The Nation as Arbiter in Times of Total Crisis: conceptualising the potential for revolutionary change in French politics, 1789 and today

Andrew Michael Morris

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Supervisors:

Professor Adrian Pabst, School of Politics and International Relations

Dr Charles Devellennes, School of Politics and International Relations

University of Kent

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Abstract

The PhD is concerned with two periods of French history, the first covers the lead up to the French Revolution and the second approximately the last half century of French politics. Through the analysis of these periods, it develops the concepts of 'Total Crisis' and 'Nation as Arbiter' as a conceptual framework for understanding the potential for revolutionary change during these periods.

Total Crisis refers to a situation in which an accumulation of abnormal occurrences, affecting multiple facets of the political system, compromise its stability to the point where collapse is possible. The construct of Nation as Arbiter relies on a conception of nation which evolves depending on the historical period under analysis. Rather than using a fixed academic definition, this thesis argues that in order to understand its role in politics it is important to view which of its characteristics have been politicised and what political purpose this has served. A clear distinction between the politicised nation at the time of the French Revolution and today emerged from the analysis of both periods.

The key argument is twofold. First, that the political significance of the nation was born within a political conflict over sovereignty and legitimacy within the *ancien régime* system and therefore the words' association with identity was not yet politicised. Second, that the politicised characteristics of nation today relate to the notions of both sovereignty and identity. By drawing parallels between the lead up to the French Revolution and today, the potential for a similarly revolutionary outcome will also be considered, if not with any finality since the cycle of crisis is not complete.

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Introduction: The Nation as Arbiter in Times of Total Crisis: conceptualising the potential for revolutionary change in French politics, 1789 and today

In early February 2017 Marine Le Pen made the first speech of her presidential campaign. After the cries of "*Marine Présidente*" had died down, she immediately drew further applause with an allusion to issues that have come to form the backbone of the FN's political platform. First, she declared that if so many people had attended the meeting, it was because those present understood that against "the right of money and the left of money" she was the candidate of "the France of the people" (Le Pen 2017 Discours de Lyon). She went on to claim that on the result of the election depended both the continuity of France as a "free nation" and for those who feel "above all else French our existence as a people"[1] (Le Pen 2017 Discours de Lyon). Both of these statements make reference to the concept of the people but meant in two different ways: once as the relatively common populist trope contrasted to an economic elite and then in the sense of an ethnic group. Adding further complexity, the reference to the people by opposition to the elites is preceded by a national qualifier implying that these elites are either not part of France or at the very least not part of the same France as her supporters. This is a clear part of the worldview that Marine Le Pen presents in her speeches and writings. As will be explored in later chapters, the elites are systematically associated with interests beyond France's national borders being either naïve dupes or willing agents of her stated enemy of "globalism".

[1] *« Si vous êtes ici aussi nombreux aujourd'hui, c'est que vous avez compris , […] que contre la droite du fric et la gauche du fric je suis la candidate de la France du peuple ! […] de son issue dépendront la continuité de la France, en tant que nation libre, et pour ce qui comme vous, se sentent avant tous Français notre existence en temps que peuple. »*

Exploring the ambiguous usage of the concepts of people and nation forms one of the key objectives of the thesis. By focusing on the politicisation of the nation and placing it in a long-term historical context, this thesis seeks to explore the nation's unique relationship with other key concepts such as the people and the state. Furthermore, in so doing, and in the context of French history, the thesis will elucidate how the nation came to its position at the heart of modern politics and why rhetoric, such as that of the FN, can be so evocative. On the basis of this analysis, the concept of the 'Nation as Arbiter' will be developed in order to facilitate a better understanding of the nature of that position. Concrete historical examples will be used to demonstrate how the nation can refer to a more or less specific group of individuals as well as a political abstraction – the contents of which can be influenced by political actors. This duality means that political actors seek a balance between their understanding of the desires of the nation and at the same time to impose their view of what the nation is on those individuals who comprise it. Consequently, it appears that since no single political faction is entirely in control of this process of interpretation and redefinition, the nation itself acts as an arbiter of politics.

The two periods during which the politicisation of the nation will be analysed are the lead up to the French Revolution beginning in the mid-seventeenth century and roughly the last fifty years of French history. Both periods were characterised by significant historical mutation, an instability useful for seeing how different political factions sought to instrumentalise the nation to fulfil their own agendas. This context of instability is the focus of the second key concept developed in this thesis: Total Crisis. The name 'Total Crisis' was chosen to emphasise the magnitude of the crisis as well as to insist on its multifaceted nature. Indeed, rather than being confined to a single facet of a given society, financial or political crises are merely individual facets of the overarching Total Crisis. These periods of accentuated crisis provoke a context of instability within established political systems that provide an

opportunity for political insurgencies like the FN to gain political influence, if they are capable of exploiting them.

To summarise, therefore, the aim of the thesis is to explore the relationship between the nation, uniquely positioned as an arbiter at the heart of modern politics, and a context of accentuated and prolonged crisis which some insurgent factions seek exploit. Apart from the various other factors that may contribute to the success or failure of an insurgent faction, which are not the object of this thesis, those factions that pose as defenders of the nation may benefit from an additional advantage. Indeed, a unique characteristic of the nation's position at the heart of modern politics is how natural it has come to appear. Despite threats to its position from globalisation, in everyday politics the nation remained prominent. Having been called into question in the 1990s and 2000s the nation has seen a resurgence in political prominence in many countries in the West and beyond. In seeking to understand the 'strengths' of the nation in its politicised role it will be inferred that one of the reasons for its resurgence in times of crisis is precisely the undermining of other political reference points. As the other less stable reference points weaken or change in nature, the nation provides a more solid base on which to build a political programme. This is all the more effective when it is precisely the defence of this 'natural' feature of politics which forms the basis of the political offering.

As previously stated, the key concepts of Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter will be developed with reference to two historical periods. The first period starts with the undermining of the principle of the Divine Right of Kings as a common justification for political action starting in the 1750s; it ends with the debates of the Estates General that led to the Third Estate unilaterally declaring itself the National Assembly and representative of a sovereign nation. Analysing a period when the nation had yet to be placed at the heart of politics, indeed before

it was even declared sovereign, provides a unique opportunity to see where some of its present-day politicised characteristics originated and the order in which they emerged.

A key element of the politicised nation that is missing at the time, compared with its usage today, was its forming the basis, at least in part, of a majority of the population's identities. This is not to say that the nation was entirely detached from some sense of identity at the time nor is it to claim that it is impossible to identify traces of French national identity at this period or even before. However, the nation on the eve of the French Revolution referred to what would now be considered regional identities within the confines of France. Indeed, a prominent historian of the period, P.M. Jones, refers to a lack of national sentiment in the lead up to revolution. He claims that contemporaries such as Robespierre or Mirabeau, two protagonists of the revolutionary period, would refer to their home regions, Artois or Provence, as their nations rather than France (Jones 1995: 14).

This simple statement, discovered during past research on the origins of the French Revolution, suggested the need, in the current project, for a different and more fluid understanding of the nation. In fact, many existing definitions of the nation or nationalism are static, a checklist of necessary characteristics to qualify as one definition or another. By checking for their presence at various historical periods one can, for example, determine when the nation and/or nationalism first emerged. This is less useful when considering the process of politicisation of the nation over a period that spans more than two hundred years. Instead, the emergence of new aspects to the common understanding of the nation's role in politics either reinforces, weakens or simply changes contemporary understanding of the nation's role in politics from that point on. For example, in France efforts to create a truly national identity on the scale of the French state were most fruitful about a century after the revolution that had established the nation's sovereignty. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to state that during this process of 'nationalisation' of the population and from that

point on any political actor seeking to call upon or otherwise reference the nation would need to contend with the fact that this national identity had been more or less successfully inculcated in the French population.

Another aspect of politicisation missing from the time period from today's perspective is the absence of a more tangible, or at least measurable, manifestation of public opinion that political actors need to take into account in their dealings. Indeed, the lack of opinion polls, focus groups and more generally an entire industry dedicated to trying to understand what the voters want and how politicians can seek to exploit this information makes the French *ancien régime*, which did not even hold regular elections, seem rather lacking in this form of public pressure. This pressure forms one key side of the Nation as Arbiter Mechanism with politicians needing to interpret and position themselves in reference to their interpretation of the opinions of those members of the public politically active at the time. As will be argued throughout the content on the French Revolutionary period, this adaptation to perceived public demand can be the result of an exceedingly abstract notion of public opinion. At the time of the *ancien régime,* more than a fear of public reprisal in the form of protests or collapsing approval ratings, it was a fear of public judgement, as an almost abstract moral judgement, that affected political decision. Based on this analysis the thesis will argue that the mechanism of arbitration can occur even in the absence of more recent tangible manifestations of public opinion, the 'public' can simply be in the mind of an individual politician for it to function.

Developing the concept of Nation as Arbiter with reference to a system that is very different and distant from our own helps to focus on its fundamental characteristics. Furthermore, the unique nature of public opinion at the time of the *ancien régime* highlights just how abstract the process of arbitration can be. By contrast, the chapters that cover the past fifty years of French politics show the same mechanism in operation in a system recognisable in all its key

characteristics to us today. Regular elections, an established party system, more concrete representations of public opinion and above all a more familiar shared notion of the nation's role in politics. As well as the notion of national sovereignty, only just being developed in a recognisable form during the revolutionary period, the nation now also forms a key foundation for the individual identity of a majority of the population. This is the case regardless of whether the nation in question is always synonymous with the state that controls the territory it claims to inhabit. These two branches of the nation's politicisation, sovereignty and identity, are now fundamental to understanding contemporary references to the nation and the long-term origins of these branches help to explain why the role of the nation is so central to the current political scene.

The FN and its rise feature prominently in the chapters exploring the mutations which have occurred in the last half century of French politics. This is because the FN is one of them. For the purposes of this thesis the FN is particularly useful as it has proved increasingly efficient at exploiting both the key features of the Total Crisis as well as playing on the ambiguities of the present understanding of the nation's role in politics. This means that reference to the FN and its rhetoric are an excellent way of highlighting the existence of these two phenomena. However, this also means that if the reader agrees with the central argument of this thesis, the existence of both a Total Crisis and the notion of Nation as Arbiter, the two taken together could provide an instructive, if partial, framework for understanding the FN's success.

The majority of the content of this thesis is historical in nature. Even though the most recent period includes the 2017 French Presidential Elections, and a little beyond, the research was conducted in much the same way as for the French Revolutionary period. This is because the historical content in this project fulfils two purposes. Firstly, it was the inspiration for the conceptual discussion of the key characteristics and interrogations surrounding the argued existence of the phenomena of Total Crisis and the Nation as Arbiter Mechanism. Secondly,

it explains and illustrates concretely how these occurrences unfold and the actions and reactions of the political actors caught up in them. Given the abstract nature of both occurrences, and the Nation as Arbiter Mechanism in particular, the main focus in terms of sources has been the words, arguments, actions and reactions of political actors. As a result, wherever possible this project seeks to rely on extrapolations made directly from the speeches and writings of the political actors themselves.

However, with topics as vast as the lead up to the French Revolution or the present crisis and the rise of the FN, it is not possible to rely solely on primary sources. Therefore, the vast secondary literatures on these topics and many others have also been searched for additional evidence, although often as a source of information rather than to directly confront their stated arguments. That being said, although to my knowledge the analysis presented here in favour of the existence of Total Crisis and the Nation as Arbiter does not directly conflict with the dominant interpretations of these events, it is not impossible that they have integrated some of the partial interpretations which may still be controversial to experts in these fields.

While not seeking to deny the importance of the history of ideas when looking at the debates or words of politicians these rarely cite specific passages of political theory explicitly. Therefore, although seeking to speculate about precisely which Enlightenment philosopher had had the most influence on the unfolding debates in the Estates General would have been interesting it was not considered essential to the argument being made here. At least one exception to the barrier between abstract theory and practical politics can be found during the revolutionary period. The Abbé Sieyès, while not an enlightenment philosopher, wrote the very popular and widely circulated pamphlet *What is the Third Estate?* which was published during the debates leading up to the meeting of the Estates General in 1789 and influenced the debate. Once elected, as a representative for the Third Estate, Sieyès was a key

contributor to the ongoing debates within the assembly. He deployed the same arguments he had in his pamphlet to help trigger the Third Estate's unilateral action and was also instrumental in choosing and getting the name National Assembly ratified for the newly constituted representative assembly of the sovereign nation.

The dual objective of developing the concepts of Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter helped to dictate a natural end point to the vast possible coverage of the French Revolutionary period in this thesis. Indeed, while the facets of the Total Crisis slowly emerged over a long period of time from approximately the 1750s onwards, the thesis argues that the *ancien régime* had to have collapsed prior to Revolution. The emphasis on nation, particularly with regard to issues of sovereignty during this time period, makes the Third Estate's declaration of themselves as a National Assembly and the nation as sovereign on 17 June 1789 a good cut off point. By this time most of the normal functioning of the *ancien régime* had already changed beyond recognition, not least due to the fact that this proclamation could be considered a more official recognition of a process that had already transferred authority within the political the system from the King to the public.

In the present day the analysis often focused on periods of national election, mainly the presidential elections. These national elections provided a large concentration of material as candidates, for the most part, put forward coherent policy proposals backed up by speeches and other communications defending their political beliefs. This periodic outpouring of material aimed at and relating to the nation as arbiter provided a useful means of exemplifying the arbiter in action. As such, the 2017 electoral cycle made for another 'natural' cut off point for the analysis in this thesis.

In order to develop the notions of Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter this thesis has relied on the historical analysis of two distinct periods. Therefore, much of the body of this thesis is

focused on summarising this historical analysis. While the historical content for each period has been split between chapters relating to Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter respectively, these distinctions are artificial for the sake of clarity. In reality, there is significant overlap between the elements of the Total Crisis and, for example, the rhetoric of insurgent factions seeking to exploit the instability while using rhetoric which appeals to the nation.

Chapter 1 introduces the key characteristics of the concepts of Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter enabling the reader to better follow their relation to the historical analysis of subsequent chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 cover the period of the lead up to the French Revolution beginning roughly in the 1750s with the start of the nation's politicisation that would ultimately lead to it being declared sovereign in 1789. Chapter 2 focuses on the Total Crisis, highlighting the increasingly abnormal functioning of the *ancien régime* to the point where it can be considered to have collapsed prior to 1789. Chapter 3 focuses on the rival claims to represent the nation in the final half century of the *ancien régime* from the nation's detachment from the person of the King to its ultimate claim to sovereignty. Chapters 4 and 5 cover the present-day period of approximately the last half century of French politics starting with the circumstances of Mitterrand's election in 1981. However, periods before that are mentioned as, for example, the origins of some of the economic dimensions of Total Crisis can be traced back to the fallout of the first oil crisis in 1973. Incidentally, this timeline also coincides with the initial, if at the start unsuccessful, emergence of the FN. Chapter 4 focuses on the elements of a multiform crisis affecting the current political system of the French Fifth Republic. Chapter 5 focuses on the emergence of the FN and its interaction with mainstream political forces of the Centre Left and Right. The FN's gradual rise, complete with its electoral setbacks and successes, helps exemplify a more complex version of the nation as arbiter in action as well as the fact that Total Crisis merely provides an opportunity to insurgent factions, not a guarantee of success. The final chapter concludes by revisiting some

of the key characteristics of both Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter but, following the exemplifications provided in the main body of the thesis, with reference to specific examples.

Chapter 1. Conceptualising political change: Total Crisis and the Nation as Arbiter

1.1. Introduction: the concepts of Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter

The presence of a galvanised opposition on the eve of the 1789 French Revolution and the presence of the FN as an increasingly important actor in French politics, since its creation in the early 1970s, are indisputable. With the benefit of hindsight, it is equally undeniable that the French *ancien régime* collapsed, even if the exact date is open to discussion. Although the Fifth Republic, France's current constitutional form since 1958, has yet to collapse and may not do so in the foreseeable future, it is hard to deny that French politics has already undergone significant change. The election of Emmanuel Macron and the success of his party, *En Marche!*, during the 2017 presidential and parliamentary elections are proof enough. Indeed, although a former government minister, his path to the presidency was unique. Rather than seeking to be the candidate of one of the existing mainstream parties, almost exactly a year before the election, he created his own movement from scratch. Equally unique was that in order to find candidates for the 2017 parliamentary elections, his party put out a public call for candidates with many of its chosen runners never having held office before.

This political originality clearly shows a significant shift in the way politics is being conducted in France. Furthermore, these elections saw the complete collapse of the mainstream left-wing Socialist Party (*Parti socialiste*), which was not only beaten to the second round of the presidential elections by Marine Le Pen but also overtaken by the radical

left party *La France Insoumise*. The FN candidate and Macron represented incarnations of a new dichotomy between pro- and anti-globalisation and open and closed societies.[2]

The aim of this thesis is not to establish that in both cases, past and present, significant political changes occurred; rather, the objective is to create a framework which explains these changes. Developing the concepts of 'Total Crisis' and 'Nation as Arbiter' contextualises these events historically and enables a better understanding of the mutations occurring at these times. The thesis therefore seeks to establish the existence and key characteristics of these two phenomena, as well as their interaction during the time periods covered. As mentioned in the introduction, a quickly reached conclusion is that the political role of the nation has changed significantly over time. For instance, in France at the time of the French Revolution the nation's role was only beginning to be defined politically and differed considerably from today's understanding.

From the perspective of the more recent historical period covered in this thesis, the lead up to the French Revolution needs to be considered as the entry point of the nation in French politics. While the thesis argues that this initial entry into politics was also an example of the nation acting as arbiter, the criteria through which this arbitration was made possible differed greatly from the way it arbitrates in more recent periods. Furthermore, the profound differences in the functioning of the economic, political and societal systems of these two time periods also mean that the characteristics of the Total Crisis cannot be detailed in absolute terms for the two instances. In short, this thesis explores resemblances between the phenomena affecting these two periods rather than absolute characteristics.

[2] For a detailed account of the 'new cleavages' emerging in French society to replace Left/Right dichotomy see Perrineau (2014) pp.107-159. For analysis of the disruptive nature of the campaign and electoral result of the 2017 Presidential elections see (Perrineau 2017b).

1.2. The Concept of Total Crisis

The concept of Total Crisis seeks to emphasise two related aspects of the crises in question. The first is the extensive magnitude of the crises. The reason being, that if they occur in the right circumstances and provoke a sufficient political reaction, they can potentially pose an existential threat to the systems they affect. The second is that Total Crises are multifaceted, involving numerous dimensions that partially overlap and are intertwined. This thesis defines Total Crisis as an accumulation of 'abnormal' occurrences that affect different facets of a political system and destabilise it to the point that insurgent factions can gain traction and pose a serious threat to the political mainstream and, in the right conditions, the system as a whole. To be clear, the different facets of a Total Crisis, which in their respective literatures are considered crises in their own right, e.g. crisis of democracy, capitalism, etc., whereas in the present conceptualisation these form only single dimensions of the Total Crisis as a whole. It is the gradual accumulation of each individual phenomenon, sub-categories of the Total Crisis, which give Total Crises their unique character and their ability to seriously compromise the integrity of the political system they affect.

The relative imprecision of the notions of *abnormal occurrences* and references to *different facets* is intentional because of the need to encompass a wide range of possible causes of instability within the system. For example, taking the case of the present-day crisis literature, individual aspects of the Total Crisis can be identified for France but also other Western countries. Be it the financial and economic crises of 2007-2013 (Sarkar 2012, Tooze 2018, Streeck 2016, Gamble 2014), a crisis of democracy (Grayling 2017, Past 2019, Crouch 2004, Runciman 2015, Streeck 2017, Rodrik 2012) a crisis of liberalism (Deneen 2018, Guilluy 2018, Guilluy 2019, Milbank and Pabst 2016) or a cultural crisis related to globalisation

(Bouvet 2015), all are manifestations, albeit different facets, of the concept of Total Crisis, in the context of this thesis. Apart from imprecision, another potential issue is that references to the 'abnormal' require agreement on a baseline for normality.

The notion of perception offers a partial solution to this issue. Indeed, analyses of the political events concerned often highlighted changes in the 'normal' functioning of a political system. This is particularly the case with books seeking to explain the emergence of insurgent political forces like the FN. For example, the books by Pascal Perrineau (2014, 2017a) are useful for tracing the progressive compromise of the characteristics of the existing system. A significant example, covered extensively in chapters 4 and 5, is the gradual undermining of the left/right dichotomy which had underpinned the party political system since the start of the Fifth Republic, together with the ideological landmarks they are meant to represent. An example of a feature that can be considered 'normal' for the *ancien régime* was the notion of the Divine Right of King. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the perception of a crisis is sufficient to have an impact on, and change the behaviour of, political actors without needing to establish that a crisis actually exists. Just as the words in the mouth of a politician can cause sudden collapse in stock market prices in a volatile market, it seems equally plausible that frequent references to the existence of a crisis is sufficient for political actors to take it to heart in their actions. Marine Le Pen provides an extreme example of this when she writes in the opening pages of her book, "my generation has heard talk of the crisis of unemployment since reaching the age of reason. A crisis which has lasted almost forty years is no longer a crisis but an entire system"[3] (Le Pen 2012: 9).

The *destabilising* effect of a Total Crisis will become clearer through the examples in the historical content of the thesis. Once again, the areas affected and the way they might be

[3] "ma generation entend parler de crise et de chômage depuis qu'elle a l'âge de raison. Une crise qui dure presque quarante ans n'est plus une crise, mais un système complet."

affected are too diverse to summarise easily, even abstractly. Potential destabilising effects can range from the undermining of the main source of legitimisation of political action within a political system to the need to seek radical political solutions to old economic problems due to political deadlock. Both these instances will be covered in detail in the chapters on the French Revolution and, contrary to what might be expected, the radical political solutions to these problems were initially proposed by the Crown.

The diversity of the potential factors contributing to a Total Crisis as well as the destabilising effects those factors may be producing, makes it difficult to identify a Total Crisis as it emerges. A further dimension that impedes easy identification is the differing time frames over which these facets of the Total Crisis emerge. For example, without hindsight it is difficult to identify the point at which a very gradual transition in the key arguments put forward to justify royal action that eventually lead to its abandonment. Such history defies the desire to find an exact historical tipping point when everything changed. Even in the sphere of economics where causes may appear to be more readily identified, the issue of differing time frames acting within a Total Crisis can occur. For example, when exploring the possible existence of a current Total Crisis in France, it might be tempting to look no further than the fallout of the 2007-2013 financial and economic crises. However, as made evident by Marine Le Pen's writings quoted above, which will be covered in chapter 5, this would be to ignore that France's unemployment rate has remained high and a source of political concern since the 1980s. The combination of these diverse time frames within the different facets of the crisis and identifying a point where they all unite to form a Total Crisis, makes it challenging to identify the precise timing of the start of a Total Crisis, even in retrospect.

Another facet of the Total Crisis hinted at in the definition, is that if the crisis is deep enough and if the insurgent factions prove effective at exploiting the destabilisation of the existing system, it can prove fatal to that system. A distinction will therefore be made between a Total

Crisis and a Terminal Crisis, i.e. a Total Crisis that has proved fatal to the system it affected. Without delving into the controversial subject of unfounded predictions, Terminal Crises are best left to retrospective analysis. Due to the sheer complexity of events like the collapse of the French *ancien régime*, it is impossible to narrow down, with any degree of certainty, the exact factors that caused a Total Crisis to become terminal. That being said, one thing becomes clear from the analysis of the lead up to the French Revolution, namely, that neither of the two key political actors competing for power was interested in preserving the regime's status quo in its entirety. Indeed, chapters 2 and 3 will argue that the Crown, through its radical agenda of proposed reforms, and the *parlements*, through the rhetoric used to defend their position, both contributed to undermining the 'normal' functioning of the absolute monarchy and ultimately to its collapse. Regardless of the specifics, while the crisis of the French *ancien régime* can safely be considered to have been terminal, this thesis will not seek to predict the outcome of the current crisis.

Given that the chapters on the French Revolutionary period focus on a finished cycle of crisis, it is possible to identify many facets of the Total Crisis as well as focusing on those that were particularly detrimental to the survival of the *ancien régime*, thus contributing to the Terminal Crisis. By contrast the more recent historical content covers a cycle of crisis that remains unfinished. Therefore, the focus of that content will be slightly different, as it seeks to highlight the various facets of the crisis in order to make the case for the present-day crisis being considered a Total Crisis. While it is still possible to identify the factors comprising the system's 'abnormal' functioning, it is impossible to speculate as to the final outcome of the cycle, although it does seem clear that the content of French politics, if not the institutional context, has already changed significantly, and some politicians, notably Arnaud Montebourg and more recently Jean-Luc Mélenchon are calling for the transition to a Sixth Republic.

The concept of crisis itself has a long and diverse history of usage in many spheres of human existence from the juridical and medical conceptions in Ancient Greece to the cyclical interpretation of economic crisis conceptualised by Engels and Marx in the mid-nineteenth century (Kosselleck and Richter 2006). The current thesis and its conception of Total Crisis reflects aspects of two past usages of "crisis". One of these is the medical conception of crisis that Koselleck traces back to Ancient Greece, where it referred both to the "observable condition" of the illness and the "judgement about the course of the illness" (Koselleck and Richter 2006: 360). Koselleck infers from this medical conception that it presupposes the existence of a "state of health" predating the illness and an assumption that this state will either be restored or the illness "will at a specific time, result in death" (Koselleck and Richter 2006: 361). While Total Crisis does not have a specific time frame implied within it, the focus on abnormal occurrences affecting a particular political system highlights, in a metaphorical sense, the 'observable' manifestations of a condition affecting the system. Furthermore, with the distinction between Total and Terminal Crises the present thesis retains the idea of 'recovery' versus the ultimate stake of the 'death' of the system. As such the usage of "crisis" in this thesis bears resemblance to the seventeenth-century application of the medical concept of crisis to the 'body politic', in that case too the stake was between life and death (Koselleck and Richter 2006: 362).

As previously mentioned, the start and end points of Total Crises are very difficult to predict with any degree of certainty, as is their outcome. This unpredictability results from Total Crisis also being related to a different conception of crisis than the aforementioned medical one. This alternative conception "draws on the Chinese approach that depicts crisis as both a danger and an opportunity" (Sakwa 2010: 8). Indeed, one of the many possible contributors to the outcome of a Total Crisis is the ability of insurgent political factions to exploit the context of instability provoked by the crisis in order to promote their own agenda of change.

Therefore, if the perspective is removed from the system as a whole and focused on potential insurgent factions, then Total Crisis is more akin to an opportunity than a danger. From the perspective of the insurgent factions, therefore, the Total Crisis refers back to another meaning of crisis, originally from Ancient Greece. Initially associated with notions of choice or decision in the sense of a judgement (Koselleck and Richter 2006: 358), this evolved into a combination of a "medical-political-military use" that referred to a "chain of events leading to a culmination, decisive point at which action is required" (Koselleck and Richter 2006: 370). Indeed, if the insurgent faction is successful in exploiting the instability provoked by the 'illness', it can help to incite change and, if that is part of its agenda, precipitate the collapse of the system.

Total Crisis is therefore 'illness' from the perspective of the political system and opportunity for certain agents of change within it this duality attempts to capture the contingency of history. Total Crises offer an opportunity for drastic change and in this sense relate to the concept of transition between epochs that emerged in the late eighteenth century (Koselleck and Richter 2006: 370). By contrast, no transition is also a possible outcome. The failure of an insurgent faction to gain traction is just one contributing factor to instances of drastic historical change such as the French Revolution. It is entirely possible, though the two examples covered in this thesis are not examples of it, that a Total Crisis could in theory occur leaving relatively minor changes to the political system in its wake.

1.3. Conceptualising the nation and nation as arbiter

By analysing the lead up to the French Revolution it is possible to identify the nation as arbiter in its most rudimentary form. This is the topic of chapters 2 and 3. This period therefore provides the clearest and simplest way of characterising the mechanism of

arbitration at work. Indeed, the process of the politicisation of the nation that culminated with the nation being declared sovereign in France, which was a much more overt and absolute form of arbitration, started with the nation coexisting with a newly empowered notion of public opinion[4]. In the absence of the representations of public opinion found in contemporary democracies, opinion polls and electoral results for example, Baker nevertheless declared public opinion to have become a "tribunal before which citizens and governments alike must appear" (Baker 1990: 168). This notion of a tribunal is interesting because it highlights the abstract level on which the process of arbitration was occurring. Even without any concrete feedback mechanism the political actors under the *ancien régime* sought to appeal to this public judge and claimed that they were working for its good and in its name.

The choice of the term arbiter proved necessary within this thesis because the nation was involved in arbitrating the growing debates of the French *ancien régime* before it was officially made sovereign. The notion of sovereignty is attributed to ultimate decision-making within the political sphere yet at this time, prior to the Revolution, ultimate authority, namely sovereignty, officially remained in the hands of the King. However, in practice, judgement was already occurring in this abstract tribunal of public opinion. Therefore, in relation to the concept of nation as arbiter public opinion is a minimum requirement for its existence. Even in the absence of modern feedback loops reporting what the beliefs, values and opinions held by the public were, political actors were forced to take into account their perception of what these might be and act accordingly.

The concept of public sphere is understood by contrast to the secretive nature of the absolutist state where the king's prerogative, at least theoretically, prohibited the public discussion of

[4] For further detail on public opinion in eighteenth century France see Farge (1992).

matters of State. Alongside, and related to the growing influence of public opinion in *ancien régime* politics, a public space which was previously censored developed to allow debates to take place. Although by modern standards the proportion of the population involved in these debates might be considered fairly limited, it was a space that had not yet been allowed to exist, let alone thrive, under the absolute monarchy. The opening up of this public sphere of debate changed the way politics was conducted under the *ancien régime* and thereby facilitated the developing process of arbitration. The public sphere can be considered one of the spaces through which the operator has agency. The existence of a notion of public opinion may lead to changes in decision-making at the individual level through fears of being judged or considered counter to morality. The existence of a public sphere of debate externalises this pressure. This space therefore brings the pressure of public opinion to bear, in an increasingly visible way, on the decisions of political actors, while also providing them with the opportunity to influence public opinion in their turn. In order for the nation as arbiter mechanism to operate, at minimum there needs to be a notion of public judgement, no matter how abstract. The existence of a public sphere of debate offers another form of public judgement, this time more overt as it is exterior to the individual's decision-making process, and therefore contributes to the functioning of the arbiter.

It is a process that still happens today in a more complex fashion and the public is often referred to as 'the nation' or 'the people', words that are often used interchangeably in contemporary politics. As with public opinion under the *ancien regime,* political actors still seek public approval for their proposals, claim public backing for them and claim to be acting in the public's greater interest, this public now having a name. What adds an extra layer of abstraction to the notion of the nation as arbiter is that by its very nature the concept of nation is agreed to have certain characteristics but these are not fixed. Therefore, politicians – as well as trying to assess what they think the nation, understood as the public, wants – also

offer their own interpretation of the meanings of the nation, by debating who should be allowed to belong to it, for example. They may also offer conflicting notions of what is in the nation's best interests.

All these calculations are made based on their personal beliefs and political agendas as well as their assessment of other political actors' beliefs about what the nation is and what its role should be. As such, the politicised nation, which is the focus of this thesis, hovers above the political fray arbitrating both through individual's actions and through their perceptions of the nation's political role and others' perceptions of it. Therefore, within the conceptualisation of nation as arbiter what the nation refers to is variable. It is the politicised nation. Depending on the time period in question, or even on the individual conceiving of the nation's role in politics, its content will be different. For example, Winock distinguishes between two forms of nationalism, the first emanating from the Revolution and the other emerging in the later decades of the nineteenth-century. These are open and closed nationalism. Open nationalism refers to:

> a nation penetrated by a civilising mission, self-admiring of its virtues and its heroes, willingly forgetting its defaults, but generous, hospitable, solidly with other nations during their formation, defender of the oppressed, raising the flag of liberty and independence for all the other peoples of the world. […] Nationalism, yes. But open to other peoples, other races, other nations – and not fixated on France alone[5] (Winock 2014: 36).

[5] " […] celui d'une nation pénétrée d'une mission civilisatrice, s'auto-admirant pour ses vertus et ses héros, oubliant volontiers ses défauts, mais généreuse, hospitalière, solidaire des autres nations en formation, défenseur des oprimés, hissant le Drapeau de la liberté et de l'indépendance pour tous pour tous les peoples du monde. […] Nationalisme, oui. Mais ouvert aux autres peoples, aux autre races, aux autres nations-et point crispé sur 'la France seule'"

Alongside this open nationalism there exists its opposite, that of "France for the French" (Winock 2014: 37). A nationalism that is "closed, scared, exclusive, defining the nation by the exclusion of intruders: Jews, immigrants, revolutionaries; collective paranoia, fed by obsession with decadence and conspiracies"[6] (Winock 2014: 36-7). During the course of the nineteenth-century both these versions of nationalism and the concepts of nation associated with them, co-existed in French politics and therefore for that period in the Nation as Arbiter. The nation in this formulation is therefore not an entity outside those conceiving of it at the time, it is a container for their specific views about its nature and its role in politics. The arbitration at any given time is between the various 'contents' of this container which is the politicised nation. This is why it cannot be defined in a static way. Definitions such as Anthony D. Smith's who considers the nation to be "a named human community residing in a perceived homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a distinct public culture, and common laws and customs for 'all members'" (Smith 2010: 13) are insightful and interesting but not adapted to the current project. Their strength lies in identifying when entities that can be recognised as 'nations' appear in history. However, they do not sufficiently capture the conflictual and fluctuating meanings of nation in different historical periods that inform interpretations of the role it should play in politics. Anderson's notion of the nation as an "imagined political community" (Anderson 2007: 6) is an interesting one. This thesis explores how the role of that community in politics is in turn imagined by its inhabitants.

The notion of arbiter was chosen as it is an action related to that of a sovereign but still distinct from it. Its differentiation from notions of ultimate political authority help reflect the much more abstract nature of the process at work. Particularly from the perspective of

[6] "Un nationalisme clos, apeuré, exclusive, définissant la nation par l'élimination des intrus: Juifs, immigrés, révolutionnaires; une paranoïa collective, nourrie des obsessions de la decadence et du complot."

modern representative democracy, where sovereignty is attributed to the will of a majority of voters in a given polity, arbiter suggests a less clear cut outcome-generating process. The rest of this introduction to the nation as arbiter mechanism will present, approximately in chronological order, the varying facets of the nation that have been politicised. This means gradually building to the contemporary, more complex form of arbitration by the politicised nation. This more recent manifestation of arbitration, covered in chapters 4 and 5, combines earlier notions of popular sovereignty found in the revolutionary period with more recent notions of identity based around national belonging.

1.3.1. The People and the Nation: popular sovereignty and some parallels from Ancient Rome

Even though this examination of popular sovereignty starts with the concepts of people in Ancient Rome, parallels can already be made between some of the legacies of Rome and the characteristics of the nation under the *ancien régime* in the lead-up to the Revolution. As is often the case when considering Western history and politics, it is hard to avoid Ancient Rome. This is certainly true when considering the link between popular sovereignty and how it was intertwined with the concept of nation. With regard to popular sovereignty one of the more interesting legacies of Ancient Rome, and diverse in its application, was the notion of "*populus Romanus*" (Canovan 2005: 12). This concept referred not to individuals but the entity that formed when voters "formally assembled in their tribes to pass laws" (Canovan 2005: 12). This *populus Romanus* was "a collective entity that transcended specific individuals, classes and generations […] in other words, the whole political community" (Cavovan 2005: 12). Parallels can already be drawn tangentially to the *ancien régime*. Long before French revolutionaries declared themselves a National Assembly during the French Revolution, the Estates-General were already considered national assemblies as they regrouped the whole of the political community, i.e. the three orders of *ancien régime* society

and the King, who at least in theory, incarnated the nation. This legacy of Rome, however, has a more direct tie to the principles underpinning medieval and later monarchs.

Even as the boundaries of the Republic expanded far beyond the reach of the "sovereign assemblies of the people" (Canovan 2005: 12), the nation was expanded to "*populus Romanus universus*" but its justificatory function remained the same. To paraphrase Cicero, he stated that what makes a people is "agreement on common law and common interests" and this detached the concept of people from the "active exercise of political power", and in so doing freed it from the constraints of a polity the size of a city state or even a republic (Canovan 2005: 12). In another non-substantiated but likely parallel to the French Revolution, this definition of the people on the grounds of agreement to common law is strikingly similar to the Abbé Sieyès definition of the nation in his radical pamphlet *Qu'est ce que le Tiers-Etats*? which will be referenced throughout this thesis but mainly in chapters 2 and 3.

The transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire transferred this notion of popular consent to imperial rule as the first Emperor, Augustus, ruled legally, despite straining the principles of the Republic. Or, as Canovan puts it, he went through "the pantomime of election and the delegation of popular power" (Canovan 2005: 13). This formality became Roman law in the form of the *lex regia* the principles of which asserted that the emperor derived his power "by delegation from the Roman people" (Canovan 2005: 13). These principles of popular sovereignty were removed from the actual exercise of political power, and, through further contortions, served to justify the rule of the Holy Roman Emperors. Rather than any semblance of an election by a large group of people, however, in this system the "Roman people were (somehow) represented by the seven German princes whose privilege it was to elect the emperor" (Canovan 2005: 13).

As Canovan points out, this already shows the "remarkable political elasticity of the language of 'people' still present today. However, it allowed further flexibility as it also planted the seed of what could become, over a very long period of time, a more revolutionary interpretation of popular sovereignty. Indeed, embedded in the concept of *rex legia* was the notion that "all government could be seen as drawing from the people" (Canovan 2005: 14). Canovan states that by the fifteenth century, through repeated reference to the principle, the notion that ultimate authority derived from the people had become "almost a common place". However, at this early stage it did not yet imply any explicit accountability or sovereignty of the people (Canovan 2005: 16). This changed during the religious struggles unleashed in the sixteenth century by the Reformation in which writers on both sides of the Protestant/Catholic divide claimed that the power of rulers derived from the people (Canovan 2005: 17). Protestant resistance to these principles was most prominent in the thinking of French Huguenots following the St Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572. One of the more prominent arguments along these lines was presented in a pamphlet called the "*Vindiciae contra Tyrannos"* written in 1579. Its key argument is summarised by Canovan as follows:

> Kings rule by authority of the people and for the sake of the people's welfare and that their authority is therefore conditional. If the king breaks his contract with the people, the latter have the right to resist. The author assumed that the people of the realm in question form a collectivity with natural representatives who can act on behalf of the whole (Canovan 2005: 17).

Once again this shift in the interpretation of the role of the people as a foundation for royal authority did not imply a transfer of sovereignty from the king to the people. In France this transfer would begin almost two centuries later and, as detailed in chapter 3, this half-century long process would eventually coalesce sovereign power around an abstract and highly politicised concept of the nation rather than the concept of the people explicitly. A further

evolution in the idea of popular sovereignty created a new concept of people which was similar to that of the political concept of nation at the time.

In his study of popular sovereignty's link to nationalism, Bernard Yack (2001) highlights the difference between the revolutionary doctrine of popular sovereignty "popularised by the English, American and French Revolutions" (Yack 2001: 519) compared to one that might be more identifiable with political practice today. Indeed, he states that while this doctrine offered "a more egalitarian picture of political order" and could serve as the "starting point for justifications for more democratic forms of government", it was not explicitly democratic in a sense that could be recognised by the practice of democracy today. This is because "this new doctrine of popular sovereignty invests final authority in an imagined community, all of a territory's inhabitants imagined as a collective body, rather than in any institutionally defined flesh and blood majority" (Yack 2001: 519).

The make-up of this imagined community is very similar to that of the aforementioned "*populus Romanus".* As such it can also be compared to the gathering of the Estates-General under the *ancien régime* which were considered an assembly of the entire political community regrouped under the banner of the nation in a national assembly. In eighteenth-century France the non-politicised and local conception of nation existed alongside an explicitly politicised and more universal political conception of nation. Given the nation's presence in the abstract lexicon of eighteenth-century French politics and its ability to be both inclusive and exclusive when defined in the right way, it is more understandable to see why it ultimately took the place of the people as the name for France's new sovereign in 1789.

A key part of the final stages of the process that culminated with the declaration of national sovereignty by the delegates of the Third Estate at the Estates-General, was the choosing of a name to reflect the assembly's new status. The delegates of the Third Estate had spent the

best part of a month since the opening of the meeting trying to get the representatives of the nobility and the clergy to join them so they could debate and vote in common. By the time of the debates concerning what name to adopt a few representatives of the privileged orders had already joined them. And although they were now considering unilateral action, they still hoped that the rest of the delegates of the privileged orders would join them eventually. As such they needed an inclusive name which allowed this coming together even if it was not prior to them constituting themselves as an active assembly.

Le Conte de Mirabeau, an outspoken member of the nobility, shunned by his own order to the point that he was elected as a representative of the Third Estate, summarised the situation:

> Regardless of whether we call ourselves the representatives known and verified of the nation [Abbé Sieyès' initial proposal], the representatives of the majority of the nation [another delegate's proposal] or the representatives of the people [his own proposal] our goal is the same, we are united against the absurd and ill placed qualification of Estates-General, yet we seek while excluding that title, to find one that goes towards the goal of activity, without having the disastrous inconvenience of being perceived as a spoliation of the two other orders[7] (Mirabeau cited in *Archives parlementaires* 1995: 124).

In the morning session of 16 June 1789, amongst the main proposals of a name, two rival groupings existed, one referred to the 'nation' and the other to the 'people'. During the evening session, Sieyès changed his proposed name to National Assembly and shortly thereafter the session was called to a close. The following day in the morning session of 17

[7] "[…] *car soit que nous appelions les représentants connus et vérifiés de la nation, les représentants de la majeure partie de la nation, ou les représentants du peuple, notre but est le même ; toujours nous réunissons-nous contre la qualification également absurde et déplacée d'État généraux ; toujours cherchons-nous, en excluant ces titres, à en trouver un qui aille au grand but de l'activité, sans avoir le funeste inconvénient de paraitre une spoliation des deux autres ordres* […]"

June a total of five names were put to the vote. Sieyès went first and if it did not regroup a majority of signatures Mirabeau's would be put to the vote and so on until a decision was reached (*Archives parlementaires* 1995: 127). The nature of the source, the minutes of the Estates-General meetings split between the three estates, do not relate what debates or negotiations may have happened between the two sessions, but Sieyès' motion passed 491 votes to 90. Therefore, Mirabeau's Assembly of the Representatives of the People was never put to the vote (*Archives parlementaires* 1995: 127).

What is striking in retrospect is that the answer to the question of what name to choose was staring them in the face all along. Indeed, as the Estates-General itself was known as a national assembly this exact terminology is stated repeatedly in the minutes of the debates. In the same speech by Mirabeau from 16 June referenced above, he made another point which was agreed upon by all those debating the name, "the necessity to prevent all opinion by Chamber [those of the distinct orders], all splits of the National Assembly, any veto of the privileged orders" (Mirabeau cited in *Archives parlementaires* 1995: 124). Interestingly, the formulation of National Assembly was also used by members of the privileged orders who chose to join the Third Estate in their chamber prior to the declaration of 17 June. In the morning session of 15 June two members of the clergy are acknowledged as having joined the Third Estate. The first, upon arrival made a speech stating:

> In a Chamber that has separated itself, I fought for your interests, united with our own and those of the nation as a whole. I come here, Messieurs, highly professing this truth, and to recognise the indispensable necessity of the common verification of the

> powers of a National Assembly[8] (M. Marrolle, *curé de Saint-Jean de Saint-Quentin* cited in *Archives parlementaires* 1995: 108).

His reference to sharing interests with the delegates of the Third Estate is a little ambiguous as, although he is nominally a member of the privileged order of the clergy, he is referred to as a priest. This implies that he is one of the numerous parish priests who were elected as representatives to the Estates-General and the reality of their everyday life was indeed closer to that of the Third Estate than it was to the wealthy upper echelons of the clergy. The other clergyman to join the Third Estate that same morning is most likely also to be a parish priest and his speech refers to him going to the "national room" in order to verify his powers and once this was done, he could truly be a "real representative of the nation"[9] (M. Mougins, *cure de Grasse* cited in *Archives parlementaires* 1995: 108). It would therefore seem that the relative neutrality of the term National Assembly, due to its already being commonplace, favoured its adoption as it did not prohibit the remaining delegates from joining, as the remaining members of the nobility and the clergy were ordered by the King on 23 June 1789.

Ultimately it was the neutrality of the name, which merely implied that its members would speak on behalf of the nation, that made it more confrontational than Sieyès' prior proposal which explicitly undermined the legitimacy of the Clergy and the Nobility debates in separate chambers. However, although Mirabeau stated it had the benefit of being undeniable (*Archives parlementaires* 1995: 124), no proposal was more exclusionary of the privileged orders than the idea of calling it an Assembly of Representatives of the People. The reason for this can once again be traced to the politics of Ancient Rome and a different notion of popular sovereignty. The mixed constitution of the Roman Republic eventually granted

[8] "*Dans une Chambre qui s'est séparée, j'ai combattu pour vos intérêts nécessairement aux nôtres et à ceux de la nation entière. Je viens ici, Messieurs, professer hautement cette vérité, et reconnaître la nécessité indispensable de la vérification commune des pouvoirs d'une Assemblée nationale*."

[9] "[…] *me rendre dans la salle nationale […] je pourrai, comme vrai représentant de la nation* […]"

specific political power to one of the lowest orders of Roman society, the Plebians. As the result of civil unrest, a parallel system of representation specifically for the Plebians, had been set up alongside the existing Senatorial system, membership of which was the exclusive right of the Patrician class.

Canovan argues that this meaning of *populus* was carried over from Latin to English. However, instead of defining a specific class of citizens "inferior to patricians but privileged by comparison to slaves", in English the notion of 'common people' would include all the lower orders (Canovan 2005: 11-12). This distinction also existed in *ancien régime* France. The minutes of the Estates-General record the sessions of each chamber separately and they are placed under the title of "nobility", "clergy" and "commons" [*communes*][10] respectively (*Archives parlementaires* 1995). Its association with this conception of the people could antagonise the privileged orders, as the Third Estate still intended to act unilaterally, and was a barrier to their joining them in common meetings.

Although this choice of name implied a welcoming of the privileged orders, should they choose to join the delegates of the Third Estate, Sieyès came pre-armed with a means of justifying unilateral action should they continue to hold out. Indeed, in his pamphlet *Qu'est ce que le Tiers Etats*? Sieyès defined the nation specifically in a way that not only mirrored Cicero's definition of people, but also enabled him to claim that the privileged orders had excluded themselves from its body. His definition is a simple one "a body of associates living under a common law and represented by the same legislature" (Sieyès 2015: 35). Should the nobles or the clergy persist in wanting to maintain their privileges, which were literally exemptions in the law, they would therefore exclude themselves from the confines of the nation.

[10] *"Noblesse" , "Clergé" , "Communes"*

Although with Sieyès the contrast is made with the nation rather than the people, this type of argument is reminiscent of what would now be considered a populist conception of politics pitching an elite against the people. Given the prevalence and popularity of Ancient Roman texts in the eighteenth century it is entirely possible that Sieyès is referencing Cicero directly, in order to fulfil his own political ends, by applying the characteristics to the nation that Cicero attributes to the people. However, this sort of ambiguity between the nation and the people in the context of an elite accused of being out of touch can be seen in the rhetoric of Marine Le Pen. In her opposition to globalism, she portrays France's political mainstream as being an out of touch elite, not only opposed to the people but being in cahoots with forces beyond the boundaries of the nation and seeking its destruction. Although this exclusion of the elite from the body of the nation is perhaps not as explicit as Sieyès', the implication is much the same. This notion of national belonging or being excluded from the nation makes up one of the key dimensions of the nation as arbiter which political actors can seek to redefine in people's minds. That being said, at the lead up to the French Revolution and in Sieyès' rhetoric the notion of a politicised identity is not yet present. In this sense the criteria through which the nation can arbitrate was less complex than it is today.

Much like the nation, the meaning of the term people can be ambiguous. For example, it can refer to a group of individuals sharing a culture and therefore akin to an ethnic group, or it can refer to a group within a polity that exists in contrast to that system's elites. In the hands of a populist, sovereignty may refer to the sovereignty extorted by an out of touch elite, or, more neutrally, people can simply refer to the entirety of the inhabitants of a polity in their capacity of as wielders of sovereignty. In short, in the context of the nation as arbiter the concept of the people has become quasi synonymous with the nation in many practical regards. It therefore forms a part of the content of the individual's interpretation of what the nation is and its desired role in politics

1.3.2. The Nation as Arbiter on the eve of Revolution prior to the declaration of national sovereignty:

Chapters 2 and 3 cover respectively the Terminal Crisis of the French *ancien régime* and the gradual rise to sovereignty of the nation, and they will explore how the nation acted as an arbiter prior to its replacing the King as sovereign. In summary, the nation's position as arbiter emerged as one consequence of the development of an increasing public space for debate not traditionally permitted under the theoretical functioning of the *ancien régime*. Although the two key factions competing for power, the Crown and the *parlements*, both published propaganda seeking to influence public opinion and also claiming the support of public opinion, no immediate feedback system existed at this time. Nevertheless, by the eve of Revolution both these factions involved in the gradual undermining of the *ancien régime* and later the defenders of the Third Estate, all acknowledged, through their actions, the authority of the public. At this point in time the nation's arbitration was closer to the notion of sovereignty than it would ever be. However, this was the sovereignty of an imagined community akin to a collective body. A formula that will be cited again in chapter 2 summarises the situation on the eve of Revolution in terms that exemplify the lack of control of any faction over the arbiter; in acknowledging the authority of public opinion the government had "unwittingly conspir[ed] with its opposition to foster the transfer of authority from the public person of the sovereign to the sovereign person of the public" (Baker 1990: 172). In France, for reasons of familiarity and political expediency, as detailed previously, that sovereign person of the public was the nation rather than the people.

1.3.3. The 'nationalist paradox' and the origins of the nation as foundation for identity

From a more recent vantage point, wherein nation-states form the basis of both domestic and international state organisation, the declaration of national sovereignty in the summer of 1789 can be seen as an immutable starting point. However, this was far from being the case at the time as, even according to those seeking to exploit it, the nation did not actually exist. This paradox is best summed up by Bell who refers to it as the 'nationalist paradox': "…political leaders making wholly unprecedented demands on behalf of the 'the nation' and justifying their actions by reference to its sovereignty, but simultaneously acknowledging that the nation did not exist" (Ball 2003: 15). A political pamphlet published in 1788 claimed that "this people [French people], assembled out of a multitude of small, different nations, do not amount to a national body" (cited in Bell 2003: 14). P.M. Jones also refers to a lack of national sentiment on the eve of Revolution. He claims that contemporaries such as Robespierre or Mirabeau would refer to their home regions, Artois or Provence, as their nations, rather than France (Jones 1995: 14).

This regional conception of nation is far from surprising when considering the very disunited nature of the French state even on the eve of Revolution. As the Bourbon monarchy expanded its territories it tended to leave existing customs in place, meaning their kingdom resembled "nothing so muc h as a patchwork quilt of interlocking and sometimes overlapping jurisdictions" (Jones 1995: 15). As will be detailed in chapter 3, the very principles underpinning *ancien régime* society highlighted these distinctions between, amongst other things, orders, provinces and guilds. France was further divided by internal customs barriers, the coexistence of both the customary and written law traditions in its territory as well as linguistically by regions where French was not the dominant language. In short, little in the organisation of the *ancien régime* was conducive to fostering a widespread commonly held conception of French nationality. A more likely cohesive force was allegiance of individuals to other individuals or institutions that all eventually led up towards the King. Therefore,

although being called upon by the revolutionaries, the nation of France did not exist in historical fact or even in the minds of those who were claiming its sovereignty. It is this paradox which lies at the origin of national identity becoming a politicised issue. Although it was not explicit in the debates over national sovereignty, as described in the next two chapters, revolutionaries had already identified the issue and very quickly turned their minds to solving it.

