FRANCE

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The official name of the country with which this chapter deals is not "France" but "*La République Française".* Because of the French custom of putting adjectives after nouns, rather than before them, a ploddingly literal translation of the name would be "the Republic which is French". In official discourse, "the Republic" is used much more than the name of the country: for example the President is usually described as "the President of the Republic."

For the purposes of this chapter, we can make a slightly artificial, but nonetheless very useful, distinction between "France" (the territory, history, culture food and wine) and "the Republic", which is a political system and an associated series of political and moral values, called by the French "republicanism". The Republic is one form of political superstructure for the country and the society, erected with great difficulty and much conflict since the Revolution, which has had to contend with alternative political forms, sometimes imposed by force, and whose values are not the only values that have been officially championed in France during that period. It is this superstructure, and these values, around which French security policy has been based in modern times. It is also the institutions established by the Republic, and according to republican principles, which have been primarily responsible for the way in which security policy has been framed and implemented.

For the French, republicanism is far more than just the absence of a monarchy. It is a fully worked out system of attitudes, values and procedures, which acts as a point of reference for the entire political system, across the spectrum. In modern times, all serious politicians have claimed to defend "republican values" at home and abroad, and all mainstream political parties (including the Communist Party in its heyday) competed to be seen to incarnate them. The current President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, was much derided when, in 2007, he promised to create an "irreproachable Republic", but his choice of the formula of Republic rather than country was itself significant, as is the fact that his critics from all parties have generally accused him specifically of abandoning Republican values since his election.

The Republic was not always unquestioned, however, and much of French security policy until recently consisted of the defence of the Republic, not as a territory but as a political form. Its enemies were both internal and external.

The monarchy itself was re-established after 1815 by the victorious allied armies, before being replaced by a short-lived Second Republic in 1848, itself the victim of a coup by Louis Napoleon in 1851. The modern Republican system only really began to take root with the Third Republic, established after the Prussian victories of 1870-71. That system lasted until the defeat of 1940, when the Republic was overthrown in an internal coup, and replaced with Pétain's French

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State, which lasted until 1944. The Fourth Republic (1944-58) perished in a military coup which brought De Gaulle, and the Fifth Republic to power: that institution survived another attempted coup in 1961, but has not been seriously troubled since.

Three things stand out from this necessarily rather breathless summary. First, political transitions in France have tended to be sudden and violent; second they have often been prompted by external factors (war, invasion, occupation); third, they have generally involved sharp changes of political form, not just of regimes or personalities. In addition, the institutions of the Republic itself have varied enormously over the past two centuries, and the political organisation of the Third Republic, for example, has almost nothing in common with that of the Fifth, for reasons which will be explained later.[2]

What does link the five Republics, however, is the conviction, first expressed in the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* that sovereignty resides in the nation, not the ruler, that certain rights, including the right to liberty and resistance to oppression, are inherent, and cannot be abrogated, and that the aim of all political association is the preservation of these rights.[3] But of course it is hard to see, in practice, how a nation as a collectivity can manage its affairs, especially in sensitive areas such as defence and security. For this reason, all sorts of solutions, from ultra-parliamentary systems to strong central authorities have been tried at different times.

Whilst such ideas of popular sovereignty were not wholly new in themselves, no-one had tried to construct a state on this basis before, and they naturally struck terror into the hearts of foreign monarchs and their supporters everywhere. But these ideas encountered much opposition in France as well, not only from nostalgics for the past, but also from those who believed that French greatness depended on a conservative, hierarchical, religious organisation of society. Such contrary views were very widespread among French elites until at least the 1940s, and so Republican governments never really felt secure. The collaborationist regime of Marshal Pétain (1940-4) exemplified all these views; Significantly, the name of the country was changed to the French State, a new flag was introduced, "Work, Family, Country" replaced "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," street names honouring Republican heroes were changed, and a vapid song of praise to Pétain was promoted in place of the *Marseillaise*. The ousting of the Vichy regime in 1944 was thus effectively the conclusion of a French civil war, and a massive victory for Republican forces (exemplified, from different parts of the political spectrum, by De Gaulle and by the Resistance) and a near-terminal defeat for the forces of reaction.[4]

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[2] Much of the rest of this chapter draws on the argument of David Chuter, *Humanity's Soldier: France and International Security*, Berghahn, 1996, which has an extensive bibliography.

