment The Constitutional amendment that abolished slavery.

utopian moralism The tendency of Americans to view the world in terms of good versus evil.

Vietnam War The protracted, costly, and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to defeat Communism in Southeast Asia (1959–1975).

Voting Rights Act 1965 legislation that eliminated barriers that had been imposed by some states to prevent African Americans from voting. It was seen as a major victory in the struggle for civil rights.

War on Poverty President Lyndon Johnson's use of state spending to combat inequality.

Washington, George Commander of the U.S. forces during the Revolutionary War, and first president of the United States.

WEB LINKS

C-SPAN www.cspan.org public service media focused on U.S. politics
Library of Congress <http://thomas.loc.gov>
National Archives www.archives.gov repository for government documents
Project Vote Smart www.vote-smart.org on elections, elected officials, and candidates
Real Clear Politics www.realclearpolitics.com politics blog
Roll Call www.rollcall.com news source focused on Congress
University of Michigan www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/psusp.html US politics resources

4 FRANCE

Head of state: President Nicolas Sarkozy
(since May 17, 2007)

Head of government:
Prime Minister François Fillon
(since May 17, 2007)

Capital: Paris

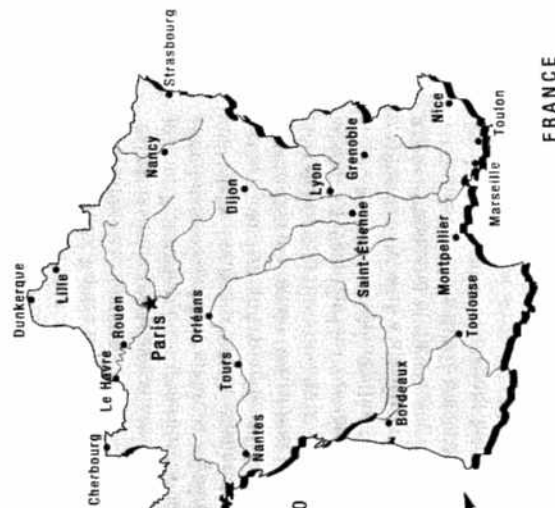
Total land size: 547,030 sq km

Population: 64 million

GDP at PPP: 2.047 trillion US\$

GDP per capita at PPP: \$33,200

Human development index ranking: 10



INTRODUCTION

Why Study This Case?

In a fundamental sense, comparative politics is the comparative study of political regimes. The term **regime**, fittingly, comes from the French word for *rule or order* and refers to the norms and rules that govern politics. These norms and rules are institutionalized—often embodied in a constitution—but can and do change as a result of dramatic social events or national crises. Regimes express fundamental ideals about where authority should reside and to what end this authority should be employed.

The French case offers a fascinating study of regimes. In little more than two centuries, France has endured a remarkable range of regimes, including both authoritarian (from absolute monarchy to revolutionary dictatorship) and democratic (such as parliamentary and semi-presidential). During this period, France has been governed by no less than three monarchies, two empires, five republics, a Fascist regime, and two provisional governments and has promulgated fifteen separate constitutions. A popular nineteenth-century joke had a Parisian bookseller refusing to sell a copy of the French constitution to a would-be customer, claiming he did not sell periodicals.¹ The most dramatic transition was, of course, the **French Revolution** (1789–1799) in which French citizens overthrew the **ancien régime** (the European order of absolute monarchy buttressed by religious authority) and replaced it, albeit briefly, with a democratic republic guided by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

France can claim title to the birthplace of modern democracy on the European continent, but democracy has not come easily. The French Revolution embraced a set of universal rights for all people and redefined French subjects as citizens. But French revolutionaries concluded that the state had to be strong enough to destroy the old regime, impose the new, and forge a strong national identity. French republicanism established a short-lived revolutionary dictatorship that was followed by Napoléon Bonaparte's **coup d'état**—a forceful and sudden overthrow of government. Over the next seven decades, French reactionaries battled radicals, and France oscillated between empires, monarchies, and republics, with two more revolutions as well.

Not until the present **Fifth Republic** (established in 1958) has France seemed able to break this alternating cycle of stern authoritarian rule and chaotic, or at least dysfunctional, democracy. Although revolution is no longer politics-as-usual and today's French citizens are more centrist, French political life is far from mundane. French citizens remain skeptical, if not cynical, about politics and politicians and vigorously divided on issues such as immi-

gration, European integration, unemployment, and the proper role of the state. Whereas most established democracies have vested their constitutions with a certain sanctity and have only cautiously amended them, France's willingness to write and rewrite the rules of the political game offers us a fascinating study in comparative politics and gives us insights into French politics and its political culture.²

Major Geographic and Demographic Features

France is a large country roughly the size of Texas. By European standards, it is substantial, twice the area of Great Britain; in Europe, it is third in size only to Russia and Ukraine. France seems even larger than it is because of its span across much of Western Europe; it shares borders with six countries and is at once an Atlantic, continental, and Mediterranean country.

Although this geography has facilitated foreign commerce, it has also exacerbated French feelings of vulnerability. Protected by mountains to the southwest (the Pyrénées) and the southeast (the Alps), no such natural barriers exist on its border with Belgium and Germany to the north and northeast. Through the centuries, this corridor has been the locus of repeated invasions and confrontations. Abundant mineral resources (in the Saar region) and productive farmland (in Alsace-Lorraine) have raised the stakes and aggravated the conflicts. Vulnerability has also motivated France's preoccupation with establishing a formidable standing army and a strong centralized state (unlike England, which had a strong navy but a weak army). The French solution to its geographic vulnerability after World War I was the construction of the Maginot Line, a series of concrete fortifications along the Franco-German border designed to prevent the next war. Nazi forces, however, simply skirted the defenses and invaded France through Belgium. The French solution after World War II—integration with its long-standing German nemesis in the form of the European Union—has proved much more effective.

Within France, there are no significant geographic obstacles to transportation or communication. A number of navigable rivers have, over the centuries, been supplemented by canals and a highly developed rail system. This ease of internal travel and communication, combined with France's natural mountain and ocean boundaries, has given the French a strong sense of national identity and facilitated France's economic and political integration.

At the hub of this national integration—both literally and organizationally—lies the capital, Paris. For centuries, Paris has served as the administrative, commercial, and cultural nucleus of France. Generations of Parisian bureaucrats have imposed taxes, *corvée* (mandatory labor assessments), and even the Parisian dialect of French on all regions of the country. In addition to this linguistic homogeneity, more than 80 percent of all French are at least nominally Catholic.

This national unity should not be exaggerated, however. Although metropolitan Paris is home to roughly one sixth (10 million) of France's 60 million citizens, "provincial" life, with its more rustic and relaxed lifestyle, is mythologized by many French people over the hustle and bustle of urban life. One enduring effect of this view is that while the number of farmers has shrunk in France, they have a disproportionate amount of power and have strongly influenced not only domestic politics but also those of the European Union. The preservation of rural life as a symbol of being French has led to conflicts over agricultural subsidies and globalization, complicating domestic and international politics. Similarly, although French citizens are proud of their national heritage, many are likewise proud of their regional differences. Generally speaking, southern France is more rural, conservative, religious, and agrarian—and relatively less prosperous—than is northern France, which is more urban, politically liberal, secular, and industrial.

Historical Development of the State

Whereas French history offers us valuable insights into the study of regimes, this same history is also an essential primer on the rise of the modern nation-state. From Louis XIV's declaration *L'état, c'est moi* (I am the state) to Napoleon's establishment of bureaucratic legal codes and the rule of law, the development of the French state offers an archetype for the emergence of a powerful state, one paradoxically combined with a public that views mass demonstrations against authority as an important tool of political change.

ABSOLUTISM AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE MODERN FRENCH STATE

In carving out the Holy Roman Empire in the early ninth century, Charlemagne, leader of a Germanic tribe known as the Franks, established a realm encompassing much of Western Europe. In doing so, he unified the area we know as France earlier than would occur in any of the other European states, including Britain. But with Charlemagne's death, Frankish control was reduced to an assortment of small feudal kingdoms and principalities well within the confines of what is now France. As with feudal kings elsewhere, the Frankish rulers sought to increase their holdings, stature, and security by squeezing wealth from their subjects. In the United Kingdom, struggles among the aristocracy led to a gradual decentralization of power, as signified by the Magna Carta. In France, however, feudalism led to absolute monarchs, who centralized authority and developed bureaucracies capable of taxing the subjects and administering the other affairs of state.

Absolute monarchy—the stage in the evolutionary development of Europe between the more decentralized feudal monarchies of the Middle Ages and the constitutional governments of the modern era—made several important con-

TIME LINE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Year	Event
800 C.E.	"France" first emerges as an independent power under Charlemagne
1681-1715	Absolute monarchy culminates in rule of Louis XIV
1789	French Revolution launched with storming of the Bastille in Paris
1799	Napoléon Bonaparte seizes power and brings revolution to an end
1848, 1871	Popular uprisings lead to the Second and Third Republics
1940	Third Republic replaced by Vichy (German puppet) regime
1946	The weak Fourth Republic is established
1954	French leave Vietnam in defeat
1958	Threat of civil war over Algeria returns Charles de Gaulle to office, leading to the ratification of his presidency and the Fifth Republic by referendum
1968	The Events of May rioters in Paris demand social and educational reforms
1969	De Gaulle resigns
1981	François Mitterrand and Socialists elected
1986	First period of "cohabitation" between Socialist president Mitterrand and neo-Gaullist prime minister Jacques Chirac
1992	Slim majority of French voters approve Maastricht Treaty, establishing the European Monetary Union (within the European Union) and the euro
2005	In referendum, French voters reject proposed European Union constitution

tributions to the modern French state.³ Many of the responsibilities that we associate with a modern state, such as education, welfare, and transportation, were at that time handled by the family, the church, an odd assortment of local authorities, or simply not at all. But three primary duties—making and executing laws, waging war and providing defense, and raising money to defend the state—became the responsibility of the French kings.

In carrying out those responsibilities, these monarchs did not ignore the social classes outside the court. In fact, the crown initially allied with and—

as its autonomy grew—ultimately employed each relevant class, or “estate,” in carrying out its duties. The Catholic clergy, or First Estate, had primary responsibility for administering the legal system; the landed aristocracy, or Second Estate, prosecuted the king’s wars; and financiers from the commoners who made up the commercial class, or Third Estate, gathered the taxes that paid for the luxuries of the court, the military, and the rest of the state apparatus. In order to co-opt these groups initially, in the fourteenth century the monarchy established an assembly known as the **Estates General**, with representatives from each of the three estates.