Bell argues that "in the turmoil of pre-revolutionary politics and culture, the definition of nation changed, and became much more demanding" (Bell 2016: 70). As well as a natural community it came to be seen as a "spiritual one, bound together by shared values, shared laws, and by a host of what we would now call shared cultural practices, including the same language" (Bell 2016: 70). In 1789 Sieyès as well as his defence of national sovereignty also referred to needing to make "all the parts of France into a single body, and all the peoples who divide it into a single Nation" (Sieyès cited in Bell 2016: 70). In an excellent example of making sweeping claims about the will of the nation as a whole, many have followed since an anonymous journalist claimed that "the French perceive quite well that they are not a nation; they want to become one" (cited in Bell 2016: 71). Crucially, with regards to the politicisation of the identity dimension of the nation, Bell signals the French Revolution after 1789 as being the birth of nationalism in France (Bell 2016: 71). In the same text Bell defines nationalism as

> a conscious political programme aimed at the construction of a nation where one did not exist, or existed only partially. It generally involves the sort of educational programmes championed by the French revolutionaries – programmes that teach common values, common civic habits and, if necessary, a common language (Bell 2016: 71).

Although this was the origin of the desire to create the traits of national identity recognisable today, it took a long time for the ambition to be realised.

In a challenge to the often stated dichotomy between ethnic and civic nationalism, Timothy Baycroft introduces the other period critical to the creation of French identity and the politicisation of national identity. Indeed, while referring to the Republican tradition from the French Revolution to the late nineteenth century with its third revival under the Third Republic, Baycroft argues that French nationalism has contained traits of ethnic nationalism (Baycroft 2016: 28-41). He argues convincingly that the perpetuation of this conception of French nationalism as being primarily civic in nature is the result of positions defended by Republican politicians and general historians (Baycroft 2006: 31). He states that their insistence on French nationalism being characterised by "the free association of individual citizens, and therefore [being] fundamentally civic in character" was in order to distinguish themselves from monarchist conceptions of nationalism (Baycroft 2006: 32). Monarchism and Bonapartism, both rival political movements to republicanism, had a more "exclusivist vision of [the] French nation" (Baycroft 2006: 33). For example, some of this rival nationalist tradition viewed France as "the eldest daughter of the church" which "left little space for non-Catholics within this embodiment of the French nation" (Baycroft 2006: 33).

By contrast to this desire to differentiate themselves from non-Republican conceptions of nationalism and call upon the legacy of the French Revolution, the policies of the Third Republic still contained some ethnic elements. Indeed, the importance of spreading a common language throughout France was still an issue under the Third Republic. This could be viewed as allowing inhabitants "to participate more fully in national life" and, provided there was the possibility of opting out, a consideration of civic nationalism (Baycroft 2006: 34). However, the insistence upon it and the more or less successful attempted destruction of local language by "French state-sponsored schoolteachers", was as aggressively pursued "as

any such programmes in so-called ethno-centric nations" (Baycroft 2006: 34). Another dimension of this school curriculum while "highlighting the civic republican tradition […], nevertheless made use of ethnic and religious symbols of France" (Baycroft 2006: 35). References to "Our ancestors of the Gauls" linking France back to ancient times, a feature of schoolbooks which remained in the programme long after the close of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the curriculum was all too happy to borrow "pre-revolutionary symbols of the French nation often associated with reactionary nationalism, such as Joan of Arc or the monarchy itself" as long "as they increased the longevity, prestige and greatness of the French nation" (Baycroft 2006: 35).

Baycroft's undermining of the conception of French nationalism as inherently civic in nature also criticises France's colonial expansion. He argues that although republicans "advocated colonial expansion for 'humanitarian' reasons, to help to spread Enlightenment French thinking throughout the world" and the language was to an extent "exclusive", there was a reverse side to this coin (Baycroft 2006: 37). By contrast to this language what they were seeking to assimilate were "not elements of the 'French people' but 'foreign races' as distinguished from the French race" (Baycroft 2006: 37). These were based on scientific concepts prominent from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and these distinctions lay at the foundation "of much colonial legislation" (Baycroft 2006: 37).

The debate over civic and ethnic nationalism is not a primary concern of this thesis but the distinction does seem to be a lot more blurred than previously considered by some. What is interesting is that this consideration of French colonial culture, and other debates before it, enshrined cultural, or at this time racial, criteria as additional factors by which individuals or groups could be excluded from the body of the nation. These would now sit alongside the political criteria of exclusion at the heart of Sieyès' exclusion of the privileged orders. Incidentally these differing focuses of political criteria in the lead up to Revolution and,

thereafter, the additional cultural considerations could at least offer guidance as to where the civic and ethnic conceptions of nationalism may have originated. Nonetheless, they did serve to add an extra level of complexity to the nation acting as an arbiter as rival political factions now had an extra characteristic of the politicised nation to debate and seek to manipulate.

1.3.4. The current version of the nation as arbiter, an increasingly concrete abstraction

As previously mentioned, the doctrine of popular sovereignty that underpinned the Glorious Revolution and the American and French Revolutions granted sovereignty to an imagined community rather than a "flesh and blood majority" (Yack 2001: 519). This new conception of popular sovereignty introduced a distinction between what E. Morgan called "the people's two bodies" (Morgan cited in Yack 2001: 519). Existing alongside the "image of the people who actually participate in political institutions, it constructs another image of the people as a pre-political community that establishes these institutions and has the final say on their legitimacy" (Yack 2001: 519). As argued previously, this abstract conception of the people as the basis of popular sovereignty was in France, firstly associated with the nation, and secondly did not necessarily imply any conception of modern representative democracy. However, between the Revolution and the present day, having suffered numerous upheavals and changes in constitution, the Republic system eventually became durably established alongside a form of representative democracy.

As a result of the gradual development of representative democracy there has been a growing concurrence between the "imagined community" of "all the territory's inhabitants imagined as a collective body" (Yack 2001: 519) and the body of voters who can participate in any given election. Furthermore, although a distinction between constituent and constituted power may still exist in the law or the study of constitutions, it is all but absent from everyday political discourse. Further blurring the lines between these two distinct 'nations', by the

rules of majority representation the will of a majority of inhabitants is attributed rhetorically to the will of the community as a whole. As just one example among many, in his investiture speech on 15 May 2017 Emmanuel Macron used this ambiguity repeatedly:

> The French have chosen, […] The whole world has watched our Presidential election. Everywhere people were asking themselves whether the French were going to decide, in their turn, to fall back on the illusory past, if they were going to separate from world progress, abandon History, yield to those who defy democracy, the divisive spirit, and turn their backs on the Enlightenment, or if, on the contrary they were going to embrace the future, give themselves a new collective 'elan', reaffirm their faith in the values which made them a great people.
>
> On 7 May the French have chosen. May they be duly thanked.
>
> The responsibility they have conferred upon me is an honour of which I acknowledge the gravity[11] (Macron 2017).

The choice that Macron claims was placed before the French voters during the election- expanded upon with a conveniently placed hint to the role of France in the Enlightenment- was solved by a decision of the nation as a whole. The community in its entirety and unity had chosen him as the more positive of the two outcomes. Interestingly, with his reference to a "great people" Macron highlights a further ambiguity of the word 'people' that can also refer to an ethnic group. This ambiguity of the term 'people' forms a significant part of Marine Le Pen's political rhetoric, as will be covered in more detail in chapters 4 and 5. Later

[11] " *Les Français ont choisi, […] Le monde entier a regardé notre élection présidentielle. Partout, on se demandait si les Français allaient décider à leur tour de se replier sur le passé illusoire, s'ils allaient rompre avec la marche du monde, quitter la scène de l'Histoire, céder à la défiance démocratique, l'esprit de division et tourner le dos aux Lumières, ou si au contraire ils allaient embrasser l'avenir, se donner collectivement un nouvel élan, réaffirmer leur foi dans les valeurs qui ont fait d'eux un grand peuple. Le 7 Mai, les Français ont choisi. Qu'ils en soient ici remerciés. La responsabilité qu'il m'ont confiée est un honneur, dont je mesure la gravité*".

in the same speech Macron briefly acknowledges that while there may be disunity, he will always have "the willingness to reconcile and bring together all the French" (Macron 2017). However, the very next sentence reverts to referring to the will of a collective entity, although this time the collective will result from the "confidence of the French women and men which fill him with an immense energy"[12] (Macron 2017).

While these previously distinct notions of popular sovereignty have become increasingly muddled, with voters' actions now granted the status of sovereignty in action, voters are present indirectly even outside electoral cycles. Indeed, the development of a whole industry frequently tasked with assessing the values, policy preferences and voting intentions of entire categories of the population, has created the feedback loop largely missing under the *ancien régime*. As such, in relation to its characteristics as a politicised sovereign, since the Revolution the nation as arbiter has become an increasingly visible and concrete force in French politics.

With time the politicised characteristics of the nation as a source of individual member's identity has also become more concrete or at least difficult to ignore. The notion that the nation is an imagined community was perhaps most famously developed by Benedict Anderson who, in his analysis of Nationalism, defined the nation as "an imagined community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 2005: 49). Anderson's argument, which is far more focused on the general sweep of history and its effect on how individual identity is constructed, states that the nation was imagined as sovereign because "the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (Anderson 2005: 50). He continues:

[12] "*La confiance que les Françaises et les Français m'ont témoignée m'emplit d'une immense énergie*"

> Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state. (Anderson 2005: 50).

While a detailed contestation of this claim is beyond the remit of this thesis, the argument already put forward and built on in chapters 3 and 4, gives a more practical reason for the nation being considered and then made sovereign. Its initial politicisation had everything to do with political struggles for power under the *ancien régime*, admittedly in a context of the decline of religious justifications for royal action, and therefore ultimately rival conceptions of sovereignty.

The notion that the nation is imagined is nevertheless useful in understanding the concept of nation as arbiter. Despite its imagined nature the nation, as previously seen in political actors' rhetoric, appears to be relatively concrete in some ways. This is a similar phenomenon with regard to national identity. Regardless of its imagined nature it is able to form a solid dimension of many individuals' politicised identities. This ambiguity is summarised by Canovan who states that

> Admitting that nations are efforts of collective imagination […] means that although a nation could cease to exist if all its individual members ceased to think in national terms, its existence confronts any particular member as part of objective reality. The nation I belong to may be all in the mind, but it is not all in my mind and I cannot alter the situation by an act of will. Any particular individual confronted by a well-established convention cannot will it away (Canovan 1996: 55).

This is key to understanding the politicised characteristics of national identity which now form a part of the nation as arbiter's make up. The politicised characteristics of the nation as arbiter while not immutable are now relatively stable. National consciousness, for example, is now enshrined in "institutional and legal forms, the apparatus of states and citizenship" (Canovan 1996: 55). Furthermore, even in their absence an individual's choice of identity is not entirely their own, it is also assigned to them by others (Canovan 1995: 55).

Michael Billig has developed the concept of banal nationalism to contrast with the usual conception of nationalism in western politics, at the time of publication, customarily associated with struggles to create new states or with extreme right-wing politics (Billig 1995: 5). With the increase in influence of 'regional' nationalism such as Catalonia in Spain or the Scottish National Party in the UK, it might no longer be entirely peripheral to European politics. Billig's key argument is that nationalism is not something confined to the extremes or only visible at times of crisis, it has a permanent presence (Billig 1995: 5). Rather, he argues that the "United States of America, France, the United Kingdom" are "daily […] reproduced as nations and their citizenry as nationals" (Billig 1995: 6). "Banal nationalism" is a concept that highlights the "ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced" (Billig 1995: 6). The product of this constant reminding of both the existence of the nation and the citizens belonging to it is contrasted with Ernest Renan's metaphor about nations being "a daily plebiscite". Billig confronts this suggestion of choice with the unconscious nature of the choice offered to citizens, concluding that "Banal practices, rather than conscious choice or collective acts of imagination, are required. Just as a language will die rather for want of users, so a nation must be put to daily use" (Billig 1995: 95).

The presence of the nation in political decisions may therefore not be entirely conscious. The nation's existence and its role in politics is frequently referenced in the rhetoric of politicians,

the media and public discourse more generally. Alongside the notion that the nation is a political decision maker, features of a claimed shared culture are also regularly circulated. But while these notions and features are more solidly engrained than they were at the time of the French Revolution, they are still not immutable. Politicians can claim to have mandates from the nation as a whole with little regard for which specific policies voters agreed with and even whether they voted for them at all. Others can seek to co-opt a component of the shared national culture in order to target a religious group for exclusion, as the FN has done with the Republican conception of secularism. Crucially, while claims can be made on behalf of this nation and its shared characteristics can be called upon to further a specific political programme, no faction can claim a monopoly on this process. This, therefore, exemplifies the nation acting as an arbiter, being at one and the same time an abstract phenomenon above politics and yet concrete through its ubiquity in the minds and actions of individual actors.

Chapter 2 The Total Crisis of the French Ancien Régime: the collapse of the system prior to revolution

2.1. Introduction

This chapter and the next will focus on the period leading up to French Revolution and its very early stages, ending just after the declaration of the National Assembly in June 1789. The revolutionary period more generally has long been considered as the origin of many features of modern political life. In this regard the present thesis is no exception. The nation played an increasingly important role in the debates and events that, in retrospect, proved to be the Terminal Crisis of the *ancien régime*. Furthermore, these debates offer one of the earliest examples of the nation being politicised in a way that would be recognised today and ended with the nation being placed at the heart of a new system of government. The way the nation was conceived and instrumentalised at the time of the Revolution offers glimpses of conceptual traits which would be reinforced over time. Indeed, the debates of the late *ancien régime* foreshadow features of more recent political systems; examples include the equality of citizens with regard to taxation and moves towards representation of the population as a whole rather than split into constituent societal orders. It would be wrong to assume that these retrospective glimpses of features similar to those present in political systems today implies any form of inevitability to this evolution. Moreover, even the remainder of the revolutionary period post June 1789, not covered in this thesis, already offered possible alternative models of political organisation. And throughout the two hundred years since, in France alone, numerous regimes have successively offered different conceptions of the relationship between governor and governed. However, since the declaration of the nation as sovereign by the national assembly in June 1789, all subsequent regimes have sought legitimacy by claiming to rule in the name of the nation. For example, both emperors Napoleon I and III styled themselves “emperors of the French” as opposed to “emperors of France” and

following the revolutionary period most French kings took a similar title implying their position as one of service to the nation. Therefore, without claiming any form of inevitability, it is possible to state with hindsight that the declaration of national sovereignty enshrined for the first time and durably the nation's position at the heart of French politics.

Apart from potentially discounting historical contingency, hindsight offers another risk when considering the elements that led to the collapse of the *ancien régime* and the subsequent revolution. Accordingly, Peter Campbell warns against emphasising "the new, the apparently 'revolutionary', elements in society to explain 1789" (Campbell 1988: 71). His warning continues:

> there are two, admittedly not wholly separate, issues to analyse. The first is the collapse of the *ancien régime,* the second is the Revolution, and they are far from identical in their causes. Unfortunately, they are often confused in historical debate on the assumption that the subsequent course of the upheaval is somehow inherent in the events of 1787-89 (Campbell 1988: 71).

While fully acknowledging both the benefits of hindsight and the contingency of history, this thesis is less cautious than Campbell and emphasises the "admittedly not wholly separate" nature of both these events. Indeed, while not claiming that the course of the future evolution was inherent in the debates of 1787-1789, hints at what was to come are nevertheless visible. By having separate chapters, one focusing on the notion of Total Crisis and therefore the collapse of the *ancien régime,* and the other on the origins of the nation's politicisation (chapter 4), a certain distinction will be made between the two events. However, the nature and content of the debates unleashed by the government's attempt to reform the *ancien régime* between 1787-89 means that true separation is impossible. This is because the reforms themselves would, if implemented, undermine the traditional society of orders and associated

privileges that formed the foundation of *ancien régime* politics and society. The next chapter will argue that these same reforms, as well as undermining the foundations of the *ancien régime*, also foreshadowed key traits that would eventually characterise later political regimes based on national sovereignty; for example, equality amongst its inhabitants, or at least those with a sufficient level of income, and forms of representation that sought to represent the community as a whole rather than its constituent parts. Given the focus of both these chapters on the same set of reforms and debates, this thesis will place the collapse of the *ancien régime* and the ensuing revolution closer than Campbell might have approved.

The current chapter focuses on the Terminal Total Crisis which led to the collapse of the *ancien régime*. The focus will be on emphasising the multiple and interrelated dimensions of the Total Crisis as well as highlighting those specific elements of the crisis that undermined the *ancien régime* and increased its risk of collapse.

As mentioned in the conceptual introduction, perhaps one of the reasons that the *ancien régime* collapsed, thereby turning a Total Crisis into a Terminal one, was that neither of the main political factions was trying to preserve it in its entirety; both the Crown and the *parlements*[13] were undermining different aspects of the *ancien régime*'s 'normal' functioning. Perhaps surprisingly, and the ultimate proof that the revolution that eventually ensued was not the original intention of either major actor before 1789, was that the most radical political faction active in 1787 was the Crown itself. The King's ministers were also aware of the radical nature of the changes they were proposing, with one of them, Loménie de Brienne, the second in a rapid succession of finance ministers engaged in the reforms of the late *ancien régime*, stating: "The crises which sometimes afflict States nearly always give way to times

[13] A series of thirteen judicial courts that represented the King's justice at a regional level, and were expected to register royal edicts in order for them to become law. Their hereditary membership meant that their members felt relatively sheltered from royal reprisals and therefore depending on who was on the throne they sought to prevent any perceived increases of royal power.

of happy revolutions […] from within a momentary disorder, new useful institutions shall be born, which will repair the woe and cause them to be forgotten."[14] (Procès Verbal de l'Assemblée des notables: 201-2).

The reference to revolutions may have proven unfortunate in light of the cataclysmic events that would follow barely two years after these words were uttered. However, it does make clear, and this is an impression that will be confirmed throughout these two chapters, that the King and his ministers were entirely aware of the subversive nature of their proposals.

By contrast, the *parlements*, and the privileged orders whose interests they served, were the faction seeking to preserve a *status quo* throughout Louis XVI's reign. The Crown's actions were interpreted as further steps towards royal absolutism and the *parlements* saw themselves as a rampart against these expansions of royal power. Furthermore, they portrayed themselves as defenders of a natural order of privilege which had existed since time immemorial and, crucially for them, prior to the foundation of the monarchy. While their objective was the preservation of one of the key components they perceived as a crucial part of the *ancien régime*, they chose to defend their position in ways that ultimately undermined this political system. Indeed, the *parlements*' argument and rhetoric undermined the traditional understanding of representation of the *ancien régime* and ultimately provided an opportunity for the Third Estate to outmanoeuvre both previously dominant actors.

This chapter will mainly focus on what proved to be the final confrontation between Crown and the *parlements*, over the royal reforms between 1787-89, that ultimately ended in revolution but these events will be placed in a much broader context. As mentioned in the conceptual introduction Total Crises have multiple facets that may begin at very different

[14] *"Les crises qui affligent quelquefois les Etats deviennent presque toujours l'époque d'heureuse révolution […] du sein d'un désordre passager, naitront des institutions utiles qui en répareront le Malheur et se feront oubliser."*

times and mature at very different rates. For example, this was by no means the first time the Crown had sought to pass potentially subversive reforms that undermined the privileges that had been taken for granted under the *ancien régime* system. During the reign of Louis XVI alone, starting in 1774, several instances will be covered in which the *parlements* successfully blocked efforts at reform, sometimes, with the help of government ministers. Another example is that the gradual undermining of the divine right of kings enabled both the questioning of the King's decision and the search for alternative sources of justification for political action. The nation would emerge as one of these contested sources of legitimacy. However, this process was a very gradual one, starting around the 1750s, with the short 1787-89 period only exemplifying the new form of politics which could ensue from this questioning.

Although there is not sufficient space within this thesis to study in depth the causation of either the collapse of the *ancien régime* or the revolution, it does nevertheless offer some potential interpretations of unfolding events. With regard to the collapse of the *ancien régime* the different time frames referenced in this chapter and the emphasis on the differing dimensions of crisis suggest that many of the issues in the final Total Crisis were not new. What was new however, was the political solution attempted by the Crown to break the deadlock with the *parlements*, together with the differing ideological context that permitted more debate and questioning of the royal prerogative than ever before.

In order to emphasise the multifaceted nature of the Total Crisis affecting the *ancien regime*, this chapter will seek to artificially split its content into various component dimensions of the crisis. Therefore, each of the following broad categories will be taken in turn: financial and economic, political, ideological, and technological. This distinction is artificial because these are different facets of the same crisis which are closely interrelated and not always easy to separate. Within these broad categories an emphasis will be placed on the timing of their

approximate emergence and the ensuing events. In short, a revolutionary outcome was not intended, but came about through a loss of control resulting from a new political solution to an old problem undertaken in a new and increasingly different ideological context.

2.2. The Financial Facet of the Total Crisis

The financial facet of the Total Crisis affecting the *ancien régime* already presents an example of how these different dimensions of crisis cannot be completely separated. Indeed, the explanation of the *ancien régime's* financial issues was that it was rapidly heading towards bankruptcy. However, this imminent risk of default had mainly political origins stemming from the monarchy's inability to adequately collect taxes and its increasing difficulty in borrowing the sums necessary to bridge the gap between spending and revenue.

As Jones argues, one cause was that France's state administration existed in "a state of imperfect modernisation" (Jones 1995: 46). Although France often serves as a model of centralisation by eighteenth century European standards, its capacity to gather revenue effectively was very limited by more recent standards. One hindrance to tax collection was the sheer number of exceptions that existed, resulting in numerous individuals and entire regions not having to pay certain taxes. The Church, for example, despite owning as much as a tenth of the territory within the French kingdom had its revenues mostly exempt from taxation (Doyle 2002: 33). Although the nobles had been slightly less successful than the clergy in avoiding attempts to tax them, they still benefited from a blanket exemption from paying certain taxes like the *gabelle*[15] and were subject to others at a reduced rate (Jones 1995: 59). The various taxes which were collected were imposed at differing rates depending on the region within the kingdom. Perhaps the most extreme example was Britany where the

[15] Gabelle : a tax on salt applied at differing rates in different parts of the kingdom.

contract that saw the dukedom being absorbed into the French kingdom by marriage guaranteed that the region would be exempt from the *taille* and the *gabelle* (Jones 1995: 58). As well as the number of exemptions, taxes were often collected in an indirect manner that proved more lucrative for the collectors than for the state. As Doyle states "indirect taxes" were collected by a syndicate of tax farmers who held a monopoly on the right to collect these taxes on a renewable six-year basis. Any sum they raised above the amount they had bid for the contract was theirs to keep. Direct taxes tended to be gathered by venal office-holders who made money through this process so successfully that they numbered "among the king's richest subjects" (Doyle 2002: 40). In order to make up the shortfall in potential revenues, royal finance ministers had to rely extensively on raising loans to keep the Crown afloat. This meant that successive ministers were preoccupied with maintaining public confidence in the royal finances, the consequences of which will be covered in more detail later in the chapter.

One finance minister who proved perhaps too effective at this was Jacques Necker, a Genevan banker, who although he held the role of finance minister was denied the title of Controller General as he was a Protestant. His personal popularity and the trust placed in him by investors meant that he was able to finance France's intervention in the American War of Independence "almost entirely by loans" (Doyle 2002: 67). Moreover, without imposing any new direct taxes he successfully raised "520 million livres in loans between 1777 and his resignation in May 1781" (Doyle 2002: 67). He also took the unprecedented step of printing a public account of the royal finances, a first under the *ancien régime,* which claimed that royal revenues exceeded royal expenditure by over 10 million livres "after three years of war and no increases in taxation" (Doyle 2002: 67). Court intrigue and the constitutional implications of this first in *ancien régime* public state auditing, cost Necker his position in the same year as the publication of his document. His resignation, and the extent to which public confidence

in the royal finances had been tied to him personally, caused issues for his successors. Furthermore, as Doyle points out, his potentially untruthful account of the state of public finances meant that "for the next seven years people would say, whenever ministers complained of financial difficulties, that affairs had been under control in Necker's time" (Doyle 2002: 67).

One of these successors, Charles Alexandre de Calonne, who took office in late 1783, was particularly hindered by Necker's legacy, so much so that Necker would return to power at the height of pre-revolution events. Calonne is of particular importance to these chapters because, although he was not the first minister to propose extensive reforms or indeed the last one to try and implement them, it was he was who instigated the reforms that precipitated what proved to be the final showdown of the *ancien régime*. Upon taking office Calonne showed little inclination towards implementing reforms; instead, he continued to focus on raising money through loans. He successfully raised 653 million livres in loans between 1783 and 1787 in part due to a policy of "lavish spending on 'useful splendour'" designed to maintain public confidence (Doyle 2002: 68). However, by 1786 imminent deadlines on taxation and the resistance of the *parlements* to raising further loans forced him to reconsider his strategy. The first signs of trouble occurred in 1785 when the *Parlement* of Paris refused to register a loan proposed by Calonne. Some of *Parlement's* leadership were engaged in "factional intrigue and were implacably opposed to Calonne" (Campbell 1988: 76). Although the registration of the loan by the *Parlement* of Paris was often purely ceremonial, if it failed or was seen to be in question "investors would have no confidence in the terms of the loan" (Campbell 1988: 76). This proved to be the case as although the loan was registered, after the members of the *parlements* were summoned into the King's presence at Versailles, and despite the generosity of its terms, it "was subscribed only sluggishly" (Doyle 2002: 69). Another contributing factor to this sudden halt in Calonne's ability to raise further loans came

from Necker. In 1785 he had published his *Administrations des Finances* which was a defence of this ministerial track record and an implicit condemnation of Calonne's (Doyle 2002: 68). The situation had become so dire for Calonne that by the summer of 1786 rumours of his imminent dismissal were circulating (Doyle 2002: 69). Reports by an attaché to the British Embassy, Daniel Hailes, kept a record of Calonne's precarious situation, describing an attempt to secure a loan in August 1985 as "very unsuccessful" and another in December as running "into similar difficulties – particularly after registration was refused by *parlement*" (Daniel Hailes cited in Jones 2017: 20). He concludes "M. Calonne must have now nearly exhausted all his resources and it seems next to impossible that he should remain in office" (Daniel Hailes cited in Jones 2017: 20). This was indeed the case as Calonne was not only finding it difficult to raise fresh money through loans but was about to lose one of his key sources of tax revenue. The third *vingtième*, a temporary tax raised to help cover the costs of financing the American War of Independence, was scheduled to continue until three years after the end of the conflict which would fall in 1787 (Jones 2017: 20).

When Calonne brought to the King a series of proposals for radical reforms aimed at saving the kingdom's financial situation he was forced to justify the need for such reforms. He explained that in 1786 there was deficit of 112 million livres which was equivalent to a quarter of expected revenue (Doyle 2002: 69). With the *vingtième* coming to an end and a heavy burden of servicing over the next decade, the debts that had been raised during the American war, "almost half of annual revenue" had to be dedicated to repaying debts (Doyle 2002: 69). Calonne's concluding pitch was a simple one and a summary of the politico-financial situation on the eve of collapse:

> It is impossible to tax further, ruinous to be always borrowing, and not enough to confine ourselves to economical reforms…with matters as they are, ordinary ways being unable to lead us to our goal, the only effective remedy, the only course left to

> take, the only means of managing finally to put the finances truly in order, must consist of revivifying the entire state by recasting all that is vicious in its constitution (Calonne cited in Doyle 2002: 69).

This programme would take the form of a series of radical reforms, which will be detailed throughout this chapter and the next, but the crux of them was to increase the Crown's revenue. One of the key pillars of these reforms was the suppression of all exemptions from taxation by the privileged orders and the establishment of a taxation system based solely on land ownership.

Although the financial situation described by Calonne in 1786 was dire it was by no means unique by the standards of the *ancien régime*. Indeed, Campbell states that "the state had tottered from one financial crisis to another since the Hundred Years War and had never succeeded in effecting adequate reforms" (Campbell 1988: 75). This statement implies over 300 years of financial crisis for the *ancien régime* by the time Calonne takes control of royal finances which begs the question of why this financial crisis proved so different in its outcome. Although the components of an answer to this question will be provided by this chapter and the next taken together, one of the keys is the new, or perhaps resurrected, political solution by Calonne to this old financial problem. Indeed, in the context of growing hostility to many successive attempts at reforms, Calonne opted instead to resurrect one of France's "national assemblies", not convened since 1626, the Assembly of Notables.

2.3. The Political Facet of the Total Crisis

The Assembly of Notables, as its name implies, comprised congregations of people of note convened at the king's request to advise him on issues of great importance to the kingdom. Even before the more than one and half century hiatus, gatherings of the Assembly of

Notables were still relatively rare, often with several decades between their convening. Details of how Calonne lost control of the first Assembly of Notables of 1787 will follow in the rest of this chapter and the next but the short explanation is that he overestimated how compliant they were going to be. Indeed, in a memorandum to the King, in December 1686, after the King acknowledged that the reforms he proposed were necessary, Calonne explained his choice of the Assembly of Notables over the monarchy's other long-dormant institution: the Estates-General. Calonne preferred the convening of an Assembly of Notables for several reasons. The nature of these two assemblies was very different in both form and objective. Calonne dismissed the Estates-General because its representatives were elected by each estate in order to represent the grievances of said estate to the King in the form of *cahier de doléance*[16]; in contrast to the Assembly of Notables where the King would be able to choose "the matters on which he permits discussion" (Hardman 1999: 33). As well as being able to control the agenda, the format of the Assembly of Notables also enabled the King to "individually summon those whom he sees fit" (Hardman 1999: 33).

Calonne's hope was that as well as potentially selecting individuals who would view the reforms more favourably, their compliance would be assured by the sense of honour at having been summoned by the King in person (Hardman 1999: 33). The ultimate hope was that this assembly of "people of weight, worthy of the public's confidence and such that their approbation would powerfully influence general opinion" would mean that resistance to the reforms from the *parlements* would be circumvented. The reasons and implications of a royal minister, acting with the King's knowledge and agreement, seeking public support to outmanoeuvre institutions that in theory only served to register the King's rulings, will be

[16] Cahier de doléance : This was the name given to the list of grievances addressed to the king that were assembled from each of the three orders and consolidated to form . These would be collected from each of the three orders in the lead up to a gathering of the Estates-General. Each delegate elected to participate in the Estates-General would normally use these greivances as the basis for their actions at the meeting.

covered in the next subsection. However, it is first important to understand the relationship between the King and the *parlements* which led Calonne to think this measure necessary in the first place.

In theory, as John Hardman points out, the relationship between the Crown and the *parlements* should have been "symbiotic" since, between them, in the absence of the Estates-General, they controlled the entirety of the legislative process (Hardman 2010: 3). In practice, however, their relationship was often conflictual and punctuated by increasingly frequent periods of overt hostility. Periods of relative peace were often not due to agreement between the two parties but because a king had succeeded in successfully curbing their power. As mentioned previously, the *parlements'* political power stemmed from the custom that in order to become law royal edicts needed to be officially registered in the *parlements'* records. This should have been a frictionless process but the right to emit *remonstrances* granted further disruptive powers to the *parlements* if they were unhappy with the Crown's proposals. The *remonstrances* were a process through which the *parlements* could raise concerns about proposed legislation, and its registration would be postponed pending the King's response (Doyle 2002: 37). This opposition could only be temporary in nature according to the theoretical functioning of the *ancien régime.* Indeed, any institution which possessed power did so only because it was delegated from the King; in his presence, this delegation was revoked. In reference to the *parlements,* this was the principle behind the *lit de justice*[17], the process used by the King when the *parlements* resisted his will. In order to overcome any prolonged resistance the King could appear before them in person or send a personal representative (Doyle 2002: 37). Doyle summarises the consequences of this move in the

[17] The *lit de justice* was the name of the ceremony through which the King would appear in person (or through a delegate in the *parlements*) thereby revoking the power he had delegated to them. Initially this was used in a judicial context, for example, the trial of prominent aristocrats, but due to increasing hostility between the *parlements* and the Crown the ceremony was used to enforce royal will on uncooperative *parlements*.

following terms: “In the presence of the monarch, the fount of justice, the delegated authority of his magistrates was nullified” (Doyle 2002: 37).

In practice this overpowering of the *parlements’* resistance to registration was often accompanied by the physical exiling of its members to a provincial backwater where they could no longer cause trouble. By the reign of Louis XVI the *lit de justice* and the exiling of *parlements* had become a mainstay of the relationship between the Crown and *parlements.* Moreover, just prior to the start of Louis XVI’s reign they played a key role in an almost successful attempt at curbing the *parlements’* power once and for all.

With the backing of Louis XV, grandfather to his successor Louis XVI, the Keeper of the Seals, René-Charles Maupeou, who had previously been a member of the Parlements of Paris, led the attack on the *parlements* power. In many ways the financial crisis of 1769 to 1771 “bears comparison with the more epochal years of 1787-89” and historian Colin Jones refers to Maupeou’s reforms as a “failed revolution” (Jones 2002: 280-1). Having exiled the *Parlements* of Paris in February 1771, Maupeou introduced an edict that sought to restructure the “whole administration of higher justice” (Jones 2002: 282). The objective of the proposed measures was to remake the *parlements* into more docile institutions more firmly under the control of the King. The jurisdiction of the *Parlements* of Paris would be split between six new “high courts” and although the *Parlements of Paris* alone would retain the right of registering royal edicts, its right to *remonstrances* was severely curbed and its membership was reduced (Jones 2002: 282). Furthermore, rather than venal office holders the new magistrates would be salaried appointees who could gradually gain ennoblement in exchange for their service (Jones 2002: 282).

One of the keys to the relative success of these measures was that throughout there was no doubt that the King was in full support of his minister’s actions. During the *lit de justice* held

on 13 April 1771, at which the aforementioned edicts were formerly registered, Louis XV stated that "I will never change [my policies]" with, according to Jones, such "vehemence which sent shivers through his audience" (Jones 2002: 286). When in the ensuing debates some opponents to the reforms attempted to claim that the King had been manipulated by ill willed ministers, Louis XV countered "You say I have not been fully informed; nothing is more false" (Louis XV cited in Jones 2002: 286). Had the new institutions had time to mature and become imbedded into the structure of the monarchy, they may have proved to be, from the royal perspective, a happy revolution, potentially changing the course of later history. Indeed, this curbing of the *parlements* and, in their absence, the passage of a series of economic reforms, enabled the finance minister to almost balance the royal budget in 1772 (Jones 2002: 291). However, it is impossible to tell what would have happened had these institutions taken root. By 1774 Louis XV had died and his successor, faced with a decision about what to do with the *parlements*, decided to reinstate them, reversing all of Maupeou's measures and dismissing him in the process.

With the *parlements* reinstated, their previous powers of *remonstrances* intact, the stage was once again set for political deadlock between one side, including the King, seeking to reform the monarchy and another, including the *parlements* resisting change. Despite his decision to recall the *parlements* Louis XVI proved to be committed to a programme of reform almost from the outset of his reign. Jones states that Louis XVI "never shrank from the need for reform, on the principle that reform would serve to maintain the viability of absolute monarchy" (Jones 1995: 110). So in no way should the monarch's reforming desire be mistaken as an attempt to diminish the monarch's power within the system, in fact Jones claims that the new King "displayed a readiness to harness innovative reform to the business of government (Jones 1995: 110).

Having replaced the key architects of Louis XV's reforms, the Abbé Terray as finance minister and the aforementioned Maupeou, Louis XVI sought out another person to carry out his "reequipping and modernising [of] the absolute monarchy" (Jones 1995: 110). He chose Anne Robert Jacques Turgot who had established his reforming credentials as the King's delegate (*intendant*) in the area of Limoges. A mere two years into Louis XVI's reign, in 1776, Turgot attempted to pass a series of fairly radical reforms known as the Six Edicts (Jones 1995: 110). One of these, and the one which proved the most contentious, proposed no less than the abolition of the guild system within France. Or as the British ambassador summarised, its objective was "to abolish all the *corps de métiers* throughout the kingdom and to have all trades quite free as they are in our towns as have no corporations" (Jones 1995: 110). This proposed abolition of the guilds was a direct attack on the corporate heart of the *ancien régime* society which in theory was a rigid hierarchy with the King perched at the summit.

Another of Turgot's edicts entailed getting rid of a tax for the maintenance of roads, the *corvée*, which took the form of unpaid labour and replacing it with a tax based on property ownership, meaning that nobles would no longer be exempt. This was an attack on another pillar of the *ancien régime* which will be considered in further detail later in this section, as equality before taxation became a mainstay of royal reforms, and Calonne's in 1787 were no exception. Given the subversive nature of these proposals it is not surprising that significant opposition to the measures was raised by various sources, not least the recently reinstated *parlements*. However, this is also an example which demonstrates that a reform-minded King might face opposition from within his own government. Although Louis XVI had read and approved Turgot's proposals he had made the mistake of appointing alongside Turgot a Keeper of the Seals who turned out to be on the side of the *parlements*. Like Maupeou, the new appointee, Armand de Miromesnil, had also previously served as a magistrate in a

parlement, although in Rouen rather than Paris. However, unlike Maupeou he was less inclined to turn on his former colleagues and retained contacts with them and in Jones' words was still a "determined defender of 'juridictional' authority" (Jones 1995: 110). As well as being opposed to attacks on privilege in general, Mirosmesnil also saw a potential risk in undertaking such reforms considering that "an operation to unstitch a part of the fabric of the *ancien régime* might easily cause the whole to unravel" (Jones 1995: 111).

When increasing opposition to Turgot came from all sides, including within his own government, the King eventually decided to remove him from office. As was often the case with failed reforming ministers, just as with Maupeou before him, the reforms that had been promulgated were rapidly reversed after the minister fell from grace. For example, the edict suppressing the *corvée* promulgated in February 1776, was revoked in August of the same year. It was this context of political deadlock between the reforming desires of the King, together with certain of his ministers, on the one hand, and the entrenched privilege of the *parlements* that sought to protect the status quo, on the other, that led Calonne to try and circumvent the *parlements* entirely in 1787. Indeed, as previously hinted at, his reforms were no less subversive of the traditional functioning of the *ancien régime* than those attempted by other ministers during Louis XVI's reign.

Setting aside the convocation of the *Assembly of Notables* as a novel means of breaking the deadlock of *ancien régime* politics and imposing Calonne's reforms, the reforms themselves constituted yet another attack on the privileged orders by the monarchy. The primary purpose of the government's challenge to privilege was once against a fiscal one. The institutions central to Calonne's reforms, the Provincial Assemblies, were designed to facilitate the assessment and collection of the new universal tax on property, the *Impôt Territorial,* which would accompany them. Therefore, in the Crown's search to increase the size of the *ancien*

régime's tax base and thereby its revenue, it was clear that the "essential momentum for reform came from within the Bourbon state machine" (Jones 1995: 107).

This meant that initial attacks on privilege did not come from below, from a disgruntled Third Estate, but from above and the Crown itself. The idea for the Provincial Assemblies and the accompanying tax were first thought up under Turgot but his memoranda on the subject were not made public until much later. His fall from power over the aforementioned attempted promulgation of the Six Edicts prevented him from unleashing his full reforming ambitions. What made these reforms so potentially subversive was that equality rather than privilege was the guiding principle behind these government proposals. The principles behind the *Impôt Territorial* were largely inspired by a group of enlightenment economists, known as the Physiocra ts, who believed that the main source of economic production and wealth was land. This principle was made explicit in Calonne's memorandum on the *Impôt Territorial* to the *notables* in 1787, which stated: "It is land which produces, its produce which is protected and guaranteed by the Sovereign; it is therefore up to the land to pay tax"[18] (Procès verbal de l'assemblée des notables: 113).

Because of this assumption the new tax was declared to be "incompatible with any application of privilege, or personal or local exemption." The King even intended his own domains to contribute (Procès verbal de l'assemblée des notables: 114-5).

Equality, in reference to Order, was also extended to the membership and rank of individuals within the new Provincial Assemblies, as they formed the key means of assessing taxable wealth. Not giving precedence to the members of the privileged orders was also profoundly at odds with the traditional society of orders of the *ancien régime*. In Calonne's proposal no members of a specific order would be given precedence, rather "only age would determine

[18] *"C'est la terre qui produit; ce sont ses productions qui sont protégés et guaranties par le Souverain; c'est donc la terre à payer l'impôt."*

rank" (Procès verbal de l'assemblée des notables: 102). It was the basis of the assemblies' voting allocation system that was key to gathering information on individual landowners' taxable assets by encouraging them to self-report the extent of their property.

The number of votes granted to each delegate was equivalent to the number of multiples of 600 livres in landed revenue which the individual admitted to earning. Those who earned more than 600 livres revenue from their lands in the geographical area under the assemblies' control were granted extra votes proportional to every multiple of 600 livres (Procès verbal de l'assemblée des notables: 104). Those landowners who did not meet the 600 livres necessary to qualify for a vote could pool together and vote for a representative to speak on their behalf in the assembly (Procès verbal de l'assemblée des notables: 104). The key differentiation between members of the assemblies, designed to represent the "universality of landowners" (Procès verbal de l'assemblée des notables 103), was not a hereditary or purchased entitlement, but the amount of land they owned in a given area. As well as encouraging individuals to declare their taxable wealth the idea was to give those who had a stake in the locality a say in the repartition of taxation as well as other local issues.

Calonne's assurances to the King that the format of an Assembly of Notables and their handpicked nature would assure their agreement and the quick registration of his proposed reforms proved to be a miscalculation. Although the privileged orders, by far the most represented amongst the *notables*, opposed the principle of equality as being incompatible with the monarchy, for the most part they agreed with the new tax. However, it was the equality implied in the Provincial Assemblies that contributed to their opposition to the reforms as a whole. A debate in one of the *notables' bureaux*[19] put it most clearly:

[19] The members of the Notables split themselves into 7 committees (bureaux) in order to discuss and debate the proposals made by the Calonne.

> There are really only two orders, the people and the nobility; the latter embraces the clergy and the magistracy…equality is fine in republics such as in Philadelphia; it can also work under despotism, such as that at Constantinople [but not in France]…the great families are at once the support of the people and bulwark of the monarchy (Hardman 1999: 39).

This hints at the constitutional role which the nobility assigned to itself of being the main opposition to monarchical power, thereby protecting against the risks of despotism.

Another statement, this time from the Fifth Bureaux, warns that these measures seem to be a "departure from the French constitution" (*Procès verbal de l'assemblée des notables*: 223). With concerns similar to those of Miromesnil to Turgot's proposals, the Fifth Bureaux stated that by compromising the French constitution based on the existence of three separate orders, the proposals would "destroy the hierarchy necessary to maintaining monarch's authority and to the existence of the monarchy"[20] (*Procès verbal de l'assemblée des notables*: 223).

In a letter to the King, Mirosmesnil informed him of this specific opposition of the *notables* emphasising that the bureaux were not opposed to the assemblies themselves but merely wanted the "precedence accorded to the clergy and the nobility from time immemorial be maintained" (Mirosmensnil cited in Hardman 1999: 42). It is perhaps for this reason that this aspect of the government's reform did not survive Calonne's dismissal from office. His replacement, Loménie de Brienne, presented a modified version of the Provincial Assemblies in which the nobility and the clergy were granted the presidency of the assemblies by virtue of their rank.

While it is impossible to prove either way, as none of the monarchy's attempts at reform were given enough time to take hold and become entrenched as another form of regime, the

[20] *"il détruit hiérarchie nécessaire au maintien de l'Autorité du Monarque et à l'existence de la Monarchie"*

implication of these contemporaneous arguments is interesting. Statements like those of the Fifth Bureaux of the Assembly of Notables or Mirosmenil's warning about Turgot's reforms threatening to "unravel" the régime as a whole, imply a case of mutually assured destruction between the Crown and the *parlements*. Indeed, the hierarchical society of the *ancien régime,* so dear to the privileged orders, was seen as so intertwined with the principles underlying the monarchy that an attack upon it, even if conducted by the King, put his own position at risk.

In the light of the events which would occur a mere two years after the Assembly of Notables, these contemporary issues concerned with the collapse of the system as a whole, the society of orders and the monarchy, are intriguing. While it is not possible to assess potential alternative scenarios in which the revolution did not happen, the analysis in this and the next chapter implies a crucial link between the hierarchy and the undermining of the monarch's position. Indeed, both the subversive reforms and the equally subversive tone and content of the debates near the end of the *ancien regime*, contributed to undermining both sides of the *ancien régime* system and offered an opportunity for the Third Estate to seize the initiative. Perhaps just as important as the content of the debates was the fact that they were occurring at all and, by the end of the *ancien régime,* doing so within a developing public sphere and in reference to that public.

2.4. The Ideological Facet of the Total Crisis

The focus of this section is the undermining of one of the core foundations of the *ancien régime* and the theory of how a king should govern as a result of the power struggles between the Crown and the *parlements*. In its purest form the *Secret du Roi* allowed for neither questioning of the king's judgement nor any public debate of the issues facing the government. This section will argue that in parallel to the half-century long process of

undermining this principle of secrecy, the actions of the kings and *parlements* also created a new force and authority in French politics which rivalled them both: public opinion. In 1775, a prominent member of the *Paris Cour des Aides* and future Minister, Chrétien-Guillaume Lamoignon de Malesherbes, described public opinion as being "independent of all powers and respected by all powers […] that tribunal of the public […] the sovereign judge of all the judges of the earth" (Malesherbes cited in Baker 1990: 189).

As highlighted previously, public opinion at the time would not be entirely recognisable today as it was much more abstract and less 'visible'. However, as the Malesherbes quote implies it was still visible in its impact on the actions of political actors who needed to take into account its judgement when making their decisions.

This section therefore focuses on these two parallel phenomena: the ability to question the king and the creation and empowerment of a public, and their relationship to the undermining of the key foundational principle of absolute monarchy, the Divine Right of Kings. As the usage and power of this justification for royal action waned as an unquestionable justification for royal power, two consequences became visible. First of all, the king's actions or at least those of his ministers, were more openly questioned and, secondly, the public nature of this questioning, with the rival political factions appealing to the emerging '*tribunal*' recognised or created a political power independent of the Crown and the *parlements*. In refence to the undermining of the *ancien régime* and the increase in its risk of collapse, three phases can be identified that completely reverse the foundational principles of the absolute monarchy. The first phase was the ability to question the king's decisions. The second was the process through which both the *parlements,* and in time the king and his ministers, started appealing for the support of public opinion. And finally, at the very end of the *ancien regime,* the Monarch authorised a last and ultimate backdown away from the principle of the *Secret du Roi* by appealing for public input into the debate.

This section focuses on these three phenomena in turn before analysing the emergence and evolution of public opinion as a force in French politics. While not in and of themselves a guarantee that the system would collapse when it did, and that the revolutionary outcome would follow, this new context of public debate and public empowerment created a new and more destabilised environment for Calonne's experiment in summoning the Assembly of Notables. It is only with hindsight that it can be concluded that by this point the destabilisation had gone too far and the right circumstances and opportunities for change had been created and seized on a scale not imagined, or hoped for, by anyone at the time. The implied link between public opinion and sovereignty mentioned in Malesherbes' quote, will be considered in further detail in the next chapter as this "public" increasingly took on the characteristics and contours of both the concepts of the people and the nation which would eventually be declared sovereign.

Starting in the 1750s a series of developments set the stage for a Terminal Crisis focused around questioning the King's judgement with regards to his finances. This questioning having been made explicit during the Assembly of Notables, it was not long before proposals for public oversight and publication of royal finances were heard. In order to understand why these calls would have been inconceivable decades earlier, it is important to realise how the absolute monarchy was meant to function according to its own theory. Perhaps the clearest outline of this theory of absolutism in France was compiled by Bossuet who used extracts from Scripture to support his view of the nature of royal power and the duties of kings. The founding principle of Bossuet's view is that "God is the real king" and monarchs are merely God's "ministers and his lieutenants on earth" (Bossuet 1776: 1-2). Based on the principle of divine power being royal power, Bossuet viewed the king as the only legitimate public figure in French politics and attributed the king's judgements to those of God. Throughout the latter

half of the eighteenth century, both these principles were undermined in such a way as to ensure that the final confrontation of the *ancien régime* would have financial origins.

In Bossuet's view of the *ancien régime* the king was the sole public person in France as "all the state is within him, the will of the people is encompassed within his own" (Bossuet 1776: 35). In practice, the monarch was expected to take counsel from various sources, be they individuals or corporate bodies (Baker 1990: 169-70). However, given that apart from the king there was no other public person to whom any concerns or counsel could be addressed, there was no reason why these proceedings should be made public beyond the circle of those directly involved (Baker 1990: 170).

As mentioned previously, one of the official feedback mechanisms for the king was the *parlements*' right to *remonstrances*, but the implication of this absolutist understanding of kingship was that it be a strictly private process. This implied secrecy was increasingly challenged as the eighteenth century wore on and the importance of public opinion in French politics grew. Indeed, since the death of Louis XV the *parlements* had developed the *remonstrances* into the principal form of opposition to royal power in general and perceived moves towards absolutism in particular. A large part of this process was the regular publication and distribution of copies of their *remonstrances* in order to "marshal public opinion to their side" (Doyle 2002: 37).

The two key areas of conflict between the kings and *parlements* were religious and financial matters. The debates over the expulsion of the Jesuits in the 1760s marked the culmination of the *parlements*' interference in religious matters (Doyle 2002: 37). Having failed to prevent open public debate of religious topics the government attempted to reinforce its control of financial information. To stifle any debate of financial matters, the Crown prohibited the printing and sale of "writings concerning the reforms of our finances, or their past, present or

future administration" (Baker 1990: 171). These attempts at censorship of financial information failed, sometimes with the government contributing to their failure, but they did establish royal finances as the final bastion of attempted secrecy in French politics.

The ambiguity over the true state of royal finances also offered a unique opportunity for the king's judgement to be directly challenged, which should not have been possible under the *ancien régime*. As Bossuet states, the king's "judgements are attributed to God himself", consequently only God can judge them and in the temporal world only the king can recognise and reverse his own mistakes (Bossuet 1776: 45). The basis for the challenge that took place at the Assembly of Notables in 1787 was established in 1781 by Necker. With the King's authorisation Necker had his *Compte Rendu au Roi* published and sold to the general public. This document, which quickly sold over 100,000 copies, was the first public account of royal finances. As well as being a direct challenge to what was in fairness a ruling of Louis XVI 's predecessor about the public discussion of royal finances, it proved detrimental to the King's financial credibility.

Indeed, this document published under royal sanction and the authenticity of which was, at best, misleading in its account of the state of royal finances. Necker claimed that in an ordinary year of government expenditure there was a surplus in revenues of 10 million livres (Doyle 2002: 67). However, this did not take into account the vast interest payments on debts incurred by Necker to finance the War of American Independence, which he conveniently labelled 'exceptional expenditure'. This very public record of Necker's claimed surplus had an adverse effect on future finance ministers, as any complaints about financial difficulties were contrasted in the public's mind with Necker's success (Doyle 2002: 67). Calonne was no exception; his notorious policy of lavish spending and borrowing meant that when he claimed that there was a deficit the public thought back to Necker's positive balance and concluded the crisis was of Calonne's own making (Doyle 2002: 71).

