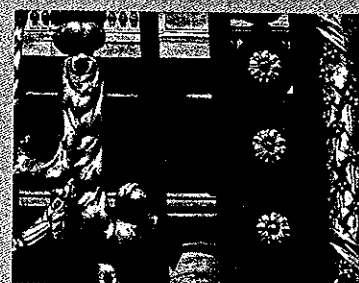
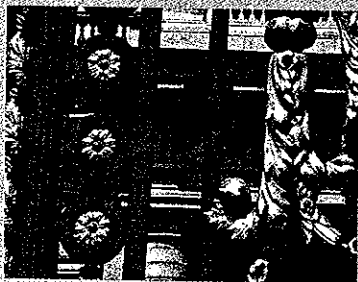
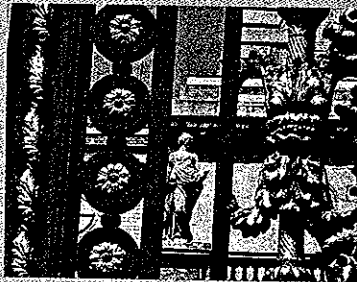
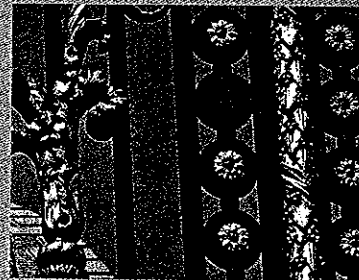
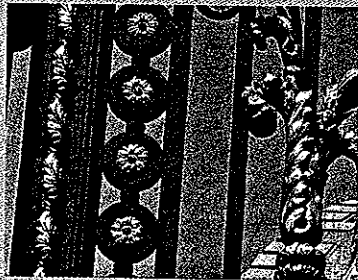


CHAPTER 7

FRANCE:

THE IMPACT OF THE PAST



“France has everything,” many French rightly boast. Hexagon-shaped, with three sides on seas and three on land, France is simultaneously an Atlantic country, a Mediterranean country, and an Alpine country. It has lush farmland, navigable rivers, many minerals, and a moderate climate. It does not, however, have a moat like England; France is vulnerable to land attack from the north and the east. While England historically had a small army, France needed a large army, a point that helps explain the rise of French absolutism. French kings had troops to rely on.

Internally, France is divided into a North and a South. Culturally and temperamentally, the two regions differ and, until the late Middle Ages, even spoke different languages. The Germanic northerners spoke *langue d'oïl*, “the tongue of oil,” their word for yes, which grew into the modern French *oui*. The Mediterranean southerners spoke *langue d'oc*, after their word for yes, *oc*. It declined after the Paris kings conquered the South in the thirteenth century. To this day, southerners have a different accent and resent rule by Paris. The region is still called Languedoc.

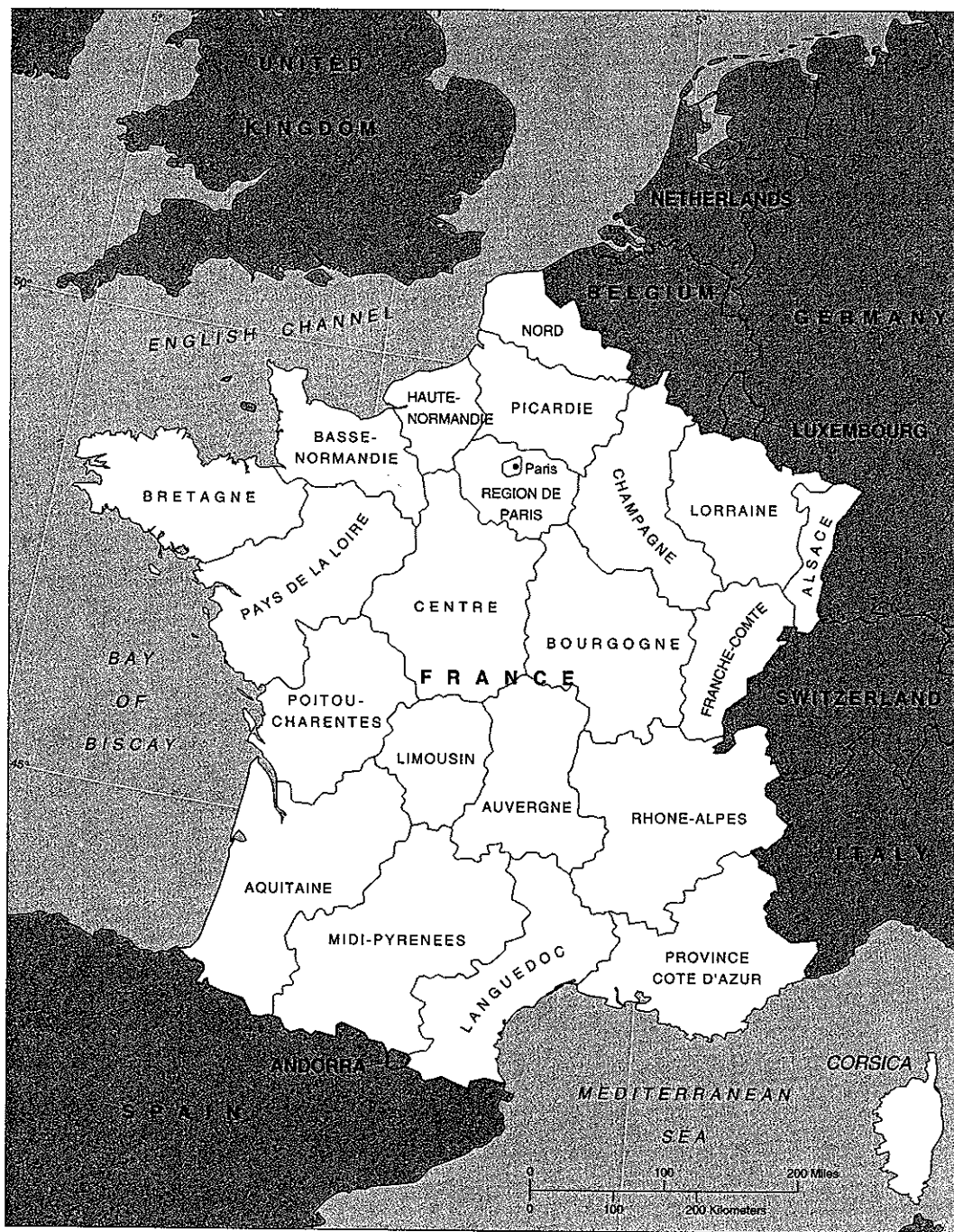
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How does the Roman influence in France compare to the Roman influence in Britain?
2. What is France's core area? How did it come to be?
3. Who epitomized French absolutism?
4. What was the theory of mercantilism?
5. What caused the French Revolution?
6. How did great French thinkers differ from the British?
7. What is Brinton's theory of revolution?
8. With what regime did France become a stable democracy?
9. What did the Dreyfus Affair show?
10. Who ran France during World War II?
11. How did de Gaulle come to power?