[3] The text is widely available. See for example the site of the French Ministry of Justice http://www.textes.justice.gouv.fr/textes-fondamentaux-10086/droits-de-lhomme-et-libertes-fondamentales-10087/.

[4] The standard work on Vichy is, oddly enough by an American scholar, Robert Paxton, *Vichy France:Old Guard and New Order*, Second Revised Edition, Columbia University Press, 2001.

But the defeat was not absolute, especially since the Vichy state had been bitterly anti-communist and the Cold War was now starting. Indeed, the new Republic faced the fundamental problem that its leaders relied on organs of government, especially the security forces, which had avidly collaborated with the Nazis during the occupation. Nowhere was this more true than the military, whose leaders had shown little enthusiasm for fighting the Germans in 1940, but had gone on to take powerful positions under Pétain. It was only De Gaulle's massive prestige, and the centralised state he created, that brought the military to heel after he took power in 1958. (Ironically, during his military career before 1940, De Gaulle had been known less as a confused proponent of armoured warfare than as one of the few Republican officers in the Army).

Thus, for the Republic, the loyalty of the very forces sworn to defend it, was in question until modern times. Sometimes, this affected the actual organisation of the French state. For example, the *Compagnies républicaines de sécurité* (the feared CRS of 1968) were actually set up by De Gaulle in 1944 to replace the discredited public order squads of Vichy. They were recruited predominantly from communist ex-resistance fighters, and their name was not chosen by accident even if, with depressing inevitability, they were first sent into action to break strikes by their former comrades in the Lorraine coalfields in 1947.

When De Gaulle returned to power in 1958, he made a number of other pro-Republican institutional changes which still endure. Notably, decision-making on security issues, and command of the armed forces, were centralised under the President. The CEMA (Chief of Defence) became the military adviser to the President, as well as the government, with direct access to the Elysée. At the same time a permanent military headquarters, headed by a very senior military officer was established in the Elysée, itself, capable of commanding military operations. Even today, French nuclear weapons would be launched through an order from the Elysée directly to the Naval HQ, bypassing other elements of the military chain of command. In recent years, the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Defence have begun to increase their influence, but ultimate decisions still rest with the President.

But why should the military, and especially the Army, have had this enormous power? Why should Weygand, the newly-appointed Army Chief in 1940, have been able to intimidate the civilian politicians into surrender, by refusing to fight on for fear of a communist uprising? Part of the answer, of course, lies in the fact that the civilian politicians themselves were deathly afraid of a communist uprising. But most of the answer lies in the security policy of France at he time, compared with how the strategic situation has changed since.

Unlike many European nations, it seemed as though the borders of France had been fixed by an obliging nature. The Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Pyrenees and the Alps seemed natural frontiers. Only in the north and north-east were things less clear, and indeed that was where French wars were generally fought. The rise of Prussia, and then Germany, produced for the first time a more powerful enemy across the borders, capable, as in 1870, of inflicting a traumatic defeat on the nation. Only the Army could prevent the annihilation of the country in a new war. The fact that France emerged victorious in 1918 was ascribed to the almost magical powers of the great commanders, whose wisdom and foresight had saved the nation. If the name of Haig evoked memories of

pointless slaughter for the British, the name of Pétain evoked memories of national salvation for the French.[5]

By contrast, the Third Republic embodied one solution to the question of how to construct a government based on popular will, but a solution that caused more problems than it solved. It was an ultra-parliamentary system, with an extremely weak executive and little central organisation. As a result, strategic decision-making, or even most basic forms of government coordination, were impossible. Governments came and went rapidly, and political life was exceptionally factional and corrupt. It is hardly surprising that the system had forfeited all respect by 1940, and that there was a longing, from all over the political system, for a decisive figure who would bang heads together and get things done. In the end, the Third Republic committed suicide, with the parliament voting itself out of existence.