By the fifteenth century, Louis XI had sufficiently centralized his authority such that he could wage expansive wars, doubling the size of his kingdom to roughly France’s current borders. He was also able to weaken the influence of the nobility and largely ignore the Estates General. His successors over the next three centuries reinforced these trends, forging a centralized state with a reputation for administrative efficiency that has largely persisted to this day. The pinnacle of this absolutist authority came during the rule of Louis XIV, who dubbed himself the Sun King and famously declared that he alone was the state. Although that was an overstatement, the absolutist French state of the seventeenth century was remarkable, indeed the envy of all Europe. France had a standing professional army, a mercantilist state-run economy, a ruthless tax system, and the extravagant palace of Versailles. In fact, the Sun King never even convened the Estates General.

Neither war nor court life came cheap, and the drains on the royal coffers, combined with the system of taxation, had by the eighteenth century reduced the French commoners to famine and bankrupted the state. In a desperate attempt to shore up support and seek essential funding, Louis XVI convened the long-dormant Estates General in 1789. Although each estate was to have one vote (allowing the more conservative clergy and nobility to override the commoners), the more numerous representatives of the Third Estate argued that all three houses should meet together as one assembly (allowing the commoners to prevail). The king resisted, stirring the anger and protests of the commoners. In this revolutionary environment, rising bread prices in Paris prompted Parisians to storm the Bastille, the old Paris jailhouse, on July 14, 1789, launching the French Revolution.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. DESTRUCTION OF THE ARISTOCRACY, AND EXTENSION OF STATE POWER

In the early days of the revolution, the Third Estate established the **National Assembly**, and that body issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Inspired by the French political thinkers Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Baron de Montesquieu, and by the example of the American Revolution, this document was a powerful and influential statement on liberty that pro-

claimed the natural rights of the individual in opposition to the tyranny of monarchy. The revolutionaries concluded that the ancien régime, with its hereditary and religious privileges, must be destroyed and replaced. No longer should birth or faith determine justice, public office, or taxation. “Liberty, Fraternity, Equality” became the rallying cry of the revolution.

Rather, in the new French republic, sovereignty was to rest with the people and their elected representatives, church and state were to be separate, and all male citizens could claim the natural and universal rights of both freedom and equality before the law. These revolutionary pronouncements have obviously had a profound effect on French politics and the constitutions of nearly all modern nation-states since then. In addition, the revolution fostered nationalism and patriotism as an expression of the natural right of the French nation-state to exist on terms established by its own citizens. A rational, “scientific” state would be the revolutionaries’ goal. But unlike their American counterparts, who feared the tyranny of any centralized authority, French revolutionaries never questioned a powerful, centralized state, who would control it, and toward what ends it would serve.

Indeed, the new republic embraced what we might now call a technocratic form of rule, embracing the Enlightenment and the early stages of the Scientific Revolution to modernize and transform their society, sweeping away old institutions. In spite of its absolutism, the ancien régime, like most states of that period, inhibited trade and development by its lack of a number of basic standards. In response, the French Revolution became a catalyst for standardization and reform, perhaps best captured in the metric system, introduced in 1795 and soon adopted by most of the world (the United States and the United Kingdom being notable exceptions). Calendar and monetary reforms were similarly embraced by the French revolutionaries. These reforms and standardization were important not only because they changed France and much of the rest of the world, but also because they institutionalized the idea that the state could play an important role in directing expertise, science, and technology toward the good of the country as a whole. This idea continues to be an important part of French meritocratic politics and technocratic economic policies, as we shall see.

In 1791, French moderates wrote a new constitution limiting the monarchy and setting up a representative assembly that in many ways resembled Britain’s constitutional monarchy. But this middle-ground effort was undermined both by monarchists on the right (conservative nobles and clerics) and by radical anti-clerical republicans on the left. Led by a militant faction known as the Jacobins, the radicals seized power and launched a class war known as the **Reign of Terror**, in which many who stood in the way of this radical vision of republicanism were executed (including the monarchy). As in other later revolutions, such as in the Soviet Union and China, terror bred turmoil

and paranoia such that the very perpetrators of the revolution were themselves devoured by the violence. The Jacobins' ruthless leader, Robespierre, became the guillotine's final victim as the Reign of Terror came to an end in 1794. Although the violence ended, this ideological and cultural division between two poles—conservative, Catholic, and rural versus progressive, secular, and urban—would resonate in French politics for centuries and in some ways persists today.

In the wake of the Reign of Terror, moderates established a weak and ineffectual government that limped along for five more years and two more constitutions. In 1799, General Napoléon Bonaparte seized power in a coup d'état that brought the decade of revolutionary turmoil to an end. Unlike the revolution that had swept away the former social and political institutions, Napoléon's coup retained and indeed codified key elements of the revolutionary order. The Napoleonic Code documented the principles of the revolution are equal before the law; that the people, not a monarch, are sovereign; and that the church and state are separate domains. Further enhancing France's long bureaucratic tradition, Napoléon established a meritocratic civil service open to all citizens and a system of elite schools to train these functionaries.⁴

THE RETURN TO ABSOLUTISM IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE

Napoléon's strong state became even stronger when he was proclaimed emperor for life in a national referendum in 1804, and the First Republic gave way to the First Empire. Clearly, French citizens preferred the peace, stability, and order of Napoleonic France to the republican chaos that had preceded it. Although the French also valued their civil and property rights, over time Napoléon's rule increasingly resembled the tyranny of the absolute monarchy that had justified the revolution. Napoléon ruled for another ten years, then abdicated the throne for a year in the wake of a series of military defeats at the hands of the hostile conservative monarchies that surrounded France. After a brief return, Napoléon was permanently defeated in 1815 by the British at the Battle of Waterloo and died in exile, remembered by most French as a national hero.

With military support from the victorious European powers, absolute monarchy, not democracy, replaced Napoléon's empire, and the bitter ideological divisions of the revolutionary era reemerged. The church and the aristocracy reasserted their privileges until a popular revolt in 1830 forced the crown to establish a constitutional monarchy and promise to pay more respect to the interests of the rising bourgeoisie. A third revolution, in 1848, ended monarchical rule, established universal male suffrage, and constituted the short-lived Second Republic, with a directly elected president—the first such office in Europe. Elsewhere in Europe executive power was held by monarchs and prime

ministers. In this development one sees the ongoing French preference for a strong executive, albeit one who is directly chosen by the people; it reflects an amalgam of monarchical and revolutionary values. In 1848, the people elected as their first president Napoléon's nephew Louis-Napoléon, who quickly followed in his uncle's footsteps, using a national referendum to proclaim himself emperor. In 1852, Louis-Napoléon (now called Napoléon III) replaced the Second Republic with the Second Empire. Napoléon III ruled for nearly two decades, presiding over a period of peace and rapid industrial growth.

Both peace and prosperity came to an end with France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, in which Napoléon III was captured and the Second Empire came to an end. Not surprisingly, the absence of central authority once again led to violent conflict between conservative monarchists and radical republicans. Although conservatives came to dominate the National Assembly, radicals in Paris, inspired by Marx, established a short-lived rival government known as the Paris Commune, until French troops crushed the uprising. While unsuccessful, the Commune would continue to inspire Communists and anarchists worldwide for decades to come; it was in reference to the Commune that Marx and Engels first spoke of a dictatorship of the proletariat that could serve as a model for future revolutions. Interestingly, then, France contributed to the emergence of not only liberal democratic ideas but also Communist ones, though in both cases the regimes themselves foundered in France.

DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE WEAK REGIMES OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH REPUBLICS

Out of the ashes of the Second Empire emerged France's Third Republic, which survived seventy years, until the outbreak of World War II. Its endurance should not be mistaken, however, for either strength or legitimacy. The Third Republic was weakened by the persistent and seemingly irreconcilable splits among various ideological factions, ranging from monarchists to anarchists. These divisions made stable government almost impossible, with successive governments often lasting less than a year. Despite weak government, the powerful bureaucracy remained and, allied with French business interests, continued to promote economic development.

Political divisions were further polarized by the devastation of World War I, during which more than 1.5 million French people died, and the economic depression that followed. These crises provided fertile ground for both Communism and fascism, as political extremists of the left and the right professed Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, respectively, as preferable alternatives to France's weak and immobilized Third Republic.

This debate was preempted by France's swift defeat at the hands of the overwhelming Nazi military force in the opening weeks of World War II. The

Nazi victors collaborated with the French right in setting up the puppet Vichy regime, named after the town in central France where the government was based. Even many French moderates ended up supporting this fascist government, reasoning that the Nazis were better than the threat of a Communist government.⁵ Other French citizens, however, including members of religious groups and Communists, resisted (both from within France and outside of the country) the Nazi occupation. Although the resistance effort was diverse and at best only loosely linked, the man who came to lead the military resistance and ultimately embody the French anti-Nazi movement was General Charles de Gaulle, who led French forces in England following his retreat from France in 1940.

After World War II, de Gaulle's heroic stature as leader of the resistance effort and his role in France's provisional government made it natural that he would play an important political role in the new Fourth Republic. However, de Gaulle believed that one of the main weaknesses of the previous regime was that too little power had been invested in the presidency, a view not shared by other political leaders. As a result, de Gaulle withdrew from politics. After the war, the new Fourth Republic, based on an electoral system of proportional representation and parliamentary government with a weak prime minister, was frequently as paralyzed as the Third Republic had been. No single party or even a stable coalition of parties was able to form a government for long—twenty governments were formed in just twelve years—and thus no political leader was in a position to make difficult choices.

During this period there was significant progress in such areas as post-war reconstruction and the creation of the European Union (EU). The regime, however, could not effectively deal with its colonial legacy, as independence movements in many colonies grew powerful. This was particularly acute in the case of Algeria: a North African and Muslim country that had been under French control for over a century. It was also home to some 1 million French and European settlers. Growing Algerian resistance to French rule had led to significant violence between Algerians, settlers, and the French military. By 1958, French Communists had demanded immediate independence for Algeria, and French generals in Algeria responded by establishing a provisional government and threatening military action against France itself if Algeria did not remain French. Under these dire circumstances, the government called on de Gaulle to return to politics and seek a way out of the crisis.⁶

THE RECOVERY OF STATE POWER AND DEMOCRATIC STABILITY UNDER THE FIFTH REPUBLIC

As he had a decade earlier, de Gaulle insisted that he would serve only if the French people would authorize and accept a new constitution that established a strong executive and addressed the other ills of the Third and Fourth Republics. The new constitution was put to a referendum and accepted. De

Gaulle, who had served briefly as the last **prime minister** of the Fourth Republic, became the first president of the new Fifth Republic, in 1958.

We conclude this discussion of the historical development of the French state by noting de Gaulle's significant impact on the republic and his ten-year tenure as its leader. Using his sweeping executive authority, from 1958 to 1968 de Gaulle granted Algeria independence, established France as an independent nuclear power, withdrew it from the military command structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), promoted European integration, nationalized a number of key industries and private firms, and established a substantial welfare state.