In his opening speech to the Assembly of Notables Calonne very briefly summarised the key burdens of royal finances, not least the 220 million livres in war debts (Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des notables : 58). The total of these burdens amounted to 600 million livres in debts and advance payments weighing on royal revenues and Calonne declared that there was "neither money nor credit" left to draw upon (Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des notables : 58). The problem with Calonne's statements was that, unlike Necker, he provided no evidence for his claims. Instead, he expected the notables to take his and, more importantly, the King's, word for it. This proved a spectacular misjudgement and a source of friction between the minister and the notables. Indeed, before considering Calonne's proposed reforms of taxations, the notables wanted first and foremost proof of the dire financial situation which he claimed were affecting the kingdom. Therefore, almost from the first day of the meeting, it was clear that the presumed docility of the notables, as opposed to an Estates-General, was non-existent. Far from controlling the direction of the debates as he had predicted, the notables demanded to see his accounts.

One of the *notables* recounts in his diary a meeting in which Calonne is asked directly to prove his claims that Necker's *compte rendu* was erroneous by "placing the proof before the notables" or at least representatives they had chosen" (Allemand-Guy 2007: 65). Calonne replied that he could not do this without the authorisation of the King who, along with three of his ministers, had examined and approved his views of royal finances. Furthermore, in language strongly reminiscent of Bossuet's, Calonne challenged the notables by asking "who would constitute themselves the judges of the King's own justice?" (Calonne, cited in Allemand-Guy 2007: 65). Far from being deterred by this appeal to absolutist theory, the notables present at the meeting pointed out that the King had also checked Necker's account of royal finances and authorised their publication (Allemand-Guy 2007: 65). When those notables present at the meeting reported back to their respective *Bureau* each one rejected a

previous instruction from the King to discuss merely the form and not the substance of the proposed taxation (Allemand-Guy 2007: 65).

Furthermore, each of the seven *Bureaux* declared that before they could pronounce themselves on the "necessity, extent and duration" of any new taxation they needed to be given account of royal expenditure and revenues (Allemand-Guy 2007: 65). The fact that Calonne could not even get the *notables* to agree on the need for the reforms, let alone on the nature of the reforms themselves, is ultimate proof that he had lost control, assuming he ever had it, of the very institutions which he had resurrected. However, the *notables* would make another demand that in its principle was even further removed from the already overt challenge of the King's financial judgement: they proposed a new system of royal finance based on public oversight. These proposals, later taken up during the Estates-General, show a total lack of faith in the *ancien régime's* financial system in which the King and his ministers had ultimate control. By the time the King had responded to the Third Estate's unilateral declaration he had come to agree with some of the provisions of their proposal.

One of the first proposals for a new system was made by the seventh Bureau of the Assembly of Notables. It proposed the establishment of a finance committee which would meet every six months to check the state of the royal treasury and every year to examine the accounts of each government department (Arrêtés du Bureaux 1787: 2). An overview of public finance would be presented to the King every year and would subsequently be made public ensuring public oversight and confidence. The *Bureau*'s proposal declared that "no financial operation will take place without having been examined and discussed in the committee (Arrêtés du Bureaux 1787-4). Although the King would still be involved in the decision-making process his actions would be entirely subject to the approval of the finance committee and, on a yearly basis, scrutinised by the public. This all constitutes a radical departure from the

traditional functioning of the *ancien régime* in which royal finances were the private prerogative of the King and his ministers.

Further evidence of the importance of financial matters in the final crisis of the *ancien régime* is its discussion in the chamber of the Third Estate as they were in the process of constituting themselves as an active legislative assembly. This process, which constituted a truly revolutionary act, was accompanied by discussions for transferring the control and guaranteeing of public debt from the King to the nation. Even before the name of the national assembly was agreed upon for the new assembly one of its prominent members, Mirabeau, proposed the ultimate transfer of power in financial matters away from the King. In a statement which contained many provisions that flew in the face of the principles of absolute monarchy, he proposed that "the representatives of the French people will take all the necessary measures to ensure the security of the State's creditors, and for the debts of the King, which will become those of the nation, will have as a pledge of honour the nation itself"[21] (Archives parlementaires 1995: 112).

This statement proposes a new system of public finance designed to remove the King from its centre. Foreshadowing developments in French politics, the proposal gave an active role to representatives of the people in constraining royal actions and transferred the King's personal debt to the sovereign nation. Interestingly, in his response to the Third Estate's making itself a national assembly, the King agreed to the implementation of serious constraints on his control of royal finances. In the declaration of the King's intentions read out by one of his ministers, the King agreed that no new taxation be implemented without the explicit consent of "the representatives of the nation" (Hardman 1999: 102).

[21] *"les représentants du peuple de France prendront toutes les mesures nécessaires pour la sécurités des créanciers de l'Etat, et pour que la dette du Roi, qui deviendra celle de la nation, ait désormais pour gage l'honneur de la fidélité de cette nation même."*

Crucially no tax old or new would "extend beyond the date stipulated by legislation without the consent of the Estates-General" (Hardman 1999: 102). If these measures had been implemented prior to the revolution it would have ensured that the King would have had to regularly summon the Estates-General. The necessary regularity of the meetings of the Estates-General which had never occurred before would have been the end of the absolute monarchy. Furthermore, although not in the way imagined by Third Estate delegates, this measure also confirmed the authority of the nation to consent to legislation through the actions of its representatives. As well as acknowledging the need for consent from the representatives of the nation it also agreed to public oversight of royal finances. Another proposal that the King agreed to in principle through his response to the Third Estate was that "a statement of revenue and expenditure will be published annually" (Hardman 1999: 102). Therefore, by the time the King responded to the Third Estate's declaration of a national assembly, its delegates and the notables before them, had replaced the King with the nation and its representatives as guarantors of sound public finance. And the King had at least in part agreed.

Having considered the undermining of the principle of secrecy that was meant to underpin *ancien régime* politics, it is time to consider the nature of public opinion which was standing in judgement. Crucial to understanding the development process of this notion of public opinion is the fact that far from playing an exclusively reactionary role to its gradual emergence, the Crown played an active role in developing and empowering it.

The emergence of public opinion as a new force in French politics began in the 1750s; with the dispute over the Jansenist sacrament, the politicised conflict of the *ancien régime* spilled over beyond the confines of absolutist secrecy into the public sphere (Baker 1990: 169). As the decade went by and further conflicts ensued it becomes increasingly clear that a "new system of authority" based on the notion of "public opinion" was taking root in French

politics. Indeed, in a clear break with absolutist justifications, both the government and the opposition sought to claim that the "judgement of public opinion" supported their side of the argument (Baker 1990: 172).

At this time, the concept of public opinion, like that of the nation, was ill-defined as a political term and it was only in the context of these ongoing conflicts that its contours would become more clearly defined. Baker refers to different editions of the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* to track the transition of public "opinion" from the philosophy to the political sections of the work. In this shift its characteristics were fundamentally changed: "opinion" referred to "flux, subjectivity, and uncertainty" whereas "public opinion" was associated with "universality, objectivity and rationality" (Baker 1990: 168). It was these characteristics which made public opinion the "universal tribunal before which citizens and governments alike must […] appear" (Baker 1990: 168).

The full transition of public opinion and its newly found authority can also be traced by looking at the government's reaction to information being made public by either trying to censor it or turning it to their own advantage. As stated previously, the government's initial instinct when faced with the *parlements* publication of their *remonstrances* on religious matters was to explicitly prohibit the discussion of financial matters, the last bastion of government secrecy. The usual reaction of the Crown to public contestation under Louis XV was to redouble efforts at censoring the information in circulation. For Doyle this tendency culminated in a final wave of censorship between 1758 and 1764. During this period the Crown attempted to curtail the circulation of the *Encyclopédie*, the works of Rousseau, and in 1764 any works "relating to the finances or administration of the state" (Doyle 2002: 56).

At the time of the aforementioned Maupeou 'revolution' in 1771, the government was still attempting to utilise censorship in order to influence public debate. Colin Jones refers to

censorship being tightened and "police spies work[ing] overtime in a crack-down on 'dangerous' books, authors and publishers, many of whom were soon languishing in the Bastille" (Jones 2002: 287). By this time there was clearly an acknowledgment that public opinion was something that was best kept on the government's side, so in parallel with the repression the government sponsored the writing of over 100 pro-government pamphlets by late 1771 (Jones 2002: 287-8). Despite having assembled a team of writers to "praise and defend" his proposals (Doyle 2002: 57) Maupeou was aware of the potential risk of the government engaging in this form of public pandering. He foretold the potential risk of this new form of public politics stating: "Somebody writes, another replies…everybody will want to analyse the constitution of the state; tempers will be lost. […] the knowledge the people are acquiring must, a little sooner or little later, bring about revolutions" (Maupeou, cited in Doyle 2002: (56-7).

Perhaps another foreshadowing of the revolutionary potential was the visible decline in the notion of the Divine Right of Kings as a justification for the King's actions. As Colin Jones points out a "fresh element within anti-government discourse was its lack of religious romance" (Jones 2002: 289). Just as the opposition rarely "utilised religious argumentation", the side defending the King's position "rarely deployed the language of divine right" (Jones 2002: 289). In contrast to this secularisation of the rhetoric deployed, another interesting feature of this period, that will be returned to in the next chapter, was the emergence of rhetoric that "transcended the corporative interest of the sovereign courts [*parlements*] and hovered, as yet still tentatively, around the supra-corporative notion of the nation" (Jones 2002: 289). In the *remonstrances* of the *Cour des Aides* penned by future government minister Malesherbes, there was even an early call of the meeting of the Estates-General; Jones argued that this was an early manifestation of the emergence of "notions of national

sovereignty and a national 'general will'" in the *ancien régime*'s political sphere (Jones 2002: 290).

Under Louis XVI among the first attempts by government to utilise public communication for its own benefit was the aforementioned publication of royal accounts by Necker; in addition to publishing a misrepresentation of the state of royal finances it was also unconstitutional. As P.M. Jones argues, although the Crown had come to recognise "the force of public opinion", the *Compte Rendu* was "to give a status and an extension to the public interest which crossed all bounds" (Jones 1995: 112). At its most basic the *Compte Rendu* can be seen as a banker's method of maintaining public confidence in the Crown's ability to service debt, thereby facilitating future credit. In this case it is a tool for maintaining public confidence rather than a more subversive attempt to lean on public opinion to win political engagement.

However, as Baker surmises from Necker's "*De l'administration des finances*", his publication of the *Compte Rendu* was merely a recognition of public opinion being the "new force in [*ancien régime*] politics" (Baker 1990: 192). The *Compte Rendu*, therefore, could be seen as an attempt to emulate the style of public accountability, which maintained public confidence in royal finance in the United Kingdom at this time (Baker 1990: 191). As well as the system of public finance, Necker was also sympathetic to the system of aristocratic government present across the channel (Hardman 2010: 12). It is therefore possible to see Necker's *Compte Rendu* and his experiment with Provincial Assembliesas an attempt to transform France's political system into one which resembled that of Britain's parliamentary monarchy.[22]

[22] Necker had also developed a version of Calonne's proposed reforms but like Turgot he was removed from office before he could try and implement them.

This was certainly the opinion of one of his fellow ministers upon the publication of his *Compte Rendu*. Vergennes, the foreign minister at the time, in a letter he wrote to the King accused Necker of having forgotten some of the fundamental principles of French monarchical government and "attributing a revolutionary significance to 'the party that he calls 'public opinion'"" (Baker 1990: 192). While blaming various crises of the French monarchy on the influence of foreigners, Vergennes accused Necker of similarly endangering the monarchy. Somewhat presciently he stated that "his *Compte Rendu*, is, in the last result, a pure appeal to the people, the pernicious effects of which for the monarchy cannot yet be appreciated or foreseen" (Vergennes cited in Baker 1990: 192). This would not be the last time a royal minister would seek to appeal to the people. When Calonne attempted it in 1787, he was quickly replaced as finance minister, suffering the same fate as Necker.

Calonne's attempt to co-opt public opinion was much more blatant Maupeou's and Necker's publication of royal accounts; he was trying to actively rally support against the privileged orders resisting his reforms. As it became clear that the Assembly of Notables would not rubber stamp his proposals without opposition, Calonne sought to put pressure on them by appealing to the public directly. Knowing that the meeting of the *notables* was generating considerable public interest, Calonne sought to capitalise on it. He sponsored the publication of the original texts of his proposed reforms preceded by an *Avertissement*, which warned against the privileged orders' attempts to stall reforms beneficial to the kingdom as a whole. The *Avertissement* on its own was printed and handed to parish clergy with the request that it be read from the pulpits (Doyle 2002: 73).

Considering the efforts being made to circulate this *Avertissement*, it is a clear example of the power of the Bourbon state being employed to circulate information and influence public opinion rather than seeking to constrain it. This attempt to get public support for his reform was a failure and shortly thereafter, with the King still committed to reform but not to

Calonne, he was dismissed and replaced by Loménie de Brienne, previously a member of the *notables*. Instead of seeking to convince public opinion in a specific direction, Brienne would appeal to the public for their input on the debate over the convening of the Estates-General in order to put pressure on the ever problematic *parlements*.

Having dismissed the *notables,* Brienne spent the summer of 1788 unsuccessfully trying to get a revised version of Calonne's reforms registered in the *parlements*. Given his inability to get the privileged orders, which dominated both the *notables* and *parlements,* to agree to reform, Brienne came to see the Estates-General and an alliance with the Third Estate as a viable solution to the grid- lock. Under public pressure Brienne had agreed to convene the Estates before 1791. In a change of tactic, he decided to move the date forward to May 1789 and to attempt to challenge the traditional composition and functioning of the Estates-General. This would be necessary because if the Estates met as they had in 1614, the vote by order rather than by head would ensure that the clergy and the nobility could continue to block reforms, even if Third Estate delegates were in favour. In order to try and force this change Brienne, in a declaration of the Council's decision (*Arrêt du conseil*) in July 1788, invited "opinions from all sides on how the Estates should be organised" (Hardman 1999: 64).

The ministerial instability caused by the failure of successive attempts at reform would eventually lead to Necker's return to the head of a government which, rather than imposing reform, sought to consult public opinion. After Brienne's fall from power Necker's approach to the growing issue of what form the Estates-General should take turned the government into a largely passive bystander of the raging debate. Not only was the debate public and open but the government was no longer seeking to control it. Necker was recalled in a context of economic crisis and impending bankruptcy because the King thought that only he would be capable of preventing the total collapse of royal credit. Unlike Brienne, Necker, was not as

keen on a direct alliance with the Third Estate and therefore recalled the *parlements* (Hardman 1999: 64). By this point the public debate over what form the Estates-General should take, so crucial in determining which of the privileged or third estate would be able to gain the most out of it, was in full swing. The government completely reversed its traditional policy by doing away with censorship of the public debate altogether.

Furthermore, the government did not play a particularly active role in these debates, offering little guidance as to what form the Estates-General should take. Given the lack of government guidance the newly reassembled *Parlement* of Paris stepped into the void (Jones 1995: 158). The *Parlement* passed a resolution which declared that the *Parlement* "maintains its insistence that the Estates-General designated next January be regularly convoked and composed and that according to the forms observed in 1614" (Resolution of the *Parlement* of Paris, cited in Hardman 1999: 68). The implication was that the number of delegates sent by the Third Estate should remain equal to that of the clergy and the nobility and that voting should be counted by order rather than by head. As a result of this statement, the *parlements'* popularity disintegrated, thereby giving an opportunity for more radical thinkers to gain prominence. It was in this context of a mass proliferation in the quantity of political writing, from 150 in six weeks in September-October 1788 to ten to twelve a day by mid-December, that Sieyès published his influential and radical pamphlet *Qu'est ce que le tiers-Etats?*.

Despite the increasingly radical publications being circulated the government remained relatively inactive. Necker eventually convened a second Assembly of Notables to advise him on the form the Estates-General should take. He promptly ignored their verdict, bowing to public opinion and granting the doubling of representation for the Third Estate. This meant that Third Estate delegates would be equal in number to those of the two privileged orders combined. However, this would make no difference unless it was also agreed that votes would be counted by head and in common rather than by order. On this point the government

remained mute. It was this lack of decision by the government that introduced a fatal ambiguity into the proceedings of the Estates-General. From the start, the Third Estate delegates refused to register their powers separately from the other two orders' delegates, as this would be an admission that meeting and voting would be conducted by order. After much failed negotiation and several months of gridlock it was this issue that led the Third Estate's delegates to unilaterally declare themselves the National Assembly and in the process the nation sovereign.

By the eve of revolution, which if pressed this thesis' focus on the nation would date at the declaration of the national assembly and the nation as sovereign in June 1789, the politics of the *ancien régime* had already irreversibly changed beyond recognition regardless of the eventual outcome. Indeed, the Crown's acceptance of the legitimacy of public opinion meant that the decision over the form of convocation for the Estates-General was opened up to uncensored public debate (Baker 1990: 198). According to Baker, government's acceptance of public opinion's authority was tantamount to the government "unwittingly conspiring with its opposition to foster the transfer of authority from the public person of the sovereign to the sovereign person of the public (Baker 1990: 172). Given the government's relative lack of input in the final debate and its bowing to the demands of the public by doubling the number of the Third Estate's delegates, the process mentioned by Baker had already occurred even if it had yet to be translated into institutional fact. The principle of the Divine Right of Kings and its implications for the Secrecy and unquestionability of royal action had well and truly disappeared to slowly be replaced by the judgement of the new notion of public opinion.

2.5. Technological Dimension of Crisis

The role of technology in enabling the scale of the debate that gradually questioned and eventually overthrew the French *ancien régime* is undeniable. The notion of public opinion operating on a scale covering the kingdom as a whole, and the various attempts to appeal to it and gain its support, would not have been possible without the development of print technology. Of course, printing press technology was by no means new to eighteenth century France, having already been around for over three centuries by the time of the collapse of the *ancien régime*. However, its new political uses helped to create and support the debates concerning the end of the *ancien regime*. This took two forms: first of all, as a means of large-scale distribution of propaganda through the publication of the *parlements' remonstrances* and the various pamphlets and official government communications described in the previous section and, secondly, as a medium for the publication and circulation of new ideas and, with the gradual failure and abandonment of censorship, as the basis for open public debate.

The importance of print technology and its impact on the development and utility of public opinion was not lost on the contemporaries of the French Revolution who also made a direct link between public opinion and the nation. One, perhaps extreme, view of the possibilities that could be exploited by the marriage of public opinion with the printing press was presented by Malesherbes in his 1775 *remonstrances*. He believed that in order to ensure good governance sovereign power needed to be limited by "laws, recourse to a higher authority, and public opinion" (Malesherbes cited in Baker 1990: 188). According to Malesherbes, the epitome of this system was achieved during the reign of Charlemagne. He counselled Louis XVI to "imitate [..] Charlemagne… [and] reign at the head of a nation whose entire body will be your council" (Malesherbes cited in Baker 1990: 189). Whereas in Charlemagne's time this could be achieved in the assemblies of the nation which took place

on the Champs de Mars, in the eighteenth century in a much larger kingdom print could achieve similar oversight. It had taken

> several centuries before the nation had developed the habit of instructing itself by reading and before there appeared "enough men…skilled in the art of writing to lend their ministry to the whole public, taking the place of those gifted with natural eloquence who made themselves heard by our forefathers on the Champs de Mars or in the public judicial hearings." (Malesherbes cited in Baker 1990: 119).

By the time of Louis XVI Malesherbes argued that this process was complete and printing could fulfil its role. Baker summarises Malesherbes' ambition for print in the following terms: "With the press as its forum, the printed word as its medium of persuasion, and writers as its ministers, the new tribunal of the public offered the possibility of achieving a functional modern equivalent of the primitive democracy of the Franks when they first appeared in Gaul" (Baker 1990: 188).

For Malesherbes, therefore, public opinion could not only act as the judge of sovereign action but also, when allied with the power of mass print, could be equivalent to an assembly of the nation. This sentiment is echoed in the 1789 Edition of the *Encyclopédie Méthodique*. In the article on public opinion the author refers to journals and newspapers as "means of universal communication" through which "an entire sect, an entire nation, the whole of Europe, is called to pronounce judgement upon a host of objects regarding which, previously, only despotism or the interest of particular individuals had the right to make themselves heard" (Peuchet, cited in Baker 1990: 188).

For both of these theorists print technology had enabled public opinion to increase its influence in the politics of the *ancien régime.* In light of the later developments in western political systems, which mix democracy with the nation-state, this initial intertwining of the

nation and public opinion has been reinforced. Furthermore, the ongoing development of new communication technologies has increased their influence by making them appear more tangible.

2.6. Conclusion

The detailing of the dire financial situation of the late *ancien régime* enables this thesis to highlight that while financial and economic dimensions are key components of Total Crisis, they do not in themselves suffice. Without the political deadlock between the Crown and the *parlements* forcing Calonne to find a new political solution to an old financial problem, the outcome may not have been as destructive. Furthermore, while it is not reasonable to speculate about "what ifs", it seems unlikely that if, over a period of decades, the King's divine authority had not been called into question in an increasingly public space, the system's collapse might have been avoided. And finally, without the development and propagation of printing and without those capable of utilising it for political objectives, the collapse of the *ancien régime* may similarly have been averted. The cumulative effect of all of these was fatal.

This chapter has by no means offered a comprehensive view of all the various possible chains of causation that accumulated to create the collapse of one political system and the subsequent birth of another. However, it has sought to underline that one of the reasons the *ancien régime* collapsed was that no faction was trying to save it in its entirety. First, the Crown was undermining one of the pillars of the system, the society of orders and its associated privileges, in a bid to increase its taxation base and augment its revenue. In parallel, the *parlements* were targeting the pillars of the absolute monarchy, exemplified by

the reign of Louis XIV, either, depending on which side is to be believed, to protect their own privilege or to preserve a natural order acting as a rampart to royal tyranny.

Taken together these characteristics of *ancien régime* society combined with the absolute monarchy formed what might be considered the 'normal' functioning of the system in its dysfunctionality. The various actions and events described in this chapter show how this 'normal' ceased to operate even before the new form of the system had been determined. This process would be partly influenced by the intervention of another faction that did not want to see the *ancien régime* survive in its entirety, the Third Estate. Its delegates and their application of ideas that had been developed directly or based on principles advanced by the *philosophes*, created the outlines of the new system, or at least its new founding principle of national sovereignty which it has since proved very hard to ignore.

Despite warnings at the start of the chapter of the need to avoid the pitfalls of historical determinism based on hindsight, it is interesting to note that contemporary observers of the events recounted in this chapter seemed to have a certain awareness of the potentially momentous changes that were being undertaken in French politics. Indeed, throughout the chapter a series of almost prophetic sounding statements have been cited from both sides of the political debate warning that they might be unleashing forces beyond their control and that the integrity of the system as a whole might be in play.

Chapter 3 : The Nation as Arbiter: rival claims to national representation in the lead up to Revolution

3.1 Introduction

The half century leading up to the 1789 French Revolution shines a light on of the central role that the politicised nation has come to play in modern and contemporary politics. As argued in chapter 2, the nation at that time was only just entering the political sphere as an arbiter of domestic politics and, as will be detailed in the following chapter, it was a contested concept – the boundaries of which were still far from immutable. The debates that led up to the French Revolution make it easier to distinguish between the two separate sets of characteristics that underpin the nation's political role since then: its sovereignty and its basis as one of the key politicised identities among a majority of the population of most states. This separation also underpins the observation that the nation's sovereignty formed the foundation of its initial political importance and predated its role as a locus of national identity. In contrast to this period, during the more recent rise of the *Front National* (now *Rassemblement National*) and particularly in the rhetoric of this national populist party, these two distinct sets of characteristics become harder to distinguish. This is not to deny that the nation was in no way tied to identity at the time of the French Revolution but, as already stated, regarding identity, at the time 'nation' tended to refer to what is now considered region rather than a sense of identity encompassing the entire kingdom. This is largely because the nature of *ancien régime* society meant that politicised identities were tied to a person's station in society and moved in an upward pyramid of allegiance towards the king.

To understand the nation's growing political role, rather than looking at this regional concept of identity, it is more important to consider a more abstract but also universal version of the nation. Perhaps the most neutral of these usages was seen in the debates surrounding the nature of the Estates-General, known at the time as one of the *ancien régime*'s "national

assemblies". In these debates about the Estates-General, the nation was used as a descriptor for the coming together of the "orders and Estates, made one in the person and presence of the king" (Baker 1990: 234). This usage of nation can be considered relatively neutral as it does not challenge any of the underpinnings of the system of representation of the *ancien régime,* and is comparable to the Crown's theoretical conception of nation that will be detailed in this chapter. In contrast, to momentarily fast-forward to the temporal end points of this chapter, the actions of the Third Estate would temporarily restrict this view of the nation to cover its representatives alone. By claiming to represent the vast majority of the individuals within the boundaries of the kingdom, the Third Estate justified its unilateral action in declaring itself a National Assembly and its members representatives of a now sovereign nation.

In order to understand how this radical departure from the theory of absolutism and the *ancien régime* was possible, and to explore an early example of the nation as arbiter, it is crucial once again to turn to the actions of the two key political actors of the *ancien régime,* the Crown and the *parlements.* Key to the notion of the nation as arbiter developed in this thesis is that no single political faction can claim a monopoly of speaking in the name of the nation. Underpinning this ambiguity is the notion that the nation is a concept sufficiently abstract that several definitions and conceptions of it can exist and be in competition with each other at any given time. Again, in the perspective of a long-term framework, a trend can be detected in the politicisation of the nation that explains its ability to act as an arbiter. In his analysis of the origins of French nationalism, David Bell highlights the increasing references to the concepts of 'nation' and '*patrie*' and argues that this resulted in them becoming "destabilised" due to disagreements not only about their definition but also concerning whether or not they actually existed (Bell 2003: 14). In a sense this ambiguity, and destabilisation of the term 'nation' in particular, is still being dealt with today.

These words were not invented at this time in France, they had been in common use prior to the eighteenth century but their significance changed during the course of the century. Bell argues that while they were in common use prior to this point, with '*patrie,'* for example, serving as a rallying cry during the seventeenth-century Wars of Religion, neither entity was ever considered to be a superior authority to the king nor necessarily clearly distinct from him (Bell 2003: 10). If this had remained the case, it is hard to see how the French Revolution could have occurred with neither foundations of national sovereignty, i.e. independent from the king, nor those of a truly national identity being in place.

As with other elements of the destabilisation of the *ancien régime* detailed in the previous chapter, it is the struggle for power between Crown and *parlements* that changed the nation's role in domestic politics. Even before the Revolution, during the time period under analysis in this chapter, the nation had already supplanted the King and had become "the source of all legitimate authority" (Bell 2003: 12). It is the nation's status as a source of authority above that of the King that enables it to arbitrate domestic politics in the lead-up to the Revolution. Despite it being very different, and arguably less tangible than in the present day, the nation was the entity to which political actors felt they needed to appeal to justify their proposals. Initially, the power struggle was a traditional *ancien régime* one, opposing the *parlements,* representing the privileged orders of society, and the Crown seeking financial reform. However, once the failure to pass reforms forced the government to summon the *ancien régime*'s dormant national assembly, the Third Estate was able to seize the initiative based on its status as the largest group in French society. Whereas under-representation based on the number of orders was unimportant, once a more universal concept of nation had taken root in French politics, the many were able to impose their will on the few.

The previous chapter on the Total Crisis that led to the collapse of the *ancien régime* concluded that the new notion of public opinion had become the arbiter of French politics

prior to Revolution. In order to build on Bell in arguing that the nation held this role, specific emphasis must be placed on the ways in which the notion of public opinion ended up having boundaries similar to that of the sovereign nation. Subsequently, this chapter will outline the three rival conceptions of nation that contributed to the destabilisation of the concept and ultimately its sovereignty. This process will also highlight a key characteristic of the politicised nation, often still contested today, the question of who is considered to belong to the nation. Interestingly, while the rhetoric plays with defining the nation by exclusion in a way that is reminiscent of contemporary politics, unlike the present day the criterion of belonging is based on adherence to common law rather than cultural criteria that can be identified in the rhetoric of the FN. Finally, this chapter will detail the shift in the form of representation necessary for the Revolution to occur. The gradual transition and spread of national as opposed to the traditional corporate forms of representation were necessary for the Revolution to occur in the way it did. Indeed, the key revolutionary act performed by delegates of the Third Estate, and one which they debated at length, was how to overcome the limitations of their electoral mandates. It was this debate and its consequences that enabled and informed their declaration of being the National Assembly and the nation as sovereign, thereby, in the view of this thesis, legitimising the true political revolution that had already changed the power relations of the *ancien régime* beyond recognition.

3.2. The shared characteristics and importance of public opinion and the nation

When the transfer of "ultimate authority from the public person of the sovereign to the sovereign person of the public" (Baker 1990: 172) was made official during the Estates-General in June 1789, the sovereign person of the public became embodied in the nation. Having finally verified their own powers, and those delegates of the clergy who had joined them in the "national room" (*Archives parlementaire*: 109), the deputies of the Third Estate debated for two solid days the name that the new assembly should adopt. In total five options

were debated, ranging from Sieyès' initial and rather ponderous suggestion of "Assemblée des représentants connus et vérifiés de la nation" to Mirabeau's succinct "Représentants du Peuple Français" (*Archives parlementaires*: 109-126).

During the ensuing debates certain characteristics of the nation, shared with public opinion, can be highlighted to explain why the nation was chosen to incarnate the new "sovereign person of the public". The deputies of the new assembly agreed that the term "Estates-General" was no longer adequate for the new assembly given that it supposed the gathering together of three orders (*Archives parlementaires*: 110). However, despite their justification for unilateral action, which will be discussed subsequently, these deputies hoped that the remaining deputies of the clergy and nobility would join them to debate in common and vote by head. Sieyès, for example, justified his proposed name by claiming it was the only possible option as long as the assembly "will not lose hope to unite within itself all the deputies today absent" (Sieyès, cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 109).[23]

This aspiration to gather together all the deputies from the three orders underlines one of the key characteristics the nation shared with public opinion. In his proposal, Rabaud de Saint-Etienne[24], mentions almost in passing "the assembly considering that it needs to be one, as the nation is one"[25] (*Archives parlementaires*: 113), highlighting that this political nation is considered a unitary entity. As mentioned above, one of the more neutral meanings of the nation at this time was merely a signifier for the unitary entity formed by the three estates assembled in the presence of the King. Therefore, whereas public opinion was "construed as rational, universal, impersonal [and] unitary" (Baker 1990: 198), the nation could at least be considered as universal and unitary. Just as these characteristics of public opinion were

[23] "[…] *tant qu'elle ne perdra pas l'espoir de réunir dans son sein tous les députées aujourd'hui absents* […]"
[24] Rabaud de Saint Etienne a protestant minister who sought to defend the rights of Protestants before and after the French Revolution. Elected as a deputy of the Third Estate to the Estates-General he was ultimately guillotined in 1793.
[25] "[…] *l'Assemblée considérant qu'elle doit être une, comme la nation est une*…"

attributes it shared with the "absolute monarchical authority it was replacing" (Baker 1990: 198), so the nation's unitary nature was shared with the sovereign it was being called upon to replace.

The unitary nature of the nation was also crucial to the arguments that Sieyès deployed in his pamphlet *Qu'est ce que le Tiers Etats?* prior to the meeting of the Estates-General and in his role as a deputy in empowering the Third Estate delegates to take action. The main struggle of the opening weeks of the Estates-General was the need for the Third Estate delegates, twice as numerous as those of the clergy and the nobility, to convince the privileged orders to meet and vote as one assembly so their numbers would count. A key component of Sieyès' argument that will be covered in more detail later in this chapter involved excluding the privileged orders from the body of the nation, or at least argue that they had done so themselves by choice. Another principal argument was that the will of the nation was a common one which could not be split. He states that

> A political society can be nothing other than the whole of the associates. A nation cannot decide that it will not be a nation, or that it will be a nation only in a certain way, for that would be saying that it is not a nation in any other way. Similarly, a nation cannot decree that its common will shall cease to be its common will (Sieyès cited in Baker 1990: 147).

This was a clear refutation of the traditional view of the functioning of the Estates-General as a meeting of delegates of three distinct orders. He concluded that "the general will…cannot be one as long as you allow three orders and three representations" (Sieyès cited in Baker 1990: 247). This is of course a further justification for Sieyès' stated desire that the orders at the Estates-General should meet and vote together rather than by Estate. Only then would it be an expression of a truly general will.

Interestingly, Sieyès acknowledges the potential for the Provincial Assemblies, one of the mainstays of the King's reforms, eventually to have developed into his much needed unitary will. Elsewhere in *Qu'est ce que le tiers Etats?* he declares that:

> It is natural that since public affairs within these assemblies would have been treated without regard for personal order, there would have soon developed a community of interest amongst the three orders, which would have been, therefore, the general interest: and the nation would have finished where all nations should have started, by being one.[26] (Sieyès 2015: 57)

This belief expressed by Sieyès is further proof of the potentially revolutionary implications of the proposals the King's was seeking to enact during his reign. However, given the failure of the Provincial Assemblies to get off the ground, Sieyès was left with no choice but to force unity between the three orders as delegates within the Estates-General.

The unity of the nation also proved useful once the Third Estate had decided to take unilateral action within the meeting of the Estates-General. As one deputy pointed out the "two privileged classes are not the nation, but are in the nation"[27] (*Archives parlementaires*: 122). Another clarified this implication stating that:

> …certainly they [privileged deputies] will agree with you; that if they only consider themselves deputies of the clergy, as deputies of the nobility, they would have no right to occupy themselves with the interest of the entire nation, and which

[26] *"Il est naturel de croire que les affaires publiques se traitant dans ces Assemblées, sans égard à l'ordre personnel, il se serait bientôt formé une communauté d'intérêts entre les trois Ordres, qui aurait été, par conséquent, l'intérêt général : et la Nation aurait finit par où toutes les Nations auraient dû commencer, par être une.''*

[27] "*Que ces deux classes privilégiées ne sont pas la nation, mais dans la nation…*"

constitution to adopt for example.[28] (M. Le Grand, cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 115)

The implication is clear: the privileged orders cannot make decisions for the kingdom as a whole, that right belonging solely to the representatives of the majority of the nation who were awaiting the missing deputies in the National Assembly. This was the name finally agreed upon by the delegates of the Third Estate and the few members of the clergy and nobility who had joined them. By a vote of 491 in favour and 90 votes against, the name was chosen based on an amendment proposed by the Abbé Sieyès himself in the morning session of 17 June 1789. As with the progressive change in the meaning and political significance of public opinion, the concept of nation had to go through a similar process in order to eventually play this revolutionary role in the hands of the delegates of the Third Estate. The process was very similar in that the first debates between the Crown and the *parlements* undermined the traditional conception of the nation, which formed the basis of absolute monarchy and then enabled new usages and arguments to emerge.

3.3. The nation as arbiter: who represents the nation?

When considering the process that led to the declaration of the nation as sovereign in June 1789, the claims of three key political actors need to be taken into account: the Crown, the *parlements* and in the final phase the Third Estate. These claims emerged at different times and in different circumstances but all coexisted and ultimately contributed to the process of establishing the sovereign nation at the heart of politics. The claims by the Crown and the *parlements* to represent the nation, and the debates over reforms in which they were involved,

[28] "*…certainement ils conviendront avec vous : que s'ils ne se considéraient eux-mêmes que comme députés du clergé, comme députés de la noblesse, ils n'auraient aucun droit à s'occuper de la totalité des intérêts de la nation, de la constitution à faire, par exemple*."

led to an initial crucial departure from the theory of absolute monarchy: the separation of the nation from the body of the king (Baker 1990: 225-6). In time, the actions and rhetoric of the monarch in trying to attack the *parlements*' privileges would acknowledge not only that the nation was separate from the king but also that it was a source of authority in its own right. The *parlements*' claim that helped to deblock the very rigid conception of the nation in absolutist theory, nonetheless, had within it the seeds of the parlements' own obsolescence. Indeed, they claimed to represent the nation in the absence of the *ancien régime's* representative assemblies, mainly the Estates-General. As soon as the government agreed to summoning the Estates-General its position weakened and, as stated in the previous chapter, it truly lost popular support when it suggested that the Estates-General should meet in the same form as in 1614. Due to this error of judgement the parlements' "popularity vanished overnight (Hardman 1999: 65). And the government's opening up of the public debate about the form of the Estates-General opened the way for newer more radical views of who represented the nation. And while the some of the Crown's proposals can already be considered as serious attacks on the *ancien regime*, the empowerment of the Third Estate's representatives introduced a new player to French politics and the consequences proved revolutionary.

3.3.1 The Crown's Claim to Represent the Nation

Put simply, according to the traditional logic of the *ancien régime*, the king had no need to make a claim to represent the nation as he was the nation. This logic, present in the works of theorists such as Bossuet and Hobbes (Baker 1990: 225), is summarised by Baker as follows: "The king represents the whole, not in the sense that he is authorised by the body of the

nation to act on its behalf, but precisely because the nation exists as a body only in the individual person of the monarch" (Baker 1990: 225-6).

The passage of Bossuet echoing this logic reads as follows:

> The Prince as a prince, is not seen as a singular man: it is a public persona, all the State is within him, the will of the people is enclosed in his own. […] therefore all the strength of individuals is reunited in the person of the Prince. Such grandeur, that a single man contains so many![29] (Bossuet 1776).

This theoretical bastion, in Bossuet's case fortified with numerous references to scripture, proved far from secure as the eighteenth century wore on. In a document read out before the *parlements* on 3 March 1766, during what came to be known as the Discourse of the Flagellation[30], the King felt the need to rebuke the *parlements*. Part of this document reads as follows: "that my people are at one with me; and that the rights and interests of the nation, which some have dared to constitute as a body separate from that of the monarchy, are necessarily united with my right and can only reside in my hands […]" (Louis XV cited in Jones 2017: 129).

The reference to the nation being constituted as separate is a direct challenge to claims that had been made with increasing frequency, and which would continue, in the *parlements*' *remonstrances*. By this point in time in the reign of Louis XV the mere need to engage in such a restatement of absolutist theory shows the fragility of the Crown's position. "Reality no longer corresponded to this theory" (Jones 1995: 109) and the Crown increasingly sought to engage with the *parlements'* claim directly through ideological confrontation.

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[29] *"Le Prince en tant que Prince, n'est pas regardé comme un homme particulier: c'est un personage public, tout l'Etat es ten lui, la volonté de tout le Peuple est renfermée dans la sienna. […] ainsi toute la puissance des particulier est réunie en la personne du Prince. Quelle grandeur, qu'un seul homme en contiennent tant!"*

[30] Name given to the Lit de Justice at which Louis XV directly addressed the Parlements of Paris and remindd them of the principles underpinning his Royal authority.

Jacob-Nicolas Moreau was a ministerial propagandist who sought to defend the Crown against the *parlements*' attacks on its position. Like more recent historians (Jones 1995, Baker 1990), Moreau, even at the time, saw the 1750s as a turning point after which the *parlements* had consolidated their own views and as a result systematically moved to confront the Crown's position. Baker characterises Moreau's proposed strategy to combat the *parlements* as being based on the recognition that their success depended almost entirely "on their ability to appeal to the public by mobilising juridical arguments and historical facts against the government" (Baker 1990:38). The key to his position was that the *parlements* had no right, according to the principles of the *ancien regime*, to act as constraints on the king's sovereign power. However, their mastery of "ideological resources" (Baker 1990: 38) and their ability to gain public backing for their position enabled them to back up their claims despite the lack of a judicial foundation.

Moreau's argument was not much different in essence from that of Hobbes or Bossuet in that he believed that "power must be one and absolute, in order that liberty may be assured and properties secure" (Moreau cited in Baker 1990: 54). He viewed the reign of Charlemagne as the gold standard of monarchical rule as it combined unconstrained sovereign power with enlightened council (Baker 1990: 53). What was new was the way in which Moreau supported his argument. Gone were the references to scripture or abstract philosophy, which were replaced with arguments based on his interpretation of French history and judicial precedent. It was by competing with the *parlements* for the control of French history and judicial precedent that Moreau wanted to win the ideological war which he perceived as rocking the foundations of absolutism. He dedicated his entire career to this endeavour and when Revolution struck France he was still obsessively building up an archive in order to defend the monarchy (Baker 1990: 39).

Another novelty of Moreau's proposed approach, set out in a memorandum circulated in ministerial circles in the 1760s, was that the Crown should not resort to secrecy but publicly confront the *parlements*' claims. As Baker summarises, "Ideological contestation was to be the order of the day. Success in this new environment required that the crown mobilise in support of its authority and policies the symbolic resources inherent in the history, laws, and traditions of the absolute monarchy" (Baker 1990: 38-9).

The Crown increasingly tried to gain public support for its policies, and this was eventually tried by a direct appeal to the nation with Calonne's *Avertisssement*. Even before he resorted to this very public attempt to oppose the interests of the privileged few to that of the many, as argued in the previous chapter, the entire point of the Assembly of Notables was to outmanoeuvre the *parlements*. In the previously mentioned memorandum to the King, Calonne stated that his objective in convening the notables was to "silence the protestations of the clergy, forestall the complaints of the nobility, ensure the swiftest registration, counter-balance the protests of the few provinces by the satisfaction of the majority and register the national interest in order to oppose it to all the sectional interests" (Calonne cited in Hardman 1999: 34).

Calonne's stated objective was therefore to confront the resistance of any privileged interests, be they those of individuals, entities or provinces, with the good of the whole, referred to here as "the nation". He re-emphasises this point in the subsequent sentences by claiming that the Assembly of Notables will "make known its [the nation's] wishes in so majestic a manner that it will be impossible to think that they will ever be susceptible to change" (Calonne cited in Hardman 1999: 34).

Given that the government's strategy was to confront sectional interests with those of the majority, it is unsurprising that both the speeches and the memoranda presented to the

notables were laced with language that echoed this opposition. For example, in his opening speech before the assembly the King expressed his hope that no "individual interests" would seek to oppose the "general interest" (*Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*: 52). Calonne's opening speech was no less confrontational, referring to "abuses […] which weigh on the productive and labouring classes" and the "abuses of pecuniary privileges, the most numerous exceptions to common law"[31] (Calonne cited in *Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*: 72). This reference to the exception to common law is of particular interest as it is similar to the argument put forward by Sieyès in *Qu'est ce que le Tiers-Etats?* to justify the Third Estate's claim to power.

Calonne's version of this argument was further substantiated in the memorandum on the *Imposition Territoriale*. The memorandum argues that once the duties of vassalage were replaced with a tax it became a "general law" inherent to "any territorial possession" (*Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*: 109). Any claims to seek exemption from this payment of tax was tantamount to breaking "the link which unites the Citizen to the State"[32] (*Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*: 109). The memorandum goes on to state that "the right to not be subject to public taxes, is the right to not be under the protection of the public authority or subservient to it, the right to no longer be a citizen" (*Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*: 115). This argument of a voluntary removal from being a citizen protected by the Crown is highly reminiscent of Sieyès idea that the privileged orders, by seeking exception, remove themselves from the body of the nation.

Although the notables did not explicitly reject the notion of equality of taxation, they did provide significant resistance to Calonne's reforms. This is perhaps unsurprising because

[31] *"Tels sont les abus qui pèsent sur les classes productives et laborieuses" and "les abus des privilèges pécuniaires, les plus exceptions à la loi commune"*
[32] *"Prétendre se soustraire à l'impôt et réclamer les exceptions particulières, c'est rompre le lien qui unit les Citoyens à l'Etat"*

many of the notables also sat and presided over the *parlements* which Calonne had feared in the first place. Faced with this unforeseen opposition, Calonne took the logic of pitting the few against the many to its ultimate conclusion and, breaking with the traditions of the *ancien régime*, publicly appealed for the support of the many.

The *Avertissement* was a clear break with traditional functioning of *ancien régime* politics. Not only was it a very public statement in traditionally private politics, but it was also a clear endorsement of equality by a government at the head of a society based on exemption and privilege. Given these subversive characteristics, it is a clear demonstration of the King's reformist credentials and therefore highly likely that he instigated Calonne's publication of the *Avertissement* and is believed to have written parts of it himself (Hardman 1999: 41-2).

With the publication of the reform Memoranda and the accompanying *Avertissement*, the language of "abuses" was intentionally made very public. The text attempts to forestall arguments about the increased cost to certain taxpayers: "People will pay more! Doubtless, but who? Only those who do not pay enough; they will pay what they owe as a fair proportion and no one will be wronged" (The *Avertissement* cited in Hardman 1999: 40).

In an effort to bring public pressure to bear on the reticent notables, the pamphlet, which was read from the pulpits, directly opposed the privileged against the people: "Privileges will be sacrificed! Yes, as justice demands and necessity requires; would it be better to load even more on the non-privileged? The people? There will be loud squeals! That was to be expected: can one ever act for the general good without ruffling certain individual interests?" (The *Avertissement* cited in Hardman 1999: 40).

Furthermore, foreshadowing Sieyès' more explicit reference to the nation, the *Avertissement* draws parallels between the King's desires and those of the nation: "It would be doing the nation an injustice and showing it a lack of understanding to doubt for a moment the

coincidence between its desires and those of a king whom it cherishes and whom it sees animated solely by the wish to make his people happy" (The *Avertissement* cited in Hardman 1999: 40).

The lack of public support in response to the *Avertissement* helped to crystallise the opposition to Calonne amongst the notables which led to his dismissal shortly after the *Avertissement's* publication. In April 1787 both Calonne and the King had misinterpreted and failed to stir the nation into supporting their reforms. However, a mere two years later in January 1789 similar arguments, this time made by a radical cleric, the Abbé Sieyès, would chime with public consciousness. Mere months after that, Sieyès would directly contribute to the unilateral action which would lead the Third Estate to declare the nation, and by proxy "the many", the true sovereigns of France.

The *Avertissement* was a departure from the normality of the *ancien régime* in more ways than one and also shared some arguments with the more radical argument made by Sieyès covered later in this chapter. This publication was the culmination of a more general trend whereby, regardless of the size of the intended audience (the notables through the memoranda or the country at large through the *Avertissement*), the Crown sought to show that it had the nation's backing for its policies. Ultimately, this shift in government communication failed to provide support for the government's reforms, be it from the *parlements*, the notables or the public at large. However, it did lend credence to the notion that, contrary to the implications of the theory of the *ancien régime*, the nation was distinct from the body of the king, and the Crown had an interest in seeking its support.

The memoranda presenting the various reforms and the speeches of ministers to the Assembly of Notables makes this separation and reliance abundantly clear. The nation is by this point considered a necessary source of support for the future of the monarchy. Indeed,

one of the stated objectives of the new Provincial Assemblies was to "at last awaken this national interest which, uniting the subjects amongst themselves and the people to their sovereign, ensure the enlightened authority of the support of voluntary obedience"[33] (*Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*: 101).

This quote emphasises that the nation is a community still in need of construction and one definitely not entirely encompassed in the body of the monarch. Perhaps more interestingly, it highlights the perceived need of the government to re-establish the basis upon which the King's subjects owe him their allegiance.

In a further break with *ancien régime* principles, another stated objective of the Provincial Assemblies was that the "king's will shall always be explained to his subjects"[34] (*Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*: 107). This is far removed from Bossuet's claim that the king was answerable only to God and therefore could not be questioned or be required to explain himself to anyone within the earthly realm. Put simply this was because according to Bossuet "God is the real king"[35] (Bossuet 1776: 1). In Bossuet's mind, "the judgements of the sovereign are attributed to God himself" and "only God can judge their judgements and of their person"[36] (Bossuet 44-5). In a clear jab at the *parlements* the Provincial Assemblies also had for objective that the administration would never "be stopped in its tracks, always seconded by the wishes of the nation"[37] (*Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*: 107). However, this confirms that not only is the nation separate from the king but also that it has

[33] "*et de faire naître enfin cet intérêt national qui, unissant les sujets entre eux, et les peuples à leur Souverain, assure à l'autorité éclairée l'hommage d'une obéissance volontaire*"
[3434] "*que les volontés du Roi seront toujours expliquées à Ses Sujets*"
[35] *"Dieu est le vrai Roi"*
[36] *"Les jugemens souverains sont attribute à Dieu même. […]Il n'y a que Dieu qui puisse juger de leur jugemens & de leur personnes."*
[37] *"que l'Administration sera toujours éclarié, et jamais arrêté dans sa marche ; toujours secondé par le vœu national"*

the power, granted by its support, to facilitate or even enable the smooth governing of the realm.

These extracts from royal communications merely confirm that part of the debate over the role of the nation in French politics was already settled. Indeed, as Baker states, by 1788, although the defenders of the monarchy refused to recognise that the *parlements*' magistrates represented the nation, they did acknowledge "the principle of nation representation itself" (Baker 1990: 233). In essence, "the issue was no longer whether the nation was to be represented, but how" (Baker 1990: 233).

In retrospect, part of the answer to this question was already hinted at during a speech by Calonne introducing the reforms proposing the suppression of internal customs barriers. Calonne declared that the request for the suppression of internal customs barriers formed a part of the *Cahiers de Doléance* presented at the previous Estates General in 1614. In light of this Calonne declared that the notables would be "fulfilling the wish that the nation in its entirety expressed one-hundred and sixty years ago" (Calonne cited in *Procès verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*: 139). Equating the will of the Estates General with that of the nation had by this point become commonplace, not least in the *parlements*' arguments. However, at the time, in 1787, the government still hoped it would not be necessary to resuscitate this ancient representative institution.

3.3.2. The Parlements Claim to Represent the Nation

Throughout the eighteenth century the primary objective of the *parlements* had been to establish themselves as the main institutions of opposition to royal power. This was

frequently done through cries against royal despotism, but from the 1750s the *parlements* increasingly relied on their claim to represent the nation. An example of this can be found in one of the *parlements remonstrance* in 1753 where they informed the King, Louis XV, that their function was "to represent to your subjects the very person of your majesty, answering to them for the justice and utility of all your laws, and to represent your subjects in the eyes of your majesty, answering to you for their fidelity and submission" (*Parlements* cited in Baker 1990: 228). This was therefore a double claim, by understanding royal power to be principally judicial, the *parlements* claimed, as the highest judicial authority in the land, to represent the King to the nation but also the nation to the King. This claim was not to be understood purely symbolically; the role of the *parlements* was increasingly described in practical terms. The *Parlement* of Brittany wrote as much in one of its *remonstrances* in 1757:

> Indeed, the *parlement* only ever speaks to the nation in the name of the king, just as it only speaks to its king in the name of the nation. Its *remonstrances* are those of the nation, the right it has to make them is a right essential to every free nation (*Parlements de Rennes* cited in Baker 1990: 230).

This quote establishes the principle that the main tool of the *parlements*' opposition, the *remonstrance*, needs to be considered as the opinion of the nation as a whole. Furthermore, it seeks to defend this by implying that any attempt to remove the right would be an act of despotism.

Seven years later the same *parlement* made an even bolder claim, this time in reference to the *parlement's* act of registering royal edicts: "It is the consent of the nation, which your *parlements* represents, that completes the law (*Parlements de Rennes* cited in Baker 1990: 231). The claim strengthens the *parlements* position by equating their registration of royal

edicts to an act of national consent. This also highlights that, unlike traditional *ancien régime* theory, a form of national consent, exterior to the King, is necessary for a law to be implemented.

The origins of these claims made by the *parlements* can be found in the work of Le Paige, who in the 1750s became "the leading theoretician of parlementary claims against the crown" (Baker 1990: 36). Crucial to Le Paige's argument was the assumption of an essentially fixed view of history. From the very beginning, French history was characterised by the stability of the relationship between the key entities of "our state" (Le Paige cited in Baker 1990: 42), namely the king, the *parlements* and the nation (Baker 1990: 42).