The low status of the political system and the high status of the Army would have been a problem for civil-military relations in any event, but the problem was greatly exacerbated by the Army's desire to play politics, and to associate itself with the strong anti-Republican forces in political life, the business world, the police and civil service, and the media. Theoretically above politics, its commanders nonetheless let it be known how much they detested the Republic and sought its overthrow. The fact that they were allowed to get away with such behaviour is itself an indication of the weakness of the political system of the time.

So deeply and widely were the Army's commanders involved in the de facto coup of 1940,and the regime which followed, that after the war it was not possible to replace them with untainted alternatives. Throughout the Fourth Republic (1944-58) therefore, the officers who had served Vichy were still around, and it was they who overthrew the Republic and brought De Gaulle to power in 1958. It was also they who tried to overthrow De Gaulle in 1961, when it became apparent that he did not share their political objectives, especially the retention of Algeria. But although that coup was based around units of the Foreign Legion – one of the few professional elements of the Army – it failed because it would have required the support of large numbers of conscripts, mostly in Algeria. The latter, much more imbued with Republican ideas, obeyed De Gaulle's instructions to stay in their barracks.

In part, the politico-military system put in place since 1958 was designed to prevent a recurrence of such events. The Fifth Republic has opted for the opposite solution to the popular sovereignty problem, through the creation of a strong centralised government, and obedience to a leader who is not a purely ceremonial president, nor a prime minister who changes every few months, but a directly-elected figure, above politics, who in principle represents national unity. The idea that such a single figure could incarnate the popular will dates back to the time of the Revolution.[6] Whatever its theoretical weaknesses, it has brought France a degree of stability in the security area which it has not known in its modern history. It also enabled such political theatre pieces as the Bastille Day

[5] The standard life is by Marc Ferro, *Pétain*, Fayard, 1987.

[6] See for example JL Talamon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, Penguin Books, 1986.

parade to be invested with Republican symbolism. It now represents the annual pledging of the allegiance of the military to the Republic (and the elected civil power) with the President taking the salute at the Place de la Concorde – the symbolic heart of the Revolution.

One by-product of the long confrontation with Germany was the search for colonies to provide resources and troops to make up for the difference in population and industrial strength. This was the basis for the sudden interest in African colonies at the end of the nineteenth century. To some extent, this policy was successful, in that large numbers of colonial troops fought for the French in both world wars: indeed, two thirds of De Gaulle's army in 1944 was from the colonies. When it became clear that independence for the African colonies was inevitable, they were offered it, en bloc, in 1960, but with many strings attached. It was qualified independence only, with French military bases retained, and French tutelage over foreign affairs and security questions. For France, the ex-colonies were not only important sources of raw materials, they were a guarantee of continued great power status.[7]

This singular option left many traces on the structures and processes of French security policy, which endure to this day. During the Cold War, operations in Africa had a significance exceeded only by the maintenance of an independent nuclear capability. Africa was the preserve of the professional troops – the Legion and the *Troupes de Marine*, who in turn went on to the highest command positions. As with nuclear weapons, control of French African policy was exercised directly from the Elysée, notably through the creation of personal linkages with heads of state in the former colonies. Money changed hands, in quite large amounts. Initially it was literally delivered, in suitcases, by the "Monsieur Afrique" of the day, on behalf of the Elysée. Subsequently, money appears to have been funnelled through the (then) state-owned company Elf-Aquitaine (known as Elf-Africaine to its critics). French interests in the region were secured by a network of military bases, and a series of secret Defence Agreements which gave the French the effective right of intervention.

This system, known scornfully to its detractors as *Françafrique*, has been in decline for twenty years now, for two sets of reasons.[8] First, unilateral military adventures in Africa became steadily more problematic and, after the traumas of Rwanda (1994) and the Côte d'Ivoire (2002) it was clear that the only feasible context for military operations in the future would be an international grouping such as the UN or the EU. Secondly, French interest in Africa was in relative eclipse, as the EU itself developed a much stronger security and defence identity and as political and economic union progressed. This in turn has meant that traditional networks have been somewhat weakened, and that the power of the European experts in the Foreign Ministry has been strengthened. In parallel, the wholesale professionalization of the French military has broken the historic link

