

3RD EDITION FULLY REVISED AND UPDATED



# Government and Politics of France

Anne Stevens



## **Government and Politics of France**

## **COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**

Founding Series Editor: The late **Vincent Wright**

*Published*

Rudy Andeweg and Galen A. Irwin

**Governance and Politics of the Netherlands**

Nigel Bowles

**Government and Politics of the United States (2nd edition)**

Paul Brooker

**Non-Democratic Regimes: Theory, Government and Politics**

Robert Elgie

**Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies**

Rod Hague and Martin Harrop

**Comparative Government and Politics (5th edition)**

Paul Heywood

**The Government and Politics of Spain**

B. Guy Peters

**Comparative Politics: Theories and Methods**

*[Rights: World excluding North America]*

Tony Saich

**Governance and Politics of China**

Anne Stevens

**Government and Politics of France (3rd edition)**

Ramesh Thakur

**The Government and Politics of India**

*Forthcoming*

Judy Batt

**Government and Politics in Eastern Europe**

Robert Leonardi

**Government and Politics in Italy**

---

### **Comparative Government and Politics**

#### **Series Standing Order**

**ISBN 978-0-333-71693-9 hardback**

**ISBN 978-0-333-69335-3 paperback**

*(outside North America only)*

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in the case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and an ISBN quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

---

# **Government and Politics of France**

**Third Edition**

Anne Stevens

palgrave  
macmillan



© Anne Stevens, 1992, 1996, 2003

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted her right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First edition 1992

Reprinted twice

Second edition 1996

Reprinted four times

Third edition 2003

Published by PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and

175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010

Companies and representative throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-0-333-99440-5 hardback

ISBN 978-0-333-99441-2 ISBN 978-1-4039-3996-8 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-4039-3996-8

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stevens, Anne, 1942–

Government and politics of France / Ann Stevens. — 3rd ed.

p. cm. — (Comparative government and politics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-333-99440-5 (cloth) — ISBN 978-0-333-99441-2 (pbk)

1. France—Politics and government—1789– I. Title. II. Series.

JN2451.S74 2003

320.944—dc21

2003051444

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03

For Helen

# Contents

<i>List of Tables, Figures, Exhibits and Maps</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiv
<b>1 France: An Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Geographical Diversity	2
The Impact of the French Revolution	5
Church and State	6
The Legacy of Napoleon	9
The Evolution of the Republic	10
The Rise of Socialism	11
Occupation, Resistance, Liberation	12
Division and Instability	14
Reconstruction and Modernization	17
State, Society and Economy under the Fifth Republic	18
Social Changes	26
<b>2 The Constitutional Framework</b>	<b>31</b>
The Constitutions of the Third and Fourth Republics	32
The Demand for a New Constitution in 1958	33
The Objectives of the Authors of the Constitution	35
The Letter of the Constitution	38
Amending the Constitution	42
The Constitutional Balance: What Type of Regime?	48
The Development of the Regime	50
The Constitutional Council	55
<b>3 President and Prime Minister: Executive Leadership</b>	<b>63</b>
The Nature of the Fifth Republican Presidency	64
The Head of Government: The Prime Minister	66
The Prime Minister and the President	67
The Formal Resources of the Presidency	71
The Position of the Prime Minister	78
Conclusion	82

<b>4</b>	<b>President and Prime Minister: Political Roles and Evolving Relationships</b>	<b>83</b>
	Presidential Practice	83
	The Political Role of the Prime Minister	91
	Cohabitation	94
	Limitations and Constraints	97
	Conclusion	105
<b>5</b>	<b>The Governmental Machine: Ministers and Civil Servants</b>	<b>106</b>
	The Machinery of Government	106
	The Characteristics of Ministers	110
	The Pathology of the Ministerial Role: Corruption and Scandal	113
	The Coordination of the Work of the Government	117
	The French Administrative Tradition	121
	Control of the Administration	131
	The Nature of Policy-Making: Image and Reality	134
	Conclusion	140
<b>6</b>	<b>Local Government</b>	<b>141</b>
	The Units of Local Government	141
	The Electoral and Administrative Structures of Local Government	150
	The Resources of Local Authorities	158
	Continuity and Change: Patterns of Local–Central Relationships	159
	Conclusion	163
<b>7</b>	<b>Parliament</b>	<b>165</b>
	The Structure of Parliament	165
	The Members of Parliament: Characteristics and Conditions	169
	The Organization of Parliamentary Work	171
	The Functions of Parliament: Opportunities and Constraints	175
	Conclusion	187
<b>8</b>	<b>Party Politics in France</b>	<b>190</b>
	The Shadow of the Past: Cleavages and Party Organization	194
	Personalities, Power Bases, Fission, Fusion	195
	Electoral Systems and the Survival of Multipartyism	196
	Party Development and Change	201
	Conclusion	224
<b>9</b>	<b>The State and Civil Society: Pressure and Interest Groups</b>	<b>227</b>
	The Nature of the Interest Groups	230
	The Role of the Groups: Context, Tactics and Responses	241
	Conclusion	250



<b>10 Policy Making and Politics: Issues and Approaches</b>	<b>252</b>
France and the European Union	253
Economic Policy	262
<i>Services Publics</i>	266
Immigration and Race Relations	269
Conclusion	272
<b>11 Conclusion</b>	<b>273</b>
<i>Guide to Further Reading and Resources</i>	277
<i>Bibliography</i>	279
<i>Index</i>	290

# List of Tables, Figures, Exhibits and Maps

## Tables

1.1	Support for the Fourth Republic	16
1.2	Average annual growth rates in percentages	23
1.3	Unemployment rates in percentages	24
1.4	Distribution of employment by major sectors	25
2.1	The business of the Constitutional Council: number and type of decisions	58
4.1	Referendums in the Fifth Republic	101
5.1	Party composition of selected Fifth Republic governments	107
5.2	<i>Grands Corps</i> and <i>Grandes Ecoles</i>	125
5.3	Proportion of director posts in the central administration where the incumbent changed	130
6.1	Extent of cooperation between <i>communes</i>	143
6.2	Principal purposes of partnerships between <i>communes</i>	144
6.3	Local government staff on 1 January 2000	158
7.1	Number of candidates elected at the first ballot	167
7.2	Representation of selected occupations in the National Assembly	169
7.3	Women in the National Assembly	170
7.4	National Assembly and Senate: the passage of Acts of Parliament	175
7.5	Use of Article 49, paragraph 3	178
7.6	Legislative activity 1997–2001	179
8.1	Selected political parties in France, 2002	191

