

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
ORTF	Office de radiodiffusion-télévision française
ONI	Office national d'immigration
PCF	Parti communiste français
PMF	Pierre Mendès France
PR	Parti républicain
pr	Proportional representation
PRG	Parti radical de gauche
PS	Parti socialiste
PSU	Parti socialiste unifié
RI	Républicains indépendants
RPF	Rassemblement du peuple français (1947–54)
RPR	Rassemblement pour la République
SFIO	Section française de l'internationale ouvrière
SMIC	Salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance
SOFRES	Société française d'enquêtes par sondages
TEPA	Travail, de l'emploi et du pouvoir d'achat (law)
TF1	Télévision française 1
UDF	Union pour la démocratie française
UDR	Union des démocrates pour la République (1971–6), also known as Union pour la défense de la République (1968–71)
UDSR	Union démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance
UDT	Union démocratique du travail
UDV ^e	Union démocratique pour la V ^e République (1967–8)
UFF	Union et fraternité française
UMP	Union pour un mouvement populaire
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNR	Union pour la Nouvelle République (1958–68)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Introduction: the Presidency in the French Fifth Republic

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Political leadership is a universal social institution, but is one of the least understood. This book is a study of political leadership using the French case. It is, therefore, a contribution to comparative political leadership studies and to the analysis of French politics (in which, in the view of these authors, leadership politics plays an almost inordinately important role). What follows is a study of the French Fifth Republic from within the field of political leadership research. Our study also deals with a series of problems related to political culture, state resources, party politics and party systems, political power, and the nature of the relationship between politics and myth. This book can be read as a contribution to the study of leadership and of Fifth Republic politics. The individual chapters, moreover, can be taken as distinct contributions to the continuing discussion of each of the Presidents, and their significance for one another, and to issues of governance. Taken together and comparatively, they constitute a presidential topography of the Fifth Republic.

In strictly constitutional terms, the President is not the head of government, but the Head of State. In practice he, (to date, only he) is, in 'normal times' rather like a combination of head of government and Head of State. This means that the role of the symbolic will have great political significance in the French case; and the political and the symbolic will interact constantly, and consequentially. A further consequence of this is that notions of France, its greatness, history, myths, and the symbolic role of individuals, will all be brought centre stage in political life, thus dramatically affecting and heightening political discourse and leadership rhetoric. As regards Presidents and aspirant Presidents, particularly because Charles de Gaulle was the first one, presidential rhetoric will constantly be used, further enhancing the political salience of history, culture, shared mythologies, and so on. This

means that the political culture itself becomes richer, and the role of symbolism more politically consequential. It also further increases the symbolic effects of personalisation, image and presidential discourse.

It may be an exaggeration to depict the Fifth Republic (1958–) as the ‘Republic of leadership’; politics involves, inevitably, a myriad of other things, but the politics of France since 1958 has been distinguished by strong leadership. Notions of an exclusive ‘French exceptionalism’ are debatable, but France does distinguish itself at least from comparable ‘Western’ regimes of representative government through the emphasis it places on presidential power (and in the right circumstances upon the enormous power and authority the President wields). For the main part, Fifth Republic leadership has been strongly presidential, but the emergence of the focus on the presidency has had an impact well beyond the institution of the presidency itself. One could argue, in fact, that it is politically ingrained in the Republic today. France was not, traditionally, associated with a presidential-executive style of leadership; in fact the opposite is true. One of the constant themes of political writing in the Third Republic was the need for leadership at the top, and the divided and what seemed to be the unassertive nature of the Republic’s political elite. Of course, some of this criticism came from the extreme right and was a way of belittling the Republic’s response to contemporary France’s many problems (particularly, in fact, its fear of strong leadership) but the criticism went beyond this, and envious eyes were cast at the American presidency, taken – often with much lost in translation – as a Republican model.

In its origins, and today in some of its constitutional and institutional limitations, the American presidency was designed to domesticate the power of the personal, the ‘monarchic’. Ironically, it was during the time of the French Third Republic that the US presidency began to take on some of the leadership features that make France and the US comparable today, particularly in symbolic politics – strong rhetoric, national appeal, and consequential use of the media (all of this under FDR). But as with the original American presidency, French republican attitudes to strong leadership were also ‘Roman’ in their fear of ‘tyranny’. Hence French republicanism’s efforts to screen out from normal political practice all ‘imperial’-seeming claims to leadership. These efforts were, of course, redoubled after the European experience of fascism. So, from the 1789 Revolution onwards, French republicanism struggled with personal leadership; in the wake of World War II, de Gaulle’s envisioning pretensions were bound to hit the brick wall of republicanism’s assertions of impersonal power.

The Fifth Republic used to be known as ‘de Gaulle’s Republic’. This political coup was the starting point for the development of the presidential institution, a form of power that did not suit the republican temperament. Without the domination of the giant and institutionally formative figure of the General, it is difficult to imagine (in any counterfactual history) that the configuration of power would have been the same. But once the locus of power was established as the presidency, the competition to become President by winning the popular vote ensured that the Elysée was likely to remain the political focus. Had de Gaulle taken some other post – the premiership – then the supreme office would be that institution (although doubtless with very different symbolic consequences). It was not certain in 1958 that he would run for the presidency; and his greatest supporter, Michel Debré, thought that the premiership would (and should) be the focus of real power in the Fifth Republic. In strict constitutional terms, the Prime Minister is indeed the source of political authority in the Fifth Republic. In the constitution, the President is an ‘arbitrator’, or referee (*l’arbitre*), and has no independent powers, outside of the wholly exceptional case of national emergency. But the constitutional framework, in the way of legal strictures, has been swept aside by political developments, a process which, it should be stressed, was backed by public opinion.