Although he averted civil war, revitalized the French economy, and restored French national pride, de Gaulle was also criticized (particularly by the left) as an authoritarian demagogue. He failed to command the loyalty of a new generation that had no memories of World War II or his role in it. In

CHARLES DE GAULLE: A TWENTIETH-CENTURY NAPOLEÓN?

Although the two were dramatically different in stature (Napoleón was famously short; de Gaulle was over six feet, five inches tall) and dissimilar in many other ways, Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970) is often compared to his earlier counterpart. Like Napoleón, he was a career military man who arrived on the French political scene at a time of crisis and saw himself as a savior of France. Also like Napoleón, de Gaulle graduated from a military academy with a predilection for the use of artillery. In the early weeks of World War II, he led a French tank division against Hitler's attacking armies. When his superiors sued for peace, General de Gaulle opposed the action and escaped first to England and then to Algeria. He became a leader in the resistance movement and in 1944 formed the Free French provisional government that governed liberated France until 1946.

Charged with constituting the Fourth Republic after the war, de Gaulle argued for the establishment of a strong executive that could rebuild war-devastated France and avoid the problems of the weak, polarized Third Republic. French voters rejected his proposal and instead opted for a strong assembly and a largely symbolic presidency. De Gaulle resigned and left politics, warning (accurately) that the Fourth Republic would be no better than its predecessor. Economic problems at home and colonial crises abroad (first in Vietnam and then, most acutely, in Algeria) brought France to the brink of civil war, its government having become immobilized. Amid these crises, de Gaulle returned to the political scene—as Napoleón had in his time—and demanded, and received by referendum, a new constitution that established a strong presidency and formed France's Fifth Republic. Wielding great power, de Gaulle avoided civil war, decolonized Algeria, revived the French economy, and to a great extent restored French prestige. De Gaulle served for eleven years. He then resigned after his constitutional reform proposals in response to the 1968 Paris riots were defeated. He withdrew (again) from politics and died the following year.

1968, many young Parisians took to the streets in what came to be known as **The Events of May**. Students erected barricades and demanded educational changes, and workers seized factories and called for sweeping social reforms. De Gaulle was able to weather these protests, but in the end had lost his mandate. When he turned to the public to galvanize support by presenting a referendum on various constitutional reforms, the president was defeated; he stepped down from office in 1969.

It might be expected that de Gaulle's departure would have signaled the end of the Fifth Republic, so tightly connected was it to de Gaulle himself. But rather than prompting a new round of polarized debate, revolution, and yet another constitution, the regime held and remains the current regime of France. Although the French had rejected a leader, they chose not to reject his vision of a republic led by a strong national executive. Since de Gaulle, a series of powerful presidents have each contributed to the image of France as a country with a strong bureaucracy, an independent foreign policy, and an economic system tightly connected to the state. However, over the past decade there has been a growing sense inside France that the country is in crisis, or at least adrift, with low economic growth and a growing, yet marginalized, immigrant population. The 2007 election of President **Nicolas Sarkozy** strongly reflected these concerns, as his supporters and detractors alike focused on issues of reform, immigration, and law and order. Does President Sarkozy represent a break from the past? Is France at a turning point? And is change really necessary or wanted in France? We shall consider these questions as we look at the institutions and policies of this important European state.

POLITICAL REGIME

Political Institutions

THE CONSTITUTION

As noted earlier, France has experienced different types of authoritarian regimes (from absolute monarchy to revolutionary dictatorship) as well as a broad range of democratic regimes (both parliamentary and semi-presidential). The French Third (1875–1940) and Fourth (1946–1958) Republics were purely parliamentary regimes. Many French viewed those regimes as weak and ineffective because fractious legislatures often resulted in a revolving door of prime ministers (with twenty cabinets in less than twelve years during the Fourth Republic). When fragmented legislatures disagreed with government policies, governments collapsed.

France's current regime, the Fifth Republic (1958–present), is codified in the constitution of 1958. That document was very much the product of

Charles de Gaulle's reaction to the perceived instability of the previous two regimes. The central goal of de Gaulle's 1958 constitution was to eliminate the pure parliamentary system and enhance the power of the executive vis-à-vis France's traditionally powerful and fractious legislature. France thus developed a semi-presidential executive system that was innovative at the time and subsequently adapted elsewhere, such as in Russia. The Fifth Republic created a system whereby political power is shared by the legislature, a directly elected president, and a prime minister who reports to both the president and the legislature.

The French constitution has proved durable and has seen relatively few significant amendments over the past fifty years. Most notable changes have involved the presidency: in 1962 the constitution was modified to allow direct election of the president, and in 2000 the president's term was reduced from seven to five years to limit divided government (which we will speak of shortly).

The Branches of Government

THE PRESIDENCY

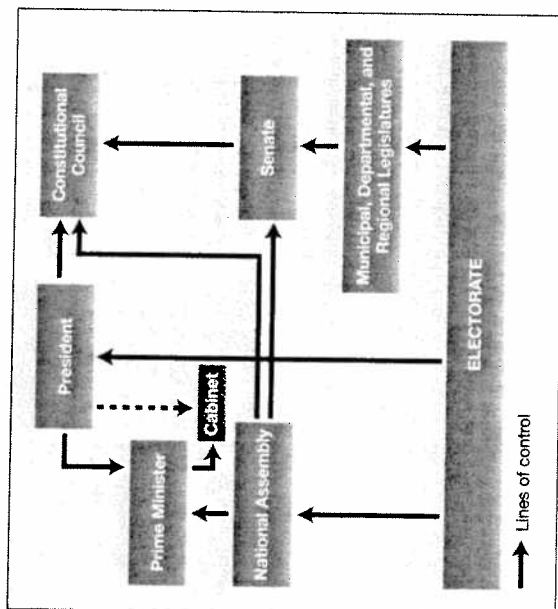
Unlike a presidential system, the French **semi-presidential** system includes a dual executive: the president is head of state, and the prime minister is head of the government. However, the constitution of 1958 is ambiguous when it comes to differentiating the powers of the president and the prime minister.⁷ Indeed, the French president has relatively few formal powers, but during the course of the Fifth Republic the president has, by precedent, acquired powers somewhat beyond those specified by the constitution.

The constitution envisions the French president as a head of state who is to be above the parties. But unlike the United Kingdom's merely symbolic head of state, French presidents hold important political powers, though they are far less explicit powers than held by their U.S. counterparts. Much of the authority of the French presidents results from the prestige and precedent of de Gaulle and from the fact that the president is the only directly elected political figure, providing a national mandate.⁸ Moreover, French presidents are elected for long terms (five years) and can be reelected without term limits.

ESSENTIAL POLITICAL FEATURES

- Legislative-executive system: semi-presidential
- Legislature: **Parlement**
- Lower house: *Assemblée nationale* (National Assembly)
- Upper house: *Sénat* (Senate)
- Unitary or federal division of power: unitary
- Main geographic subunits: regions
- Electoral system for lower house: single-member district majority
- Chief judicial body: *Cour de cassation* (Supreme Court of Appeals)

STRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNMENT



According to the constitution of the Fifth Republic, presidents do not directly govern. Rather, they appoint a prime minister, who must be approved by a majority of the lower house of the legislature; he is supposed to select a cabinet (called the **Council of Ministers**) and preside over the day-to-day affairs of the government. In practice, when French presidents enjoy a majority in the legislature, they select both the prime minister and the members of the cabinet.

The 1958 constitution would appear to create a potential conflict between a directly elected president and a legislature dominated by the opposition. This is because the constitution requires the legislature to approve the president's choice of prime minister. Many observers predicted that this feature was a recipe for political disaster. The French system has worked rather smoothly, however, due in part to the fact that from 1958 to 1986 the same party dominated the presidency and the legislature, thus reducing the possibility of intra-executive conflict. During those years, the French president developed the important informal powers he wields today. As noted below, however, even when presidents have lacked a majority in the legislature, they have compromised by appointing prime ministers from the opposition. What might happen should a president refuse to compromise is not entirely clear.

Presidents and Prime Ministers Since 1959

President	Dates in Office	Terms	Party	Prime Ministers (Dates)
Charles de Gaulle	1959-69 (resigned in second term)	two	N/A	Michel Debré (1959-62) Georges Pompidou (1962-68) Maurice Couve de Murville (1968-69) Jacques Chaban-Delmas (1969-72) Pierre Messmer (1972-74)
Georges Pompidou	1969-74 (died in office)	one	Gaullist	Jacques Chirac (1974-76) Raymond Barre (1976-81) Pierre Mauroy (1981-84) Laurent Fabius (1984-86) Jacques Chirac (1986-88)
Valéry Giscard d'Estaing	1974-81	one	Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF)	Michel Rocard (1988-91) Edith Cresson (1991-92) Pierre Bérégovoy (1992-93) Edouard Balladur (1993-95)
François Mitterrand	1981-94	two	Parti Socialiste (PS)	Alain Juppé (1995-97) Lionel Jospin (1997-2002) Jean-Pierre Raffarin (2002-2005) Dominique de Villepin (2005-2007)
Jacques Chirac	1995-2007	two	neo-Gaullist	François Fillon (2007-present)
Nicolas Sarkozy	2007-present		Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP)	

The constitution of the Fifth Republic does give the president some formal constitutional tools in addition to those that have become institutionalized over time through precedent. Presidents direct the armed forces. They cannot veto legislation, but they can ask the lower house to reconsider it. They can submit referenda directly to the people. They must sign all laws and decrees. Presidents also have the power to dissolve the legislature and call new elections, a power that has been employed on five occasions, usually to obtain or reinforce legislative majorities to the president's liking. The president also enjoys a powerful staff, whose members help him develop and initiate policy and work with the prime minister and the cabinet.

Perhaps the most important power of the president is the authority to appoint the prime minister, though the appointment is subject to legislative approval. Moreover, presidents have simply asserted the power to remove prime ministers and cabinet members even if those officials have support in the legislature, although the constitution does not specify this authority. In short, the prime minister has become a sort of chief aide whose goal is to carry out the president's political agenda. Consequently, the president—not the prime minister—chairs the weekly meetings of the Council of Ministers.

In the early years of the Fifth Republic, it was often argued that because of the power and prestige of the president, France was developing a republican monarchy.⁹ Even during de Gaulle's time, however, the presidency was hardly omnipotent; recall that de Gaulle resigned after the electorate rejected his 1969 referendum. President **François Mitterrand**, despite serving for fourteen years, was twice forced to "cohabitate" with an opposition prime minister; this divided government severely limited his power. President **Jacques Chirac** was similarly stymied when the opposition controlled the lower house and prime minister's office from 1995 to 2002. It was this divided government that led to the change in the president's term of office, syncing presidential and legislative elections in the hope that voters would support a single party for both institutions. So far this has been the case, which may promise a more consistently powerful presidency in future.

