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PRAISE FOR

A HISTORY OF POLITICAL CONFLICT

"A bold undertaking [that] will undoubtedly fuel political and social debate… A key concept highlighted as a determinant of voting is geosocial class, defined as… a cross-referencing of socioeconomic data and location within the territory… Through the systematic use of this approach, [Cagé and Piketty] reach conclusions that contradict current political discourse. They make clear, in particular, that variables linked to geosocial class are far more important than those relating to religion and foreign origin."
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A HISTORY OF POLITICAL CONFLICT

ELECTIONS & SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN FRANCE, 1789–2022

JULIA CAGÉ & THOMAS PIKETTY

Belknap
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TRANSLATED BY STEVEN RENDALL

WHO VOTES FOR WHOM AND WHY? Julia Cagé and Thomas Piketty comb through more than two hundred years of data from some 36,000 French municipalities to show how inequality has shaped the formation of political coalitions, with stark consequences for economic and political development.

Cagé and Piketty argue that today's tripartite division of French political life—a competition among a bourgeois central bloc and distinct factions of the urban and rural working classes—has a precise, and revealing, historical analogue. To understand contemporary tensions, we can look to the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, another period when runaway economic inequality produced such a three-way rivalry. Cagé and Piketty show that tripartition has always been unstable, whereas the binary political conflict enabled by relative equality and typical of most of the twentieth century facilitated social and economic progress. Comparing these configurations over time helps us envisage possible trajectories for the French political system in the coming decades.

With its many changes in governmental structure since 1789, France is an ideal laboratory for studying the vicissitudes of modern political life in general, and electoral democracy in particular. Using France as a model, *A History of Political Conflict* offers a powerful framework for understanding the complex project of building and sustaining democratic majorities.

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By providing us with sources they had already digitized, or their expertise on this or that particular point, many of our colleagues were of enormous help. We are especially indebted to Serge Aberdam, who gave us access to valuable data on the referenda of 1793 and 1795, which he had digitized on the basis of electoral registers in the revolutionary period, and who so kindly shared his enthusiasm and knowledge about this founding moment. We also want to thank Guillaume Blanc, Carles Boix, Florian Bonnet, Pierre-Henri Bono, Paul Brandily-Snyers, Charlotte Cavaille, Thomas Corpet, Hyppolite d'Albis, Abel François, Pauline Grosjean, Saumitra Jha, Jean Lacroix, Miren Lafourcade, Eric Monnet, Etienne Pasteau, Gilles Postel-Vinay, Frédéric Salmon, Nicolas Sauger, Aurélie Sotura, Mara Squicciarini, and Timothy Tackett for their help. Thanks also to Caroline Piketty for having guided us through the twists and turns of the various electoral registers concerning elections in the national and departmental archives.

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This book has also been a personal and familial adventure. Without her big sisters and her grandparents, our little Piana might sometimes have found her parents a little too absorbed in their research. Thanks to her for making a big splash! She'll find out soon enough what her parents were doing at that time, and in the interim she'll continue to make us the happiest of lovers.

A HISTORY OF POLITICAL CONFLICT

Introduction

Who votes for whom, and why? How has the social structure of the electorates of the various political tendencies in France evolved between 1789 and 2022? To what extent have the diverse coalitions in power and in opposition been able to bring together the lower, middle, and wealthy classes and federate divergent interests, and how has that contributed to the process of the social, economic, and political development of the country? How have the multiple characteristics of social class and sociospatial inequalities (size of the urban area and the municipality, sector of activity and occupation, level of property and income, age and gender, education and degree, religion and origin, and so on) determined the ways individuals vote—as well as whether or not they participated in elections?

Such are the fundamental questions that this book seeks to answer. It has both a retrospective and a prospective interest. With its five Republics and the multiple changes in its governmental system since 1789, France is an incomparable laboratory for the study of the vicissitudes of modern political life in general, and of electoral democracy in particular. Election by majority vote or by proportional representation, direct or indirect democracy, a parliamentary or a presidential system, representative democracy or referenda, multiple coalitions between the Left, Right, and Center—France has tried them all in the course of the last two centuries. It was the first country to experiment on a large scale with quasi-universal suffrage for men, in the 1790s, and then in a quasi-permanent way starting in 1848; it was also one of the last to extend the right to vote to women, in 1944. France has had legislative assemblies constituted by a large majority of monarchist deputies (in 1871) and others in which the Communist and Socialist deputies were by far the most numerous (in 1945). If democracy is a promise never completely fulfilled, always an ongoing project, an imperfect attempt to regulate social conflicts by deliberation and voting and always to move further down the road toward social and political equality, then the French laboratory offers an ideal framework for better understanding the complex paths and unfinished bifurcations that this hope can take.

Thanks to its precocious unification as a territorial and administrative state, a process largely begun under the Old Regime and then accelerated and consolidated by the French Revolution, the country also has well-preserved electoral archives going back to 1789 that make it possible to study at the level of the municipalities almost all the results of the votes that took place over the past two centuries. The

very rich collection of data produced by censuses and diverse administrative, educational, religious, social, financial, and fiscal sources also enables us to analyze in detail the structure of sociospatial inequalities and their relation to political behaviors since the revolutionary period.

An Unprecedented Database: unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr

On the basis of an unprecedented project of digitalizing electoral and socioeconomic records covering more than two centuries, an enterprise that had never before been carried out in such a systematic way and encompassing such a long period, this work offers a history of electoral behaviors and sociospatial. inequalities in France from 1789 to 2022. All the data collected from the approximately 36,000 municipalities in France, from raw documents (electoral registers preserved in the National Archives in manuscript form) to homogenized, finalized files, are available online at unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr, and anyone can consult the site to obtain the digitized versions of all the graphs and illustrations presented and analyzed in this book. This site also contains hundreds of other maps, graphs, and tables that we have chosen not to include in this book in order to limit its size, but interested readers can refer to them to deepen and refine their own analyses and hypotheses. Readers can also generate maps and graphs of their own choosing—for instance, to determine the political movements characterized by the most working-class or the most bourgeois votes, election by election and political tendency by political tendency, over the last two centuries.

The municipal and cantonal data we put online relate to the quasi-totality of the legislative elections carried out from 1848 to 2022 (a total of forty-one legislative elections),[1] all the presidential elections from 1848 to 2022 (a total of twelve

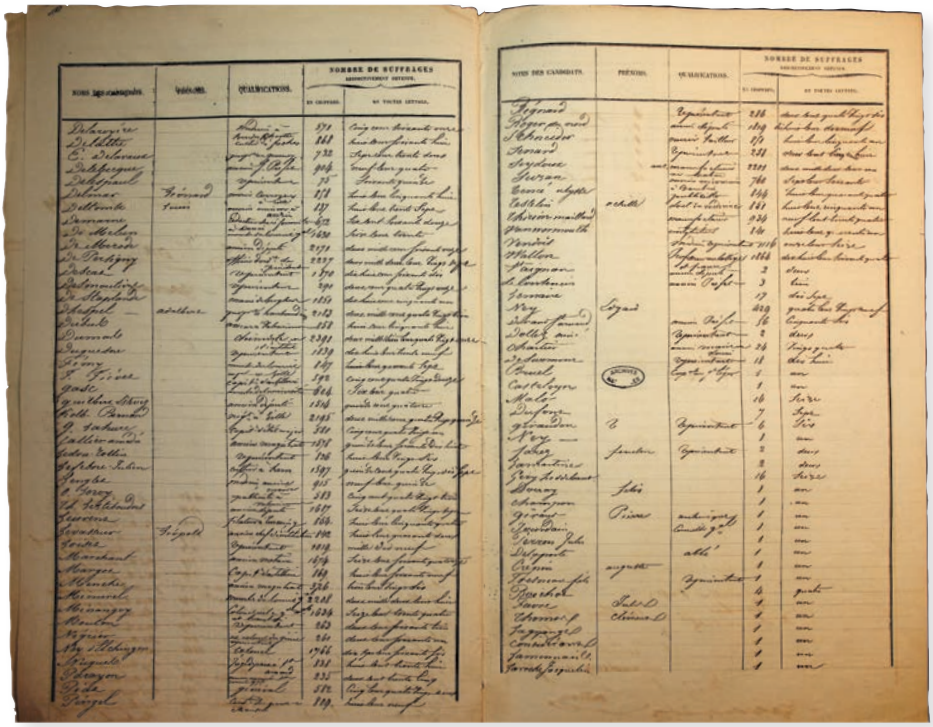
1. This includes the legislative elections of 1848, 1849, 1871 (two elections), 1876, 1877, 1881, 1885, 1889, 1893, 1898, 1902, 1906, 1910, 1914, 1919, 1924, 1928, 1932, 1936, 1945, 1946 (two elections), 1951, 1956, 1958, 1962, 1967, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1981, 1986, 1988, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017, and 2022. The data were collected at the level of 3,000 cantons for 1848, 1849, and February 1871 (because not all the municipal data were preserved for these three elections, which were held in the cantons' main towns) and then, starting in July 1871 (with a few exceptions connected with problems of preservation for certain years or departments), at the level of 36,000 municipalities. For the legislative elections held from 1789 to 1799, we have utilized the departmental data collected by Marvin Edelstein and have not undertaken new collections. Furthermore, we have not attempted to digitize the data for the legislative elections under the monarchies from 1815 to 1848 (in which only 1 to 2 percent of adult males had the right to vote) or those held under the Second Empire from 1852 to 1869 (conducted under the system of universal male suffrage, but in an authoritarian framework that left only limited space for candidacies that were not official).

