

REPRESENTATION IN TROUBLE

Suzanne Berger

Department of Political Science

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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Introduction

The presidential elections of 2002 exploded the hope that the transformation of French society and economy that had been underway over the past twenty years would slowly but inevitably produce a transformation of politics and the disappearance of French exceptionalism. The April 21 first round of balloting eliminated Lionel Jospin, the Socialist prime minister and placed Jean-Marie Le Pen, the historic leader of a xenophobic Far-Right party as the run-off candidate against Jacques Chirac. It was an earthquake in French politics, with shock waves felt around the world. April 21 stands as a marker of the radical disaffection of the French for their representatives in government and of the unreformed state of French political organizations and ideas. A third of the electorate did not vote, and another third voted for parties of the extremist right and left. The repudiation of the parties of government spread far beyond its previous level in the 1997 legislative elections, when already almost half of the registered voters had either abstained or voted for an anti-system party.¹ With 19.2% of the votes cast, the Far Right (Le Pen and Bruno Mégret) achieved the best-ever score of the Right in national elections. With 10.4% of the vote the three Trotskyite parties far outdistanced their old enemy, the Communist Party, with 3.4% of the votes, their worst-ever score. However

unexpected, these election results in fact reflected a shift in the basic structures of representation in France that had been long in the making.

That this election took place in a period of relative prosperity and growth, with unemployment levels substantially lower than in the recent past highlights the meaning of the results. The electoral collapse of the parties of government did not derive from an inability to produce satisfactory outcomes in the economy. In fact, in polls carried out before the election, concerns about the economy took second place to concerns about security, an amalgam of fears about crime, immigration, and longterm economic decline. Even more important than a shift in attitudes on particular issues, the returns demonstrated the inability of candidates in the parties of government to convince much of the electorate that French politicians see a horizon beyond the politics of personal and party gain. Even as the old meanings of Left and Right have shifted and blurred, no new vision of social order and justice in French society or of France's role in the world has taken their place. There has been a failure by the parties and politicians to articulate convincing new understandings of the public interest and of what can and should be undertaken by the state. On the side of the public, what has emerged is a mixture of fear and anger. On issues perceived as major threats to wellbeing, the parties of government appear rudderless and incapable of steering a course that promises a more secure future.

At the origin of these resentments and of their manifestations in this election lies the stalled reform of French politics. As many commentators rushed to explain, the election results of April 21 involved a variety of accidents: the school vacations that separated voters from their polling places, the misleading polls that suggested an inevitable Chirac-Jospin list for the second round, and the multiple candidacies that made the results hang on thin margins. That all these contingent events could have so serious a set of consequences reflects, however, the underlying fragility of the system. Here what I propose is not an electoral analysis, but some ways of understanding the strains in the system of representation and the challenges these present for the short to medium term project of reconstructing the vehicles of representation in France.

Broadly speaking, representation involves both the organizations that link citizens to government and the political ideas and programs that structure citizens' conceptions of how the world works and, consequently, their expectations about what can and should be achieved through politics. To assess the organizational dimension of representation, we need to focus on the creation, reproduction, and renewal of capabilities that allow parties and civil society associations to express and structure the demands of broad segments of society and to mobilize citizens as members, supporters, or electors. Organizational capabilities depend in the first instance on some degree of fit between given socio-economic environments and party institutions. It was obvious, for example, that the sharp decline of heavy

industry in the old territorial bases of the Left and the expansion of a service economy in those constituencies would undermine institutions that the Communist Party had deployed in the 1950s and 1960s to mobilize workers in mass production industries and to link voters, supporters, party members, party leaders and elected representatives. Even party members and electors employed in parts of the economy that did not undergo such drastic shrinkage over the past twenty years have nonetheless experienced major changes: in employment contracts and the content of jobs, in female labor force participation, rising average levels of education, new forms of sociability, and with exposure to new media and internet technologies. These transformations in society all made it highly unlikely that the old party institutions could carry on without major restructuring.

Even as the socio-economic terrain on which the parties had to operate was shifting, there were also far-reaching changes in the public's desires and expectations about the kinds of individual experience that participation in a civic association or in a political party should provide. Without subscribing to any particular theory of the transformation of individual preferences in post-industrial societies, one can still observe that over the past twenty years new recruits into political organizations have had different aspirations for individual expression and participation than those who joined political movements in the past. As Boy et al have shown for members of the parties of *la gauche plurielle*, degrees of satisfaction with their organizations were closely linked to perceptions of openness and democratic

practice within the group.² The rejection of the kinds of hierarchy, subordination, and discipline that were integral features of political party membership in the sixties and seventies created another and autonomous source of pressure on the parties to reform their internal systems of governance. Yet there is not much evidence of adaptation on this dimension. The decline in party membership and the rise in participation in civic associations suggest that militants are voting with their feet for organizations within which they can have more voice and closer, less-hierarchical relations with others.