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[7] For a general history, see Jean-Paul Gourévitch, *La France en Afrique*, Le Pré au Clercs, 2004. For more recent events see Antoine Glaser and Stephen Smith, *Comment la France a perdu l'afrique*, Calman Lévy, 2005.
[8] The term is an untranslatable pun on *fric*, one of the numerous slang words in French for money. It appears to have been coined by, Francois-Xavier, Verschave, *Françafrique: Le plus long scandale de la République*, Stock, 1998.

between Africa and the historically small professional cadre, and has meant that the Legion and the *Troupes de marine* no longer have the dominant position in the French hierarchy that they once enjoyed.

But much of the old system remains. In spite of the "rupture" announced by the 2008 Defence and Security Review, France retains most of its military bases in Africa (only that in Dakar is effectively being closed, to continue as a small advisory element.) Critically, the Africa Cell in the Elysée continues its existence, and there is still a Monsieur Afrique in charge. Most recently, there have been accusations of money sent to African leaders, or paid as commission on contracts, being funnelled back to France to fund domestic political campaigns. To an extent unthinkable in any other country, therefore, Africa remains a fundamental part of French security policy and the structure and processes of policy-making in Paris.

Critics of France's African policy claim that it is a betrayal of Republican values. Its supporters, meanwhile, claim that France has a continuing obligation to export these same Republican values to Africa. So what are these values?

A word of caution is obviously in order first. Few if any governments would claim to operate without values entirely: almost all claim to be guided by values of some kind. France is therefore only one (admittedly extreme) case. Further, there is often a noticeable disconnect between the advertised values and the actual behaviour of a state – and the French have been criticised here, as well. But what Republican values do provide, is a context in which debates about French policy can take place, and a vocabulary and set of concepts in which they can be conducted. This approach is shared by all parts of the French political system other than the atavistic extreme right, which is openly anti-Republican.

A useful place to start is the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, which incorporated at least two epoch-making innovations. One was the universality of its ideas: the first attempt in history to claim this status for purely secular theories. All human beings, whoever they were, had these rights innately, and they could not be taken away, (This line of thinking led inevitably to the freeing if slaves in French colonies a few years later). But in most of the world, outside France, these rights were being denied, and France thus had an obligation to help spread such rights, including providing military support to nations struggling to be free. No wonder the crowned heads of Europe were terrified. Thus, for two hundred years, French security policy has had an avowedly ideological component. At a minimum, this component has been a verbal point of reference for French governments, and a way of structuring and expressing their policies. But experience suggests that this deeply entrenched way of thinking does also have a degree of influence on the formulation and implementation of policy itself.

In addition, of course, whilst these ideas may have a universal application, they originated in France. By this way of thinking, France (as the "soldier of humanity" and the "soldier of the ideal" in Clemenceau's formulation of 1918) is indulged in a way that is impossible for other nations.[9] French behaviour in

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[9] The full text of Clemenceau's remarks to the French parliament on 11 November 1918 can be found at http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/intervention_clemenceau.asp

Africa, for example, may have had its unfortunate moments, but it was always in defence of, and in the interests of, the pilot nation of humanity, and thus of humanity itself. In this fashion, behaviour that would be unacceptable by others could be pardoned in the case of France.

In addition, the drift of the *Declaration* was very much against arbitrary power, and towards a rules and norms based system. The French have been enthusiastic supporters of international human rights treaties ever since, and also of a rules-based approach to international relations, where this does not explicitly conflict with French interests. As a matter of practical policy, the French attach a great deal of importance to the United Nations as a political framework for action: it is this that explains their refusal to support the attack on Iraq in 2003, which they would happily have joined had a Security Council resolution been forthcoming.

The second disruptive idea is that sovereignty resides in the nation, not the ruler, and that the institutions of the state, and especially the security institutions, must reflect this. The new concept of the nation directly challenged the traditional idea of human beings as simply the subjects of a ruler, likely to be transferred or relegated by conquest or marriage. The most thoroughgoing Republican formulation of this concept is that of Ernest Renan, in his 1882 lecture, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* His reply, in essence, was that a nation is not a racial or religious entity, but a "continual referendum" (*plebiscite de tous le jours)* in which individuals freely choose to live together on the basis of shared values and a shared heritage. Anyone who accepts these values and this heritage can therefore become a citizen of the nation, irrespective of their race or religion.[10] This idea – explosively radical at the time – has had a number of very practical effects since.