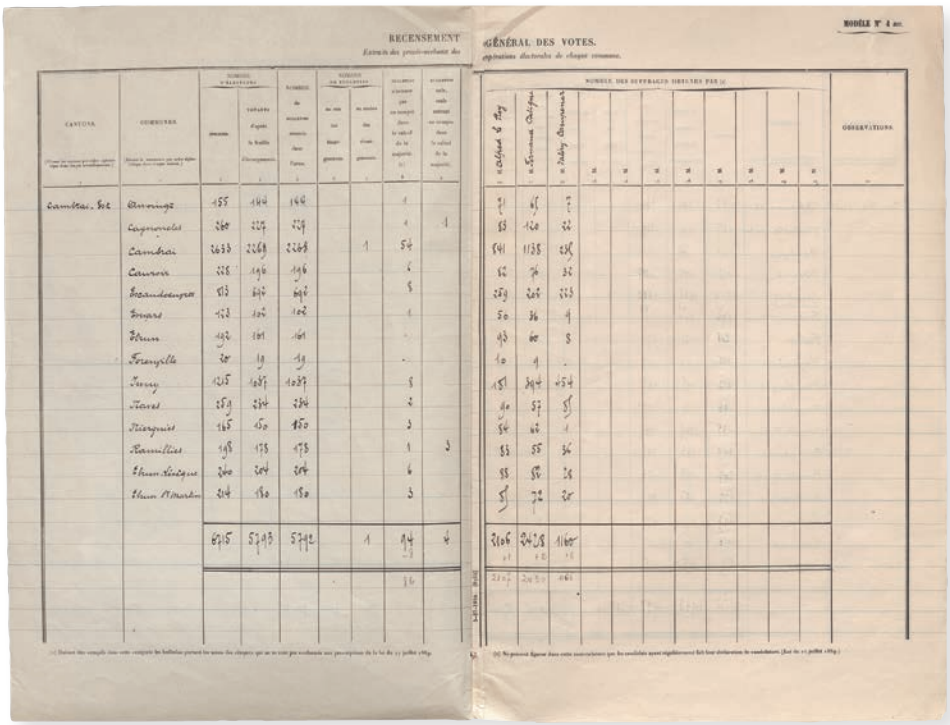
presidential elections),[2] .and five significant referenda that took place from 1793 to 2005.[3] For the period from 1993 to 2002 we have reproduced the official municipal data digitized and published by the Ministry of the Interior, with a few minor corrections concerning the political subtleties used. But for the period before 1993, before now, none of the election data at the municipal level had been digitized and put completely online, so the database presented here with free access online is totally unprecedented.[4]

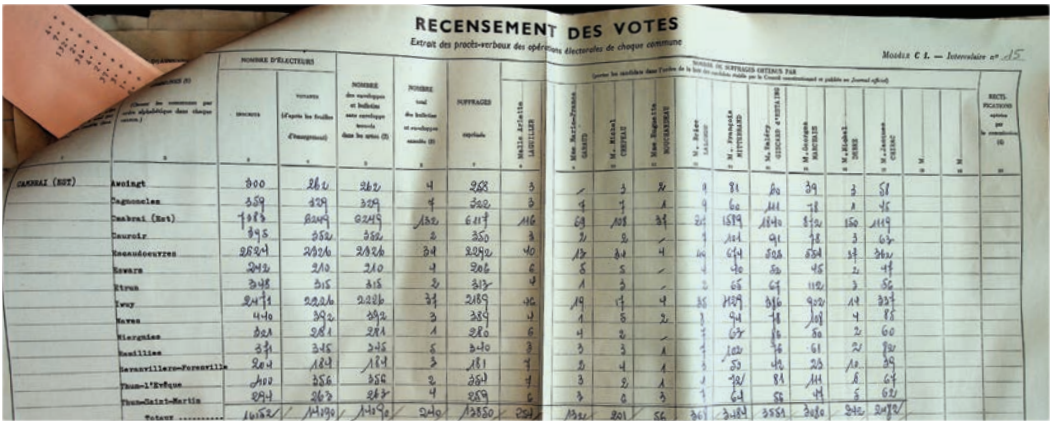
Rethinking Bipolarization and Tripartition on a Historical Scale

In addition to its historical interest and the new database that it provides, this work offers a new way of seeing the crises of the present and possible ways of resolving them. In recent years, and moreover almost constantly over the course of the last two centuries, certain political actors have thought it clever to explain that the ideological and sociological cleavages of the past have been definitively transcended. That Left and Right were now meaningless notions, et cetera. In reality, political conflicts are always multidimensional and can never be reduced to a unidirectional Left-Right axis, in part because social class is itself a multidimensional concept (taking in the size of the agglomeration and the municipality, occupation, income, wealth, age, gender, origin, religion, and other factors) and in part because electoral conflict bears on extremely diverse questions (about the political system, border system, property system, fiscal system, and educational system, for example) and is

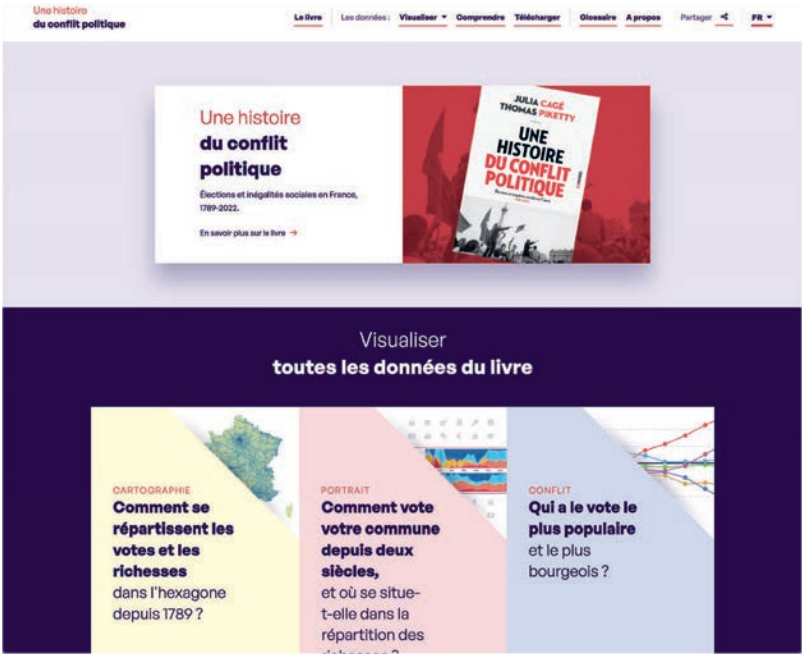
2. We refer to the presidential election of 1848, and then those of 1965, 1969, 1974, 1981, 1988, 1995, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017, and 2022. The data collected for 1848 are at the level of the cantons (for the same reasons as for the legislative elections), and starting with 1965, at the level of the municipalities.
3. We refer here to the referenda conducted in 1793, 1795, 1946, 1992, and 2005. The data were collected at the level of the districts (groups of cantons) for 1793 and 1795, cantons for 1946, and municipalities for 1992 and 2005. The data for 1793 and 1795 issue from collections made by Serge Aberdam.
4. All the details on the sources used and the procedures of digitalization and homogenization are available online. In the body of the text we will return to the most important sociopolitical aspects connected with the constitution of this database (and in particular, to the attribution of political labels to the candidates, especially on the basis of the press of the time; see chapter 8). We would like to thank all the students, young researchers, and colleagues of all ages who have assisted us in this project, and of course the National Archives' splendid teams, without whom no research of this kind would be possible. Their names appear in this book's acknowledgments and on the site. Let us add that in this book we limited ourselves to elections conducted in Metropolitan France; the elections carried out in the overseas territories and the former colonies during the last two centuries raise specific questions and deserve to be the subject of a full-scale study in their own right.







Reproduction 1: The raw materials used: Electoral records
1a (*left top*) Legislative elections of 1849 (Canton of Cambrai-Est. Nord)
1b (*left bottom*) Legislative elections of 1910 (Canton of Cambrai-Est. Nord)
1c (*above*) Presidential election of 1981 (Canton of Cambrai-Est. Nord)
The figure reproduces the electoral records for the legislative elections of 1849 (1a) and 1910 (1b), as well as for the election of 1981 (1c) for the Canton of Cambrai-Est in the department of Nord.



Reproduction 2: The website unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr (screenshot)

constantly developing. Even so, the cleavages of the past are never completely absent. On the contrary, it is always on the basis of this heritage that the structure of political conflict and the plural and changing conceptions of Rights, Centers, and Lefts continue to be redefined and rearticulated around worldviews and divergent socioeconomic interests whose importance does not seem about to decline.

Apart from this structural multidimensionality of political conflict, there are historical periods in which one main axis may take precedence over the others. In particular, this may involve a socioeconomic conflict between the working classes and the property-owning classes as a whole, in which case, the electoral confrontation takes the form of a Left-Right bipolar conflict that may to a certain extent merge with a conflict between rich and poor. We shall see that this "classist" type of bipolarization is generally structured around inequalities of property (even more than around inequalities of income) and always leaves an autonomous role for the rural-urban conflict and the religious and educational conflicts, and obviously for the complexity of individual experiences and subjectivities. This "complexified classist" configuration has occupied an essential place in France beginning around 1900–1910 (with the rise in the power of the Socialist Party and then the Communist Party) and continuing until 1990–2000. It played a maximal role from 1958 to 1992, a period during which almost no political tendency could exist outside the Left-Right bipolarity, particularly in the emblematic elections of 1974, 1978, and 1981, when the Left-Right structure of the voting in relation to wealth was indeed very marked. If we take a long-term view, we have to admit that this bipolarization, which was especially strong between 1910 and 1992, had a deciding and largely positive impact on the country's democratic, social, and economic development over the course of the century. It fed a prolific competition to set up multiple essential public policies while at the same time permitting more peaceful democratic transfers of power at the head of the state. One of this book's essential goals is to better understand the socioeconomic and political-ideological contexts and the strategic choices made by actors capable of explaining why and how this type of bipolar conflict is constructed or deconstructed.

The question is all the more important because there are also historical periods—at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and once again in this beginning of the twenty-first century—for which a ternary (or sometimes quaternary) structure is more suitable for describing the multiple political currents and subtleties involved. In particular, the presidential and legislative elections held in France in 2022 brought out a relatively clear tripartition of political life, with a green-social bloc on the left, a liberal-progressive bloc in the

center, and a nationalist-patriotic bloc on the right, each of them representing about a third of the votes.[5] The choice of terms is of course open to question, and indeed, the debate about words represents one of the central stakes of political conflict: some people accuse others of being part of the "false Left" (*fausse gauche*), while others claim to be the "true Right." Almost everyone describes their adversaries as being in the hands of extremists or the powerful. We try to avoid these strategies that seek to disqualify, define, or essentialize any group; in our view, there is no true Left or true Right, but rather a moving plurality of political tendencies. We shall use the terms "Lefts," "Centers," and "Rights" (in the plural) in a flexible and evolving way, starting with the ways in which actors—voters, parties, media, and others—have tended to use them to designate themselves in different periods. We shall insist on the particularity of each political tendency or nuance (generally speaking, we can distinguish about ten significant political nuances in most of the legislative elections that took place from 1848 to 2022), which we will assign, as much as possible, by using the names they use for themselves or which are, in any case, acceptable to their supporters (when supplementary groupings appear to be pertinent). For that reason, we will avoid using the terms "extreme Left" and "extreme Right," because there are no political actors who choose to designate themselves as extreme.

In the case of the tripartition resulting from the 2022 elections, it is natural to connect it with older ideological bases. We shall see that in large measure, it refers to three of the principal ideological families that have structured political life since the nineteenth century: socialism, liberalism, and nationalism. For two centuries, liberalism has emphasized the role played by private property and the domestic and international markets in promoting individual emancipation and industrial development, with occasional successes on the economic level but sometimes also with considerable social damage. Nationalism responds to the resulting social crisis by emphasizing the importance of the nation and local and ethnonational

5. If we add up the votes for the candidates from left-wing and green parties (LFI, PS, PCF, EELV, LO, NPA), we get 32 percent of the votes cast in the first round of the presidential election. Adding up the votes for the outgoing president (who came from the LREM party) and the candidate of the LR party (Les républicains), we also obtain 32 percent of the votes. We arrive at exactly the same result of 32 percent if we add up the three candidates of the nationalist-patriotic candidates (RN, Reconquête, and DLF). If we divide up the three blocs the 3 percent of the vote that went to the unclassifiable ruralist candidate (Jean Lasalle), we end up with three almost perfectly equal thirds. To a large extent, LR is halfway between the liberal-progressive bloc and the nationalist-patriotic bloc, and could be classified with the latter. Obviously, a fourth bloc is constituted by those who abstained, and we will also study in detail the factors that determined participation in voting.

solidarity, whereas socialism attempts, not without difficulties, to promote an alternative socioeconomic system founded on sharing power and property and on universal emancipation through education. Each of these three main tendencies seeks in its own way to provide plausible answers to the social question as it has been formulated since the Industrial Revolution and constantly redefined over the last two centuries in light of both the different blocs' experiences in power and socioeconomic transformations. The tripartition of 2002 also bears the mark of new issues that became fully important only in the last few decades (ecology and climate, as well as migration and cultural identity), which have helped redefine the old political tendencies, as new issues do in every historical period.