THE PRIME MINISTER

French prime ministers are appointed by the president but serve with the support of both the president and the legislature. As opposed to many parliamentary systems in which the prime minister is drawn from among the members of parliament, Article 23 of the French constitution prevents members of the legislature from serving simultaneously as prime minister. This creates a disconnect between the legislature and the prime minister, and it ties the prime minister more strongly to the president. On paper, the constitution appears to make the prime minister the most powerful politician in France. In practice, when presidents enjoy a majority in the legislature, French

"SARKO" THE AMERICAN?

Whether Nicolas Sarkozy will be a successful president, it is clear that his election marks a departure from the past presidents and typical French leadership. While postwar presidents have been a product of elite education and extensive experience in the public sector, Sarkozy's biography is quite the opposite. The son of a Hungarian immigrant, Sarkozy came not from the ranks of the *enarques*, but rather had an undistinguished educational background and became a private lawyer. Whereas many other political elites were groomed inside the civil service, Sarkozy ran for elected office early, became a city councilor in his twenties, a city mayor, a member of the National Assembly, and by 1993 a member of the government cabinet. During that time he developed a reputation for favoring greater reform and being critical of French political culture as too risk averse and reliant on state power. During his stint as Minister of the Interior he also became known for his tough positions on immigration and crime, most notably during the 2005 riots. Sarkozy broke with the traditional mold of the French president; he was more of an energetic self-made man whose personality and behavior struck many, unfavorably, as so-called American. Indeed, Sarkozy (or Sarko, as some wags nicknamed him), openly expressed his admiration for the United States.

Since taking office, Sarkozy has laid out numerous reforms, though the extent to which he will be able to carry these through remains uncertain. He assembled around him a diverse cabinet, including members of the Socialist Party and the first women cabinet member of North African origin—and few *enarques*. But he also became mired in public controversy over his ostentatious lifestyle, divorce, and remarriage, which has cost him time and public credibility. Sarko must now buckle down.

prime ministers are chiefly responsible for cultivating support for presidential policies from within the legislature, rather than setting policy themselves. Prime ministers may be removed with a **motion of censure** (effectively a vote of no confidence), though this requires an absolute majority of the 577 members of the lower house.¹⁰

When presidents lack a majority in the legislature, leading to the appointment of a prime minister from an opposing party—**cohabitation**—the prime minister assumes a much greater degree of power, since she or he does not feel bound to subordinate policy matters to a president from another party. Under these conditions, the explicit powers of the prime minister as laid out in the constitution become prominent, effectively creating a parliamentary system with a more ceremonial president. However, the 2000 constitutional amendment that modified presidential terms may have well brought cohabitation to an end, since presidential and parliamentary elections now occur at roughly the same time. It is possible that in the future voters could split their

ticket, favoring one party for the legislature and the candidate of another party for the president, leading again to cohabitation and a strong prime minister. So far, that has not been the case, nor do many observers expect it in the future.

THE LEGISLATURE

France has a bicameral legislature, composed of the 577-member *Assemblée nationale* (National Assembly) and a 321-member upper house, the *Sénat* (Senate). Deputies in the National Assembly are elected for five-year renewable terms, and senators are elected for six-year terms. The constitution of the Fifth Republic clearly weakened the legislature vis-à-vis the executive. As a result, the French legislature is weaker than its counterparts in most advanced democracies, but it still plays an important role.

The constitution gives the legislature the right to propose legislation, but most bills (about 80 percent) originate with the executive. The constitution gives the government considerable control over the workings of the legislature, including control of the agenda and the schedule of parliamentary activity. One particularly important instrument is the **blocked vote**, which limits the legislature's ability to amend legislation. French legislators also have no power to introduce bills or amendments that affect public spending; only the government may introduce such legislation. Moreover, if the Parliament does not approve finance bills and the annual budget within seventy days, they automatically become law.

Another unique feature of the constitution allows governments to submit legislation as motions of confidence. In such cases, the proposed laws are passed unless the legislature can muster a motion of censure against the government. This is not an easy task (as it requires an absolute majority), and one that could trigger new elections. This feature was used frequently during the 1980s and 1990s as a way of passing important legislation without legislative debate. The constitution's Article 38 also grants the legislature the right to enable the government to legislate via decrees, known as ordinances, though this has only been used sparingly. Finally, the constitution limits the number and powers of the legislative committees that served as powerful legislative tools of previous regimes.

In spite of these limitations, the legislature has gradually asserted itself more forcefully. Since the 1970s, it has conducted a weekly questioning of government ministers (though not the president) that is somewhat similar to the British routine. The French parliament now regularly amends legislation, and the executive no longer asserts its right to reject all amendments. In 1995, the legislative session was extended from six months to nine months, and extended special sessions have become fairly common. Legislative committees have become more important in proposing and amending legislation, and

motions of censure, while unlikely to pass, are used by the opposition as a way to bring controversial issues to the floor for debate. In April 2008, the government faced a motion of censure over sending more troops to Afghanistan, which was used by the opposition Socialists as a way to criticize President Sarkozy's call for stronger military ties to the United States and NATO.¹¹

The French upper house, the *Sénat*, is clearly the weaker of the two legislative chambers. It is elected indirectly by an electoral college of local government officials and members of the lower house. This indirect election helps deprive it of popular legitimacy, and its legislative powers are limited to delaying legislation passed by the lower house. Important legislation has been passed over the objection of the *Sénat*, most notably during the Socialist governments from 1981 to 1986, when the more conservative *Sénat* opposed much of the legislation enacted by the leftist government. The *Sénat*'s main power resides in its ability to reject constitutional amendments, which require the consent of both houses. The *Sénat* is widely seen as somewhat obsolete and unrepresentative, composed of elderly conservatives (more than half the members are over sixty years old). As with the British House of Lords, there have been regular calls for constitutional reform of the upper house, but unlike in the UK, there have been few constitutional changes since de Gaulle's failed attempt in 1969.

THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

As in most democracies, the French judiciary is divided into several branches, including civil, criminal, and administrative. The French judicial system is based on Continental European **code law**, in which laws are derived from detailed legal codes rather than from precedent (as in common law used in the United States, Canada, and the UK). During Napoleon's rule, French laws were systematically codified, and much of that original code remains in place today. The role of judges is simply to interpret and apply those codes. Consequently, judges in France have less discretion and autonomy than those in the common law systems.

The French court system also operates very differently from that in the United States or Canada. Judges play a much greater role in determining whether charges should be brought, and they assume many of the roles of prosecuting attorneys. In France, judges, not lawyers, question and cross-examine witnesses. Because the 1958 constitution created a semi-presidential system with built-in potential for deadlock of the legislature and the executive, the Fifth Republic also created a **Constitutional Council** to settle constitutional disputes.¹² The Constitutional Council is comprised of nine members, who are appointed for a single nine-year term by the president and heads of the National Assembly and Senate. Former presidents of France also serve as

members of the Council, for life, once they have left office. The Council is empowered to rule on any constitutional matter, so long as there is a request from either the government or the head of or at least sixty members of either house of the legislature. In its early years, the Constitutional Council tended to act rarely and usually backed presidential actions. In recent decades, however, it has shown more independence; in 2008, the Constitutional Council rejected legislation that would have allowed for the indefinite imprisonment of dangerous criminals even after their terms had been served. One role that the Constitutional Council does not serve is that of a court of last appeal for cases from lower courts; that function is held by other judicial bodies.

The Electoral System

France's electoral system is majoritarian rather than proportional, thus looking more like the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom than Continental Europe. However, the use of a two-round runoff between candidates distinguishes it from the plurality-based system found in those countries. French presidents are directly elected in two rounds of voting every five years. Unless a candidate gets over 50 percent of the vote in the first round (which has never happened in the Fifth Republic), a second round of balloting two weeks later pits the top two candidates against each other.

France also employs a two-round electoral system for its single-member district elections of members of the National Assembly. In each district, candidates with over 12.5 percent of the vote face off in a second round of balloting (again, unless a candidate gains over 50 percent of the votes in the first round). During the Socialist administration of François Mitterrand, France experimented with proportional representation for lower-house elections, as it had in the Fourth Republic, but returned to single-member districts two years later. Using two rounds of voting does ensure that winning candidates have a majority of the vote in each district, but it still delivers disproportionate outcomes common in single-member district elections. In 2007, for example, President Sarkozy's party won 54 percent of the lower-house seats with only 46 percent of the nationwide vote.

By using two rounds of voting for presidential and lower-house elections, the French system encourages more parties and candidates than do single-member district systems in Canada, the UK, or the United States. At the same time, the second round of elections still uses a winner-take-all format, and the 12.5 percent threshold for entry into the second round of legislative elections severely limits the number of parties that actually win. The National Front, for example, won nearly 5 percent of the vote in the first round of the 2007 elections, but not a single seat. The complexity of a two-round system can create a rather confusing electoral landscape, as parties and individuals com-

pete for seats with the expectation not necessarily that they can win, but rather that a good showing in the first round can translate into leverage to be used against more powerful parties. Small parties or coalitions or candidates may throw their support behind a stronger rival as part of a political deal. Still, these calculations can backfire, as they did in the 2002 presidential elections, when candidates on the left fragmented their vote—with a disastrous outcome. We shall speak more about this below.

Local Government

France is usually considered a prototypical unitary state with all power concentrated in Paris, the capital and largest city. Furthermore, compared with most of its neighbors, France has experienced relatively little separatism or demands for greater regional autonomy (an independence movement on the island of Corsica is a rare exception). Whereas this is a generally accurate picture, France also has a long history of localism and regionalism that should not be discounted and three levels of local government—region, department, and commune—that have enjoyed increasing power over time.

There are twenty-six regions in France, four of which are overseas. The regions' primary responsibilities are regional planning and economic development. The regions are led by a council, elected every six years. At the next level there are 100 departments, with responsibility in such areas as health services and infrastructure. For nearly two centuries, power in the departments resided with a **prefect** appointed by the central government, but a series of reforms in 1982 transferred a great deal of power to a directly elected council. Finally, at the municipal level there are directly elected councils and mayors who handle the main tasks of these communities. Since the 1982 reforms, local governments have been given some control over taxes and revenues, and as a result their powers have slowly grown. However, their share of the budgetary pie remains very small.

Other Institutions: The French Bureaucracy

The development of the French state is associated with the creation of one of the world's earliest and most efficient bureaucracies, the legacy of which can be seen in contemporary French politics. Compared with that of most other democracies, where the notion of bureaucracy conjures up the image of inefficiency and red tape, the civil service in France retains a high profile and considerable prestige, as well as an important springboard to elected office.