As Herbert Kitschelt's work on the transformation of the organizations and strategies of social democratic parties in Europe has emphasized, there is no simple correspondance between structural changes in society and the economy and the responses, successful or otherwise, of political parties.³ Kitschelt identifies two key dimensions of party internal structure that condition the party's ability to respond to changes in the environment: organizational entrenchment and the autonomy of party leaders.⁴ In this analysis the central interaction is between these internal institutional properties and the characteristics of an external competitive environment in which the party strives against others for influence and voters. From this perspective, party organizational configurations appear quite resilient and ordinarily likely to change in only limited and incremental fashion. In case of massive party defeat or the entry of a wave of new members, such organizational

changes may be accelerated, but in normal times, these structures are relatively stable.

On this grid of analysis, Kitschelt identified France as one of the countries in the 1980s (along with Belgium, Netherland, and Spain) where Socialist parties had organizational forms that matched up well with the challenges they faced in the competitive party environment in contrast to the Communist parties in the same systems.⁵ In retrospect, it is hard to know what happened to the capabilities of French parties that Kitschelt saw in the eighties as providing flexibility and responsiveness to changes in social demands and to the opportunity structure in the competitive political arena. Was the problem that organizational supply adapted too slowly, or was it that social demand accelerated and diversified too rapidly for any party to have been able to capture? The organizational supply explanation would point to the failure of political entrepreneurship and emphasize the progressive atrophy and rigidification of party organizations that made them undesirable vehicles for citizens looking for new forms of political participation. Alternatively, a political demand story would focus on the complexity and heterogeneity of demand in a society that by the end of the century was very different from the one in which the party organizations and strategies had been born. Both of these explanations of the decay of the links between the parties and society seem plausible. In any event, because of the feedback between problems arising from inflexibility of organizational supply and those arising from the diversification of

social demand it would be difficult to choose between these two accounts or even to weigh their relative importance.

Beyond some minimal fit between a changed society and the party organizational infrastructure there is also the issue of how the parties identify concerns of the population and how they express these new anxieties and demands in political ideas and programs. The challenge for a political party is not only to build programs that accommodate increasingly diverse societal interests and the range of views of a more heterogeneous party membership. It is also to structure the demands of its members and electorate. The parties need organizational capabilities that, minimally, allow them to lay out new cognitive maps of how the problems experienced in daily life are linked to political choices and to articulate new visions of what is possible through political action. Representation in this sense is not only capacity for transmission but also a capacity for shaping and reshaping the preferences of voters and party members. Without attempting an exhaustive account of the failures of representation on these dimensions in France over the past twenty years, this essay will focus on two aspects of the dilemma which seem especially important today: (1) the atrophy of the organizations of political representation; and (2) the failure of the main political actors to convince the French public of the legitimacy of the new relations between France and the outside world.

Representing Civil Society

In both liberal and Marxist theories of politics, there is an unresolved question about whether political parties should be identified as part of the realm of civil society or whether they belong to the realm of the state. The notion of a “changing democratic balance” in France that underlies the “Changing France” project conceives democratic polities as built on particular distributions of power and resources among state, markets, and civil society. In this conception, the stability of a constellation or balance requires a certain complementarity and coherence among the functions carried out in the “three spheres,” as well as a substantial measure of public acceptance and legitimation of the division of labor among spheres. From this perspective, it is unclear whether the institutions that serve to form, express, organize, and represent political ideas and interests should be located within civil society or within the state, or perhaps, somehow, outside the three spheres.

Why this matters--- for comparative politics and for understanding the French situation-- is that such formulations suggest that political organizations change in step with changes in society and economy or in step with changes in state policies. In fact, the history of the past twenty years in France seems to show quite the opposite. The crisis we are witnessing in France today is a reminder of the stickiness, resilience, and considerable autonomy of the institutions of representation and of their resistance to renewal. Despite the enormous changes over the past two

decades in French society, economy and in the policies of the state, the organizations that articulate, aggregate and represent French society have reproduced themselves as quite faithful copies of the old models. They have changed mainly by subtraction: by a sharp decline in the numbers of French who participate, by a withering away of the core ideological issues that used to animate them, and by a shrinking of the social terrain over which the parties today exercise their authority. As Serge July in *Libération* concluded after the April 21 election:

“All the intermediary bodies have entered into an advanced state of decomposition over the past 20 years. The decay has been continuous and we observe that the effects of this disaggregation are becoming more and more serious. Political parties, unions, social forces, bureaucracies, the school are all weakened. None of them can organize society, that is to say, organize its voice and expression, provide accountability, or make a bridge between government and social actors, the citizens, employees or unemployed.”⁶