The most obvious was to turn patriotism into a popular, even revolutionary, phenomenon. The volunteer armies that turned out to defend the ideas of the Revolution, like those which defended Paris in 1870-1 after the professionals had run away, did so out of popular patriotism, not because of the traditional loyalty to a ruler, a political system or a religion. Of course, other nations could arise also, free groupings of individuals rather than the possessions of princes, and the French had an obligation to assist in this process, which naturally brought them into violent collision with the existing power structures in neighbouring countries.

This type of thinking, often called the "Jacobin" tradition, meant that there was an alternative discourse of patriotism available to Republicans and left-wing parties, to contest the traditional right-wing discourse of custom and hierarchy. Patriotism, in this concept, was revolutionary rather than conservative, concerned with defending new and modern values rather than old and traditional ones. It was therefore possible to appeal to popular nationalist sentiment in the name of the defence of the ideals of the Republic.

This meant that anti-militarism was rare in France, and remains rare today. The disputes were not over the military per se, but rather issues like the

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[10] The full text is available at http://www2.ac-lyon.fr/enseigne/ses/ecjs/renan.html

length of conscription. The Left traditionally wanted a short period of conscription and a large People's Army. The Right wanted a longer period of conscription so that military training could be used to get rid of all this Republican nonsense from the minds of the recruits. The need for the largest possible Army to confront the Germans led the French to adopt longer periods of conscription than the Left would have liked, but on the other hand the formation of improvised citizen armies, both in the Franco-Prussian War and in World War II, demonstrated that the popular tradition was by no means dead. National service was seen politically as a component of Republican values, as a demonstration that, in the event of a war, an invader would have the whole French nation to contend with. It was De Gaulle's call in 1934 for a professional military, rather than his amateurish remarks about armoured warfare, which caused a minor sensation when *Towards a Professional Army* was published.[11] The Left saw him as advocating a return to a military that would be able to seize power from the Republican political leadership, though this seems to have been far from his intentions. The abolition of national service in 2000, after more than a century, was mainly a pragmatic response to the changing strategic situation, but the relative lack of controversy that accompanied it was a sign that these fears had considerably reduced in the interim.

One reason why anti-militarism was rare was that the security policy of France has always been based firmly around the defence of national values and interests, and the French have never been shy of saying this. It helps, of course, that French values are of necessity universal values. It also helps that France, as pilot nation of humanity has the right to be indulged in a way no other nation is. But in essence, the concept of the nation, and the norms and values being defended, are essentially popular rather than elite ideas. Indeed, French elites have historically looked overseas for inspiration and guidance in political and economic ideas: to German and Italy in the 1920s and 1930s, and to the US and Britain since the 1980s. By contrast, the most important date in the Republican calendar – the 14th of July – is a genuinely popular festival, celebrated with balls and concerts in villages and small towns everywhere.

Politically, it is thus relatively easy to build a consensus around a security policy based on the defence of a nation and of ideas that are widely shared. In most western countries, security policy in the Cold War was largely the preserve of the Right, or of moderate politicians who had adopted the Right's discourse. The situation differs today only in degree. In turn, this was because western security policies before 1989 were largely based on anti-communism, and were by extension suspicious of all political movements even mildly left wing in tone. Most European governments were caught between the imperatives of anti-communism and deference to the United States on one hand, and popular scepticism about, and even hostility towards, the anti-communist crusade on the other. This unbridgeable gap regularly brought down governments all over Europe during the Cold War.