One gateway to the bureaucracy is the **École Nationale d'Administration (ENA)**, a state educational institution the primary mission of which is to train civil servants. Indeed, the highest category of civil servants are usually recruited through ENA and several other elite state institutions.

This specialized training combined with few barriers between civil service and politics means that the links between the bureaucracy and elected office are strong and considered normal. The *énarques*, as graduates of ENA are known, commonly move between the civil service and elected or appointed political office. Former President Chirac graduated from ENA in 1959 and was a civil servant for nearly a decade before running for office; his last prime minister, Dominique de Villepin, also was an *énarque* with a long career within the state—indeed, Villepin never held any elected office, including that of the prime minister himself. This blurry line between state and politics extends to the economy as well, which has long been subject to state guidance and partial state control. Career bureaucrats often move from the civil service to positions within business: a transition that is known as *pantouflage*—literally, putting on slippers. The largest private companies in France remain dominated by *énarques*, though this has declined of late.¹³ The impact of the civil service on French life thus is hard to overstate. By one estimate, over half the population either works for, or has a parent, child, or spouse who works for, the public sector; of course, such a large state comes with a cost in the form of wages and benefits, and as the French population ages, supporting the civil service and its retirees will be an increasingly costly proposition.

POLITICAL CONFLICT AND COMPETITION

The Party System

De Gaulle was deeply suspicious of political parties, blaming them for much of the political turmoil of the Third and Fourth Republics. The single-member district system helped narrow the field of parties and often produced stable majority governments. By the 1960s, the badly fragmented party system of the Fourth Republic had been replaced by a less fragmented multiparty system that featured a **bipolar** alternation of coalitions of the center right and the center left.¹⁴ By the late 1970s, the political blocs of the center composed mainly of the **Rally for the French Republic (RPR)** and the **Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)**, and the left, composed mainly of the **French Communist Party (PCF)** and the **French Socialist Party (PS)**, each earned about half the vote in French elections. The four major parties together won over 90 percent of the vote. The electoral system helped this dominance of the two major blocs, as the single-member district system, with its two rounds of voting, required coalition building in the second round.

Since the 1980s, the **four-party, two-bloc system** has been in transition. One important ideological change has been the spectacular demise of the PCF

on the left and the emergence of the **National Front (FN)** on the right, changing the prospects for electoral coalitions. In addition, constitutional changes may have brought cohabitation to an effective end, also transforming the power of political parties to act as a counterweight to the president. The French system may be coalescing into a more standard two-party system, though the two-round electoral system probably means that smaller parties will continue to play a role in French political life. In addition, the institution of the presidency also encourages party formation as a springboard for presidential campaigns, while weakening the internal coherence of the parties themselves. Below we discuss the main ideological groups in the party system.

THE FRENCH LEFT

The Communist Party and the Socialist Party have been the dominant parties of the French left since the end of World War II. The Communist Party played a major role in the French resistance to the Nazi occupation and was rewarded at the polls after the war. The Communists had long been a party staunchly loyal to Moscow, and supported the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 (though it drifted away from its allegiance by the 1970s). Historically, the PCF had a very strong base of support among French workers and in France's trade union movement, and for much of the post-World War II period it did well in local and national elections, usually winning about 20 percent of the vote. This did not translate into significant national power, even though the PCF participated in government coalitions led by the rival Socialist Party and briefly held cabinet positions in Socialist governments. Rather than giving the PCF credibility, government experience only tarnished its image as a principled party of the opposition; the collapse of the Soviet Union undermined the appeal of its ideology. By 2007, the PCF polled only 4 percent of the votes in the first round of parliamentary elections.

The Socialist Party, formed in 1905, was also long divided into social democratic and Marxist camps. In the 1930s, the Socialists were elected to power and led a brief and ill-fated government. After World War II, the Socialist Party reemerged, though it regularly gained fewer votes than the Communists and stagnated. Its fortunes began to change, however, when François Mitterrand became its leader in 1971. Mitterrand forged an electoral alliance with the stronger Communists and eventually eclipsed them with a more moderate social democratic ideology. This strategy was vindicated by the 1981 election of Mitterrand to the presidency, the first (and to date only) leftist president of the Fifth Republic. Mitterrand's long presidency (1981–1995) was marred by his party's loss of its legislative majority in 1986 and by his need to cohabit with a conservative prime minister during most of his two terms in office. Subsequently the Socialist Party won a legislative majority in 1997, and though

they were defeated in the 2002 and 2007 legislative and presidential elections, they remain a powerful political party that is certain to return to power. At present, the Communist Party, along with the Green Party and Radical Party, command some attention but few seats.

THE RIGHT

Unity has also long proved elusive for the French right, though like the left this may now be over. In the past, the most important force on the right consisted of those who consider themselves the political heirs of General Charles de Gaulle, often called Gaullists or neo-Gaullists. But since de Gaulle never associated himself with any party, his heirs created various competing parties of the right that were more often than not divided by personality and presidential ambitions. The two most important forces were the Rally for the French Republic (RPR), created by Jacques Chirac, and the **Union for French Democracy (UDF)**, an alliance of five center-right parties founded by Chirac's rival, former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. These parties differed in part over the role of the state and their view of the European Union, but over the years, the differences mostly disappeared. In 2002, President Chirac encouraged most of the center right to cohere as a single party, the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP). Under the current president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, the UMP has continued to move in a more liberal direction; like the Socialist Party, however, the UMP supports a strong state role in economic development and extensive social benefits.

Unity among France's two main conservative parties was partly spurred by the emergence and surprising success of the National Front on the far right. A small if noisy party, the National Front's major policy focus has been a reduction in immigration and expulsion of illegal immigrants. Led by the fiery **Jean-Marie Le Pen**, the FN made its first real mark in national politics when proportional representation was briefly introduced in the 1980s, enabling it to win its first seats in the lower house. The party reached its peak with 15 percent of the vote in the 1997 legislative elections, but due to the single-member district system has never won more than a single seat in the lower house. Nevertheless, in the 2002 presidential elections Le Pen benefited from the divided votes among various leftist candidates to actually make it into a runoff with President Chirac. In the second round, Le Pen won less than 20 percent of the vote as voters recoiled from the possibility of a Le Pen presidency. But the factors that make the National Front a success, particularly fears over immigration, remain. To a large extent these fears have been successfully coopted by the UMP, which has emphasized law and order and greater controls over immigration and immigrants.

Elections

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 2007

Toward the end of his second term, President Chirac had lost much of his popular support. This was due in part to public fatigue (Chirac had been in office since 1995), allegations that he and his government were deeply corrupt, and a greater sense that the government was incapable of carrying out needed reforms. Indeed, many expected that in 2002 he would lose to the candidate of the Socialist Party, but he was saved by the fragmentation on the left that led to the runoff against Le Pen. Chirac thus chose not to run for a third term in 2007, leaving the elections open to a new generation of candidates. On the left, the Socialist Party fielded Segolene Royal, an *entreeuse* who nonetheless had a long service in elected office, having first entered the National Assembly in 1988. Royal had also served in several cabinet positions in previous governments. Also notable was Royal's gender, a woman in a country where female representation in the National Assembly is low by European standards. On the right, the UMP's Nicolas Sarkozy also represented a break from the past (see "Sarko' the American?", p. 131). The 2007 presidential elections between Royal and Sarkozy mobilized the population to a degree perhaps not seen for many years; voter turnout was higher than at any time since 1974, and the campaign turned on questions of reform, liberalization, immigration, and improving law and order. More broadly, the campaign was about change, with Sarkozy arguing that the country faced a crisis that required dramatic actions. In spite of his polarizing nature, Sarkozy won handily over Royal. The question now is whether the president can deliver, something we shall discuss in the following sections.

REFERENDA

The constitution of the Fifth Republic allows the president to call national referenda. President de Gaulle held five referenda, staking his reputation and political capital on each one. Referenda were used to approve controversial policies, such as independence for Algeria, and to approve the direct election of the president. When de Gaulle lost a 1969 referendum aimed at reforming the upper house of the legislature, he resigned. Since then, referenda have been used less frequently, though often utilized regarding changes to the European Union. In 1972, President Pompidou used a referendum to approve the enlargement of the European Union, and in 1992 President Mitterrand asked voters to approve the EU's Maastricht Treaty. More recently, in 2005 President Chirac submitted a proposed European Constitution to a referendum. Voters delivered a resounding rejection of the document despite Chirac's support for it. The defeat weakened Chirac, and since that time the government has not been willing to submit

further EU treaty reforms to a national vote (it is not required by the constitution). France has suggested, however, that it might require a public referendum on a Turkish membership in the EU, if it is offered. As such a referendum would surely fail, this has engendered consternation among other EU members as well as Turkey.

Civil Society

As early as the 1830s, the French scholar Alexis de Tocqueville noted the weakness of French civil associations. Most scholars argue that French interest groups and associations remain weaker than those in most advanced democracies, a function of the powerful state and the emphasis on so-called mass action over organized lobbying. Nevertheless, trade unions and business organizations are two important elements of civil society that are worth discussing in detail.

LABOR UNIONS

Observers of French politics, particularly its numerous strikes, commonly speak of how powerful the French labor unions are. This is misleading. In fact, French labor unions have traditionally had a long history of being "divided, weakened, and quarrelsome."¹⁵ Less than 10 percent of the French workforce belongs to a union, one of the lowest rates in Europe. And unlike the powerful trade unions found elsewhere on the continent, French labor unions have usually been divided along partisan lines. The most powerful French union confederation includes the **General Confederation of Labor (CGT)**, historically linked to the PCF; in contrast, the **French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT)** and Force Ouvrière (FO) have tended to have a more centrist or anti-Communist orientation. Paradoxically, it is in part the weakness and fragmentation of French unions that explain the large number of strikes that occur in France. More powerful unions could effectively engage in productive bargaining with employers or the government, but lacking this authority, public demonstrations and work stoppages have become a vital tool to express discontent, something that capitalizes on the French tendency toward mass action and public protest. But despite their weakness, unions continue to play a key role in French society and in the management of the country's major welfare organizations (health care, retirement, and social security). They are also strongly represented in France's public-sector workforce and are a force to be considered when any French government attempts to reform welfare benefits, as has been attempted of late.

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

Compared with French labor, the business sector is well organized, with large firms represented by MEDEF (French Enterprise Movement), and smaller

firms represented by CFPME (General Confederation of Small and Medium-Size Enterprises). Both have tended to support lower taxes on business, more flexible laws regarding the hiring and firing of workers, and a reduced role for government in the economy. Business has generally supported parties on the right like the UMP. Since large numbers of France's business leaders are *marques*, French business often has privileged access to the state bureaucracy. Not surprisingly, MEDEF has been a strong supporter of Sarkozy's call for economic reforms; CFPME has been less enthusiastic, fearing deregulation that will remove many of the barriers that currently protect small businesses from competition.