## Figures

8.1	Percentage share of valid first-ballot votes cast	197
8.2	Votes and seats for the Socialist Party at National Assembly elections	204
8.3	Votes and seats for the mainstream right at National Assembly elections	210
8.4	Votes cast for the National Front at selected elections	217
8.5	Voter protest 1981–2002	225

## Exhibits

1.1	Regimes in France since 1789	7
1.2	The Dreyfus Affair	8
1.3	Prime ministers of the Provisional Government and the Fourth Republic	15
2.1	Charles de Gaulle 1890–1970	34
2.2	Extracts from Charles de Gaulle’s speech at Bayeux 16 June 1946	36
2.3	The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen 1789	39
2.4	The structure of the constitution of the Fifth Republic in 2002	41
2.5	The Economic and Social Council	42
2.6	Constitutional amendments under de Gaulle	43
2.7	Constitutional amendments	44
2.8	Parity	47
3.1	The presidents of the Fifth Republic	64
3.2	The prime ministers of the Fifth Republic	68
3.3	Presidential powers in the Constitution of the Fifth Republic	72
4.1	The <i>Canal</i> case	104
6.1	National and local electoral systems in France	150
6.2	Mayors	152
6.3	Local government expenditure	159
7.1	The committees of Parliament	174
7.2	The Powers of Parliament	177
8.1	Party proliferation and finance	199
8.2	Jean-Marie Le Pen	218
9.1	La vie associative	229
9.2	May 1968	237
9.3	José Bové	239
9.4	1995 – discontent and protest	248

## Maps

The regions of France	xvi
France by <i>départements</i>	146

# Preface

Early in the 1950s my parents tired of summer holidays mostly spent on chilly wind-swept beaches and embarked, with hire car, tents and four young children, on what was, in the lingering climate of post-war austerity, a still unusual adventure – a tour through France. I still recall the vivid realization, as the ferry approached Calais, that France looked different, and the even sharper shock of discovering that it really did sound different too. That journey took us from Calais to the Spanish border, and back along the Mediterranean coast. When the family turned towards the Channel again my twin sister and I stayed behind, to spend a further few weeks near Nîmes, in the Ardèche and in Marseilles with the French family with whom we had been corresponding.

That summer left its mark on both my twin and me. It was for both of us the start of a continuing interest in and affection for the country and the first of many visits. For me it was a beginning that, twenty years later, led me, through many changes and chances, to the study of contemporary France. My sister came earlier to the subject, as an undergraduate in Philip Williams' lectures when the Fifth Republic was still quite young. She retains her connections with France and French people. This book is dedicated to her.

This book is a new version of the one first published in 1992 with a second edition in 1996. Like its predecessors it is intended as an introduction to the study of French government and politics for students and also as a guide for general readers with an interest in French affairs. I have been pleased to learn that readers found the previous edition helpful, and am grateful to those students and their teachers whose comments assisted the initial drafting and the revisions. This third edition has been very extensively rewritten and restructured. Chapter 1 now attempts to give a sense of the broad sweep of French social, economic and intellectual life up to the present day. Chapter 2 deals with the multiple revisions to the constitution since 1992. Chapters 3 and 4 now deal with the complex dynamics at the heart of the core executive in France, while Chapters 5, 6 and 7 have been recast and extensively up-dated. Chapter 8 is an almost entirely new attempt to provide a guide to the kaleidoscope of French political parties, and Chapter 9 has new emphases and case studies to illustrate the current shape of interest group and social movement activity. Chapter 10 is also largely new, to give some sense of the ongoing issues which currently provide the content and context for political conflict, debate and activity. Throughout, the European dimension of French politics today has been highlighted.

Research and teaching on aspects of French politics and administration have been at the centre of my working life for the past three decades, and I owe a great deal to the many colleagues at Sussex, Kent and Aston, and to acquaintances and

friends who make this area of study so congenial and stimulating. I am especially grateful to the Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France, to the editors of *Modern and Contemporary France* and to the Maison Française at Oxford for all they do to make the study of contemporary France both pleasant and fruitful.

I have accumulated many debts over the years I have worked in this field; as I look back I am particularly conscious of those to Dr Howard Machin, Professor John Gaffney, Professor Siân Reynolds, Professor Robert Elgie, and Dr Peter Holmes. The writing and revision of the book have also been much assisted by Professor Clive Church, Professor Françoise Dreyfus, Dr Michael Sutton and Dr Georgios Varouxakis. My family, Handley, Hilary, Lucy and Mary Stevens all believed in me and in the book, even when progress seemed difficult. So did a patient and supportive publisher, Steven Kennedy. With great sorrow I record how much the first two editions of this book owed to Vincent Wright's care and meticulous help, and how sorely, since his death in 1999, I have missed him. Without him there would have been no research, no teaching and no book at all. For the weaknesses and errors it contains I am alone responsible.

March 2003

ANNE STEVENS

# List of Abbreviations

BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CAC	<i>Commission des Agents de Change</i> (CAC-40 index of share values on the Paris stock exchange)
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDS	<i>Centre des Démocrates Sociaux</i>
CFDT	<i>Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail</i>
CFTC	<i>Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens</i>
CGPME	<i>Confédération Générale des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises</i>
CGT	<i>Confédération Générale du Travail</i>
CNIL	<i>Commission National de l'Informatique et des Libertés</i>
CNJA	<i>Centre National des Jeunes Agriculteurs</i>
CNPF	<i>Confédération Nationale du Patronat Française</i>
CPNT	<i>Chasse, Pêche, Nature, Tradition</i>
CODER	<i>Commission du Développement Economique Régional</i>
DATAR	<i>Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale</i>
DL	<i>Démocratie Libérale</i>
EC	Economic Community
ECB	European Central Bank
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDF	<i>Electricité de France</i>
EEC	European Economic Community
EMS	European Monetary System
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ENA	<i>Ecole Nationale d'Administration</i>
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FD	<i>Force Démocrate</i>
FEN	<i>Fédération de l'Education Nationale</i>
FN	<i>Front National</i>
FNLC	<i>Front National pour la Libération de la Corse</i>
FNSEA	<i>Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles</i>
FO	<i>Force Ouvrière</i>
G7	Group of Seven leading industrial countries
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDF	<i>Gaz de France</i>
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	<i>Génération Ecologie</i>