Well before the election, political analysts had been signaling the multiple signs of weakness and fatigue in the system of partisan representation.⁷ The first symptom was a dramatic increase in the hostility of the electorate to politicians. Support for the idea that “politicians do not care about what’s worrying people like us” rose from 42% in 1977 to 72% in 1995 to 83% of the voters polled before the April

21 election, and 58% of the respondents in that survey believed that political leaders are more or less corrupt.⁸ In the wake of the 2002 election, as journalists fanned out into the areas that had high rates of absenteeism and high rates of shift to Le Pen, the stories they reported were of a kind of revolt against the political elite, with strong echoes of the old Poujadist battle cry, “sortir les sortants.” Dominique Goux and Eric Maurin have developed an analysis of the election results as a rejection of the political class.⁹ They found that rather than a Left-Right divide, the real cleavage lay between an electorate that supports the current political system in departments that voted relatively heavily for Jospin or for Chirac and relatively less for Le Pen; and an anti-system electorate in departments that voted heavily for Le Pen, Laguiller, and Hue. This divide appeared again in the results of the second ballot, which showed Chirac making gains in departments that had voted for Jospin on the first round, but not in those areas in which Hue or Laguiller had done especially well in the first round.

The sense of distance and distrust between voters and their representatives in power has undoubtedly been fed by multiple sources. In part it may reflect a more general phenomenon of falling confidence in elites, since over the past fifteen years polls show a huge increase in those who lack confidence in private corporate leaders as well (from 25% in 1985 to 54% in August 2002).¹⁰ There were also specifically political drivers of these sentiments. Over the past decade a long run of scandals involving politicians under investigation for abuse of office for private financial gain

or for party coffers dragged on interminably through the courts. The politicians implicated in these scandals came from all the major parties, and inevitably the public came to feel that there was rot all the way through the system.

Even where there was no criminal betrayal of faith, the gap between the views expressed in the electorate and those defended by political parties has been widening. Even within parties, as Daniel Boy *et al* show for the militants in the parties of “la gauche plurielle,” there has been increasing fragmentation in the views held by members of the same party.¹¹ This widening of the gap between the range of views within the electorate and within the militant base of the parties, on the one side, and the positions proposed by the political elites may fall short of a “déconnexion radical entre ‘demande’ idéologique et ‘offre’ partisane,” as Chiche, Haegel, and Tiberj conclude.¹² But across the board, in the polls of public attitudes over the past twenty years one finds evidence of the erosion of the links of trust and identity between electors and their representatives.

The elections of the past fifteen years present a similar picture. Chiche and Reynié point to the continuous decline since 1988 in the votes cast in legislative elections for Left and Right parties of government.¹³ In other European countries as well, the traditional governmental parties of Left and Right face new challengers within their own ideological camps. Chiche and Reynié emphasize, however, that despite the growth of protest parties and a certain fragmentation of the electorate in Italy, the Netherlands and elsewhere, the French case stands out as exceptional for

the sharpness of the decline of the governmental parties. They conclude: "The fragility of the French parties of government shows up in any European comparison. The weakness of the parties of government is a French problem."¹⁴

Other indicators of the disaffection of the electorate are the growth of abstention, the increase in the numbers of blank ballots cast, and the rise in the number and success of candidates not associated with a national party in local and regional elections. The weakness of the parties is manifested as well in their inability to hang on to supporters who gravitate to other parties without necessarily crossing the Left-Right divide. The old cleavages of religion, class, and union membership matter less today than they did in the past for shaping the party preferences of the voters.¹⁵ But even when these sociological variables structure the likelihood of a voter's choice of Left or Right, they do not account for which of the parties of Left or Right the voters choose, as Chiche, Haegel, and Tiberj have shown. Rather, there has been an increasingly loose association between the ideological predispositions of the voter and the *particular* party of Left or of Right that he or she chooses. The dispersion and volatility of the electorate within the camps of Left and Right is yet another demonstration of the parties' inability to stabilize their relations with even those electors who are, so to speak, ideologically and sociologically their closest of kin.¹⁶

Even as the French express more negative attitudes towards the parties and retreat from party membership, there has been a significant increase in support for

other forms of political action. Over the past ten years there has been rising public approval for virtually all protest movements in favor of protecting the rights, jobs, or benefits of established social groups. During the December 1986-January 1987 public sector strikes, a large majority (67%) of those polled criticized the strikers; by the December 1995 strikes there were majorities who endorsed the strikers, and that has been true across a wide range of social conflicts through the past decade.¹⁷ Public support for these protests is higher in France today than elsewhere in Europe¹⁸ and it seems to be a kind of counterweight to the growing discredit of the parties.