In other words, the presidency is a supremely (and highly ambivalent) political institution. It has no constitutional powers beyond the limited ability to invoke other balancing forces under the constitution. This is like the previous Third and Fourth Republic Presidents who had only ceremonial functions, and who remained within that remit most of the time. The President often had transient authority in particular circumstances (foreign policy, for example), but this was not an executive function, and they could be brutally evicted from decision-making arenas (a classic example being Prime Minister Clemenceau’s sidelining President Poincaré in World War I). Thus, the exigencies of political authority require a President to bring together a majority of the public in competitive elections, but then to maintain the cohesion of that majority, as well as manage a general election victory. If they do these things they will enjoy legitimacy, power, and authority of breathtaking ambit.

Without the support of a majority in the Assembly, the Head of State becomes rather like the presidency of the Third Republic – remote but dignified and uninvolved in day-to-day politics, at best; humiliated and virtually powerless at worst. To use Giscard d’Estaing’s term, a President of one side faced by a hostile Assembly has to ‘*cohabit*’ with the government of another (*‘cohabitation’*, although not a constitutional

term, has come into current usage to describe this situation). And they live with one another in a very unequal relationship. The President becomes the de facto (wary and hostile) leader of the opposition to the government over which they preside. '*Cohabitation*' is a peculiar French arrangement and has no equivalent elsewhere in Western-type systems (the United States is a very different, although interesting comparator), but it has prevailed three times: for two years from 1986–8 and 1993–5, and for five years from 1997–2002 (a full legislative term), and it could have happened on other occasions. In these conditions, the President has to be treated with the respect due to a Head of State, but otherwise is not part of the executive. This does, however, place constraints on the government, which cannot frontally attack the leader of the opposition, and on the President, who cannot disown their government. '*Cohabitation*' is a taut relationship and a surreptitiously conflictual one in which battles are fought by proxy or in areas where the contestants force their adversary onto what they think is impossible terrain. Two of these contests were 'won' by the President (in the sense that they were re-elected, in 1988 and 2002). From 1993–5, on the other hand, President Mitterrand was conspicuously in no position to run for a third term. Since the constitutional amendment of 2000, and the institution of a five-year quinquennium (replacing the traditional seven-year septennate), '*cohabitation*' is in theory far less likely to occur.

In contrast, in what has come to be regarded as 'normal times', the President is the head of the majority in the National Assembly, whose destiny is linked with the President it supports. This makes the relationship between the President and the legislature's majority similar to that between a Prime Minister and majority in other European systems. A Fifth Republic President with a majority has extensive power, but that power is an extra-constitutional growth. When the President holds this high ground they can intervene and determine any aspect of policy; there is no constitutional basis for a foreign policy and defence presidential 'reserved domain' (contrary to assertions), and powerful Presidents will extend their remit as they see fit. This can be the micro-management of anything from architecture to appointments, and it normally means close supervision of the 'sovereign' powers of foreign policy and defence.

In leadership terms, this means that the authority of the Fifth Republic President is dependent on obtaining and maintaining public support. Fifth Republic politics is politics in an open society and is about gaining, keeping and maintaining public backing for the government's policies. Public support is democratically expressed through general elections for

the National Assembly so that the President's majority is an expression of public support. The presidency, however, is also linked to much wider notions of public support. A President's room for manoeuvre on matters such as appointments, dominance over policy, having to respond to public pressure, or being 'disavowed' through, for example, losing a referendum (as happened to President Chirac in 2005), all relate the presidency very consequentially to public approval in a wider sense. A popular President has a great deal more scope for action than an unpopular one. With that support, the President's powers – relayed by the Assembly majority – are extensive. Thus, the President's power is the exercise of political leadership on a permanent basis. All the political arts have, at one time or another, to be brought to bear on creating this support, and in persuading the public that the course of the Republic under their leadership is the correct one. Sometimes this fails and '*cohabitation*' is the result.

For students of political leadership, therefore, the Fifth Republic forms a test bed of theories of the political art, or, to use Riker's term, political 'heresthetics', second to none (Riker 1986). 'Heresthetics' is roughly what is meant by 'manoeuvre', but combined with manipulation and an eye for the advantage. However, the term 'heresthetic' is not pejorative, and structuring a position to gain advantage, without (if possible) that art being evident, is an inevitable part of politics in an open society. Observers of the French scene are not being given a glimpse into a uniquely depraved world, but of a milieu in which leadership manoeuvres have a presidential setting. All of the exercise of the political arts takes place in the context of a distinctive and sophisticated political culture that has its possibilities and constraints. Having said this, the highly personalised nature of such manoeuvres, the role of entourages and special advisors, the clashes of personalities, all lend to French politics an intrigue and complexity reminiscent of classical Rome or Renaissance city states.

This focus on leadership in contemporary French politics requires special analysis, and the contributors to this volume have chosen to focus on aspects of leadership using particular examples, in order to highlight the different facets of the phenomenon, as well as capturing and, where necessary, re-evaluating, the range of French presidencies. This book is therefore not a history of the politics of the Fifth Republic but an examination of salient aspects of Fifth Republic political leadership, and of political leadership more generally, and its relation to its conditions of policy development and political performance. All Presidents to date are examined, but each review of the features of their leadership will be different, according to the case studies.

Each author has decided to appraise and characterise what they feel are the most salient features of their case study. In the Fourth Republic, as in the Third, politicians in the Assembly were permanently negotiating: log-rolling, bargaining and dealing in committees. This led to an unassuming style of leadership that, coupled with the need to appeal to ordinary voters in the local constituencies, favoured, unsurprisingly, the undramatic figures who could make deals, fix things, and be relied upon both by their constituents and by their parties (as David Hanley shows in Chapter Two). Again unsurprisingly, very few of these Fourth Republic political leaders are remembered (aside from a very few personalities such as Antoine Pinay and Pierre Mendès France), but their roles enabled swaps and changes of position, as negotiations necessitated. The political figures of Henri Queuille and Pierre Pflimlin were typical: stolid political operators inoculated against flamboyancy (Williams 1964). This does not mean, contrary to assumptions, that there were no achievements: the economic growth of the 1950s, European integration and decolonisation were already well underway, and to no small degree thanks to this cohort of post-war politicians. But little was attributable to individuals, as such. Much of the work of the legislatures was done in committees away from the public gaze, where these complex bargains could be enacted in a relatively discreet manner, without claims to visionary leadership, self-promotion or narcissistic self-display.