ORGANIZED RELIGION

France is formally a Catholic nation, and despite minorities of Muslims, Protestants, and Jews, over 80 percent of the French are nominally Catholics. Yet despite the predominance of a single religion, France has long been an anti-clerical society, dating back to the Revolution, when the church was seen as a tool of monarchical power. Church and state have been formally separate since 1905, under what is known as *laïcité* (which roughly translates as secularism). Under *laïcité*, no religion could receive state support, and religious education was restricted. The church continues to play a role in important social rituals (marriage, births, funerals), but not in the day-to-day lives of most French citizens. The church lacks an important or central role in French politics, which has no Christian democratic party as found in other Catholic countries, such as Italy or Germany. The church can, however, rally to the defense of its own institutional issues: in the 1980s, church opposition forced the Socialist government to back away from plans to impose stricter government control over religious schools.

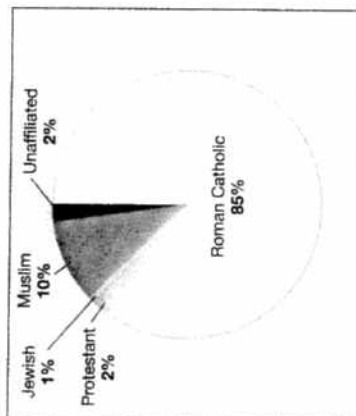
As the Catholic Church has waned in power, other religions, particularly Islam, have grown. France has thus seen a rapid growth in mosques and Islamic educational and cultural institutions, something that has made many French nervous. For many of these institutions the Union of Islamic Organizations acts as an umbrella group, and in 2002 the government created the French Council of the Muslim Faith to act as an intermediary between the government and Muslim leaders. This has had limited success in building state-faith relations, and tensions remain.

SOCIETY

Ethnic and National Identity

In its ethnic identity, France is a relatively homogeneous society. Historically this was not the case, and it continues to change in the present. In centuries

RELIGION



past, many parts of France maintained distinct ethnic identities, which included their own languages and cultures: Gascon, Savoyard, Occitan, Basque, and Breton, to name a few. Over time, these unique communities were largely assimilated into a single French identity, though certain ethnic groups, particularly Basques and Corsicans, have retained stronger language and cultural ties.

Assimilation was in part connected to the particular role that the French state played in the development of national identity. One of the important facets of the French Revolution was the idea of a set of universal rights that identified people as citizens rather than subjects of the state. This form of republicanism was unlike that of the American Revolution, where democracy was predicated on an individualism that demanded a weak state and federalism. French revolutionaries believed in the necessity of a powerful state to destroy the institutions of the past and serve the people in building the future. A powerful state thus became a key instrument in solidifying and expressing French national identity and patriotism in a way in which it did not in the United States.¹⁶ In contrast to U.S. policy, in France rivals for public loyalty were eradicated or brought under control of the state.

This relationship between state and nation is now being challenged by changes in both religious and ethnic identity. In the past, *laïcité* served to subordinate religious identity to the state, and ethnic identities were downgraded through assimilation and nationalism. In fact, French identity is so primary that the national census does not record such basic information as ethnicity and religion (and is forbidden by law to do so). This became a point of debate in the 2007 presidential campaign, during which the candidates and the public were divided over whether recording such information would help address social issues or exacerbate division.

Why this question should emerge is that these identities are becoming more salient. In the past few decades, France has seen an influx of people from outside of Europe, notably Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Data are sketchy, but it is assumed that France has the largest immigrant population in Europe; around 10 percent are foreign born. By way of contrast, in the United States the number of foreign born is about 12 percent, and in Canada the number is approximately 20 percent. As in many countries, immigrants to France and their children often find themselves marginalized due to a lack of education, language barriers, and/or persistent discrimination.

Many immigrants are concentrated in housing projects on the outskirts of Paris and other large cities, with poor social services, employment opportunities, or transportation. This ghettoization compounds the sense of disconnect from French life and has led to violence. In 2005, France saw a month of heavy rioting across France's immigrant suburbs, culminating in a state of emergency and approximately \$200 million in damages. A second set of riots, not as large though more violent, occurred in 2007.

Within this debate over immigration, the future of the Muslim community takes center stage. Currently, France has the largest Muslim population in Europe outside Turkey: about 5 to 6 million people (approximately 10 percent of the population, including foreign born and those born in France). The growth of a large Muslim population has been disconcerting for a country that historically has been overwhelmingly Catholic, if now only nominally so. This situation is not unlike that of other Western countries but is compounded by the particular position of the French state. *Laïcité* means that Muslims are expected to place their faith below that of national and patriotic identity as

IN COMPARISON RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT

Should religion and government be kept separate? Percent saying yes:

Country	Percent
France	72
Canada	71
Germany	67
Brazil	67
United Kingdom	66
India	58
Nigeria	57
United States	55
Russia	55
South Africa	45
Japan	33
Mexico	38
China	21

*Data on Iran not available.

Source: Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2007.

part of the assimilation process. Yet many Muslims believe that the French state should be more accommodating to their needs, rather than vice versa. Furthermore, in the face of persistent marginalization, many Muslims turn to their faith as a source of identity and meaning.

In the past few years, one prominent example of this conflict was over the headscarf. Growing expressions of Muslim identity have been a challenge to *laïcité*, in particular whether girls could wear a headscarf in public schools. Many French on both left and right argued that educational institutions, as part of the state, could not allow the wearing of the headscarf without violating the principle of *laïcité*. After a long discussion, France passed a law in 2004 that forbade the wearing of any "conspicuous religious symbol" in schools, whatever the faith. The ban has been overwhelmingly popular among the non-Muslim French population, but the French Muslim population is more divided.¹⁷ Whether such steps will help bring minorities into the mainstream or further marginalize them is open to debate. Many French would point out that the United Kingdom's much more multicultural approach (for example, female Muslims in the British police force may wear headscarves) has not prevented similar problems of marginalization, and that the Muslim community in the UK is much more radicalized than it is in France.

How to resolve these conflicts over immigration and religion? President Sarkozy has argued in favor of positive discrimination, which would give advantages to immigrants and their children: this is a radical position in a country whose revolution was based on the notion that all humans are inherently equal and thus not entitled to special treatment. At the same time, Sarkozy has favored greater restrictions on immigration, a greater emphasis on integrating immigrant populations, and a greater emphasis on so-called law and order (which is widely understood to mean a focus on crime committed by immigrants and their offspring and to many observers is a particularly subtle expression of racism). Multiculturalism remains taboo in France, and the current policy path seems to be to provide more opportunities for immigrants to assimilate themselves into the French polity. This may work, or it may leave increasing numbers of immigrants and their offspring behind.

Ideology and Political Culture

The role of the state in shaping French national identity can be seen in the country's ideological landscape and political culture. Ideological divisions in France are much more fragmented than are those in other European countries, where there tend to be a few coherent and persistent parties that dominate the political scene. Divisive historical events, the weakness of civil society, the importance of the state, Gaullist hostility toward political parties, the two-round electoral system, and semi-presidentialism have all played a

part in creating a system in which individual political leaders, rather than ideological groupings, have been central.

As a result, although we can speak generally of left and right, social democratic or liberal, in fact the ideological divisions are much more diverse and reflect a range of experiences, such as the battles over the French Revolution and the role of the Catholic Church in French life. In many cases, these values cannot be classified as an ideology at all but rather fall under the term *populism*, or a set of ideas that is suspicious of organized power and places faith in the common man. From the revolution to Napoléon to de Gaulle, French leaders have often appealed to the masses by seeking to transcend ideology and speak for the people. This populism has helped keep civil society and ideology weak by fostering an ongoing mistrust of such institutions as political parties.

The residual strength of populist ideas explains not only why ideological divisions in France are as much within groups as between them but also why one of the most notable elements of French political culture is the tendency toward mass protests. With civic organizations being too weak to articulate public concerns and with individuals being faithful to the populist notion that the people must struggle against those with power, one of the most common forms of political activity in France is mass protest: marches, demonstrations, and strikes. For example, France regularly averages more than 1,000 workers' strikes per year, compared with fewer than 200 in the United Kingdom.¹⁸ That said, French respondents to political surveys tend to put themselves more on the left of the political spectrum than do those in the United States, UK, or Canada.¹⁹

At the same time, France's populism and faith in the power of mass action is combined with a strong sense of national and patriotic identity and a pride in the French state, with a belief that France is exceptional among countries—not unlike the American vision of itself. This has led to frequent conflict with the United States, a rival with a similar notion of its own exceptionalism but whose ideology of individualism runs counter to the French vision.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

The political economy of France shares with its continental neighbors a strong state role in the economy. Part of this is a function of modern social democratic policies, whereas other elements can be traced over the course of several centuries. As far back as the sixteenth century, the absolute monarchy levied heavy taxes on the populace to support a large bureaucracy. At the same time, the French economy was highly mercantilist domestically, divided into a number of smaller markets, each subject to internal tariffs and nontariff

barriers. Exports constituted a relatively small portion of the economy.²⁰ Although the French Revolution and the reign of Napoleon rationalized many of these structures, by the twentieth century France was lagging behind many of its neighbors in terms of economic development. The country retained a large agricultural sector, had few large firms, and had experienced a relatively low level of urbanization. As one scholar described Paris in 1948, it was "empty of vehicles, needed neither traffic lights nor one-way streets"; electrical services and major consumer goods like refrigerators were little known. He concluded, "France had not really entered the twentieth century."²¹

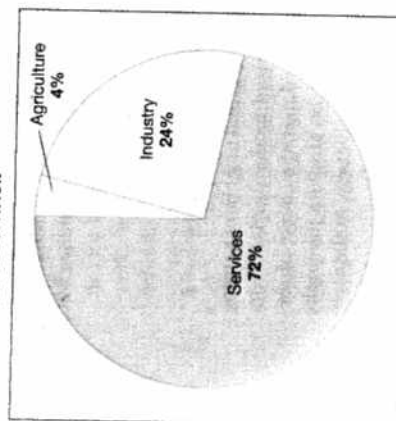
In the aftermath of World War II, the French government set out to rapidly transform the economy. This took the form of what the French termed **dirigisme**, which can be explained as an emphasis on state authority in economic development—a combination of both social democratic and mercantilist ideas. Dirigisme involved the nationalization of several sectors of the economy (such as utilities), the promotion of a limited number of "national champion" industries to compete internationally (such as Airbus), the creation of a national-planning ministry, and the establishment of the ENA and similar schools to ensure the education of bureaucrats who would be able to direct the economy.