THE ROMAN INFLUENCE

Like most peoples, the French are a mixture of ethnic stocks. In the centuries before Christ, tribes of Celts pushed into France and merged with the native Ligurians. The Romans conquered the area and called it *Gallia* (Gaul). Roman influence in France was longer and deeper than in England, which the Anglo-Saxons obliterated, but the Germanic tribes that moved into Gaul became Romanized themselves. Thus, English is a Germanic language and French a Romance language.

By the time the Roman Empire collapsed, one Germanic tribe, the Franks, had managed to take over most of present-day France. Their chief, Clovis—from whom came the name Louis—was baptized in 496, and France has been mostly Catholic ever since, the “eldest daughter of the Church.” The Franks under Charles Martel turned back the invading Moors in 732, possibly saving Europe. Charles Martel's grandson, Charlemagne, in 800 founded a huge empire—the Holy Roman Empire—that encompassed what someday would amount to most of the six original EU countries. Although the empire soon disintegrated, Charlemagne had planted the idea of European unity.



FRANCE

THE RISE OF FRENCH ABSOLUTISM

In the confusion after Charlemagne, France was reduced to several petty kingdoms and dukedoms, as was Germany. While Germany stayed divided until the nineteenth century, French kings pursued unification and centralization of their power with single-minded determination. Pushing outward from the Paris area, the *Ile de France* (Island of France), French kings added territory while retaining control in Paris.

Feudalism in France began to give way to absolutism with the crafty Louis (pronounced *Lwie*) XI, who ruled from 1461 to 1483 and doubled the size of France until it was nearly its present shape. He also weakened the power of the feudal nobles, ignored the **Estates-General**, and developed a royal bureaucracy to increase taxation. This pattern was strengthened for at least three centuries, leaving the France of today still highly centralized. Louis XI also cultivated relations with Rome. There was never an English-style break with the Vatican; instead, the Catholic Church remained a pillar of the French monarchy. The **Huguenots** were controlled, massacred, and driven into exile. In 1589, however, the royal line of succession fell to a Huguenot, Henry of Navarre. The Catholic Church offered the throne to Henry only if he accepted Catholicism. Shrugged Henry: "Paris is well worth a Mass."

Under Louis XIII, Cardinal Richelieu became chief minister and virtual ruler from 1624 to 1642. Obsessed with French power and glory, Richelieu further weakened the nobles, recruited only middle-class bureaucrats, and sent out **intendants** to control the provinces for Paris. Richelieu was an organizational genius who put his bureaucratic stamp on France for all time.

French nobles fought centralization but lost. In 1648 and again in 1650 some French **aristocrats** staged an uncoordinated revolt called the *Fronde*. Recall that at this time English nobles and their commoner allies beheaded a king who tried to act like an absolute monarch. In France, the nobles were quickly broken and lost the **autonomy** enjoyed by English lords.

Estates-General Old, unused French parliament.

Huguenots French Protestants.

intendants French provincial administrators, answerable only to Paris; early version of *prefects*.

aristocrat Person of inherited noble rank.

autonomy Partial independence.