This stability of French history was used to trace the origins of the *parlements* all the way back to institutions existing in Frankish times. Le Paige equated the *parlements*' role with the combined roles of the Frankish *Cour du Roi*

> or council of princes elected by the nation to assist the king in the administration of justice; and the *Cour de la nation*, the general assembly or *parlement* in which the king exercised his legislative function with the counsel of the assembled nation (Baker 1990: 43).

This historical demonstration undertaken by Le Paige shows the claimed underpinning for the dual judicial and representative roles which the *remonstrances* of the 1750s and later, referred to with increasing frequency. It is the power of history, and therefore judicial precedent, which shores up the *parlements*' claim. Their lineage can be traced back, according to Le Paige, to "that described by Tacitus 1600 years ago during the period of our German kings, whose origin is found only with the very origin of the state" (Le Paige cited in Baker 1990: 43). Le Paige's argument also helps explain why the nation was placed at the centre of the ideological debates between the King and the *parlements*. In order to defend the *parlements*'

claim to represent the nation, Le Paige was forced to ignore the claim of another institution, the Estates General. Unlike the *parlements*, Le Paige denied that the Estates General had any links to Frankish national assemblies, thereby ensuring, in his mind, that it had no legitimate claim to represent the nation's will (Baker 1990: 44).

By the 1770s, however, the *parlements* had drastically changed their stance on the role of the Estates General. The *parlements* argued increasingly that in the absence of its representative institutions, one of which was the Estates General, the *parlements* could represent and defend the nation's interests. This formed the central argument of the *Remonstrances de la Cour des Aides* presented to Louis XVI in 1775 shortly after his accession to the throne. The criticism of the monarchy found in this *remonstrance* is twofold. The first is that all the institutions which should provide representation for the nation have either not been summoned, like the Estates General, or have had their powers curtailed like the *pays d'élections*[38] (Baker 1990: 117). The *remonstrance* summarises this in these terms: "The whole nation has, so to speak, been declared incapable of managing its own affairs and placed in the charge of guardians" (*Remonstrances de la Cour des Aides* cited in Baker 1990: 117).

The second criticism is that in the absence of its true representation, the institutions which have been forced to step in to represent the nation's interests have also had their power limited. Most notably, the higher courts and the *parlements* were forbidden from discussing administrative matters (Baker 1990: 117). As a result of these two tendencies in the *ancien régime*, the *remonstrance* concluded that "a government has been introduced into France far more fatal than despotism and worthy of oriental barbarism" (*Remonstrances de la Cour des Aides* cited in Baker 1990: 117). The allusion to "oriental barbarism" is key because it was

[38] Pays d'election: were administrative areas in which the King's of France had to seek consent for taxation from local elected assemblies. During the 17th century these assemblies gave up their rights to consent to taxation and gradual disappeared.

seen as a form of government in which the administration rather than the sovereign acted despotically. It is for this reason that in the following sentence the *remonstrance* claims that the injustices of the *ancien régime* were being enacted "under eyes of just the sovereign" (*Remonstrances de la Cour des Aides* cited in Baker 1990: 117). When seeking to avoid being directly critical of the King, it was always useful to portray him as a victim of an evil minister or administration.

The key arguments of the *parlements* developed in the second half of the eighteenth century resurfaced in the final confrontation between the King and the *parlements* in the summer of 1788. The *Parlement de Rennes* stated that "In the absence of the Estates General, the nation, since it is unable to have its voice heard, has the right to expect from the *parlements*, which is the intermediary between the sovereign and his peoples, the protests required by attacks upon its rights" (*Parlement de Rennes* cited in Baker 1990: 234). This restates the initial argument that the *parlements* are the main interface between the King and the nation, and that in the absence of true national representation, they represented the nation's interests.

It was in the context of this final confrontation with the *ancien régime* that the *notables* and then the *parlements* declared themselves unable to agree to the promulgation of a new perpetual taxation. They argued that this right rested solely with the assembly of the nation in the form of the Estates-General. The problem with this line of argument is that as soon as the government agreed to call the Estates General, any argument based on this institution's absence collapsed. The focus of public interest moved away from the *parlements* and shifted to the Estates-General itself, and more specifically the form it should take after over a century and a half of absence. It was in the context of this debate that the *Parlement de Paris* committed an error of judgement which would cost it any remaining support among the public. Having returned from exile, the *Parlements de Paris* declared on 25 September 1788 that it "maintains its insistence that the Estates General designated for next January be

regularly convoked and composed, according to the form observed in 1614 (*Parlements de Paris* cited in Jones 2017: 132).

Public opinion turned against the *parlements* because the implication of their demand was that the new principles of representation, already experimented with in the Provincial Assemblies, would be ignored. For the crucial principles of doubling the representation of the Third Estate and voting by head were jeopardised by this claim by representatives of the privileged orders. This loss of public support provided the perfect opportunity for defenders of the Third Estate's claim to represent the nation to make their ultimately successful case.

3.3.3. The Third Estates Claim to Represent the Nation

Although not explicitly in support of the Third Estate's claim to represent the nation, Mably's "*Des droits et devoirs du citoyen*" was a direct contestation of the *parlements*' claim set out by Le Paige.[39] It was written in the 1750s as a counter-argument to Le Paige's interpretations of French history, but was not published until 1789. Its criticism of the *parlements'* position and its support for the institution of the Estates-General could have contributed to undermining the *parlements*' position and therefore bolstering the claim of the Third Estate.

In contrast to Le Paige, Mably's view of French history is one of profound instability caused by the inability of the nation "to achieve a settled political order appropriate to the needs as a free and sovereign people" (Baker 1990: 46). For Mably the key to satisfying these needs was through the regular convocation of an assembly of the nation. It is for this reason that like Moreau, the defender of the Crown's claim, he also had a favourable view of Charlemagne's reign precisely because he would regularly assemble the nation on the Champs de Mars (Baker 1990: 48). Mably's defence of the role of the Estates-General therefore stemmed from it status as an assembly of the nation. It was the increasing tendency of French kings during

[39] Grabiel Bonnot de Mably (1709-1785) : French philosopher, historian and economist.

the Middle Ages to summon the Estates-General when they pleased rather than systematically, that constituted, for Mably, the great tragedy of French history. Baker summarises Mably's position that by failing to make the Estates-General a regularly convoked body, the French failed to make it "an effective expression of the national will" (Baker 1990: 49). Mably also blames the *parlements* for the undermining of the importance of the Estates-General in French politics. This is because in order to position themselves as the representatives of the nation, as seen in Le Paige's work, they also needed to discredit the Estates-General, which, for Mably, had a more legitimate claim. Baker summarises Mably's criticism of the *parlements'* defence of fundamental rights as follows:

> The fundamental rights of the nation, Mably insisted, is not its first, but that which gives it a regular political existence. And in this sense, French history was the story not of enduring constitutional success but of constantly repeated political failure. Quite simply, the French lacked a fundamental law because they had yet to exercise a sustained national will (Baker 1990: 49).

The convocation of the Estates-General in 1789 would therefore constitute a unique opportunity for the resurrection of a genuine assembly of the nation. The form which this assembly would take was still open to debate, and it is no coincidence that the work of Mably was reprinted at this time. Sieyès also came to play a crucial role in this debate.

Abbé Sieyès was fundamental in establishing the Third Estate's claim to political power both through pamphlets and as a deputy at the Estates-General. The basis of Sieyès argument is that the nation, as an eternal entity, has the power to change the French constitution. In *Qu'est ce que le Tiers Etats*? he states that "the nation exists before everything, it is the origins of everything. Its will is always legal, it is itself the law"[40] (Sieyès 2015: 77). Sieyès

[40] *"La Nation existe avant tout, elle est l'origine de tout. Sa volonté est toujours égale, elle est la loi elle-même"*

makes the implication of this statement quite clear when he contrasts the power of the government to that of the nation. Government power is "real only because it is constitutional" meaning that the government is constrained by laws which are imposed on it (Sieyès 2015: 79). In contrast "national will, on the contrary, only needs to be a reality in order to be legal, it is the origin of all legality" (Sieyès 2015: 79).

For Sieyès, therefore, an assembly of the nation would have the power, not only to overrule the government, but also change the laws which would constrain government operations in the future. Sieyès also acknowledges that in a nation too large to meet in person there was a need for representation. The nation would need to grant "the necessary powers" to extraordinary representatives" to act on its behalf[41] (Sieyès 2015: 81). This is clearly a reference to the forthcoming Estates-General and consolidates Sieyès' view that this national assembly would be able to reform the French constitution to recognise the power of the Third Estate. As covered in the previous section, for Sieyès the Third Estate is the essential component of the nation by virtue of encompassing the vast majority of the people contained within it. He summarises this position by declaring that: "If the Third Estate is not present [at the Estates General], the nation will be mute. And nothing done there will have any validity"[42] (Sieyès 2015: 62). It was in order to ensure that the Third Estate was not only present but also able to counter the manoeuvrings of the privileged orders that the representation of the Third Estate should be doubled and voting be conducted by head rather than by order (Sieyès 2015: 42).

Sieyès, in his pamphlets and subsequently in his interventions once he became a deputy of the Third Estate, was consistently critical of the privileged orders that he saw as a main impediment to the Third Estate's claim to empowerment. In this, some of Sieyès' arguments

[41] *"il faut qu'elle confie à des représentants extraordinaires les pouvoirs nécessaires dans ces occasions"*
[42] *"Si le Tiers n'y est pas représenté, la Nation y sera muette. Rien ne pourra s'y faire validement"*

read as more extreme versions of the arguments put forward by the King and his ministers in documents such as the aforementioned *Avertissement*. Sieyès was critical of the *notables* whom he accused of having defended their own privileges, first against "the throne" in 1787, and then against "the nation" at the second meeting in 1788. This was a reference to the second Assembly of Notables' ruling against the doubling of the representation of the Third Estate and voting by head rather than by order at the upcoming Estates-General. This proposed arrangement was of course a quasi guarantee that the privileged orders could work together to block any reforms they disagreed with, even if the Third Estate voted in favour. It was in this context that Sieyès wrote his pamphlet *Qu'est ce que le Tiers Etats?* to weigh in on the debate.

The pamphlet opened with an unambiguous claim of the power he felt the Third Estate should wield in French politics:

1. What is the Third Estate? – Everything

2. What has it been up to now in the political order? – Nothing

3. What does it ask for? – To be something[43] (Sieyès 2015: 31).

His claim that the Third Estate wanted to be something was somewhat of an understatement of his actual ambitions. Indeed, at the heart Sieyès' argument is a new view of the nation. It was no longer merely a name for the collective entity of the three orders of the *ancien régime*, it was a community, crucially one from which members could be excluded. Sieyès' definition of the nation is simple: "A body of associates living under a common law and represented by the same legislature" (Sieyès 2015: 35). With regard to the overall theme of the thesis, it is interesting to note the total absence of cultural factors determining national belonging. The

[43] *"1. Qu'est ce que le Tiers Etats ?- Tout 2. Qu'a-t-il été jusqu'à présent dans l'ordre politique ? -Rien 3. Que demande-t-il ?- A être quelque chose. "*

primary focus of this deployment of the nation was to establish its ability to instigate and defend a certain conception of the way politics should be conducted. In a sense this has not changed but in more recent periods it would be expected that a notion of shared culture, language or ethnicity would also be included in any definition of national belonging.

For Sieyès "common law" was the crucial factor and this makes a lot of sense when his main target in the pamphlet was the privileged orders which he saw as the key impediment to his desired reforms. Sieyès argued that because of their claims to privilege, which "they dare to call rights", the orders of the nobility exist outside the "common order" and "common law" (Sieyès 2015: 35). As a result of the nobility's claim, they are to be considered a People apart from the "*grande Nation*" (Sieyès 2015: 35). Furthermore, explicitly in political terms, the privileged orders exercise their rights apart from the rest of the nation through their own representatives (Sieyès 2015: 35). With an existence and political representation outside the common order, Sieyès declared the privileged orders to be an "*imperium in imperio*" and "foreign to the nation" (Sieyès 2015: 35).

Sieyès doubled down on his criticism of the privileged orders by claiming that they were at best surplus to requirements and at worst parasitical in nature. For Sieyès the Third Estate alone held within it "everything necessary to form a complete nation"[44] (Seiyès 2015: 34). In contrast, the privileged orders could only "weaken" and "harm" the nation. He goes so far as to suggest that the best way to view the "privileged classes" within a nation is as one would consider "on the body of an unfortunate, a horrible sickness that was eating him alive" (Sieyès 2015: 103). This lack of useful contribution to the community is sufficient, according to Sieyès, for the privileged orders to be made "foreign to the nation by their laziness"[45] (Sieyès 2015: 34).

[44] *"le Tiers-Etat n'a pas en lui tout ce qu'Il faut pour former une Nation complète"*
[45] *"Une telle classe est assurément étrangère à la Nation par sa fainéantise"*

It was on the basis of these ideas that Sieyès was elected to the Estates General as a representative of the Third Estate. Although as a delegate Sieyès made less explicit reference to this exclusionary vision of the nation, it was nonetheless present in the debates. In a speech in which Sieyès urged the Third Estate to constitute itself an active assembly, he stated that they no longer needed to consider attempts at conciliation with the privileged orders. This was because, according to his matter-of-fact argument, "it is sufficient for one party to reject the means of conciliation for them to be viewed as annulled" (Sieyès cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 85). In this case he was referring to the privileged orders rejecting proposals made by the Third Estate in a purposefully constituted conciliatory committee. The fault therefore lay with the privileged orders, leaving the Third Estate's delegates' consciences clear to take unilateral action.

The argument put forward by Sieyès which proved effective in convincing his fellow Third Estate deputies to move towards ever more radical measures was a simple one based on numbers. After the Third Estate had verified its powers and constituted itself an active assembly, Sieyès spoke again, this time justifying the need for them to take action even in the absence of the privileged representatives. In a speech in which he proposed a new name for the assembly, Sieyès mirrored his own argument that the Third Estate alone was sufficient to constitute a nation. He declared that the assembly was comprised of representatives of "at least ninety-six percent of the nation" (Sieyès cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 109). He goes on to state that such a "mass of deputations" should not remain inactive due to the absence of the representatives of "a few bailages or a few classes of citizens" (Sieyès cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 109). Another revolutionary who would shortly gain notoriety spoke after Sieyès. Mirabeau, who was also encouraging the delegates of the Third Estate to take immediate action, albeit under a different name than Sieyès had proposed, also used the numbers argument. He criticised the *ancien régime's* constitution as one in which "a single

word pronounced by 151 individuals could stop the king and 25 million men"[46] (Mirabeau cited in *Archives parlemantaires*: 110). He continued his criticism: "A constitution where two orders which are neither the people, nor the prince, use the second to put pressure on the first, and the first to scare the second, and circumstances to reduce anything which is not them to insignificance"[47] (Mirabeau cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 110).

It was therefore imperative that the Third Estate delegates take immediate action to reform this defective constitution to ensure that it favoured the wellbeing of the majority. Even in the absence of the privileged orders, representatives of the Third Estate, voting for a proposal presented by Sieyès, still considered themselves sufficiently representative of the whole of France to take the title of National Assembly. This was in part a recognition of Sieyès' argument that they alone were able to constitute and therefore represent the nation, but it was also in the hope that the absent delegates would eventually join them. This assertion and recognition that ultimately the majority of the population, grouped in the Third Estate, were the legitimate representatives of the Nation was the culmination half a century of ideological struggle. The Third Estate was a late entrant to this debate which had first been instigated by the King and the *parlements* and which would eventually unstitch the fabric of the monarchy.

Another author to have deployed arguments based on the Third Estate making up the vast majority of the population was Joseph Guillaume Saige and the implications of his arguments were even more radical than Sieyès. Saige's arguments were laid out in a pamphlet called "*Le catéchisme du citoyen*" which was originally published in 1775 but republished in 1789 as a contribution to the growing debate over the meeting of the Estates-General.

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[46] *"une prétendue constitution où un seul mot prononcé par cent-cinquante individus pourrait arrêter le Roi et 25 millions d'hommes"*

[47] *"une constitution où deux ordres qui ne sont ni le people, ni le prince, se serviront du second pour pressurer le premier, du premier pour effrayer le second, et des circonstances pour réduire tout ce qui n'est pas eux à la nullité"*

Saige's pamphlet was also supported by the need for the Third Estate to play a more prominent role in French politics. Much like Sieyès, the *catéchisme du citoyen* bolsters the importance of the Third Estate while challenging that of the two privileged orders. Saige states:

> the Third Estate, finding itself composed of the greatest part of the members of the society, forms, properly speaking, the society itself; and the two other orders must only be considered as particular associations, whose interests are, by the very constitution of the civil state, really subordinate to that of this numerous order (Saige cited in Baker 1990: 125).

The importance of the will of the majority is crucial to Saige's position because his overall argument relies on a form of contract theory. Indeed, he views political society as being formed by the association of free individuals who choose to come together to seek benefits for their common advantage. However, Baker argues that it quickly becomes evident that the author is less concerned with the rights of individuals than with the nation which they form (Baker 1990: 123). One of the central arguments of Saige's pamphlet was that the nation had a "most incontestable right to legislative power" (Saige cited in Baker 1990: 123-4).

The basis of this claim was that the contract underpinning society was agreed upon for the general good and therefore could only be protected by the general will, defined as "the common will of all the members of society, clearly manifested and relative to an object of public interest" (Saige cited in Baker 1990: 124). It was as the collective entity that encompassed all the members of society that the nation should be granted legislative power and the power to modify any aspect of the present organisation of society and politics. Baker argues that at the time of writing Saige did not deploy these potentially radical statements to undermine the traditional constitution of the *ancien régime* (Baker 1990: 124).

However, in the changed context of 1789 and with the benefit of hindsight it is hard once again not to see signs of the Revolution's ultimate outcome in some of the statements in this pamphlet. For example:

> For there is nothing essential in the political body but the social contract and the exercise of the general will; apart from that, everything is absolutely contingent and depends, for its form as for its existence, on the supreme will of the nation, of which every civil power is an emanation […] Thus the nation can create, destroy and change all the magistrates of the state, modify the constitution, or annihilate it totally, in order to form a new one (Saige cited in Baker 1990: 124).

This statement of national sovereignty grants huge power to the nation and although not explicitly stated could be interpreted as meaning that not even the king is safe should the nation choose to totally "annihilate" the existing constitution. It is unsurprising therefore that Baker declares that he knows of "no more radical statement in the pamphlet literature of 1788 and early 1794" (Baker 1990: 124).

Despite all these radical claims in favour of national sovereignty, the importance of the Third Estate and the Estates-General, this institution remained an institution ill-adapted to enabling the implementation of nation sovereignty. Indeed, although it was referred to as a national assembly it was an institution into which the divisions of the *ancien régime* were deeply engrained. For the revolution to occur the actions of the Third Estate had to transform this institution from a gathering of representatives of the three orders of *ancien régime* into society into a gathering of representatives of the nation as a whole endowed with legislative authority.

3.4. From a Society of Orders to National Representation and Limited Corporate Representation to Legislative Assembly

The debates of 1788-89 concerning the form which the upcoming Estates-General should take had led to an innovation that moved it one step closer to being a better representation of the society from which the delegates were drawn. In recognition of the numerical superiority of the Third Estate, the number of its delegates had been doubled compared with those of the privileged orders. However, the government's failure to endorse the other key innovation, instructing the delegates of the three orders to meet together and crucially vote by head rather than order, meant that ultimately the representative nature of the Estates-General remained unchanged. Its delegates traditionally represented the orders which had sent them rather than the nation as a whole. Furthermore, it was on no account to be considered a legislative assembly, and severe limitations were placed on what its delegates could agree to without the explicit permission of whoever deputised them. The doubling of the number of Third Estate delegates had changed nothing of this, so for the Revolution to happen these two final obstacles had to be overcome with little or no support from the privileged orders. The Third Estate delegates would have to become representatives of the nation as a whole rather than merely the Third Estate and, moreover, they would have to overcome the binding mandate that constrained their actions as delegates of the Third Estate. Once again, particularly with regard to a shift in the form of representation, the government's own reforms set precedents which then proved hard to reverse.

3.4.1. From Corporate to nation representation

A key characteristic of *ancien régime* society was not unity but rather endless levels of distinction between geographic regions, members of corporate bodies and other forms of privilege [here some reference(s) would be useful]. The clearest incarnation of this was the existence of the three orders, the clergy, the nobility and the Third Estate, each of which had

clearly defined roles and associated duties or privileges within *ancien régime* society. Furthermore, in theory at least, the nation did not have an existence exterior to the body of the monarch. Given the multiplicity of interests in society and the notion that they only became one in the presence of the monarch, representation under the *ancien régime* served a very specific purpose. As previously mentioned, in the case of the Estates General the delegates of each order were not there to represent the interests of the nation as a whole but only those of the members of the order which elected them. Baker describes the functioning of the "traditional Estates General" as an institution assembled in order to give the king "aid and counsel on behalf of the multiplicity of corporate bodies comprising the particularistic social order of the Old Regime" (Baker 1990: 226). Crucially, the Estates-General "represent[ed] the nation not as a separate entity from the king but as a multiplicity of orders and Estates made one only by (and in) the royal presence" (Baker 1990: 226).

This traditional version of the Estates-General had last been summoned in 1614 and according to some was looking rather outdated by 1789. The debates over the form in which the newly resurrected Estates-General should convene called into question these traditional assumptions about its purpose. Baker concludes that this debate "implied that the principle of political identity had already passed from the king to the nation itself, it is a nation that should now be consulted according to forms adequate to represent its true political nature" (Baker 1990: 234).

It was partly a result of precedents set by the government's reforms that such a drastic debate over the form and function of the Estates-General was triggered. Ultimately, faced with the actions of the Third Estate delegates claiming to speak on behalf of a newly sovereign nation, the Crown resorted to references to the traditional function of the Estates-General. During the *Séance Royale* held on 23rd June in direct response to the declaration of a national assembly

by delegates of the Third Estate joined by a few from the clergy, the King's wishes were stated as follows:

> The king wishes the ancient distinction between the three orders of the state to be preserved in its entirety as being indissolubly linked to the constitution of his kingdom; and that the deputies freely chosen by each of the three orders, forming three chambers, deliberating by order but able, with the sovereign's consent, to agree to deliberate together, may alone be considered as constituting the body of representatives of the nation. Consequently, the king declares null and void the decisions taken by the deputies of the Third Estate on the seventeenth of this month and any subsequently adopted as being illegal and unconstitutional (Hardman 2002: 101).

It was precisely because they had acted unilaterally and claiming to speak for the nation as a whole, as an entity independent from the King, that he felt justified in nullifying the Third Estate's delegates' actions. Furthermore, and presumably in order to stave off any further claims to speak on behalf of the nation as a whole in a challenge to royal power, the King prohibited the discussion of certain topics between the three orders. These included "matters relating to the ancient and constitutional rights of the three orders" and "the form of organisation to be given to future Estates General" (Hardman 2002: 101).

These warnings and prohibitions, of course, went unheeded by the delegates of the Third Estate and they directly defied the King's order to disband into their respective assemblies. Mirabeau famously disobeyed the King's command to disband by declaring that to remove the delegates of the Third Estate from the national chamber his officials would have to request the authorisation to use bayonets (*Archives parlementaires*: 146). However, as has been previously alluded to, the King and his ministers were not entirely blameless in creating

what, in retrospect, can be labelled a truly revolutionary situation. Again, successive attempts at government reform had an impact on the French political landscape and on public consciousness, which in this case accentuated the frustration of the Third Estate.

The reign of Louis XVI saw the government experiment with new forms of non-corporate representation. The Municipal Assemblies, proposed by Calonne and then partially implemented by Brienne, were particularly important as from the outset they were elected institutions. As noted by Jones, the participation of tens of thousands of Frenchmen in elections in 1787-88 "gave expression to an embryonic theory of representation based on individuals rather than interests or orders" (Jones 1995: 10).

At the level of Provincial Assemblies, successive iterations introduced measures intended to reflect the fact that their main objective was to represent the landowners rather than members of specific orders. The earliest versions to be implemented by Necker between 1778-81 were neither elected nor free of the distinctions of order. However, he did implement the doubling of the representation of the Third Estate in recognition of their numerical superiority in the nation's population (Jones 1995: 141). Although none of the Provincial Assemblies proposed by Calonne ever saw the light of day, his proposal was made public record by his publication of his memoranda in 1787. His proposal included the doubling of the number of Third Estate delegates as well as voting by head and in common. As seen previously, in Calonne's proposal there was to be no distinction of order between members of these assemblies.

Although Brienne did concede to the *notables* in granting the privileged orders the role of presiding over the Provincial Assemblies, his objective for these institutions can be seen as the most radical of them all. Jones shares this view with John Hardman who, he reports, believed that Brienne's objective was to create through these assemblies a "viable constitutional alternative to absolute monarchy" (Jones 1995: 118). Brienne's hope was that

ultimately this network of representative assemblies, Municipal, District and Provincial, could provide delegates to an Estates General style assembly should it still prove necessary (Jones 1995: 119). Jones states that this proposal was "enthusiastically supported" by one of Brienne's colleagues, Malesherbes. In a memorandum presented to the King in July 1788, he declared that Provincial Assemblies would elect a "national assembly" of undifferentiated deputies who would represent the whole nation as opposed to individual estates or orders" (Jones 1995: 119). Jones concludes that just as the monarchy teetered on the edge of bankruptcy, Brienne and Malesherbes were "prepared to cross the last frontier of absolute monarchy" (Jones 1995: 119).

Of course, this never occurred, as the promise to convene the Estates General by early 1789 fore-stalled Brienne's attempts to create the necessary network of elected assemblies. Despite the ultimate failure of this hypothetical transition from absolute to representative monarchy, the Provincial Assemblies still left their mark on public opinion. As Jones concludes, "even aborted experiments left a mark on public opinion" (Jones 1995: 141). As well as giving the French population early experience of voting for representatives, it also set precedents about potentially fairer ways of representing the numerical distribution of orders in the nation. It established in the mind of the public the principle of doubling the number of delegates of the Third Estate and voting by head rather than by order. This meant that when the *parlements* of Paris called for the Estates General to be convened, as in 1614, the Third Estate believed they were calling into question precedents which had already been set.

3.4.2. From limited corporate representation to a legislative assembly: overcoming the binding mandate at the Estates-General

As mentioned in the previous section, the purpose of the delegates of the Estates General was not to represent the nation as a whole but the "sum of [its] parts" (Baker 1990: 227). The delegates to the Estates General were to act as bearers of the *Cahiers de Doléances* which

were “the instruments by which the king is informed of the views of particular communities” (Baker 1990: 227). This limitation to information gathering ensured that the Estates General was no challenge to the king’s legislative power as the only public individual able to act on behalf of the nation as a whole. Information gathering was the stated purpose of the Estates General in 1614. It was convened by a young Louis XIII, officially at least, in order to “represent and make known what has happened during our childhood” (Louis XIII cited in Baker 1990: 226).

This view of the Estates General was in keeping with the theory of the *ancien régime* which did not allow any legislative assemblies to challenge the right of the king. For example, even though the Provincial Assemblies were an experiment in alternative forms of representation they were on no account to be institutions endowed with legislative power. These limitations were made clear by Louis XVI in an annotation he wrote on a memorandum sent to him by Brienne. He states that “They [provincial assemblies] will only be empowered to supervise the execution of what has already been decided and to apportion taxation fairly; but they will not even possess the power of simulated consent belonging to the other provinces” (Louis XVI cited in Hardman 2002: 45).

Any institution which did possess power only did so because it was delegated from the king in his absence. As detailed in the previous chapter, with the example of the *parlements* and the *Lit de Justice*, this delegation of power could be revoked in the king’s presence or that of a delegate. In theory at least, this act of appearing before the *parlements* was meant to put an immediate end to any resistance to registering his legislation, as the king was in theory rescinding the delegation’s power that enabled them to raise issues about proposed decrees.

This was a classic example of *ancien régime* power which was delegated from above by the sovereign. However, in the case of the Estates General, the fact that the deputies were there to

represent the interests of the orders which sent them meant that they were also subject to limitations on their power imposed from below.

Ulph, in his assessment of the origins and impact of the binding mandate, argues that delegates to the Estates General "remained unfree agents closely tied to their local constituencies" (Ulph 1951: 225). Far from being representatives of the nation as a whole, these delegates sometimes barely qualified as representatives of the political or social unit which sent them. Indeed, they were often members of the legal profession being paid to fulfil this representative role (Ulph 1951:229).

In order to protect their own interests against demands by the king to extend royal authority, the local authorities had every motive to constrain the power of whoever they had chosen to represent them (Ulph 1951: 228). In the case of the delegates of the Estates General this imposed limitation of power from below took the form of the binding mandate. In short, the binding mandate ensured that the delegates to the Estates General "possessed no power to commit themselves beyond the specific instructions attached to the *cahiers* by their constituents" (Ulph 1951: 225). These mandates were legally binding upon the delegates who could be subject to "retribution from their community" should they be seen to go beyond what was permitted by their *cahiers* (Baker 1990: 227). Even without the fear of retribution, the legal nature of the binding mandates made them very important in a society deeply concerned with matters of law and legal precedent. Furthermore, it may have been even more important to the delegates of the Third Estate, the majority of whom were lawyers.

This point is illustrated during the debates over what name the Third Estate delegates should adopt, having recognised each other's powers, when Mirabeau raised the issue of the limitations of their mandates. Mirabeau criticises Sieyès' first proposed name for its reference to being the "only known and recognised representatives", as potentially being contrary to the

Third Estates delegates' mandates. He refers to the obstacle of a small number of mandates which declare that their respective delegates should withdraw from the Estates General should the three orders fail to negotiate "debating in common" (Mirabeau cited in *Archives parlementaires 1995* : 111). He also declares that "It is therefore not sufficient for you to grant yourselves this name in order for you in fact to have it, nor that we believe you to be legally covered by it"[48] (Mirabeau cited in *Archives parlementaires 1995*: 111). Instead of Sieyès' potentially problematic name, Mirabeau's preferred option is the formula of "Representatives of the French people", as this would at least be beyond the refutation of those who elected to send them to the Estates General (*Archives parlementaires 1995*: 111).

Once again Sieyès had an answer to the problem of the binding mandate set out in *Qu'est ce que le Tiers Etats?*. He argued that "the deputies of a district are not merely the representatives of the bailliage[49] which has named them; they are also called upon to represent the generality of the citizens, to vote for the entire realm" (Sieyès cited in Baker 1990: 248). Sieyès' arguments about the numerical importance of the Third Estate and the indivisible nature of the nation, which permitted no legitimate existence for private interests within it, had clearly had an impact on his fellow delegates. Indeed, during the debate of the naming of the now active Third Estate assembly, a deputy, Monsieur Galand, spoke as follows: "I request that we constitute a legitimate and active Assembly of representatives of the French nation. The Nation is one, indivisible; the Clergy is only a stipendiary body to serve the nation at the foot of the altar; the nobility a body of illustrious persons"[50] (Galand cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 126).

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[48] "*Il ne suffira donc pas de vous donner ce titre pour l'avoir en effet, ni pour qu'on vous en croie légalement revêtus*"

[49] Baillage : administrative division of the land under the ancien régime that in 1789 served as the basis for the electoral breakup for electing representatives to the Estates-General and the cahiers de doléance.

[50] "*Je demande qu'on se constitue en Assemblée légitime et active des représentants de la nation française. La Nation est une, indivisible ; le clergé n'est qu'une corporation stipendiaire de la nation pour le servir au pieds des autels ; la noblesse est une corporation de gens illustrés*."

The minutes of the meeting state that "hardly had he finished when he received the strongest applause"[51] (*Archives parlementaires*: 126). It was as a result of calls to act on behalf of the general will that the binding mandates were sufficiently loosened to enable the creation of a legislative assembly which claimed to be on par or superior to the king. In the Assembly's first official statement, drafted by Sieyès, it declared that "there cannot exist any veto or negative power between the throne and the Assembly" (*Archives parlementaires*: 110).[52]

The Third Estates' delegates resolve in this regard was tested almost immediately during the *Séances Royale* of 23rd June 1789. The King ended his speech with an order: "I order you, Gentlemen, to separate immediately, and to meet tomorrow morning in the chambers affected to your orders" (Louis XVI cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 142).

The deputies of the nobility and some of the clergy complied immediately but "all the members of the National Assembly and several priests stayed still in their places" (*Archives parlemetaires*: 142). It is in this context that Mirabeau gives a speech to encourage the delegates to stay in place: "Where are the enemies of the nation? Is Catalina on our doorstep? I ask that covering yourselves with your dignity and your legislative power, you cover yourselves in the religion of your vow, which does not allow us to separate without having made a new constitution"[53] (Mirabeau cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 142).

With all the right references to threats to ancient Roman democracy and the promise which the delegates made during the Tennis Court Oath, there followed, after a further call to obey the King by a Marquis, a torrent of statements of defiance. These statements highlight the shift in power between the nation's representatives and the King. For example, one deputy,

[51] "*A peine a-t-il achevé qu'il reçoit les applaudissements les plus vifs*"
[52] "*il ne peut exister entre le Trône et l'Assemblée aucun veto, aucun pouvoir négatif*"
[53] "*Où sont les ennemis de la nation? Catalina est-il à nos portes ? Je demande qu'en vous couvrant de votre dignité, de votre puissance législative, vous vous renfermiez dans la religion de votre serment ; il ne nous permet de nous séparer qu'après avoir fait la constitution*"

Monsieur Gleizen, states: "This is a *lit de justice* held within a national assembly: it is the sovereign who speaks as a master; when he should consult"[54] (Gleizen cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 146).

The session ended with the deputies of the National Assembly passing a motion guaranteeing their protection. It stated that the "person of each deputy is inviolable" and any individual who undertook to harm a deputy "is an infamous traitor of the nation and guilty of a capital crime"[55] (National Assembly motion cited in *Archives parlementaires*: 147). Although it was not yet given the name of crime against the nation, the punishment for seeking to attack the new sovereign was the same as before: death.

The rejection of the binding mandate in favour of delegates representing the nation as a whole was the one, among the first truly officialised revolutionary steps taken towards the new order, which would emerge out of the ruins of the *ancien régime* in the summer 1789. As Baker concludes "the French Revolution of 1789 was, first and foremost, a revolution of the deputies against the conditions of their election" (Baker 1990: 244). It was achieved through appeals to the general will of the national body, which would gradually cement its position as France's true sovereign replacing and ultimately, several years later, killing the King.

3.5. Conclusion

From the perspective of recent and present day politics, claiming that the nation as sovereign acts as an arbiter of domestic politics does not seem to be a particularly controversial claim, especially in France where its legislative assembly still bears Sieyès' title of National Assembly. However, the arguments contained in this chapter strongly suggest that the nation, as the politicised name given to the body that would replace the king as sovereign, was

[54] "*C'est un lit de justice tenu dans une Assemblée nationale: c'est un souverain qui parle en maitre, quand il devrait consulter*."
[55] "*sont infâmes et traitresse envers la nation, et coupables de crime capital*"

arbitrating before its role was officialised. By drawing parallels between an expanding notion of public opinion and the limits of the politicised nation, this chapter has argued that even before the shift was officialised its political importance was already rivalling that of the King. The existing concept of the nation was destabilised through its increasing usage starting in the 1750s with each of the main factions of the *ancien régime*, the Crown, the *parlements*, and later the Third Estate, each claiming to represent its interests. As with other elements which destabilised the *ancien régime*, detailed in the previous chapter, its usages in the debates between the Crown and *parlements* helped free it from the confines of absolutist tradition and eventually opened up the opportunity for the Third Estate. The ideas of those claiming national representation on the behalf of the Third Estate proved ultimately to be much more revolutionary in their political implications. The final step in officialising the position of the nation as the new sovereign, replacing the king and setting it on the path that would be recognisable to us today, occurred at the Estates-General and precedence had once again been set, in part by the Crown's own ambitions.

Considering once again, as at the opening of the previous chapter, Campbell's warning about distinguishing between the fall of the *ancien régime* and the Revolution, the nation seems to be a clear bridge between the two. While nothing was inevitable in the way the events unfolded, the increasing importance of the nation in domestic politics seems to have become inevitable throughout the process of decomposition of the *ancien régime*. Indeed, having been detached from the body of the king and eventually having become an entity which key political actors sought to control while at the same time appealing publicly for its support, the nation's role in politics appeared assured.

This work has chosen to focus on the period leading up to the French Revolution so as to examine one of the first and most radical politicisations of the nation. In order to insist on its initially political role as opposed to that of being a source of identity, it does not go beyond

June 1789 in its analysis of the Revolution. In short, the nation is considered as an abstract political weapon in an *ancien régime* argument over sovereignty rather than a weaponised source of politicised identity as recognised in the chapters on the FN's usage.

This thesis endeavours to present a very long-term and evolutionary perspective of history in which the French Revolution is considered as being a long time in the making and by no means inevitable. However, if one true turning point can be identified, again only with hindsight, it would be the Third Estate's declaration of having constituted themselves as a national assembly and the nation sovereign. Indeed, from 17 June 1789, most subsequent regimes in France, and eventually many around the world, have had to pay some form of lip-service, at the very least, to the notion of national sovereignty.

Transition – Mind the Gap: A brief and focused history of French politics between the French Revolution and founding of the Front National

§1. Introduction: 200 years of French political history in the shadow of the Revolution

Almost 200 years separate the two periods that serve as inspiration and examples of both Total Crisis and the Nation as Arbiter, the development of which form the primary objective of this thesis. Brushing over such a large period might imply a continuity and inevitability between the First Republic, established in September 1792, and the Fifth Republic established in 1958 in the context of the Algerian War of Independence. This could not be further from the truth. Indeed, Winock (2009) estimates that since 1791 France has known 15 constitutions or "equivalent texts". Further to highlight the point, he emphasises that at the time of the publication of his book, in 1986, a 50-year old would have lived under four distinct regimes "three republics and one dictatorship under foreign tutelage" (Winock 2009: 9).

Rather than the continuity in regimes providing a link between the two periods under study in this thesis, some of the varied legacies of the French Revolution can fulfil this role. Furthermore, while the FN was founded in 1972 it was itself a coalition of numerous far-right movements with sometimes long and distinct traditions stretching back, in the case of the monarchists and Catholic factions to the original traditions of Counter-Revolution.

This chapter will first consider some of the direct legacies of the French Revolution particularly the regimes' instability during the nineteenth century and the notions of Left and

Right that originated in the Revolution and are still in use today. Then a brief history of the Far-right in France will be provided in relation to the FN's direct and indirect ancestors. Emphasis will be placed on continuity and discontinuity between these various movements as well as crucial scholarly debates on the existence of French fascism. Taken together, these differing elements show a form of continuity in French politics linking the period of the French Revolution with that of the recent rise of the FN, and in the present thesis the twin concepts of Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter.

§2. The long shadow of the French Revolution

Many events and trends in French political history can, more or less tenuously, have their origins traced back to the French Revolution. Without presenting an exhaustive account of all the possible links which can be made, this section highlights some of the ones relevant to the upcoming chapters on the rise of the FN. These include the spirit of counter-revolution that has permeated the right and far-right since the Revolution and finds echoes in some of the movements which formed part of the coalition that founded the FN in the 1970s. It will also cover the origins and initial evolution of the Left/Right divide, which has been a key political landmark of French politics, and has increasingly been called into question during the current Total Crisis covered in chapter 5.

This section opens by considering the Regime's instability which characterised nineteenth century French politics. In particular, the focus will be on those counter-revolutionary movements that threatened what can only retrospectively be characterised as the eventual victory of the Republican system. Then the origins and legacy of the Left/Right division will be considered. Finally, another key divide in French politics, this time between Catholicism and the trend towards secularity instigated during the Revolution, will be considered. As is

often the case the divisions between these topics is artificial in nature since during the nineteenth-century, as noted by Sirinelli (2017), the key dividing line between Left and Right was the legacy of the French Revolution: specifically, whether France should be a monarchy, either absolute or constitutional, an Empire or a Republic, each with implications about the relationship between the Church and the State.

§2.1. Regime Instability in Nineteenth-century France

The notion of Republic during the nineteenth-century formed the object of "passionate investment or no less passionate rejection" (Furet et Ozouf 1993: 7). In the minds of nineteenth-century French actors, rather than an abstract notion of "a republic", it is "the Republic", understood in very general terms to be that of the revolutionaries (Furet 1993: 287). While some might have a positive perspective on the unfolding revolution, others cannot dissociate the Republic from the Terreur and its atrocities. Or as François Furet puts it:

> […] three Constitutions for a single republic, year 1, year 3, year 8, none of which were respected. The first survived until the nineteenth-century its purity intact as it never even began to be enforced. But it cannot exorcise the memories of the blood spilled on the scaffold of year 2 (Furet 1993: 287).

This deeply contested legacy of the notion of a Republic in France was relevant throughout the nineteenth-century, not least because some factions sought to restore the monarchy in France, sometimes successfully. If we adopt the erroneous and retrospectively informed perspective that France would eventually end up becoming a republic the threat to this outcome in the nineteenth-century took three forms. Each had already been experimented with during the course of the Revolution itself. France went from being an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one. While the constitution of the First Republic was written, it was never

enforced because it was suspended as the Revolution descended into the Terror. Following the Terror, France's political organisation once again centralised power in the hands of an increasingly small number of individuals, first with the Directory (1795-1799) and then in the hands of Napoleon under the First Empire (1804-1814/1815).

The three threats to the republican model of government have been referred to as the "three rights" by the historian Michel Winock (2003) following René Rémond's classification of right-wing movements in France. The first is the most overtly counter-revolutionary as it seeks to re-establish the absolute monarchy that existed prior to the Revolution (Winock 2003: 131). In a sense, this faction at times proved more royalist than the king himself, for example, when they opposed the Charter Louis XVIII signed during the Restoration (1814-30), because they considered its content as being the "fruit of compromise with the Revolution" (Winock 2003: 131). The closest they came to having their way was with Louis XVIII's successor, Charles X crowned in 1824, who was the younger brother of both Louis XVI (executed during the Revolution) and Louis XVIII. He, Charles X, was forced from power by the 1830 revolution which would install the July Monarchy, and Louis Philippe I, who was a member of a junior branch of the Bourbon dynasty, as a king supported by another form of monarchist faction. The second threat to the Republican model was the Orléaniste, named after Louis Philippe I's father, Louis Philippe II, Duke d'Orléans, who adopted the more Revolutionary name Philippe Equality during the Revolution and favoured the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in France. During the July Monarchy (1830-1848) the third threat began to emerge. Bonapartisme initially surfaced as mere nostalgia for the glories of a misremembered empire under Napoléon I (Winock 2003: 135). However, following the 1848 revolution and the establishment of the Second Republic (1848-1852), this nostalgia enabled the nephew of Napoleon I to be first elected as a deputy, then as

President and eventually to be declared Emperor, forming France's Second Empire (1852-1870).

Each of these threats to the Republican model of government had been expressed in one of the growing numbers of constitutional models adopted in France throughout the nineteenth-century. Following the military defeat of Napoleon III at the hands of the Prussians the discredited Second Empire collapsed and France once again opted for a Republican model of government. The Third Republic (1870-1940) proved to be the most long-lived of France's constitutions up to this point in French history. This is not to say that it did not face any challenges before its ultimate demise in the face of the Nazi's victory over France in 1940. One such challenge occurred in the late 1880s and took the form of a movement which coalesced around the figurehead of a popular general and former minister of war, General Boulanger. At its height this movement was perceived as a threat to the Republic's existence.

Winock summarises the Boulangiste movement as a "revolt of the excluded against the Parliamentary Republic" (Winock 2009: 93). The movement's support originated from within the full range of the political spectrum. It regrouped Socialists hoping to instigate a social revolution with those on the far-right opposed to the secularisation of the State under the Third Republic. Monarchists supporting both lines of the Bourbon monarchy, now regrouped in a single candidate, were joined in their adherence to Boulangisme by Bonapartistes all seeking to overthrow the Republic. Winock concludes that the movement's programme was "sufficiently vague to leave each clan with hope and to authorise each group's calculations" (Winock 2014: 17). Regardless, the failure of Boulangisme also proved to be the end of the credible threat of restoration to the Republic. Indeed, Winock concludes that in "1889 the hope of restoration collapsed", a further blow to the royalist cause occurred when in 1892 when "the Pope counselled French Catholics to support the Republic" (Winock 2014: 18).

The serious threat of restoration having all but evaporated by the end of the nineteenth-century, the key issue which, according to Sirinelli (2017: 216), defined the left/right divide since the Revolution was also solved. Accordingly, one of the direct legacies of the French Revolution, namely the conflict between republican, monarchist and bonapartiste regime organisations had also come to an end. However, although in retrospect we can state that restoration is no longer a credible threat to France's republic, monarchism persists as a movement on the far-right to this day. A monarchist movement formed part of the coalition of desperate movements which came together under the banner of the Front National in 1972. As such this direct legacy of the revolution, although not as politically relevant as it was in the nineteenth-century, it still persists and links the two time periods under discussion in this thesis.

§2.2. The Lasting Division of Politics along a Left/Right Divide

Although not all right-wing movements have necessarily been opposed to all of the changes brought about in the French political system since the Revolution, their association with counter-revolutionary ideas have been very strong. This is in no small part due to its origins. The distinction started as a literal spatial identifier for the position of groupings of deputies relative to the president of the Constituent Assembly. The debates over the existence and power of the royal veto in France's first written constitution crystalised the opposition between these groups. To the right of the president, deputies "sought to defend royal prerogative or the strength of the executive, they were resolutely favourable to the King's right to veto which would give the King the ultimate say in legislative matters (Winock 2003: 127). Deputies on the left prioritised notions of national sovereignty over divine right sovereignty and therefore opposed the King's right to veto (Winock 2003: 127). The return of

aristocrats who chose to emigrate as the Revolution became increasingly hostile as well as the Restoration, led to the "coexistence on national territory of two political families, the result of the profound fracture that the fall of the monarchy, the execution of the monarch and the war between the whites and the blues had created in the collective imagination" (Winock 2003: 39). Winock concludes that since this period France has been "bicephalous" (Winock 2003: 39).

From this basis the association of each side of the political spectrum with either support for the Revolution or more or less reactionary opposition to it grew more entrenched. The Republican system looked increasingly stable by the end of the century, the right's association with counter-revolution became detrimental to its image. Winock refers to the right during the nineteenth-century being understood not as a relative position opposed to the left, i.e. if you are not left-wing you are right-wing but rather "a metaphysical category, reactionary in essence, inducing a non-admittable complicity with privilege" (Winock 2003 :125). In essence the right's association with counter-revolution tarnished its image as the appeal of a monarchical system became tarnished. In a chapter dedicated to the progressive establishment of male Universal Suffrage in nineteenth-century France, Rosanvallon argues that one of the reasons the monarchy fell out of favour as a constitutional model was its increasingly problematic association with privilege (Rosanvallon 1993: 374). Indeed, with arguments in favour of universal suffrage portraying it in line with the revolutionary struggle for equality of social status (see final section of this chapter), the monarchy became invested by "an accumulation of negative images" (Rosanvallon 1993: 374). It became associated with "every possible form of social distinction and social division" – be it social privileges, fiscal exemptions, or exclusion from the franchise based on revenues (Rosanvallon 1993: 374). Winock concludes that once the Republic had become widely accepted "no one wanted to be right-wing anymore" (Winock 2003: 86).

The Right's association with counter-revolution and hostility to the Republic does not mean that the pro-revolutionary Left were necessarily outright supporters of the Republic. For much of the nineteenth-century a not insignificant number of factions making up the left-wing of French politics considered the Revolution not to have gone far enough. For example, there were the Socialists that supported the Boulangiste cause in the hope of bringing about a socialist revolution. This changed particularly under the impetus of another right-wing threat to the Republic that emerged in the fallout of the Dreyfus affair. Faced with a right-wing threat to the Republic the Socialists chose to rally to the Republic's defence by allying with the centre-left and republican Radical Party against the would-be challengers. A slogan from the time "no enemies on the left" (Winock 2003: 152), summarised what would become a new feature of left-wing politics, namely the defence of the republic when it was perceived to be in danger. Winock highlights another instance where this notion of a united left defending the republic was evoked. On 6 February 1934, faced with an anti-republican demonstration comprised of veterans associations and right-wing leagues, a figurehead of the Radical party, Pierre Mendès France, called for a "vigorous policy of republican defence" to see off the threat (Winock 2003: 152).

In a sense, vestiges of this rhetoric still exist today although it is becoming increasingly unclear whether calls to unite to block the far-right will continue. When Jean-Marie Le Pen secured a place in the second round of the 2002 presidential run-off, prominent Socialist politicians called on their supporters to block Le Pen's accession. For example, François Hollande, at the time the national secretary of the socialist party, stated "we'll do what we have to do because we are republicans and democrats" (Henley 2002). Although the then Prime Minister and defeated Socialist Candidate, Lionel Jospin, failed to provide a voting instruction in his concession speech, he did give one later. While he could not quite bring himself to explicitly call for his supporters to vote for Chirac, he stated that they should

"express by their vote their refusal of the far-right" (Vampouille 2017). Following an emergency meeting of their national body the socialist party issued a much more explicit statement through François Hollande who, a few days later on the radio, made his own view even more explicit: "voiding the ballot or voting blanc is not sufficient. If we want there to be a veritable referendum against the far-right, for the republic, we must use the 'Jacques Chirac' ballot" (Hollande, cited in Vampouille 2017). Chirac went on to win by the highest margin of over 82% in any French presidential election. By contrast to these clear, if sometimes tardy, calls to block the way to the FN, in 2017 when Marine Le Pen faced off against Emmanuel Macron the calls still existed but with a few notable exceptions; the main one being Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of an increasingly prominent far-left movement, La France Insoumise (Le Monde 2017). Although it is obviously not possible or sensible to link Macron's results with this increased reticence to call to block the FN, he failed to get close to Chirac's record score, 'only' gaining 66% of the vote.

§2.3. Another great schism between Catholicism and the Secularity of the Republic

Given the right's association with counter-revolution it is unsurprising that the opposition between Catholicism and the secularity of the Revolution can also be mapped on to the Left/Right divide. The defence of Catholicism and its position in French society was solidly and durably anchored on the right. Albert de Mun, who Winock qualifies as a "prominent figure of the right" declared in 1878:

> The Revolution is neither act nor fact; she is a social doctrine, a political doctrine which claims to found society on the will of man, instead of founding it on the will of

> God, which puts the sovereignty of human reason in the place of divine law[56] (Mun, cited in Winock 2003: 41).

Although stated almost a century after the French Revolution which instigated the split, the incompatibility of these two world views is clearly apparent. Therefore, although Winock states that the Constituent assembly did not deliberately declare war on the Catholic Church, circumstances quickly conspired to make any reconciliation impossible (Winock 2003: 9). In addition to the philosophical distinctions about the world reflected in the two positions, the more terrestrial concern of the ongoing role of the Church in French society was also at stake (Winock 2003: 40). As a result of these increasingly irreconcilable differences the Catholic church's "fate became progressively linked to that of the counter-revolution" (Winock 2003: 9). From this separation two distinct cultures emerged: one "Catholic culture" and the other "secular [laïque] and republican" (Winock 2003: 9). The conflict was further deepened due to the condemnation of the Revolution, including the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the nationalisation of the church's property and the Declaration of Human Rights, by Pope Pius VI (Winock 2003: 40). The conflict between Catholicism and the Revolution descended into a state of quasi civil war due to the blood spilt, particularly the execution of the king and in the repression of the Catholic and Royalist uprising in the Vendée. This memory of "civil war lies deep in the collective memory like the intense combat between these two Frances and these two cultures" (Winock 2009: 398). This helps to explain the longevity of this division throughout the nineteenth-century. Under the Third Republic "highly organised" Catholic opposition to the parliamentary and secular republic continued through press outlets, a tightly knit series of religious orders and influential believers (Winock 2003: 11). The conflict was particularly intense with regard to the ultimately successful ambition to secularise the public

[56] "La Révolution n'est ni un acte ni un fait; elle est une doctrine sociale, une doctrine politique qui pretend fonder la société sur la volonté de l'homme, au lieu de la fonder su la volonté de Dieu, qui met la souveraineté de la raison humaine à la place de la loi divine."

school system. As mentioned before, it was only in 1882 that the Papal office withdrew its opposition to the Republic, encouraging French Catholics to cooperate with it.