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[11] Charles de Gaulle, *Vers l'Armée de metier,* Berger-Levraut, 1934. The book had little impact at the time, and has largely been ignored since. There is a page at the site of the *Fondation Charles de Gaulle,* http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/pages/l-homme/accueil/oeuvres/vers-l-armee-de-metier.php

France was largely isolated from these pressures, especially after the 1960s. Whilst French élites were as anti-communist as any (the main reason, after all, why they had allied themselves with the Nazis) they did not necessarily see subservience to American leadership as an automatic consequence of anti-communism. The large and influential Socialist Party had itself been bitterly opposed to the Communists since the latter had split away in 1920, effectively fracturing the French political Left for most of the century. But even the Communists (who claimed to be the real inheritors of the Jacobin tradition) supported the idea of territorial defence, and loyally reported for national service.

De Gaulle's decision to leave the Integrated Military Structure of NATO was not universally popular, especially on the extreme Right, but soon became accepted as orthodoxy. It was, in fact, the logical culmination of a series of initiatives since the early 1950s to gain more influence within NATO for Europeans, reinforced by increasing doubts about the reliability of the US, especially after the 1956 Suez debacle. The French, who saw themselves as being abandoned by the Anglo-Saxons too often in the past, were concerned that effective control of the NATO command system by the US would mean that any future crisis in Europe would be settled without reference to Europeans. The French were quite happy to have US troops in Europe, but they also needed, in their view, a Plan B in case the US decided to go home or surrender.

Many, if not most, European governments privately shared these fears, but the French were unique in that their relatively important military potential and their domestic defence consensus actually enabled them to be practically addressed. After repeated attempts to reform NATO structures, the French set up two structures that made an independent security policy possible. One was a national command structure, which meant that French forces could defend national territory even if NATO was no longer playing. The second was an independent nuclear force, capable of being used against an adversary as a last-ditch threat, irrespective of what NATO decided. As a result, whilst French troops would have been made available to NATO commanders in a crisis, under secret agreements with SHAPE, they could also be withdrawn and commanded nationally; an option not open to other European nations.

These orientations have not substantially changed, or been substantially challenged, for half a century. They were supplemented by the development of independent technical intelligence capabilities, and an independent arms industry. Even during the Cold War, most French people approved of these initiatives, because their purpose was to improve France's strategic autonomy, especially with respect to the United States, rather than demonstrate loyalty to that country or to the NATO alliance.

Finally, it is important to stress the distinction between means and ends in all this. French strategic priorities have always been strategic independence, freedom of manoeuvre and retention of great power status. The means of achieving these goals have changed over time, and currently feature, for example, much more tactical reliance on the European Union, especially in Africa, than was the case in the past But this is not a change of strategy: it is a way of retaining status and independence through the creation of a genuinely independent European capability for action where France will play an important

role. Whilst continued separation from the NATO Integrated Military Structure had become something of a fetish in come quarters, it was also recognised that return to the IMS was a symbolic card of some importance, which could be played for national strategic benefit. But by definition, the card could only be played once, and criticism of President Sarkozy's decision to reintegrate has concentrated on the alleged absence of any practical strategic gains to France from this decision.

Of course, it would be far too tidy and reductive to suggest that the theory and practice of French national security policy can be explained simply by the mechanical application of Republican principles. Other factors, as well as the normal confusion of politics, are also at work.

If Republican ideas dominate French politics today, they do also have competition. The anti-Republican Right has continued to exist, in two main flavours.[12] The old, traditional, monarchist and Catholic Right, of the *Action française* and of Vichy, is now largely moribund, and has very limited influence. The populist, racialist Right of the *Front national*, strong in parts of the countryside and in depressed industrial areas, has largely replaced it in modern times, and has polled around 10% of votes in elections in recent decades. Broadly, the Right poses two kinds of challenges; it has a culturally Catholic outlook, against the militant secularism of the Republic, and a racially-based concept of what it means to be French, rather than the inclusive Republican one. Moreover, the *Front national* has gained strength recently, ironically because of the sharp move to the neoliberal right by the orthodox political parties, including the Socialists. It is thus able to pose as a patriotic party, concerned with defending French interests and French cultural identity, and saving French jobs in a globalised world.