LCR	<i>Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire</i>
LO	<i>Lutte Ouvrière</i>
MDC	<i>Mouvement des Citoyens</i>
MEDEF	<i>Mouvement des Entreprises de France</i>
MEP	<i>Member of the European Parliament</i>
MNR	<i>Mouvement National Républicain</i>
MPF	<i>Mouvement pour la France</i>
MRAP	<i>Mouvement contre le Rascisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples</i>
MRG	<i>Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche</i>
MRP	<i>Mouvement Républicain Populaire</i>
MSI	<i>Movimento Sociale Italiano</i>
OAS	<i>Organisation de l'Armée Secrète</i>
OECD	<i>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</i>
OEEC	<i>Organisation for European Economic Co-operation</i>
PACS	<i>Pacte Civile de Solidarité</i>
PCF	<i>Parti Communiste Français</i>
POS	<i>Plan d'Occupation des Sols</i>
PR	<i>Parti Républicain</i>
PREP	<i>Pôle Républicain</i>
PRG	<i>Parti Radical de Gauche</i>
PS	<i>Parti Socialiste</i>
PSU	<i>Parti Socialiste Unifié</i>
RI	<i>Républicains Indépendants</i>
RPF	<i>Rassemblement du Peuple Française</i>
RPF	<i>Rassemblement pour la France</i>
RPR	<i>Rassemblement pour la République</i>
SFIO	<i>Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière</i>
SGCI	<i>Secretariat General de la Comité Interministerielle pour les Questions de Coopération Économique Européenne</i>
SIVOM	<i>Syndicat Intercommunale à Vocation Unitaire</i>
SIVU	<i>Syndicat Intercommunale à Vocation Multiple</i>
SNCF	<i>Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français</i>
TGV	<i>Train à Grande Vitesse</i>
UDF	<i>Union pour la Démocratie Française</i>
UMP	<i>Union pour un Mouvement Populaire</i>
UMP	<i>Union pour une Majorité Présidentielle</i>
UNEDIC	<i>Union pour l'Emploi dans l'Industrie et le Commerce</i>
UNSA	<i>Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes</i>



• Regional prefecture

— Regional boundaries

## The Regions of France



# 1

## France: An Introduction

France is sometimes represented as a hexagon. The coasts of the Channel and then the Atlantic, the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean sea, the Alps and the Jura, the Vosges and the Rhine and the long land frontier with Luxembourg and Belgium seem to outline a regular pattern. The shape of France is not, however, the consequence of some long and rational process of geometrical neatness and indeed the hexagon omits the large Mediterranean island of Corsica. It emerged only slowly, as successive French kings extended their control from their heartland around Paris, conquering Normandy, driving the English out of the South West and the West (Calais, the last English outpost, fell to the French in January 1558) asserting their domination over Burgundy (1481) and Provence (1491), and incorporating Brittany into the kingdom (1532). At the beginning of the nineteenth century Napoleon extended the sphere of metropolitan French administration into the Low Countries and parts of Germany and Northern Italy. In 1815 the Treaty of Vienna redefined France's borders: Corsica, annexed in 1769, remained French but Savoy and the town of Nice, which had been annexed during the Revolution, were lost. They were to return in 1860. The bitter history of Alsace (mostly incorporated into France in 1648) and Lorraine (incorporated in 1766) which were conquered and attached to the German Empire in 1870, regained by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, conquered again in 1940 and liberated in 1945 left a deep mark on French historical consciousness.

As a result, perhaps, of this chequered history and a certain obsession with French territorial integrity which derives from it, the French constitutions of both 1946 and 1958 proclaim France as a secular, democratic, social, but also indivisible republic. Like many constitutional pronouncements this is a statement of will and intention as much as of fact. The intention is to bring together a country of great diversity and a contested and conflict-ridden political history into a united nation state. This chapter attempts to outline some of the main elements of that diversity. An examination of the geographical and historical diversity of France is followed by a consideration of some of the factors which have contributed to political change and development. The impact of the Revolution, the legacy of Napoleon, the rise of the Republic, relationships between state and church and the period of Liberation and reconstruction all had their repercussions upon the political, economic and social structures of France today. The final section of the chapter provides a very brief overview of social, economic and intellectual developments since 1958.

### **Geographical Diversity**

France, with a land area of 212 919 square miles (543 965 square kilometres) is the third largest country in Europe, exceeded only by Russia and the Ukraine. North and west of a line from the mouth of the Gironde to the Ardennes the land only occasionally rises as high as 250 metres above sea level. South and east of this line the Massif Central, which occupies about one sixth of the land area, rises gradually southeastward with summits of over 1700 metres along the southern escarpment of the Cevennes. Its now extinct volcanoes were thrown up by the tectonic movements that produced the Alps. These, to the east, include the highest mountain in Europe, Mont Blanc (4807 metres). To the south of the Massif Central lie the undulating plains of Languedoc, separated by the valley of the Rhône from Provence, and from Spain by the mountain wall of the Pyrenees. North of the Alps are the wooded hills of the Jura, the Vosges and the Ardennes. More than 23 per cent of the land area of France is forested. The basins of the main rivers – Seine, Loire, Saône, Rhône, Garonne – shape and delineate the various regions. The island of Corsica lies south of the gulf of Genoa, some 100 kilometers south and west of the Côte d’Azur.

Geographical and climatic conditions help to account for the diversity of French landscapes, from the scrubby *macquis* of Provence and Corsica to the mountainous and pastoral landscape of the Alps, the broad flat cereal fields of the plains of Northern France and the vineyards of Languedoc, themselves somewhat different in appearance from the greener, more hilly wine growing country of Burgundy. The coasts of Northern and Western Brittany are rocky and spectacular; further south the Atlantic coast is formed of dunes and marshes. ‘Differing conditions of geology, morphology, climate, soil and vegetation are responsible for widely differing natural habitats. Out of these habitats man has made regions, accentuating natural diversity by differences of organisation and use’ (Pinchemel, 1987, p. 13).

At the 1999 census the population of metropolitan France was 58 518 748 people. This is similar to the populations of Italy (57.4 million) and the United Kingdom (56.8 million). In the middle of the eighteenth century, it is reckoned, France was the most densely populated country in Europe. Nowadays it is amongst the least densely populated. If France had the same average number of people per square kilometre as the United Kingdom it would have a population of 126 million (Pinchemel, 1987, p. 125). Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the population of France has almost doubled – but growth has not been at a steady rate. Population growth during the nineteenth century was slow, and the population actually declined not only during the First and Second World Wars, but also during the 1930s. Since 1945 the population has increased much more rapidly, growing since 1946 by some 14 million, a greater increase than that which had occurred over the previous century and a half. This increase is largely due to a marked, but fairly short-lived, rise in the birthrate during the babyboom years of 1945–55, combined with sharp reductions in the death rate, and

particularly in infant mortality. Immigration has long been an important cause of population growth notably in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries and again since the 1950s. Some 4.3 million residents in France (7.4 per cent) at the time of the 1999 census had not been born in France nor held French nationality at birth although 1.56 million had subsequently acquired French nationality as had 800 000 people born in France but without French nationality. Of the 4.3 million 1.3 million, approximately 30 per cent, had been born in North Africa and 45 per cent in Europe (Boëldieu and Borrel, 2000).