This, however, was not the end for at least a portion of French Catholics maintaining their opposition to the Revolution and the Republic. Indeed, Winock argues that "Catholicism maintained traces of counter-revolution, surges of which occurred during every crisis up until 1940 (Winock 2009: 402). He identifies values associated with the Catholic opposition to the Revolution in Pétain's "conception of society [as being] organic, hierarchical [and] anti-individualist" (Winock 2009: 402). He cites one instance of Pétain defining his conception of society in the following terms:

> A people, is a hierarchy of family, of professions, of communes, of administrative responsibility, of spiritual families, articulated and federated to form a fatherland [*patrie*] animated by one movement, one soul, one ideal, motors of the future in order to produce across all its echelons a hierarchy of men […][57] (Pétain, cited in Winock 2009: 402).

This link to the anti-Republican trend in French Catholicism extends beyond the Vichy regime. Although its relative importance has declined, a faction of fundamentalist Catholics formed a part of the broad FN coalition of far-right sympathisers. Indeed, one of its more prominent representatives, Bernard Antony, founder of the newspaper *Présent*, joined the FN in 1984. Winock states that under his pen name, Romain Marie, he calls to mind "the great accomplishments and great figures of the counter-revolutionary school, from the martyrs of

[57] "Un peuple est une hiérarchie de familles, de professions, de communes, de responsabilités administratives, de familles spirituelles, articulées et fédérées pour former une patrie animée d'un mouvement, d'une âme, d'un idéal, moteurs de l'avenir pour produire à tous les échelon une hiérarchie des hommes […]"

the Vendée to the writings of Charles Maurras. His literature pages maintain a specific culture, anchored in the Catholicism of the refractory[58] priests"[59] (Winock 2003: 282).

As with the monarchists, another political group with traditions dating back directly to the events of the Revolution has taken its place in the newest manifestation of far-right discontent in France. Direct links can therefore be found between the two periods that form the backbone of the historical focus of this thesis. While the intention is not to infer any causal links between these movements' long traditions and the events describing the rise of the FN in the upcoming two chapters, their longevity is nonetheless of note. While these movements often sought to overthrow the Republic forcefully, their representation in the FN marked a departure from this trend since it was founded specifically to interact within the democratic confines of the Republican system.

§3. The Ancestry of the Front National and a brief overview of the history of the far-right in France

§3.1. Introduction

One of the key actors in the two upcoming chapters is the FN. During its first decade, electoral success was trivial with the first significant breakthrough only occurring in 1983. These chapters will argue that the FN's subsequent success was based on its ability to exploit the context of Total Crisis (chapter 5) and capacity to help place the nation back at the heart

[58] Name given to the priests who refused to sign the civil constitution of the clergy under the French Revolution.

[59] "[…] rappelle les grands faits et les grandes figures de l'école contre-révolutionnaire, depuis les martyrs de la Vendée jusqu'aux écrits de Charles Maurras. Ses pages littéraires entretiennent une culture spécifique, enracinée dans le catholicisme des prêtres réfractaires."

of French politics (chapter 6). However, it would be a mistake, as Winock states, to consider the "ideology of the Front National as a pure creation of our time" (Winock 2003: 281).

Rather, the key themes of the FN's rhetoric and policies can be traced to long traditions of the French far-right dating back to the turn of the previous century. Indeed, Shields in his overview of the history of the far-right in France summarises the FN's diverse legacy as follows:

> When the FN promotes the instincts of the people over oligarchic elites, it echoes Maurice Barrès; when it calls for a strong executive with recourse to popular referenda, it evokes General Boulanger; when it denounces "anti-French racism" and raises the alarm against France's enemies within we hear Charles Maurras; when it inveighs against the confiscation of democracy or the 'fiscal inquisition', it is redolent of Poujadism (Shields 2007: 308).

This list is a veritable overview of the key politicians and thinkers of the past century's far-right. This section will make reference to them and their links to the FN, either in terms of shared ideas and sometimes through shared personnel.

This section will first briefly account for the broad nature of the coalition that made up the FN on its foundation in 1972. Then it will account for the aforementioned traditions the FN and Jean-Marie Le Pen had drawn on or mirrored from the past century of French far-right movements. Finally, the question of the existence of French fascism will be considered in reference to the far-right as a whole and to the FN specifically.

§3.2. The broad coalition making up the FN

The creation of the FN in the early 1970s was unique in the history of the French far-right, as it was a party specifically designed to engage with democratic politics. Shields refers to its

ambition as being a "forward-looking parliamentary party with a respectable public face and a message calculated to appeal to a wide audience" (Shields 2007: 169). Another objective of this new party was to bring together within a single entity the various and disparate factions and movements that made up the far-right at the time. In this it was relatively successful. Declair relates the words of one of the members of the party's Bureau Politique who explained:

> Jean-Marie Le Pen's great virtue is that he has succeeded in unifying all of these tendencies, that he has brought them all together to create a coherent force. In the Front, one finds former Poujadists who joined simply because of fiscal or economic reasons, traditional Catholics who are scandalised by the Socialist influence in the Church, as well as Algerian veterans disgusted with the failure of Gaullist policy in Algeria. I could list even more of them…even monarchists (anonymous cited in Declair 1999: 13).

Identifying the dignitaries speaking at an FN event in 1995 exemplifies the plethora of backgrounds within the FN. The aforementioned Romain Marie and another editor of the 'Présent' newspaper are in attendance representing the far-right Catholic movement within the FN. François Madiran, an old member of the Milice of the Vichy government, is also present, and made a pointed reference to the "national revolution", echoing the policy the Vichy government at the time (Winock 2003: 279).

Of course, Jean-Marie Le Pen himself had links back to several of the twentieth-century far-right movements since his entrance into politics in the 1950s. His political career started after his return from service in French Indochina when he became a deputy of the Mouvement Poujade in the 1950s. Shields identifies this stint as a deputy as the moment when he first experimented with his "form of populism" that would eventually come to form the "core of

his political style" (Shields 2007: 75). While Poujade's objective was to gain support for a refounding of the French political system through the summoning of another Estates General, Le Pen pursued his own priorities. From the outset in the assembly, Le Pen made declarations that "articulated a strident anti-communism and authoritarian nationalism" (Shields 2007: 75). The anti-communism would remain in the early programmes of the FN, even though it was subsequently removed in order to appeal to the growing number of working-class FN voters (see chapter 6). These positions can also be recognised in Le Pen's subsequent political career. Having been ejected from the Poujadiste party, Le Pen retained his seat running as an independent in 1957 when he supported the cause of French Algeria defending "the repressive methods employed by the army and the police in Algeria" (Shields 2007: 75). Indeed, during his time in the army he is considered to have taken part in this oppression. Le Pen also contributed to the first attempt of the far-right to engage with the electoral system by fielding a candidate, Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancourt, in the 1965 presidential campaign. Le Pen took on the role of campaign manager for this dismally unsuccessful campaign with the candidate gaining only 5.2 percent of the vote. These ties, his war record in Indochina and Algeria and his relative moderation compared with certain other candidates for the FN's leadership, were instrumental in the decision to make him leader of this wide coalition. While bringing together these disparate groups was an impressive feat, the coalition may have proved, almost from the outset, too broad. Within a week of its creation, it suffered its first split when a group broke off believing that having members of movements such as Ordre Nouveau might prove too big an obstacle to any electoral ambitions (Shields 2007: 169).

§3.3. Jean-Marie Le Pen and the FN's link to past traditions on the far-right

As mentioned in the introduction of this section the FN's rhetoric draws clear parallels with past far-right movements and thinkers. To simplify matters, three main traditions of the far-right will be considered in turn – its nationalism, its populism and its anti-Semitism.

Maurice Barrès, a French journalist, novelist, and politician active at the time of the Dreyfus Affaire and beyond, proved instrumental in developing, in France, a new concept of nationalism opposed to that of the Revolution, which is reflected in the rhetoric of Jean-Marie Le Pen nearly a century later. The nationalism that emanated from the Revolution was a positive one with the nation being a community held together by "a notion of social contract" and a choice of belonging (Winock 2003: 284). By contrast Barrès' view of nationalism is one based on "blood and heritage" and therefore not voluntary at all (Winock 2003: 284). Barrès identifies the attachment to a native land and the generations that came before an individual, as a basis for a "common way of feeling and reacting" (Barrès cited in Wincok 2003: 284). With this conception of national identity, immigration becomes a threat. Barrès maintained that "we brought the invasion of our territory and our blood by foreign elements which work to subdue us"[60] (Barrès cited in Winock 2003: 284). As will be seen in more detail in subsequent chapters on the FN, the inability of immigrants to adequately integrate into French society has formed the bedrock of the FN's political offering since its creation.

Barrès also provides a link to the populist tradition that still animates the FN today. He was elected as a Boulangist deputy, a movement the main purpose of which was to "return to the people their voice confiscated by professional politicians"[61] (Winock 2003: 285). A friend of

[60] "[…] ont amené l'envahissement de notre territoire et de notre sang par des éléments étrangers qui travaillent à nous soumettre"
[61] "et de render au peuple la parole confisquée par les politiciens."

Barrès, Paul Déroulède, an army officer who founded the *Ligue des Patriotes* which Barrès would eventually end up leading from 1914 onwards, summarised this populism in the notion of a "plebiscitary Republic" (Winock 2003: 285). This was a republic in which the head of state maintained a strong contact with the people's will through their regular consultation by referendum. Although claiming to be republican this was not dissimilar from one of the sources of legitimacy for both Napoléon I and Napoléon III during France's two Empires. While not initially seeking to refound the Republic, Jean- Marie Le Pen nevertheless hoped if elected to organise referenda on key societal questions such as the death penalty or immigration (Winock 2003: 285). Since the 1995 elections his programmes have on occasion contained reference to the founding of a Sixth Republic. Uniting both the nationalist and populist traditions this Republic would inscribe the notion of national preference in its constitution and would seek to renovate the parliamentary system in order to "return the voice of the people" (Winock 2003: 286).

Anti-Semitism has a long and unpleasant history in France and the far-right in its various iterations is at the heart of it. Winock identifies three forms of anti-Semitism in French history. The first emanates directly from a re-interpretation of the Revolution itself. It has erroneously made the Jews responsible for the collapse of the Ancien Régime. Furthermore, a conspiracy unites the Jews with the Freemasons and explains all the woes that have befallen French society since, from the process of secularisation, the separation of Church and State and the destruction of the family after a Jewish minister re-established the right to divorce in 1884 (Winock 2014: 211). The second was thought up in response to the modernisation of society: economic transformation relating to the banking, commercial and industrial sectors. In this view Jews are held to be "without roots, eternal nomads " and city dwellers, as well as those benefiting from this economic transformation (Winock 2014: 212). The final version of anti-Semitism emerged following the growing threat of socialist and communist revolutions.

Now the Jews are not only the masters of capitalism they are also subversive revolutionaries (Winock 2014: 212). These three versions of anti-Semitism, sometimes singly, sometimes collectively, form the basis for the anti-Semitism which permeated French society. Far from being limited to the right-wing, until the time of the Dreyfus Affair anti-Semitism was also a common feature on the left (Winock 2014: 213).

The Dreyfus Affair started with the wrongful condemnation, degradation and imprisonment of a Jewish officer, Alfred Dreyfus, for being a German spy. The scale of the fallout from the mismanagement of this case ended up involving numerous intellectuals and a general public divided between advocates of Dreyfus' innocence or culpability. Unsurprisingly, anti-Semitism played a role in his initial condemnation and in the ongoing ramifications of the affaire. The aforementioned Barrès and Déroulède can both be considered anti-Semites but they were far from being the only ones in the far-right alliance opposing Dreyfus' innocence. Charles Maurras, a monarchist and founder of the *Action Française* movement, was also vocally anti-Semitic. He blamed France's issues since the Revolution on "four alien nations" (Maurras cited in Declair 1999: 14); these included "Jews, Freemasons, Protestants and Foreigners" (Declair 1999: 14). One of the founders of the FN, when asked about the obstacles to the FN's success, made points very reminiscent of Maurras' explanations:

> Future obstacles-the lobbies. Very difficult to know, but it may be the Jewish lobby, the Freemason lobby, the Protestant lobby, but they are only lobbies. They don't represent the majority of Jews in this country, nor the majority of Protestants of this country. The Freemasons only represent themselves. All of this nice little world is aligned against us (Founder of the FN, cited in Declair 1999: 14).

Anti-Semitism was prevalent amongst the founding members of the FN. A poll of the FN's managers [*cadres*] in April 1990, revealed that 88 percent of them agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "the Jews have too much power in France" (Vinock 2003: 287).

Another high point of anti-Semitism in France was under the Vichy regime when the French state cooperated with Nazi Germany in the deportation of Jews. Declair concludes that under the Vichy regime "the anti-Semitism of Action Française and the Leagues of the thirties was now public policy" (Declair 1999: 19). While Jean-Marie Le Pen has avoided making anti-Semitic statements as overt as those of Maurras or one of the FN's founders mirroring Maurras, he has nonetheless been condemned numerous times for Anti-Semitic statements about the Second World War. Most recently having his sentence confirmed in March 2017 for having maintained in 2015, not for the first time, that the gas chambers were a mere "detail of history" (Lepelletier 2018). Jean-Marie Le Pen has also frequently defended the record of Pétain and the Vichy regime, for example he was condemned for having stated in 2008 that the German occupation "had not been particularly inhumane" (Lepelletier 2018). It was statements like these, with the 2015 being the final straw, that led Marine Le Pen, party leader since 2011, to have her father excluded from the party.

§3.4. The question of the existence of French fascism

The debate over whether France has ever been affected by a fascist movement or movements has raged amongst historians both in and outside France (Berstein and Winock 2014; Milza 1987; Rémond 1982; Winock 2014; Shields 2007; Soucy 2004; Dobry 2004). While it is not the focus of the current thesis, elements of the debate help to establish certain continuities and discontinuities in the history of the French far-right thus providing context for the emergence and rise of the FN.

The existence of similarities between the various movements of the French far-right and fascism is undeniable. However, those who argue against the interpretation of these movements as expressions of fascist ideology note that some of these characteristics are not exclusive to fascism while certain crucial traits of fascism are absent. For example, Shields in his assessment of the fascist nature of the FN states:

> It is easy enough to detect echoes of fascism in the FN's discourse (exclusionary nationalism, anti-egalitarianism, anti-liberalism, anti-communism among others); but none of these is the preserve of fascism, and other features which are integral to historical fascism (rejection of democracy, the single party state, political violence, militarism, corporatism, anti-conservatism, the 'leadership cult' in a real sense), cannot be inferred from the FN's programme (Shields 2007: 310).

While the Mouvement Poujade did attract members who maintained some of the more unpleasant beliefs of fascism, as a movement that did not seek power for its leader it falls short of meeting the full criteria.

What is often at stake in this debate is the nature of the definition of fascism the academics are using to assess the nature of the different movements. This issue is exemplified in Winock's book on nationalism, anti-Semitism and fascism in France in which he is arguing directly against new publications that claimed once again the existence of French fascism (Wincok 2014: 277). One of these was a collective work *Le Mythe de l'allergie française au fascisme* edited by Michel Doubrie, which Winock concludes is able to claim the existence of fascism in France by either refusing to define fascism all together or expand its definition to the point that all the inter-war movements would meet the criteria (Winock 2014: 280). Winock contrasts these definitions with a specialist on the subject the Italian, Emilion Gentile who defines fascism as follows:

> Fascism is a modern political phenomenon, nationalist and revolutionary, antiliberal and antimarxist, […] with a totalitarian conception of politics and the state, with an activist and anti-theoretical ideology, with mythical foundations, […] that affirms the primacy of the nation, understood as an organic homogenous ethnic community, organised hierarchically in a corporatist state, with a belliquose attitude towards the politics of grandeur, power and conquest, aiming at the creation of a new order and a new civilisation (Gentile cited in Winock 2014: 305).

This definition may go too far in the other direction with regard the list of criteria necessary to qualify as a fascist movement it does, however, identify a criteria missing from French far-right movements including the FN. Winock highlights that the true originality of fascism is "while being a reactionary movement, it is also a 'revolutionary'" one (Winock 2014: 305). Fascism therefore needs to be considered in its purest form as a revolutionary ideology the ultimate aim of which is the founding of a new form of civilisation. To take but one example from the French far-right the Vichy regime, the rhetoric of which echoed some fascist ideas and the government of which cooperated with Nazi Germany, the notion of revolution is largely absent from its actions. Shields concludes that Vichy "was not a 'fascist' regime in any vigorous sense of the term" (Shields 2007: 42). It did not seek to create a one-party state and crucial it lacked a "clearly conceived political project" relying instead for its unity on "nostalgic reverence for Pétain and generalised antipathy to the Third Republic" (Shields 2007: 42). He concludes "the dynamic, transformation, revolutionary dimension of fascism was absent from a regime whose loudest voices preached instead archaic values and an anachronistic social model" (Shields 2007: 43). With its engagement with the democratic system and at least no overt ambition to overthrow the democratic system in France the FN also lacks this revolutionary ambition. Furthermore, the FN has abandoned its anti-

communist rhetoric and, since after its first legislative campaign, has abandoned the application of corporatists solutions to the French economy.

§3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has offered but the briefest of overviews of close to 200 years of French political history. Rather than providing a detailed account of every regime and every movement that has punctuate a complex and turbulent period of history, the focus is on outlining some elements of continuity between the two periods.

While the longevity of the Fifth Republic makes the regime instability of the nineteenth - century seem distant contemporary politicians still call for a transition to a Sixth Republic at regular intervals. Furthermore, as will be detailed in the next two chapters, although the regime may not be under threat, the politics of the French Fifth Republic have already changed considerably under the dual influence Total Crisis and the Nation as Arbiter. In particular, the political of landmarks of Left/Right directly descended from the Revolution have once again become challenged by multiple political players claiming to have moved beyond their confines.

The account of the far-right helps to understand the FN's uniqueness on the far-right, in being a party specifically intended for engaging with democratic politics, while simultaneously detailing some of the long-standing traditions of the far-right which it draws upon both ideologically and in terms of its personnel.

Beyond the scholarly debate over the legacy of the French Revolution and the continuities and discontinuities of the history of the French far-right what is interesting to note is the fact that these legacies are kept alive by contemporaries throughout different periods of French history. This chapter has made numerous references to political actors orienting themselves

or calling upon legacies of the Revolution or past far-right movements, thinkers and events but this phenomenon continues to this day. When Emmanuelle Macron sought a solution to appease the Gillet Jaune established in January 2019 a scheme to collect *Cahiers de Doléance* from around France (Sergeur 2020). While these do nothing for those who claim his presidency has a tinge of monarchy about this is also a direct recall to the preparation stage of the Estates General convoked in 1789. On the far-left of the political spectrum Jean-Luc Mélenchon has also made calls for a holding an Estates General to found a new Sixth Republic, thereby echoing both the Revolution and Poujade's call for a Estates General to found a Fifth Republic. Furthermore, during his 2012 presidential campaign he organised a March on the Bastille and before his supporters declared:

> Genie of the Bastille that culminates [culmine] on this square, here we have returned, the people of revolutions and of rebellions in France. We are the red flag! We have come to this place on the right date, starting point of all our revolutions" (Mélenchon cited in Le Monde 2012).

The location and the call upon France's revolutionary legacy can hardly be made more explicit. Other less glamorous episodes of French history also make their periodic appearance in French politics. Most recently, on the occasion of the opening a museum dedicated to the Affair Dreyfus. The new force on the French far-right Eric Zemmour, an author and as of the date of writing not yet officially a candidate for the 2022 French Presidential elections, has called into question Dreyfus' innocence. In a separate incident he has also attempted to clear the Vichy government of wrong-doing with regards its collaboration on deportation of Jews to Germany by claiming that Pétain saved their lives (Henley 2021). These few examples show that far beyond the conceptualisation of French history in terms of continue or discontinuity, the legacies of history of both the Revolution and the far-right live on in their daily instrumentalization in French political discourse. The upcoming French presidential

elections will doubtless provide numerous further examples of the French Revolution's continued presence in French politics.

Chapter 4 : The Current Context of Crisis and the rise of the FN

4.1. Introduction: the context of crisis and the rise of political insurgencies

When looking into the context that enabled the widespread rise of far-right insurgent parties in Europe it may be tempting to look no further than the fallout from the financial and economic crisis triggered in 2007-8, now already more than a decade old. Indeed, the biggest financial and economic catastrophe since the Wall Street Crash and ensuing Great Depression looks like a promising backdrop for understanding the present disruption of European politics.

This, however, would be a mistake on two counts, particularly when considering France and the emergence of the FN (now renamed Ralliment National [RN]). Firstly, as will be argued in the first subsection of this chapter, the crisis which has provided the FN with the opportunity to gain traction predates the 2007 financial crisis by several decades. Indeed, in his historical analysis of the French "revolutions" affecting French politics since the 1960s, Sirinelli (2017) recontextualises Jean-Marie Le Pen's breakthrough to the second round of the 2002 presidential election. Rather than adhering to the surprised reactions expressed at the time about the political "earthquake" of the "21 April", Sirinelli highlights that the "triple crisis, social, identity [identitaire] and political"[62] was already in place ten years prior to this result (Sirinelli 2017: 293). As will be seen subsequently, Sirinelli considers that this triple crisis is a necessary prerequisite to the national populist reaction which has been affecting French politics periodically since the late nineteenth century (Sirinelli 2017: 286). The second reason that focusing on the financial and economic crisis would be a mistake has already been hinted at in Sirinelli's quote. Indeed, economic and financial aspects alone do

[62] *"[…] une triple crise, sociale, identitaire et politique"*

not provide an adequate account of the necessary context of crisis which provide solid foundations for successful insurgencies. While Sirinelli chooses to refer to these crises as "multi-form crises" (Sirinelli 2017: 286) and this project chooses the term Total Crisis, both are seeking to highlight the need to go beyond economics. While economic crises can sometimes help to catalyse issues in society precipitating a more or less radical political reaction, they do not in and of themselves suffice to explain the process of change.

These two points will be revisited in more detail in the first section of this chapter. However, the rejection of purely economic explanations for the present crisis does highlight a recurring feature of total crises: the difficulty in bookending these crises with a specific start and end date. In the present chapter, to simplify matters, the crisis will be considered as effecting to the French Fifth Republic. The chapter will therefore detail a growing number of abnormal aspects affecting key areas of the Fifth Republic's functioning mainly in the sphere of politics, economics and ideological landscapes. With regard to timing this chapter will, for the most part, begin its coverage in the 1980s because although some facets of crisis predate the 80s this was the first time their effects on politics became clear. Given the breadth of the components of this crisis, determining what is considered to be normal or abnormal for the regime cannot be defined in general terms at this point. However, the cumulation of "abnormal" occurrences will hopefully become clear in each section as the changes in behaviour and functioning of the political system are highlighted and the contrasted.

The near half-century electoral rise of the FN and corresponding growth in ideological influence over the political mainstream raises the issue of causation, as have other insurgencies in the other historical chapters. On the one hand, the context of crisis and its destabilising effect on the political mainstream and the electorate seem to be an essential prerequisite to an insurgency's success. This implies that the FN is merely adapting in order to ride a wave of discontentment and instability, a phenomenon which would happen anyway

regardless of its existence in politics. On the other hand, without the FN's growing electoral success it is hard to determine whether mainstream political parties would have veered so decisively in its ideological direction: for example in the increasingly hostile attitude towards immigration. Whether the hardening of values amongst voters is occurring because of, or in spite of, the defenders of said values being present in domestic politics is unclear. In the next chapter these issues will be covered in more detail, in particular the FN's ideological influence and its impact on the mainstream right in France. However, while the chapter suggests that the FN is both benefiting from and accentuating the political crisis, it is beyond the scope of this research to contribute to the debate on the causality of these events. Rather this chapter will focus on developing the concept of Total Crisis in relation to the ongoing current crisis and the next chapter will focus on the FN and its relationship to, and manipulation of, the concept of nation.

The main point of this chapter will be to argue in favour of interpreting present day politics through the prism of a long-term multi-dimensional crisis whose origins reach as far back as the 1970s. The first section will highlight in general terms the non-economic dimensions of the crisis as well as, with reference to Sirinelli and his notion of "multiform crises", placing it in historical perspective alongside past crises which have given rise to a right-wing insurgency. The second section will explore the economic factors responsible for an almost 50-year long economic crisis which in turn has profoundly affected the political system. The third section will analyse the political and ideological consequences of the policy convergence of mainstream parties, starting in the early 1980s when the Socialist Party gave in to the pressure of international money markets.

4.2. Present Day Total Crisis in Historical Perspective

The key to developing the notion of Total Crisis is to highlight the non-economic and non-financial dimensions of the crises in question. Although these factors undoubtedly have an impact on unfolding events, the extent of the destabilisation they caused to the political systems in place attest to the much deeper and more complex crises affecting them. This first section will seek to identify some of the non-economic dimensions of the present day crisis in order to make the case that it can indeed be considered a Total Crisis, the full consequences of which are as yet unknown. In their analyses of context for the rise of the FN, several authors have highlighted numerous non-economic factors, as well as long-term social impacts of economic factors such as unemployment, which long predate the sub-prime crash and its fallout (Perrineau 2014, Bouvet 2015, Sirinelli 2017, Alduy and Wahnich 2015). This section will also recontextualise the current rise of the FN with other instances in French history where "multi-form crises", to borrow Sirinelli's terminology, have given rise to reactionary far-right movements. With the benefit of hindsight, compared to those writing as events unfolded, Sirinelli also accounts for the FN's longevity, compared to past far-right movements, by directly relating it to the corresponding longevity of the crisis.

4.2.1. The non-economic symptoms of the crisis

While the crisis effecting French politics undoubtedly has economic components they are by no means the only ones. Perrineau (2017), in his account of the left-wing voters who have turned towards the FN, provides an exhaustive list of events and their consequences which make up the present-day crisis. He contrasts the relative stability of the 30 post-war years with the gradual increase in instability of the last 30 years (Perrineau 2017: 50-1). His list is as follows:

> The start of the economic crisis, at the end of the 1970s, the development of large scale unemployment, the constant process of economic globalisation, the emergence of a society of individuals, the collapse of communism symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the exhaustion of the social-democratic compromise, the rising threat of radical Islam since the attack on the Twin towers in 2001, all these elements have led to an identity crisis of the Leftists adapted to the post-war world, the world of growth, of the Trente Glorieuses, of the communist alternative – or of keynesian inspired 'national' compromises[63] (Perrineau 2017 : 51).

All these factors have combined to destabilise French politics to the extent that it has provided an opportunity for a far-right insurgency, which spent the first decade of its existence in relative obscurity, to gain traction and electoral support. As with the Total Crisis of the *ancien régime*, the symptoms described by Perrineau and corroborated by other authors referred to in this chapter go well beyond mere economic disruption. Almost all the established aspects of French politics, society, ideology and culture have been affected. Furthermore, the resurgence of politicised violence, together with that of domestic terrorism, has compromised people's sense of security in a way not known since the early years of the Fifth Republic.

In fact, insecurity is a useful word to describe the effect of a Total Crisis. More important than the specific components of each of these crises, which will vary from one historical period to another, it is the climate of doubt and instability caused by the crisis which are common to each instance. The notion of insecurity is at the heart of Bouvet's (2015) book

[63] *" Le début de la crise économique, à la fin des années 1970, le développement du chômage de masse, le processus constant de globalisation économique, la montée d'une société d'individus, la chute du communisme symbolisée par la destruction du mur de Berlin en 1989, l'épuisement du compromis social-démocrate, la montée des périls de l'Islamisme radical depuis l'attentat des Twin Towers en 2001 sont autant d'événement qui ont entrainé une crise d'identité des gauches adaptées au monde d'après guerre, celui de la croissance, des Trente Glorieuses, de l'alternative communiste-ou encore de compromis « nationaux » de type keynésien"*

about the rise of populism in France specifically, although he makes a claim that his analysis applies to Europe more generally (Bouvet 2015: 7). Bouvet acknowledges that populism is "first a response to a sense of economic and social insecurity"[64], however, the focus of the book highlights the sense of cultural insecurity which accompanies its more obvious economic counterpart (Bouvet 2015: 7). He refers to cultural insecurity as being a "profound and insidious doubt about what we are, 'who' we are, collectively, in a world which has become largely unreadable as well as stressful"[65] (Bouvet 2015: 7). Bouvet considers the current sense of crisis to be the result of mutations which have occurred since the 1990s be they "the dissemination of new information technologies"[66] or geopolitical changes upsetting world order (Bouvet 2015: 15). This mutation, and some of its more problematic components such as economic crisis or the increased power of Islamism, have all contributed to adversely affecting everyday life (Bouvet 2015: 15). He concludes that cultural insecurity is "the expression of fear, confused and multiforme, in the face of such an environment, perceived as being chaotic and unreadable"[67] (Bouvet 2015: 15).

Crucially, although these fears cannot be easily measured or perceived, they are "nonetheless real in the everyday lives of those most exposed to economic and social difficulties"[68] (Bouvet 2015: 16). This passage once again emphasises that it is the psychological impact of the sense of crisis which is all important to reading the crisis' political consequences. The link Bouvet establishes between economic and social vulnerability and the sense of cultural insecurity is crucial to understanding the rise of parties like the FN. The link between the economic and the cultural permeates this entire project but particularly this chapter, and the

[64] *"Si elle répond d'abord à une insécurité économique et sociale qui saisit toute la société ou presque … "*
[65] *"elle témoigne aussi d'un doute profond et insidieux sur ce que nous sommes, sur 'qui' nous sommes, collectivement, dans un monde devenu très largement illisible en plus d'être anxiogène"*
[66] *"la diffusion des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication"*
[67] *"L'insécurité culturelle est l'expression d'une peur confuse et multiforme face à un tel environnement, perçu comme chaotique et illisible […]"*
[68] *"[…] mais pour autant bien réelle dans la vie quotidienne, car pesant sur les fragiles et les plus exposés aux difficultés économique et sociales."*

next. Bouvet insists that frontiers under threat from globalisation are essential to understanding cultural insecurity. Once again it those most vulnerable in society who risk losing the most from the disappearance of frontiers (Bouvet 2015: 21). This can most easily be seen through the perceived dual threat posed by immigration. Bouvet writes that initially immigration was primarily perceived as a form of economic competition but increasingly it is viewed as a cultural issue with new arrivals being a threat to the host society's idea of how to live together (Bouvet 2015:22). This is why public expressions of concern over immigration are increasingly focused not on their geographic origins but on the immigrants' religion and way of life (Bouvet 2015:22). The combination of an economic and cultural threat posed by immigrants will be the focus of the first subsection of the next chapter about the FN's and Marine Le Pen's worldview. For the FN leader immigration is just one of the threats posed by globalisation and like those most vulnerable in society, who have a higher tendency to support the FN, she sees the nation and its frontiers as key to any solution.

4.2.2. Recontextualising the current crisis and rise of the FN

French history offers a specificity compared to other European countries in that it has a well-documented and recurring problem with ring-wing insurgencies. Indeed, this tendency has been a problem as the initial appearance and electoral success of the FN was originally dismissed as merely the latest manifestation of this transitory phenomenon. Pascal Perrineau (2014) acknowledges this initial dismissal of the FN, referring to the phenomenon of interpreting far-right insurgencies as "poussée de fièvre" which "never succeed in implanting themselves durably in the electoral landscape"[69] (Perrineau 2014: 21). In their survey of the French far-right since the Revolution Atkin and Tallet make a similar point about the FN initially being dismissed as a transitory phenomenon (Atkin and Tallet 2003: 262). However,

[69] *"[…] qui ne réussissent jamais à s'implanter durablement dans le paysage électoral."*

these authors both insist that the FN has far surpassed the point at which it could be considered a temporary phenomenon with Atkin and Tallet referring to it as a "fixture of French political life" (Atkin and Tallet 2003: 262). An example of academics' tendency to initially dismiss the FN is provided by Emmanuel Todd (1990) in his book first published in 1988 four years after the confirmation of the FN's electoral success at the 1984 European elections. Todd's objective is to highlight the profound disruptions of traditional French political allegiances, which he traces back as far as ancient times, resulting from Mitterrand's election in 1981. As for his interpretation of the existence and success of the FN Todd declares: "the emergence of the FN […] is the price to pay for the violence of the shock-not too serious in the end because this movement devoid of ideological substance will quickly disappear[70]" (Todd 1990: 11)

Although Todd, like the present research, is associating the emergence of the FN with a profound crisis in French society, in this early edition, and without the benefit of hindsight, he assumed the FN would disappear fairly quickly. In a later edition, with a new foreword written in January 1990, Todd acknowledges that the FN has achieved a form of staying power (Todd 1990: ii). However, Todd concludes that the votes for the FN are nothing more than an "angry form of abstention" (Todd 1990: ii). With the benefit of hindsight this project will argue, alongside other more recent interpretations of the FN's rise, that the votes for the FN have gone beyond mere expressions of anger but now also comprise a degree of adherence to its rhetoric and policies.

Sirinelli (2017) also looks to past instances of far-right insurgencies in order to draw parallels with what caused the rise of the FN in the 1980s. The common thread which Sirinelli associates with each instance is the existence of a triple crisis effecting the economic and

[70] *"L'émergence du Front national […], c'est le prix a payer pour la violence du choc- pas trop élevé finalement puisque ce mouvement sans substance idéologique disparaîtra rapidement."*

political spheres as well as the sphere of collective identity (Sirinelli 2017: 286-97). Sirinelli identifies the original triple crisis in the late nineteenth century, another affecting France in the 1930s and another barely a decade later that culminated in the 1950s with the rise of Poujadisme (Sirinelli 2017: 286-290). He concludes that:

> There are moments in France's history when disturbances of identity, real or supposed, provide fuel for political movements which proclaim to be a break with the existing system in place at that period (Sirinelli 2017: 290).

The last of these gave rise to the *Mouvement Poujade* which took advantage of an economic and social crisis resulting from the impact of mutations within the economy affecting rural life as well as small distributors (Sirinelli 2017: 289). It was also a result of questions about France's place in the world increasingly called into question by the ongoing process of decolonisation (Sirinelli 2017: 289). The *Mouvement Poujade* itself would not survive the establishment of the Fifth Republic in 1958, by which time many of the issues fuelling its rise had been resolved (Sirinelli 2017: 290).

Following the *Mouvement Poujade's* disappearance, although the far-right would continue to exist on the fringes, it did not gain electoral prominence again until the early 1980s. By pointing out that the 1970s were not a decade affected by a triple crisis of any sort and then listing the dismal electoral results for the FN, Sirinelli definitively seeks to establish the link between the two phenomena (Sirinelli 2017: 290). Indeed, for him without the triple crisis no far-right insurgency stands a chance of gaining significant traction. Having detailed the catastrophic electoral results of the FN during its first decade of existence, Sirinelli reminds the reader that its leader failed to garner the 500 signatures necessary for his name to appear on the presidential ballot in 1981. Fast forward to another decade after the FN's initial success in the 1983 municipal election in Dreux with a score of 13.9% at the regional election

of May 1992 and Sirinelli concludes that "longevity has succeeded to intermittence"[71] (Sirinelli 2017: 292). Indeed, he argues that in the closing decade of the twentieth century the triple crisis phenomenon has "acquired a largely structural character"[72] (Sirinelli 2017: 293). Sirinelli's ultimate conclusion, after delving into the past cause and effect of crises and the rise of far-right insurgencies, is to point out that the "earthquake of 2002" should not have come entirely as a surprise. In fact, his interpretation makes it clear that ten years prior to the breakthrough all the necessary conditions were already in place; a triple crisis "social, *identitaire* and political" already existed by 1992 (Sirinelli 2017: 293).

4.3. Economic mutation, long-term unemployment and political disillusionment

The succession of financial and economic crises affecting the world since 2007 has undoubtedly reoriented politics in many of the countries concerned. In France, however, this new economic shock needs to be understood as coming on top of existing economic issues, much older and insidious, dating back to the early 1970s, which those in power have had to contend with; such as high unemployment rates and more broadly the ever-increasing influence of globalisation in the national sphere. These factors have affected voters' attitudes towards politics and politicians and have influenced and occurred alongside a reshuffling of political support and influence in French politics. The key signs of this are the start of alternation in power between the mainstream left and right, starting with Mitterrand's election, and the gradual collapse of the strength of parties which had dominated French politics since the advent of the Fifth Republic. This section will also deal with the social consequences of long-term unemployment and the political reaction of those voters affected.

[71] "[…] à l'intermittence succédait la longévité […]"
[72] "[…] loin d'être comme auparavant conjoncturel, acquiert un caractère largement structurel […]"

4.3.1. Persistent unemployment and the encroaching influence of globalisation

Writing about the challenges facing Mitterrand's newly installed government, Shields (2007) highlights the poor economic outlook which had already plagued his predecessor's, Valérie Giscard d'Estaing, stint in power. Indeed, as a result of the 1973 oil shock, unemployment in France during Giscard d'Estaing's mandate had tripled to over 1.5 million (Shields 2007: 199). Despite his attempt at a Keynsian stimulus of the French economy Mitterrand's policy did not halt, let alone reverse, the rise in unemployment. In the first year of Mitterrand's presidency unemployment had risen by 12 percent to affect 2 million people (Moray 1997: 93). Since this then unemployment has been an intermittent political worry for presidents and prime ministers in France. In 2004, just a few years prior to the financial crash, France's economy already appeared to be in trouble. In March 2004 unemployment stood at 9.8 percent, the equivalent of 2.4 million people, the economy had stalled and France's budget deficit and debt level were in breach of the terms of the European stability pact (Shields 2007: 295). The advent of the crisis since has done nothing to help this dismal economic outlook which overall has given the French voters the impression that their politicians are powerless in the face of their economic issues.

The growing impact of economic globalisation, undoubtedly a contributing factor to changing unemployment rates, has done nothing to reassure voters of their leaders' ability to control economic outcomes. Sirinelli dates the true arrival of globalisation in French politics with Mitterrand's decision to change the policies he had tried to implement for the first two years of his mandate. Mitterrand's choice to favour staying within the European Monetary System, which would entail the abandonment of his spending habits and the implementation of austerity, marked a clear shift in French history (Sirinelli 2017: 220). Sirinelli argues that prior to this point the impact of world history was largely constrained to the sphere of foreign policy and had limited impact on decisions made in and for domestic politics (Sirinelli 2017:

220). However, tied up in Mitterrand's decision was the "indirect proof that [world history] now possessed a kinetic energy which no longer obeyed solely national dynamics" (Sirinelli 2017: 220). This is probably a case of taking an interesting argument a little too far to imply that before this point the international dimension had little or no impact on the domestic decisions of French leaders. This overstatement is due in part to Sirinelli's conceptual framework and narrative of viewing French history through varying changing and interplaying scales, be they temporal or geographic; slightly flowery and abstract language related to these concepts permeate the whole book. However, the bowing of a French president to the pressure of international capital markets at the cost of his stated, allegedly revolution-inducing, campaign promises was, at that time, probably a novel occurrence in recent French history. Sirinelli concludes that as a result of the growing impact of world economic events the "republican monarch" had suffered the "retraction of his prerogatives" (Sirinelli 2017: 221). Whether or not we choose to assign such a precise date to the start of economic globalisation's effect on the French economy and domestic political decision-making, it is undeniable that the impact of global events has only increased since. The spread of the subprime crisis and the need for a global response to its fallout has further emphasised the inability of politicians to provide solutions to these sorts of issues at a national level.

4.3.2. Political 'realism' and its consequences

The perceived inability of politicians to deliver on their economic promises has led over the years to a corresponding decrease in the belief in and value of political utterances. Once again Sirinelli identifies Mitterrand's acceptance of the need to change his policies as the turning point in this regard. From this point on France's major ruling parties were forced to agree that there was no alternative to dealing with the economic crisis and changed their policies accordingly (Sirinelli 2017: 212). This acceptance of economic realities was an implicit admission by political leaders of the limits of their rhetoric and actions; shortly thereafter

more explicit acknowledgements of these limitations would follow. Faced with layoffs at a Michelin factory in September 1999 the then Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin, stated "not all can be expected from the state" (Sirinelli 2017: 212). In this acceptance of his inability to take action, Jospin was also calling into question the power of the state and its ability to intervene in the French economy. In France any reference of this sort would come up against the belief in a long tradition of positive state intervention in the economic sphere. On a more abstract level this "lucid acknowledgement of the limitations of political voluntarism"[73] also reflected the fact that "the words of the politician could no longer suffice to enchant or re-enchant"[74] the electorate (Sirinelli 2017: 212).

The inability of politicians to resolve the key economic and social issues facing the country has led to a lack of faith in politicians and ever growing abstentionism (Alduy, Wahnich 2015:202). For example, between 2009 and 2014 the number of respondents who said they trusted the prime minister decreased from 35 to 25 percent (Alduy, Wahnich 2015:203). The impression that politicians are unable to solve some of France's major problems has been paralleled by a growing impression amongst a portion of voters that politicians are unwilling to solve these problems. In a study conducted by Cevipof in January 2014 87% of respondents affirmed that "politicians do not preoccupy themselves with what people think" (Alduy, Wahnich 2015: 203). Therefore, since the first signs of the present unsettling of French politics in the 1980s a significant portion of the population has come to see politicians as at best unable and at worst unwilling to solve the issues which most preoccupy voters.

A further issue affecting mainstream politicians, and their respective parties, is that they are failing to provide an adequate explanation for the "dysfunctionings generated by

[73] *"n'était que le constant lucide des limites du volontarisme politique."*
[74] *"[…] montrait que les mots du politique, désormais, ne pouvaient suffire à enchanter ou réenchanter l'agorat […]"*

globalisation" (Alduy, Wahnich 2015: 204). Alduy and Wahnich draw parallels between the impact of globalisation and the destabilising effect of industrial revolution of the nineteenth century (Alduy, Wahnich 2015: 204). The key here is that the FN benefits from this inability of mainstream parties to provide an adequate framework through which to interpret the changes triggered by globalisation. As will be analysed in more detail in the next chapter, the FN provides, through its opposition to the ideology behind globalisation that Marine Le Pen terms "globalism", a complete explanation for the ongoing crisis from which France is suffering . In her 2012 manifesto book "Pour que vive la France" Marine Le Pen sets out her ideological worldview as well as her criticism of the economic situation and the action, or lack of action, of French political leaders: "a crisis which lasts almost forty years is no longer a crisis but a complete system" (Le Pen 2012: 8). She argues that elites have not taken action and instead have falsely claimed that "unemployment is ineluctable", she even references the neo-liberal claim of Margaret Thatcher that "there is no alternative" (Le Pen 2012:8). As the next chapter will argue, one of the key characteristics of Marine Le Pen's FN is that it is presenting itself as a counter-hegemonic project, fighting a lonely battle against the system, rather than merely a party defending simple policies.

Taking a step back from Marine Le Pen's more recent electoral victories it is worth considering the impact of the FN's success more generally on the political balance of power in French politics. By the end of the 1980s the consistent electoral results of the FN had compromised the stability of the four-way balance of power which had dominated the Fifth Republic for much of its existence up to then (Perrineau 2014: 164). As Perrineau points out, up to that point French politics had for "several decades" been organised around two large coalitions each comprised of two parties (Perrineau 2014: 163). On the left, the "union of the left" comprised the Socialists and the Communists although not always in a formal alliance, dominated left-wing politics. Although their electoral alliance only lasted from 1972 to 1977

the communist support was nonetheless essential to Mitterrand's electoral victory in 1981. On the right the "conservative block" comprised both the Gaullist and non-Gaullist right. The FN together with, to a lesser degree, the Greens and the plethora of far-left parties that emerged after the relative decline of the French Communist Party, have all contributed to the breakup of the previously relatively stable electoral system. The crucial distinction between these two party systems is the number of parties in play and the great difficulty for parties to forge alliances on each sides of the political spectrum (Knapp, Wright 2006: 259). An example of this breakup, which could have helped Jean-Marie Le Pen to get through to the second round in the 2002 presidential election, is that no less than 15 candidates contested the first round.

The breakup of these alliances was preceded by another anomaly for the Fifth Republic as Mitterrand's election was the first time the left had gained power since the advent of the republic. After this initial alternation in power the practice became a common feature of the Fifth Republic "voters changed president, parliamentary majority, or both" (Knapp, Wright 2006: 256). Knapp and Wright identify these frequent alternations in power as an "obvious expression of public disappointment" (Knapp , Wright 2006: 257). As well as frequent alternation in power the number of party members also declined at this time; "total estimated party membership dropped from some 900 000 in the late 1970s to barely half that twenty years later (Knapp, Wright 2006: 257). On the whole, the FN has been able to benefit from the discrediting of these government parties which have alternated being in power for so many years (Perrineau 2014: 11).

4.3.3. Social impact of long-term unemployment and its political consequences

The key to understanding the impact of unemployment on the rise of the FN is the longevity of its existence in French society. Sirinelli highlights this unique longevity stating that by 2002 the deregulation of the labour market had already been in action for over a quarter century (Sirinelli 2017: 294). This duration means that people of all ages are affected by unemployment and more importantly several generations within the same family live with unemployment or at the very least the threat of unemployment (Sirinelli 2017: 294). This phenomenon has led to the tearing of social fabric thereby creating perfect conditions for the FN to thrive (Sirinelli 2017: 294). Perrineau also identifies the link between the social exclusion caused by unemployment and the increased tendency to support Marine Le Pen. In his book explaining why traditionally left-leaning voters would be tempted to vote for the FN, their economic and social marginalisation is a key characteristic of these individuals (Perrineau 2017a: 97). Perrineau provides an exhaustive list of characteristics found in the path of these individuals leading to their voting for the FN ; these include (Perrineau 2017a: 97). "precarity of employment and long term work, casual labour, unofficial work, unemployment, living on the street and the status of being homeless, collapse in quality of life"[75] (Perrineau 2017a: 97). Perrineau's book also includes interviews with individuals who have gone from voting for either the far-left or the socialists to voting for the FN. One of them, a 54 year-old unemployed man who works undeclared in the construction industry and who used to vote left-wing, describes a link between unemployment and abstention or choosing the FN:

> "I think we are numerous in France in this situation. I mean voting for the socialists and then starting to vote for the FN once unemployed. You see guys like me all the

[75] "la précarisation de l'emploi, l'installation durable dans les 'petits boulots', la sortie de l'économie officielle, le chômage, le passage par « la rue » et le statut de 'sans domicile fixe', l'effondrement du niveau de vie "

time on TV. We are numerous I think, very numerous. And in my family, no, they still refuse to change their vote to the FN, now they abstain, I think they don't care. But maybe they this will change in 2017…." (Interview in Perrineau Cette France de Gauche 2017: 99).

4.4. Mainstream policy convergence, a crisis of democratic representation and the undermining of the political landmarks of left and right

4.4.1. Introduction

Although still related to economic policy choices in the 1980s this subsection will focus on one aspect of the growing political and ideological crisis affecting France and contributing to the success of the FN. This ideological crisis has been caused by the undermining of the significance of the political landmarks of Left and Right which are meant to distinguish ideologically opposed political actors, such as parties, politicians and voters.

Having detailed the policy convergence undermining these notions, this subsection will highlight the characteristics of the French political system by which means this convergence has caused a crisis of political representation. The second portion of this subsection will argue that the aforementioned convergence has also caused an ideological crisis due to the undermining of the difference implied by and key to these notions. Furthermore, with reference to Sirinelli and a wider understanding of the historical distinction between the political Left and Right in France, the subsection will contend that this phenomenon is better understood as a transformation rather than an extinction of these concepts. This transformation is ongoing and therefore, as argued by Sirinelli, the current state of politics can be seen as a yet incomplete transformation from an old to a new politics. This transition

can be seen at work, although again in an incomplete stage, during the 2017 presidential elections which will be the focus of the next subsection.

This convergence of Left and Right, due to the Left's support of the free market, will be returned to in the final subsection of the next chapter on the nation as arbiter and the FN. While the focus of this subsection is the convergence leading to a lack of choice and issues of representation, the final subsection of the next chapter will highlight the vacuum left by this decision; a vacuum which would in time be filled by the FN.

4.4.2. Policy convergence and the crisis of democratic representation

The convergence central to this and other subsections is the U-turn conducted by Mitterrand in the early 1980s. Having been elected on the promise of instigating a "break with capitalism" (Mitterrand 1997: 82), Mitterrand was forced to reverse his policies and take measures to placate the international money markets which had begun a run on the French franc. The philosopher Jean-Claude Michéa (2014) has placed this decision in the context of a process occurring "over the last 30 years" by which Socialist parties throughout the western world have embraced "the cult of the competitive market, the need for competitive companies and the pursuit of unlimited growth" (Michéa 2013: 22). There are numerous possible explanations for Mitterrand's change of policies. One possibility is Michéa's argument that this process was the inevitable consequence of the contamination of French socialists by the metaphysics of Progress which started with their choice to engage with parliamentary politics in the late nineteenth century (Michéa 2013: 19-23). Another possibility is the notion that Mitterrand was a political pragmatist who adhered to socialist principles to see off leadership challengers and was more than happy to abandon the polices in all but name thereafter (Morray 1997: 73). Mitterrand's decision can also be explained, as previously mentioned, simply by a choice in favour of Europe and the growing pressures of globalisation. Another

explanation, once again taking a long-term view of this process, is that the Socialists' change of heart was due to the progressive numeric decline of their traditional working-class support. This notion will be covered in more detail in the next chapter but suffice it to say that in the face of being wiped out electorally the western socialist parties chose instead to temper their more radical economic policies. Regardless of which explanation or group of explanations we adhere to, one of its consequences remained the same; particularly in political systems which favoured the dominance of a small number of parties, like France, the mainstream political offerings came to resemble each other.

Highlighting this similarity between the mainstream parties' economic policy offerings has been a favourite target of FN rhetoric over the years. For example, Marine Le Pen writes:

> The succession over the past thirty years of "left wing" and "right-wing" government has made our fellow citizens become aware of the very strong permeability between their respective programs, and their practices in particular, without for the moment being able to completely extricate themselves from these artificial differences between them when it comes time to vote[76] (Le Pen 2012: 136).

In a slightly less biased assessment of the situation Perrineau (2014) emphasises the appeal of the FN's distinct economic proposals to those considered to be losing out from the process of globalisation. He states:

[76] *"La succession depuis trente ans des gouvernements « de gauche » et « de droite » a fait certainement prendre conscience à nos concitoyens de la perméabilité très forte entre leurs programmes respectifs, et surtout entre leurs pratiques, sans qu'ils parviennent toutefois pour le moment à s'extraire totalement de cette différence artificielle, lorsqu'il s'agit d'aller voter. "*

> In the economic domain, it [the FN] systematically defends the necessity of protecting the national market, in contrast to the more free-trade friendly position of the government parties of the left or the right[77] (Perrineau 2014: 113)

In French politics, until recently, the defence of the national market is a policy the FN is more likely to share with parties, supposedly at the far end of the political spectrum, than with any of the mainstream offerings. This has meant that over the past 30 years or so a disconnect has developed between votes cast and the policies advocated by those in positions of power.