GEOGRAPHY

RIVERS

Navigable rivers are economic arteries, tying a country together and often boosting international trade. England's Thames also gives it an inland outlet to the sea. France's Seine, Rhine, Rhone, and Loire give it trade routes and outlets to the sea in all four points of the compass. French kings supplemented the rivers with an ambitious system of canals, some of which are still in use. The Rhine has for centuries served as a West European highway, connecting Switzerland,

France, Germany, and the Netherlands. The Danube stitched together the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but for centuries its outlet in the Black Sea was controlled by the hostile Turks. Russia's rivers flow the wrong way; either to the Arctic Ocean or to the Black Sea, where the Ottomans held the vital Turkish Straits. China's economic and political life grew up around the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers, the early Indian kingdoms along the Indus and Ganges.

GEOGRAPHY

CORE AREAS

Most countries have an identifiable **core area**, a region where in most cases the state originated. Some countries contain more than one core area, and this may produce regional tension. Typically, the country's capital is in its core area. Farther out are the peripheral areas, often more recent additions where people may speak a different language and resent rule by the core area. At times the resentment can turn deadly, as when provinces such as Serbia's Kosovo, Turkey's Kurdish area, and China's Taiwan attempt to break away. Part of the tragedy of Kosovo is that it was the medieval Serbian core, but after Turkish conquest in 1389, Serbs were displaced northward, and Kosovo slowly became a majority Albanian. Looking to their history, Serbs refused to give up their ancient heartland.

France is an almost perfect example of a core area, centered on Paris, spreading its rule, language, and culture with an eye toward perfecting national integration. This has been a slow process and one that is still not complete. In the nineteenth century, some regions of France still spoke strange dialects. Under deliberate educational policy, corps of schoolteachers directed by Paris spread across France to turn "peasants into Frenchmen," in the words of historian Eugen Weber. Because of this some peripheral areas still harbor resentment against Paris. Brittany, Corsica, and Languedoc try to keep alive local dialects and regional culture. Extremists in Corsica practice occasional violence.

England is the core area of the United Kingdom, and the Valley of Mexico is Mexico's core area, established and reinforced by Toltecs, Aztecs, and Spaniards. The German core area is much less clear. The many German ministates of the Middle Ages kept their sovereignty and dialects for an unusually long time. Prussia led German unification in the nineteenth century, and so Berlin became the nation's capital. But many regions had little respect for Prussia; Catholic lands such as Bavaria and the Rhineland disliked Prussia's authoritarianism and Protestantism.

Germany remained riven by **particularism**, a factor that contributed to present-day federalism. Nazism was in part a contrived effort to bring all German regions under central control by means of lunatic nationalism. Nigeria, assembled by British imperialists, has no core area, which is the root of its breakaway tribalism.

The Soviet Union represented a huge gap between its Slavic core area and its non-Slavic peripheral areas. Russia's numerous nationalities are still distinct and discontent. Lacking the kind of cohesion that other nation-states have, the Soviet Union was a type of colonial empire. The Slavic core of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine gradually beat back Tatars, Turks, and Swedes until it straddled the vast belt where Europe meets Asia. Then the tsars sent expeditions eastward to claim Siberia to the Pacific. During the mid-nineteenth century Russia acquired most of the Muslim-Turkic peoples of Central Asia. **Russification** proved impossible, however, and fostered nationalist hatred against Moscow. The breakaway of republics from the Soviet Union may be seen as decolonization. The remaining Russian Federation still contains lands like Chechnya that would like to break away.

China's core area was the Yellow River Valley, but before the time of Christ, China had consolidated a major empire. So numerous and united—despite occasional civil wars—were the **Han** Chinese that the addition to the kingdom of a few outer barbarians (Mongols, Tibetans, Turkic Muslims, and others) bothered the Han little. Recently, however, Central Asian dissidents have set off bombs to protest rule by Beijing.

Japan, with Tokyo-Yokohama as its core area, has some center-periphery tension between East and West Japan and from agricultural and fishing prefectures. Iran has non-Persian-speaking peripheral areas that resent rule by Tehran. The U.S. core area began with the thirteen colonies along the Atlantic seaboard, especially the northern ones, which are still somewhat resented by the rest of the union.

LOUIS XIV: THE HIGH POINT OF ABSOLUTISM

"*L'état, c'est moi*" ("The state—that's me"), Louis XIV is often quoted as saying. By the time Louis XIV became king in 1661, French absolutism was already well developed; he brought it to a high point. Louis's emblem was the sun, around which all things revolved. The Sun King further increased centralization and bureaucratization, all aimed at augmenting his own and France's power. Louis used his large army in almost continual warfare. He acted as his own prime minister and handled much administration personally. He never bothered convening the Estates-General. He constructed Versailles and made hundreds of nobles live there, diverting them from power seeking to game playing—games of intrigue, love, and flattery. While English lords ruled as small kings on their estates, French nobles were reduced to **courtiers**.

Louis's policies of "war and magnificence" were financial drains. In order to harness the French economy to serve the state, Louis's minister, Colbert, practiced **mercantilism**, the theory that a nation was as wealthy as the amount of gold it possessed and that the way to amass gold was for the government to supervise the economy with plans, subsidies, monopolies, and tariffs. This set a pattern

core Region where the state originated. (See page 90.)

particularism Region's sense of its difference. (See page 90.)