The population of France is far from being uniformly distributed within the country. The most striking feature is the concentration in and around Paris. The Ile-de-France region – Paris and the surrounding area – which contained less than 4 per cent of the national population at the beginning of the nineteenth century, 6.5 per cent at the beginning of the twentieth century, and just over 15 per cent at the end of the Second World War, was, at the 1999 census, inhabited by nearly 19 per cent of the population of France.

This concentration is an extreme example of a more general phenomenon of urban growth. Towards the end of the 1920s about half the inhabitants of France lived in areas categorized as rural; that is, in districts which contained no settlement of more than 2000 inhabitants. In 1962, 30 per cent did so, and at the 1999 census 23 per cent (Bessy-Pietri *et al.*, 2000). All types of towns have grown, but especially those which now have populations of between 100 000 and 1 million, of which there are now 38 in France. The largest towns are Lyons, Marseilles and Paris, which, with over 2 million within its city boundaries, far outstrips the other two.

The rhetoric of republican values in France resists attempts to map or define cultural diversity. The Republic is indivisible, and all citizens are to be regarded as equal and in that sense indistinguishable. ‘Multiculturalism’ as practised, for example, in the United Kingdom, which recognizes the existence of different communities within one country and their right (within general limits) to varied language use, religious customs, clothing and other cultural practices, is explicitly rejected as likely to lead to division and conflict. Nevertheless France is diverse. It is, for example, diverse in religious affiliation. While the majority of the population relate to the Roman Catholic tradition, it is estimated that the second largest group – probably some four to five million (about three million of whom are of North African origin or ancestry) – are culturally Muslims, and there are much smaller Jewish, Protestant and other groups.

France is also linguistically diverse. The arrival of residents speaking languages other than French has increased the diversity of languages spoken, even if, for the reasons suggested above, this is not officially recognized, and indeed the Constitutional Council ruled against ratification of the Council of Europe convention on the protection of minority languages. However, the regional diversity of ‘indigenous’ languages has diminished. In 1863 at least a quarter of the country’s population lived in communes that did not speak French and nearly 450 000 out of just over four million schoolchildren between the ages

of seven and thirteen spoke no French at all (Weber, 1979, p. 67). Breton and the Langue d'Oc of the south, being different languages rather than dialects, most effectively resisted the onslaught of Parisian French during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and are now precariously maintained by bilingual speakers supported by vigorous regional cultural movements, as is the language of Corsica, a Tuscan dialect of Italian.

The regions are also economically diverse. In France the main force of the industrial revolution was not experienced until the second half of the nineteenth century. The economic geography of France that was established before the First World War and is the basis of the present-day pattern arose from several diverse factors. These included the presence of natural resources – coal in Central France and the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, iron ore in Lorraine – or of long established traditional industries – textiles in Lyons and in the North for example. The growth and shape of the railway system was another factor, as was the development of hydro-electric power. Between the wars and until the mid-1950s industrialization was centred in Paris and to the North and East; indeed at that period over 50 per cent of industrial employment was located within the four regions of the Ile-de-France, the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Lorraine and the Rhône-Alpes. Outside the Paris region this industrialization was based upon long-standing textile, chemical, mining and iron and steel-based industries (Tuppen, 1983, p. 147).

Since the 1950s the areas of traditional industrialization have experienced the problems associated with decline whilst some formerly largely agricultural areas especially in the West, but also in the Alps, have seen the growth of advanced technology industries in a number of towns. Government policy in the 1950s and 1960s was aimed at encouraging industry to move out of Paris. This resulted in the movement out of some industrial activities, though many firms retained headquarters in Paris. Much of the movement was into the area immediately surrounding Paris – the Ile-de-France. From the early 1970s policy concentrated more on industrial reorganization, concentration and adjustment than on decentralization. Even today industrial activity is quite unevenly distributed across France and contrasts exist between regions in the level and nature of their industrial activity.

'At the micro level of *pays* or *arrondissement* France is almost certainly the most variegated [of European countries] in its landscapes and traditional ways of life. The mosaic of mountain, hill, scarpland or plain has been interpreted through a long history of rural and small town development. The late arrival of large scale industry and urbanisation has not had the effect of creating the greater uniformity in ways of life found, for example, in Britain' (House, 1978, p. 56). Distinctive landscapes, building styles, methods of farming, products, lifestyles, even cooking, from the butter, cream and cider of Normandy to the olives, tomatoes, herbs and wine of Provence, reinforce feelings of regional identity. The mobility of the population in the decades since the Second World War, commercial and industrial developments and the impact of genuinely mass media such as television have all helped to produce a greater uniformity of lifestyle and experience throughout

France. However, many French people still have strong feelings for their own or their family's origins and a sense of belonging not only to the nation but also to the locality – of being French but also, perhaps chiefly, Breton, Alsatian, Provençal or Corsican.

### **The Impact of the French Revolution**

The impact of the French Revolution upon the history of modern Europe lies not only in its social, economic and political consequences, but also in the perceptions, even the myths, which surrounded it and the strength of the political traditions and analyses which looked back to it as a crucial point of reference. These competing and contradictory traditions formed the basis for many of the conflicts and cleavages discussed below. Historians debate the causes and consequences of the Revolution; from its turbulent events stem many of the political and administrative currents, forces and patterns that shape modern France. Although continuities can also be traced, linking people, behaviour and institutions across the watershed of the Revolution, it was nevertheless an abrupt break with the pattern of what had gone before, a pattern that was very soon described as the old order (the *ancien régime*). That pattern was based in principle upon an absolute monarchy, upheld by a theory of divine right and by a hierarchical society which emphasized the existence of three separate orders, or estates, within society – the clergy, the nobility and the remainder, the third estate. Government consisted of the attempt by the King to manage a diverse and imperfectly unified country through a system of royal officials. This administration was chiefly concerned with the maintenance of public order, the levying of taxes and provision for military needs and also with the commerce and industry of the country. The name of Louis XIV's minister, Colbert, is particularly associated with attempts to encourage trade, foster economic development and introduce industries through governmental supervision and initiative.