The crisis of democratic representation in France is particularly visible through two types of public consultation: legislative elections and referenda. In both cases, over the past 30 years an increasing percentage of voters supporting parties or policies not reflected by the political mainstream, see their decisions underrepresented or absent from parliament and policy outcomes. In the case of many national and subnational elections in France there is a risk of a disconnect between the percentage of votes cast in a party's favour and the number of seats they will eventually be granted.

This is the result of the voting system favoured in France, uninominal single majority vote in two rounds, which like the first past the post system in the UK favours larger and more established parties. This bias towards the larger mainstream parties has often served to keep extreme parties, from both sides of the political spectrum, either out of or in very small numbers within parliament. For example, in the 1993 legislative elections the right-wing coalition (RPR, UDF) were able to win a landslide comprising over 80 percent of parliamentary seats by grouping votes from only 29% of the total registered voters at the time. To put these numbers into perspective; this majority was voted for by fewer people than decided to abstain or spoil their ballots, an option which was chosen by 34 percent of

[77] *"Dans le domaine économique, il défénd systématiquement la nécessité de protéger le marché national, à l'opposé de la position plus libre-échangiste des partis de gouvernement de gauche come de droite "*

those registered to vote (Knapp, Wright 2006: 257). Furthermore, in the first round of voting, although the FN got 12.57 percent of votes cast compared with the RPR's 20.6 percent, the FN ended up losing its only parliamentary seat.

As well as a simple mismatch between number of votes cast and the number of seats won by various parties, this and other elections also reflect the growing dissatisfaction with mainstream parties. In the 1993 legislative election less than 44 percent of the electorate voted for "parties of government" with 23 percent voting for parties considered to be "outside the system" (FN, PCF (Partis Communiste Français), Trostskist or ecologist groupings) (Knapp, Wright 2006: 257). This trend of unpopularity for the *parties de gouvernement* (PS, UDF, RPR)[78] was reflected at a subnational level where in 1992 they had barely scraped the majority of votes cast (51.3%) (Sirinelli 2017: 292).

In terms of the policies being side-lined by this crisis of representation, particularly the absence of certain parties in parliament, the most obvious example concerns the question of European integration. Indeed, as early as the 1992 referendum on the Maastricht treaty, the leaders of all three government parties, Mitterrand, Jacques Chirac and Valéry Giscard-d'Estaing, were all personally engaged in favour of accepting the treaty. In spite of this backing the majority in favour of the treaty was a narrow one with 48.96 percent of those who voted going against the treaty (Sirinelli 2017: 292). Furthermore, in contrast to the 13 million who voted in favour over 12.5 million voted against the treaty and a further 12 million chose to abstain (Sirinelli 2017: 292). In contrast to this narrow win, in 2005 the failure of mainstream politicians to rally a majority of voters in favour of a European treaty was total. Indeed, 55 percent of voters chose to reject the proposed European constitution even though once again this policy was supported by the leaders of the major mainstream

[78] PS : Partis socialiste, UDF : Union pour la démocratie française non-Gaulist centre-right party, RPR : Rassemblement pour la République (Gaullist mainstream right).

parties (Knapp, Wright 2006: 274). The main opposition to the yes campaign had been mounted by parties such as the FN and those of the French far-left, which had very little parliamentary representation. This meant that despite ignoring the provisions of the Constitution, a treaty, which does not have to be promulgated by a referendum according to French law, despite being similar in terms of content, was accepted and passed by 90 percent of French deputies and senators (Knapp, Wright 2006: 274). The convergence of the political mainstream on policy stances favourable to European integration lend a certain credence to the FN's denouncing of a "democratic deficit" which sees "a large portion of the electorate go unrepresented"[79] (Perrineau 2014: 169). Perrineau further argues that this "democratic dysfunction" helps to feed support for the FN (Perrineau 2014: 169).

4.4.3. The ideological consequences of a largely indistinguishable mainstream opposition

This part of the subsection will deal with the first truly ideological dimension of the current Total Crisis. Indeed, the Left/Right dichotomy which has been increasingly called into question in France is one of the main means by which parties, politicians and individuals position themselves or are positioned relative to each other in the ideological political landscape. For the spatial metaphor of Left and Right to continue to be a useful way of making sense of the political landscape there needs to be a clearly understood difference between political actors placed on either side of the division. When this concept of ideological distinction was originally developed, in the various assemblies of the early French Revolution, the separation was literally a physical one. Left and Right merely described the deputies seating arrangements, relative to the president of the assembly, based on their support or opposition to royal power in the proposed doomed constitutional monarchy. The aforementioned policy convergence between the mainstream parties meant to incarnate either

[79] *"empêche la representation d'une part importante de l'électorat "*

side of the ideological divide has had two major consequences. The first is the legitimacy of the Socialist Party still being part of the left has been called into question, particularly by those who have felt betrayed by the Socialist change of policy. This will be the focus of the final section of the next chapter which deals with the vacuum created by the Socialists' change of policy and the ability of the FN to insinuate itself into the void. The second consequence, which is the focus here, is that the ideological proximity of the divide's key opposed representatives has called into question the Left/Right categories themselves.

In France the progression of this trend is clear. Perrineau cites a 1981 opinion poll which asked respondents whether they considered "the notions of right and left to be surpassed: this is no longer how we can judge politicians and political party's positions"[80] (Perrineau 2014: 165). In 1981 33 percent agreed with the statement, by April 1991 this percentage has risen to 55 percent, 60 percent by the early 2000s (Perrineau 2014: 165). By December 2012, 68 percent of respondents declared that "today the notions of right and left do no longer mean much", revealingly this percentage is as high as 78 percent amongst those who vote for the FN (Perrineau 2014: 165). These successive opinion polls make it clear that large portions of the electorate have lost faith in one of the major landmarks of the French ideological political landscape. Furthermore, the fact that this portion is higher amongst FN voters might be a sign of the appeal of a party which specifically refuses to position itself in relation to this dichotomy which it claims is redundant. In the Presidential election of April 2012 Marine Le Pen attracted 24 percent of electors who felt they were "neither of the left or the right" putting her in front of Sarkozy (23 percent) et Bayrou (20 percent) (Perrineau 2014: 165). However, putting the concepts of Left and Right into a longer-term historical perspective helps to shed light on the nature of the present political and ideological crisis.

[80] *"Les notions de droite et de gauche sont dépassés : ce n'est plus comme cela qu'on peut juger les prises de positions des hommes et des partis politiques"*

When considering the present compromising of the relevance of the notions of Left and Right it is interesting to note that their demise has been decried in the past in Britain. For example, writers such as Bell (1962) and Brittan (1968) published books entitled "the End of Ideology" and "Left or Right: the bogus dilemma" respectively. Both called into question the ongoing relevance of the concept of Left and Right for making sense of the politics in the 1960s. Bell, for example, wrote that ideologies have "lost their 'truth' and their power to persuade" (Bell 1962: 402), a statement which would not appear out of place when applied to the mainstream parties in twenty-first century France. At the time, the cause of the dichotomy that was being called into question in Britain was very similar in process, albeit different in nature, to that in France at present time. In Britain the post-Second World War settlement had created a consensus, transcending the Left/Right divide, supporting the establishment of the National Health Service and extensive state intervention in the economy. These policies, broadly associated with the positions of 'the Left', meant another consensus existed between the mainstream political parties in a given political system. That consensus, epitomized by New Labour under Tony Blair in the UK was virtually the opposite of that established by the Left in 1980s France, although the consequence for the importance of Left and Right were much the same. The relevance of the divide in both situations was questioned.

Returning to France, the long-term perspective found in Sirinelli's work offers another insight into the nature of the Left/Right dichotomy, mainly that the key issues through which the divide has been defined have changed several times in the past. As Sirinelli himself puts it: "they [Left and Right] at a given date are the fruit of History and evolve as it unfolds. In other words, the indicating signs have changed with time"[81] (Sirinelli 2017: 216). Sirinelli therefore considers it necessary to trace the evolution of Left and Right to their origins in the

[81] *"[…] elles sont à une date donnée le fruit de l'Histoire et évoluent au fil de son déroulement. En d'autres termes, les panneaux indicateurs ont bougé avec le temps."*

French Revolution. After the affirmation of the original Left/Right divide which cemented the "bipolar" nature of French politics (Sirinelli 2017: 216) the Revolution continued to impact the defining of this divide. Indeed, the rapid succession of numerous constitution types left an unanswered question, which would form the basis of the political divide of the nineteenth-century, namely which Constitution would be best for France (Sirinelli 2017: 216). Sirinelli cites the work of René Rémond who identified three distinct "rights": one proposed the restoration of absolute monarchy, another the establishment of a constitutional monarchy and thirdly a "synthesis between authority and popular expression for the Bonapartists"[82] (Sirinelli 2017: 217). Crucially, however, by the close of the century this question had been solved: with the growing entrenchment and longevity of the republican constitution model the "content" of the Left/Right cleavage changed (Sirinelli 2017: 217). The constitutional issue having been resolved a new one would emerge to define the twentieth century. Indeed, the ongoing industrial development of the country created "new social forces", mainly the working-class and associated political forces in the form of the socialist movement (Sirinelli 2017: 217). As this new force gained political traction the new Left/Right divide was formed around questions of "economic and social issues" such as "the role of the state in relation to property, the mechanisms of taxation and any potential redistribution of wealth, as well as the issue of social equality" all became crucial points of division (Sirinelli 2017: 217). With the French socialists rallying to support the markets the key issues which had defined the Left/Right divide in the twentieth-century seemed largely resolved at least for the mainstream political offering (Sirinelli 2017: 18).

Sirinelli argues that since the 1980s another series of issues, this time socio-cultural in nature, has gained increasing prominence and could form the basis of "so many new dividing lines"[83]

[82] *"[…]recherche d'une synthèse entre autorité et expression populaire pour les bonapartistes. "*
[83] *"[…] autant de nouvelle lignes de clivage."*

around which politics will orient itself (Sirinelli 2017: 219). Scientific progress which has enabled humans to intervene more than ever before in their own life cycle, from contraception and gestation to illness and prolonging life, has raised societal questions which form the basis of these new splits (Sirinelli 2017: 219).

Perrineau (2014) casts the net a little wider than Sirinelli in terms of the number of new political "fault lines" rearranging French politics as a result of the "unfreezing" of the existing political divide (Perrineau 2014: 105). He identifies five new emerging splits contributing to the appearance of the FN. An economic divide separates those who consider themselves victims of globalization and those who desire furthering it in order to change and invigorate the national economy (Perrineau 2014: 106). On a related note to the previous divide, another new fault line occurs between those who want to move towards more international openness as opposed to those who have a more national and protectionist outlook (Perrineau 2014: 106). A third divide separates those who have embraced cultural liberalism and seek to take it further from those who believe it has gone far enough and that society must return to more traditional values (Perrineau 2014: 106). There is also s a geographic divide which has further emphasized the contrast between the development and dynamism of central urban areas and a more or less abandoned periphery (Perrineau 2014: 106-7). The final divide is political with, on the one hand those who ascribe to a "culture of government" and, on the other, an "anti-system" culture which favours political defiance (Perrineau 2014: 107).

What is crucial about these five new fault lines is that regrouping existing parties according to their stances on these new dividing issues, would yield very different results to a division according to the previous Left/Right dichotomy. It is for this reason that the emergence of these new divides is so disorientating when trying to understand the new ideological landscape being formed around them. For example, the divide between the "losers" and

"winners" of modernization and globalization places the FN alongside Mélenchon's Front de Gauche, both appealing to similar "perceptions and rejections" in a population which is "more and more fearful and disorientated (Perrineau 2014: 108). The position of individuals relative to the opportunities and threats of globalization goes beyond the economic sphere and impacts the degree to which individuals identify and place importance on the national community (Perrineau 2014: 111). The "losers" of globalization will tend to interpret the "denationalization" process as an irreversible and negative consequence of globalization, whereas the "winners" see it as a positive and potential opportunity (Perrineau 2014: 111). Perhaps unsurprisingly considering the proximity of the issues, the divide between those desire an open society versus one more closed to the world, separates parties along similar lines to that of the winners and losers of globalization. A good example of this is the parties classified at each extreme of the Left/Right spectrum both of which are in strong opposition to European integration. Perrineau (2017a) refers to a "social-nationalism tropism » amongst certain left-wing voters and the FN which brought these voters together in opposition to the 2005 European Constitutional Treaty. Indeed, 95 percent of the PCF voters and 96 percent of the FN voters joined in voting against the constitution in the 2005 referendum. Interestingly, they were also joined by a significant majority (59 percent) of the PS voters (Perrineau 2017a: 39). An issue which adds another layer of complexity to the interactions of these 5 new divides is that existing political parties would split the same way, not only compared to the traditional Left/Right divide, but also in relation to the 5 newly identified divides. For example, and this will be covered in more detail in the next chapter, while Mélenchon is hostile to Europe, unlike the FN, he was for a time favourable to immigration and even at one point proposed granting legal status to all illegal immigrants.

Another new division concerns the attitudes of voters and parties to cultural liberalism. There exists what is referred to as a "demand for authority" which is opposed to the trend of

liberalisation that started back with the cultural revolution of the 1960s and the political parties which eventually emerged from it in the 1980s. It is unsurprising therefore that the voters for the Greens, one of the new parties that emerged as a result of the new values flooding French politics, are the most opposed to the FN with regard to cultural liberalism. Indeed, a poll from the 2012 Presidential election showed that 84 percent of Eva Joly's voters, versus 65 percent in the general population, were opposed to the death penalty. In contrast 60 percent of Marine Le Pen's voters are in favour of reinstating it (Perrineau 2014: 142). Green voters are also the least reticent when it comes to welcoming immigrants, with 78 percent being favourable in contrast to 49 of the general population, and 88 percent of FN voters who consider that there are too many foreigners in France (Perrineau 2014: 143-4). What is crucial to note at this juncture is that the "demand for authority" seems largely to concern the public sphere and is, according to Perrineau, a response to the feeling of insecurity in the country (Perrineau 2014: 14). By contrast, concerning individuals' private lives, there has been a general trend towards increasing tolerance, with 75 percent of Marine Le Pen's supporters considering that "homosexuality is an acceptable way to living one sexuality"[84] (Perrineau 2014: 144).

The potential complexity of understanding the place of the Left/Right dichotomy in current French politics appears to be endless. Although the new divides help regroup French political parties more precisely than mere Left and Right alone, depending on the issue, they are not infallible to creating a new binary opposition. However, given the importance of globalisation, in all its forms and impact on society and individuals' positions, the closest option to a binary distinction is the contrast between supporters of an "open society" and those favouring a "closed society". What really blurs the lines with regard to a new way of orientating a way through the political landscape, be it as a voter or a commentator, is that,

[84] "l'homosexualité est une manière acceptable de vivre sa sexualité "

as Grunberg (2017) argues, in his assessment of the 2017 Presidential elections, for the time being both systems currently coexist. Grunberg states:

> In reality, in the current situation, both splits [Left/Right and Open/Closed] are in competition and this situation could produce for a long-time strong instability in the partisan system and a great volatility within the electorate[85] (Grunberg 2017: 217).

The importance of this instability, which is a major component of this project, has been succinctly summarised by Grunberg: "the decomposition phase of our political system is well advanced, that of its composition is by contrast far from over"[86] (Grunberg 2017: 318).

[85] "En réalité, dans la situation actuelle, les deux clivages sont en concurrence et cette situation pourrait produire longtemps une forte instabilité du système partisan et une grande volatilité de l'électorat."
[86] "Si la phase de décomposition de notre système politique est fort avancée, celle de sa recomposition est en revanche loin d'être achevée."

Chapter 5: The Front National and the resurgence of the nation in French politics

5.1. Introduction

The closing lines of the speech given by Marine Le Pen in Lyon during her 2017 Presidential election campaign were designed to give her supporters the impression that the Front National (FN) would join an unstoppable wave of national populism sweeping the West. She stated:

> I believe in our victory […] Other peoples have shown the way. The British who have chosen freedom with Brexit, […] The Italians who have shown their disapproval during the referendum on M. Renzi's Constitution. The Greeks who are contemplating once again exiting the Euro. The Austrians who, in the first round of the presidential elections, have eliminated all traditional parties. The Americans who have made the choice for their national interest. These nations have shown that the awakening of the people against the oligarchies can become reality and as our Blue Rose symbolises, the impossible becomes possible (Le Pen 2017 Discours de Lyon).[87]

Although for the moment the wave she claims to be a part of has failed to bring the FN (now the *Rassemblement National*) to power, it has nevertheless continued its rise in Europe.

More than mere rhetorical self-aggrandisement on Marine Le Pen's part, it does appear that, at the very least in the West, a political upheaval is at work which is largely benefiting parties with nationalist inclinations (Betz 2003, Eatwell and Goodwin 2018, Mudde 2016). In the

[87] *"Les autres peuples ont montré la voie. Les Britanniques qui ont choisi la liberté avec le Brexit […]Les Italiens qui ont montré leur réprobation lors du référendum sur la Constitution de M. Renzi. Les Grecs qui envisageraient à nouveau de sortir de l'Euro. Les Autrichiens qui ont éliminé de la présidentielle au premier tour tous les partis. Les Américains qui ont fait le choix de leur intérêt national. Ces Nations ont montré que le réveil des peuples contre le oligarchies peut devenir une réalité et que comme le symbolise notre belle Rose Bleu, l'impossible devient possible."*

previous chapter on the current Total Crisis fuelling the rise of the FN in France, parallels have already been made with similar phenomena in other countries and this chapter will continue to explore this trend. The focus of the present thesis, however, must remain the FN within the context of French politics. While both chapters draw on events that have affected other countries, the FN in France offers an interesting example of the Nation as Arbiter phenomenon occurring within a context of Total Crisis.

The FN has been present on the fringes of French politics since the early 1970s. However, its electoral breakthrough can be traced back to the consequences of a growing context of Total Crisis, the effect of which was not felt until the early 1980s. Also, unlike other European countries such as Austria or Italy, the FN has never, at the time of writing, had a position in the national government and yet incarnates ideas which have gained tremendous influence over the mainstream of French politics. The current chapter will seek to understand the unique position occupied by the FN in French politics through the prism of the concept of the Nation as Arbiter. While the focus of the previous chapter detailed the necessary context for the rise of the FN, this chapter is more focused on those FN actions within French politics which have led to its success. These actions range from FN leaders seeking to redefine the boundaries of the nation as well as reemphasising its primacy in the political sphere, to a series of political strategies more directly related to its election successes. For example, over the course of its existence the FN has shown a form of political pragmatism which has enabled it to court a new electorate abandoned by the mainstream left. Furthermore, the strategy of 'de-demonisation' (*dédiabolisation*) mainly instigated by Marine Le Pen, first as her father's campaign manager and then as leader of the party, has contributed, alongside the changing values of the population, to making the FN's ideas sound more palatable.

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of the FN's political arsenal is that Marine Le Pen's FN in particular views itself as being on an antihegemonic mission to combat globalism

(*mondialisme*). In the FN's worldview the nation is simultaneously threatened, from within economically and culturally and from without by globalism and its advocates, while at the same time being the best rampart against the abuses of the global world.

In the wider context of this thesis the FN's portrayal of the nation under threat and the rhetoric it uses is of particular note, because it draws on and highlights both key characteristics of nations which have come to define the modern age. In the FN's rhetoric the notions of the nation as a sovereign entity and the nation as a source of the population's identity, are both drawn upon and portrayed as being under threat. The FN claims that it alone is seeking to protect this entity's integrity as well as those who live within and form it. This conflation of the various aspects of nation is perhaps most visible in the intentional ambiguity maintained in FN rhetoric around the use of the term "people". As Alduy and Wahnich explain, both Marine Le Pen and her father intentionally maintain the confusion between the three meanings of the term "peuple":

> the people as demos, the source of democratic sovereignty, as a sociological category more restrictively defined in opposition to the elites and the wealthy, and finally as ethnos, confined to the "French" (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 169).

The confusion caused by the conflation of these three meanings of 'people' is made worse when common usage creates compound nouns such as 'sovereign people'. For example, in many countries the nation is considered to be sovereign and so in France 'nation' can mean 'sovereign people', except when specifically used to exclude an elite perceived to be out of touch with the concerns of a significant part of the population.

The content of this chapter is doubly important for this thesis. Although it largely concludes its analysis in the immediate aftermath of the 2017 French presidential elections, it still constitutes the most up to date view of the 'Nation as Arbiter' mechanism at work.

Furthermore, given the FN's ambiguous use of the term "people", at times interchangeable with the national community and its identification of globalism as its main enemy, the FN's rhetoric epitomises the most extreme and "pure" vision of the role the nation has come to play in modern politics. In a sense, regardless of personal attitudes towards the FN, its position shows the culmination of the evolution of the nation as a political sovereign entity and the source of a politicised identity, both of which are currently at work and influential in French politics. The 'Nation as Arbiter' mechanism, which first appeared in primitive form during the time of the French Revolution, has perhaps matured into a purer, more explicit incarnation.

This chapter is split into three subsections each treating a different element of the FN's rhetoric, influence and position in French politics. The first subsection focuses on the FN's worldview, mainly its definition of globalism (*mondialisme*), the perceived consequences of its dominance and the FN's reasoning behind the nation as the only natural rampart. The second subsection focuses on the crux of the FN's half-century political offering with its focus on the defence of the nation and answering the perceived rise of insecurity. This subsection will also cover the increasing ideological influence that the FN has had over the political mainstream, mainly on the centre-right UMP or rather *Les Républicains* since 2015. The final subsection will argue that the FN's pragmatism enabled it to gradually fill a void opened up by the left's adoption of pro-market policies and its abandonment of the working-class in favour of a growing middle-class constituency.

5.2. The FN's ideology : the nation and the FN versus "Mondialisme"

5.2.1. Introduction

Since its creation in 1972 the FN has always placed the defence of the nation at the heart of its political offering. However, over the years, both the enemy it claimed to be defending the nation against, and the policies and justifications it has used to target these threats, have changed.

The focus of this subsection will be the FN's latest declared "opponent", the ideology of "globalism" (*mondialisme*) which seeks the undermining and ultimate destruction of the nation and nation-state. Since Marine Le Pen's first presidential campaign in 2012, the concept of globalism has provided a unique coherence to the FN's rhetoric, ideas and policy proposals. While specific policy proposals are sometimes lacking from the FN's electoral campaign, the FN's claimed alliance with the nation against the all-encompassing dominance of globalism, which is held singly responsible for all of France's various woes, suffices to gain traction in the context of accentuated crisis. Crucially, globalism is considered a threat to all dimensions of the nation's role in politics -its sovereignty, internal and external, and its role as a foundation for national identity, both are actively being compromised by globalism's dominance. In Marine Le Pen's reading of contemporary politics the nation is under threat while being itself the only plausible point of resistance and ultimately the means of reversing the influence of globalism. As Le Pen states in her book: "Without the nation, cradle of the republican State, there is no salvation against the new mercantile tyranny that destroys values

and identities, transforming citizens into stupefied, uprooted consumers fragmented into communitarian tribes, incapable of resisting this modern Leviathan."[88] (Le Pen 2012: 108).

This subsection opens with an account of what the FN means by globalism, its dominance and effects, as well as observing the increasingly cultural dimension laid open in the main account presented in Marine Le Pen's 2012 book. Mirroring this cultural shift, the FN's arguments concerning immigration will subsequently be considered as well as one aspect of the process of *dédiabolisation* which has seen the FN successfully monopolise and change the meaning of the term '*laïcité'* in order to further its political ambitions. Finally, the notion of the nation in all its facets being simultaneously under threat and the only rampart against the perceived evils of globalism, will be related more broadly to the wider issues covered in this thesis.

5.2.2. "Globalism" and the FN's anti-hegemonic ambitions

The notion of globalism forms the focus of Marine Le Pen's 2012 book "*Pour que vive la France*", published as part of her presidential bid in the lead up to the 2012 presidential elections. It offers both an analysis of the economic, political and societal woes affecting France, largely blamed on various aspects of globalism itself, and the broad strokes of the FN's proposed solutions to these problems.

Given the FN's often protectionist policy stance, it is interesting to note that Marine Le Pen's hostility is not globalisation itself but globalism. Globalisation is merely considered to be the "technical phenomenon" describing the multiplication of exchanges between "regions and between nations" and she considers it to have had a positive impact on human development

[88] *"Sans nation, berceau de l'Etat républicain, point de salut face à la nouvelle tyrannie mercantile, destructrice de valeurs et d'identités, transformant les citoyens en consommateurs hébétés et déracinés, fragmentés en quelques tribus communautaristes, incapables de résister à ce Léviathan modern."*

(Le Pen 2012: 27). The crucial caveat to this praise of globalisation is that while "globalisation must not be fought, it must be controlled by nations"[89] (Le Pen 2012: 27). This is precisely what globalism seeks to avoid. Indeed, one of the clearest definitions of the FN's notion of globalism can be found in Marine Le Pen's 2017 campaign speech in which she accuses an anonymous "they" of having transformed the "fact" of globalisation into an "ideology"[90] (Le Pen 2017 Discours de Lyon). In other words, at its most basic, globalism is an ideology which aims to accentuate and accelerate its importance by removing existing obstacles to it. For example, globalism is said to "deny the utility of nations" and is the "political translation of ultra-liberal economic doctrine"[91] (Le Pen 2012: 27). An "alliance of consumerism and materialism", the claimed objective of globalism, is to create a new Man "Homo Mondialisus" who is "devoid of all beliefs, of all solidarity, of all national identity, all historical references" and has as his only objective "producing and consuming"[92] (Le Pen 2012: 27-28). The nation, therefore, is an anchor which currently serves as an impediment to globalism's objective of creating the perfect globalised consumer.

In Marine Le Pen's analysis the danger of globalism is a product of its dominance which has tended towards forming a hegemony successfully discrediting and demonising alternatives, most notably the nation. The strength of this ideology is not based on repression and force but rather on its ability to transform "opinions, ideas, which are by nature contestable, questionable and influenced by the hazards of history […] into an intangible 'scientific truth'" (Le Pen 2012: 92). Marine Le Pen describes it as a "gospel" which claims to be

[89] *« La mondialisation ne doit pas être combattue, mais elle doit être maîtrisée par les nations […] »*
[90] *« La mondialisation qui était un fait avec la multiplication des échanges, ils en ont fait une idéologie »*
[91] *« Le mondialisme est en effet une idéologie, qui a pour trait principal de nier l'utilité des nations […] Il est en quelque sorte la traduction politique de la doctrine économique ultralibérale, […] »*
[92] *« L'homo mondialisus est ainsi un homme vidé de toute croyance, de toute solidarité, de toute identité nationale, de toute référence historique. Il est la pour produire et consommer »*

scientific as it relies on truths which have become incontestable as they form the "impassable dogma of the economic sciences" (Le Pen 2012: 90-91).

For Le Pen the dominance of this ideology, masquerading as scientific truth, is twofold. First of all, its claim to rationalism has enabled its supporters to claim that the current historical age marks "the end of ideologies" when in truth globalism is the "triumphant ideology, in reality more powerful than any which lasted through the twentieth-century"[93] (Le Pen 2012: 116). Secondly, and more importantly in understanding the FN's attitude towards the nation, Le Pen claims that "ultra-liberal globalism" has engrained the "demonization of the Nation" from childhood to such an extent that many are incapable of questioning the functioning of the current system (Le Pen 2012: 104). The proof of the successful undermining of the Nation is that "the defence of the Nation has become for them synonymous with chauvinism, the rejection of the other, and the risk of war"[94] (Marine Le Pen 2012: 104). Therefore, those who benefit from globalism, having successfully established the ideology's foundations as unquestionable scientific truth, have consequently rendered it impossible for many to consider any alternative system by effectively neutralising the concept of nation, which for the FN, would form the best alternative foundation.

Those who benefit from globalism in Le Pen's analysis are clearly identified. This ideology on which globalism is based is the "tyranny of limitless cupidity, the absolute power of the financiers and bankers who run the world and make rulers their auxiliaries"[95] (Le Pen 2012: 90). As this quote implies, the local implementors of policies who benefit from the triumph of globalised markets are mainstream politicians, known fittingly in France, in a formulation used by Marine Le Pen, as the 'government parties'. A recurring topic in these chapters

[93] *« […] idéologie triomphante, plus puissante en réalité que toutes celles qui ont traversé le XXe siècle […]*
[94] *« La défense de la Nation est devenue pour eux synonyme de chauvinisme, de rejet de l'autre, de risque de guerre. »*
[95] *« […] tyrannie de la cupidité sans limites, le pouvoir absolu des financiers et des banquiers qui dirigent le monde et font des gouvernants leurs auxiliaires. »*

about the FN and the present crisis, is that once again the key representatives of left and right come under fire, this time for maintaining a fake antagonism when in reality they are both in the service of the "globalised hyper-class" (Le Pen 2012: 127). As proof Le Pen cites the example of Bernard Kouchner, a left-wing figure and "symbol of May 68'" being offered and accepting a role in Nicolas Sarkozy's government. Le Pen highlights the oddity of this appointment for both involved, given that Sarkozy had promised to "liquidate the legacy" of the 1968 movement (Le Pen 2012: 127). Furthermore, she herself refers to "Sarkozy the American" and the UMP as being just "the most visible and most caricatural incarnation of an ideology in power for quite a while, globalism"[96] (Le Pen 2012: 25-6). Le Pen concludes that the association of these political figures who should be opposed to each other, highlights both the extent of the "ideological collusion" between the Left and Right at the time, as well as the "electoral scam" being perpetrated on the French voters (Le Pen 2012: 127). As further evidence of the longevity of this fake opposition between mainstream parties she refers to their track record stretching back thirty years. She writes:

> over the past three decades, no government, be it left or right-wing, has challenged the race towards a supranational Europe, the ever more numerous transferences of sovereignty, or the dismantling of customs protections, not one has considered the renegotiation by France, in its own interests, of the European treaties[97] (Le Pen 2012: 134).

As a consequence of this collusion against French interests by its own politicians she concludes that the electoral choices offered to the French do not present truly different

[96] *« 'Sarkozy l'Américain » et l'UMP ne sont en réalité aujourd'hui que l'incarnation la plus visible et la plus caricaturale d'une idéologie au pouvoir depuis bien longtemps, le mondialisme ».*
[97] *« Au cours des trois dernières décennies passées, aucun gouvernement, qu'il soit de droite ou de gauche, n'a remis en cause la course à l'Europe supranationale, aux transfers de souveraineté, toujours plus nombreux, ou au démantèlement des protections douanières ; pas un n'a envisagé un instant la renégociation par la France, dans son intérêt, des traités européens. »*

choices between alternative political projects. She says that the phenomenon of "alternance" between left and right merely offers the "sentiment of a rough political confrontation", an illusion, when the alternative political projects meant to be "antagonists" are in reality in their "fundamental orientation twins" (Le Pen 2012: 136). What is actually on offer for Marine Le Pen are two slight deviations of the same theme which is both "globalist and antinational" (Le Pen 2012: 136). In France's very own version of 'fake news' Marine Le Pen claims the media is complicit in creating the fake confrontation between the mainstream parties (Le Pen 2012: 137). Indeed, she refers to the "two candidates chosen by the press", well in advance of any presidential election, thereby "setting the scene for the play which will be performed for the French" [98](Le Pen 2012: 137). It is unsurprising, given how corrupted she claims French politics has become, that she states that the mysterious "elites" are engaged in a "veritable ideological war against the people"[99] (Le Pen 2012: 102).

Marine Le Pen's 2012 book mainly focuses on the previously mentioned globalism, as intimately tied to the economic and financial concerns of a banking and financial elite out for profit. However, with its reference to immigration it does touch upon more cultural concerns. The question of immigration will be covered in more detail in the next sub-section, but it is interesting here to highlight an evolution in Marine Le Pen's treatment of globalism as a phenomenon. Indeed, in her book immigration is an economic threat which places pressure on salaries keeping them lower than they should be (Le Pen 2012: 48). Immigration is also a cultural threat to French national identity. Le Pen argues that the mass immigration and the "imposition on the French of multiculturalism" have contributed to cutting the French off from their culture in an effort to "weaken national conscience, a rampart against the

[98] *« la presse commande-t-elle très en amont du scrutin des intentions de vote entre les deux candidats qu'elle a choisis pour l'affrontement final du second tour.[…] L'essentiel est de commencer très en amont, avant même que le scénario ne soit connu, à planter le décor de la pièce qui sera jouée aux Français. »*
[99] *« […]c'est désormais une véritable guerre idéologique qui est menée contre le peuple par ses élites. »*

edification of the 'global village'"[100] (Le Pen 2012: 86). In this sense the question of immigration is treated merely as another tool to undermine the nation, the main obstacle to globalism's dominance. Moving forward to her speech from the 2017 campaign, not only has another globalism materialised in her thinking but immigration has taken on a potentially more sinister undertone.

In the words of Marine Le Pen's 2017 speech, the "economic globalism" with its weakening of the nation's "immunitary defences" through the undermining of its constitutive elements has enabled the "birth and growth" of "another globalism", Islamist fundamentalism (Le Pen 2017 Discours de Lyon). In her speech Marine Le Pen states;

> The djihadist globalism which damages our vital interests abroad, but which also implants itself on our national territory, in certain neighbourhoods, in certain locations, in certain weak minds… (Le Pen 2017 Discours de Lyon).

Although not overtly stated at this point in the speech, it is hard not to see an implicit reference to a threat from immigration or even second-generation immigrants of Muslim background.

In terms somewhat reminiscent of Schmitt's concept of the political (Scmitt 2007) , Marine Le Pen then declares these two forms of globalism to be her enemy. Having described economic globalism and its impact on the development of the globalism of fundamentalist Islam, she states "we have thereby fulfilled our first political act which is to designate the opponent".[101] (Marine Le Pen 2017 Discours de Lyon). Being ideologies with global ambitions in Marine Le Pen's eyes, the objective of both is to undermine and destroy the nation. She says that both

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[100] *« En imposant au Français le multiculturalisme […] on les a progressivement coupés de leur culture, cherchant à affaiblir la conscience nationale, rempart à l'édification du 'village global' »*
[101] *« Nous avons ainsi rempli notre premier acte politique qui est de désigner l'adversaire ».*

> seek to subdue our country. One in the name of globalised finance, that is to say the ideology of total commerce [sic], the other in the name of radicalised Islam, that is to say in the ideology of total religioun [sic].[102] (Le Pen 2017 Discours de Lyon)

What is interesting with regard to the FN's protectiveness and claim to monopolise the interests of the nation, is that as ideological opponents both of these "globalisms" have local representatives within the national sphere. This issue will be returned to in subsequent subsections but for now it can already be seen that the local mainstream political elites are, at best, under the influence of economic globalism and, at worst, complicit and benefiting from it, and Muslim immigrants are implicitly under suspicion as being related to the threat of Islamic fundamentalism.

5.2.3. The evolution of the FN's designated "enemy"

Given the role that the FN has played in maintaining immigration as one of the major issues at the heart of French politics over several decades, it may come as a surprise that initially immigration played little or no part in the FN's political offering. In the legislative campaign of 1973, the first since its creation, anti-communism was still the main focus of the FN and its leader's (Jean-Marie Le Pen) antagonism. Immigration did not even figure in the 10 key points of the FN's electoral manifesto (Shields 2007: 185). Jean-Marie Le Pen, under the influence of one of the FN's other founders, François Duprat, only gradually came round to recognising the electoral potential, particularly when courting the working-class, of adopting an anti-immigrant stance (Shields 2007: 185). Duprat foresaw that immigration, while not yet an electorally determining issue, had the potential to become one in the context of rising unemployment and a mounting feeling of economic insecurity (Shields 2007: 185). This

[102] *« Ceux deux idéologies veulent soumettrent notre pays. L'une au nom de la finance mondialisée, c'est-à-dire de l'idéologie du tout commerce, l'autre au nom d'un islam radicalisé, c'est-à-dire de l'idéologie du tout religieux. »*

economic context helps explain why the introduction of immigration into the FN's programme and rhetoric focused on the alleged economic consequences of immigration more than any other concerns. In February 1978 Jean-Marie Le Pen stated on the radio:

> There is no racism whatsoever in observing, firstly that there are five million foreigners in France, then in asking whether the million French people who are out of work do not have a greater right than foreigners to work in their own country. […] We think that a million unemployed is a million foreigners too many (Jean-Marie Le Pen cited in Shields 2007: 186).

That final sentence would become the basis for the main slogan of the 1978 electoral campaign and the slogan, with updated numbers to reflect rising unemployment levels, would continue to be used throughout the 1980s and 90s (Shields 2007: 186).

It is interesting to note here, and it is an issue that will recur during the course of this chapter, that the rhetoric equating unemployment rates with excess immigration was far from being an original adopted position. Shields notes that in doing this the FN was not "setting the agenda". He quotes the Minister for Employment, Michel Dufour, "taking his lead from Prime Minister Chirac" making very similar claims in a newspaper article published in February 1976 (Shields 2007: 186). Part of the article read as follows:

> […] employment in France has an absurd aspect to it. There are a million unemployed; but at the same time there are two million immigrant workers, a significant number of whom have more disposable income than certain salaried employees in the highly coveted tertiary sector. Who can fail to see the contradiction in that? (Dufour, cited in Shields 2007: 186).

Given that later in the year the government implemented a policy of voluntary repatriation in an attempt to reduce the number of immigrant workers on French soil, the FN's stance does

not seem, by any stretch of the imagination, original. Although the FN would become the party most associated with an anti-immigrant stance it seems that, at least originally, it was an issue begrudgingly recognised by Jean-Marie Le Pen and largely borrowed from more mainstream parties.

Moving from a mere two brief mentions in the FN's 1973 programme, by 1986 immigration occupied an entire 15 page chapter of the FN's manifesto and was now held responsible for France's woes: either "crime and unemployment" or "economic recession, declining educational standards" or constituting a "threat to national identity" (Shields 2007: 212). The mention of immigration being a threat to the integrity of French national identity introduces another key to understanding the FN's changing portrayal of the immigration issue. Although it never fully abandoned the argument that immigration is economically detrimental to the country, with increasing frequency it added an argument about the cultural threat of immigration.

The evolution of the FN's number one enemy over the years has been summarised by Pascal Perrineau: during the 1970s it was Communism, then "the scapegoat of the 1980s until the beginning of the 2000s" was immigration and since then "Islam and its derivatives have taken the top spot" (Perrineau 2014: 99). This is not to say that the theme of immigration has entirely disappeared, but it has been increasingly side-lined in importance by Islamism (Perrineau 2014: 97). Much like the decision to focus on immigration in the context of growing economic crisis and rising unemployment, the choice of Islam as a key opponent is also an attempt to take advantage of a growing anxiety of the period.

With the succession of terrorist attacks, starting in the United States in September 2001 but quickly spreading to Europe and France in particular, concerns about Islam have risen amongst the population. Perrineau argues that in its opposition to radical Islam the FN sought

a theme which had a real echo in French society but crucially went well beyond the limits of the traditional far-right electorate (Perrineau 2014: 100). French opinions of the Muslim religion certainly seems to suggest that this is fertile ground for the FN. An opinion poll conducted in January 2013 noted that 74% of the French consider that "the Muslim religion practised in France is "not tolerant"", 80% claimed that it "sought to impose its functioning on others" and 77% considered "the question of religious fundamentalism in France to be 'a more and more preoccupying problem which needs to be seriously addressed'"[103] (Perrineau 2014: 100). Perrineau states that the FN is trying to "incarnate the most radical version of an anti-Islamism largely shared with the population" (Perrineau 2014: 100). This strategy once again seems very close to that of the Nazis in their pursuit of power covered previously in Chapter 5. For Perrineau, the shift from immigration alone to anti-Islamism is merely the FN adapting to the "evolution of French fears and worries"[104] (Perrineau 2014: 100). This is another example, and more will follow, of the FN's adaptability and pragmatism in its pursuit of power. The choice of culture and religion as a target has shown an adaptation to a new concern amongst the French population but the rhetoric used to attack these new enemies has also helped contribute to the FN's acceptability.

The combination of the defence of Christian values, one of the claimed roots of French culture, and the Republican concept of "*laïcité*", traditionally associated with the Left in France, means that the FN has sought to appeal well beyond the limits of traditional far-right voters. While her father's religious rhetoric usually seeks to echo fundamentalist Catholicism, Marine Le Pen, while occasionally using Catholic vocabulary, prefers the notion of "*laïcité*" (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 51). While the separation of church and state has been associated

[103] *« 74% des Français considèrent que la religion mulsulmane pratiquée en France n'est « pas tolérante » , […]80% qu'elle « cherche à imposer son mode de fonctionnement aux autres », et 77% que la question de l'intégrisme religieux en France est « un problème de plus en plus préoccupant dont il faut s'occuper sérieusement. »*

[104] *« Le Front national s'est ainsi adapté à l'évolution des peurs et des inquiétudes françaises. »*

historically with the Left, the FN has taken advantage of the fact that the Left has largely abandoned or at least been rendered "ill-at ease" on the subject since the 2004 polemic about veils (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 52). Alduy and Wahnich argue that the left has become divided because it is caught between "the defence of minorities and *laïcité*" (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 52). Marine Le Pen has taken "*laïcité*" and turned it into a "weapon against communitarianism and more generally against the durable implantation of Islam in France" (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 52). For Perrineau, Marine Le Pen is therefore able to appeal to both sides of the political spectrum: her defence of Christian values appeals to right-wing voters and her support of "*laïcité*" appeals to left-wing voters (Perrineau 2014: 97). Even so, the support for *laïcité* in France goes well beyond the left and right divide. A post-2012 presidential election opinion poll shows that 85% of left-wing electors, 84 percent of those on the right and 85 percent of those of the centre, all agree that "*laïcité*" is "something positive" (Perrineau 2014: 139).

As well as broadening the basis of the FN's appeal, the shifts towards "*laïcité*" and the focus on Islam more generally have also enabled it to make their position with regard to immigration more respectable. Marine Le Pen, first as her father's campaign manager for the 2007 presidential election and then as the leader of the party, has conducted a process of "de-ethnicisation" of the party's stance on immigration (Perrineau 2014: 137). She has replaced the ethnic arguments against immigration deployed by her father, which scared off more moderate electors, with arguments based on perceived threats to notions of French identity (Perrineau 2014: 137). The threat of immigrants, and also those in the population of second or third generation immigrant background, is now tied to "fears relative to Islam and Muslims populations" instrumentalised by the FN (Perrineau 2014: 137). As Perrineau argues, immigration is now seen through the "filter of religious radicalisation" (Perrineau 2014: 98). Immigrants from Muslim countries are not considered assimilable because they bring with

them the inevitable threat of religious radicalisation (Perrineau 2014: 99). Although the representation of immigration has adopted a tone more acceptable to the growing concerns of the French population, the rhetoric used is very radical. Marine Le Pen has referred to there being "no 'Islam of France' but an 'Islam in France'" (Marine Le Pen cited in Perrineau 2014: 99). She has also compared Muslims praying in the streets to a foreign occupation, drawing parallels with the Second World War (Perrineau 2014: 99). Incoming immigrants, linked in Marine Le Pen's thinking to globalism, as well as Muslims already present on French territory, are thereby being excluded from the body of the nation and considered a domestic threat to it.

5.3. The Defence of the Nation and the impact of the FN on the mainstream right

5.3.1. Introduction

Following its creation in 1972 it took over a decade for the FN to gain any significant and consistent electoral success. Since its initial breakthrough in local elections in 1983 the general trend of the FN's electoral success has been upward with two notable, if temporary, setbacks. The detail of these electoral upsets will be outlined in the following subsection; however, the one which occurred at the 2007 Presidential elections is of interest to the overall themes covered in this thesis. Jean-Marie Le Pen gained only 10.4 percent of the vote, down from the 16.9 percent which had enabled him to make a surprise appearance in the second round of the 2002 Presidential elections. Despite this electoral defeat, on the evening of the first round of voting Jean-Marie Le Pen declared an ideological if not an electoral victory:

> This evening we have won the battle of ideas. The nation and patriotism, immigration and insecurity have been put at the heart of this campaign by my opponents who, only yesterday, set aside these notions with a disgusted pout. This ideological victory is an

> irreversible achievement for the Front National, for which I congratulate myself.[105] (Jean-Marie Le Pen cited in Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 20).

Given some of the positions and policies defended during the campaign by Nicolas Sarkozy, the mainstream-right UMP candidate, it seems hard to refute Jean-Marie Le Pen's claim. Even the Socialist candidate, Ségolène Royal, felt the need to lay claim to the French flag suggesting that all French households should proudly fly the flag as is the custom in America. Therefore, in 2007 the FN's electoral success was not reflective of the prevalence of the sorts of ideas it habitually defended. Indeed, almost the opposite is true because the centre right radicalised its positions under Sarkozy's leadership and was able to syphon off some of the FN's electorate while simultaneously bringing its ideas into the sphere of power. This phenomenon of a political party not needing to gain power, or even get close to gaining power, and yet by its electoral ascendance being able to influence the positions held by mainstream rivals is relevant to the notion of the Nation as Arbiter mechanism.

This subsection will trace the electoral rise of the FN since the 1980s and seek to relate it to the level of impact the FN was having on the agenda of the political mainstream. This interaction between the FN and mainstream right can, broadly speaking, be broken into three separate periods. The first lasted from the 1980s to the late 1990s and saw an ever-increasing electoral presence combined with a radicalisation of the mainstream right in an effort to reclaim lost voters. The second period starts with the electoral breakthrough of 2002 and ends, this time, with a successful attempt by the mainstream right under Sarkozy to syphon off FN support no matter how temporarily. The final period coincides with Marine Le Pen's leadership of the party which has seen both attempts at radicalisation by the mainstream-right

[105] *« Ce soir nous avons gagné la bataille des idées. La nation et le patriotisme, l'immigration et l'insécurité pont été mis au cœur de cette campagne par mes adversaire qui, hier encore, écartaient ces notions avec une moue dégoutée. Cette victoire idéologique est un acquis irréversibles du Front national, dont je me félicite. »*

as well as renewed attempts for the FN to appear more acceptable to the electorate and ever growing electoral success. What remains ambiguous, however, is whether the FN is driving the shift in attitudes leading to its electoral prominence or whether it is merely benefiting from the context of crisis and a hardening of attitudes towards immigration, insecurity and national identity. While these issues of causation are alluded to, and of interest to, the argument of this thesis, proving causal mechanisms is beyond the scope of this project and therefore is not attempted in this subsection.

5.3.2. 1980s the initial electoral breakthrough and the mainstream right's reaction

The 1986 Legislative Elections were in many ways unique in French political history. The first to be held since Mitterrand's presidential victory in 1981, they forced a change of electoral strategy on behalf of the mainstream right parties. The two main right-wing parties which had up to this point sought to differentiate themselves from each other at election times chose, this time, to seek an alliance. The Gaullist Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) and the non-Gaullist Union Démocratique Française (UDF), abandoned their previous antagonism and combined their programmes to present the 1986 joint RPR-UDF platform (Shields 2007: 223). Their alliance ensured their victory, given the Socialists fall from grace. By securing between them 286 of the 577 seats they were able to form a coalition government meaning that for the first time a situation of cohabitation took hold in France with the executive, comprising the President and the Prime Minister, being from opposite sides of the political spectrum.

Mitterrand, ever the tactician, had anticipated this result and tried to counter it. Indeed, the 1986 Legislative Elections were the first and last time that the results of a legislative election were calculated using a system of proportional representation under the Fifth Republic. As Shields points out, even at the time Mitterrand's decision, although a part of his Presidential

manifesto in 1981, was "seen as a calculated move to reduce the Socialist's losses and the centre right's predicted majority" (Shields 2007: 209). Shields argues that Mitterrand was almost successful in his attempt to thwart his mainstream rivals as the proportional calculation of results enabled the FN to gain 35 seats in the assembly "almost depriving the RPR-UDF alliance of a majority" (Shields 2007: 209).

These results confirmed, for the first time in a national election, the trend started by the FN's electoral breakthrough at local elections in Dreux in 1983, where the FN formed a local alliance with the RPR, and in 1984 at the European Elections. The FN's electoral breakthrough was confirmed at Cantonal elections held in 1985. It was also the loss of these same elections which led to Mitterrand's decision to reintroduce, what had been a standard under the Third and Fourth Republics, proportional representation at the legislative elections being held the following year. The threat of the FN as an ascending electoral force combined with the increased jeopardy of an electoral system which would favour further electoral gains for the FN led the RPR-UDF alliance to change their policy proposals during the campaign and affected their actions while in power. Furthermore, the right-wing press added to an ideological context favourable to the FN by publishing articles by writers close to Le Pen and GRECE and the New Right more generally[106] (Shields 2007: 218). An example of this was the publishing on 26 October 1985 of an edition of Le Figaro-Magazine with a cover page asking "Will we still be French in thirty years?" featuring a report on immigration which "predicted that, by 2015, France would be submerged by an alien, Arab Muslim population and culture" (Shields 2007: 218). These and other publications helped to lend a certain

[106] GRECE and the Nouvelle Droite : GRECE stood for the Groupes de Recherche et d'Etudes pour la Communauté Européenne (Groups for the Resesearch and Study of the Eupean Community). It was a far right intellectual movement founded in 1968 that aimed to create a new intellectual foundation for the Far-right.

"intellectual credence" to the view held by Le Pen and the FN that France's "nation identity was under threat" (Shields 2007: 218).

In this electoral context, with such questions being asked in the press, the UDF-RPR's common programme called the "Platform for Governing Together" published in January 1986 was both firm on immigration and aimed to "reform the procedures for acquiring French citizenship" (Shields 2007: 217). To those immigrants already settled on French territory this common programme offered a "simple choice 'integration or subsidised repatriation" (Shields 2007: 217-8). These FN-like measures were the only ones that had successfully made it into the alliance's common programme. A proposal by the RPR, very close to the FN's own policy proposals, suggested that measures promoting population growth should be limited to French nationals alone (Shields 2007: 218). As Shields emphasises, although this proposal did not make it into the programme it was a good example of "policies previously held to be extremist were gaining currency in mainstream political discourse" (Shields 2007: 218).

Once in power the RPR-UDF government continued in its commitment to be tough on crime and immigration. Prime minister Jacques Chirac appointed a "tough neo-Gaullist, Charles Pasqua, as Interior Minister" and created a new ministerial position with specific responsibility for public security (Shields 2007: 218). In response to this Le Pen stated that the appointment of Pasqua was "a bulwark preventing part of the RPR electorate from defecting to the Front National (Jean-Marie Le Pen cited in Shields 2007: 218). The new government's policies also conveyed the same tough stances on immigration and crime. The police were given new powers to help them deal with both crime and immigration including the ability to carry out random identity checks, wider surveillance powers and reinforcing the ability to arrest and detain criminals and terrorists (Shields 2007: 218). Chirac's government also attempted to implement changes to the rules for attaining French nationality. For

example, the proposals would have meant that the children of immigrants would no longer automatically gain French citizenship on turning 18 but would need to apply and undergo tests before being able to attain it. Although, due to intense political opposition, the most controversial measures proposed were ultimately not implemented, there mere proposal by a mainstream right government showed the extent to which the public debate on subjects of immigration and insecurity had evolved.

The change in attitudes is perhaps most evident from the fact that the main opposition to these reforms came from "Mitterrand, opposition parties, human rights and immigrant organisations, students and a selection of the French clergy" but not, for the most part, from the public as a whole (Shields 2007: 219). A series of terrorist attacks on French soil, the perpetrators of which were suspected of belonging to radical Islamist groups, meant that the public was primed to welcome the tough stances proposed by the government (Shields 2007: 219). Shields argues that when faced with a government "intent on rendering him redundant, Le Pen fell back on his argument that the French would always prefer the 'original' to the 'copy'" (Shields 2007: 219).