True to its objectives, the dirigiste system helped bring about a transformation of the French economy. Economic wealth grew rapidly, along with increased urbanization. Through the help of economic subsidies from the European Union, France was also able to change its agricultural sector from one of small farms to one of large-scale production. Whereas in the 1950s France's per capita GDP was approximately half that of the United States,

within twenty years it had surpassed its historical rivals, the United Kingdom and Germany.²² Dirigisme, however, came with costs, including a large public sector, an expansive welfare system, and a heavy tax burden. By 2007, total government expenditures consumed 50 percent of France's GDP compared with around 40 percent in Canada and 30 percent in the United States.

As with many other economic systems around the world, in the past twenty years this model has been put to the test. By the mid-1980s, unemployment had risen to over 10 percent, a rate that has persisted and is disproportionately concentrated among the young. Economic growth, which had been double that of the United States from

LABOR FORCE BY OCCUPATION



the 1950s to the 1970s, fell to around 2 percent, the lowest in the EU. As a result of this slow growth, France's GDP has stagnated, once again falling below the United Kingdom and Germany. France also faces the European-wide dilemma of an aging population, compounded by a large public sector workforce that can retire early with generous benefits. As the French population has grown older, it is thus using an ever greater share of the welfare system, while fewer young workers are available to fund those expenditures.

The French government has found it difficult to respond to these challenges. Part of the reason is a function of political culture. As the dirigist model faces internal stresses, it is also being buffeted by international competition from the United States, Asia, and within the EU itself. Increasing globalization presents new opportunities for France's economy, but for many French, globalization is seen as risky economic liberalism extended to the international level. Tellingly, when the French speak of economic liberalization or globalization, they speak of an Anglo-Saxon model, by which they mean the United Kingdom and the United States. Many French thus are suspicious that domestic economic reforms will essentially Americanize France, undermining their core identity. France is awash in discussions that the country is in decline and must carry out radical change if it is to survive in a changing world. It was Sarkozy's very call for a rupture with the past that helped him win the presidential election.

President Sarkozy has proposed a number of changes, including pension reform, expanding the work week past thirty-five hours, lowering taxes, deregulating business, and liberalizing the labor market. These will be easier said than done; the previous government backed off on reforms in 2006 after a wave of strikes, and President Sarkozy has already faced numerous protests in 2007 and 2008 against these reforms. Meanwhile, the global economic recession only makes reforms that much more difficult. There are, however, several elements working in favor of reform. First is the general consensus that reform is necessary, even if there is less appetite for the reforms themselves. Second is the fact that in spite of the structural problems of the French economy, in many ways it is highly competitive. The United States may have a higher GDP per capita, for example, but that is due in part to the fact that Americans work much longer hours than do the French. But when measured in terms of productivity, the French produce more, per hour of labor, than do Americans, British, or Canadians.²³ The challenge now will be to reform old institutions and capitalize on French economic strengths while assuring the public that French identity itself will not get lost in the process.

Another interesting facet of the debate about the future of the French economy can be seen in the struggle over agriculture. Though the percentage of the French population engaged in agriculture has shrunk dramatically in the past fifty years, agriculture still plays a central role in French identity. French

DECLINISM IN FRANCE

For the past few years, there has been a growth industry in France of books decrying the country's current state and predicting its demise unless steps are taken. One best seller by historian and economist Nicolas Baverez, *La France qui tombe* (*Falling France*), claims that the country's greatest period was in the 1970s, and that since then it has been unable to adapt to a changing European and international environment. This crisis, he has argued, is not merely economic but also intellectual. Member of Parliament Pierre Lellouche's *Illusions Gauloises* (*Gaulic Illusions*) similarly criticizes France's focus on its external forces (the United States, the UK, and the EU) rather than emphasizing its own internal problems and need for reform. Journalists Denis Jeambar and Jacqueline Remy, in their book *Nos enfants nous haïront* (*Our Children Will Hate Us*) criticize the '68-ers (as baby boomers are commonly called in France) for protecting their interests above all else and thus stifling change. The discussion of declinism helped pave the way for a Sarkozy presidency, but whether France is "in decline" depends on what we mean by this term. France remains a highly developed and internationally competitive country with some of the highest standards of living in the world. And all countries, including the United States and the UK, have experienced their own declinist debates on numerous occasions, only to reform and rebound. Catastrophe sells but is no predictor of the future.

culture is strongly tied to the concept of rural and agricultural life, and this is also bound up with national identity: locally or nationally produced food is central to the French self-image and to international prestige (think of French wines or cheeses).

The French identity has been sustained in part, however, by large subsidies from the EU, through what is known as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Created in part to satisfy French conditions for joining the EU, it became one of the EU's main expenditures. The CAP consumes over 40 percent of the EU's budget, with France the largest single recipient. Whereas countries with large agricultural sectors have done well under the CAP, member states with smaller or more efficient farms have resented the costs of the CAP. Outside the EU, the United States and less developed countries have long opposed the CAP's tariff barriers and import quotas, which limits non-EU agricultural products. The growing cost of the CAP (especially with enlargement), combined with pressure from non-EU countries, has intensified this conflict in recent years. But in spite of the pressure, the French government has resisted restructuring the CAP. French farmers have also turned the issue into one of anti-globalization, arguing that reduced support and open trade will lead to the "McDonaldization" of French food.²⁴ In a country where agriculture is central to national identity, such arguments carry weight.

FOREIGN RELATIONS AND THE WORLD

Our discussions have already touched on the idea that France views itself as a product of revolution with universal application, such as the American Revolution before it or the Russian Revolution after. With such a view, France has long seen itself as having a special mission in the international system, that is, to export its revolution's core ideas. Such thinking was part of the legitimizing force of the French empire in the eighteenth century, when the concepts of egalitarianism and the importance of the nation-state spread from France across Europe. Modern nationalism as we understand it, in the form of mass volunteer armies and patriotic fervor, was first associated with the French Revolution and Napoléon Bonaparte. Today, the historical struggles for national identity across Europe are often traced to the Napoleonic Wars.

France's unique view of its place in the world has persisted to the present, and this role was brought into sharp focus with the rise of two rivals to universal authority: the United States and the Soviet Union. With the onset of the cold war, France saw itself as caught between two superpowers, both of whom claimed that their ideological mission represented the ultimate political destiny for the rest of the world, including France. During the cold war, France played an important role in two Western European institutions: the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the case of the EU, France was a founding member, along with Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, in 1951. Recall how radical this proposal was at the time, since France and Germany had concluded a bitter war only a few years earlier. But France's motivation was not driven by a sense that its role in the international system had past, requiring it to subsume its powers into a larger, supranational organization. Rather, France saw in the EU the potential to extend its own authority, as a counterweight to the United States and the Soviet Union. With a French-German motor at its core, the EU could be a superpower in its own right, changing a bipolar international system into a multipolar one.

Thus, the French have always viewed the EU somewhat differently than have other member states, particularly Germany and the United Kingdom. For Germany, the EU has been seen as a necessary instrument to prevent another major war by openly refuting the primacy of nationalism and patriotism. For the United Kingdom, the EU is an ongoing threat for precisely the same reason. But for France, the EU has always been an instrument through which French ideals could be pursued. Indeed, under de Gaulle, France consistently blocked the UK's membership in the EU, viewing it as a Trojan horse for American interests.

Even NATO, explicitly created to counter Soviet power, was viewed by the French in these terms. For de Gaulle, America's domination of NATO reduced

the likelihood that the organization could function as an expression of French policies and values. As a result, the French relationship to NATO was much more distant. Seeking to enhance a European position that would be more independent of the United States, France withdrew from the central military command of NATO in 1966 and developed its own independent nuclear capacity. France failed to achieve its objective of developing Europe as a superpower independent of the United States, but it continued to seek its own path and authority in the international system, both independently and through the EU.

The end of the cold war and the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower brought a new set of issues and concerns to French foreign policy. Even before 2001, French officials worried about what they termed the United States' "hyperpower". This hyperpower was no longer fettered by the cold war and in the absence of any restrictions would be free to act unilaterally, attempting to remake the world in its own image. Moreover, American military hyperpower would be further enhanced by globalization, which at its core was seen as an internationalization of Anglo-Saxon values and institutions. As a French foreign minister put it, the United States was like a fish in the sea of globalization, uniquely suited to swim in its waters. For some French observers, then, the end of the cold war and the rise of U.S. hyperpower not only were a challenge to France's international role but also represented an existential crisis, undermining France's place in the world order.²⁵

This tension has been evident since September 11, 2001. Although France expressed strong support for the United States after the terrorist attacks, relations between the two countries grew more tense, especially over the U.S. decision to go to war with Iraq. The debate over the war related to a number of factors important to French foreign policy. First, France saw the war as a clear expression of U.S. hyperpower, a unilateralism that rejected international institutions and thus marginalized other countries. Opposition to the war was therefore driven in part by a desire to have a say, and by the belief that U.S. force should be part of a multilateral process. The administration of George W. Bush rejected such calls, seeing France's arguments as an attempt simply to stymie U.S. power. A second factor was that France has traditionally cultivated a strong relationship with the Middle East, establishing far friendlier relations with many Arab states than with the United States. Not surprisingly, then, as with the United States moved closer to war, France became one of the strongest voices of protest, opposing a United Nations resolution authorizing force.

The Iraq war badly damaged diplomatic relations between the United States and Europe, particularly France. However, these relations may be on the mend with the election of President Sarkozy. Unlike his predecessor, Sarkozy is unabashedly pro-American and has sought to reconnect the coun-

try more strongly to the United States; for example, he proposed that France rejoin the NATO command structure that it left in 1966. Sarkozy has emphasized the need for a more muscular role for French foreign policy, calling for a modernization of the military and taking a more assertive position on such issues as Iran's nuclear program. Sarkozy's vision is one where France plays a stronger international role through its own diplomatic and military authority, a renewed partnership with the United States, and a leadership position in the European Union. It may be the last issue, however, that proves most difficult to achieve.

For many Europeans, the EU represents an important achievement in bringing security and prosperity to the continent. For France in particular, the EU has been a way for the country to amplify its power within this growing body. At an extreme, some observers imagined a fully federal Europe, with a unified foreign and security policy, that could become a superpower to rival the United States or a rising China. But there are obstacles to this vision and France's place in it. First, the expansion of the EU eastward has brought in a number of countries whose view of the international system is quite different from that of France. Having experienced the cold war from under Soviet control, they view the United States less as a rival than a liberator. This proved problematic in the run up to the Iraq War, when several East European states backed the U.S. intervention, much to France's chagrin. This reconfirmed France's suspicion of further enlargement, a concern that more, and more diverse, members would dilute French influence inside the EU. The French have thus emerged as strongly opposed to possible EU membership for Turkey, a Muslim country (albeit with a secular state) that has a population as large as France. As mentioned earlier, it has been proposed that Turkish accession would require a referendum in France (which would certainly fail), and President Sarkozy has expressed strong opposition to Turkey inside the EU.