De Gaulle introduced into the Fifth Republic a leadership of a fundamentally different order from that of the Fourth Republic. De Gaulle brought into the heart of the Republic mythologies about France and about leadership, which already existed in French society and political culture, but had been screened out, pushed to the margins of the republican tradition. It is here that the Fifth Republic is distinguished dramatically from its predecessors. Symbolic politics floods into the new regime, reconfiguring the parameters of politics itself. In the Fifth Republic, the leaders have to strike public postures and dramatise their political positions to win support across the nation. Figures like Senate Speaker Alain Poher, the modest interim President in 1969 and 1974, can be appreciated by the public, but to date have been rejected in competition with the projected self-image and more dramatic performances of 'envisioning' contenders (the question of which is the 'better' form of leadership opens a much bigger discussion, but the public, as mentioned, clearly prefers the leadership styles of the Fifth Republic). The contrast in leaderships is between the Fourth Republic's minimalist, semi-visible style, and the more personality-driven mode of the Fifth, which seeks maximum exposure. Fifth Republic leaders, of course,

depend on political party backing, and the rise and 'nation-wide' extension of the party as the mainstay of the presidential system is, ironically, one of the features of the Fifth Republic, however much this is denied by Gaullists, for whom the 'party' is anathema, because a party divides, whereas a 'rally' brings people together, rallies and unites (Pütz 2007; Graham 1993).

In the first section of this book, the general background to the Fifth Republic is discussed. There are the aspects of the abrupt change in leadership style from the Fourth to the Fifth Republics and the constitutional developments which accompanied that change. These are analysed by David Hanley and Jack Hayward, respectively. It is important in a study of political leadership of this nature, which deals with both culture and institutions in a comparative context, to set this framework for the subsequent studies of individual Presidents treated in the separate chapters.

In Chapter Two of Part One, David Hanley anatomises the Fourth Republic's leadership and the forces behind it. A model of republican leadership is described and the forces making for change are outlined. This enables Hanley to demonstrate a contrast between the two Republics in what is, of course, a single country. Hanley's is essentially a comparative empirical and theoretical exercise. This is important for what happens subsequently, and establishes the political dynamics of Fifth Republic leadership. There are many factors at work here, including the change in the Fifth Republic to move towards the bipolar party system around the left/right cleavage and the presidency. Many of these themes are investigated later in the book.

In Chapter Three, Jack Hayward goes back to the origins of the Fifth Republic Constitution and to the political culture (here, statecraft) that undergirds any written constitution. This chapter also examines attempts by academic observers like Maurice Duverger to find an appropriate model of Fifth Republic government (Duverger 1980 and 1986). As the chapter makes clear, the regime inaugurated in 1958 by de Gaulle is presidential (under certain circumstances), and, in 1958, the Algerian War, the threat of a military coup, and de Gaulle's popularity acted as a three-line whip for the President in the Assembly. This political situation, to which de Gaulle was the key, meant that there was no initial resistance to the aggrandisement of the executive presidency; once this had been accomplished, resistance was pushed aside.

At the beginning of the Fifth Republic, the stature of the President and the political authority of de Gaulle effaced the Prime Minister (leading to Duverger's famous remark of Michel Debré, de Gaulle's

Prime Minister: '*M. Debré existe-t-il?*' (Duverger 1959)). This set the pattern against which the future leadership of the Republic would be measured. Duverger subsequently classified the Fifth Republic as a 'semi-presidential system' and placed it in a new category of presidential regimes in Europe (along with Weimar Germany and 1970s Portugal, neither particularly apt comparisons). This was disputed by many, including the jurisprudential authority Georges Vedel who argued that it was less a new regime type than a hybrid (Elgie 1995). That is to say, the institutional structure can swing from the President to the Prime Minister in the space of an election, and power moves over the river, from the presidential Palace of the Elysée on the right bank of the Seine, to the Prime Minister's residence, the Matignon on the left bank.

As Jack Hayward argues, French presidentialism can easily move into 'hyper-presidential' mode in a way that is not consistent, for example, with the United States system of presidential government. Many of these overly formal interpretations of the powers of the presidency in the Fifth Republic miss the fundamental truth about the President in the Fifth Republic. The constitution does not tell us much about the presidency in reality. What de Gaulle did – ably helped by a sense of drama in 1958 – in a move seen as indispensable to re-establishing the authority of the state and solving the Algerian crisis, was to bring centre stage the role of personality and persona in the political process, and its use in recognising institutions and their salience; in this way, he rewrote the rules of the game, elevating the status of leadership and making the role of 'persona' and its elevated status salient for 50 years afterwards. In the 2007–12 presidential term, President Sarkozy had, in certain respects, pushed the authority of the institution beyond previous limits, becoming in some ways both Prime Minister and President. A French President is not constrained by the Congress or legislature in the way that the American President is (the exception, perhaps, is Roosevelt, who had overwhelming public support for a time, and in war time). In the United States, the separation of powers makes presidentialism a constrained form of government, and one that is frequently constricted to the point of being paralysed. In the Fifth Republic, the President does not go through these phases of partial power; a Fifth Republic President is either all-powerful or else a ceremonial figure – in the latter case, they are treated like a constitutional monarch with the power to advise, to encourage and to warn, and little else, apart from fume with anger. Of course, the President will use public performances and lost 'power' to regain 'authority', as Mitterrand did in 1986–8. This, whatever some might try to assert, is how the constitutional legal position stands.