The old pattern was swept away with great speed by the Revolution (see Exhibit 1.1), swept away, moreover, in the name of rational philosophical uniform principles. The representatives of the three estates, summoned for the first time since 1614 to meet as the Estates General, and transformed into a National Assembly, voted in August 1789 for what is described as the abolition of feudalism – the ending of the old patterns of privileges and rights and the abolition of the sale of offices. These measures implied the restructuring of the systems of local administration, of justice and of taxation. The principles upon which this restructuring was to occur were set out in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, passed on 26 August 1789. This Declaration, which forms an integral part of the present-day French constitution, asserts the right of all men (but not women, who did not achieve political rights until 1944) to liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression. It insists that the law is the same for everyone, all citizens being equally entitled to avail themselves of its protection and equally subject to its sanctions, and that all citizens should be eligible for position and

public employment on the sole criterion of ability. Political authority stems, according to Article 3, from the nation. The Declaration also includes an assertion of freedom of religious belief and of speech and publication.

With the abolition of the monarchy in 1792, Republicanism became an essential component of the Revolutionary tradition. The broad moral principles of rationality, liberty and equality which are still widely felt to be central to France's identity are encompassed within the concept of Republicanism.

The Revolution, however, left France deeply divided. There were divisions even within the revolutionary tradition. In popular mythology these have come to be symbolized by the divisions between Girondins – a group of members of the national assembly grouped around the representative from the Gironde, the area around Bordeaux – and the Jacobins – the party of Robespierre, named after the former Jacobin monastery where the group met. The Girondins are held to symbolize a more moderate, more participatory, form of republicanism, with an emphasis on local rights. The adjective 'Jacobin' is applied to a tradition which insists firmly upon the power and the authority of the central institutions of the republic, upon the need for uniformity throughout the country and upon a strong and centralized direction of public affairs.

Opposed to the revolutionary republican tradition there was a monarchist tradition, seeking a return to a hierarchical and ordered society. The restoration of the monarchy in 1815 marked a brief ascendancy for this political tradition which was an important component of the 'Right' in French political life for much of the nineteenth century. In addition to this 'anti-revolutionary' current, it is possible, following David Thomson, to identify a 'counterrevolutionary' current. 'Common to all forms was the blunting of some consequences of the Revolution by accepting and turning against them some of its other consequences and implications' (Thomson, 1969, p. 80). The political manifestations of this current were liberal Orleanism, dominant during the constitutional monarchy of the Orleanist King Louis-Philippe between 1830 and 1848, and the Bonapartists, with their appeal to a strong leader supported by popular plebiscite. All these currents played important roles in the politics of the nineteenth century, and even when the dynasties to which they were attached died out or dwindled the political cleavages which they symbolized continued.

## **Church and State**

The salience, and the bitterness, of the division between revolutionary and reactionary political traditions was enhanced by the fact that it was deeply entangled with another area of conflict, that over the place and role of the Roman Catholic church within society. Under the *ancien régime* the church held a particular place in society, for religious doctrine played an important role in legitimizing the power of the monarch.

The initial period of the Revolution (see Exhibit 1.1) saw the ending of the privileges which the clergy had enjoyed in their role as feudal landowners. Then,

**EXHIBIT 1.1****Regimes in France since 1789**

<b>May–June 1789</b>	Estates General meets at Versailles and declares itself a constituent national assembly.
<b>August 1789</b>	Adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man.
<b>September 1789</b>	New constitution; limited monarchy.
<b>August 1792</b>	Invasion of the Tuileries Palace; end of the monarchy.
<b>September 1792</b>	Meeting of the Convention.
<b>January 1793</b>	Execution of the King.
<b>April 1793</b>	Establishment of the Committee of Public Safety.
<b>June 1793</b>	Vote for 1793 Constitution; never implemented.
<b>10 October 1793</b>	Convention decides that government will be ‘revolutionary’ until peace is achieved.
<b>April 1795</b>	Directory constitution.
<b>November 1799</b>	(18 Brumaire an VIII) Coup d’état of Napoleon Bonaparte.
<b>December 1799</b>	Constitution of the Consulate.
<b>May 1804</b>	Establishment of the First Empire.
<b>April 1814</b>	Restoration of the monarchy; Constitutional Charter.
<b>March 1815</b>	Return of Napoleon. Imperial constitution amended by <i>Acte Additionnel</i> .
<b>June 1815</b>	Second abdication of Napoleon – return to monarchy and 1814 charter.
<b>1830</b>	Constitutional monarchy (July monarchy) under Louis-Philippe.
<b>1848</b>	Second Republic.
<b>1852</b>	Second Empire under Napoleon III.
<b>1870</b>	Provisional regime.
<b>1875</b>	‘Wallon amendment’ – consolidation of Third Republic.
<b>1940</b>	Occupation. ‘Vichy’ regime continued Third Republic constitution except where amended by Pétain’s constitutional acts.
<b>1944</b>	Provisional Government.
<b>1946</b>	Fourth Republic.
<b>1959</b>	Fifth Republic.

in 1790, as the need for money grew pressing, the National Assembly voted the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which deprived the church of its landed possessions and its right to levy tithes and made the clergy salaried officials. The Pope condemned this move. From this time on resistance to the Revolution was increasingly identified with support for the church.

Equally, revolutionary principles came to appear incompatible with traditional religion and in 1793 a revolutionary calendar was introduced abolishing Sundays – weeks were replaced by 10-day periods – and removing traditional associations with the Christian year. A cult of reason was invented and a campaign of de-christianization begun. This was short-lived, and Napoleon, facing a society in which Roman Catholicism was still deeply anchored, brought order and compromise through the conclusion, in 1801, of a Concordat with the papacy. This remained in force until 1905. The church’s lands were not restored, the

clergy were paid salaries by the government and the degree of religious toleration introduced by the Revolution through the recognition of Protestants and Jews was maintained. In 1905 the advocates of *laïcité* (secularism) achieved the formal separation of churches and state, which no longer recognizes any religion nor pays any clergy.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the church was clearly identified with the forces of the reactionary Right, with conservatives who hankered for a return to an ordered hierarchical society. It had great difficulty accepting the principle of a republican regime, with all its implications of democracy and popular sovereignty, and only did so at all, and then partially, slowly and reluctantly, in a movement known as *ralliement*, at the urging of Pope Leo XIII in the 1890s.

The clash between clerical and anti-clerical forces was dramatically demonstrated at the time of the Dreyfus affair (see Exhibit 1.2), which linked together a

### EXHIBIT 1.2

#### The Dreyfus Affair

In 1894 a list, probably recovered from a waste-paper basket in the German Embassy, and detailing documents apparently handed over to the Germans by an officer of the French army acting as a spy for them, came into the hands of French counter-intelligence. Suspicion fell upon Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer from Alsace. The evidence was flimsy, but the military authorities were being harassed by the right-wing press who alleged that a traitor had been discovered, but would escape justice because he was Jewish and consequently had influential protectors. A secret court-martial was held, Dreyfus was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment in the tropical prison island, Devil's Island. Two years later, with information continuing to flow to the Germans, a new counter-intelligence chief re-examined the case. Although senior officers tried to suppress his opinions, and to bolster up the case against Dreyfus with additional forged evidence, the doubts became known. In the hope of quelling them another officer, to whom some evidence had pointed, was court-martialled, in 1898, and triumphantly acquitted. Two days later the novelist Emile Zola published his famous article *J'accuse* accusing the army of deliberate injustice.