Jacques Capdevielle has argued that the new wave of corporatist mobilizations of the nineties rushed in to fill a vacuum left by traditional political organizations, and he concluded: "Les identités et les revendications corporatives, loin de correspondre à un archaïsme, appartient bien à part entière à notre modernité. Elles agissent comme un révélateur de ses manques politiques et ne seront dépassées qu'en palliant ces derniers."¹⁹ The growing support for forms of civic participation that substitute for party militancy does not, however, only flow into these corporatist movements. There has been a boom in the participation in new social protest groups, some of them focused on single issues, like the "sans-papiers" or the "chomeurs" committees, some with broader agendas, like SUD-PTT, a break-away from more traditional trade-unionism (with 15,000 members), or the regional ethnic movements, or the NGOs focused on development.²⁰ The vitality of these diverse

forms of association suggest a widespread interest in participation, but this potential has not translated into a new reservoir of recruits for political organizations.

Open borders=vulnerability

In the diversity of problems troubling the French electorate, one common element recurs. Many of the matters on which the French feel that their representatives have failed to hear them and to respond are perceived as having their origins outside of France. Foremost among these issues is crime and violence, which are widely perceived to be on the rise and widely believed to be the doing of second generation North African immigrant youth. While there has been an increase in crime, with growth in the numbers of reported violations of 5.7% in 2000 and 7.7% in 2001, certain categories of serious crime, like homicide have declined over the same period.²¹ So the question of why the French suddenly feel so vulnerable and unprotected can not be answered by any simple reference to crime statistics. The sense of insecurity may have been amplified, rather, by the fact that the issue lies along a political fault line that identifies openness to the outside world and the removal of the state from its traditional functions on the frontiers as the source of new dangers and menaces to French society. The dangers that threaten to pour in over the unprotected borders of the state are of three kinds: first, there are the immigrants, both those already in and asylum seekers and others trying to get

into France by all means legal and illegal. The principal danger they pose is felt today as one of security, since people believe that foreigners are responsible for a disproportionate share of crimes. Beyond the issue of crime, there lurks the threats the immigrants present for the racial, cultural, and religious composition of the country.

The second manifestation of high levels of concern about France's openness to the outside world and the shrinking of the protective functions of the state is the growth of the anti-globalization movement. Various public opinion polls provide rather different readings of French perceptions of the impact of globalization.²² Over the past few years, however, the proportions of those expressing anxiety about globalization seem to be on the rise. In a SOFRES 12-13 July 2001 survey 55% of the respondents described *la mondialisation* as a threat for French jobs and companies.²³ Three-quarters of them agreed that there was not enough regulation in the international economy and that government (39%), unions (48%), or citizen movements (67%) should play a larger role. By the fall of 2002, those polled who expressed "worry" about globalization rose to 63%, and only 10% expressed "confidence in globalization," half the number who had been confident about globalization three years earlier.²⁴ The election results of 2002 also reflect a shift in the weight of candidates hostile to globalization (the three Trotskyites, the Communist, Chevènement, the Green, Le Pen, Mégret, and Saint-Josse) who won

close to half the votes, a rise over the success of candidates opposed to globalization in previous elections.²⁵

This division of public opinion appears again in polls on French feelings about France's membership in the European Union. Here again, there are significant fluctuations from year to year even over the near past and variations depending on the question posed. In early 2001, 43% expressed reservations about the effect of the EU on France (in contrast to 53% who were confident); asked about whether they were committed (*attaché*) to Europe, 49% said yes; 50%, no.²⁶ Although European political leaders, French among them, often approvingly describe the EU's institutional capacity to regulate globalization, their message has apparently been received with considerable skepticism by the French public. In a July 2001 poll, asked whether Europe could provide some kind of protection against the negative effects of globalization, 54% answered no; 40%, yes.²⁷

What the questions both on globalization and on Europe appear to tap is a set of concerns about the consequences of openness. At least as many see it, globalization and Europe mean an end to national borders, hence to the possibilities of national regulation within society. Widely-shared perceptions of the impact of change in the international economic arena on domestic politics have led to a growing fear of globalization in virtually all advanced countries. Even after years of economic growth and prosperity in the United States, various opinion polls find the public roughly evenly divided over whether free trade is bad for the U.S. However

sophisticated or ignorant citizens' beliefs may be about the relationships between trade, growth, and employment, they do tend to focus on the issue of open borders and on the implications for security and national policies. There is a growing sense of the loss of control over the basic foundations of societal well-being and the belief that globalization means that no one can be held accountable for basic choices about society's use of resources and allocations of reward and risk.