Jack Hayward's chapter also investigates the problems of state power and of political representation in the Fifth Republic, under which the strong state – seemingly unlimited – is constrained by local, European Union, and pressure group and other forces, which together constitute a different dimension. As Hayward points out, with the change in the constitution, which from the 2000s onwards created a five-year presidential term in place of the septennate and gave priority to presidential over general elections, the prospects for future '*cohabitation*' are, as previously argued, greatly diminished, although not eliminated. President Sarkozy's subsequent constitutional changes did not diminish the President's powers. Hayward's chapter also examines the 'omnipresence' of President Sarkozy, as well as the limited nature of his reforms, and the exceptional nature of French presidentialism.

French Fifth Republic presidentialism has distinctive features, but they are not those of a new regime type, and the President remains (normally) a leader of a major party in a party system, unlike the United States where parties are local, running candidates for constituencies or localities, and ephemeral at national level. In the USA, the national party comes into existence for the presidential election, and around the candidate, who emerges from primaries in a well-known, long-standing, highly expensive, and exhaustive and exhausting process. French parties are constructed on the European model and have traditionally involved mass memberships continually submerged in activities from fund-raising to membership drives, to ideological debates, to mobilisation (party membership in Europe has, of course, diminished and converged on the US model in the last decades).

A recent development (over the last fifteen years or so) has been the primary in French presidential elections, but these are not straightforward affairs and have sometimes been set up to reduce internal party conflict. A candidate who does not have a party vehicle to propel them into the Elysée may yet win (Alain Poher in 1969 and François Bayrou in 2007 may have come relatively close at moments in their campaign to disproving this rule – and Giscard's party in 1974 was simply a small grouping of MPs), but the President will depend on parties in the Assembly. Moreover, weak party support in general elections will reduce the authority of the President (or demolish it). In the French system, an elected Assembly can exert its legitimacy as an authority to overrule a President. The comparisons with the US are interesting for their similarity and differences (Pierce 1995). But France is distinguished from other European systems because of the dramatic circumstances of its formation, and the consequences of that for the scope and status of

leadership. Ironically, one of the things that de Gaulle's status and the dramatic nature of his taking power conferred upon him was, first, that he was able to impose a constitution that was written for him, and, second, able to completely ignore it (Gaffney 2012).

In Western politics, leadership is almost invariably the domain of men, and the question of why this is the case is as pertinent to leadership generally as it is to France in particular. In Chapter Four on 'gendered leadership', Rainbow Murray examines the masculinised notion of political leadership in France. This has been discussed in academic discourse, but with the spectacular implosion of Dominique Strauss-Kahn's career, and the reasons for it, this question has been forced onto the popular agenda. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the head of the IMF in Washington was, according to opinion poll evidence, seen by many at the beginning of 2011 as the certain winner of the Parti socialiste (PS – Socialist Party) nomination for the presidential elections of 2012, and almost certainly as the next French President. However, in May 2011, he was accused of sexual assault and attempted rape in a New York hotel, just as he was assumed to be about to launch his campaign for the Socialist Party's nomination. He was arrested, and his political career came to a dramatic halt. Many questions were raised about the French political system by this affair, although the mainstream reaction in France itself was, to put it no more strongly, mixed, and quite different from the reaction in many other countries. There was a flurry of other accusations about politicians' behaviour (sexual harassment and '*droit du seigneur*' comportment, and so on). These developments have led to major re-examinations of the elements of machismo within both French society and French political culture. From our point of view, however, the Strauss-Kahn case demonstrates, once again, that gender in this context poses a double series of problems and constraints in that the President has traditionally been expected to display 'masculine' characteristics (Jamieson 1995). These involve attributes such as aggression and 'male' rationality, while women who move into this world are often derided as lacking in 'femininity', or else possessing such femininity to the point of being too attractive or conciliatory to operate in the tough world of men; or, again, they trigger a whole series of often misogynistic attitudes and myths towards women (Alexander and Andersen 1993). Political leaders like Edith Cresson and Ségolène Royal both suffered from these dichotomies of incompatible demands. There have been a number of women candidates in French presidential elections, including the persistent (but marginal) Trotskyite Arlette Laguiller; but the first from a major party, and the first to be credited

with the possibility of winning, was Ségolène Royal in 2007. Murray's chapter looks closely at Royal's experience as presidential aspirant and then as candidate in 2007. Although the campaign succeeded to some extent in feminising the public's expectations of political leadership, the chapter finds that there were many factors hampering that experience. The possibility of *Madame la Présidente* (Perry 2005) is a constrained one given that, at present, the numbers of women in the forefront of politics are limited (Kuhn 2007). Rainbow Murray argues that the gender aspect remains an entrenched feature of French politics, and that the problems posed need to be overcome if France is to see the progression of women in politics. This has a bearing on the future of French leadership, and more widely on representative government in France; but the Ségolène Royal phenomenon of 2007 and that of Dominique Strauss-Kahn in 2011 have triggered a series of fascinating national debates about gender and its symbolism, and gender and its political practice, that will inform the understanding of leadership in French politics for the foreseeable future.

In Part Two of this book, the authors look at aspects of the leadership of the successive Presidents of the Fifth Republic. This is a chronological sequence, but the facets highlighted by the different chapters are not the same. There is, like an uncut diamond, a number of ways of revealing the facets of the stone, and this series of chapters does not highlight the same facets of each. Thus, although the Presidents are presented in review, the features of leadership displayed in each case are different. Only the interim President (Alain Poher) is not treated separately, because his was not an exercise of full power.