France became very divided indeed. There were those who believed in the necessity of upholding the rights of every individual, and who called for justice. The League for the Defence of the Rights of Man was founded. Many of those arguing for Dreyfus were strongly anti-clerical and anti-militarist. They were supported by a number of left-wing politicians. On the other hand were those who were convinced that to question the army's proceedings was to undermine the state and subvert national strength. The church, the monarchists and the aristocracy came out in support of the army, and there were very strong currents of anti-Semitism.

Eventually Dreyfus was brought back from Devil's Island. In 1899 another court-martial found him guilty but with extenuating circumstances, the nearest the army would come to admitting a mistake. Dreyfus was promptly pardoned by the President, and later completely exonerated by a civilian appeal court. But the divisions and passions which this extraordinary and melodramatic affair had aroused, and the myths it created, were not quickly forgotten.



whole series of complex themes, involving a large number of social and political groupings in taking sides and hence ranging themselves in virulent opposition to the proponents of the alternative view.

The identification of the church with reactionary and conservative principles and forces within society aroused fierce hostility to it amongst those who professed democratic and Republican traditions and amongst Socialists who had good Marxist reasons for their hostility (Hanley, 2002, Chapters 1–3). The field of education was a particularly hotly contested one, since this is a major way in which the church can impinge upon society. This hostility, known as anti-clericalism, persisted as a major trend in French political life. It coexisted with an even more widespread, but not politicized, social trend to indifference, as the population, especially the male population, ceased church-going. Nevertheless, although often inextricably intertwined with other issues, the old conflict between clerical and anticlerical sentiments has not been entirely forgotten in France.

### The Legacy of Napoleon

Napoleon Bonaparte, who came to power initially as one of three consuls in 1799, was crowned Emperor in 1804, and was finally defeated and exiled by the British in 1815, introduced a third strand of political tradition that evoked some of the aspects of the Revolution – chiefly the emphasis upon direct popular support – and allied them to administrative rationality, authoritarian institutions and an assertion of national grandeur. Bonapartism was not a return to the hierarchical privileged society of the *ancien régime*: nor was it a continuation of the democratic republican aspects of the period from 1791 to 1799.

In political terms the legacy of Bonapartism was a political tradition which supported the idea of popular sovereignty as embodied within an empire and confirmed by plebiscite. It ‘looked to an authoritarian government rather than to religion or the habit of deference to maintain order and social stability’ (Anderson, 1977, p. 101). It can also be linked with the idea that a strong and charismatic leader may, especially at times of crisis, be required to override the incurable divisions of French society.

Perhaps more important than the political aspects of Bonapartism has been Napoleon’s administrative legacy. He inherited the work of the Jacobins and the Directory, whose aim had been to give France a uniform administrative system and to organize militarily in order to win in war. Napoleon required a civil administration that would permit him to mobilize the resources that his campaigns required. He wished to see a well-organized country. He set about developing a pattern of local government based upon the territorial unit of the *département*. To supervise and control this local government he placed the prefectural system upon a firm footing. A prefect was posted in each *département* as the local representative of the central government. Despite much hostility, for the prefect was often seen as the unacceptable and oppressive emanation of an authoritarian central power, especially given the early linkage of the system with Napoleon’s need for a steady of

flow of conscripts to his armies, the system survived the many changes of regime of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The administration of the French educational system also looks back to the Napoleonic division of the country into *académies*, under the overall control of a senior official appointed from Paris, grouping together state educational institutions at all levels.

Amongst the key principles upon which Napoleonic administration operated was, first, an insistence upon territorial and functional uniformity. All local authorities, whether large or small, affluent or impoverished, enjoyed the same legal and administrative powers as their counterparts elsewhere and the structures and functioning of all the public services were shaped to a uniform pattern. Secondly, the administrative institutions were not to be subject to the control and jurisdiction of Parliament or the Civil Courts. Control was, however, required, since the image and legitimacy of the state would suffer if irregularities and abuses occurred. Hence, important and powerful control systems were created within the administration, including administrative courts and prestigious inspectorates. To staff the administration Napoleon looked to a civil service which would, at the highest levels, be endowed with prestige and status.

The Napoleonic system was in some senses a system of checks and balances. A powerful, prestigious, able, efficient administration operating through centralized and authoritarian institutions would act as a counterweight to the elected assemblies. This dual tradition, of authoritarian administrative institutions and participatory assemblies, combining something of both the old royal aspirations to a unified and centralized and well-administered state, and of the democratic principles of the Revolution, can be traced throughout the subsequent history of French government. In its ideal of a highly structured rationally organized system, acting within a clear and codified legal framework, the French administration continues today to look back to Napoleon.

### **The Evolution of the Republic**

In 1870 Napoleon III was defeated and captured by the invading Prussian armies and on 4 September the Third Republic was proclaimed. It was set up and consolidated in stages, rather than by a single constitutional act. Indeed, many of those who drew up the initial drafts of the laws which, in 1875, provided the constitutional framework for the Republic hoped they would prove to be temporary measures within which a constitutional monarchy could be restored. This did not occur. On 16 May 1877 the President, Marshal MacMahon, backed by monarchists and bonapartists, finding himself unable to create a government that would respect what he felt to be the proper balance of powers between Parliament and presidency, dissolved the National Assembly, which had a Republican majority. The subsequent election returned a majority who were clearly opposed to his views. MacMahon gave in and chose an acceptable Prime Minister. No President of the Third or Fourth Republics ever again felt able to use the dissolution of Parliament as a political weapon. MacMahon's experience

marked the end of any inclination on the part of presidents of the Third Republic to exercise executive powers independently of Parliament (Anderson, 1977, p. 10).

The Third Republic survived many crises – the threat of a coup d'état by General Boulanger, the Dreyfus Affair (Exhibit 1.2), the Panama scandal, the Stavisky affair and the riots of 1934 being only some of the most serious and notorious – and the First World War. It collapsed only in 1940 under the force of invading German tanks. The balance of power within the institutions had tipped decisively towards Parliament. Its members knew that there would be no dissolution, and hence governments could be allowed to fall and new combinations to emerge. Between 1870 and 1914, for example, France had no fewer than 60 governments. The multiplicity of loosely organized party groupings within Parliament meant that all governments were combinations of political forces, based upon compromise and negotiation. There were, moreover, important political forces which did not accept the republican regime at all. Those on the extreme Right called for a return to monarchy or for 'strong' leadership. On the Left Marxist Socialists, including, after 1920, the Communists, condemned the Republic as bourgeois. When it collapsed, in 1940, under the overwhelming weight of the German invasion, its shortcomings were seized upon to provide at least part of the explanation for the rapid defeat.