Concerns about globalization are hardly uniquely French. But there are specific features to the French response. First, the attacks on globalization fall along a political fault line that traverses the Left-Right divide. The emergence in the debates over the 1992 Maastricht referendum of a "*souverainiste*" camp has operated over the past ten years to reformulate and revivify the old categories of French nationalism and to give them new content and targets.²⁸ The arguments of the *souverainistes* cut not only against transfers of sovereignty to the European Community but also against reducing the role of the state in regulating all transactions--capital mobility, migration, trade in goods and services--across France's borders. For *souverainistes* of both Left and Right, what is at stake in Europe and in globalization goes far beyond material issues. The nation itself is jeopardized not only by the explicit transfers of sovereignty to other bodies, but by the renunciation, as in the Uruguay Round, of the instruments through which the state's intervention might be implemented.

For the *souverainistes*, the foundations of the national exercise of control and choice are borders . As Philippe Séguin expressed it in the debates over Maastricht: "The idea of frontiers as outdated! There's a dogma to attack. Bringing back the frontiers today is the condition of any policy..."²⁹ By giving up the powers that allow it to implement social solidarity, justice, and equality, the state is seen to be destroying its own foundations. And on this, whatever their other differences, Jean-Pierre Chevènement and Séguin or Philippe de Villiers or Charles Pasqua would agree. The result has been that within both Left and Right , the emergence of the *souverainiste* fissure has pulled voters away from the parties of government and into the minor parties of the camp. Even though this theme was not prominent in the recent campaign, still it had a major effect on the outcome, since--to take only one clear measure of the appeal of this issue---the 5.3% that Chevènement won would have been enough to have put Lionel Jospin at the top of the winners.

Even more significant than the *souverainistes* in providing political expression of popular anxieties about globalization have been the new anti-globalization movements. As Marcos Ancelovici explains, out of the political battles and strike wave of December 1995, a novel formulation of the contradictions between social democracy and capitalism emerged. Ancelovici calls the new vision a "politics against global markets" frame. It expresses the opposition between social solidarity and justice and markets in terms that both borrow from old anti-capitalist Left ideology and also innovate in identifying the enemy as the global character of

markets.³⁰ Ancelovici points out that where in the past the anti-capitalist Left saw the units of political confrontation as social classes---workers against capitalists---the new perspective sees citizens within a national community struggling against global markets in which multinational corporations and financial interests are the strongest forces. Far from identifying the state as the instrument of powerful economic interests as in the old Left, the anti-globalization militants regard the state as the basic instrument that citizens can use to defend their rights, and above all, the right to shape their own lives. State intervention and regulation are understood as the ultimate resort against the commodification of human social relations and the destruction of democratic politics by market forces .

The main political actor in France in advancing this new view of the world has been ATTAC (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens), an organization founded in 1998 by a coalition of Left wing intellectuals, trade unions, newspapers, and civic action associations. Today, the organization has 230 local groups throughout France and about 30,000 members (probably equal to half the membership of the Socialist Party).³¹ It has played a highly visible role in international demonstrations against the IMF and at the G8 summit meetings; and was the leading organizer of the Porto Alegre World Social Forum meetings. ATTAC's relations with the political parties of the Left have been at arms-length; it has neither presented candidates for election, nor supported any. As Bernard Cassen, ATTAC's first president stated, the organization does not intend to

supplant the parties and parliamentary institutions; it wants to be a "democratic pacemaker" to force them to do their jobs properly."³² The leaders of ATTAC describe its relationship to the Left parties as one of forcing the parties to recognize that the new basic cleavage in politics is between liberals (on domestic issues, like privatizations, and on the international economy) and the defenders of the social democratic welfare state.³³ Its advances on the Socialist Party look more like efforts to split the party than to join it.

Viewed from the parties' perspective, the wild fire growth of this new movement with its call for radical change in policies at the national, European, and international levels is a mixed blessing. The anti-system parties of Left and Right have embraced the anti-globalization themes, albeit with different perspectives, the Left supporting alternative forms of internationalization ("altermondialisation"), the Right identifying the continuities between its old anti-immigration programs with the newer anti-globalization ideas. For the Left and Right parties of government, however, to endorse fully the new "politics against global markets" frame of ATTAC would mean drastic renunciation of the European and international commitments of past governments. It would involve major innovation in party programs. Though the new streams of activists entering politics through local organizations centered on globalization would appear to be potential candidates to be drawn into party politics, the parties have not been recruiting these activists – in part, at least, because

the parties have not been willing to address the globalization issue in ways that connect with the new associational mobilization.³⁴

Even the Socialist Party---which in principle had perhaps the best chance of recruiting the militants from associations like ATTAC---has been unable to articulate a stand on globalization that goes beyond half-hearted steps for regulating and moderating globalization in mostly unspecified ways.³⁵ The Socialists did officially accept the idea of a "Tobin-like" tax on international financial flows. But to go further than this on the new issue would have required revising the old templates of Left politics for a "politics against markets" frame and thus risking the support of old members and electors. However reduced the salience of categories linked to *laïcité* or class conflict for interpreting contemporary society, still the parties believe (or believed, until April 21) that a stable component of their electorate relies on those old touchstones of partisan identification. So there was deep reluctance both in the Socialist Party and in the Communist Party to jettisoning their old themes and to bringing fully on board the new issue.