But the central point is that the current tripartition can be correctly analyzed only by looking back two centuries. Over the long term, we find different forms of tripartition between 1848 and 1910 (around a triptych composed of Socialists and Radical-Socialists on the left, Moderate and Opportunistic Republicans in the center, and conservatives, Catholics, and monarchists on the right), then a bipolarization (with the disintegration of the Socialist-Communist Left, the rising power of the European and ecological question, and the emergence of new migratory and identitarian cleavages).

We shall also see that the existence of a ternary electoral confrontation, rather than a binary one, in no way implies the weakening of the class cleavage. On the contrary, the vote for the central liberal-progressive bloc registered in the election of 2022 appears in the available data to be one of the most "bourgeois" observed for two centuries (probably even the most "bourgeois" in all of French electoral history) in the sense that it brought together in unprecedented proportions a group of voters much more privileged than the average. The propensity to vote for this bloc, for example, is a strongly increasing function of the municipality's wealth (as measured by either average income or average property value), with an unusually steep slope in comparison to the preceding historical periods. Thus, in 2022 the Ensemble vote was more than 1.7 times higher than its national average in the richest 1 percent of the municipalities, or more than what we find for the Right in 1924, 1962, or 1993; above all, it is systematically and greatly lower than its national average in the least affluent 60 percent of municipalities, whereas the Rights of the past generally succeeded in gathering more significant support from their own ranks (see figure I.1).

The other particularity of this new tripartition is that the working classes are deeply divided between the two other blocs. Simply put, we can say that the urban working classes voted for the Left bloc and the rural and peri-urban working classes

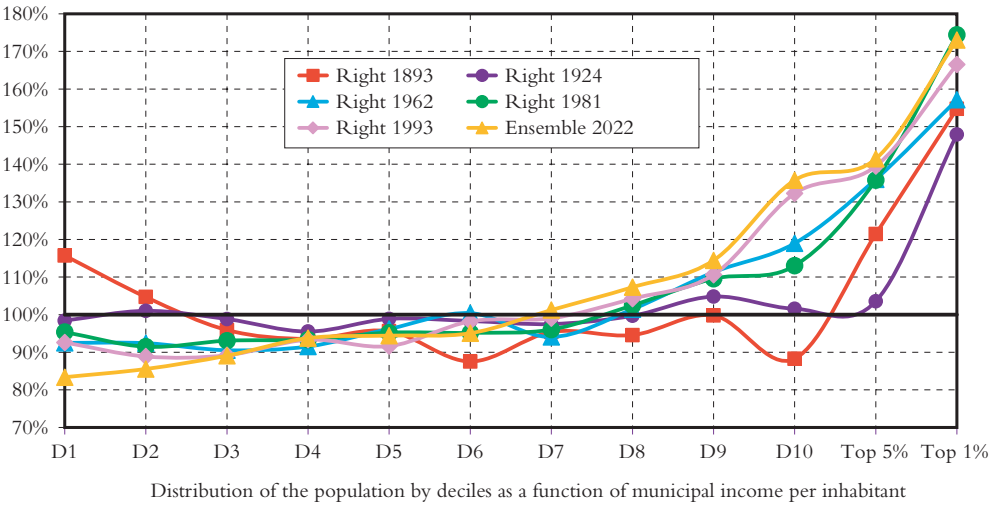


FIGURE I.1. Was the 2022 Ensemble vote the most bourgeois in French electoral history?

The vote for the Ensemble-UDI bloc in 2022 increases strongly with income. The slope is on the whole comparable with the vote profiles for the right wing observed in the past, with the difference that the latter generally got better results in the poorest municipalities (particularly in the poorest rural municipalities, but not only there).

Note: The results indicated here are after controls for the size of the conurbation and municipality.

Sources and series: unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr

voted for the Right bloc.[6] We find certain aspects of similar electoral structures in earlier episodes of tripartition in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, before bipartition became dominant during much of the twentieth century. In this work, we shall try to show in particular that it is by meticulously comparing these different configurations and their transformations that we can better understand the tensions at work today and envisage several trajectories of development for the coming decades. We shall emphasize especially the fact that in the past, the union of the rural and urban working classeswas achieved on the basis of ambitious programmatic platforms that aimed to reduce social inequalities in all their dimensions, taking into account the particularities of the different territories—and the same will probably hold true in the future.

6. See chapters 11, 13, and 14 for a detailed analysis of the recent elections and of these historical comparisons. The conclusion obtained concerning the Ensemble vote is even more striking in the absence of any monitoring of the size of the agglomeration and the municipality. See chapter 11, figures 11.30–11.31.

Surveys, Electoral Data, and Sociospatial Inequalities

Before going further in this direction, let us begin by clarifying the procedure and methods that we will use, as well as the way our work is situated within the vast literature in social sciences (especially history and political science) that is devoted to elections and to political ideologies. Generally speaking, how can we know who votes for whom? We can distinguish two principal and complementary methods: one starts from the surveys conducted at the individual level, the other from electoral and socioeconomic data observed at the most granular level possible.

The most direct method consists in conducting surveys at the individual level, ideally with a representative sample of the population—generally, a few thousand people who are asked questions relating to their socioeconomic characteristics (occupation, income, age, sex, religion, and so on) and their recent electoral choices. Since 1950, surveys of this type have been conducted regularly after most of the elections in the main Western countries, particularly in the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, and were then generalized in almost all the countries where there have been pluralistic elections since 1980–1990. These so-called postelectoral surveys (usually conducted in the days or weeks following the election studied)[7] have given rise to exciting, innovative kinds of research, particularly in French political science since the 1950s, notably by Jacques Capdevielle, Nonna Mayer, Guy Michelat, and many other authors.[8] In the context of a collective project in which we participated that involved about twenty researchers, and fol-

7. This generally makes it possible to conduct longer interviews and ask more questions than in the exit polls conducted by news organizations when voters are leaving the polling place.

8. An initial, relatively detailed survey of voting and occupations was organized in France by the Institut français d'opinion publique (IFOP) after the legislative elections in 1951. Then more and more sophisticated postelectoral surveys were organized following the legislative elections in 1958, generally in partnership with the Fondation nationale des sciences politiques (FNSP) and its various research centers, particularly the Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po (CEVIPOF). The 1978 survey introduced detailed questionnaires on inheritances—crucial information that was unfortunately absent from most of the surveys carried out in other countries. On this long tradition of research, on which we base our own work to a large extent, see, in particular, M. Duverger, *Partis politiques et classes sociales en France* (A. Colin, 1955); G. Michelat and M. Simon, *Classe, religion et comportement politique* (Presses de la FNSP, 1977); J. Capdevielle and E. Dupoirier, "L'effet patrimoine," in *France de gauche, vote à droite?* (Presses de la FNSP, 1981); D. Gaxie, *Explication du vote. Un bilan des études électorales en France* (Presses de la FNSP, 1985); D. Boy and N. Mayer, *L'électeur a ses raisons* (Presses de Sciences Po, 1997); S. Crépon, A. Dézé, and N. Mayer, *Les faux-semblants du Front National* (Presses de Sciences Po, 2015); and M. Foucault and P. Perrineau, *La politique au microscope. 60 ans d'histoire du Cevipof* (Presses de Sciences Po, 2021).

lowing on from earlier studies, the postelectoral surveys conducted from 1948 to 2020 in fifty countries on every continent were recently assembled and systematically used to compare the transformations of the structure of the electorates, specifically concerning the link between electoral behavior and the level of education, income, and inheritance.[9]

Unfortunately, this first method, based on surveys carried out at the individual level, suffers from two drawbacks that are serious and even crippling, considering the historical and spatial perspective adopted in this study. No representative survey of this type exists before World War II, so this method prevents us from going back to the interwar period or the beginning of the twentieth century (and a fortiori to the nineteenth century or the end of the eighteenth century) and taking a long-term approach, which is the primary objective of this book. In addition, the limited size of the samples used in these surveys allows us to bring out certain general tendencies, but it weakens the subtle comparisons between one election and another, and in particular, it keeps us from correlating in a statistically reliable way the territorial criteria (such as the size of the municipality and the agglomeration) with socioeconomic criteria (such as the sector of activity, occupation, income, or wealth), even though the correlation of spatial and socioeconomic criteria plays a central role in the transformations that we are going to highlight, especially those concerning the political division of the rural and urban working classes and its transformations over time. This lack of historical depth and sociospatial representation also applies to individual surveys of the ethnographic type, which are based on detailed interviews with small samples and provide uniquely rich material for a subtle understanding of individual trajectories and processes of politicization, but which are unfortunately not available consistently over a long period.[10]

The second method consists in using electoral data at the most detailed spatial level possible (such as cantons, municipalities, and polling stations) and putting

9. See A. Gethin, C. Martinez-Toledano, and T. Piketty, eds., *Clivages politiques et inégalités sociales. Une étude de 50 démocraties, 1948–2020* (EHESS / Gallimard / Seuil, 2021). All the results are available in the World Political Cleavages and Inequality Database (wpid.world). The chapters of this work also provide points of entry into the very rich international bibliography founded on postelectoral surveys.

10. For fascinating examples of ethnographic surveys concerning recent elections, see E. Agrikoliansky, P. Aldrin, and S. Lévêque, *Voter par temps de crise. Portraits d'électrices et d'électeurs ordinaires* (Presses Universitaires de France / Irisso, 2021). See also Collectif SPEL, *Le sens du vote. Une enquête sociologique (2011–2014)* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016). There also exist multiple studies combining surveys of a representative sample and detailed ethnographic interviews. See, in particular, C. Braconnier and N. Mayer, *Les inaudibles. Sociologie politique des précaires* (Presses de Sciences Po, 2015).

them in correspondence with the socioeconomic data observed at the same level. In this way, it is possible to compare the votes of the poorest and richest municipalities (defined by the level of their average income or average property values, for example), or the most agricultural and the least agricultural municipalities, or the most and the least industrial, and so on. The results thus obtained must always be carefully interpreted because this method, by construction, does not enable us to observe electoral behaviors at the level of the individual, but only to compare averages at the level of municipalities or the other geographical units used. In comparison with the method based on surveys, this second approach, based on localized electoral and socioeconomic data, nonetheless has immense advantages. In particular, electoral results at the local level have generally been well preserved in most countries since elections have existed, so it is possible to go back to the beginning of the twentieth century, to the nineteenth century, and even to the end of the eighteenth century in certain cases (especially in France) where the right to vote was generalized early on and where the archives have been especially well preserved. Then it becomes possible to write a history of electoral behaviors and social inequalities covering more than two centuries and not just a history centered on the post-1950 period, which changes the perspective in an extraordinary way and makes it possible to renew the thinking and problematics of the present period, which is in certain respects closer to the situation that prevailed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth than it is to that of the Trente Glorieuses. Considering the magnitude of the work of collecting data for this project, it seemed to us materially impossible to carry it out on a comparative basis, and that is why the present work concerns only France (and specifically, Metropolitan France). However, we hope that it will encourage similar research projects on other countries and enlighten our understanding of the political conflicts at work today in many Western democracies.