In Chapter Five, on the first President of the Fifth Republic, John Gaffney looks at the symbolic manipulation of the Republic's presentation to show how the executive presidency was made compatible with republicanism. This problem of self-representation, the interpolation of 'self' in the form of a political persona or character, is an aspect of leadership that has been frequently commented on but much less analysed (and much misunderstood) in academic studies of political leadership. De Gaulle faced the suspicion of those, mainly on the left, who thought that a new dictatorship was in the making, and of those on the traditional conservative right who, much like the US Republican Party's response to the active presidency of F. D. Roosevelt, did not see the dynamic presidency as an institution that would bring political stability. This last group included figures like the conservative notable, Antoine Pinay, but also the small conservative parties of the Fourth Republic and some Christian Democrats. And for the political parties

of the left, 'personal power' in the form of an executive presidency was likened to the dictatorship of Napoleon III, and to the excesses of the Second Empire. It is arguable that no one (perhaps not even de Gaulle himself) knew what was truly happening to French politics and to republicanism between, say, 1958 and 1962.

De Gaulle's task was to establish a new institution while at the same time appealing to the long history of French republicanism that was suspicious of the presidential executive – but the Republic was the regime that, according to the historian and politician Adolphe Thiers, divided France the least. De Gaulle's response was, at least in part, the manipulation of French leadership symbolism, but also, the orchestration (almost in the musical sense of the term) of a range of discourses and mythologies informing (though often hitherto kept at the margins of) French politics and culture.

Georges Pompidou was both an executant for the President, as de Gaulle's second Prime Minister from 1962–8, and latterly – because of circumstance – de Gaulle's rival in the conservative/Gaullist camp against the left. Chapter Six, by Gilles Richard, analyses the presidency of Georges Pompidou from several crucial perspectives. De Gaulle's appointment of Pompidou (a close associate, but until then an administrative more than a political figure) to the Matignon in 1962, was both an assertion of presidential domination and a reduction in the authority of the Prime Minister's office. However, because de Gaulle was more interested in foreign affairs and defence, Pompidou had a freer hand in domestic politics than might have been anticipated; and he remained an effective and respected Prime Minister for six years, an unprecedented term in French history (later Lionel Jospin in 1997 and François Fillon in 2007 were to have full five-year terms). Pompidou thus gained a reputation as architect of the domestic policies of de Gaulle's presidency, and grew in stature as these progressed. In 1968, Pompidou's stature was confirmed when he managed the government's response to the 'events' of the student riots and then the general strike. This sureness of touch was widely recognised, and, by contrast, de Gaulle's political insight was uncertain until the very end of May 1968. In June, in wholly exceptional conditions the Gaullist party on its own, and without its allies, won an absolute majority in the Assembly in the general elections. This was the first time in French republican history that a single party had the majority, a landslide that was attributed by many to Pompidou himself. Pompidou's stature as a *présidentiable* was confirmed by the 1968 'events' and he was rewarded by being dismissed from the Matignon.

Pompidou thus became a serious rival to de Gaulle as a potential successor within the Gaullist camp (Beltran and Le Béguec 2004). This was a situation that had to be carefully managed: Pompidou could not openly challenge de Gaulle, but had to make clear his own vision, at least in its minimal sense. When Pompidou was elected President, after the defeat of the General's referendum of 1969 and de Gaulle's resignation, he had to deal with a majority in an Assembly which had been elected to support de Gaulle in the wake of the 1968 'events'. Pompidou was a Gaullist, but he was not the General himself. Political authority had to be asserted and managed in a generally difficult situation within the Gaullist and conservative camp. Pompidou managed to impose his authority, before becoming ill with a debilitating form of cancer. He then died while in office. What Pompidou's presidency might have become is thus one of the imponderables of the 1970s, and in the event his unexpected death in 1974 left the Gaullist party intestate. The Republic's leadership took a new turn (Cointet et al. 2001). In his analysis of Pompidou's presidency (1969–74), Richard sets out and reviews how Pompidou responded to being de Gaulle's inheritor, and rival, and also how he responded to his role as President in the uncertain aftermath of the 1968 'events'.

Pompidou's latter presidency dramatised the polarisation of the Republic between the Gaullist government and the opposition of the left, led by the Socialists but including the Communist Party. This conflict was played out in the 1974 presidential elections between the left, represented by François Mitterrand, and the right, represented by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. This clash, which included a round-one victory over the Gaullist, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, by Giscard within the conservative camp, was a further test for the presidency. Giscard came from the small centrist Independent Republican Party and was supported on the right as the most capable of the candidates and the most likely to defeat the threat from the united left. This perception however, whilst probably correct, introduced severe conflict in the conservative camp that was not properly overcome until the creation of the Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP) by President Chirac in 2002. Giscard's election meant that the Gaullist Party was moved out of its central position by the rising force of the centre-right around Giscard d'Estaing. Had Giscard moved immediately on election in 1974 to assimilate the Gaullist Party to the new presidency – possibly by creating a new party – the conflict might have been defused. In fact, the Gaullist movement, defeated and demoralised, was taken in hand by the Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, and the quarrel on the conservative right between Gaullists and Giscard's supporters

(‘Giscardians’) became endemic. Giscard’s failure to act on this in 1974, and Chirac’s decision to take over the Gaullist leadership in 1974 and then in 1976 to transform the party into one that was personalised around himself, are illustrations of the central role of both individual decisions (and miscalculations) and personal animosities (and friendships). The Giscard–Chirac rivalry would inform French politics for 20 years.

In Chapter Seven, on the Giscard d’Estaing presidency of 1974–81, Jim Shields analyses a President who had a majority but was at odds with the Gaullist part of the coalition in the National Assembly. President Giscard had to deal with the problems of slowing economic growth (after the rapid three decades of economic expansion of the post-war ‘*trente glorieuses*’), as well as burgeoning unemployment, rising oil prices and rising inflation, as well as the challenge from the left (by then high in the polls). Dealing with these domestic problems was not aided by an initial style of ‘hyperpresidentialism’ that saw Giscard intervening in detailed issues and cutting Prime Minister Jacques Chirac (soon to be his rival) ‘out of the loop’. Giscard had rewarded Chirac with the premiership for his help in beating the Gaullist, Chaban; but this choice was partly made in the belief that Chirac was, if not insignificant, at least no threat to Giscardian ascendancy.