There was, moreover, another risk in taking on the globalization issue: that it would reinforce internal strains within the party between reformers and radicals. After the elections, globalization did in fact become one of the issues on which the cleavages within the Socialist Party crystallized. While the party leadership and more moderate factions called for "*de nouvelles règles et un nouvel order mondial, fondé sur le droit, la solidarité et la citoyenneté*" (François Hollande) or to "*inventer*

des instruments de regulation efficaces” (Dominique Strauss-Kahn), the rebels against the party leadership called for “une contestation sans équivoque de la mondialisation libérale...aux côtés de ceux qui luttent contre le libéralisme à l’échelle de la planète” (le Nouveau Monde de Henri Emmanuelli et Jean-Luc Mélenchon) or for fighting against “la férocité de nouveau capitalisme et les vertiges de la dérégulation.”³⁶ Far from operating to build links between the Socialist Party and new generations of militants within the civic associations and to channel these activists into party politics, the anti-globalization issue has been pulled into the old divisions of the party and functions to revitalize them.

The Public-Private Divide

Finally, the French anxiety over the disappearance of national border-level regulations under the combined impact of European construction and international trade and financial market liberalization has refocused attention on a sensitive internal boundary: that between the public and private sectors. Over the past 15 years, the scope of state ownership and control has shrunk dramatically, as both Right and Left wing governments have reprivatized most of the nationalized industries and utilities. The issue of the extent of state control of the national economy has basically lost its partisan colors: the Jospin government privatized more than any Right wing government. Despite these profound changes in the

dimensions of the private and public sectors, the issue of where the boundary should lie, far from fading, seems to remain as divisive as ever. The battles no longer focus on ownership of corporations producing tradable goods, but on services, whether those provided by public utilities, like EDF, or social services, like those provided by schools, hospitals, municipalities.

There is generally much greater support in Europe than in the United States for a social model with public provision of services, but the French stand out even in European comparison for the intensity of their preferences in this respect. Even in a period (1990-2000), of strong pressures to contain public expenditures in order to respect the EMU limits on public deficits, the French have increased the proportion of GDP paid in wages to government employees, while this item in the budget fell in Germany, UK, and the US.³⁷ Government employees as a percentage of the workforce grew in France from 1990-2000, while this figure declined in Germany, UK, and the US. Proposals to "reform" the public service or to align the compensation and social security treatment of public employees with those in the private sector trigger strikes and massive demonstrations, as the ill-fated proposals of the Juppé government or the Sautter plan to reform the tax services, or the Allègre reforms all demonstrated.

With the issue of the future of the public-private divide, the question of France's relationship to the outside world has now become embedded in domestic debates over the "democratic balance." What the French perceive as most menacing in

globalization are the forces at work to move France towards an Anglo-Saxon model, in which public services are transferred to the market. These pressures may derive from the European Commission, or from the WTO, or from the competitive strength of foreign multinationals. Resisting these pressures and defending the dimensions of the state and its regulatory controls at the borders has become synonymous with protecting the public sector. Because public services are seen as the guarantee of social solidarity and justice, their vulnerability to external pressures appears to many French as an unavoidable and unacceptable consequence of globalization. Thus anti-globalization associations like ATTAC are on the front lines of the battle to protect the public services. The new president of ATTAC, Jacques Nikonoff, linked the Russian loans, the emblematic disaster of the first globalization (1870-1914), to the dangers of France's current liberal regime in a phrase that said all, when he charged that "les fonds de pension sont la version moderne des emprunts russes."³⁸

Reforming representation?

This picture of the weakening of the relays between civil society and government suggests no natural process of modernization of the French political system in process and no end to "French exceptionalism" in sight. If there are to be real alternatives to more of same, they would require deliberate political engineering and leadership. As the dust of the 2002 elections began to settle, it did indeed

appear that new projects were in the works. The shock of public recognition at the consequences and costs of the disaster provoked by April 21 appeared to provide new legitimacy and resources for political reformers within the old parties of government. There was a surge of new members into the Socialist Party and signs of renewal in the other parties of government as well.