Russification Making non-Russian nationalities learn Russian. (See page 90.)

Han Original and main people of China. (See page 90.)

Versailles Palaces and park on outskirts of Paris begun by Louis XIV.

courtier Person who hangs around a royal court.

mercantilism Theory that a nation's wealth is its gold and silver, to be amassed by government controls on the economy.

bound To name bordering countries.

GEOGRAPHY

BOUND FRANCE

There is an old technique for teaching geography that has been forgotten; we are going to revive it here. The technique requires the student to recite, from forced recall, the boundaries of a given country in the following form:

France is bounded on the north by Belgium and Luxembourg;
on the east by Germany, Switzerland, and Italy;
on the south by the Mediterranean Sea and Spain;
and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean.

The four directions need be only approximate. Germany is also on France's northern border but is mainly to the east of France. Bounding is a more effective learning tool than labeling a blank map, as a map gives several clues. **Bounding** forces students to reconstruct the map in their minds without clues. To reinforce your knowledge, based on the map on page 89, sketch out and label France and its neighbors. Next do it again from memory. Once you can bound each of our ten countries, you will be able to label much of all the continents except Africa, which is extremely fragmented and complex. To fill in the blank spots, we also include other countries in our bounding exercises. Bounding has only limited utility for Britain, as the United Kingdom has only one land boundary. What is it?

PERSONALITIES

THREE FRENCH GENIUSES: VOLTAIRE, MONTESQUIEU, ROUSSEAU

Each in his own way, three eighteenth-century thinkers—Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau—helped persuade many French—especially middle-class intellectuals—that the *ancien régime* was rotten and that it was possible to construct a better system. Their weapon was reason—abstract, *Cartesian*, logical—in contrast to English thinkers, who relied more on empirical reality. The French dislike reality for failing to live up to their logical constructs, an approach that lends itself to radicalism.

Voltaire (1694–1778) was the epitome of the **Enlightenment**, doubting and ridiculing everything stupid he saw around him. His chief target: the Catholic Church, which he saw as intolerant, irrational, and hypocritical. Voltaire's phrase, "*Ecrasez l'infâme*" ("crush the infamous thing," meaning the Church), became the founding cry of anticlericalism and spread through most Catholic countries, including Mexico. (But not Ireland or Poland. Any idea why?) As we shall see, France still has some remnants of the old clerical-anticlerical split.

The Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755) traveled all over Europe to gather material for one of the first books of comparative politics, *The Spirit of the Laws*. Montesquieu was especially impressed with English liberties, which he thought resulted from the "checks and balances" of the different parts of their government. Montesquieu wrote about an idealized model of an English system that had already passed into history, but the American Founding Fathers read him literally. Montesquieu suggested that countries could more or less rationally choose their governmental institutions. The French have been choosing and discarding them ever since.

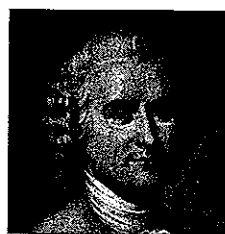
Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), who was born in Geneva but lived in France, was the most complex and dangerous of these three thinkers. Rousseau hypothesized man in the state of nature as free, happy, and morally good. (Note the contrast to



Voltaire



Montesquieu



Rousseau

Hobbes's and Locke's states of nature.) He believed it was society that corrupted humans, chiefly with private property, which leads to inequality and jealousy. Rousseau, in a famous phrase at the beginning of his book *The Social Contract*, wrote: "Man is born free but everywhere is in chains." How can humans be saved? Rousseau further hypothesized that beneath all the individual, petty viewpoints in society there is a **general will** for the common good. This general will could be discovered and implemented even though some people might object; they would be "forced to be free." Critics of Rousseau charge that he laid the intellectual basis for both nazism and communism because his theory lets dictators crush dissent and claim that they "really know" what the people want and need.

The French political thinkers tended to call for major, sweeping change; English thinkers, for slow, cautious change that preserved the overall system. The French thinkers fundamentally hated their government; the English did not.

found in most European countries and in Japan: Instead of there being a totally free market, the government supervises the economy.

Louis XIV was an able monarch who impressed all of Europe; other kings tried to imitate him. French cuisine, architecture, dress, and language dominated the Continent. From the outside, the France of Louis XIV looked more impressive than England. Without "checks and balances" to get in the way, the centralized monarchy of France accomplished great things. But the English, by developing political participation, devised a more stable system.

Why THE FRENCH REVOLUTION?

For all its splendor, France in the eighteenth century was in difficulty. Its treasury was often near bankruptcy. Especially costly was French support for the American colonists against Britain; the French did it more for revenge than for love of liberty. The bureaucracy was corrupt and inefficient. Recognizing too late that mercantilism was bad economics, the regime tried to move to a free market, but by then French industry and agriculture were used to state protection and wanted to keep it. Also important was the spread of new ideas on "liberty," "consent of the governed," and "the general will." Ideas can be dynamite and undermined the *ancien régime*.

As Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out, revolutions seldom start when things are bad but, rather, when they are getting better. France enjoyed improving economic conditions for most of the eighteenth century, but that increased expectations and awakened jealousies

Cartesian After French philosopher René Descartes, philosophical analysis based on pure reason without empirical reference. (See page 92.)

Enlightenment Eighteenth-century philosophical movement advocating reason and tolerance. (See page 92.)

general will Rousseau's theory of what the whole community wants. (See page 92.)

ancien régime French for old regime, the monarchy that preceded the Revolution.

DEMOCRACY

LEFT, RIGHT, AND CENTER

The way delegates were seated in the National Assembly during and after the French Revolution gives us our terms for radical, conservative, and moderate. In a half-circle chamber, the most radical delegates, those representing the common people, were seated to the left of the speaker's rostrum, and the most conservative, those representing the aristocracy, were seated to the right. This allowed like-minded legislators to caucus and separated delegates who might start fist fights.

The precise meanings of left, right, and center have varied through the ages and from country to country. In general, however, the left favors greater equality of incomes, welfare measures, and government intervention in the economy. The right, now that it has shed its aristocratic origins, favors individual achievement and private industry. The center tries to synthesize the moderate elements in both viewpoints. Those just a little to one side or the other are called center-left or center-right.

Third Estate Largest chamber of Estates-General, representing commoners.

alienated Psychologically distant and hostile.

Thermidor Month when Robespierre fell, a calming down after a revolutionary high.

toward people who were getting richer faster. As we shall see in Iran under the Shah, economic growth can be highly destabilizing. Furthermore, Louis XVI had decided to reform the political system and provide for some kind of representation. But as we shall see in Russia and Iran, the reforming of an unjust and unpopular system is extraordinarily difficult, often leading to revolution.

In the spring of 1789, Louis XVI convened the Estates-General for the first time since 1614. Its three estates—the clergy, the nobility, and the commoners—were elected by nearly universal male suffrage. The **Third Estate**, the commoners, demanded that all three

houses meet together, meaning that the more numerous Third Estate could override the conservative First and Second Estates. The Third Estate argued that it represented the popular will, but Louis

KEY CONCEPTS

BRINTON'S THEORY OF REVOLUTION

The great Harvard historian Crane Brinton in his 1938 *The Anatomy of Revolution* argued that all revolutions pass through similar stages. He compared several revolutions, but his main model was the French. Brinton's stages are as follows:

- The old regime loses its governing effectiveness and legitimacy. It becomes inept and indecisive. Intellectuals especially become **alienated** from it. An improving economy provokes discontent and jealousy.
- The first stage of revolution comes with the growth of antiregime groups. Triggering the revolution is a political problem—such as whether the three estates should meet separately or together—that the old regime cannot solve. Rioting breaks out, but troops sent to crush it desert to the rioters. The anti-regime people easily take over power amid popular rejoicing.
- Moderates initially seize power. They opposed the old regime, but as critics rather than as revolutionaries. They want major reform rather than total revolution. Extremists call them weak and cowardly, and indeed they are not ruthless enough to crush the extremists.

- Extremists take over because they are more ruthless, purposeful, and organized than the moderates. In what Brinton likened to a high fever during an illness, the extremists whip up a revolutionary frenzy, throwing out everything old, forcing people to be good, and punishing real or imagined enemies in a reign of terror. In France, this stage came with Robespierre; in Iran, it came with Khomeini.

- A **Thermidor**, or calming-down period, ends the reign of terror. Every revolution has a Thermidor, which Brinton likened to a convalescence after a fever, because human nature cannot take the extremists and their revolutionary purity for too long. Power may then fall into the hands of a dictator who restores order but not liberty—a Napoleon or a Stalin.

Brinton's theory became a classic and has largely stood the test of time. Revolutions do seem to pass through stages, although their timing cannot be predicted with accuracy. Russia and Iran, as we shall see, followed the Brinton pattern.

resisted. By the time he gave in, many parliamentarians were angry and radicalized and voted themselves into a **National Assembly**, its name today.

Shortly afterward, the common people of Paris, furious over rising bread prices, stormed the **Bastille** on July 14, 1789. Bastille Day became the French national day. Upon hearing of the Bastille incident the king exclaimed, "*C'est une révolte*," meaning something that could be put down. A duke corrected him: "*Non, Sire, c'est une révolution*." It was the first modern usage of the word **revolution**.

One reason Louis XVI was unpopular was his frivolous and extravagant Austrian-born queen, Marie Antoinette. She was said to have once inquired why there had been riots and was told it was because the people had no bread. "No bread?" she tittered. "Then let them eat cake." The masses hated her. She was guillotined in 1793 a few months after Louis XVI.

National Assembly France's parliament.

Bastille Old and nearly unused Paris jail, the storming of which heralded the French Revolution in 1789.

revolution Sudden and complete overthrow of a regime.

constitutional monarchy King with limited powers.

French Revolution 1789 popular ouster of monarch.

Reign of Terror Robespierre's 1793-1794 rule by guillotine.

coup d'état Military takeover of a government.