President Giscard’s underestimation of his Prime Minister was a fundamental miscalculation and Chirac rapidly emerged as his most persistent challenger. Thus after 1976, when Jacques Chirac resigned as Prime Minister, he went on to lead a semi-rebellion by the Gaullist conservatives into the presidential elections of 1981. In 1977, however, it seemed the left would win the 1978 general elections. Because of this, President Giscard evoked the possibility of ‘*cohabitation*’ in a speech at Verdun-sur-le-Doubs, in effect saying that if the French public were to vote for the ruinous policies of the left, there was nothing the President could do to prevent it. This was both constitutionally precise and politically astute. The President probably thought he could withdraw to Rambouillet and watch the left make a mess of things, at which point he would be returned by voters to clear up the shambles. In fact, Giscard did not have to face ‘*cohabitation*’ because the left itself succumbed to internecine disputes pitting the Communists against the Socialists. In the 1978 general elections, the conservative right won a comfortable majority, although one in which the two segments (Gaullists and centrists) were more or less evenly balanced, and with the internal issues still unresolved.

President Giscard, having over-extended the authority of the presidency, retreated to a more indirect relationship with the government

and let the Prime Minister, Raymond Barre (1976–81), take the lead in domestic policy, while foreign affairs remained a presidential domain. Perhaps the ‘divine surprise’ of the right’s election victory in 1978 engendered complacency (and the left were still quarrelling ferociously as late as 1981). It may be that the difficulties of running for a second septennate were underestimated, but President Giscard also faced the difficulty of uniting the conservative camp. The fact that half of his potential support was under the influence of his main rival (and Chirac even went on to stand in the 1981 presidential election) made Giscard extremely vulnerable, much more so than he realised. Jacques Chirac rebranded the party as the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) in 1976 and reshaped it as his vehicle. Moreover, the neo-Gaullists believed that they had been sidelined after 1978, and they were not keen on the re-election of the centrist President Giscard. In the event, the left’s divisions proved less deep than had been assumed, or rather their effects were not as debilitating for the Socialist Party candidate François Mitterrand. In 1981, a second term could not be guaranteed for a President who had presided over the recession of the 1970s, and the election was won by François Mitterrand. This, for many, unexpected victory would dramatically change the course of Fifth Republic politics.

There are many reasons why François Mitterrand’s presidency is historic. It was the first time the opposition moved into government in the Fifth Republic. It was the first time the Communists had been in the majority coalition since the Liberation of France in 1944. It marked the reconciliation of the left with the institution of the executive president. There was a whole series of other reasons. François Mitterrand evoked a spirit of hope, and this confirmed the Socialist Party as the main vehicle for the left’s *présidentiable*. In Chapter Eight, David Bell’s principal focus is on the manoeuvres of the Florentine politician that was François Mitterrand. Mitterrand is a classic case for a study of ‘heresthetics’ (Riker 1986). He was probably one of the most artful strategists that the French left has produced. Socialism and Radicalism had produced their moralists, like Mendès France and Léon Blum, and their tacticians, like Guy Mollet. These were strong and substantial figures, but their length of time in government and the circumstances surrounding them limited their scope to effect change, and none had the calculation, nor the presidential opportunity of Mitterrand (Graham 1994).

Mitterrand remained in the Elysée for two full terms, that is, 14 years, an achievement that no other President of any French Republic can claim. In addition, the left held power in government for 10 of those

years. Thus, *'cohabitation'* aside, this is the longest spell of power ever for the French left, and one that made its mark in numerous ways, including the decline of the once powerful Communist Party and the evolution of the Socialist Party into a government party of sorts (Cole 1994). This was achieved by François Mitterrand from a seemingly impossible base on the fringe of the left and outside of its main parties and, in fact, with none of the credentials of a left-wing leader.

But this position as outsider enabled François Mitterrand to see the strengths and weaknesses of the position the left was in without the filtering lens of socialist ideology. It is interesting that it was a single person who understood the true significance of the union of the left within presidentialism, and that (most members of) the two vast and nationally dominant organisations, the PCF and the SFIO, did not. In this, the union of the left, between the Socialists and Communists, was crucial to Mitterrand's strategy. It was evident that the Communist Party had decided to take the 'parliamentary road' to power in France, and that it was willing to pay a high price for its entry into mainstream politics. It is not quite as easy today, after the end of the Cold War and the near-disappearance of the revolutionary movement, to grasp why this perception of a need to bring the Communist Party into the coalition as a solid partner was so contentious or important. However, for Mitterrand, the union of the left was a necessary preliminary to the creation of an opposition and potential majority in the French party system. But even more importantly this issue was something he had identified much earlier, when he was still only the head of the tiny Union démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance (UDSR) party. Mitterrand entered the presidential race in 1965 against de Gaulle as an isolated and unthreatening figure who would not disturb the party political balance, and who could (and was generally expected to) be blamed for the drubbing the left would get from de Gaulle in the elections. (Mitterrand was to join the Socialist Party six years later). Here is a classic example of how the Fifth Republic has functioned, namely, with an individual assessing and calculating the consequences of a personal undertaking, and, as a result, dragging swathes of others into his orbit, and (eventually) being triumphant within the system.