The results of the first round of the 1988 presidential elections seem to provide some credence to Jean-Marie Le Pen's claims. He won 14.4 percent of the vote, just over 4 million votes, doubling the number of votes which caused the breakthrough at the 1984 European elections (Shields 2007: 224). His 14.4 placed him only 6 percent behind the outgoing Jacques Chirac and 2 percent behind a former UDF Prime Minister, Raymond Barre, thereby "redraw[ing] the map of the French right" (Shields 2007: 224). The FN would remain a prominent and disruptive electoral and ideological force until the late 1990s, sitting to the right of the mainstream right and exerting pressure on them to toughen their stances particularly with regards immigration and insecurity. It was this decade which saw the cementing of questions of immigration and insecurity, a mainstay of the FN's political

positioning, as key issues in French politics which would in time enable a further electoral breakthrough. Indeed, as will be explored below, Jean-Marie Le Pen's surprise appearance in the second round of the 2002 presidential elections was due in part to Lionel Jospin's, the Socialist candidate, failure to adequately convince voters of his ability to reduce insecurity.

Issues of law and order have plagued the Socialists while in power from the very beginning. By the time Mitterrand came to power, a two decade long rise in reported crimes and in the last decade violent crimes in particular had led to questions of law and order forming the "core of a cluster of issues denoted by the increasingly invoked term of '*insécurité*'" (Shields 2007: 200). It was in this context of public sensitivity to issues of law and order that Mitterrand implemented a series of potentially unpopular policies, including a prisoner amnesty and the abolition of the death penalty. Further accentuating any potential fallout from these measures was the opposition's willingness, despite their own questionable record, to criticise the government's actions (Shields 2007: 200). For example, a former Gaullist justice minister accused his successor, Robert Badinter, of being a "defender of criminals" (Shields 2007: 200). Public opinion seldom improved over the years with a 1983 poll giving a 31 percent approval rating "for the government's record in addressing insecurity, with 53 percent judging it unsatisfactory" (Shields 2007: 201). A year later, in April 1984, the approval rating had sunk to 28 percent and the disapproval rating risen to 59 percent with 64 percent of respondents declaring themselves favourable to the restoring of capital punishment (Shields 2007: 201). These opinion polls attest to the public's growing concern with issues of law and order and particularly their impression that government at the time was not adequately dealing with the problem. However, the context of rising crime which fuelled these concerns pre-dated the FN and were beyond its control. The precise role the FN played in politicising issues of law and order is difficult to establish, although it is entirely plausible that mainstream parties identified this growing concern as politically significant without any

help from the FN's insistence on the topic. That being said, particularly for the mainstream right, the risk of appearing weak on crime, when a party offering more radical solutions to the same problem and was on the rise electorally, must have provided an impetus to radicalise its own attitudes. A similar tendency can be identified regarding the FN's other central theme the issue of immigration.

During the 1980s the political attitudes and ways of talking about immigration underwent a significant change; in short, it was the acknowledgment of a transition from an assimilationist approach to dealing with incoming immigrants to an integrationist one and finally an inclusionist system (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 198). Since the latter half of the nineteenth century all the way up to the 1960s an assimilationist model, in which new arrivals abandon, apart from in the private sphere, any traces of their original culture, prevailed (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 198). From the 1980s onwards the appearance of expressions like "second generation immigrant" were the recognition that an integrationist model, in which new arrivals adopted the customs of the host nation but retained their original culture "without influencing its adoptive society"[107], were closer to the reality of French immigration (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 199). Indeed, in the theory of an assimilationist system there is no such thing as a second generation immigrant as they are considered to have assimilated and are therefore simply French (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 199). In time what was perceived as a further backdown occurred when officials started referring to "inclusion" as an alternative to integration (Adluy, Wahnich 2015:201). The crucial difference here was that inclusion acknowledged that the new arrivals can change the social balance of the host society; this therefore was the complete opposite to the starting doctrine of assimilation (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 201). The evolution of these attitudes and language with regard to the place of immigration and immigrants in French society was perceived by some to constitute the

[107] *« […] mais conserve également sa culture d'origine, sans influencer sa société d'adoption. »*

failure and abandonment of the French model of dealing with immigrants (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 201).

It was in this context of changing official discourse on immigration which could be interpreted as an acknowledgement of an issue with France's model for dealing with immigrants, that immigration gained increasing political importance. Therefore, as with insecurity, these changes were outside the direct control of the FN but it was still able to benefit from them and exert influence on other parties in this regard. The effect of the FN's electoral breakthrough at the 1984 European elections had an impact on the attitude of the Socialists in power towards immigration. Indeed, the new Fabius government appointed in July 1984 not only performed an economic U-turn but also changed the government policy on immigration. In September 1984, during a television interview Fabius acknowledged that Le Pen had "the right questions and the wrong answers"[108] (Fabius cited in Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 208). Shields argues that this statement was tantamount to "endorse[ing] Le Pen and to suggest[ing] that the previous [Socialist] government had not taken sufficient account of the issues on which the FN had affected its electoral breakthrough" (Shields 2007: 205). By the following year during a televised debate between Fabius and the leader of the opposition and soon to be prime minister, Jacques Chirac, "there was very little substance or tone to separate them on the immigration issue" (Shields 2007: 205). Clearly, despite the claim that the FN was suggesting the wrong answers, all major parties were moving towards the positions that the FN defended. The main points Fabius made during this debate were showing off his government's record in regards to refusing immigrants entry, expulsions and subsidised repatriation (Shields 2007: 205).

[108] *« Les bonnes questions et les mauvaises réponses »*

Throughout the 1980s and 90s a series of utterances by prominent mainstream politicians have, in Alduy and Wahnich's opinion, "made commonplace (banalisé) or legitimised" the FN's discourse. As well as the words of Laurent Fabius quoted above, Alduy and Wahnich also refer to Mitterrand's statement, amongst others, that a "*seuil de tolerance*" in France had been passed in terms of immigration in the 1970s (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 208). This statement followed the abandonment of a proposal which would have enabled foreigners to vote in France (Vaudano and Maruani 2014). Another to make their list is Jacques Chirac, in an incident resulting from statements made at a 1991 RPR meeting which they refer to as "*le bruit et les odeurs de Jacques Chirac*" (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 208). This refers to part of a speech Chirac made to a rally of RPR supporters in which he said:

> How do you want the French worker […] who, together with his wife, earns approximately 15 000 francs to feel, when they see on the same floor of their social housing, all crammed in, a family with a father, three or four wives and twenty or so children, earning 50 000 francs in state benefits without working of course. If you add to this the noise and the smell. Well the French worker goes crazy, that is the way it is. He needs to be understood if you were there you would have the same reaction and that is normal. And it is not racist to say that.[109] (Chirac cited in Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 208).

This statement sounds a lot like the sort of stereotypes and shortcuts favoured by the FN in their opposition to immigration. Furthermore, it was in response to this incident that a journalist asked Le Pen whether he was worried that the RPR would render the FN useless;

[109]« Comment-voulez-vous que le travailleur français […] et qui travail avec sa femme et qui ensemble gagne environ 15 000 francs et qui voit sur la palier de son HLM entasser une famille avec un père de famille, trois ou quatre épouses et une vingtaine de gosses, et qui gagne 50 000 francs de prestations sociales sans naturellement travailler. Si vous ajoutiez à cela le bruit et l'odeur. Eh bien le travailleur français sur le palier il devient fou, il devient fou c'est comme ça. Il faut le comprendre et si vous y étiez vous aurait la même réaction et c'est normale. Et ce n'est pas raciste de dire cela. »

he replied that he believed the French would always prefer the original to the copy. In short, particularly with regard to immigration, the periods of the 1980s and 90s were a period when the mainstream was under the electoral pressure and ideological influence of the FN. This is also the point made by Alduy and Wahnich who state:

> It was in the years 1985-2000 that so many abandonments [the aforementioned list of utterances] legitimised the discourse of Jean-Marie Le Pen and brought water to the watermill of the FN[110] (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 208).

While this process of legitimization of the FN's ideas and rhetoric by the political mainstream has contributed to their electoral rise it is undeniable that the FN's positions on key issues such as immigration and law and order resonate with the population at large. Indeed, in his book on the FN, Declair (1999) used the results of the 1984 Euro-Barometer and the opinions of the FN's leadership to measure to what extent the leadership's ideas reflected those within the population at large. He concludes that "the Front is most attuned to the concerns of the general French public with respect to societal questions" which include such issues as "immigration and security and violence" (Declair 1999: 118). For example, "95 percent of the Front leaders agree with the statement that there are too many immigrant workers in France", a statement which 76 percent of the public also agreed with (Declair 1999: 119). The proximity of a large portion of the population's concerns with the focus of the FN's rhetoric and policies must have played a role in its success. By presenting the most radical answer to these concerns the FN forced mainstream parties to change their own rhetoric through fear of appearing to have weak responses to these genuine concerns. This radicalisation of the mainstream's positions in turn provided some justification and legitimacy for the FN's initial position and their increasingly durable presence in French

[110] *« Ce fut dans les années 1985-2000 autant d'abandons qui ont légitimé le discours de Jean-Marie Le Pen et apporté de l'eau au moulin du Front national. »*

politics. This reading of the FN's electoral success and influence in the 1980s, combined with the analysis of the Total Crisis which provided a unique context for its successful emergence (as covered in the previous chapter), provides a false sense that the FN's rise was a historical inevitability. This is far from being the case and is far from being the desired message about instances of historical change put forward in this thesis. A good counterpoint to this sense of historical inevitability is the split within the FN which closed the millennium and, although temporarily, ruined the far-right's electoral performance.

5.3.3. Late 1990s : the Mégret split and the temporary electoral collapse of the FN

During the 1990s FN voters remained relatively loyal with approximately 91 percent of those who voted for the FN in the 1993 legislative election supporting the party again at the 1997 legislative elections (Shields 2007: 268). This relative stability masked a potential weakness in the FN's electoral support, namely that FN voters tended to be voting against something rather than for the FN. A SOFRES poll cited by Shields found that 29 percent of FN voters had voted for their "chosen candidate" whereas 67 percent were voting "against the 'other candidates'" in the 1997 elections (Shields 2007: 268). The nature of the FN vote as being mainly one of protest might help to explain the almost immediate electoral collapse, under the impact of internal divisions, into two separate and competing far-right parties.

In the lead up to the split in January 1999 the key issue was how the FN should act in relation to the mainstream right. Jacques Chirac was elected president in 1995, bringing the right back to the presidency after Mitterrand's fourteen years in power. However, following a tactical error he dissolved the National Assembly thereby triggering a legislative election in 1997 which the Socialists won, leading to the third instance of cohabitation, with the Socialist Lionel Jospin being appointed Prime Minister. The left's return to power crystallised the opposition between two contrary views within the FN. The first, defended by Le Pen and his

supporters, wanted to refrain from providing any assistance to the now struggling centre-right. The other put forward by Mégret, favoured forming electoral alliances with the centre-right for the second round of key elections. The hope was that this alliance would bolster the FN's position through its association with the mainstream and, in key strongholds, even try to threaten the bastions of various left-wing parties (Shields 2007: 276).

The split which involved both a clash of ideas and personalities led to the Mégrétistes leaving the FN in January 1999 and eventually forming their own party, the Mouvement National Républicain (MNR). The immediate consequences of the split were that the FN lost many of its previously elected officials as well as members of its internal party organisation. One example, amongst others, shows that 140 of its 275 regional councillors, elected in 1998, joined Mégret as well as 52 of the 120 members of the party's central committee (Shields 2007: 279). Furthermore, the electoral fallout of the split was quickly felt when at the June 1999 European elections, traditionally a strong showing for the FN, their lists only gained 5.7 percent of the votes, the lowest score since its 1984 breakthrough (Shields 2007: 280). The lists put forward by Mégrét only garnered 3.28 percent of the vote, meaning that even the two party's combined results did not exceed the score of 10.5 percent of the votes of the previous European elections held in 1994 (Shields 2007: 280). This electoral setback ultimately proved to be temporary. At the next national election, the 2002 presidential elections, Jean-Marie Le Pen created a political shock by beating the Socialist candidate, Lionel Jospin, to the run-off in the second round against the incumbent President Chirac. This was a first for the party which would only reoccur with Marine Le Pen's second-round contest pitting her against Emmanuel Macron in 2017.

5.3.4. 2002 The surprise victory of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the presidential elections

With 16.86 percent of the vote, a mere 0.68 percent more than the Socialist candidate and outgoing Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, Jean-Marie Le Pen beat him to the run-off against the centre right candidate Jacques Chirac (Shields 2007: 281). For the first time since 1969 no left-wing candidate made it to the run-off and, furthermore, the combined score of Le Pen and his former associate Mégret exceeded that of the Socialist and Communist candidates in metropolitan France (Shields 2007: 282).

In the evening of the first round, on 21 April 2002, *Le Monde* published a report based on exit polls declaring "Jacques Chirac in the lead, the Le Pen earthquake"[111] (Le Monde 2002). This sort of language was relatively prevalent at the time and for some Le Pen's success was seen as resulting from a surge in support for the far-right in France. However, Shields (2010) in an article seeking to correct the perception of both the FN success in 2002 and its relatively collapse in 2007 offers an alternative reading of the situation (Shields 2010: 63-4). Indeed, Shields argues that the real shock factor of Le Pen's victory was caused by the inability of the pollsters to accurately predict it. The final round of polls by most major pollsters placed Jospin comfortably ahead of Le Pen with 18 percent of voting intentions versus a significant but unthreatening 13 percent for Le Pen. In reality Le Pen had increased his score by less than 2 percent compared with the previous 1995 Presidential elections and by less than 2.5 percent over the period stretching back to 1988 (Shields 2010: 63). Furthermore, Shields points out that as a proportion of registered voters, a number not affected by an often crucial factor of voter participation, Le Pen's share of the vote rose from 11.5 in 1988 to 11.7 percent in 2002 (Shields 2010: 63).

[111] *« Jacques Chirac en tête, le séisme Le Pen »*

In short, the second place of Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002 was the result of a particular set of circumstances which contributed to reinforcing support for him, although not to the levels of a surge, as well as undermining the position of the Socialist candidate. Indeed, political "fatigue" caused by five years of cohabitation as well as the return of a context of economic and social crisis, notably further rises in unemployment rates, all contributed to favouring votes for Le Pen and discouraging votes for the outgoing head of the government. As Perrineau points out, one more time Le Pen was able to be the "voice of multiple political and social problems which made the difference"[112] (Perrineau 2014: 25).

In contrast to a context favourable to the FN candidate several factors contributed to undermining Jospin's ability to qualify for the second round. Firstly, the 2002 Presidential election was characterised by never before seen levels of abstention with over 28 percent of registered voters not taking part (Shields 2010: 62). This abstention inflated the electoral impact of Le Pen's support and since many of the abstainers could be considered "natural socialists" who believed the first round to be a mere formality, it was inevitably detrimental to Jospin's bid (Shields 2010: 62). Secondly, support for both Chirac and Jospin was diluted by the presence of a record 16 candidates in the first round while Le Pen benefited from the absence of the "soverainist", Philippe de Viliers, and the weak performance of Mégret (Shields 2010: 62). Once again Jospin was particularly affected by the dispersal of voting in the first round as, in contrast to the electoral alliance, the plural left, which had formed the basis for his government in 1995, each left-wing party fielded their own candidate. The Left-wing vote was split between five candidates, including three Trotskyists, two of whom benefiting from disillusionment resulting from Jospin's premiership, were able to gain 10 percent (Shields 2007: 62).

[112] *« […] à être le porte-voix de multiples problèmes politique et sociaux qui a fait la différence ».*

Looking beyond the electoral results alone, another factor relating to the political agenda of the campaign, may have contributed to giving the impression of an FN surge in 2002. Indeed, in the aforementioned article published on the evening of the first round, Le Monde quotes a socialist activist who stated "We were not wary enough, we were too drawn onto the terrain of insecurity"[113] (Marie cited in Le Monde 2002). This is a reference to the key debates during the campaign which were gradually drawn away from any mention of the record of Jospin's government and instead focused on issues such as "crime, unemployment, big business, anti-Europeanism and inevitably immigration" (Atkin and Tallet 2003: 296). This was partly due to Chirac wanting to challenge the left on terrain where it was at a disadvantage by bring questions of Law and Order to the forefront of the debate, which certainly benefited the FN (Knapp and Wright 2003: 242). However, a specifically FN influence on this debate was in evidence as Le Pen forced "all parties into the adoption of tough rhetoric and policies on race" (Atkin and Tallet 2003: 296). Atkin and Tallet conclude that by referring to French identity being "mutilated" Le Pen had created a climate in which in debates about race politicians from other parties were "frightened of appearing 'soft'" thereby "preventing any proper debate and undermining any sustained moves towards multi-ethnic integration and positive discrimination" (Atkin and Tallet 2003: 297). In 2002

Therefore, in 2002 a relatively small increase in support for the FN had conspired with other factors to create an electoral surprise which shocked France. Perhaps more importantly, however, the key debates that occurred during the campaign were firmly in terrain favourable to the FN, and Le Pen succeeded in ensuring that this debate was to some extent conducted on his own terms. This situation is particularly interesting in light of the following two presidential elections in which the themes key to the FN's political offering would still play a prominent role but the FN's electoral performance would vary wildly. The upcoming

[113] *« On ne s'est pas méfié, on s'est trop laissé entraîner sur le terrain de l'insécurité »*

examples of French presidential elections, as well as that of UKIP's influence on the political agenda prior to the Brexit vote, show that parties defending insurgent positions to not need to get anywhere near power or continue to perform well electorally after their initial breakthrough, in order to have significant impact on unfolding political change.

5.3.5. 2007: A relative collapse in performance but evidence of ideological dominance

The FN's performance in Jean-Marie Le Pen's final presidential bid before Marine Le Pen's take-over of the party was just as surprising as that of 2002 but this time due to his relatively poor electoral performance. With 10.5 percent of the vote he had lost almost a million voters compared to 2002 and his vote share had been cut by a third even though he had only lost about a fifth of actual votes (Shields 2010: 64). This discrepancy was caused by a significant increase in voter participation at these elections which diluted the impact of Le Pen's votes (Shields 2010: 65). Shields (2010) once again seeks to relativize the immediate response to Le Pen's performance which was described as a "collapse" or a "spectacular slump" (Shields 2010: 67). He points out that Le Pen still managed to mobilise 3.8 million votes, compared with the 4.8 million in 2002, and crucially he was able to capture new support with 40 percent of his electorate being first-time Le Pen voters (Shields 2010: 67).

In general terms the context of this campaign appears to have been less favourable to Le Pen's success. As mentioned above participation during this election was on the rise with over 37.2 million voters showing up as opposed to the 29.5 million in 2002. If the participation rate had remained the same between elections Le Pen would have garnered 13 percent of the vote (Shields 2010: 65). Furthermore, this participation rate was a reflection of a renewal of interest in politics and also support for mainstream political candidates and their offerings. Indeed, in 2007 the government parties, the UMP and the PS, gathered between them 57 percent of the total votes cast. By contrast in 2002 Jospin and Chirac only had a

combined score of 36 percent (Sirinelli 2017: 315). This seeming apparent renewal of interest in non-protestation politics leads Sirinelli to point out the legitimacy of the questions posed by observers: "this moment in 2007, did it reflect a notable inversion of the crisis of political representation?" (Sirinelli 2017: 315). The FN was further penalised by the reduction in the number of candidates from 16 to 12 which accentuated the trend towards the larger candidates (Shields 2010: 65). Jean-Marie Le Pen's success in 2002 may also have directly contributed to his reversal of fortunes in 2007 with some voters "chastened by the experience of 2002" being more inclined to vote for mainstream candidates (Shields 2010: 65). Another factor that contributed to voters' willingness to vote for the mainstream was that the leadership and, throughout the campaign of Nicolas Sarkozy the UMP, veered more than ever before towards the FN's political offering.

In the 2007 presidential elections for the first time Le Pen faced a "systematic challenge on his own agenda: (Shields 2010: 65). Sarkozy had made this strategy explicit several months before the vote, stating

> Yes, I am seeking to seduce FN voters. Who could hold it against me to recoup these people to the Republican camp? I would even go and get them one by one, it does not bother me. If the FN has progressed, it is that we on the right have not done our job[114] (Sarkozy cited in Fourquet 2007: 1).

Sarkozy's campaign revolved around "themes of authority, law and order, national sentiment, immigration control, hard work, lower taxes and merit" (Shields 2010: 65). Many of these campaign themes placed Sarkozy directly on Le Pen's usual stomping ground but the policy proposal which most epitomised Sarkozy's attempt to undermine support for Le Pen was his

[114] *« Oui, je cherche à séduire les électeurs du FN. Qui pourrait m'en vouloir de récupérer ces gens dans le camp républicain ? J'irai même les chercher un par un, ça ne me gêne pas. Si le FN a progressé, c'est que nous n'avons pas fait à droite notre boulot ».*

promise to establish a Ministry of Immigration and National Identity. Sarkozy's strategy would appear to have been successful to an extent with an estimated 38 percent of former Le Pen voters switching their allegiance to Sarkozy in 2007 (Shields 2010: 66).

In contrast to Sarkozy's approach Le Pen himself was attempting, under the influence of Marine Le Pen, to appear more moderate in order to expand his pool of potential voters. Seeking to counter-act a reputation which had become problematic in electoral terms, Le Pen sought to show a more moderate and republican image going so far as "exalting the 'values of the Republic'" (Shields 2010: 65). These attempts at respectability were even commented upon by Sarkozy who claimed that French politics had "moved 'to the right'" all except Le Pen who was "less right-wing than before" (Le Pen cited in Shields 2010: 65).

With Sarkozy veering right and Le Pen searching for the centre the 2007 presidential election introduced a new phenomenon to the French right, which blurred the lines between the political offering of the mainstream and the extremes. With the emergence of what would become known as "*La droite forte*" and the increasing attempts at respectability by the FN, pursued by Marine Le Pen once she became party leader, there resulted an increasing overlap between right and far-right and an increasing "interpenetrability" of parts of their respective electorates (Shields 2010: 66).

As mentioned above, Sarkozy's strategy of encroaching on Le Pen's electoral territory was at least partially successful. However, analysis of Le Pen's 2002 supporters when faced by Sarkozy's challenge, highlights two differing priorities amongst them and foreshadows the emergence of a group which prioritises the protection of the national community above all else. This group forms the basis of one side of Perrineau's aforementioned new divides which have increasingly served as better landmarks for understanding French politics than traditional notions of Left and Right. In his study of the election Fourquet (2007) identified

two reactions amongst Le Pen's 2002 voters, those whom he considers "moderate" who were tempted by Sarkozy's offering, and a hardcore who remained loyal to Le Pen in 2007. For the moderate 2002 Le Pen voters who changed their allegiance in 2007, Sarkozy's record as Interior Minister tackling delinquency and issues of insecurity was a big draw (Fourquet 2007: 4). Furthermore, his experience of government granted Sarkozy, for these voters, a "credibility and 'presidentiability'" which Le Pen lacked (Fourquet 2007: 11). As well as appearing to be a less plausible candidate, Le Pen still suffered from an image problem with some of his former voters still associating him with being "racist or xenophobic" (Fourquet 2007: 10). In short, those who switched their allegiance saw in Sarkozy "a candidate articulating some of Le Pen's ideas […] but more likely to be elected and able to implement those ideas" (Shields 2010: 66).

In contrast to the moderate voters, those who voted for Le Pen in both 2002 and 2007 prioritised issues of "nation preference and immigration and to a lesser extent insecurity" (Fourquet 2007: 12). Fourquet refers to national preference in particular being a "trademark" of this segment of the electorate (Fourquet 2007: 12). The open-ended portion of his survey confirmed this trend with statements such as "French families must be the priority" or "My slogan is: France for the French"[115] (Fourquet 2010: 12). This electoral group also believed Le Pen would be more effective in controlling immigration, seeing Sarkozy as being soft or merely paying lip service to anti-immigration (Fourquet 2010: 12). With this electorate, once again the notion that people would prefer the original to the copy seems relevant. Indeed, Fourquet states that:

[115] *« Il faut favouriser les familles françaises en priorité » « Mon slogan est : la France aux Français ».*

> […]Jean-Marie Le Pen is viewed as more authentic, more legitimate in treating the aforementioned big issues, especially because of the constancy and anteriority of his speeches on these subjects[116] (Fourquet 2007: 12).

The legitimacy of Jean-Marie Le Pen on issues of national preference and immigration, conferred by the FN's long-term stance on these topics, was already visible prior to the election and foreshadow part of the issues which would undermine support for Sarkozy in 2012. Indeed, when Sarkozy announced his intention to create a Ministry of Immigration and National Identity, a measure meant to appeal to Le Pen voters, the news produced the opposite effect, raising stated voting intentions for Le Pen rather than Sarkozy (Fourquet 2007: 4). This tendency was only reversed following violent altercations in the area of the Gare du Nord, on 27 March 2007, which once again placed Sarkozy's strong record on insecurity and as Minister of the Interior in voter's minds (Fourquet 2007: 4). This incident, which highlighted Le Pen's relative strength on issues relating to the protection of the French nation, combined with the emphasis placed by a portion of the electorate on these issues, highlighted the risk Sarkozy was taking in attempting to compete. When Sarkozy instigated the debate on national identity he failed to convince, which contributed to his failure to get re-elected in 2012.

5.3.6. 2007-2012 : Sarkozy's presidency the debate on national identity and the ideological triumph of the FN

The Ministry of Immigration and National Identity was created by Sarkozy shortly after coming to power but the promised debate on national identity did not occur until late 2009. Many right-wing voters considered that the debate surrounding issues of national identity which had been brought to prominence as a key campaign issue in 2007 was largely ignored

[116] « […] Jean-Marie Le Pen est vu comme plus authentique, plus légitime à traiter des grands problèmes cités, notamment en raison de la constance et de l'antériorité de son discours à ces sujets. »

by Sarkozy once in power. It was not the "hastily organised" consultation of 2009 that convinced them otherwise (Perrineau 2014: 32). The debates themselves were clearly something of interest, as 57 percent of respondents to a survey conducted in November 2009 considered that "the debate on national identity is justified because it corresponds to a subject of interest"[117] (Perrineau 2014: 32). Although support for this debate was higher on the right (77 percent) significant portions of those who identified as left-wing (47 percent), of the centre (44 percent) and non-partisan respondents (57 percent) also considered the debate to be of importance (Perrineau 2014: 32). Despite the potential interest for the debate the public were suspicious of Sarkozy's motivations for launching the debate at this time with 77 percent of respondents considering that although the debate was justified "it has an essentially tactical scope and 'constitutes a strategy to win the regional elections'"[118] (Perrineau 2014: 32).

Sarkozy's failure to convince the public of his intentions in instigating the debate might have come at another cost, as Perrineau also argues that the contents of the debate helped to place the themes close to the FN back at the heart of French politics (Perrineau 2014: 32). Without confirming a direct causation Perrineau points to a survey of FN voters in which 77 percent of respondents considered that the debate on national identity made it possible "to restore the FN to the centre of the political and public debate"[119] (Perrineau 2014: 33). Once again only hinting at a causal link, Perrineau implies that these FN supporters may have been on to something judging by the results of the 2010 regional elections which many believed Sarkozy was hoping to influence. Indeed, the FN experienced an electoral resurgence with close to 2 million voters (9.2 percent of votes cast) in the 14 mars 2010 regional elections compared

[117] *« le débat sur l'identité nationale est justifié car il correspond à un sujet qui intéresse ».*
[118] *« […] [le débat] n'a qu'une portée essentiellement tactique et 'constitue une stratégie pour gagner les élections régionales. »*
[119] *« de remettre le Front national au centre du débat politique et public. »*

with just over 1 million (6.3 percent) at the European elections held on the 7 June 2009 (Perrineau 2014: 33). Perrineau concludes that the "ideological agenda" had once again became favourable to the FN and combined with the "logic of 'intermediary elections'"[120] to provoke an electoral resurgence of the FN (Perrineau 2014: 33).

In the more direct lead up to the 2012 Presidential elections Alduy and Wahnich confirm this ideological context favouring the FN. They argue that Sarkozy's presidency, the debate on national identity included, helped to "legitimise[d] the Front National based axiom which equates immigration (non-european) with a 'problem'"[121] (Perrineau 2014: 82). In this context, Marine Le Pen was entering "conquered territory", in contrast to her father who had to justify asking questions on immigration (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 82). Alduy and Wahnich argue that if during the campaign Marine Le Pen did not refer as much to the FN's historic anti-immigration stance, it is simply because she does not need to as such positions are now routinely conveyed by "the media and politicians" (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 81). In short, when Marine Le Pen took over from her father as leader of the party this "ideological battle was already won"[122] (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 82).

5.3.7. 2012 Presidential Elections: New leadership and striving towards respectability:

The 2012 Presidential election were different from those which preceded it in that for the first time in its history the FN had chosen a new leader. Although the family name remained unchanged, Marine Le Pen, elected during the party's congress in January 2011, represented a significant change for the party's image. At the very least it is possible to refer to a "generational renewal" as overnight the party leader had changed from an 82 year old man to

[120] *«La logique des 'électionsintermédiaire' » : a tendency of voters to express themselves more freely at certain non-national elections as their actions will not provoke a change in national leadership.*
[121] *« […] a légitimé l'axiome de base du Front national selon lequel l'immigration (non européenne) est un 'problème' »*
[122] *« Lorsque Marine Le Pen prend les rênes du part, cette bataille idéologique-là est déjà gagnée. »*

a 42 year old woman (Perrineau 2014: 28). The positive effects of this change in leadership would be felt almost immediately. The Cantonal elections held in March 2011 saw the return of the FN electoral dynamic with their score of 15.1 percent being the highest ever achieved at such an election (Perrineau 2014: 29). Furthermore, Perrineau notes that these results marked a process of "renewing its electorate and engaging in new dynamics" (Perrineau 2014: 29). These further attempts at renewal under Marine Le Pen's leadership would become clearer in the lead up to campaign for the 2012 Presidential elections.

The 2012 Presidential election campaign quickly took a turn similar to that of 2007. Having failed to gain traction with attacks on the Socialist opposition candidate, François Hollande, Sarkozy once again sought to syphon votes away from the FN (Shields 2013: 183). From the declaration that there were "too many foreigners in France" to promises to halve immigration and cut the benefits claimable by immigrants, Sarkozy positioned himself clearly in the vicinity of the FN (Shields 2013: 183). Once again a mixture of "anti-immigrant populism with anti-European and strong-arm law and order rhetoric" (Shields 2013: 183) formed part of a clear effort to undermine the FN's support.

Although Marine Le Pen's campaign started with a focus on economic issues, the principal one being withdrawing from the Euro and restoring the French Franc, Sarkozy's fresh attempts at outflanking the FN's position forced their campaign back into familiar territory. Marine Le Pen's "*Mon projet pour la France et les Français*" was characterised by the « time-honoured FN policy of 'national preference' which was rebranded for the occasion as 'national priority'" (Shields 2013: 182). This series of policies involved restricting government welfare accessible to immigrants by prioritising French citizens with regard to "housing, jobs, health care and social benefits" (Shields 2013: 183). Furthermore, Marine Le Pen's programme also included a provision to rescind the territorial right to nationality which had been a principle of French law since the nineteenth century.

Although once again Sarkozy and the younger Le Pen ended up fighting on the same territory and competing for the same voters as in 2007, what had worked then for Sarkozy failed in 2012. Polls differed in their estimates of the number of Le Pen voters who transferred their votes to Sarkozy, varying from 44 percent to as much as 58 percent, but nonetheless there were sufficient unconvinced Le Pen voters to block Sarkozy's victory against Hollande (Shields 2013: 184-5).

5.4. The left, the markets and the FN

5.4.1. Introduction

As in the previous section the focus will be on providing the context for the electoral ascension of the FN in relation to the mainstream parties of French politics against the backdrop of growing Total Crisis. Having looked at the FN's impact and influence over the mainstream Right, the emphasis here is placed on the FN's electoral challenge to the two main forces of the French Left, the *Parti Socialiste* (PS) and the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF), as well as their interactions with each other. Unlike the often quite direct struggle and transfer of voters between the FN and the succession of re-named mainstream Gaullist parties, the FN's challenge to the Left has been more distant but still significant. Indeed, although the Socialists have sometimes been close to borrowing some pages from the more nationalist playbook, particularly as Sarkozy was doing the same during the 2007 presidential campaign, the transfer of votes from Communists and Socialists to the FN was indirect and took place over several decades. These voters were not syphoned directly from the leftwing parties rather they were categories of voters who felt disillusioned and abandoned by decades of political and ideological evolution within the PS and the PCF. As highlighted by Knapp and Wright, it was not even the same individuals transferring their votes "from Far-Left to Far-Right". Rather, it was "working-class voters who would have been natural Communist

supporters, but who reached voting age in the 1980s or early 1990s, [and] immediately gravitated, not to the PCF, but to the FN" (Knapp and Wright 2006: 242).

This section also ties in with the previous chapter and the ideological dimension of Total Crisis. In hindsight the starting point of the Socialist's electoral fall from grace can be traced back to the progressive and not always explicit acceptance of market capitalism by Mitterrand and successive Socialist politicians from the early 1980s onwards. As well as contributing to the calling into question of the left/right dichotomy, by making mainstream political offerings harder to distinguish in the eyes of some, it will be shown here that for certain voters the Socialists can no longer be considered leftwing. It will be argued that the pursuit of economic and then cultural liberalism, partially under the influence of a growing middle-class electorate and personnel, has created a political vacuum which the FN adapted to fill. Indeed, for a time no political party was seen to effectively defend the interests of the working-class in particular by taking a true stance against the markets. From the 1990s, having already started to attract working-class protest voters, the FN changed its policy proposals in order to more adequately appeal to this group of disillusioned voters. This change of policy within the FN, accentuated further by Marine Le Pen's ascension to the party's leadership, has gradually allowed the party to gain high levels of support among the working classes. This has enabled the FN to join a new breed of political party on the electoral rise in some European countries from the 1980s and 1990s onwards. Indeed, in two separate studies two decades apart Betz identified an increase in the "support among poorer, blue-collar workers" for what he would eventually call "today's new working-class parties" (Ford and Goodwin 2014: 112).

This section on the left's interaction with the FN will therefore cover almost half a century of French political history while re-emphasizing the social transformations and the ideological shifts that occurred within the French Left over this period. Although both the PCF and the

Socialists will be referenced, the focus will be on the Socialists, as since the 1980s they have been the dominant force on the French Left. An interesting prism through which to view this period of the history of the French Left is offered by Grunberg who refers to the period as the "Cycle d'Epinay" (Grunberg 2011, 2017). Grunberg starts this period with the PS Congress of Epinay, held in the summer of 1971, during which Mitterrand was elected party leader and also successfully negotiated an alliance between the PS and the PCF, based around a common electoral programme which was temporary but had long-lasting consequences. Although the electoral alliance was short lived, Grunberg dates this as the start of the Communists' decline as the leading left-wing party, shortly thereafter the Socialists would supplant the PCF as the dominant party on the French Left. Grunberg ends the cycle with the catastrophic fourth place of Benoit Hammond, the Socialist's candidate in the 2017 Presidential elections (Grunberg 2017: 308). He remarks that although the Socialists had suffered significant electoral setbacks prior to this, notably in the 1993 legislative elections and the 2002 presidential elections, they had remained throughout "one of the two big government parties" (Grunberg 2017:308). Having come a distant fourth in the first round in 2017, behind two relatively new political offerings, and also losing many of its deputies in the subsequent legislative elections, their status of being a government party is since very much in question. Furthermore, the key for Grunberg is that one of these insurgencies, Mélenchon's new party, *La France Insoumise*, overtook the PS as the dominant left-wing party thus bringing an end to the Cycle d'Epinay (Grunberg: 2017: 308). Or in the words of another contributor to the same volume:

> In only five years from 2012 to 2017, on the ruins of a divided socialist left, undermined and worn out by the exercise of power, Jean-Luc Mélenchon has

> managed, with la France Insoumise, to simply deconstruct the patient political construction of François Mitterrand.[123] (Cautrès 2017: 179-80).

This section will open by covering two consequences of the Socialist's acceptance of free markets. The first, it will be argued, was internal to the party through the formation of a division between the supporters of and opponents to economic liberalism. Although these two stances were able to co-exist for a time, the appearance of two new political offerings, one to the left and one to the right of the party, Mélenchon and Macron respectively, proved catastrophic. The second set of consequences covered here concerns the immediate and long-term outcomes of the sense of betrayal amongst the working-class and the FN's ability to profit electorally from this growing disillusionment. A final section will focus on some of the elements which may contribute to the divide between working-class voters and left-wing parties whose focus has evolved.

5.4.2. A fatal ambiguity at the heart of French Socialism divided over economic liberalism

As indicated above, this section will focus on another of the consequences of Mitterrand's U-turn and more broadly the mainstream left's acceptance of the market economy, and already mentioned in the previous chapter in reference to the growing perception of ideological indistinguishability between Left and Right. In France, although specific policy proposals and changes in rhetoric used by the PS can be identified as in the previous chapter, the process of accepting the importance of markets has been altogether more ambiguous and drawn out than previously implied. Indeed, in his broad overview of the evolutions of French society and politics since the 1960s, Sirinelli, refers to this process as a "sort of crawling Bad Gudenberg,

[123] *« En cinq ans seulement de 2012-2017, sur les ruines d'une gauche socialiste divisée, minée et usée par l'exercice du pouvoir, Jean-Luc Mélenchon est parvenu, avec la France insoumise, à tout simplement détricoter la patiente construction politique de François Mitterrand. »*

at the scale of an entire decade"[124] (Sirinelli 2017: 213). This name is a reference to the Bad Gudenberg Conference of 1959 during which the German Social Democrats "renounced Marxist references and placed their analysis as well as their political practices in a world governed by the markets"[125] (Sirinelli 2017: 213). He argues that this was what the Socialists did once in power almost a quarter of a century later. However, unlike the explicit shift in the German party's orientation, Sirinelli makes repeated references to the French PS's "rallying" to the markets being placed "under the sign of euphemism", an ambiguity resulting, for example, from a contradiction between the government's policies and its rhetoric highlighted in the previous chapter (Sirinelli 2017: 213-4).

Although it is possible to state in retrospect that the PS never returned to its pre-1981 outright condemnation of the market economy and its associated policies, this was not necessarily obvious at the time. Indeed, within the party's leadership and amongst its members a divide was created by Mitterrand's U-turn. As noted by Sirinelli, a "structural fault line" divided those who saw this evolution as a chance to "modernize French Socialism" and "definitely legitimize it as a government party" and those who saw it as both a "loss of identity and substance" for their party (Sirinelli 2017: 214). This unresolved divide has persisted within the party ever since and has re-emerged several times over the years. It can be related more broadly to the internal division within the party between partisans of reform and those of revolutions already covered in Chapter 7. The aforementioned differing attitudes towards the European Union within the PS, most visible during the campaign for the 2005 European referendum, were in reality a reflection of the party's differing attitudes towards economic liberalism (Grunberg 2011:10). Perhaps the clearest opportunity to reverse the swing towards reformism and the support of the markets came in the context of the 2008 crisis. However,

[124] *« […] une sorte de Bad Gudenberg rampant, à l'échelle de la décennie toute entière […]»*
[125] *« […] avait renoncés en 1959 à la référence marxiste et s'était désormais placée de plain-pied, dans ses analyses comme dans sa pratique politique, dans un monde régie par l'économie de marchés […] ».*

despite a resurgence of anti-liberal and anti-capitalist rhetoric the party did not return to proposing pre-1981 solutions, such as nationalization, or at least "without conviction and only shortly" (Grunberg 2011: 11). In an action strikingly reminiscent of Mitterrand's U-turn, particularly in its ability to divide the party and the Left more generally, following a loss at France's local elections in 2014, Hollande changed both his prime minister and his policies. In the words of Grunberg "the supply-side economic policy, […] , created a double rupture, within the Socialist Party and between the Socialist government and the other left-wing groups."[126](Grunberg 2017: 311). "From that point on", Grunberg continues "at the same time and along the same dividing line of economic liberalism, the Socialists and the left in its entirety progressively decomposed"[127] (Grunberg 2017: 311).

Despite these divisions, up until this point the Socialists had not been faced with an exterior electoral threat which could split the party's vote along this dividing line. Although Jean-Luc Mélenchon had revived the threat to the left of the PS with his 2012 presidential candidacy at the head of a far-left coalition, the Front de Gauche, his result of 11.10 percent, while better than usual for the left of the left, did not yet threaten the PS's dominance. Furthermore, his much-mediatized challenge to Marine Le Pen in the 11th constituency of the Pas-de-Calais, an FN stronghold, did far less than Le Pen herself to threaten the Socialist's eventual win. Indeed, in the first round Mélenchon gained 21.46% of the vote against a marginally better 23.72% for the Socialist candidate and an overwhelming first place for Marine Le Pen at 42.26% of votes cast. Ultimately the Socialists only managed to win very narrowly by 118 votes (L'Express Résultat des elections législatives 2012). In 2012, therefore, this new threat on its own would be insufficient to prevent the Socialist's candidate, François Hollande, from

[126] *« La politique économique de l'offre, […], a créé une double rupture : au sein même du Parti socialiste et entre le gouvernement socialiste et les autres formations de gauche. »*
[127] *« A part de cet moment-là, de manière synchrone et selon la même ligne de clivage sur l'enjeu du libéralisme économique , les socialistes et la gauche dans son ensemble se sont progressivement décomposés. »*

winning the election. However, his unpopularity, resulting from the divisions caused by the policies implemented during his mandate, made him renounce running again in 2017, a first under the Fifth Republic, hot on the heels of Sarkozy's first failure of an incumbent president to get re-elected. Furthermore, unlike in 2012, a renewed Mélenchon candidacy and a new threat, this time to the right of the party, proved fatal to the Socialist's presidential prospects.

Hollande's unpopularity and the new political threats that had emerged in late 2016 has led Martigny, in his analysis of "the end of the social-democrat synthesis"[128], to argue that the Socialists entered the campaign with a sense of inevitable defeat (Martigny 2017: 43). According to Martigny, the primaries organised by the Socialists to select their candidate in January 2017 found it impossible to choose a "credible alternative candidate and condemned Benoît Hammon to a campaign which he would retrospectively qualify as 'a second rate blockbuster'"[129] (Martigny 2017: 43-4). This result left a political space open for another challenge to the Left from Mélenchon and the "central space" of "both right and left"[130] of Emmanuel Macron (Martigny 2017: 44).

As well as the issue of Hollande's popularity in the 2017 Presidential election the Socialists were under the threat from a reinvigorated Mélenchon, this time at the head of his own fashionable insurgent movement of *La France Insoumise*. Even more crucial to the Socialist's defeat was the defection of Emmanuel Macron from government minister to founder of a new political insurgent party, La France en Marche!, posing a challenge to the right of the party. What made these new political offerings such a dangerous threat was that they challenged the Socialists precisely along the pre-existing fault line of economic liberalism. Grunberg notes that:

[128] *« […] la fin de la synthèse social-démocrate »*
[129] *« […] se révèlent dans l'impossiblité de faire émerger un candidat alternatif crédible et condamnent Benoît Hammon à une campagne qu'il qualifiera a posteriori de 'blockbuster de série 2' »*
[130] *« […] l'espace central, 'et de droite et de gauche »' d'Emmanuel Macron.*

> the left of the party looked towards the extreme and the experience of Podemos in Spain, whereas the right of the party was attracted to social-liberalism. The Socialist party as it was, no longer resembled, to either side, an adapted political instrument for fulfilling their political objectives[131] (Grunberg 2017: 311).

To further accentuate this almost natural challenge to the Socialists, both new parties refused any form of electoral alliance with the Socialists in order to encourage the defection of their voters (Grunberg 2017: 311). Mélenchon extended this unwillingness to form electoral alliances with the left as a whole, including some of the parties which he had previously represented (Grunberg 2017: 311). Overall, both Macron and Mélenchon succeeded in syphoning support away from the Socialists. By the start of the official campaign, according to polls, Macron had regrouped almost half of the Socialist's 2012 voters (Grunberg 2017: 314). Mélenchon was also successful, with polls from March 2017 placing him equal in voting intentions at 11.5%; a month later his share had risen to 18.5% whereas Hammon had dropped to 7% (Grunberg 2017: 314). The final results confirmed the trend highlighted by the polls. In the first round of the 2017 Presidential elections the Socialist candidate came a distant fourth with a mere 6.36% of the vote, behind Mélenchon in third place with a much improved 19.58% of the vote (Le Monde Résultat présidentiel 2017). Macron, who would go on to win against Marine Le Pen in the second round, attained the highest score of 24.01% in the first round (Le Monde Résultat présidentiel 2017). Several months later at the legislative elections the Socialist block in the assembly was reduced from 295 members in 2012 to 31 in 2017; this represented only 48% of left-wing deputies versus 86% in 2012 (Grunberg 2017: 309). With these disappointing results the Socialists not only ceased to be the "dominant party on the left" but were also "returned to their situation prior to Epinay when the

[131] *« LA gauche du parti regardait vers l'extrême et l'expérience de Podemos en Espagne, tandis que la droite du parti était attirée par le social-libéralisme. Le Parti socialiste, tel qu'il était, ne semblait plus alors, ni aux uns ni aux autres, constituer l'instrument politique adapté à leurs objectifs politiques. »*

Communist Party was the dominant force on the Left (Grunberg 2017: 309). As stated above this result closed the Cycle d'Epinay with the end, at least for now, of the Socialist's electoral dominance of the left and its status as a government party. This thesis will now consider in more depth one of the contributing factors to this fall from grace and one which presented an opportunity for the FN: the perception that the Socialist party is no longer truly leftwing.

5.4.3. The abandoning of a working-class conception of the left: "It is the left that is no longer the left"

In his exploration of the phenomenon of former left-wing voters supporting the FN, Perrineau has deployed several types of sources to form the basis for his analysis. These include large scale tools such as the result and socio-economic breakdown of both poll and electoral results, as well as a series of relatively freeform interviews, some of which have already been cited in this thesis. As highlighted in Chapter 7, a claim which could initially be confusing is the result of conflating the ideological position – with its common understandings of what it means to be left-wing – and the main party or parties which are held to defend that position at any one time. One of the interviewees, a 24-year-old male political sciences student who used to vote left-wing, makes the previously quoted statement:

> Frankly, you know, I still feel leftist, it's the left that is no longer the left. I don't know if you see what I'm trying to say. Let me remind you that my grandfather was a worker....(silence) It's the rest that has changed, not my opinion..... at least not much.... I no longer believe in this vision of Left versus Right[132] (Anonymous interviewee cited in Perrineau 2017a: 75).

[132] *« Franchement , tu sais, je me sens aussi maintenant de gauche, c'est la gauche qui n'est plus la gauche, je ne sais pas si tu a compris ce que je veux dire. Je te rappelle que mon grand-père était un ouvrier…[silence] c'est le reste qui a changé, pas mon opinion…enfin, pas trop…je ne crois plus de cette vision de gauche contre droite »*

This one passage highlights several of the key issues influencing some voters to switch from supporting traditional left-wing parties to voting FN. First, there is the notion, covered in the previous chapter, that the concept of the left/right divide no longer has any meaning. Secondly, a point which will be expanded upon here, is the idea that "the left", in this instance most likely referring to the PS and to a lesser extent potentially other left-wing parties, can no longer be considered truly left-wing. The final point, which will be covered later in this section, is the implication that if these voters do not consider themselves to have changed their minds then the FN has to be considered, at least partially, left-wing.

Perrineau argues that these FN supporters more generally "do not have the feeling they have broken with the left but rather that it is the left which abandoned them"[133] (Perrineau 2017a: 74). Several other interviewees echo the political sciences student's sentiments also calling into question the existence of a left, at least where it is meant to be found. One, a 54 year old construction worker, questions, "I do not understand the far-left, the left, the real left, the worker, the factory, the the the….where is it? We do not see, I do not see the left, I do not see a left"[134] (Anonymous interviewee cited in Perrineau 2017a: 75). Yet another, a 25-year-old European Parliament assistant, targets the Socialists specifically, stating "I cannot stay in the Socialist Party because the economic and social policies have nothing to do with a left-wing policy, they frankly have nothing social"[135] (Anonymous interviewee cited in Perrineau 2017a: 75). This extract in particular hints at the specific conception of the left which these voters consider to have been lost. It was labelled in the previous chapter as the twentieth century left/right dichotomy to distinguish it from those that came before and potentially

[133] *« […] n'ont pas le sentiment d'avoir rompu avec la gauche mais que c'est bien plutôt la gauche qui les a abandonnés. »*
[134] *« […] je ne comprends pas que l'extrême gauche, la gauche, la vraie gauche, la vraie gauche, l'ouvrier, l'usine, la la la…elle est où ? On la voit pas, je la vois pas la gauche, je vois pas de gauche. »*
[135] *« Je ne peut plus rester au Parti socialiste parce que la politique économique et sociale n'a rien a voir avec une politique de gauche, n'a plus rien de social franchement. Et en plus, sur les questions républicaines on abandonne tous les principes. »*

those new issues through the prism of which a new dividing line may yet emerge forming a new left and right.

This dichotomy, called into question by so many, is split along the key issue of social and economic policy, specifically the role of the state. The left is meant to seek to use the power of the state in order to protect the most economically vulnerable of society and is particularly associated with the electoral rise of the working-class. Perrineau characterizes the left that has been lost as "the popular left, that of 'social rights', of the 'defence of salaries', of the preoccupation of protecting workers on the social and economic front"[136] (Perrineau 2017a: 74). Perrineau, this time combining references to the left/right divide as well as some of the new divides currently emerging, says that these working-class voters are seeking a form of protection. The abandoning of the working-class and their conception of the Left means their "demands for protection both economic and cultural"[137] are no longer being met (Perrineau 2017a: 74). Indeed, this thesis will argue, alongside Bouvet (2015), that what differentiates Le Pen from Mélenchon, in both their policy proposals and their electoral success, hinges upon this need for cultural protection. This is also a key point for the arguments in the thesis generally as it helps in understanding the importance of the nation as a key entity around which both of these forms of protection can coalesce.

In his book on "cultural insecurity" Bouvet (2015) states that the starting point of his research on the topic was the results obtained by Mélenchon and Marine Le Pen in the 2012 Presidential elections. In a context of strong participation (nearly 80% of registered voters) Mélenchon gained 11.1% of the overall vote and Le Pen 17.9% (Bouvet 2015: 134). Furthermore, additional questions were raised by the fact that the "working-class"[138], which

[136] *« […] la gauche populaire, celles des « droits sociaux », de la « défense des salaires », de la préoccupation à protéger les ouvriers sur le plan économique et social […] »*
[137] *« […] laisse en déchéance nombres de demandes de protection économique et sociale. »*
[138] *« catégorie populaire »*

both candidates were courting, have, since 2012, mobilized more for the FN than for Mélenchon, at the time the candidate of a far-left coalition party (Bouvet 2015: 135). Bouvet sought to discover what accounted for the differences in their electoral outcomes, particularly because broadly speaking their economic programmes were fairly similar, being focused around "the critique of capitalism and globalization" and "the return of the state and public services"[139] (Bouvet 2015: 134). Having briefly considered potential economic explanations for the differences in results, Bouvet concludes "such an economic explanation is not sufficient"[140] (Bouvet 2015: 138). Rather, he argues, it is the "protectionist coherency" of Le Pen's programme that gave her the edge over Mélenchon. He concludes that her programme is more coherent, with her tight border controls which "extend in a continuous fashion from capital to people via money (exiting the Euro) and moreover this is applied on a national scale which is both known and controllable in contrast to those of Europe"[141] (Bouvet 2015: 140).