FROM FREEDOM TO TYRANNY

In 1791 the National Assembly constructed a **constitutional monarchy**, and if it had stopped there the **French Revolution** might have resembled the English Revolution of a century earlier. But the French constitutional monarchy was undermined from two sides: from the king and some aristocrats who wanted to restore absolute power, and from a militant faction called the Jacobins, who wanted a radical revolution. Their cry: "*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité!*" The king was caught conspiring with foreign princes to invade France and restore him to power. The attempted invasion of 1792 helped the Jacobins take over. With a makeshift but enthusiastic citizen army—"the nation in arms"—they repelled the invaders at Valmy.

Power fell into the hands of the misnamed Committee of Public Safety under Maximilien Robespierre, a provincial lawyer and fanatic follower of Rousseau who was determined to "force men to be free." Instituting the **Reign of Terror**, Robespierre and his followers guillotined more than twenty thousand people, starting with the king, queen, and nobles but soon spreading to anyone who doubted Robespierre. Finally, in 1794, during the revolutionary calendar's month of Thermidor, Robespierre's comrades, afraid they might be next, guillotined him, and the Terror ended.

During all this turmoil, the army became the only coherent institution, especially one young artillery officer, the Corsican Napoléon Bonaparte, who had won fame leading French armies in Italy and Egypt. In 1799 a **coup d'état** overthrew the weak civilian Directory and set up a Consulate with Bonaparte as First Consul. Brilliant in both battle and civil reform, Napoleon crowned himself emperor in 1804.

Above all, Napoleon loved war. As Henry Kissinger pointed out, a revolutionary power, like France in the midst of hostile conservative monarchies, can feel secure only by conquering all potential threats. Napoleon made France master of all Europe, using dashing tactics and a large, enthusiastic army to crush one foe after another until at last they went too far. Facing a British-led coalition, harassed by guerrilla warfare in Spain, and frozen in the Russian winter, Napoleon was defeated and exiled to the Mediterranean island of Elba in 1814. The next year he tried a comeback and thousands of his old soldiers rallied around him to fight at Waterloo and lose.

tyrannical Coercive rule, usually by one person.

plebiscite Referendum; mass vote for issue rather than for candidates.

chauvinism After Napoleonic soldier named Chauvin; fervent, prideful nationalism.

Bourbon French dynasty before the Revolution.

Napoleon left behind an ambiguous legacy. Although he claimed to be consolidating the Revolution, he actually set up a **tyrannical** police state. Trying to embody Rousseau's elusive general will, Napoleon held several **plebiscites**, which he always won. He unleashed **chauvinism** by proclaiming France to be Europe's liberator. Napoleon was not just a historic accident, though, for we shall see similar figures emerge in French politics. When a society is badly split, as France was over the Revolution, power tends to gravitate into the hands of a savior, and democracy does not have a chance.

THE BOURBON RESTORATION

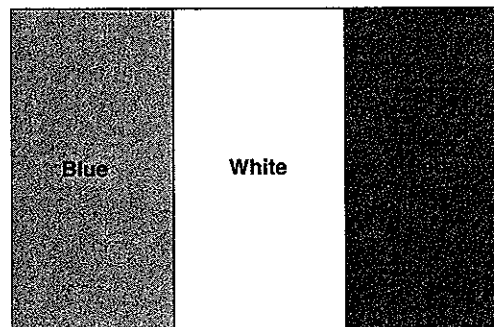
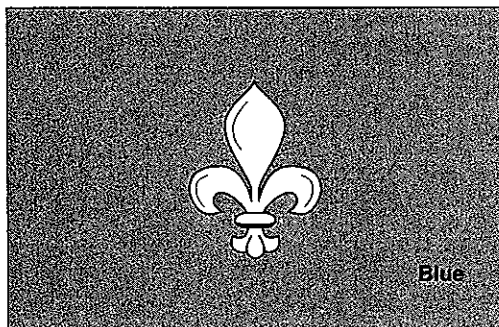
Europe breathed a sigh of relief once Napoleon was packed off to a remote island in the South Atlantic and the brother of Louis XVI was restored to the French throne as Louis XVIII. In the **Bourbon Restoration**, exiles from all over Europe returned to France to claim their old rights. Many French disliked the returning Bourbons and sighed, "They learned nothing and they forgot nothing."

GEOGRAPHY

A TALE OF TWO FLAGS

The Bourbon flag had been blue and white with a fleur-de-lis (iris). (Today's Quebec flag is blue and white with four irises.) The Revolution introduced the tricolor of red, white, and blue. The post-Napoleon restoration

brought back the old flag, for the tricolor symbolized everything the Bourbons hated. In 1830, the Orleanist monarchy, to mollify revolutionary sentiment, brought back the tricolor, France's flag ever since.



France was badly split. Most aristocrats hated the Revolution, while most commoners supported at least a version of it. The Catholic Church was reactionary, for the Revolution had confiscated church lands and ended its tax privileges. French Catholics for generations opposed the anticlericalist republicans, who in turn mistrusted the church. Residuals of the clerical-anticlerical split persist in France. But France had also changed in the quarter-century since the Revolution. Parliaments now counted for something; kings could no longer rule without them. The civil reforms of Napoleon were preserved. People insisted on equality before the law.