Ideally, this method based on localized electoral and socioeconomic data should be conducted at the level of the polling station. Unfortunately, this kind of data that cover a long period are not available.[11] On the historical scale, most of the

11. In France, electoral data at the level of the polling station have been systematically digitized by the Ministry of the Interior only since 2002. For earlier periods, electoral records preserved in the National Archives pertain to only the municipalities, and not the polling stations, with a very small number of exceptions (such as the residential neighborhoods within Parisian arrondissements). In any case, the local cartography of polling stations has changed a great deal and does not seem to have left a homogeneous mark over a long period, not to mention that the socioeconomic data that can be used for analyzing the voting is generally not available at that level (with the exception of data from very recent years).

sources are available solely at the level of the municipality, which in the French context already constitutes an extremely detailed and pertinent level of analysis.[12] For example, with about 36,000 municipalities it is possible to compare, for all sizes of agglomeration, hundreds of very poor and very wealthy municipalities, others that are highly agricultural or highly industrial, those that rely largely on private education and those that do not, and so on. We will also use, secondarily, the cantonal level (generally about 3,000 cantons), which allows for analyses that are less detailed than at the municipal level but nonetheless pertinent in the rare cases where the municipal data are not available. On the other hand, it is impossible to use such a method rigorously if one only has data at the level of the department (around 90 to 95 departments, depending on the period) or electoral districts (generally, about 500 districts). As soon as we try to correlate several variables (the size of the municipality and the agglomeration, income and real estate, the sector of activity and occupation, religiosity and education, for example)—and this is indispensable if we are to have any hope of sorting out the different factors—only the municipal level or possibly the cantonal level allows us to envisage a satisfying analysis.

From the History of Ideologies to the History of Electorates

Why wasn't the work of collecting electoral data and analyzing the socioeconomic structure of electorates over a long period, as we propose in this book, done earlier on this scale? Certainly there are intellectual factors that are connected with an unwarranted separation of the disciplines and methods within the social sciences (particularly between economic and social history, and between political and cultural history), but another possible explanation is that such a project of digitization and data collection is much more conceivable today than it was just a few decades ago, considering the new human and material means (in particular, digital means) at the disposal of researchers in the social sciences.

12. All the electoral and sociodemographic data are also available at the level of the twenty Parisian arrondissements, which we have treated as separate municipalities in the context of this study. On the other hand, the data concerning the arrondissements of Lyon and Marseille are not available consistently over a long period, and we have therefore had to treat these two cities as whole municipalities, as we also did for all the other large cities, which constitutes an important limit of the analysis. More detailed data at the level of neighborhoods or cantons would benefit from being further utilized for certain cities and subperiods, and they are available at unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr.

Without overestimating its significance, the issue of resources is no doubt important, and it can help explain why there are a great many works on the history of political-ideological tendencies in France since the Revolution and relatively few on the social history of the electorates that given their votes to these different tendencies. However that may be, this imbalance seems to us regrettable, insofar as the two approaches are obviously complementary. In particular, the social history of electorates may make it possible to better understand the most significant political-ideological and programmatic characteristics of the parties and coalitions as they have been perceived by voters, which can in turn illuminate the history of ideologies and lead us to propose new interpretations of the history of the Lefts, the Rights, and the Centers. With regard to the history of the different political families, there are in all countries a great many works—in France, for example, in the lineage of René Rémond's research on the history of the Rights or Gilles Richard's more recent works, which put more emphasis on the renewal of tendencies from a sociohistorical point of view than on their supposed fixity. This domain of research includes a very rich literature composed of multiple monographs and synthetic works on the histories of both the Rights[13] and the Lefts,[14] on which our characterization of the different political tendencies will be largely based. We will also make use of the classic sources on these questions: parliamentary debates, the press, manifestos, and electoral programs.

Let us recall in particular that the first use of the notions of Left and Right to characterize different political tendencies goes back to the French Revolution. The decisive moment is traditionally situated in the session of 28 August 1789, which was devoted to the question of the royal veto, shortly after the taking of the Bastille on 14 July 1789 and the abolition of aristocratic privileges adopted during the night of 4 August. While the deputies tried to agree on a new constitution for the kingdom, the representatives favoring the king's absolute right to veto in future legislative processes sat on the right side of the assembly hall, while those who were

13. See G. Richard, *Histoire des droites en France de 1815 à nos jours* (Perrin, 2017). See also R. Rémond, *Les droites en France* (Aubier, 1982), a revised version of the classic study first published in 1954 under the title *La droite en France de 1815 à nos jours. Continuité et diversité d'une tradition politique.* See also the collective work coordinated by J. F. Sirinelli, *Histoire des droites en France,* 3 vols. (Gallimard, 1992).

14. See the collective work coordinated by J. J. Becker and G. Candar, *Histoire des gauches en France,* 2 vols. (La Découverte, 2004). See also M. Winock, *La gauche en France* (Tempus, 2006); J. Julliard, *Les gauches françaises 1762–2012* (Flammarion, 2012); J. Mischi, *Le parti des communistes. Histoire du PCF de 1920 à nos jours* (Hors d'atteinte, 2020). On the structuring role of the triptych socialism-liberalism-nationalism, see B. Karsenti and C. Lemieux, *Socialisme et sociologie* (EHESS, 2017).

opposed to it and demanded that the Assembly have full and complete sovereignty sat on the left side.[15] Some authors point out that this Left-Right topographical division had already been adopted in 1787–1788, during the meetings of the Assembly of Notables, an Areopagus constituted by representatives of the nobility, the clergy, *parlements,* and the cities of the kingdom. It was convened by Louis XVI for the purpose of adopting fiscal measures that sought to save the Old Regime (without success), and it ended with the convocation of the Estates General in 1789.[16] What is certain is that the Left-Right conflict over the political and constitutional system was from the outset inseparable from a Left-Right of the socioeconomic type about the question of taxes, the privileges of the nobility and the clergy, the Church's ownership of properties and the educational system, and more generally, the distribution of property, wealth, and power in the society. What the supporters of the royal veto feared was obviously that an excessively sovereign Assembly might set about redistributing wealth and power limitlessly, or more generally radically challenging the social order, on the basis of a simple decision made by a majority vote. We shall see that the effects of the political-constitutional and socioeconomic dimensions have continued in combination (but without ever completely coinciding) in the ideological and programmatic history of the Lefts, the Centers, and the Rights since 1789.

Siegfried, the Question of the Republican Vote, and Influence

Unfortunately, studies concerning the social history of electorates are much less numerous. The work closest to the project developed here is no doubt the *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République,* published in 1913 by the political analyst and geographer André Siegfried. In this classic book, which is foundational for modern political science, the author sets forth a meticulous study of the votes observed in the legislative elections from 1871 to 1910, canton by canton in the fourteen departments of western France, from the Vendée in Brittany and extending though Anjou and Normandy. On the basis of data collected by hand and carefully mapped, Siegfried attempts to answer a central question: Why do certain rural cantons vote massively for monarchic or conservative candidates,

15. In the end, a compromise was found in the framework of the monarchical constitution that officially went into effect in September 1791, which included a right to issue a suspensive veto (for a maximum of two legislative sessions, or four years) that did not apply to financial and budgetary questions.

16. M. Denis, "1815–1848. Que faire de la Révolution française?," in Sirinelli, *Histoire des droites,* vol. 1.

whereas others continue to vote heavily for republican candidates, even within a single department and within cantons that are geographically close and apparently similar? To account for these observations, Siegfried uses two sets of socioeconomic indicators that he also took care to collect at the cantonal level: on the one hand, the data issuing from the real estate tax relating to the distribution of agricultural land in 1883 (making it possible to measure the influence of large properties, defined as the farms larger than forty hectares in the total area of the canton) and on the other hand, the data issuing from a ministerial survey of primary schools for girls in 1911 (making it possible to measure the share of girls enrolled in private schools in the canton).

The thesis Siegfried defends by using his maps is the following: In cantons where land has remained concentrated in the hands of the great landowners, who are often of noble origin, and where the Church has retained its influence, especially through its control over educational institutions, voters support monarchical and conservative candidates. Inversely, in cantons where the redistributions carried out since the Revolution have made it possible to establish small farms and to loosen the grip of the large landowners and the clergy, the peasants vote for republicans.[17] This thesis is debatable, and it can be challenged especially insofar as it presents a purely passive view of the conservative vote, which, as Siegfried sees it, can be analyzed only as the result of the ascendancy of the elites over the rural working classes (which raises several difficulties, as we shall see later). No doubt this can be attributed in part to the fact that Siegfried himself was an unsuccessful republican candidate for a seat in the deputation from Basses-Alpes, facing an aristocrat known for his clientelism (the Count of Castellane), and then again in 1910 in Normandy, where he was also unsuccessful.[18]

Still, Siegfried's work, carried out with limited means, is extremely innovative and impressive, and it has long deserved to be continued and systematized with the aid of supplementary resources. Unfortunately, although this work has often been celebrated, it was not followed by similar research.[19] In 1921, Gaston Génique

17. See A. Siegfried, *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la IIIe République* (A. Colin, 1913).

18. See A. L. Sanguin, "Entre contexte personnel et contexte professionnel: André Siegfried et le *Tableau,* une perspective biographique," in *"Le Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest" d'André Siegfried. Cent ans après, héritages et postérités,* ed. M. Bussi, C. Le Digol, and C. Voillot (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016).

19. For a long time, Siegfried himself planned to extend his 1913 study to other parts of France, in particular in the context of a project devoted to all the departments of the Mediterranean South—a goal he never realized. However, see the partial results published in A. Siegfried, *Géographie électorale de l'Ardèche sous la IIIe République* (A. Colin / Presses de la FNSP, 1949).

published an interesting study on the distribution of votes in the legislative elections of 1849, using, as we do, the electoral reports preserved in the press archives of the time in order to determine the political tendency of the candidates (democrats-socialists, republicans-constitutionals, conservatives).[20] However, the work produced relates to only the departmental level (and not the cantonal level), and contrary to Siegfried, the author does not seek to bring together socioeconomic indicators that might be able to explain the votes observed. In 1937 and 1946, François Goguel, one of Siegfried's main followers at Sciences Po, published his classic works on the French Senate and party politics under the Third Republic. Then in 1951 and 1970 he published very interesting sets of maps indicating the distribution of votes by political tendencies, from the legislative elections of 1871 to those of 1958.[21] Unfortunately, there again, data were gathered only at the department level, with no attempt to relate them systematically to socioeconomic indicators. Starting in 1980 and 1990, Hervé Le Bras and Emmanuel Todd published several stimulating works that analyzed the impact of familial structures (not just social class) on the geography of voting. However, the historical data collected mainly relates to the departmental level, which makes it difficult to rigorously separate the effects of the different variables.[22] Several authors have also published electoral atlases describing the results of elections at the departmental (and sometimes the cantonal) level, but without seeking to connect them systematically with voters' socioeconomic characteristics.[23]

In addition to the factors already mentioned, the fact that Siegfried's approach has not gained widespread acceptance can probably be explained in part by the meteoric rise in postelectoral surveys after the 1950s and 1960s (along with the revival of interest in the history of political tendencies and ideologies). As we have already noted, these surveys permit an analysis at the individual level of the links between socioeconomic characteristics and political behavior, and have led to very rich works. The price to be paid for this methodological innovation is that it may have helped diminish interest in the method based on spatialized electoral data,

20. See G. Génique, *L'élection de l'Assemblée législative en 1849. Essai d'une répartition géographique des partis en France* (Rieder, 1921).