François Mitterrand became the incarnation of the union of the left and of the unity of the Socialist movement, and used this to develop the Socialist Party. It is surprising that the Communists did not foresee the development of the Socialist Party into the dominant force on the left, and François Mitterrand as the vehicle for the presidential bids that would transform all their fortunes, for better and worse. However, when

the Parti communiste français (PCF) did come alive to the danger, it was too late to challenge Mitterrand's increasingly dominant position and stop its own marginalisation. Mitterrand's strategy persisted into the first septennate of the presidency when, as President, he brought Communist ministers into government, even though there was no need, given the Socialist Party's absolute majority of seats in the National Assembly. He did this to retain the PCF's voters' immediate support. It did not, however, profit the PCF to have Communist ministers, and the difficulties of the mid-1980s, continuing unemployment and slow growth, eventually impelled the Communists to end their participation (not that leaving government helped them either). In 1986, the left lost the general elections, and François Mitterrand became the first President to *'cohabit'* with an opposition Prime Minister. The PCF would profit from none of these developments. Symbolically, Mitterrand's triumph in 1981 initiated a steep decline in the PCF's fortunes, from which it would never recover.

This *'cohabitation'* of 1986 was a step into the unknown. For the Republic's first left-wing President, facing a conservative majority in the National Assembly was a daily humiliation. He now presided over a government and Assembly majority that opposed him. But this moment demonstrated the astonishing role of symbolic politics in France. François Mitterrand used this position to create the basis for a victory in the 1988 presidential elections, and to transform the 'narrative' of the strategy from the union of the left into the unity of the French nation. By 1988, François Mitterrand had achieved a considerable makeover, and won presidential elections against the Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac. Between 1986 and 1988, Mitterrand lost all his power but gained enormous symbolic authority; and with that, he regained power. There was, however, in 1988, less room in the new situation than in 1981. The Socialist Party returned to government in 1988, holding only a relative majority in the Assembly. There was a centre ground that could have been occupied, and the appointment of the irenic Michel Rocard as Prime Minister seemed to herald that. But the Socialists made few moves to the political centre. Instead, the President's party in the Assembly relied on 'variable geometry' ad hoc majorities, and managed to pilot its main legislation through with only lukewarm popular support and, in fact, thinly veiled disdain for the Prime Minister on the part of the President.

Despite initial success, the Socialist governments after 1988 ran into trouble, and the sacking of Rocard and the appointment of an inappropriate Prime Minister in 1991 did nothing to revive the left in the

polls. At the general elections of 1993 the Socialist Party, humbled by scandals and by maladministration, and lacking allies, was swept away by the conservative right. Here again, but in a very dysfunctional way, we see the intense personalisation of the Republic having inordinately consequential effects. Mitterrand disliked and scorned the popular Michel Rocard when he appointed him in 1988. When he felt he could, he sacked him – brusquely – in 1991 after the first Gulf War. He then appointed his former collaborator, Edith Cresson, whose support beyond Mitterrand himself was minimal. Her instant unpopularity dragged the President's popularity down. In 1993, he had to replace her, but this could not stop what was little short of an annihilation of the PS at the polls. Arguably, Mitterrand never recovered politically, at least not until after his 1993 defeat. This misjudged nomination demonstrates the potentially enormously damaging effects of personal power when expressed as caprice. It is one of the implications of a presidential polity that such caprice can have such extensive effects.

This might have been the ignoble end to the Mitterrand years, but the second enforced '*cohabitation*' of 1993–5, with the conservative Prime Minister Édouard Balladur, gave the President (as in 1986–8) a modicum of revived popularity. As a reigning President rather than a ruling one, his position became uncontroversial, and was seen as that of protector of the national interest (however that might be interpreted). Mitterrand (it was now clear to everyone who came into contact with him that he was not going to run again) was allowed to serve out his time as a symbolic Head of State. This time, between 1993 and 1995, the '*cohabitation*' battle for supremacy still took place but now within the conservative ranks, between the Prime Minister, Édouard Balladur (whose popularity had soared) and his neo-Gaullist party leader, Jacques Chirac, who had put him there. In 1995, François Mitterrand left the Elysée with an unprecedentedly high rating in the polls. His mixed second term, therefore, ended with a certain national appreciation of his role. The appreciation, however, was not transferred to the Socialist Party, nor to the left generally, which was now as fragmented and ill-led as it had been in 1971 when Mitterrand took over. In fact, it had tied itself to him for better or worse, and by the time his voice was reduced to a whisper, the Socialist Party discovered that it had no voice at all.

In 1995, the presidential election was won by Jacques Chirac but, as Andy Knapp points out in Chapter Nine, with the lowest poll for a winning candidate on the first ballot. This was the culmination of the longest campaign to become President by any of the successful Presidents so far. It had started formally in 1981, although this had clearly been the

intention from 1976, and, despite the substantial defeat of 1988, had continued in the 1990s. Jacques Chirac had the material advantage of being mayor of Paris (heading almost a government in exile at the Paris Hôtel de Ville) and head of the largest of the conservative parties. Andy Knapp describes the long, destructive campaign by Chirac to become President, which was instrumental in defeating Giscard in 1981, Barre in 1988 and Balladur in 1995 (the last two, if the polls are any measure, were the preferred conservative candidates before the campaigns started). Chirac's career is a tribute to an almost Nixonian ability to pull himself off the floor after a knockout blow that would have ended the fight for most politicians, as well as to his ability to campaign from a niche position, and in the right circumstances turn it to major advantage. In the case of Jacques Chirac, it was the presidential campaign itself, both in 1995 and in 2002, that weighed in the balance of the subsequent presidential terms.

Jacques Chirac, as has often been said, was good at campaigning (and there was no glad-hander and people-greeter to rival Chirac in his electioneering) but unsure what to do with the office once it had been reached. President Chirac delegated a good deal – possibly much more than other Presidents – to ministers and to the Prime Minister. Andy Knapp examines this paradox, that Chirac's determination to reach the top was not accompanied by a 'vision' of the future for the country (not unique to Chirac, it should be said). But there was also the un-Gaullist way in which Chirac acted as an almost Third Republic Radical with a rural fiefdom in Corrèze. This would seem to tarnish his 'Gaullist' credentials somewhat; nevertheless, he retained the support of the mass membership of the neo-Gaullist RPR and its enthusiasm through the lean years of opposition.