At first the French, tired from upheaval and warfare, accepted the Bourbons. But by 1830 they proved to be as pig-headed as ever, and rioting broke out. In a semilegal switch, the liberal Duc d'Orleans, Louis-Phillipe, replaced the last Bourbon, Charles X. He, too, proved inept, and a small uprising in that revolutionary year of 1848 brought the Second Republic. This did not last long either.

The French have historically turned from tumultuous democracy to authoritarian rule. In 1848 they overwhelmingly elected Napoleon's self-proclaimed nephew, Louis Napoleon, as president. Using plebiscites, in 1852 he turned the Second Republic into the Second Empire with himself as Emperor Napoleon III. This brought two decades of peace and progress until Louis Napoleon, in 1870, allowed himself to be goaded into war with Prussia. Bursting with overconfidence, the French were quickly trounced. The Germans surrounded Paris and shelled it daily, but there was no French government left to surrender. In Paris itself, a revolutionary takeover by common citizens brought the short-lived **Paris Commune**, which conservative French troops crushed, killing some twenty thousand Parisians. Karl Marx mistakenly saw the Commune as the first proletarian uprising, and among leftists the Commune grew into a legend of worker power.

Paris Commune Takeover of Paris government by citizens during German siege of 1870–1871.

belle époque "Beautiful epoch," France around 1900.

Zionism Jewish nationalist movement that founded Israel.

POLITICAL CULTURE

THE DREYFUS AFFAIR

Nothing better reveals the deep division of French society in the late nineteenth century than the trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, an officer on the French general staff. In 1894, Dreyfus was accused of selling secrets to the Germans; he was given a rigged military trial with fake evidence and sent to Devil's Island for life. It soon became clear that Dreyfus was not the culprit and had been convicted by bigoted officers simply because he was a Jew, a handy scapegoat.

France split in two. Those defending Dreyfus—the *Dreyfusards*—supported the republican traditions of equality. These tended to be people on the left. Novelist Emile Zola published his famous letter *J'accuse!* (I accuse!), charging the government with covering

up for the military. The *Anti-Dreyfusards*—reactionary aristocrats, army officers, fanatic Catholics, and anti-Semites—were equally passionate in defense of pre-revolutionary values. Most French took one side or the other; there was even street fighting.

The French Supreme Court finally exonerated Dreyfus in 1906, but the episode left scars. It showed how the beautiful, civilized veneer of **belle époque** France concealed reaction and anti-Semitism. A Viennese journalist covering the trial, Theodore Herzl, was so shocked by the anti-Semitism unleashed by the trial that he immediately organized a world **Zionist** movement to save Jews from what he (correctly) feared would be worse outbursts.

The Third Republic

Amidst near anarchy, the **Third Republic**, France's first stable democracy, was born. Its first task was a humiliating peace with Germany that cost France the province of Alsace (which has many German-speaking people) plus a billion dollars in gold. The enraged French ached for revenge and transferred their traditional hatred of Britain to Germany.

Third Republic France's democratic regime from 1871 to 1940.

bourgeois Middle-class.

reactionary Seeking to go back to old ways; extremely conservative.

The accidental Third Republic turned out to be the longest-lasting French regime since the ancien régime. The Third Republic was basically fairly conservative and **bourgeois**. France was not healed during its long tenure; indeed, social tensions mounted. A **reactionary** Catholic right dreamed of an authoritarian system, while the left organized Socialist and later Communist parties. Economic and population growth was slow, and France slipped further behind

the rapidly growing Germany. Still, the Third Republic staggered through the ordeal of World War I. At first the French were delighted with a chance for revenge against Germany, but soon the appalling losses—a million and a half French lives—turned France bitter and defeatist even though it was on the winning side. France regained Alsace but had no stomach to fight again.

Political Culture

FRANCE'S POLITICAL ERAS

The political history of France is rich and complex. Notice how conservative and radical eras approximately alternate. It is more difficult to construct such a table

for British political development because it has had no drastic regime changes since the Commonwealth in the seventeenth century.

Name	Years	Remembered for
Old Regime	–1789	Absolutist monarchy; centralized administration; supervised economy.
Revolution	1789–1799	Tumultuous; repel invaders; Reign of Terror; Thermidor.
Napoleon	1799–1814	Redoes civil code; conquers most of Europe; crowns self emperor.
Bourbon Restoration	1815–1830	Try to restore monarchy in badly split France.
Orleanist	1830–1848	Liberal monarchy.
Second Republic	1848–1852	Attempted liberal republic.
Second Empire	1852–1870	Louis Napoleon's conservative stability.
Third Republic	1871–1940	Bourgeois liberal democracy.
Vichy	1940–1944	German puppet government.
Provisional Government	1944–1946	De Gaulle-led coalition.
Fourth Republic	1946–1958	Unstable, fractious, immobilized; Indochina and Algeria.
Fifth Republic	1958–	De Gaulle strong president; state-led modernization.

French defeatism played into the hands of Nazi Germany, which swept easily through France in May–June 1940. Only one French unit fought well, a tank column commanded by an obscure colonel named de Gaulle, who had been warning for years of the need to develop better French armored forces. The French thought they could prevent a repetition of the World War I bloodshed by hiding behind the **Maginot Line**, but fixed defenses cannot move; the Germans simply went around them on the north.