21. See F. Goguel, *Le rôle financier du Sénat français. Essai d'histoire parlementaire* (Sirey, 1937); *La politique des partis sous la IIIe République* (Seuil, 1946).

22. See F. Goguel, *Géographie des élections françaises de 1870 à 1951* (A. Colin, 1951); *Géographie des élections françaises sous la IIIe et la IVe République* (A. Colin, 1970).

23. F. Salmon, *Atlas électoral de la France (1848–2001)* (Seuil, 2002), which includes interesting maps at the departmental level (and even at the cantonal level for some elections). Unfortunately, the corresponding data have not been made public and are not available online.

and in that way, focused attention on the post-1950 period (when it does not focus on more recent periods) and reduced the import of research on the transformations of electorates over long periods.[24] Moreover, even for the recent period, the approach using surveys does not permit us to correlate the variables in a satisfactory way (by taking into account simultaneously income and land, or education and property, for example), or to study the characteristics of the electorates of small parties, because of the size of the samples; by comparison, the use of variations at the municipal level makes such an approach possible.

Understanding the Divisions of the Working Classes, 1789 to 2022

Although the method developed by Siegfried has not really been followed and systematized since his foundational work was published in 1915, several important studies carried out on the level of smaller areas (but with more diversified sources and greater historical depth) have made it possible to go into more detail and, on some points, to revise his conclusions on the origins of the republican electorate and the monarchist or conservative electorate. We refer in particular to the book that Paul Bois devoted to the department of the Sarthe.[25] Like Siegfried, Bois seeks to understand why, under the Third Republic (and, for that matter, under the Fourth Republic as well), the vote for right-wing candidates was much greater in municipalities in the western part of the department than in the eastern part. However, Bois introduces an additional explanatory factor—namely, the profound disillusionment of a large part of the rural working class with regard to the French Revolution. In particular, he shows that peasants in the western part of the department, far from being dominated for all eternity by the traditional elites, were on the contrary the ones who expressed themselves the most virulently in the *Cahiers de doléance* of 1789 and formulated the most pressing demands concerning the clergy and the nobility, especially regarding fiscal injustices and the redistribution of land.

On these two decisive points, the peasants would be deeply disappointed. The general philosophy of the new powers that issued from the French Revolution con-

24. A comparable phenomenon for works devoted to the distribution of incomes and inheritances. The development of surveys conducted on households, starting in the 1950s and 1960s, probably delayed the use of fiscal and administrative data, which—despite all their defects—have the immense advantage of going back as far as the nineteenth century and allow more long-term historical perspectives. T. Piketty, *Les hauts revenus en France au 20e siècle* (Grasset, 2001), 23–27; *Le capital au 21e siècle* (Seuil, 2013), 39–40.

25. See P. Bois, *Paysans de l'Ouest. Des structures économiques et sociales aux options politiques depuis l'époque révolutionnaire dans la Sarthe* (Mouton, 1960).

cerning fiscal matters was to reduce indirect taxes (the *gabelle,* which was deeply unpopular, as well as the various duties and indirect taxes weighing on urban areas in particular) and to shift the fiscal burden to the new direct tax system, which was to be based mainly on a property tax proportional to the value of the agricultural land and real estate held. Nothing in this program guaranteed that poor peasants would emerge winners, considering that the new authorities rejected the principle of progressive taxation (that is, levying higher taxes on rural and urban elites than on the rest of the population). In practice, starting in 1791, many peasants encountered higher taxes and fees, not the decreases they had hoped for, especially since the landowners often shifted the new fiscal burden to agricultural rents. The disappointment was even greater regarding the redistribution of land. When the Church's properties were nationalized in 1790, the most important issue for the government in Paris was to refill the state's coffers, not to redistribute land free of charge to the poorest citizens. Church properties were to be auctioned off, and it was largely the urban bourgeois classes that benefited from this and increased their power, much to the displeasure of impoverished country people.

Using especially the records of electoral assemblies in the revolutionary period, Paul Bois convincingly showed that this disappointment was particularly great in the western cantons of Sarthe, where ecclesiastical lands (notably, those owned by the monastic orders, which were particularly unpopular, and on which many hopes were based in the *Cahiers de doléance*) had historically been the largest. Resentment directed toward the urban bourgeois was, of course, encouraged by the clergy and the noblesse, who found it easy to condemn the hypocrisies of the new government, accusing it of ruining the Church and its social works in order to enrich itself, all in the name of justice and equality—as was right and proper. When the authorities in the capital decreed in February 1793 the conscription en masse of 300,000 new draftees, the cantons in the West swung over into royalist insurrection. They retained a long-lasting distrust of republican elites from the cities. Inversely, Bois shows that the ecclesiastical lands were few in number in eastern Sarthe (where noble properties were predominant and were largely spared), such that the resentment directed toward bourgeois who had bought national properties was much less pronounced and was expressed more against the traditional nobility.[26]

26. By collecting more data concerning the distribution of land in the cantons of the Sarthe, Bois also shows that in certain cases, a greater concentration of land in the hands of nobles can increase the number of votes for left-wing candidates (not for right-wing candidates, as Siegfried thought). We will return to this question on the national level and confirm to a large extent both Bois's results and the nonsystematic nature of the connection found by Siegfried. See chapter 8.

In addition, even before the Revolution, the eastern cantons were more closely connected with the city through the rapidly developing, multiple activities of weavers in the countryside, which encouraged a greater proximity to the urban world and voting behaviors more favorable to republic tendencies.

The classic work on the Vendée uprising published in 1964 by Charles Tilly confirms Bois's conclusions concerning the deep postrevolutionary disappointment of a large part of the rural working classes.[27] In this case, Tilly is interested in a set of cantons located south of Angers, in Maine-et-Loire, and in particular in the striking contrast between Mauges, west of Layon, the region in revolt par excellence, and the area around Saumur to the east, which remained loyal to the republic and to which we can attach Val (the right bank of the Loire). Tilly also takes as his basis real estate sources and the records of electoral assemblies, and he confirms that the selling off of national properties played a foundational role in the formation of political representations. The urban bourgeoisie succeeded in getting their hands on ecclesiastical lands in a particularly crushing way in Mauges, where the peasants were too poor to be able to buy anything at all, whereas a few of them were able to purchase land in Val-Saumurois, a region that was historically wealthier. Mauges continued to be overtaxed under the Revolution, contrary to the hopes expressed in the *Cahiers de doléance*.[28] Tilly also shows that the poverty in Mauges led to the exclusion of a large proportion of the peasants from the electoral process, which strengthened the grip of the urban bourgeoisie and rich individuals in the countryside on assemblies and elective offices. The military conscription initiated in February 1793 infuriated the peasants of Mauges, who demanded that those who had bought ecclesiastical properties be the first to be sent off to the far reaches of the country and that they cease to benefit from various exemptions. In the first days of March, columns of thousands of peasants took up arms against the government in Paris. This brutal conflict between the countryside and the cities continued to feed resentment and the right-wing vote in Mauges

27. See C. Tilly, *The Vendée: A Sociological Analysis of the Counter-Revolution of 1793* (Harvard University Press, 1964) [*La Vendée. Revolution et contre-révolution* (Fayard, 1970)].

28. This is explained in part by the rejection of progressive taxation, which could have benefited poor regions like Mauges, as well as by the fact that the new authorities feared that the new fiscal system (based notably on proportional taxes on land) might lead to excessively large redistributions among territories, so they adopted a system of departmental quotas intermediary between the taxes paid under the Old Regime and the taxes implied by the new bases in force, with a very gradual convergence of the two systems.

during the Third Republic, whereas Val-Saumurois kept its distance from the insurrection and subsequently voted for republican candidates and for the Left.[29]

Without denying the electoral influence of the elites and the importance of the phenomena of manipulation and capture analyzed by Siegfried, phenomena that play a central role in political processes at the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth, as they still do in the twenty-first century,[30] it seems to us that this thesis of a postrevolutionary disappointment and more generally of the "hypocrisies of the Left" (and in particular, of certain "left-wing elites" or groups perceived as such—in this case, the urban bourgeoisie benefiting from the Revolution) deserves to be taken seriously. In particular, the Left has been regularly accused by the Right of taking pleasure in making abstract remarks about social justice that ultimately enable it to present itself in a favorable light while at the same time pursuing its own interests. This kind of discourse always contains a grain of truth, and we begin by analyzing the social and political conditions of its diffusion and efficacy, just as we do for other discourses (in particular, those on the hypocrisies of the different right-wing groups and their elites). In addition to the case of Siegfried, who, as a good republican of the triumphal Third Republic, tends to demonize the monarchist or conservative vote (which cannot be solely the effect of the elite's influence) and to conclude that the republican vote is the only one in conformity with the interests of the working classes (while at the same time remaining wary of the socialist vote), since 1789 there has been a repeated tendency to consider the rural world as structurally conservative, eternally in thrall to the powerful and perpetually resistant to progress and democracy, whereas the urban world is supposed to be the bearer of the values of modernity and change, of solidarity and respect for difference. These prejudices are all the more widespread because they have been diffused both by the urban, liberal bourgeoisie (which is often sure of its right and of the legitimacy of its civilizing mission with regard to the rural masses, who are considered backward) and by many socialist and working-class tendencies (which are often persuaded that only the urban proletariat was

29. In an interesting way, the economic and political balance was inverted at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first: Val-Saumurois, which was formerly more prosperous than Mauges, lost its industrial jobs and swung over to a strong vote for FN and then RN, whereas Mauges handled its conversion more successfully, continuing to support the traditional Right or the Center-Right. See J. Prugneau and E. Bioteau, "Une 'frontière de l'Ouest intérieur.' Cent ans après Siegfried, retour sur le Layon," in Bussi, Le Digol, and Voillot, *"Le Tableau" . . . d'André Siegfried.*

30. See J. Cagé, *Le prix de la démocratie* (Fayard, 2018).

the bearer of revolutionary changes, whereas the peasantry is doomed to be conservative and submissive with regard to the elites old and new).