The practical impact of this development on French security policy depends on how the orthodox parties react. The current government has sought to appease the FN and its electorate by moving even further to the right on crime and public order issues, targeting fear of criminals whom everyone understands are most likely to be of African extraction, and demonising the country's small (about 5%) but visible Muslim community. So far, this tactic seems to have backfired, strengthening the extreme Right further. At the time of writing, speculating about the future of French security policy making is especially difficult, but it is likely that a future French government will be at least as independent and nationalist on security issues as recent ones have been. Fidelity to the European ideal is unquestioned among French elites, and popular anti-Europeanism, which is a significant force, is largely directed against neoliberal economic policies imposed from Brussels. The European Security and Defence Policy, on the other hand, is not seriously questioned.

The second set of complicating factors has to do with structural characteristics of French policy, which are probably inherent, and certainly will not change soon. One is its regional nature. All serious politicians have a local power-base, and will continue to be, say, mayor of a town or President of a

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[12] A good recent survey is James Shields, *The Extreme Right in France: From Petain to Le Pen*? Routledge 2007.

Department, even while becoming a Deputy and a Minister. This system – known as the *cumul des mandats* is obviously open to abuse and corruption, but benefits too many people for it to be reformed soon.

Another is personalisation. Successful politicians will gather around them personal entourages, often beginning at the local level. Over time, Prefects, diplomats, policemen, military officers, lawyers and journalists may all join, usually for personal rather than ideological reasons. Some may become part of the *Cabinet*, the personal staff halfway between politicians and public servants. Others may be formally independent, but do political or financial favours and receive them in return. A successful politician will then seek to place members of this entourage in key positions, especially in the security and justice areas. Thus, the current heads of the National Police and of the French domestic intelligence service, the DCRI, which comes under it, are acknowledged to be long-time allies of President Sarkozy. (At the time of writing, both are under criminal investigation for unauthorised use of the personal telephone records of journalists). Finally, the wholesale privatisation of previously public assets has also led to figures moving from the public service into the private sector, yet still remaining linked to political figures, especially for raising funds. This has produced new concentrations of power that can have a substantial effect on government policy.[13] An emblematic figure is Serge Dassault, head of the only real French aerospace company, friend and financial backer of the current President, mayor of a small town and Senator in Sarkozy's party, and proprietor of the nation's largest-selling daily newspaper. Sarkozy's enemies have claimed, correctly or otherwise, that French defence procurement and export priorities have been skewed to reflect Dassault's commercial objectives.

The combination of these factors creates a balkanised political system of what the French call "clans", where bitter political enemies may control different parts of the security sector, and even use them against each other. These enmities, it should be stressed, are much more personal than political, especially on the Right. Thus, over the last few years, the current President (Sarkozy) has apparently been behind moves to get the previous Prime Minister (de Villepin) put on trial, and hopefully convicted, on charges of circulating information suggesting that Sarkozy had an illegal offshore bank account. This information, which appears to be false, is alleged to have been concocted on the orders of the previous President (Chirac), because he was desperate to prevent Sarkozy from becoming President, even though, at the time, they were members of the same political grouping and Sarkozy was Chirac's Interior Minister. [14]

In this kind of system, it is often true that the only way of getting things done is through the networks that are so ubiquitous in French life. These may be patronage networks as described above, they may be networks from the *Grandes écoles* which dominate French professional life, (but rarely from universities)

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[13] See for example Michel Pinçon and Monique Pinçon-Charlot, *Le président des riches : Enquête sur l'oligarchie dans la France de Nicolas Sarkozy*, La Découverte, 2011.

[14] Revelations about the ironically-titled "Clearstream Affair" have been emerging almost weekly. See http://actualite.nouvelobs.com/Dossier%20Clearstream/ for a reasonably complete account.

from the same promotion of the military or police academy, or even membership of the same political party. There is, for example, a network of serving and retired officers of the *Troupes de marine* who have a powerful influence on African policy, not just in the Army and the Defence Ministry, but as consultants, commentators, advisers to politicians and political groupings, and above all as defence and security advisers to private companies on retirement.

In general, these various factors are too deeply embedded in French culture and society to change quickly, and possibly too deeply to change very much at all. For that reason, French security policy, even as its principal orientations probably remain largely unaltered, will continue to be made and implemented in a way that is often difficult to understand, if not downright incomprehensible, to outsiders.