Vichy: FRANCE Splits AGAIN

The Germans largely let the French run occupied France. Named after the town of Vichy in central France where it was set up, the Vichy government was staffed by the same sort of reactionaries who earlier had reviled Dreyfus, people who hated democracy and admired the authoritarian Germans. The aged Marshal Pétain, hero of World War I, became chief of state, and an opportunistic politician, Pierre Laval, became premier without elections. Some French thought Vichy was an improvement over the Third Republic, which had voted the **Popular Front** into power in 1936. "Better the Nazis than the Communists," muttered Vichy supporters. French SS units fought in Russia. French police rounded up Jews for deportation to death camps. French workers volunteered to work in Germany. Although most French hated to admit it, many collaborated with the Germans and even liked them.

Other French, however, hated the Germans and Vichy. Some joined the **Résistance**, an underground network that sabotaged and spied on the Germans, rescued British and American airmen, and occasionally killed collaborators. Again, France split. The Vichy period was, in the words of Stanley Hoffmann, "a Franco-French war." The Resistance attracted French people of many political persuasions, but the left predominated. The Communists, who refused to attack Germans until the 1941 invasion of Russia, became the most effective underground fighters and emerged from the war with prestige and a good organization.

The rallying point of the Resistance was Charles de Gaulle (promoted to general in the last days of the Third Republic), who broadcast from London: "France has lost a battle, but France has not lost the war!" Organizing French-speaking people around the world—France had sizable colonies and thousands of able-bodied men who fled from France—de Gaulle declared a provisional government comprised of **Free French** expatriates. Participating in military actions in North Africa, the Normandy landings, and the liberation of Paris in 1944, the Free French Army was of considerable help to the **Allies**. During the war de Gaulle came to think of himself as the savior of France, a modern Joan of Arc.

THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

From 1944 to early 1946, de Gaulle headed a provisional government. A newly elected constituent assembly, dominated by parties of the left, drafted a constitution for the **Fourth Republic** that gave great power to the legislative branch. De Gaulle opposed the new constitution and resigned with the warning that the Fourth Republic would have the same institutional weaknesses as the Third. He retired to the small town of Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises, not to return to power until the people called him back to save France again twelve years later.

Maginot Line Supposedly unbreachable French defenses facing Germany before World War II.

Vichy Nazi puppet regime that ran France during World War II.

Popular Front Coalition government of all leftist and liberal parties in France and Spain in the 1930s.

Résistance World War II French underground anti-German movement.

Free French De Gaulle's World War II government in exile.

Allies World War II anti-Axis military coalition.

Fourth Republic 1946–1958 French regime.

immobilisme Government inability to solve big problems.

decolonization Granting of independence to colonies.

Indochina War First Vietnam war, 1946–1954, between French and Communist Viet Minh.

He was right about the Fourth Republic resembling the Third: From its inception the Fourth was plagued by a weak executive, a National Assembly paralyzed by small, squabbling parties, and frequent changes of cabinet. The result was, as before, **immobilisme**. Politicians played games with each other; they were good at wrecking but not at building.

Still, like the Third Republic, the Fourth might have endured if not for the terrible problems of **decolonization**, problems the fractious parliamentarians could not solve. The first problem was Indochina, a

French colony since the 1880s, occupied by the Japanese in World War II and then reclaimed by France. The **Indochina War** broke out in 1946 and dragged on until the fall of the French fortress of Dienbienphu in 1954. (The United States came close to jumping into the Vietnam conflict that year but backed off.)

Algeria was even worse. The French had been there since 1830, at first to suppress piracy but later to settle. Close to a million Europeans dominated Algerian economic, social, and political life; Algeria was even declared part of France. Algerian nationalists started their revolt in 1954 with urban terrorism. This time the French army, determined to win, hunted down nationalists and tortured them. When civilian politicians in Paris opposed the Algerian War, the French army in Algeria began a *coup d'état* in 1958. Paratroopers were ready to drop on their own country; France tottered on the brink of civil war. At the last minute both sides agreed to call back General de Gaulle. The army assumed he would keep Algeria French (he did not). De Gaulle, acting as if he had known all along that history would recall him to lead France, demanded as his price a totally new constitution, one that would cure the ills of the Fourth Republic. He got it. In the next chapter, we explore the institutions of the Fifth Republic.

KEY TERMS

alienated (p. 94)
Allies (p. 99)
ancien régime (p. 93)
aristocrat (p. 89)
autonomy (p. 89)
Bastille (p. 95)
belle époque (p. 97)
bound (p. 91)
Bourbon (p. 96)
bourgeois (p. 98)
Cartesian (p. 92)
chauvinism (p. 96)
constitutional monarchy
(p. 95)
core (p. 90)
coup d'état (p. 95)

courtier (p. 91)
decolonization (p. 100)
Enlightenment (p. 92)
Estates-General (p. 89)
Fourth Republic (p. 99)
Free French (p. 99)
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general will (p. 92)
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tyrannical (p. 96)
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Zionism (p. 97)

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