Such prejudices do not survive analysis. Generally speaking, in the eighteenth century, peasant revolts played a central role in the process leading to the French Revolution and then as the Revolution unfolded. The National Assembly's abolition of privileges on 4 August owed a great deal to the peasant revolts in the summer of 1789, which attacked lords and chateaus and began to burn the titles to property that they found there, which ultimately convinced the deputies meeting in Paris that they had to act as quickly as possible and put an end to the discredited institutions of feudalism. These revolts themselves followed decades of peasant rebellions that the divided government was less and less able to control, particularly during the summer of 1788, when the question of the modalities of the election for the Estates General was finally clearly raised, in a quasi-insurrectional atmosphere (amid the occupations of parcels of land and communal properties and anti-landowner violence).[31]

If so many peasants later turned their backs on the Revolution, it is not because they suddenly became conservatives. It is because their hopes of gaining access to property and being able to stop working for other people had been dashed, and because the peasants were marked by what they perceived as an unbearable hypocrisy on the part of the so-called revolutionary urban elites who had taken the lead. This foundational disappointment, well studied by Bois and Tilly, is essential for understanding the initial formation of partisan and electoral structures and their later developments. We should also note that in several regions we see a strong Socialist and Communist vote in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in the legislative elections of 1849 (which saw a rural left-wing vote that frightened many property owners) and then in the interwar and postwar periods with the vote for the French Communist Party.[32] This reminds us that nothing is set in stone; everything depends on the way in which political organizations succeed or fail in mobilizing electorates around collective projects.

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31. See J. Nicolas, *La rébellion française. Mouvements populaires et conscience sociale, 1661–1789* (Gallimard, 2002), which lists eighty-seven antiseigneurial rebellions in 1730–1759 and 246 in 1760–1789. See also G. Lemarchand, *Paysans et seigneurs en Europe. Une histoire comparée, 16e–19e siècles* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011), which emphasizes the role of peasant revolts on the European scale, in particular during the years preceding the wave of revolutions in 1848.

32. See, for example, L. Boswell, *Le communisme rural en France. Le Limousin et la Dordogne de 1920 à 1939* (Pulim, 2006). See also J. Mischi, "Ouvriers ruraux, pouvoir local et conflit de classe," in *Campagnes populaires, campagnes bourgeoises,* Agone 51 (2013), 8–33.

We will also see that over the past two centuries, participation in elections has been structurally greater in the rural world, a phenomenon that has moreover been seen as early as the revolutionary period, which shows that the demand for democracy has never been limited to the world of the cities—on the contrary. The diverse working classes, average or well-off, rural or urban, have always had reasons to adopt this or that political behavior, and it is above all important to begin by understanding these reasons, in 1789 as in 2022, rather than seeking from the outset to stigmatize or essentialize them.

Multidimensionality and the Metamorphoses of Sociopolitical Cleavages: Rethinking Political Conflict on the Basis of Geosocial Classes

That is why in this book we will emphasize the multidimensionality of sociopolitical cleavages from the French Revolution to the present and the necessity of understanding the different points of view on the current conflicts. To sum up, social class exists, and it has never stopped playing a crucial role in political confrontation. However, to be productive, it must be seen in a multidimensional and spatial perspective. For analyzing the developments of socioeconomic inequalities as well as for examining the structure of political conflict and its transformations, the pertinent concept of social class corresponds in reality to a geosocial (or sociospatial) class whose contours are constantly being redefined by economic processes, and especially by the ongoing political experiences and lessons that each individual draws from events. The concept of a geosocial class that we will use includes, of course, the question of the relation to the territory and to natural resources, means of transportation, and sources of energy (in connection with the analyses developed by Bruno Latour, for example).[33] But it is a notion that must be understood in the broader sense, in its socioeconomic dimensions. It includes in particular the question of inequalities of access to social transfers and public services (schools, hospitals, athletic and cultural facilities, public infrastructures, and so on), the questions of possession of the means of production, of the hierarchy of salaries and incomes, of access to property and housing, of fiscal and social justice—subjects that all have a strong territorial dimension.

Within the rural world, as in the urban world, disparities between social classes thus appear as multiple and changing, especially in relation to the sector of activity involved, to what the different groups have and the ways in which they fit into the

33. See B. Latour and N. Schultz, *Mémo sur la nouvelle classe écologique. Comment faire émerger une nouvelle classe écologique consciente et fière d'elle-même* (La Découverte, 2022).

social and spatial fabric, to their hopes and expectations. Beyond broad statements of intentions (the end of privileges, the establishment of a fairer fiscal system and a better distribution of wealth and opportunities), successive governments find themselves obligated to negotiate complex arbitrages and to create countless frustrations as soon as they actually exercise power, as were the new authorities issuing from the Revolution of 1789. From the outset, the fundamental political conflict is not unidimensional (the poor versus the rich). It is at least bidimensional (the poor versus the rich; country people versus city dwellers), with very different ways of seeing the world and different expectations among the rural working classes and urban working classes, the former often tending to fear that they will be neglected in comparison with the latter (sometimes with good reason), as well as among the rural and urban wealthy classes. This bidimensional conflict immediately defines a structure with at least four large geosocial classes and not two (poor country people, wealthy country people; poor city dwellers, wealthy city dwellers), not to mention intermediary classes, which multiply accordingly the possible coalitions and the different forms of bipartition or tripartition. We can even say that the initial conflict that resulted from the Revolution was tridimensional (at least), because the experience of the rural working classes was not the same depending on whether, historically speaking, they had had to confront ecclesiastical property owners (whose goods were often acquired by the urban bourgeoisie after 1789, whence particular resentments against the urban world) or noble landowners (which, depending on the attitude of the local nobility and the development of the successive mobilizations, might have helped feed various political positions).

For two centuries, this initial complexity had undergone multiple transformations on the same scale as the profound social, economic, and political changes that the country had experienced since 1789. However, the overall structure retained some of its original aspects. The feelings of abandonment—regarding the absence of public services in rural areas, the difficulty of gaining access to property and wealth, and the accusations of hypocrisy made against various camps, for example—all continued to play a structuring role. At times, and in particular during periods of bipolarization in the course of the twentieth century, certain political movements succeeded in convincing the rural and urban working classes that what bound them together was more important than what divided them, thus imposing a conflict based on class. But generally speaking, the rural world's distrust of the urban world remained very strong. In 1793, the peasantry feared being despoiled by the cities, and specifically by the urban bourgeoisie. In 1848 and 1871, rural voters attributed the worst goals to the zealots and the new proletarians in the cities: the destruction of the private property to which they aspired, and a fresh

challenge to the family and religion. In 2022, voters in villages and towns attributed to voters in the working-class suburbs and the metropoles intentions that were hardly more reassuring: ethnic quotas, urban privileges, abolition of the police, welfare, Islamo-leftism, and "wokism." This immense incomprehension often has something excessive about it, but it always has its reasons, rooted in socioeconomic disparities and contradictory worldviews that must be analyzed publicly. Usually, it plays the game of the elites, who can benefit from these confrontations to keep themselves in power and perpetuate a high degree of inequality, in the nineteenth century as in this beginning of the twenty-first century. In theory, we can always imagine after the fact programmatic platforms that might have made it possible to unite rural and urban working-class voters in the various periods. But the task is clearly more complex in contemporary reality than in a retrospective analysis. Our primary objective will be, first, to understand the reasons for these divisions and the logics presiding over their transformations, hoping, naturally, that that might help renew our perspectives on the crises of the present.

Our analysis is also inspired by the works of the political analysts Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan, who set out in the 1960s to analyze party systems and their evolution by adopting a multidimensional view of electoral cleavages. Their classification is based on the idea that modern societies have been marked by two major revolutions: the national revolution—through the construction of a centralized state power and of the nation-state—and the Industrial Revolution. According to Lipset and Rokkan, these two revolutions gave rise to four great political cleavages, whose importance varied depending on the countries involved: the cleavage between the center and the periphery (the central regions, or those close to the capital, and the regions that saw themselves as peripheral); the cleavage between the centralized state and the churches; the cleavage between the agricultural and the industrial sectors; and finally the cleavage concerning the ownership of the means of production, which opposed the workers to employers and to property owners.[34] Today, we must add the migratory and identitarian cleavage, the cleavage over globalization and international economic integration, and of course the cleavage over the environment and climate change. There, too, we will seek in each case to understand how the different socioeconomic characteristics help structure worldviews and contradictory expectations on all these questions.

34. See S. Lipset and S. Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An introduction," in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-national Perspectives* (Free Press 1967.

A Central Hypothesis: The Classist Conflict Makes the March toward Equality Possible

Even so, in this book we do not intend to simply reject all beliefs and all discourses. Understanding different points of view does not exclude trying to analyze the measure in which the different electoral configurations have contributed to good democratic functioning and more generally to socioeconomic development. In particular, we will see that the tendency to bipolarization observed during the twentieth century, from 1900–1910 to 1990–2000, and particularly between 1958 and 1992, was accompanied by broad participation in voting and by a powerful movement toward greater socioeconomic equality, a movement that has historically been inseparable from movement toward greater collective prosperity. It corresponds to phases in which the spatial divisions tend to disappear behind social divisions, and in which both the former and the latter tend to diminish. Inversely, the phases of tripartition observed in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century have been accompanied by unequal participation (like the decline in turnout seen in the course of recent decades, which is unparalleled for two centuries), increased inequalities, and relative social and economic stagnation.

In summary, bipartition and classist conflict allow democracy to function and continue the march toward equality and social and economic progress.[35] Inversely, tripartition often feeds on a division of the working classes on the basis of spatial and identitarian conflicts, which tends to prevent the peaceful, democratic devolution of power and to hobble the movement toward equality and the resolution of tangible problems that arise.

Let us say at the outset that all electoral configurations (bipartition, tripartition, quadripartition, and so on) have their advantages and disadvantages, and especially that they have their own reasons and logics, such that it would make no sense to rank them in a strict hierarchy. The central hypothesis presented in this work seems to us the most coherent with the historical materials at our disposal, and we will try to weigh patiently all the elements pushing us in this direction or another. But it must be considered a historical hypothesis, reasonable and supported

35. Let us emphasize in passing that, contrary to what theorists of populism like Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe claim, the classist and multidimensional approach of the opposition between the humbler and the more privileged is a more pertinent way of reading social inequalities than the one that would consist in simply opposing "adversaries" separated by purely political borderlines and not socioeconomic borderlines. In particular, the classist approach enables us to consider the possibility, by establishing economic and social policies that are appropriate and clearly explained, the transcendence of antagonisms.

by arguments, and not an absolute and intangible law. The social sciences are above all historical sciences; they are not experimental sciences, and therefore we are not going to replay the electoral and political history of the past two centuries, replacing bipartition with tripartition or inversely. In theory, we could very easily imagine a democratic world where bipartition and tripartition would both have disappeared in their current forms, and where differences of opinion and beliefs would depend entirely on the deliberative process itself and no longer on socioeconomic characteristics. But none of that seems able to be materialized within a visible horizon. Political opinions are certainly never reducible to socioeconomic determinants. They always depend in large measure on the subjective, private experience of each individual, on meetings and exchanges, on the hopes and the worldview that flow from it. The fact remains that the individual socioeconomic variables (including the size of the agglomeration and the municipality, the sector of activity and occupation, the level of property and income, age and gender, education and diploma, and religion and origin), understood in the broad sense, have lost none of their importance in the past two centuries—quite the contrary. We will see that their explanatory power has even had a tendency to increase in recent decades. There is nothing astonishing about that, and it must not be interpreted as a sign of selfishness or self-absorption; it is legitimate that the multiple social experiences help feed the different worldviews that people subsequently bring to the table of democratic deliberation and the electoral confrontation, especially in periods of intense transformation.

