

## 1 French political traditions in a changing context

### Essays

How has the political division between Left and Right in France developed since the nineteenth century? Does it still correspond to any real issues?

In what ways have long-standing political traditions in France been challenged since 1945, and with what results?

'La fin de l'exception française.' How far have France's economy and society become less 'different' since 1945?

### Websites

The single major portal for France's public institutions is [http://www.vie-publique.fr/sites\\_references/institutions.html](http://www.vie-publique.fr/sites_references/institutions.html).

The leading Paris research institute on French politics is the Centre d'Études sur la Vie Politique Française (CEVIPOF) at <http://www.cevipof.msh-paris.fr/>.

The major French statistical institute is INSEE, at [http://www.insee.fr/fr/home/home\\_page.asp](http://www.insee.fr/fr/home/home_page.asp) (available in English).

International economic and social comparisons are best sought from the OECD ([http://www.oecd.org/home/0,2605,en\\_2649\\_201185\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/home/0,2605,en_2649_201185_1_1_1_1_1,00.html)).

France's leading national dailies are

*Le Monde* (<http://www.lemonde.fr/>) – a 5-euro monthly subscription includes access to the paper's whole post-1987 archive; *Libération* (<http://www.liberation.fr/>); and *Le Figaro* (<http://www.lefigaro.fr/>).

## 2 From Fourth to Fifth Republic

### Essays

Why did President Coty ask General de Gaulle to form a government in May 1958?

To what extent was the popular consensus in favour of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic bought at the cost of ambiguity?

### Websites

The Constitution of the Fifth Republic, and of its predecessors since 1791, can be consulted on the Constitutional Council website at <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/textes/constitu.htm>. The Constitutional Council website also tracks revisions to the current constitution.

## 3 Presidents and prime ministers: the personal factor

### Essays

To what extent, if at all, is the personality of individual political leaders more important in France than in other political systems?

In opinion polls, the French have generally considered de Gaulle to be the best president of the Fifth Republic. At the start of 26, Mitterrand became the front-runner. Evaluate the claims of both men to this accolade.

### Websites

The three deceased presidents of the Fifth Republic are all commemorated by associations of a more or less hagiographical type: the Fondation Charles de Gaulle at <http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/> (probably the best site on a

president, and available in English); the Association Georges Pompidou at <http://www.georges-pompidou.org> (also available in English) and the Institut François Mitterrand at <http://www.mitterrand.org/spip/sommaire.php3>.

No comparable websites exist for living presidents.

## **4 The sources of executive power**

### **Essays**

'La monarchie républicaine' (Duverger). How accurate is this as a description of France under the Constitution of the Fifth Republic?

Compare and contrast the resources available to the President and the Prime Minister of France to exercise leadership in government.

### **Websites**

The website of the President is at <http://www.elysee.fr/>.

The Prime Minister's website, also leading to all government ministries, is at <http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr>.

For polling institutes, see Chapter 9.

## **5 Executive policy-making: the variable diarchy**

### **Essays**

What difference does 'cohabitation' make to the workings of the French executive?

'Cohabitation is simply a tougher version of what usually happens' (Pierre Servent). How accurate is this view of conflicts between the President and the Prime Minister under the Fifth Republic?

What makes it difficult for France's political executive to act with a common purpose?

### **Websites**

See Chapter 4.