Immediately after the elections, would-be reformers within the parties of government on both the Left and Right began to lay out proposals for redesigning the relations between the electorate and the parties. The first impulses on both Left and Right were to promote a set of solutions to reduce the fragmentation of the party system and to restore and reinforce bipolarization, which had been a strong tendency of the system since de Gaulle's introduction of popular election of the president. The dispersion of votes over a large number of parties was indeed one of the factors responsible for Jospin's failure to make it into the second round and for Chirac's poor showing on the first ballot. After the election, Chirac and Alain Juppé were able to pursue a long-cherished ambition and turn an electoral coalition, the Union pour une majorité présidentielle, which had come into being to support Chirac's re-election bid, into an encompassing new party of the Right, the Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP). The UMP absorbed the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) and many of the deputies and supporters of Nouvelle Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF) and Démocratie Libérale (DL). Despite its mixed parentage, the new governing bodies of the UMP were

largely dominated by politicians coming from the RPR. François Bayrou stayed outside and maintained an autonomous but seriously weakened UDF --- having lost about half its deputies to the UMP group. Within the governmental majority, the future of Right parties outside the UMP seem dim. But this evolution is not likely to drain the reservoir of anti-system supporters. The Front National, despite its poor showing in the 2002 legislative elections, remains a real contender. Its score on the first round of the presidential election traced out a zone of possible expansion for the Far Right and of future challenges to the UMP's control of the terrain.

The formation of a broad party of the Right immediately provoked debates on the Left about the possibilities of a merger within this camp. But the conflicts that continued to rage within the Socialist Party over who was responsible for the electoral defeat, over leadership succession, and over rebuilding the party quashed any real effort to explore the terrain of creating a new party with allies of *la gauche plurielle*. The Socialists seem to be engaged in a new long phase of internecine struggles between moderates and radicals over the party's future. The Greens, badly weakened by the election, have pulled away from the alliance. The Communist Party, the third component of *la gauche plurielle*, struggles for survival. *A recul chez soi* rather than an expansive design for a new party of the Left seems to be the order of the day.

The second response to April 21 was a classic move, familiar from all French parliamentary history, to change the electoral system in order to weaken the smaller

parties. The Sarkozy proposal to change the voting system in regional and European elections would raise the bar for candidates remaining in the second balloting from 10% of the votes cast in the first round to 10% of the voters registered as of the first round of the election. In the UMP -dominated *Assemblée nationale*, the bill met bitter opposition from the UDF , the Socialists and all the smaller parties who denounced an attack on “pluralist democracy.” In order to halt its passage, these parties presented 12,000 amendments to the proposal, and finally the government had to use article 49 to rescue the bill from the quagmire of debate over the amendments.³⁹ The parties that oppose the bill have joined in a request to the *Conseil Constitutionnel* to declare the law unconstitutional. The public’s response to the proposed change in the electoral system was about equally divided between approval and opposition.⁴⁰

The history of such re-engineering of the electoral system in France does not support much optimism about the prospects of reducing anti-system voting or revitalizing the major parties in this way. If there is an effect, one likely outcome would be to transform anti-system voters and the electorate now voting for smaller parties into non-voters, thus accelerating the growth of abstentionism. Should abstentionism continue to rise, the system would become more fragile and vulnerable to shocks, even if there were simultaneously a certain reconcentration of the electorate around the UMP on the Right and the Socialists on the Left. If those voters who now cast votes for the small parties withdraw from the voting booths,

they need not withdraw from the streets. Pushed out of the electoral system, they might well seek other channels for expression. Even in the new government's first months in office it faced major demonstrations over some of the new policies; it is clear that this political arena still functions well in France.

Almost a year after the electoral shock of 2002, many of the basic questions it raised remain unanswered. Why are the linking institutions between French society and French politics so resistant to change? What kinds of change would party organizations have to undertake in order to reach out to a population that is increasingly participant in a wide variety of cultural, sports, civic, and single-issue associations, but also, apparently, increasingly allergic to party membership? Which political entrepreneurs might emerge as reformers? How could they win a mandate for the organizational and programmatic innovations needed to rebuild the connective tissue of French democracy? These questions echo old debates about the relationships between society and political institutions in France. Particularly in troubled times, the most challenging arguments about French democracy have always turned on whether the real problems lie in the divided, complex, and changing nature of French society or in the institutions that the French have built to govern themselves. At least with respect to the representative role of parties, the case for institutional dysfunctions seems the more convincing one today.

¹ Jean Chiche and Dominique Reynié, "La France en Dépression électorale," in SOFRES, L'état de l'opinion 2002, O. Duhamel and P. Méchet eds., (Paris, Seuil, 2002), p.82.

² Daniel Boy, François Platone, Henri Rey, Françoise Subileau, Colette Ysmal, C'était la gauche plurielle (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2003), pp. 65-88.

³ Herbert Kitschelt, The Transformation of European Social Democracy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴ Ibid., pp. 212 ff.

⁵ Ibid., 230-1.

⁶ Serge July, "La fracture politique," *Libération*, 23 avril 2002, p.3.