From this point of view, the immense advantage of a bipolar, Left-Right conflict of the classist type—primarily between the working classes and the wealthy classes, or else between the most disadvantaged classes and the less disadvantaged classes, defined by, for example, their levels of real estate and financial capital, income, or diploma, independent of their geographic or cultural origins—is that it provides "grist for the mill." In other words, conflicts intermediated by social class are potentially solvable in redistribution and economic and social transformation, whether it is a matter of incomes, salaries, or property, the circulation and sharing of power, the amelioration of working conditions and participation, or egalitarian access to education and healthcare. It is certainly never simple to set the cursor at the right level on these different questions. But an assumed democratic confrontation between several classist parties contributing points of view and complementary experiences can contribute to it. If there is something healthy about classist conflict, that is clearly not because the working-class bloc wants to go too far in redistribution, or that the bourgeois bloc is too timid. There are also and especially an infinite number of variations in the methods of structuring redistribution

and of organizing the property system and the fiscal system, the educational system and the real estate system, the healthcare system and the retirement system, and so on. Historical experience suggests that in the face of such complexity, a democratic confrontation between two coalitions defined on a principally classist basis may allow us to work out solutions and advance toward the construction of a new social and economic system, in the context of a driving dialectic.

By comparison, the tripartition of political life is often accompanied by a division of the rural and urban working classes around identitarian conflicts based on geographical origins or ethnic or religious identities. The problem is that such conflicts often do not admit of any solution other than the exacerbation of the conflict itself or the destruction of one camp by the other. This can lead to political dead ends, such as situations in which the privileged classes remain in power by playing on the divisions between the two camps, or, more generally, blockages preventing the adversaries from finding solutions to the great socioeconomic problems of the moment (inequalities, education, the environment, security, and so on). However, it would be a mistake to attribute all "identitarian" conflicts to a form of tribalism from which there is no escape. Taking into account in a rational way the multiple forms of sociocultural and ethnoreligious differences sometimes requires the invention of new politics based on respect for diversity and common rules, the battle against discriminations, and the shared need for individual and collective security. In the same way, it would be absurd to reduce every form of rural-urban cleavage to an identitarian conflict. As we have already noted, the origin of rural-urban conflict often lies in misunderstandings, frustrations, and sociospatial hypocrisies that must be examined closely and generally admit of socioeconomic solutions—the reorganization of public services and a better redistribution of medical and educational infrastructures in the field, for example. In addition to examining the question of bipartition and tripartition, we will seek above all to improve our understanding of the multiple dimensions of political conflict and the reasons why the different social classes have adopted this or that electoral behavior in France over the past two centuries.

Finally, let us emphasize that all the hypotheses and interpretations presented here require, of course, ample discussion. Our objective in this work is to open a debate on a new empirical and historical basis, and not in any way to end it. We hope that the interpretations defended in this book, along with the data put online, will make it possible for everyone to clarify their own hypotheses and will help provide material for the essential future democratic confrontation over these complex questions.

The Outline of This Book

The rest of this work is composed of fourteen chapters in four parts. The first part, titled "Classes and Territories: Sociospatial Inequalities in France since the Revolution," consists of four chapters. The objective of this first part is to set up the general framework in terms of sociospatial inequalities, which will be used in the following parts to study the transformations of electoral behaviors. Chapter 1 analyzes what is no doubt the most striking structural development on the level of the right to vote and political equality as well as the redistribution of wealth and socioeconomic equality—namely, the existence of a limited but real advance toward greater social equality in France since the Revolution. Chapter 2 introduces the spatial dimensions and shows that this limited progress toward equality over the long term is located in the context of a growing polarization of the population and the rise of territorial inequalities in the course of recent decades. Chapter 3 introduces the metamorphoses and persistence of educational inequalities, as well as the structuring role of the public-private cleavage and the religious question of religion. Finally, Chapter 4 introduces the new identitarian cleavages connected with national or ethnic origins and their interaction with the other dimensions.

The second part, "The Rise and Fall of Democratic Mobilization: Electoral Turnout in France, 1789–2022," consists of three chapters. Chapter 5 begins by studying the general evolution of electoral participation since the Revolution by examining one after the other the three main categories of national elections analyzed in this work—namely, legislative elections, presidential elections, and referenda. Chapter 6 examines the socioeconomic factors determining participation in the framework of the legislative elections conducted from 1848 to 2022, emphasizing the existence of a rural participation that has been structurally greater for the past two centuries (with interesting exceptions) and the unprecedented disconnect between the participation of the poorest municipalities and that of the richest ones since 1980–1990 (a phenomenon largely unknown earlier). Chapter 7 extends this analysis to the participation in presidential elections and referenda.

The third part, titled "Between Bipolarization and Tripartition: Two Centuries of Legislative Elections in France," offers a general analysis of the socioeconomic determinants of the vote for the various political tendencies from the legislative elections from 1842 to 2022. Chapter 8 begins by providing an overview of the general structure of coalitions and political families as expressed in legislative elections since 1848. Chapter 9 takes a more detailed look at the socioeconomic structures of the vote during what might be called the first major period of tripartition

(1848–1910). Chapter 10 analyzes the difficult process of building a system based on Left-Right bipolarization during the period 1910–1992. Finally, chapter 11 examines trends toward a new form of tripartition between 1992 and 2022 and analyzes different scenarios for future developments.

The fourth part, "Between Representative Democracy and Direct Democracy: Political Cleavages in Presidential Elections and Referenda," examines the role of presidential elections and referenda in the transformations of the socioeconomic determinants of voting. Chapter 12 begins by analyzing the case of the presidential election of 1848 and its reinvention between 1965 and 1995. Then chapter 13 examines the metamorphosis of the presidential elections from 2002 to 2022. Finally, chapter 14 analyzes the role of referenda in electoral and socioeconomic cleavages, with particular emphasis on the role of the European referenda of 1992 and 2005, which were a powerful catalyst for the tripartition of recent decades, and this leads us back to the question of possible future developments.

In order to facilitate reading, only the main sources and references are cited in the text and the footnotes. Readers who want to obtain detailed information on all the sources and methods used in this book are asked to consult the site unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr, where they will also find the complete database of electoral and socioeconomic information constituted in the framework of this research project, along with numerous supplementary materials. In particular, each individual will be able to download all the graphs, tables, and maps presented in the book, as well as all the corresponding series and all the information and computer codes that make it possible to reproduce them, from the raw data to the final series. Hundreds of supplementary graphs and maps will also be available, along with an interface enabling everyone to explore the data in their own way—for example, by producing maps and graphs showing the evolution of the structure of voting and the level of wealth for a chosen municipality over the last two centuries. The database and the tools made available will be regularly updated, and we thank in advance users who are so kind as to inform us, via the interface provided for that purpose, of any observations, reactions, and suggestions they might have with a view to possible improvements.

Conclusion

In this book, we have attempted to write a history of political conflict that is based on the French laboratory. France is a country that has had a rich and eventful political and electoral life from 1789 to 2022 and thus offers a particularly relevant vantage point from which to observe the hopes of the democratic idea and the complex paths it has taken over the last two centuries. We have been able to draw on France's exceptionally extensive and well-preserved electoral archives going back to the time of the French Revolution. These sources and methods have enabled us to carry out an in-depth analysis of the social structure of participation and voting for the various political currents observed in the 36,000 French municipalities for all legislative and presidential elections between 1848 and 2022, as well as for the main referenda held from 1793 to 2005. These materials have also led us to draw several conclusions of more general significance for the study of political conflict in other European countries and elsewhere in the world. Nonetheless, it must be emphasized once again that all our interpretive hypotheses must be considered for what they are: reasonable and well-founded propositions that are nonetheless tenuous and provisional, commensurate with the complexity of the issues we are dealing with and the sociohistorical processes involved. Above all, we hope that the reader-citizen will find in our book material to deepen his or her own reflections, and that this work will stimulate new research on these issues.

Rethinking the Dimensions of Political Conflict and the Role of Social Class

Perhaps the most important finding of our research is that social class has never been as important for understanding voting behavior as it is today. In our view, this is an optimistic conclusion, in the sense that political and electoral conflicts are decipherable and can be resolved through socioeconomic means. In other words, we reject the notion that present-day political conflicts have become unreadable, dominated by democratic exhaustion, identity and community clashes, or the reign of post-truth. Political conflict does not pit the camp of reason against that of folly. Today, as yesterday, it opposes contradictory socioeconomic interests and aspirations. It can be overcome only through democratic alternations in power and further transformation of the socioeconomic system, a process that has already been underway for the past two centuries and will not end today—whatever

the conservatives of any era may think. Of course, difficulties do exist, and electoral exhaustion threatens, particularly in France, where voter turnout fell below 50 percent in the 2022 legislative elections (whereas it was around 70–80 percent from 1848 until the 1980s–1990s), topped off by an unprecedented increase in the disparity in turnout between rich and poor municipalities, which has reached a level unknown for more than two centuries. In the early 2020s the political scene in France is also characterized by unstable tripartition, with three blocs that are of comparable size and largely irreconcilable—which may come as a surprise for a country that invented Left-Right bipolarization over two centuries ago.

However, a closer look reveals that these divisions correspond to extremely distinct and predictable socioeconomic cleavages. The vote for the central liberal bloc increases massively with the municipality's level of wealth, to the point that it appears to be one of the most bourgeois votes in French electoral history. Conversely, the left-wing bloc brings together the popular vote from the metropoles and suburbs, and the right-wing bloc brings together the popular vote from towns and villages, with both electorates characterized by specific integrations within the productive and professional structure. The question of foreign origins, on the other hand, plays a secondary role—for instance, when we control for income or occupation. Finally, it is in fact social class that determines the vote, but only if it is envisaged in a multidimensional perspective. In particular, social class is always geo-social class; it is measured in relation to not only wealth but also a specific integration into the territorial and productive fabric.

The fact is, however, that this is not a new reality. At the beginning of the Third Republic, the cleavage between the urban and rural working classes, industrial workers and peasants, fueled in large measure the tripartition of the 1880s and 1890s, with Socialists and Radical-Socialists on the left, Moderates and Opportunists in the center, and conservatives and monarchists on the right. It was only after a long political and programmatic process that the interests and aspirations of urban and rural worlds could be reconciled and the social divide could prevail over the territorial divide, thus enabling Left-Right bipolarization to triumph for most of the twentieth century. That tripartition has been able to develop again at the start of the twenty-first century is partly due to the lack of programmatic renewal of the political forces confronting new social, international, and environmental challenges, resulting in a new division between urban and rural working classes on a scale not seen since the nineteenth century. This is also due to the growing complexity of the class structure, which is characteristic of an advanced welfare state grappling with unbridled international competition. In short, Left-Right bipolarization centered on the social divide is always a specific sociohistorical construction

based on particular strategies, and in this case, a construction that made it possible, over the course of the twentieth century, to organize electoral confrontation and to structure an unprecedented movement toward greater social equality and greater economic prosperity. On the contrary, tripartition can be seen as a form of rent that allows an opportunistic bloc to maintain power while halting the movement toward social equality at the point that best serves its self-interest.