The Third Republic was based upon direct manhood suffrage. Women did not obtain the vote until 1944. However, the advent of male suffrage did not, under the Third Republic, entail the emergence of organized political parties. Local committees would be set up to support candidates at particular elections, but only gradually did they begin to have a continuous existence, and the labels adopted by particular candidates were not necessarily a very clear guide to how they would behave once within Parliament. Even by the end of the Third Republic the only broadly organized mass-based parties with a disciplined group of members of Parliament were on the Left.

### **The Rise of Socialism**

The slow development of the industrial revolution in France was accompanied by a slow development of working-class politics. France throughout the nineteenth century produced highly influential socialist thinkers and leaders, and a tradition of participation in political life by working men that could look back to the Revolution. However, the event that marked the movement most deeply was the Paris Commune of 1871, both for its actual effects and for the powerful myths which it engendered.

The working-class Left as it emerged in France was marked by a number of features. First, although union developments and political developments often went together, there was no close institutional connection between the socialist political parties and the union movement. Moreover, within the trade union movement there were several varied and conflicting strands.

Secondly the mass-based socialist party, known from its formation in 1905 until 1971 as the French Section of the Workers' International (*Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* – SFIO), contained various strands of socialist thought. Its first great leader, Jean Jaurès, brought it to accept the possibility of reform through parliamentary institutions, but it long retained its revolutionary rhetoric.

Thirdly, in 1920 a majority of the SFIO's rank and file membership accepted Lenin's 21 conditions, devised to ensure the defence of the revolution in the Soviet Union, split off from the SFIO and formed the French Communist Party. Thereafter two organized parties existed to represent the Left.

Fourthly, whilst both parties claimed to be working-class parties, they were not necessarily strong in all the areas of the industrial working class and, conversely, they both enjoyed support from groups outside the main areas of industrialization. For at least the first half century of its existence the SFIO drew much of its support from workers in small plants and secondary industries, and above all from public employees and minor civil servants. The Communist Party was strong not only in the industrial centres around Paris and in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, but also in more rural areas, such as parts of the Massif Central and the Mediterranean coast, where it represented not so much the working-class struggle as the tradition of dissent from, and resistance to, domination and authority that derived from the Revolution (Williams, 1972, p. 79).

### **Occupation, Resistance, Liberation**

Before the rapid advance of the German armies in 1940 the Third Republic crumbled and fell. Under Marshal Pétain, the military hero of the First World War, an armistice was concluded. France was initially split into a *zone annexée*, joined to Germany, a *zone occupée*, controlled by the German authorities, and a *zone libre*, within which a government was reconstituted at Vichy, in central France. It was effectively a dictatorship, for Pétain as head of the French State (not Republic) was given plenary powers pending a new constitution, which was never promulgated. Its orientation was authoritarian and traditionalist, symbolized by the slogan *Travail Famille Patrie* (work, family, country). In November 1942 German troops occupied the whole country. The Vichy government was increasingly subject to the demands of the German forces and identified with collaboration with the Germans.

Resistance in France was initially limited and spasmodic. It developed only slowly, growing particularly after the institution of a system of forced labour in Germany for many young men. Those involved in the Resistance represented many strands of political ideas – Socialist, Catholic and, after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Communist. In 1942 a National Council of the Resistance was set up in France, and General de Gaulle (see Exhibit 2.1) came to be recognized as its leader. By 1944 he was the head of the French Committee for National Liberation, supported by a provisional consultative assembly, in Algiers,

on which the National Council of the Resistance was represented. He succeeded in imposing the authority of this Provisional Government on each part of France as it was liberated, and in June 1944 triumphantly entered Paris.

The legacy of Occupation and Liberation was a bitter one. For many French people the first reaction to the trauma of defeat and occupation was a need to restore something like normality to everyday life (Paxton, 1972, pp. 16–18). Nevertheless, as the occupation continued, choices were made. The dilemmas and tragedies of these choices have formed the subject matter of telling works of literature and film. Times were hard for everyone. Average consumption levels fell to about 45 per cent of their pre-war level. Many people experienced the Nazi occupation as harsh and repressive, for example in the system of compulsory forced labour. France did not escape the anti-semitism of the Nazis, which found some echoes in anti-semitic views that had long been present within some sections of French society. However, in Paxton's words, 'Even Frenchmen of the best intentions, faced with the harsh alternative of doing one's job, whose risks were moral and abstract, or practising civil disobedience, whose risks were material and immediate, went on doing the job' (Paxton, 1972, p. 383).

The period of Liberation inevitably brought disorder and retribution. Whilst de Gaulle's government attempted to impose a degree of control and legality, there were widespread purges of actual and supposed collaborators, no doubt accompanied in some places by a good deal of personal rancour. There were about 10 000 executions, three-quarters of them while the fighting was going on and less than a thousand of them after due legal process. About 100 000 people suffered lesser legal penalties (Rioux, 1980, pp. 54–6).

These divisive events continue at times to cast long shadows over French life. There has been a shifting balance between the extent to which politicians will or can use their connections and influence to protect themselves and their friends, and increasing concern to face the legacies and condemn wrongdoing. For example, in 1994 Paul Touvier, a collaborator of the Gestapo in Lyons who had been pardoned by President Pompidou, was sentenced for crimes against humanity. A subsequent President, François Mitterrand, had, during the war, after escape from a prisoner of war camp, been both a sufficiently assiduous servant of the Vichy government to be decorated by it, and courageously and dangerously active in the Resistance. After, or possibly even during, the war he befriended René Bousquet who was eventually, but not until 1991 and then after considerable delays, indicted for crimes against humanity committed while he was a senior police official under Vichy (Tournier, 1995, p. 257). Bousquet was murdered before he came to trial. However, Maurice Papon, who had been a prefect from 1947, and Prefect of Police in Paris at the time of the massacre of Algerian demonstrators in Paris in 1961 and subsequently a minister under President Giscard d'Estaing, was sent to prison in 1998 for his part in the deportation of Jews during the occupation, though controversially released on age grounds (he was 92) in 2002.

### **Division and Instability**

This traumatic period had a number of political effects. One was the discrediting of the ideas of the Right, since so many of their adherents had supported Vichy and collaboration. For the first decades after the war no political movement was willing to admit to being situated on the Right in politics.