⁷ Chiche and Reynié, *op. cit*; Jean Chiche, Florence Haegel, and Vincent Tiberj, "La fragmentation partisane," in Gérard Grunberg, Nonna Mayer, and Paul M.

Sniderman, eds, La Démocratie à l'épreuve (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2002), pp. 203-237.

⁸ Nonna Mayer, Ces Français qui votent Le Pen (Paris: Flammarion, 2003), p.359, citing the SOFRES/Le Monde/RTL, survey reported in Le Monde, 29 May 2002.

⁹ Dominique Goux and Eric Maurin, "Anatomie sociale d'un vote," Document de travail La République des idées," May 2002.

¹⁰ TNS SOFRES survey on "gouvernance de l'entreprise," www.sofres.com/etudes/corporate/040203_gouvernance.htm

¹¹ Boy et al.

¹² *Op.cit.*, p.235.

¹³ *Op.cit.*

¹⁴ *Op. cit.* 52.

¹⁵ See Balme chapter in this volume, pp. 25-6, and Pierre Martin, Comprendre les évolutions électorales (Paris: Presses de Sciences-po, 2000).

¹⁶ This summary draws on Chiche, Haegel, and Tiberj.

¹⁷ Stéphane Rozes, "La popularité des mouvements sociaux ne se dément pas depuis 1995," Le Monde, 7 March 2001, p.18.

¹⁸ Jérôme Jaffré, "La combativité se diffuse dans toute la société," Le Monde, 7 March 2001, p. 18.

¹⁹ Jacques Capdevielle, Modernité du Corporatisme (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2001), p. 179.

²⁰ For descriptions of these movements, see Xavier Crettiez and Isabelle Sommier, La France rebelle, Paris: Editions Michalon, 2002, and Eddy Fougier, La Contestation de la Mondialisation: Une Nouvelle Exception Française? Paris: Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), 2002.

²¹ Le Monde, 10-11 March 2002, p. 16. See also the interviews on this issue with Emmanuel Todd and Robert Rochefort, p. 20.

²² For a view that emphasizes the acceptance of globalization by the French, see Philip Gordon and Sophie Meunier, The New French Challenge (Washington: Brookings, 2002). For an account that lays out the contradictions in French responses across a number of different polls and questions, see Marcos Ancelovici, "Organizing against Globalization: The Case of ATTAC in France," Politics and Society vol. 30 (3), pp. 427-63.

²³ Cited in Bernard Spitz, "Une mondialisation: deux France," in O. Duhamel and P. Méchet, SOFRES, L'état de l'opinion 2002 (Paris: Seuil, 2002), p. 117.

²⁴ CSA survey, 24-25 September 2002, cited in Nicolas Weill, "Vers la fin de la 'mondialisation heureuse?' in Le Monde, 8 October 2002, p. 15.

²⁵ Fougier, op.cit., p.32.

²⁶ SOFRES, L'état de l'opinion 2002, p. 287. See also www.sofres.com/etudes/pol/180701_mondialisation_h.htm.

²⁷ Le Monde/SOFRES 12-13 July 2001 survey "Les français et la mondialisation," www.sofres.com/etudes/pol/180701.

²⁸ Paul Alliès, "Souverainistes versus fédéralistes: la controverse française," Les Temps Modernes 55 (September-November 2000)pp. 120-155.

²⁹ Philippe Séguin, Ce que j'ai dit (Paris: Grasset, 1993), p.42.

³⁰ The description and analysis of ATTAC here draws on Ancelovici's account.

³¹ Fougier, op. cit., p. 62.

³² In a speech at Maison Française, Oxford, 20 February 2002.

³³ Ccaroline Monnot, "Attac entend peser sur les débats à gauche sans participer à la recomposition," Le Monde, 3 December 2002, p. 12.

³⁴ The wave of new members that the Socialist Party gained after the April 21 shock did show a significant number of recruits who already belonged to some association – mainly cultural or athletic. Only 13% of the incoming members belonged to unions, in contrast with 65% in 1998. Le Monde, 20-21 October 2002, p.7.

³⁵ See for example, Lionel Jospin, Ma vision de l'Europe et de la mondialisation . Les Notes de la Fondation Jean-Jaurès, no. 25, October 2001 (Paris: Plon).

³⁶ Michel Noblecourt, "Mondialisation, Europe, sécurité, institutions, retraite, services publics: de qui divise les socialistes," Le Monde, 22 October 2002, p. 8.

³⁷ Charles Fleming, "French Candidates Agree on One Issue: The Civil Service," The Wall Street Journal Europe, April 18, 2002, pp. 1 and A6.

³⁸ Le Monde, 3 December 2002, op. cit.

³⁹ Le Monde, 12 February 2003.

⁴⁰ CSA survey, 3 February 2003, reported in Le Monde, 4 February 2003.