Breaking Out of Tripartition to Restore the Possibility of Democratic Alternation

This is our second essential conclusion: if the programmatic content is renewed rapidly enough, then Left-Right bipolarization has the immense merit of allowing repeated democratic alternations and nurturing a productive, dynamic, political dialectic, whereas tripartition, on the contrary, favors the maintenance in power of a center with such electoral certainties that it seems to lack a democratic balancing force. Here too, the lessons of historical analysis lead to reasoned optimism: tripartition is structurally unstable and is not destined to last forever in its present form; the reappearance of bipolarization in a renewed form could happen sooner than is sometimes imagined. In the previous episode of tripartition, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Opportunist Republicans were quickly weakened by their narrow electoral base and the accusations of social self-interest leveled against them. Looking back on this period, Jean Jaurès noted in 1904 with his usual acuity the harmfulness of tripartition, the "great confusion," and the fragility of such a situation.[1] In fact, the current central liberal bloc is already considerably weakened by the "opportunists" like those of the nineteenth

1. In "Le socialisme et le radicalisme en 1885" (Socialism and Radicalism in 1885), the introduction to the first volume of his *Parliamentary Speeches,* published in 1904, Jaurès drew up an eloquent indictment of tripartition, underlining the great confusion caused by the dual opposition of both the Radicals and the Right to the Republican party on the colonial question, as well as on religious and fiscal policy. Jaurès notes that the great misfortune of the Radicals "was that their opposition, inspired by the principles of pure democracy, was swollen with all the hatreds and perfidies of reaction," adding that "the Right distorted the effects of Radical opposition," creating "a kind of chronic disorder and fundamental instability disastrous for the Republic. What's more, through its frequent encounters with the extreme democratic Left on ambiguous issues it created a demagogic state of mind; it accustomed the country to those deplorable confusions where the most opposed parties seem to be grouped under the same formulas, and which pave the way for the supreme confusion, for the supreme cheating, of demagogic and reactionary Caesarism." "Deplorable confusions"—we could find no better description today for the use of the all-purpose term "populism."

century. It will be hard for it to stay in power without broadening its social base in the direction of one or the other bloc, probably the Right. In the final analysis, the most likely and, to a large extent, the most desirable evolution in the French political system is the emergence of a new form of Left-Right bipolarization: on one side, a social-ecological bloc with a broader popular base, and on the other, a liberal-national bloc born of the coming together of the most liberal and bourgeois tendencies of the other two blocs.

Historical and comparative experience suggests, however, that such a trajectory is far from the only one possible. In particular, it depends on the social-ecological bloc's ability to unite, deliberate, and democratically settle differences regarding both programs and people. As far as the programmatic basis is concerned, it seems essential to place at the heart of the analysis the very strong feeling of abandonment that has developed since the 1980s and 1990s in terms of access to public services and transportation, hospitals, and education infrastructures, and also the perception of harmful international and European commercial competition orchestrated primarily for the benefit of urban dwellers. The central point is that the issues at stake are above all socioeconomic, and they demand an ambitious and appropriate response. If an appropriate response is not forthcoming, then the continuation of a more or less chaotic tripartition is not impossible, nor is the perilous transition to a Polish-style bipolarization that opposes a social-nationalist bloc to a liberal-progressive bloc, with the attendant risk of heightened tensions and a failure to meet the social and climatic challenges of the future.

Beyond National Elections, beyond the French Case

Among the many limitations of this book, the main one is undoubtedly that we have concentrated on elections held in a single country, France, and on legislative, presidential, and referendum elections held since the French Revolution. This work deserves to be extended in two main directions: beyond national elections, and beyond the French case.

While there is a certain logic in focusing on national elections, it must be stressed that this is not the only choice, and it implies a significant narrowing of perspective and reflection. As Edelstein's work in particular has shown, it was first of all in municipal and departmental elections that electoral democracy reached its highest levels of turnout and took its initial steps in the 1790s, at a time when legislative elections were organized on a two-tier basis that largely excluded the working classes, contributing to a long-lasting distrust of the national represen-

tative system. Municipal and departmental elections also played a central role in engendering skepticism, particularly during periods when national legislative elections were authoritarian or conducted by censitary suffrage. A systematic study of municipal and departmental elections from the time of the Revolution to the present day would be of immense interest and would open up new perspectives complementing those developed here, particularly concerning the role of political nuances and independent candidates in these elections. An analysis of elections conducted at the regional and European level since the 1970s and 1980s would also be of great interest in relation to similar elections held in other countries.[2] Lastly, the legislative elections organized under the censitary monarchies of 1815 to 1848 and the Second Empire from 1852 to 1870—which we have chosen to leave aside in this work—would also merit a separate, in-depth study.

For the purposes of this research project, we have also chosen to focus on the polls in Metropolitan France, excluding elections held within the framework of the colonial empire and overseas territories. However, since the nineteenth century, many elections have been held outside Metropolitan France under the authority of the French state, first in Réunion, Guadeloupe, and Martinique from 1848 onward, then in the "four municipalities" of Senegal at the end of the nineteenth century, in a growing number of colonial territories in the early twentieth century and between the world wars, and finally in almost the entire French Union from 1946 to 1962. In this last phase, elections were held in accord with complex and little-studied rules, with separate electorates for settlers and colonized peoples, highly unequal ratios of parliamentary representation, and specific processes of political and electoral mobilization that deserve in-depth study.[3] Such an analysis would have gone far beyond the scope of this book and would justify research in its own right, in connection with the political and electoral trajectories observed after independence and in other imperial and colonial contexts.

We also hope that our work will help to stimulate similar historical research in other countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, India, and Brazil. Generally speaking, election results at the municipal level seem

2. We have conducted general analyses of voting patterns for the main political parties and electoral blocs in recent regional and European elections and found that in a first approximation, socioeconomic cleavages took forms similar to those observed during the legislative and presidential elections. See unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr.

3. See F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa 1945–1960* (Princeton University Press, 2014); and D. Cogneau, *Un empire bon marché. Histoire et économie politique de la colonisation française, 19e–21e siècles* (Seuil, 2023).

to have been well preserved and archived in most countries that have held elections, and these data could be digitized and exploited in conjunction with the various sociodemographic data available at local level, notably from censuses and administrative, fiscal, or educational sources. While it seems difficult to go as far back in time as in France, where universal (male) suffrage was applied particularly early, and where territorial and administrative unity has enabled us to preserve exceptionally complete documents from the end of the eighteenth century onward, we can nevertheless hope to collect sources for most countries dating back at least to the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth. This would make it possible to develop longer perspectives than those permitted by postelection surveys, which did not exist in any country before the 1940s–1950s (and often not until the 1970s or 1980s in a satisfactory form), and which in any case are always based on sample sizes too small to allow sufficiently detailed analyses of social and territorial cleavages.[4]

An explicitly comparative perspective would provide a much better understanding of the social and territorial structures of electorates revealed in the French case. While the particular form currently taken by France's electoral tripartition owes much to the specifics of France's political history and electoral system, the fact remains that comparable forms of political-ideological tripartition can be found in many countries, with a central liberal bloc bringing together above-average bourgeois voters and a working-class electorate divided between the Left and the Right, due in particular to the different ways they are integrated into the country's territorial structure (the territories neglected by the metropoles and suburbs versus the neglected towns and villages of the "flyover country"—interior regions that the elite only ever fly over).[5] In most countries, the abandonment of an ambitious redistributive agenda from 1980–1990 onward seems to have contributed to social and territorial inequalities, and to a weakening of the previous Left-Right bipolarization. At this stage, our hypothesis derived from the French case is that these cleavages can be overcome only by continuing the historical process of redistribution and the construction of the welfare state. But it goes without saying that only a comparative perspective based on the accumulation of national monographs could go further.

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4. See A. Gethin, C. Martinez-Toledano, and T. Piketty, eds., *Clivages politiques et inégalités sociales. Une étude de 50 démocraties, 1948–2020* (Seuil / EHESS / Gallimard, 2021).
5. See K. J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (University of Chicago Press, 2016); and A. R. Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Reconciling Economic and Social History with Political and Cultural History

Let us reiterate that the questions raised in this book are of great sociohistorical complexity, and the skills and methods we have mobilized are far too partial and limited to provide fully satisfactory answers. The study of political and electoral behavior is a difficult and fascinating subject, for at its heart it brings into play both individual subjectivities and worldviews and the socioeconomic and material underpinnings of society as a whole. The skills and methods we have brought to this project are those of two social scientists with backgrounds in political economy and economic and social history. We have done our best to draw on work from a wide range of disciplines—in particular, electoral sociology, political science, political and parliamentary history, and the history of ideas—but the result is inevitably imperfect. We have tried to build on the tradition opened up in the twentieth century by the work of Siegfried, Bois, and Tilly, and to extend it with the questions, methods, and technical means available at the start of the twenty-first century. More than ever, we believe it is necessary and even indispensable to combine quantitative sources linked to electoral behavior and socioeconomic and territorial inequalities with a historical, qualitative, and institutional analysis of the formation of political representations and the various belief systems and justifications for voting. Each social group, such as rural voters under the Revolution or in the 2020s, develops a representation of the conflicts and a view of the conflicting interests at stake, which are generally far more sophisticated than those attributed to them by other groups (especially their detractors in the urban world).

In our analyses, we have tried to do justice to the complexity and sophistication of these different points of view on the world that are expressed during elections, but no doubt we have failed to do so with as much success as we would have liked. We made no attempt to hide the political implications that we, as citizens, draw from it, but we have always sought to indicate the historical and factual elements on which they are based, and to conceal none of the considerable uncertainties raised by all assertions and commitments. To take this approach and these analyses any further, it is obvious that many other skills, methods, and perspectives would have to be mobilized. It is with this in mind that we have put all our materials and sources online at the website unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr. We hope that these data will be useful to researchers from all disciplines and thus contribute to the necessary decompartmentalization of the social sciences. The use we have made of these materials here, along with the additional maps and charts

presented on the website, represents only a tiny fraction of the possible uses of these sources, which could be mobilized for much more detailed analyses of this or that particular election or regional context, in conjunction with other materials bearing on the candidates, voters, political parties, the press, and activists linked to a particular political current. It is our fervent hope that specialists on the various political movements and periods will use these resources to refine and enrich the analyses developed here.

In addition to its use by other researchers, we hope that the site unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr will arouse the interest of many citizens concerned with electoral issues and territorial inequalities, who will be able to refine their own hypotheses and interpretations, compare them with ours, and form their own opinions and future political and electoral behavior—in relation to their own socioeconomic trajectory and their personal and family history, to be sure, but also and above all in relation to their intellectual and reflective trajectories and to the exchanges and deliberations in which they have taken part. For if electoral democracy is based on a material and socioeconomic foundation that structures the various social interests and aspirations involved, it is also inseparably based on the irreducible specificity of individual subjectivity and the irreplaceable, structuring role of collective deliberation. If this research could contribute to this process and enable everyone to clarify their own positions as much as it has for us, we would be delighted.