In comparison, Mélenchon's message of protection was hampered by a contradiction between tight restrictions on the movement of capital, goods and services while encouraging an internationalist perspective favourable to the movement of people (Bouvet 2015: 139). Indeed, a week before the first round in a speech in Marseille, Mélenchon insisted at length on the need for open borders and the absence of any "clash of civilisations" between the two sides of the Mediterranean (Bouvet 2015: 139). Bouvet's analysis is interesting in clarifying why a renewed left-wing party may still struggle to reconquer its traditional base, and it also highlights the culmination of the importance and position of the nation in present day politics developed throughout this thesis. Moreover, the conception of the nation as a framework for

[139] *« fondés sur une critique du capitalisme et de la mondialisation, le retour de l'Etat et des services publics. »*
[140] *« une telle explication, économique, n'est pourtant pas suffisante. »*
[141] *« […] puisque le contrôle étroit des frontières qu'elle propose s'étend de manière continue des capitaux aux personnes en passant par la monnaie (sorti de l'euro) et qu'il s'applique à un cadre national connu et apparemment maîtrisable, contrairement à celui de l'Europe. »*

protection, that is both "known and controllable", is a characteristic directly resulting from key points made in this thesis. The claim that it is known can be linked to its ubiquity in the present day, be it as a source of mass collective identity or that most groups of humans seeking recognition on the international stage will try to do so through their constitution as a nation-state. Furthermore, this association of the nation-state with power and sovereignty, only challenged by globalization in the last 30 years or so, is the reason for it being considered more "controllable" than the borders of an ill-defined supranational entity such as the European Union. That being said, Mélenchon may have suffered from other disadvantages besides having chosen the institutional level to propose the imposition of protection; a policy that may be more a result of his party's decision than his own.

In 2012, the election which Bouvet's analysis focuses on, Mélenchon was running for the Front de Gauche, made up of several far-left factions including the PCF. There has been a longstanding contrast between left-wing intellectual elites and working-class voters, which may have only worsened with the changing make-up of these parties' memberships. As part of his argument, Bouvet also notes the disproportionate number, compared to the population at large, of FN voters preoccupied by immigration. 68% of FN voters placed immigration policy as their top priority, whereas amongst voters more generally this number was much lower at 20% (Bouvet 2015: 138). With his open-door policy in 2012 this may well have hindered Mélenchon's electoral chances. This issue of immigration, international versus nationally focused attitudes to people, may go back much further. Perrineau quotes the study of the socio-politics of Lorraine conducted in the 1960s and 70s, in which the author, Serge Bonnet, demonstrated that "popular communism does not react the same way as intellectual Marxism" (Bonnet cited in Perrineau 2017a: 45). Bonnet explains that the working-class communists of Lorraine "shared a profound nationalism not free of a xenophobic tint", not hesitating to use anti-German terms, a legacy of the war (Perrineau 2017a: 45). A slight

difference to this past period exists in that despite "occasionally racist discourse" amongst Gaucho-Lepénistes, it is far from being "omnipresent" (Perrineau 2017a: 95). Perrineau says that when immigration is denounced it is more concerned with economic and security issues as opposed to ethno-cultural ones (Perrineau 2017a: 45).

That being said, immigration remains a point of contrast between the working-class and some left-wing elites. The interviewees in fact directly reference a different left which did not hesitate in its condemnation of immigration. Revealingly, this is not a different left-wing party currently active in politics, rather it is the Communist party under George Marchais, its leader from 1972 to 1994. One of the interviewees states: "Also when Jean-Luc Mélenchon says he wants to legalise all illegal immigrants, I am not in agreement: we have neither the moral obligation nor the possibility to welcome all the misery of the world, to quote the socialist Michel Rocard or the Communist George Marchais, who, in the 1980s, demanded a halt to immigration"[142] (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 139). Another interviewee seems to hint that George Marchais, were he around at the time, would have been an FN supporter: "Very clearly, today, Georges Marchais, I think, well, I was talking about him with people from the FN, er ….well.., they love him, do you see what I mean, they venerate him so there is the question. Well, it, it explains the Nord-Pas-de-Calais" (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 76). The reference to Nord-Pas-de-Calais is presumably a reference to Marine Le Pen's consistently strong showing amongst the working-class there. The aforementioned 24 year old political sciences student explicitly refers to the old Communists' economic argument against immigration: "The Left today […] It is no longer communist, you know, the communists of the 1980s were against immigration! They already said, and very

[142] *« Aussi lorsque Jean-Luc Mélenchon dit vouloir régulariser tous les sans-papiers, je ne suis pas d'accord : nous n'avons, ni l'obligation, ni la responsabilité d'accueillir toute la misère du monde, comme le disaient le socialiste Michel Rocard ou le communiste George Marchais, lequel, dans les années 1980, réclamait l'arrêt de l'immigration. »*

clearly, that accepting mass immigration is only a way of diminishing the salaries of the people" (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 76). In another interview the hostility to Mélenchon's immigration policy is stated again and also hints at another facet of the problem and why it may be hard for the Left to reconnect with these voters:

> In 2012 I hesitated to vote Front de Gauche in the first round, because I quite like Mélenchon. He is someone who is always pleasant to listen to, er…he has revolutionary positions, I like him. On social and economic questions, Mélenchon is not so far from us. He calls for exiting the Euro. […] I cannot vote Front de Gauche because they are all teachers' kids, des bobos (les bourgeois) who explain to us that we have to welcome immigrants; and their main struggle is Palestine. That doesn't interest me[143] (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 77).

This interviewee is not only stating his hostility towards immigration but also referring to a wider issue of working-class support for emerging parties which are, economically speaking, on the right side of the twentieth-century left/right divide. His reference to "teachers' kids" and 'bourgeois', whom he seems to hold responsible, as opposed to Mélenchon, for the policies which he disagrees with, hints at a wider shift in the make-up of left voters going back to at least Mitterrand's time. Mentioned as one of the possible reasons for Mitterrand's U-turn in Chapter 7, the pursuit of a rising number of middle-class voters as opposed to a shrinking number of working-class voters, has also played a role in the more culturally liberal attitudes found amongst left-wing parties today. More than the mere attempt to seek voters,

[143] *« En 2012, j'hésitais à voter Front de gauche au premier tour, parce que j'aime bien Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Il est quelqu'un toujours agréable à écouter…euh…il a des positions révolutionaries, je l'aime bien. Sur les questions économiques et sociales, Jean-Luc Mélenchon d'ailleurs c'est un peu proche de nous. Il appelle à la sortie de l'Euro […] Je ne peux pas aller au Front de gauche parce que c'est des fils de profs, quoi, des bobos qui nous expliquent qu'on doit d'ailleurs accueillir des immigrants et leur principal combat c'est la Palestine. Mais ça m'intéresse pas. »*

the membership of the parties themselves over time has also changed to become more middle-class, carrying with them more liberal values. Perrineau highlights this shift stating:

> The increasing influence of the middle-class on the left-wing, in social and cultural terms, has changed the situation considerably, as well as the discourse on immigration, on the values of order and authority, on national identity in relation to minority groups which had been more or less stigmatized; these no longer have any place in the world of the Left. This testifies to a deep cultural schism to the point of breakdown with social representations and the expectations of the working-class, as if the Left thought it could manage without the people and without taking into account the social and cultural concerns that preoccupy the working classes[144] (Perrineau 2017a: 44)

This second, albeit simultaneous, abandonment of the working-class, this time in favour of cultural liberalism, also began in Mitterrand's time. Knapp and Wright refer to new members of the PS signing up in the 1970s from a new social background, they were "young, middle-class imbued with a soft-version of the ideals of May 1958, and active. They were the pool from which the party's elite was completely renewed" (Knapp and Wright 2006: 195). Arguably their influence was already visible in Mitterrand's policies with his "support of greater sexual freedom for women, especially for the practice of contraception […] Mitterrand brought the issue into the mainstream of French politics […] along with numerous others, in a programme of reform on behalf of human liberty" (Morray 1997: 29-30). This tendency towards cultural liberalism is reflected in Hollande's mandate, the second time the

[144] *« L'embourgeoisement social et culturel de la gauche a changé profondément le dispositif, et ce type de discours sur l'immigration, sur les valeurs d'ordre et d'autorité, sur la valorisation nationale par rapport à des outgroups plus ou moins stigmatisés ne trouve plus sa place dans l'univers de gauche, témoignant d'une profonde rupture culturelle et d'un point de brisure avec les représentations sociales comme avec les attentes des classes populaires, comme si la gauche pensait qu'elle peut faire sans le peuple et sans prendre en charge l'inquiétude sociale et culturelle qui taraude les milieux populaires »*

Left gained power, as his more mediatized policy was that of the legalization of same sex marriage rather than any traditionally left-wing economic policy. In fact, with his election the culmination of the Socialists' transformation from a working-class to a middle-class party can be seen. Bouvet contrasts the two groups between which the Socialists have switched their allegiance:

> This France of tomorrow is fully aware and unified by its cultural, progressive values; France wants change; it is tolerant, open and united…. It opposes an electorate that defends the present and the past against change, that considers that 'France is less and less France; it was better before', an electorate worried about the future, more pessimistic, more closed, more defensive[145] (Bouvet 2015 : 152-3).

In other words, this refers to the contrast between open and closed societies, one of the new divides highlighted in Chapter 7; and in the case of the latter a group which would very much see it in their interest to seek protection by the state. A report by a left-wing think tank, Terra Nova, highlighted the possible culmination to date of this process of switching support bases. Bouvet states that the report "revealed, in some sense out loud, what the party did not dare admit or relish for several years: the abandonment, pure and simple, of the popular categories, to the choice between abstention and an FN in favour of a 'new coalition'" (Bouvet 2015: 152). It is in precisely this process of switching from abstention to support that, with a gap of around a decade, enabled the FN to gradually reinvent itself as a new working-class party.

It may have been in an effort to escape this trend of middle-class influence and renew his appeal amongst the working-class that Mélenchon has at times moved in the direction of the

[145] *« Cette France de demain est savant tout unifiée par ses valeurs culturelles, progressistes : elle veut le changement, est : tolérente, ouverte, solidaire, […] Elle s'oppose à un électorat qui défend le présent et le passé contre le changement, qui considère que 'La France est de moins en moins la France, c'était mieux avant', un électorat inquiet de l'avenir, plus pessimiste, plus fermé, plus défensif »*

FN's nationalist policies. It is possible that support for immigration and illegal immigrants in 2012 were imposed on Mélenchon by the Front de Gauche which he represented. Referring to the convergence between the two extremes of the political spectrum during the 2005 European referendum, with both Far-Left and Far-Right opposing the constitution in contrast with much of the political mainstream. Perrineau reports an incident in which Jean-Luc Mélenchon was confronted by a Socialist activist who insisted on the importance of the new arrivals to the EU at which Mélenchon snapped back "Well they can go fuck themselves! Lithuanians? D'you know any Lithuanians? I have never seen any."[146] (Mélenchon cited in Perrineau 2017a : 39).

More recently, and while at the head of his own movement, Mélenchon spelt out in his book, *Le choix de l'insoumission*, published in September 2016, some of his views on immigration stating "I have never been for the right to settle and I will not start being so today"[147] (Jean-Luc Mélenchon cited in Grunberg 2017 :315). Mélenchon's more nationalist and protectionist views, whether genuine or not, may contribute to closing the gap between him and his electors, since another aspect of their values where the FN might hold an advantage is the Gaucho-Lepéniste's attachment to the nation (Perrineau 2017a: 122). Unlike other FN voters, the ethnic component is absent from their definition of the nation, but their attachment is still evident with regards to a belief in French culture and the need for immigrants to seek to integrate. Perrineau states that "their investment in a national community defined by a beloved territory, a glorified history and a cherished culture, is very strong"[148] (Perrineau 2017a: 122). Once again details of these general points can be found in the words of the book's interviewees. The aforementioned 70-year-old baker states:

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[146] *« Eh bien qu'ils aillent se faire foutre! Lituaniens ? T'en connais, toi des Lituaniens ? J'en ai jamais vu un moi »*
[147] *« Je n'ai jamais été pour la liberté d'installation et je ne vais pas commencer aujourd'hui »*
[148] *« Leur investissement dans une communauté national définie par un territoire aimé, une histoire glorifiée et une culture chérie, est très fort. »*

> National identity above all else! I am French and I am proud to be so. I am French above all else. […] I defend national identity, and to defend national identity, it is done through small industries, it is done through foie gras, it is done through champagne, it is done through everything! [149] (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 122).

Another interviewee, the political sciences student, referring to his sense of history, conferred by studying history at school, helps explain his views of France declaring that France had "always been associated with a grand country, with a grand history and that always stuck with me" (Anonymous 2017a: 123). Although not opposed to immigration on ethnic grounds there is still a strong sense that it is up to the immigrant to fit in with their newly adopted culture, a notion reminiscent of Marine Le Pen's railing against *communautarisme.* An economics masters student puts its bluntly:

> When an immigrant arrives in France, he has to assimilate. Not only find a job. France is a community of citizens and they share a culture, French culture. Immigration can bring a few small nuances to our culture. But today, in some neighborhoods, it is French culture that we expulse.[150] (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 123).

Another, having echoed the sentiment about some neighborhoods no longer being French refers to the inability of teachers not being able to teach certain history topics or authors. His uncertainty about being able to talk about this topic seems to shine through his statement:

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[149] *L'identité nationale, en premier lieu! Je suis français et je suis fier de l'être. Je suis français avant tout moi! […] Moi je défends l'identité nationale, et pour défendre l'identité nationale, ça passe à travers les petites entreprises, ça passe à travers le foie gras, ça passe à travers le champagne, ça passe à travers tout !*

[150] *« Quand un immigré arrive en France, il doit s'assimiler. Pas seulement trouver un job. La France, c'est une communauté de citoyens et ils partagent une culture, la culture française. L'immigration peut apporter quelques petites nuances à notre culture. Mais aujourd'hui, dans quelques quartiers, c'est la culture française qu'on expulse »*

> For me, well, it was a problem for me as a….well, I have always been very republican, so, as a republican, it was an issue for me because I thought 'but these people we…we are not assimilating them', and there is a real assimilation problem. It was a problem to me because if we start questioning the laws of the Republic, that, becomes worrying.[151] (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 123-4).

Not unlike Marine Le Pen's circumventing of political correctness, the interviewee here falls back on supposed principles of the Republic rather than risk appearing out of line. Depending on the interpretation , a final interviewee seems to perfectly mix the various attributes of nation highlighted by this thesis: popular sovereignty and nation as a source of identity, states:

> The Front National, it is sovereignty, it is us, it is France first! I mean to say, it is putting the French that live in France first, those that love their fatherland. You do not need to have a flag, it's in here…it's in here! Your French, you are proud to be French, not to have dual nationality. It is…me, I don't know, I do not know two countries [152] (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a:124).

His vague statement about sovereignty, whether external towards other nations or internal of the people against the elites is unclear, but it is clearly linked to the nation and France. It may have been in pursuit of voters animated by these sorts of senses of national attachment and pride that Mélenchon attempted to position himself as against immigration after his, in this light, contradictory statements. However, despite this he never succeeded in overtaking Le

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[151] *"Moi, ce qui me, enfin, ça m'a posé un problème à moi en tant que….enfin, moi j'ai toujours été très républicain, donc, en tant que républicain, moi ça me posait un problème parce que je me disais 'mais ces gens-là on les…on ne les assimile pas », et il y a un vrai problème d'assimilation. Ça me posait un problème parce que quand on remet en cause la loi de la République, c'est, ça devient inquiétant."*

[152] *Le Front national, c'est la souveraineté, c'est nous, c'est la France d'abord ! je veux dire, c'est d'abord les Français qui vient en France, qui aiment leur patrie. T'es pas obligé d'avoir un drapeau, c'est là-*dedans…C'est là-dedans ! T'es français, t'est fier d ''être francais, pas d'avoir une binationalité. C'est…moi, je sais pas, je connais pas deux pays

Pen in terms of popular support. The following section will detail how the FN came to dominate this niche of French politics.

5.5.4. The Evolution and success of the FN as a new working-class party

Thus far this section has mainly focused on how the left, and the PS in particular, created a political vacuum by abandoning their position as the dominant defenders and representatives of working-class voters. Here the focus will be on how the FN, witnessing a growing influx of working-class voters, very pragmatically performed an economic policy U-turn of their own in order to appeal to the abandoned working-class. The radical nature of the U-turn, and the fact that it occurred almost a decade after the FN's initial electoral breakthrough, make it clear that appealing to the working classes was an opportunistic decision rather than the party's initial intention

It is hard to overstate the extent of the FN's economic policy U-turn, undertaken almost a decade and a half after Mitterrand's triggered the start of the decline in working-class support for the Socialists. Indeed, from the outset the themes of law and order and opposition to immigration have always been staples of the FN's programmes, but in the 1970s and most of the 1980s they stood alongside very different economic policies. Speaking retrospectively almost a decade later, Jean-Marie Le Pen compared the FN's 1978 programme to a "form of 'Reagonomics' two years before Reagan's election" (Shields 2007: 189). Until the late 1980s key words to describe the FN's economic platform were "free market, competition, enterprise, profit, and rolling back the state" (Shields 2007: 214). In the mid-1980s, dismissing an electorate which would soon form the basis of the party's electoral dynamism, Le Pen senior accused the unemployed of being "social parasites" and complained that in France "the number of workers is constantly falling while the number of social parasites and dependents is on the increase." (Jean-Marie Le Pen cited in Shields 2007: 272). Despite this

off-putting rhetoric, by the end of the 1980s the FN had started to attract increasing numbers of working-class supporters, a trend which would be further amplified in the 1990s (Perrineau 2017a: 59). At the 1988 Presidential and Legislative elections the tone was still opposed to state intervention in the economy. Le Pen claimed that the "clinical symptoms of mortal decadence" were "demographic crisis, immigration, unemployment, insecurity, a burdensome administrative and fiscal state, and moral degeneracy" (Jean-Marie Le Pen cited in Shields 2007: 219). Perhaps surprisingly, in light of the FN's recent calls for "le Frexit", the messages during these elections were to an extent pro-European, with calls for "closer military and monetary union" (Shields 2007: 221).

By the early 1990s the FN had already gained a decent support base amongst the working-class and the ongoing issues of rising unemployment combined with the FN U-turn would cement this trend. In the 1992 regional elections, the FN's 13.9% of votes cast enabled it to comfortably distance the increasingly unpopular PCF which only gained 8% (Shields 2007: 247). The real change in policy proposals and results occurred during the 1995 Presidential election and the Legislative elections two years later. The 1995 Presidential election campaign was dominated by themes of high unemployment and the associated social issues which accompany it, a topic encompassed in the Centre Right candidate's, Jacques Chirac, theme of "*la fracture sociale*"(Shields 2007: 254). Breaking entirely with his prior economic policy proposal, Shields accuses Le Pen's programme, called 'The Contract for France with the French', "an exercise in outright populism (Shields 2007: 251). Jean-Marie Le Pen's campaign declared him to be a "man of the people" through the slogan "Homme du peuple, Homme d'Etat". He further stated that "I am not appealing to the rich bourgeois of the 16th arrondissement, I am appealing to those French people whose present lot is miserable, and there are millions of them" (Jean-Marie Le Pen cited in Shields 2007: 254). Shields concludes that by the mid-1990s the FN "with support among the most vulnerable sections of

French Society" had "undergone a conversion, superficially at least, to the politics of welfare" (Shields 2007: 272). Regardless of whether the sincerity of Le Pen's conversion is to be believed, this new orientation contributed to the expansion of working-class support. The results of the 1995 Presidential election saw a large increase in the portion of working-class votes for the FN. Indeed, his share amongst working-class voters had increased from 16% to 27% between the 1988 and 1995 Presidential elections. Furthermore, that share placed him comfortably ahead of all other major candidates in this social category, with the Socialist Jospin gaining 21%, the PCF's Robert Hue 15% and centre right Chirac also 15% (Shields 2007: 253). Moreover, amongst those who considered themselves to be disadvantaged, the gap in Le Pen's favour was even wider with his share being 34% versus 17% for Jospin and 13% for Hue (Shields 2007: 253). Perhaps unsurprisingly considering these numbers, 1995 was also the election where unemployment joined law and order and immigration as some of the key stated reasons for voters choosing to vote FN (Shields 2007: 270). From this point the FN has rarely been dethroned as being the leading party amongst these categories. Citing a study of the FN's electorate at the 1997 Legislative elections, Shields shows that there was by this point a relative balance between its right and left leaning elements, 54 and 46% respectively. The left leaning voters comprised the "nationaux-populists" (21%) who were "largely working-class and sociologically left leaning" and the "gaucho-frontiste" who were "the largest group, socially disadvantaged, politically disenchanted, naturally left leaning" (Shields 2007: 269). These elections confirmed the trend amongst the most economically disadvantaged groups of society, with polls showing that 24% of blue collar voters, 22% of unemployed voters and 29% of voters classing themselves as disadvantaged, support the FN" (Shields 2007: 269). By contrast the Communists achieved only 13% amongst blue collar voters, 13% of unemployed votes and 16% of those considering themselves disadvantaged (Shields 2007: 269).

Both trends, the purposeful targeting of the working-class and high scores in favour of the FN amongst the working-class, have continued largely uninterrupted to this day. For example, during the political earthquake of 2002 Jean-Marie Le Pen's place in the second round was secured thanks to 24% of the working-class vote combined with 22% of salaried voters and the older group of FN supporters, independent professionals, with 20% of their votes (Perrineau 2017a: 60). Perrineau characterizes Le Pen's speech on the evening of the first round on 21 April 2002 as being a "veritable speech about class"[153] in which he directly sought to address "you the meek, the without rank, the excluded….the miners, the metal-workers, the workers"[154] (Jean-Marie Le Pen cited in Perrineau 2017a: 60). The only interruption to this trend in working-lass support came between 2007 and 2012 when Nicolas Sarkozy was able to significantly weaken the FN's support amongst these voters. In 2007 Sarkozy was able to reduce Jean-Marie Le Pen's share of the working-class voters by 8 percentage points and that amongst employees by 9% (Perrineau 2017a: 61). This setback did not last; the challenges of being in power and, confirming the trend mentioned in the previous section on the FN's impact on the mainstream right, here again Sarkozy's success was reversed by 2012. This time Marine Le Pen, at the head of the FN since 2011, returned to similar levels of support amongst the working-class as her father had enjoyed ten years previously (Perrineau 2017a: 61).

Marine Le Pen pushed the economic policies and rhetoric of the FN even further to the left than her father ever did. The state is now the "central pillar unifying her project for economic, social and national recovery"[155] (Alduy and Wahnich 2015: 43). This positioning of the state at the heart of all things FN is also highlighted by Perrineau. He quotes Marine Le Pen directly: "the key is the state, we need to rediscover the state, the state has become the

[153] *« véritable discours de classe »*
[154] *« vouls les petits, les sans grade, les exclus…les mineurs, les métallos, les ouvriers »*
[155] *« lepillier central et unifié de son projet de redressement économique, social et national. »*

veritable backbone of France, of the France we love"[156] (Marine Le Pen cited in Perrineau 2014: 79). Alduy and Wahnich refer to Marine Le Pen reinventing the connotations associated with the state. Under fire for so long by the neo-liberals, her father's 1980s version included" (Alduy, Wahnich 2015: 43). By contrast, in Marine Le Pen's rhetoric it is reinvigorated as "strong", "protective", "strategically minded"[157] (Marine Le Pen cited in Alduy and Wahnich 2015:43). Similarly to the aforementioned argument about the cohesive nature of Marine Le Pen's programme enabling her to triumph over Mélenchon, Mayaffre declares that her success results from blending "the patriotic lexicon with that of questions about identity within a social lexicon." (Mayaffre 2017: 149). In the second round of the 2017 Presidential election, the "national vocabulary" never overtook the social one in importance, but this vocabulary took up an even greater part of Marine Le Pen's speeches as she attempted to court Mélenchon's voters (Mayaffre 2017: 149). Moreover, at the polar opposite of her father's 1980s rhetoric, Marine Le Pen in 2017 decried the collapse of the welfare state:

> Basically we are witnessing a total derailment, the destruction, perhaps planned by those who believe that the state is the enemy and cynically use the austerity imposed by the European Union to achieve their objectives, to dispossess the French of their State in order to satisfy the voracious appetite of the private sector, whose obvious objective is to appropriate all profitable activity, leaving a rump State in bankruptcy to take care of what's left[158] (Marine Le Pen cited in Mayaffre 2017 : 150).

[156] *« l'Etat est devenue la colonne vertébrale de la France de la France que nous aimons. »*
[157] *« « fort », protecteur » « stratège »*
[158] *« Sur le fond, nous assistons à un dévoiement total, à une décomposition peut-être programmée de la part de ceux qui professent que l'Etat est l'ennemi et se servent cyniquement des exigences austéritaires de l'Union Européenne pour arriver à leur fin, déposséder les Français de leur Etat pour le livrer au appétits voraces du privé, celui-ci ayant évidemment l'objectif de s'en approprier les activités rentables afin de laisser à un Etat croupion et en faillite le soin d'assumer ce qu'il en reste »*

With such rhetoric Marine Le Pen has confirmed and accentuated the trend which has made the FN by far the number one party in terms of electoral support amongst the working-class. The latest Presidential election in 2017 shows the inversion of the traditional orientation of French politics. Alongside the catastrophic results of the Socialists mentioned previously, prior to the election they were credited with a mere 7% of working-class voting intentions, and a hardly better 8% amongst salaried voters (Perrineau 2017a: 62). 2017 also confirmed the fall from grace of the left more generally, with 29% of working-class voters and 32% of employees intending to vote for a left-wing candidate (Perrineau 2017a: 62). In contrast 37% of working-class voters and 32% of salaried voters intended to vote Front National during the Presidential elections (Perrineau 2017a: 62).

As well as becoming by far the most successful party in working-class circles up until 2017, a further element confirms that it has done so by replacing the left. As seen at the start of this section, for Gaucho-Lepénistes the Socialists have lost their status of being left-wing; that title has been transferred to the FN and Marine Le Pen. Once again Perrineau's interviews are interesting when it comes to understanding some of the thoughts and ideas hidden behind the electoral results even when broken down by social category. One interviewee, a 70 year old baker declares the FN to be left-wing because people that used to vote left-wing vote for it:

> All the workers, I mean, all the workers, huh…it's the people's party, the Front National at the moment. Marine Le Pen is surfing the current wave of human misery. Unemployment, precarity, people's discomfort…those who voted for the left before, who voted communist, they all vote for the Front National now. Therefore, it's a party of the Left now, the Front National. I don't want to be accused of being leftist, I tell you, it's a party of the Left.[159] (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 91).

[159] *« Tous les travailleurs, attention, tous les travailleurs, hein…c'est le parti du peuple, Le Front national, actuellement. Marine Le Pen elle surfe sur la misère humaine actuelle. Le chômage, la précarité, le mal-être des*

Another interviewee, a 54 year old man who works undeclared in the building industry, said « The Front National is not the extreme right, we must stop these stupidities…it is the only left-wing party in this country. »[160] (anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 90). When prompted by the interviewer as to why he considered the FN left-wing the man continues:

> "..because they take into account the present aspirations of the working-class, it is no longer a liberal party supporting inequality between people, like before, as was the case several years ago. Personally, I would never in all my life have voted for Jean-Marie, I'm not racist. In 2002, I voted Chirac in the second round against Jean-Marie Le Pen and I don't regret it. But Marine, it's different. The FN has changed. It's a party which aims to improve the conditions of French workers."[161] (Anonymous cited in Perrineau 2017a: 90-91).

This explanation of his support for the FN not only recognizes the change in economic policy that the FN has undertaken but also Marine Le Pen's success at changing the party's image and establishing herself as a representative of the people. Another key factor in understanding the FN's working-class appeal is that the positive views attributed to the party are also attributed to her personally. Perrineau states that in numerous opinion polls asking participants to assign qualities to different candidates, Marine Le Pen is often considered the candidate most likely to understand "the problems of people like you"[162] (Perrineau 2017a:

gens…ces gens qui votaient avant à gauche, qui votaient communiste, ils votent tous Front national maintenant. Donc, c'est un parti de gauche le Front national, maintenant. Je ne veut pas être taxé de gauchiste, je te le dis, moi : c'est un parti de gauche. »

[160] *"Le FN n'est pas d'extrême droite, faut arrêter ces conneries…il est le seul parti de gauche dans ce pays"*

[161]« parce qu'il tient compte des aspirations ouvrières actuelles, il n'est plus un parti liberal prônant l'inégalité entre hommes, comme ça a été le cas, il y quelques années. Perso, j'aurais jamais voté Jean-Marie de toute ma vie, je suis pas raciste. En 2002, j'ai voté Chirac au deuxième tour contre Jean-Marie Le Pen et je ne regrette pas. Mais Marine, c'est différent. Le FN a changé. C'est un parti qui vise à l'amélioration des conditions des ouvriers français. »

[162] « comprend les problèmes des gens comme vous »

92). A February 2017 poll reported that 49% of participants believed that Marine Le Pen "understands the daily problems of the French"[163] (Perrineau 2017a: 92).

One of the key questions at the heart of Perrineau's analysis is whether the trend towards voting for the FN amongst the working-class can be considered a "class vote". He first concludes that today, after "three or four decades" the 'class vote' in favour of the Left has disappeared (Perrineau 2017a: 54). As also stated here, Perrineau details the rise in the share of FN working-class voters since the 1980s and he finds that the FN's 2017 score amongst the working-class is comparable to that of the "class vote" which supported Mitterrand in the 1988 Presidential election: 42% of working-class votes and 38% of salaried voters compared with Le Pen's 39% and 30% respectively. (Perrineau 2017a: 62). Comparing the FN today to the Communists in the 1950s and 60s, Perrineau simply and decisively concludes that they have changed place, stating: "the National front has simply taken over the class vote which benefited the Communist Party, 'the party of the working-class', in the 1950s and 1960s "[164] (Perrineau 2017a: 64). Perhaps the most intriguing argument in favour of the FN benefiting from the same kinds of forces as the Communists at the height of their power, is that studies have shown that the more anchored in a working-class background an individual is, the more likely they are to be an FN supporter. The study shows that from 33% of the overall vote, the propensity to vote FN increases to 46% amongst those with one "worker attribute" and 47% amongst those with two or three attributes (Perrineau 2017a: 63). Perrineau concludes that class divides have not disappeared from French politics they have merely moved "with much amplitude from one extreme of the political spectrum to the other" (Perrineau 2017a: 64). In so doing the cleavages of the twentieth-century left/right divide, outlined in Chapter 7, and this working-class conception of the left remains alive in French politics: "the Front National

[163] « comprend les problèmes quotidiens des Français »
[164] *« le Front national a tout simplement pris le relais du vote de classe dont bénéficiait le Parti communiste, 'partie de la classe ouvrière', dans les années 1950 et 1960 »*

has simply taken over the class vote previously the preserve of the Communist party, ‘the party of the working-class’, in the years 1950 and 1960”(Perrineau 2017a: 64).

Conclusion

This thesis has developed the concepts of Total Crisis and the Nation as Arbiter as a framework for understanding two instances of turmoil affecting the French political system in two distinct periods of history. The historical analysis summarised in the historical chapters that form the body of this thesis served first and foremost as the inspiration for the characteristics and effects of these concepts. They now serve as ways of exemplifying these phenomena in action. Therefore, at this point it is worth returning to some of the main characteristics of the two concepts with reference to the specific examples raised in the historical chapters.

To summarise: Total Crisis conceptualises a context of growing instability within the political system and an associated possibility for significant change and/or collapse of the system as a whole. The Nation as Arbiter offers a prism through which to understand some of the rhetoric and proposals made by political actors competing for power and those they are trying to convince in order to achieve it. As such, the system in question needs to contain some notion of public opinion and more or less direct public judgement. As seen previously, prior to the French Revolution a rather abstract conception of public opinion, based on an abstract fear of public judgement with virtually no direct feedback mechanism, sufficed. The political actors vying for influence seek to appeal to the nation as the name for the political community as a whole in both its imagined abstract singularity and, in the present day, its concrete electoral plurality. Both the actors who are appealing, and those they are appealing to, have certain shared notions about the nation's place in politics, as well as shared cultural characteristics and criteria for national belonging. While these have solidified over time through practice and tradition they are not completely fixed, and political actors can seek to change the meaning or understanding of these political features in order to suit their own ends.

As this thesis has argued, while distinct uses of 'people' and 'nation' exist in French, with regard to sovereignty the two concepts have become virtually synonymous in common parlance. Therefore, it is possible to apply to the nation part of Canovan's characterisation of the concept of "the people" that she describes as "potent but hazy" (Canovan 2009: 353). Canovan declares the people as "at one and the same time universal and particular, abstract and concrete, collectivity and collection, mythical and mundane" (Canovan 2009: 353). Leaving out the "universal and particular" this can also describe the nation as an arbiter. Its peculiar imagined existence places it beyond the control of any single individual or political faction while being affected indirectly by all, and this is how it arbitrates as if from the outside in the form of perceived momentum in one direction or another.

The nation arbitrating in the lead up to the French Revolution was in many ways a simple form of the version present in politics today. In the context of the power struggles of the *ancien régime* the nation was an abstraction referring to the community as a whole and politicised in relation to evolving notions of legitimacy and ultimately sovereignty. Today, the nation as arbiter has retained features of this abstract sovereign community but its influence has been increased by the development of modern representative democracy, augmented by an entire industry dedicated to measuring public opinion. As a result, its position as sovereign is always present in the everyday political process referenced by political actors who rhetorically assign the stated position of a majority of the community to that of the national community as a whole.

The series of characteristics related to the nation as sovereign have been further anchored in everyday politics by the development, on a large scale, of a shared sense of national identity. This process of the development of national identity was accomplished in the same way as that concerning the abstract sovereign community, whose existence was believed to stretch back into time immemorial. As shown in reference to the nation-building efforts of the Third

Republic, despite Republicans still trying to see off the threat of royalist factions, the "glorious" past, be it monarchist or catholic, was assigned to the French nation's past glories. As a result of this form of construction of national identity regardless of its artificiality, acknowledged by the French Revolutionaries and even Marine Le Pen (Le Pen 2012: 186), it has come to appear as a natural level of human association.

The current form of the nation as arbiter therefore connects the identity of individuals to the politicised community to which they are considered to naturally belong, while in democratic systems also belonging, albeit indirectly through representation, to the community's decision-making process. By creating a perceived link between the individual level and that of the community they are believed or expected to belong to, the nation can truly be considered to be positioned at the heart of politics. The arbiter's role in times of crisis is even more accentuated at present by its appearing to be an almost natural entity, both from the perspective of its political existence, and for many, as one of the more politicised cornerstones of their identity. This relative solidity within a system perceived to be collapsing makes it a natural fallback point for those called upon to make political decisions and an easy reference point of shared notions for those seeking to appeal to their constituents.

Furthermore, the current crisis, at least in the eyes of the FN, has everything to do with the nation, as forces exterior to it are threatening its very existence. The possibility does not seem too farfetched as the end of the nation was proclaimed to be in process in the 1990s and 2000s, as a relic swept aside by a new powerful wave of globalisation both economic and related to new international institutions. For instance, notably in Europe, the ever-growing integration of the members of its community is a constant theme and perceived threat in Le Pen's rhetoric. One of the strengths of Marine Le Pen's presidential bid was that her worldview based on opposition to "globalism" offers a coherence lacking in other parties, most notably that of a direct rival, Mélenchon. Her interpretation of the threat of economic

and cultural globalisation, aided by internal elites, is 'resolved' in the theory of her programme with the closing of borders to immigrants, capital and even, at the time, currency. The coherence of the programme is provided in no small measure by the nation, which is seen as being under threat, and through the actions of the national government, by contrast to Europe, as being the main line of defence against the excesses of globalisation. Even before Marine Le Pen's theorisation of 'globalism', Perrineau claimed that after 2002 her father could look at his political future with confidence as "the country seemingly surrendered to the sirens of national withdrawal" (Perrineau 2014: 27). Perrineau then reminds the reader that Jean-Marie Le Pen's optimism did not take into account the efforts of Nicolas Sarkozy who led a successful, if ultimately short-lived, reclaiming of the FN's voters.

This is a reminder of the key characteristic that makes the nation an arbiter 'outside' the political fray, namely that no single faction has a monopoly of speaking in its name or attempting to redefine its characteristics. As noted in chapter 4 this inability to monopolise the nation's voice was exemplified by the mistake of the *Parlements* of Paris in the lead up to the summoning of the Estates-General. Indeed, up to this point the *parlements* had been instrumental in leading opposition to royal power by successfully appealing to public opinion and claiming to represent the nation in the absence of the *ancien régime*'s national assemblies. However, with a single proclamation arguing that the Estates-General should meet as it had over a century before and completely ignoring evolutions in public opinion reinforced by proposed royal reforms, they lost the initiative. With the Crown silent and the *parlements'* discredited the momentum was transferred to the defenders of the Third Estate and concepts of representation which would ultimately underpin claims of national sovereignty. In the much more recent history, the perceived momentum imparted by the arbiter, monopolised by no-one, is visible in the struggle between the FN and the centre-right UMP/Les Républicains. Indeed, Sarkozy was able to seize part of the FN's electorate in 2007

in no small part by borrowing heavily from the FN's policy and lexicon and being seen as a more electable version of Le Pen. However, at the very next presidential election and under new leadership, the FN was able to recover a majority of their previously lost voters and in so doing contributed to Sarkozy's ultimate defeat.

The FN's fluctuating electoral performance over the course of its half century of existence is also a reminder that there is nothing deterministic in the conceived outcome of a Total Crisis. While in the study of the French Revolution this thesis has benefited considerably from hindsight as an example of a finished cycle of crisis, it has sought to avoid any argument that the outcomes were predestined. As referenced in the introduction, this thesis has sought to heed Campbell's warning that the collapse of the *ancien régime* and subsequent Revolution need to be considered as related but not to share causation. Although this thesis may have considered these events to be more directly related than Campbell might have approved, it is not claiming that the revolutionary outcome was inherent in the *ancien régime*'s collapse. Indeed, a Total Crisis is considered to provide the opportunity for political factions to act as agents of more or less significant change; it is up to them to successfully exploit it. As well as the loss of electoral support for Sarkozy in 2007, another crucial example is the FN's split in the 1990s, from which some analysists at the time did not think it would recover.

Given that by its own admission this thesis does not consider the current Total Crisis to be over yet, in 2021 it was not possible to benefit from hindsight as in the case of the French Revolution. In the absence of closure and the analytical benefits imparted by that, it is an open question whether this crisis can be considered to be an example of Total Crisis and whether there is a risk of it being a Terminal Crisis fatal to the affected system.

Although the cycle is not finished, the evidence provided in chapters 3 and 4 is sufficient to establish the existence of a multiform crisis affecting the normality of the political system

concerned. If it is considered that the system in question is the French Fifth Republic, established in 1958 during the chaos of the Algerian war of independence, then the criteria of a Total Crisis are met. Chapter 5 has covered numerous 'abnormal' occurrences that have gradually changed long-established features of Fifth Republic politics; an important one of these is the undermining of the political landmarks of Left and Right as a means for both politicians and voters to orientate themselves according to a series of positions in key policy areas. So engrained was this dichotomy that the main representatives in the party system also shared their names, *Gauche* and *Droite*. Since the 1980s both sides of this left/right dichotomy have been challenged to the point of being considered irrelevant. The principal twentieth century issue dividing Left and Right-wing parties along the lines of positions for or against market capitalism and state intervention in the economy was seemingly 'solved.' Shortly after their presidential victory, the centre-Left Socialists rallied to support France's ailing currency, giving in to the pressure of the international money markets and abandoning its policy, while not always the rhetoric, of breaking with capitalism. In so doing they are perceived by working-class voters as being still attached to this apparently 'resolved' divide and as having abandoned their ideological position.

The formula "it's the left which is no longer the left" stated by a former left-wing voter in Perrineau's book encompasses this ambiguity between ideological opposition and party opposition of Left and Right. Compared with the Fifth Republic the party system has been no less disrupted by political crisis. Since its inception and until the 1980s the parties had organised themselves along the lines of two main forces on each side of the left/right divide. Although the electoral collapse of the French Communist party, once the dominant force on the left, already upset this system, by the second round of the 2017 presidential elections the Socialists who had supplanted them had also all but disappeared electorally. Furthermore,

they were supplanted by two candidates, Macron and Le Pen, who both criticise the relevance of the left/right divide and seek to present themselves as surpassing it.

The question of the survivability of the regime is harder to answer. However, one of the equally important aspects of the Total Crisis can provide some indication of how to approach it. Indeed, an increasing number of voters and parties have started to challenge how representative the Fifth Republic's version of democracy is. The two-round majority voting system often produces situations in which parties, such as the *Rassemblement National*, gain a relatively high overall percentage of the vote but fail to get any representatives in the National Assembly. Both the RN and Mélenchon, as well as several smaller parties, regularly include a call for a more proportional voting system to be adopted in order to remedy this imbalance. Furthermore, issues mainly surrounding further European integration have shown a clear discrepancy between the desire of voters consulted by referendum and their representatives in the National Assembly. These discrepancies, particularly between the rejection by referendum of the project for a European Constitution and the acceptance of the very similar Lisbon Treaty, make it difficult to dismiss outright some of the RN's accusations. While this does mean that the democratic legitimacy of the system of the Fifth Republic is being called into question, it is not the fundamental basis of national sovereignty that is being called into question, quite the opposite.

Therefore, a possible speculative answer to whether the current Total Crisis might prove fatal to the affected political system could benefit from the separation of the Fifth Republic from the principles of national sovereignty underpinning it. While it seems possible that the institutions of the Fifth Republic might be done away with in time, the fundamental principles do not appear to be at risk, if anything they seem reinforced. Multiple candidates over the years, but most recently Mélenchon, have run on the basis of the founding of a Sixth Republic. Mélenchon has also made numerous references to the French Revolution in his

quest for power. For one campaign event he organised a march on the Bastille and his programme calls for the summoning of a constituent assembly to debate and promulgate the constitution of the Republic. Marine Le Pen, while not directly calling for a Sixth Republic as her father did back in 1995, does propose extensive revisions to the existing constitution. Even Macron, in his attempt to defuse the protests of the *Gilets Jaunes,* promised to organise a "*Grand Débat*" based on the online submission of *cahiers de doléance* as the *Estates-General* before. However, there was no accompanying promise of assembling anything that could, intentionally or through loss of control, be considered a constituted assembly. In fact, at the moment of writing, Macron's initiative seems to have been forgotten by the government (Sergeur 2020).

The Fifth Republic could very well end with the election of either candidate directly proposing its dissolution, already an electoral promise for Mélenchon in 2022, or through significant constitutional change. However, the main motivation for at least a portion of these proposals is an effort to increase public participation in politics and redress perceived discrepancies in the representative outcome of the electoral system. Therefore, without entering into the thorny issues of constitutional theory, the primary focus of these proposed reforms seems to be modifying the balance underpinning France's system of representation. The push seems to be geared towards measures that would further blur the line between the imagined community comprising the abstract unity of the community as a whole and the "flesh and blood" community that makes up the active nation at any given time. If enforced this would end the system but reinforce the notion of popular sovereignty rather than do away with it as was the case with royal sovereignty.

As far as possible the current thesis has sought to draw on the analysis of historical documents and the written or spoken words of political actors engaged in the everyday conduct of politics. For the development of a concept like the nation as arbiter this focus on political 'practice' is particularly helpful as it shows its current usage in all its ambiguity, and distinct from the more rigorous academic attempt to distinguish between key concepts such as nation and the people. A consequence of this intentional choice is that the developments in political philosophy that underpinned the various usages or, more importantly, change in usage of some of the key concepts, is conspicuous by its absence. With the exception of Sieyès who, to an extent bridges the gap between political thinker and politician, some of the big names that could be expected when covering the French Revolution, are absent, notably Rousseau, despite Sieyès' reference to the "general will" in one of the citations in chapter 4. In reflecting upon whether or not to include detailed accounts of the philosophical debates that underpinned these events, the decision was made to exclude them. Firstly, these debates involve considerable complexity and require research time and space to cover them adequately. Secondly, and crucially given the focus of this thesis, the complexity of these intellectual debates is rarely reflected in the unfolding political debates. If a reference is at all identifiable directly it is often a considerable simplification or an outright misrepresentation of the original idea.

That being said, while the specifics of these philosophical debates, particularly those of the Enlightenment philosophers, are not explicit in everyday political discourse they nevertheless form a necessary intellectual context for these debates. As such, an area of further research would be to delve into these philosophical debates, specifically the way they reinterpreted existing notions of popular sovereignty to create what Yack (2001) called the new concept of popular sovereignty in the eighteenth century. Ideally the objective would be to look for specific parallels in the arguments put forward during political debates and those made by the

philosophers that would be known at the time. If this proves not to be possible in all circumstances, at the very least an overview of some of the key philosophers should be considered as the intellectual context in which these debates took place.

The analysis of these philosophical debates also implies an expansion in the temporal scope of this research. In the realm of political philosophy alone the exploration of the concept of popular sovereignty leads all the way back to Rome. Given that Ancient Roman texts formed a part of the educative curriculum at that time this connection would probably not have been lost on those involved in the French Revolution. Indeed, Sieyès' definition of the nation, which is astonishingly close to Cicero's concept of "the people", might be far from coincidental. This consideration also begs the question of which philosophers could be considered to have been widely read at the time, if for no other reason than to determine the relevance of English or American philosophers on the thoughts of those political actors involved in the final debates of the *ancien régime*. Given that radicals such as Thomas Paine and American revolutionaries were present in France at certain points during and prior to the Revolution, the transmission of ideas seems highly likely.

Further research along the same lines as the present thesis could also be conducted into earlier periods in French history. There are two obvious candidates, both related to religious strife prior to the period covered in this thesis. The first is in the sixteenth century, specifically the context and the debates surrounding the publication of the "*Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*" that was considered instrumental in changing attitudes towards the role of the people in politics. Analysis of the debates taking place in the *parlements* and other institutions would enable more detailed conceptualisation of the very long transition towards popular sovereignty. The second period is more explicitly related to the development of the nation as arbiter and would involve the analysis of the debates between the King and *parlements* concerning the Jansenist problem in the 1750s. According to the secondary

literature, it was during these debates that the *parlements* first started claiming to speak in the name of the nation. Looking in depth at the debates within the *parlements,* as well as the *remonstrances* they published and the royal response, would provide greater understanding of the process by which the nation was separated from the royal person. Furthermore, this period is also noted for the decline in the usage of religious justification of royal action and is therefore related to the undermining of the Divine Right of Kings covered as one dimension of the *ancien régime's* Total Crisis.

Consideration of the debates over religious matters under the *ancien régime* also raises an interesting question about the interaction of the nation as arbiter with potential politicised identities acting as arbiters. The religious one is of particular interest to the current project as in the literature on nationalism, most notably Anderson (2007), there is considered to be a link between the relative decline of religion and the rise of nationalism. The aforementioned research into the periods of religious strife in France might help further elucidate that relationship and how one came to supplant if not replace the other. Indeed, with regards to politicised identities, while one identity can be dominant, it is rare for an individual to have only one. A more plausible interpretation is that different politicised identities can coexist within an individual but one might be dominant in that individual's political decision-making. Another politicised identity that is worthy of further research is class, as a Marxist or socialist conception. It was briefly considered in the section of chapter 6 on the relative success of Le Pen compared to Mélenchon. Further research into class as a politicised identity could help in understanding how these two identities interact and why, at least presently, the concept of the nation seems better able to mobilise certain voters than the concept of class.

These differing levels of layered identity and their significance to political behaviour could provide the basis for research which would constitute the biggest departure from this thesis. Indeed, for the most part this thesis has had to rely on fairly general claims concerning shifts

in public opinion about specific parties, in relation to the nation as arbiter and with regards for example to changing attitudes towards politicians' trustworthiness as markers of Total Crisis. That being said, some of the most revealing sources were the testimonials of former left-wing voters found in Perrineau (2017a). They provided some of the only insights into the level of an individual's political identity and wider trends identified by different means. Research into individuals' reactions to a context of Total Crisis would provide a bridge only largely inferred in the present thesis. Research into the notion of politicised identity at the level of the individual would similarly provide insights on a scale largely inaccessible to the current thesis; for example, the aforementioned relationship between politicised identities such as nation, religion or class. Such research could also provide different, more concrete evidence of the existence of the nation as arbiter and how it arbitrates at the level of the individual.

A further temporal and geographic expansion to the research into the concept of Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter could be undertaken by looking at the period spanning the closing of the long nineteenth century and the interwar period. In the context of France alone this new period for historical analysis could cover the time of 'nation building' under the Third Republic. This would provide further depths of understanding concerning the process through which the nation as a source of identity became a politicised dimension of the Nation as Arbiter. Viewing this process both from the perspective of intellectual history and political reality would provide an insight into this dimension of the arbiter that was treated relatively briefly in the current thesis. By following this process by which French identity supplanted regional ones, insight could be gained into how it was done and whether this process helps understand how the nation comes to be seen as natural. The period of 1885-1889 in France would also offer an opportunity to research an insurgent force that failed to gain durable traction. Indeed, the *Boulangiste* movement gained temporary prominence between these

dates and its short-lived nature led some, early on, to consider the FN as a transitory phenomenon related to temporary dysfunction in the French political system. While examining whether these movements referred explicitly to the nation would be interesting, it would also provide an opportunity to see whether this more temporary flair up of an insurgent party could be associated with the existence of a Total Crisis at the time.

Extending the research of this period to Germany would necessarily require the establishment of the specifically German way in which the nation was politicised and the impact this had on the characteristics of the arbiter. Crucially, an understanding of the emergence of *völkisch* nationalism, now largely abandoned due to its association with Nazism, would be essential to understanding the inter-war period. This version of nationalism is more ethnic in its characteristics and by comparing France to Germany's arbiters, a more in-depth understanding of the distinction or not between civic and ethnic types of nationalism can be formed, although the starting point of a Total Crisis in inter-war Germany is unclear. Indeed, it is not entirely clear which system it was affecting, the German Empire or the Weimar Republic. However, inter-war Germany does seem like a promising candidate for another multiform Total Crisis that proved terminal. Although the economic fallout of the Wall St crash was felt by both France and Germany it can arguably be said to have hit Germany hardest. Furthermore, if it can be determined that other dimensions affected France and Germany simultaneously, consideration of the distinctions between the two could be a means of exploring the factors that contribute to making a Total Crisis become Terminal.

This notion that elements of Total Crises are not necessarily confined within the borders of a country can provide a final geographic expansion for the exploration of the reach of Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter. Several Western countries have been experiencing more or less successful surges of insurgent political activity, often with a nationalist hue to them. Furthermore, dimensions of the crisis are shared between different countries. For example,

although the notion of the left/right dichotomy is less prominent in everyday political discourse in the UK, it does still exist and has been criticised. Additionally, the process of abandonment of the working class through the transition to New Labour is similar to that undertaken by Mitterrand in the 1980s. Again, localisation for the specificity of the characteristics of the politicised nation that might be acting as arbiter in recent British history, can be considered through the prism of Total Crisis and Nation as Arbiter. The rise of UKIP and its influence on the Brexit process, despite a lack of durable electoral breakthrough, could be a good further test of the usefulness of the key concepts developed in this thesis.

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