The issue of enlargement is also tightly connected to institutional changes within the EU and France's perception of these changes. In the past, French leaders have favored an expansion of EU power as an extension of their own power. But with enlargement and the growing diversity of the EU there has been a need for institutional reform (essentially, an EU constitution) that would give more power to all member states but reduce the authority of such founding members as France. This has caused consternation in France and played an important role in the country's rejection of the 2005 referendum on the constitution. From having long viewed the EU as central to the French role in Europe and the world, it became clear that for many French the EU has become a threat to their authority and even a symbol of globalization. As of 2007 nearly 40 percent of French surveyed argued that the EU was headed in the wrong direction, a larger number of dissenters than in any other EU member.²⁶ France thus finds that even familiar institutions may be changing

into something they do not understand and are beyond ability their ability to control. The question now is whether the French will embrace this uncertainty or retrench.

CURRENT ISSUES

THE CHALLENGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

France is often seen as a country of intellectuals and scholars that reveres knowledge in a way few other countries do. Institutions like ENA further reinforce this idea of a state that emphasizes meritocracy and technocracy: that is, rule by merit and technical expertise. Higher education is highly centralized and free to those who are talented enough to be accepted. That said, it is surprising to find that, by many standards, higher education in France is in poor shape. Top institutions like ENA accept only a fraction of university students, leaving the remainder to make their way through institutions that are overenrolled and poorly funded, with large classes and high dropout rates. Furthermore, there are concerns that the French university system is not serving as an important engine of innovation and growth. Two separate studies do not place any French university among the top twenty in the world, and they place only three or four (depending on the study) among the top 100 research institutions in the world.²⁷

Under the Sarkozy presidency there have been proposals to transform higher education in France in several ways. None of these may seem particularly radical, but for France's centralized institutions they could in fact amount to dramatic change. First, universities have been allowed to raise private funds; while the notion of an endowment funded by private donors is common in the United States, in Europe it is largely unheard of. Second, there are proposals to give students more freedom in choosing to which schools they can apply and to give universities more leeway in deciding which students they may accept. Traditionally, students could only attend nearby universities, and the universities were forbidden from rejecting students who had passed entrance exams. Third, the government has suggested basing funds on regular evaluations of a university's performance, determined by its endowments and the job success of its graduates.

Interestingly, one of the greatest sources of opposition to these reforms have been students. Although many understand that the current system could improve by providing a better education, there remains resistance to changes that in effect will increase competition between schools and competition between students. Surveys indicate that many young French still hope to land a job in the state sector, and they view their degree less as an important bundle of skills to be used in the job market than as a necessary credential that

should translate into a secure public sector job. As a result, proposals for reforms in education and the labor market to create more flexibility in both have resulted in student demonstrations. As one European magazine noted, the interesting contrast with the protests of 1968 is that back then youth sought to dramatically change the current order. In France today, however, students are protesting to keep the current order from being changed.²⁸

NOTES

1. Rolf H. W. Theen and Frank L. Wilson, *Comparative Politics: An Introduction to Seven Countries* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001), p. 101.
2. Britain has no single document defining its democratic regime but has a constitutional order dating at least to the seventeenth century. The United States has had only one constitution, which it has amended only twenty-six times in more than two centuries. Japan has never changed its postwar constitution.
3. For a useful discussion of these contributions, see James B. Collins, *The State in Early Modern France* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
4. Malcolm Crook and John Dunne, "Napoleon's France: History and Heritage," *Modern and Contemporary France*, 8 (2000), pp. 429–31.
5. John Hellman, "Memory, History, and National Identity in Vichy France," *Modern and Contemporary France*, 9 (2001), pp. 37–42.
6. For more, see Serge Bernstein, *The Republic of de Gaulle, 1958–1969* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
7. Gino Raymond, "The President: Still a 'Republican Monarch'?" in Gino Raymond, ed., *Structures of Power in Modern France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 1–18.
8. From 1958 to 1962, presidents were indirectly elected by an electoral college composed of elected officials. De Gaulle sought direct election of the presidency in order to enhance his own power, as well as that of the institution of the presidency.
9. Robert Elgie, *The Role of the Prime Minister in France, 1981–1991* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).
10. See "Procedures for Raising an Issue of Government Responsibility, French National Assembly," www.assemblee-nationale.fr/anglais/government_responsibility.asp (accessed 13 August 2008).
11. John Lichfield, "Sarkozy's Military Plans 'Put Independence at Risk,'" *The Independent* (9 April 2008), www.independent.co.uk (accessed 19 January 2009).
12. Alec Stone, *The Birth of Judicial Politics in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
13. William Wright, "FN Focus on France: ENA Loosens its Grip on Power," *Financial News Online*, 29 October 2007, www.efinancialnews.com/assetmanagement/people/moves/content/2349055738 (accessed 15 August 2008).
14. See Alistair Cole, "The Party System: The End of Old Certainties," in Raymond, *Structures of Power in Modern France*, pp. 19–36.
15. Susan Milner, "Trade Unions: A New Civil Agenda?" in Raymond, *Structures of Power in Modern France*, pp. 37–69.

16. For a discussion of the differences between the United States and France, see Robert A. Levine, *Assimilating Immigrants: Why America Can and France Cannot*, Rand Occasional Paper (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2004).
17. Justin Vaisse, "Veiled Meaning: The French Law Banning Religious Symbols in Public Schools," U.S.-France Analysis Series, Brookings Institution, March 2004, p. 5, n. 16.
18. Mark Carley, "Developments in Industrial Action," EIROOnline, www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2005/06/update/t0506101u.htm (accessed 19 January 2009).
19. World Values Survey 1999, www.worldvaluessurvey.org (accessed 19 January 2009).
20. Douglass C. North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1973), ch. 10.
21. David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 468.
22. Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective* (Paris: OECD, 2001), pp. 132, 185.
23. United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Comparative Real Gross Domestic Product Per Capita and Per Employed Person (July 2007)," www.bls.gov/fls/flsgdp.pdf (accessed 15 August 2008).
24. José Bové and François Dufour, *The World Is Not for Sale: Farmers against Junk Food* (London: Verso, 2001).
25. See Hubert Vedrine, *France in an Age of Globalization* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2000); see also Philip Gordon and Sophie Meunier, *The French Challenge: Adapting to Globalization* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2001).
26. European Union, *Eurobarometer*, 69 (June 2008), p. 18, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs69/eb_69_first_en.pdf (accessed 15 August 2008).
27. See the Times Higher Education Top 200 World Universities, www.timeshighereducation.co.uk (accessed 19 January 2009); also Academic Ranking of World Universities, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, www.arwu.org/rank2008/en2008.htm (accessed 19 January 2009).
28. Kim Rahr, "Liberté Egalité and Job Sécurité," *Der Spiegel* (March 15, 2006), www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,406157,00.html (accessed 19 January 2009).

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

absolute monarchy That stage in the evolutionary development of Europe between the more decentralized feudal monarchies of the Middle Ages and the constitutional governments of the modern era.

ancien régime European "old order" of absolute monarchy buttressed by religious authority.

bipolar Alternation between coalitions of center-right and center-left.

blocked vote Forces the legislature to accept bills in their entirety and allows amendments only if approved by the government.

Chirac, Jacques President from 1995–2007.

code law Laws that are derived from detailed legal codes rather than from precedent.

cohabitation An arrangement when presidents lack a majority of legislative power and appoint an opposition prime minister who can gain a majority of support in the legislature.

Constitutional Council Empowered to rule on any constitutional matter at the request of the government, the heads of each house of the legislature, or a group of at least sixty members of either house.

Council of Ministers The cabinet selected by the prime minister.

coup d'état Forceful and sudden overthrow of government.

dirigisme An emphasis on state authority in economic development; a combination of social democratic and mercantilist ideas.

École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) National Administrative School.

Estates General Weak French assembly representing the clergy, nobles, and commoners prior to the French Revolution.

The Events of May 1968 Parisian riots in which students and workers called for educational and social reforms.

Fifth Republic France's current regime (1958–present).

four-party, two-bloc-system A system that required coalition building in the second round of the two-round, single-member district system.

French Communist Party (PCF) One of the dominant parties of the French left since the end of World War II.

French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT) A smaller confederation backed by the Socialist Party.

French Revolution 1789–1799; overthrow of French absolute monarchy and establishment of the First Republic.

French Socialist Party (PS) Dominant party of the French left.

General Confederation of Labor (CGT) The most powerful French union confederation, it is linked to the French Communist Party.

laïcité The subordination of religious identity to state and national identity—state over church.

Le Pen, Jean-Marie Created the National Front in 1972.

Mitterrand, François Leader of the French Socialist Party starting in 1971, president of France from 1981 to 1995.

motion of censure An act of legislature against the government, requiring new elections when proposed legislation submitted as matters of confidence are not passed.

National Assembly Lower house of the French parliament.

National Front (FN) A political party on the far right that was created by Le Pen in 1972.

pantoufle Literally putting on the slippers; used to describe the move of administrative elite from the bureaucracy to the top echelons of the private sector.

parlement France's bicameral legislature.

prefect Government-appointed local official.

prime minister Appointed by the French president and approved by the majority of the lower house of the legislature to select a cabinet and preside over the day-to-day affairs of government.

Rally for the French Republic (RPR) Formed by Jacques Chirac as the more nationalist, socially conservative, EU-skeptic force of the French right.

regime Norms and rules that govern politics.

Reign of Terror Seizure of power and class war launched by radical Jacobins in revolutionary France (1793–1794).

Sarkozy, Nicolas President of France since 2007.

semi-presidential A legislative-executive system that shares political power among the legislature, a directly elected president, and a prime minister responsible to both the president and the legislature.

Sénat France's 321-member upper house of legislature.

Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) A single cohesive party of the center-right formed in 2002 with Chirac's encouragement.

Union for French Democracy (UDF) An alliance of five center-right parties founded in 1978 by Chirac's rival and former president Giscard d'Estaing as a more neo-liberal force of the French right.

WEB LINKS

Assemblée nationale www.assemblee-nat.fr
 Constitutional Council www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr
 Information on national, regional, and local governments
www.politicalresources.net/france3.htm
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs www.diplomatic.gouv.fr/en
Le Monde diplomatique mondediplo.com
 President www.elysee.fr/elysee
 Prime Minister premier-ministre.gouv.fr/en

5 GERMANY

Head of state: President Horst Köhler
 (since July 1, 2004)

Head of government:
 Chancellor Angela Merkel
 (since November 22, 2005)

Capital: Berlin

Total land size: 357,021 sq km

Population: 82 million

GDP at PPP: \$2.81 trillion US\$

GDP per capita at PPP: \$34,200

Human development index ranking: 22



GERMANY