The Communist Party and the SFIO emerged from the war strengthened by an honourable record of resistance, so that the 1946 general election marked a high point of the Communist vote. More than one voter in every four voted for the PCF, some, no doubt, seeking to assert their anti-collaborationist credentials by voting conspicuously for a leading party of the Resistance. The strength of the PCF, which was attracting by far the largest vote of any single party, was a very marked feature of France in the post-war years. Real fears of a Communist takeover certainly help to explain the virulent anti-Communism of some groups in post-war French politics, fears which may have been magnified by the apparent political instability of the period from 1946 to 1958.

In the Provisional Government over which de Gaulle presided until early 1946 were representatives of the three parties which, in the elections held in 1945, proved to enjoy massive support; they were the Communists, the SFIO and the Christian Democrats. The Right disappeared almost completely and the centre Republican and Radical groups, too associated with what were felt to be the weaknesses of the Third Republic, also did poorly.

That the new regime should be a parliamentary republic was unquestioned. What the balance of power between the institutions should be was much more in dispute, and in early 1946 de Gaulle resigned over what he saw as the parties' insistence on returning to the bad old ways of the past and putting their own interests first. The Fourth Republic, based upon a constitution adopted in October 1946, lasted until 1958 (see Exhibit 1.3).

The Fourth Republic was dogged for most of its existence by the perception that it was an unstable and precarious regime. A number of features contributed to this. They included:

- the balance of power between the institutions that resulted from the 1946 constitution;
- the succession of coalition governments;
- the nature of the party system;
- the traumatic process of de-colonization.

The 1946 constitution was the outcome of a turbulent process. De Gaulle, the head of the Provisional Government in 1945, viewing the strong representation of the traditional parties of the Left in the Assembly elected in 1945 with the task of producing a constitution 'gloomily assumed', in Maurice Larkin's words, that the Constitution that would emerge would fail to fulfil the needs of the country as he perceived them (Larkin, 1997, p. 139). He resigned in January 1946, undoubtedly

**EXHIBIT 1.3****Prime ministers of the Provisional Government and the Fourth Republic**

**Charles de Gaulle** September 1944 – January 1946  
**Felix Gouin** January 1946 – 23 June 1946  
**Georges Bidault** June 1946 – December 1946  
**Léon Blum** December 1946 – January 1947  
**Paul Ramadier** January 1947 – November 1947  
**Robert Schuman** November 1947 – July 1948  
**André Marie** July 1948 – August 1948  
**Robert Schuman** August 1948 – September 1948  
**Henri Queuille** September 1948 – October 1949  
**Georges Bidault** October 1949 – June 1950  
**Henri Queuille** June 1950 – July 1950  
**René Pleven** July 1950 – February 1951  
**Henri Queuille** March 1951 – July 1951  
**René Pleven** August 1951 – January 1952  
**Edgar Faure** January 1952 – February 1952  
**Antoine Pinay** March 1952 – December 1952  
**René Mayer** January 1953 – May 1953  
**Joseph Laniel** June 1953 – June 1954  
**Pierre Mendès France** June 1954 – February 1955  
**Edgar Faure** February 1955 – January 1956  
**Guy Mollet** February 1956 – May 1957  
**Maurice Bourgès-Manoury** June 1957 – September 1957  
**Félix Gaillard** November 1957 – 15 April 1958  
**Pierre Pflimlin** 13 May 1958 – 28 May 1958  
**Charles de Gaulle** 1 June 1958 – January 1959

in the hope that by so doing he would bring everyone to their senses. In fact a tripartite government of Communists, Socialists and Christian Democrats was formed. The first proposed constitution was rejected by referendum in May 1946. A new Constituent Assembly was elected, another tripartite government formed, and in October 1946 a constitution was approved by referendum. It bore a 'depressing resemblance' (Larkin, 1997, p. 142) to the constitutional arrangements of the Third Republic.

Although attempts were made to limit the extent to which Parliament could control the government and force frequent changes, in fact earlier patterns of behaviour persisted (Williams, 1972, p. 428). The weakness of the prime minister in the face of the members of Parliament, and the fragmentation of political groups led to a constant succession of coalition governments, for no single party group was strong enough to dominate the Assembly. Prime ministers had to devote a great deal of energy to putting together deals and agreements between the various political groups to ensure support for their programmes, and when they were not certain of doing so would often prefer to resign rather than risk formal defeat. Parliament feared a strong leader, and even those prime ministers

who wished to act firmly found themselves frustrated by the unwillingness of their fragmented following to support them, and by the likelihood that even if support could be called upon one time, it would not be forthcoming the next time it was needed (Williams, 1972, p. 207). Although in many respects the changes of government were akin to reshuffles, governmental authority suffered, for the position of prime minister was derived not from electoral choice but from political manoeuvres and seemed highly precarious. Continuity or legitimacy in the handling of contentious matters could not be assured.

The fragmented nature of the party system compounded these difficulties, which were exacerbated by the rejection of the whole nature of the regime by two of the major political groupings (see Table 1.1). The Communists never fully accepted the rules of the game in the Fourth Republic, although they were willing to work within it and to return members of Parliament. Likewise, the Gaullists echoed de Gaulle's own virulent denunciations of the weaknesses of the regime. Moreover, at the point in the mid-1950s when the Gaullist movement seemed to be fading an alternative challenge to the system grew rapidly, vociferously expressed by Pierre Poujade and the shopkeepers and tradesmen who followed him in protesting against technocracy and economic progress.

Whether any regime, let alone the contested arrangements of the Fourth Republic, could have withstood the traumas that decolonization inflicted upon France is debatable. French decolonization was frequently bloody and bitter. The independence of Indo-China was conceded after military defeat. The war for Algerian independence brought down the Fourth Republic in 1958, and caused

**TABLE 1.1**  
**Support for the Fourth Republic: votes cast in general elections, 1946–58, %**

	June 1946	November 1946	June 1951	January 1956
<b>Parties supporting the regime</b>				
Socialists	21.1	17.8	14.6	15.2
Radicals and allies	11.6	11.1	10	15.2
Christian democrats	28.2	25.9	12.6	11.1
Total	60.9	54.8	36.2	41.5
<b>Parties opposing the regime</b>				
Communists	25.9	28.2	26.9	25.9
Gaullists and allies		3.0	21.6	3.9*
Poujadists				11.6
Extreme Right				1.2
Total	25.9	31.2	48.5	42.6
Others	12.9	13.7	14.1	15.7

*Note:*

\* The Gaullists split their support between a left-wing Republican Front alliance including the Socialist Party and some Radicals, and a more right-wing alliance including Christian Democrats.