But Chirac's career also raises the question of what the impact of the leader can be in a presidential system like the Fifth Republic. This is a balance sheet that is set out by Andy Knapp, and it could be argued that Jacques Chirac's '*cohabitation*' of 1986–8 with President Mitterrand, and then the ill-considered dissolution of 1997, which lost the conservative right its majority (and led to the Fifth Republic's longest '*cohabitation*'), followed by the referendum on the European Constitution in 2005 (also lost), diminished the office from its original Gaullist dimensions. But Chirac's presidency was not one without a legacy. This was partially in foreign affairs (reconciliation with NATO but a forthright condemnation of the invasion of Iraq), and partly in cultural terms: such as the acknowledgement of France's Vichy past, or the banning of the hijab and other religious symbols in schools. Jacques Chirac left office amid a

flurry of scandals (some still unresolved), and was convicted of corruption in December 2011. His state of health was bad and he was given a two-year suspended sentence. Notwithstanding, after leaving office Chirac emerged as a well-liked figure, and by some reckonings one of the most popular of the retired politicians in France.

Jacques Chirac was succeeded in 2007 by Nicolas Sarkozy. Sarkozy had been close to Chirac in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the rise of Prime Minister Balladur led to Sarkozy's switch in allegiances. This change of loyalties was also a source of rancour in the conservative camp, although not to the extent of the Chirac and Giscard divisions. However, Sarkozy embarked on a new form of presidentialism, aiming to bring the institution onto a popular level more reminiscent of aspects of the United States example than the republican monarchy-style of some of the comportment of previous leaders.

In Chapter Ten, Pascal Perrineau eschews the many psychological portraits of the new presidency and, taking his cue from Alain Duhamel, examines the 'Consular' style of the presidency under Sarkozy. This is, of course, a Napoleonic reference, going back to the authoritarian leadership of the First Republic after the takeover of the institutions by the Consular group, and before the full-blown development of Bonaparte's *imperium* (Duhamel 2009). This authoritarianism within a republican form also enforced the executive over the legislature and judiciary. President Sarkozy extended the power of the President beyond what previous incumbents had managed to do, and allied this with a media-conscious strategy that gave the institution great authority. This hyper-active President was also omnipresent in the media (Jost and Muzet 2008). By the same token, the Prime Minister was reduced still further in status and became the executant of presidential commands. The sixth President, therefore, broke some of the taboos of the presidentialism of the Fifth Republic. One of the consequences, however, of such ever-presence was that unpopular actions would all be attributed to the President not the Premier, and Sarkozy's poll ratings, for these and other reasons, suffered enormously, and contributed to the unpopularity that haunted his presidency and led to his defeat in 2012 by François Hollande.

One aspect of Sarkozy's extended media presence was the transgression of the public and private boundaries that had been unbreachable in the Republic: private life was brought to the forefront of the public scene. This break in the republican form goes back to the much older European tradition of the 'King's two bodies': it is a desymbolisation incompatible with the regal Gaullist style of political leadership. The consequences

of this public use of the private, and the relative demystifying of the President's image have had a range of consequences for the political life of the republic that will unfold in the years to come, particularly as Sarkozy's successor, François Hollande, tries to fashion his own presidential image from 2012 onwards.

Political leadership in France has a distinctive pattern, but one that fits a Western form of representative institutions. However, it is not a given. Political leaders have their own conceptions and capabilities. With the election of François Hollande as President and the victory of (his) left-wing supporters at the polls in the general election of June 2012, the five-year term was set in a new form, in what was to be a creative display of the political arts as Hollande tried to marry two images of himself; first, as a kind of inheritor of Mitterrand's presidentialism, and second, as his own much more 'normal' (his own term) idea of consensus leadership. Until 2012, François Hollande had been a politician of consensus at the head of the fractious Socialist Party, and in the rural district of Corrèze where he won a seat as deputy and headed the local council. These positions were not sinecures, and required supreme political skills even though they were played out away from the national media and in a minor key.

François Hollande's consensus-making became a form of leadership that could be transferred to the top level and was, paradoxically, compatible with the Fifth Republic, although contrary to Hollande's portrayal of himself, it is not regarded as Gaullist by many commentators. It could perhaps be said to be a style reminiscent of Chirac; it may be suited to the difficulties facing France and Europe, and should not be disregarded. French politics, perhaps, has room for many different approaches to the exercise of power, and the Fifth Republic is only at the beginning of the exploration of these. As Gaffney points out in Chapter Five, what de Gaulle brought to the Fifth Republic was less *grandeur* than personality. Hollande's approach has major consequence for the functioning of the Fifth Republic.

In private and with party members, François Hollande, the President elected in May 2012, was known for a deflating sense of humour and ready wit, but this was camouflaged during the campaign, the better to emphasise the necessary 'presidential' seriousness. These traits may re-emerge to the new President's benefit, but the campaign gave the misleading impression of a rather low-key, technocratic and colourless figure. In the French presidential system, this usually poses problems for mobilising the voters on the candidate's side, and for the 'third' and 'fourth' rounds, that is to say the general elections that follow on from

the presidential election. Without a manageable majority the power of the presidency is severely constrained.

As candidate in 2012, François Hollande was also careful about promising too much. Learning from previous Socialist Party campaigns which had stoked up expectations, in 2012 the platform was relatively restrained. François Hollande was helped by the context of an election that was more a rejection of the unpopular incumbent Sarkozy than a wave of support for the newcomer. In this way the 2012 presidential election resembled a referendum that rejected the incumbent President. In western politics, however, the avoidance of commitments and ambitious promises is a normal part of the political leader's repertoire. François Hollande began his presidential term in 2012 not only with major questions confronting him over the crucial Franco-German relationship, the troops in Afghanistan, and so on, but also questions as to how he was to comport himself after the 'Consular' presidency of Sarkozy, and the presidential heritage of his six predecessors

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