

## **The collapse of the presidential leadership in France.**

France has had seven presidents since the introduction of the 5th Republic in 1958. It was born in a unique environment that has marked the evolution of the political system in the long term: the events in Algeria and the return to power of General de Gaulle. The events in Algeria had an important impact. It is what led to the fall of the 4th Republic, due to the inability of successive governments to find a solution to the problem. Global decolonization met much resistance in the French society, and particularly in the political class and the military. The French government finally granted independence to the countries of Indochina and to Tunisia and Morocco. In Algeria, the struggle for independence, started in November 1954, has grown and become a real war. Any move towards independence encountered the hostility of the French population living in the colony, the "pieds-noirs". Big demonstrations in Algiers led the President of the 4th Republic, René Coty, in precipitating the return to power of General de Gaulle, who appeared as the only one capable of resolving the crisis. The return to power of General de Gaulle is the second event that changed the French political life and led to the fall of the 4th Republic, the installation of a new republic and the drafting of a new constitution, that of 4 October 1958. General de Gaulle returned to power with a range of ideas and proposals for reform that were progressively implemented and that have transformed the rules of the political game on the roles of government, parliament and political party system. The fundamental transformation brought by General de Gaulle was about the role of the executive. It has had a significant impact on the nature of presidential leadership.

The first traces of the ideas of General de Gaulle can be found in a speech in Bayeux June 16, 1946, after his departure from power. He defends the idea of separation of powers which implies that the government does not proceed from parliament, but from the head of state placed above parties. For him, it is unimaginable that ministers are 'agents of a party'. It also called for the head of state to be an arbitrator, placed above "political contingencies". Other traces of the ideas of General de Gaulle appear during the reform of the presidential election with the introduction of universal suffrage in 1962 and during the press conference on 31 January 1964 in which he stated that the indivisible authority of the state is vested in the president by popular vote and that there is none else, nor ministerial or civil or military or judiciary, which is conferred and maintained by the president. This reading of political institutions has largely remained thereafter, with more or less force and success, and it strongly influences the patterns and practices of government since the presidency of General de Gaulle. In France, the presidential leadership therefore results from these methods and practices.

But all presidents have not had the same advantages to govern. Various factors may explain these differences. We will use the elements of political capital offered by Mark Bennister, Paul t'Hart and Ben Worthy ("Political capital and the dynamics of leadership") to try to understand the variations in the presidential leadership in France. The following elements of political capital will be studied to judge successive strengths and weaknesses of different presidents: their personal style; their ideas, their values and their political commitments; their support; the constraints and institutional limitations; and the context in which they exercise their power.

The analysis of the political conditions of the method of government aims to locate the consequences of a certain level of political capital on the type and nature of the leadership of each of the seven French presidents. There are few studies on the leadership of French presidents (John Gaffney, *Political leadership in France: From Charles de Gaulle, to Nicolas Sarkozy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; David S. Bell and John Gaffney

(eds.) *The Presidents of the French Fifth Republic*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012 ; Jean-Louis Thiebault, « France. The personalisation of leadership and French political parties », in Jean Blondel and Jean-Louis Thiebault, eds, *Political leadership, parties and citizens : The personalisation of leadership*, London : Routledge, november 2009, chap 9; Cristina Bucur and Robert Elgie, “The development of the French executive: Endogenous Americanization”, *French Politics*, vol 10, no 4, 2012, 389-402; John Gaffney, “Leadership and style in the French Fifth Republic: Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency in historical and cultural perspective”, *French Politics*, vol 10, no 4, 2012, 345-363; Jamie D. Stacey, “The statecraft approach: A case study of Nicolas Sarkozy”, *French Politics*, vol 11, no 3, 2013, 284-306). It seems that the most recent presidents are victims of the weakness of their leadership. It is this last point that will hold our attention in the conclusion.

### **1. Personal styles of Presidents.**

General de Gaulle first appeared as the " guide " or "savior" , needed to solve a major crisis : the Algerian crisis . Alone seemed to have the authority to offer a solution. Yet the new constitution of 1958 did not provide for presidential government , except in emergency situations , where the president could assume full powers with article 16 of the constitution. The only real constitutional basis for granting a normal direction to the role of president is article 5 of the constitution ( which gives the president a role of arbitrator to ensure "the proper functioning of the organs of government and the continuity of the state" and protect "national independence" and " territorial integrity " and " respect for the treaties "). Between 1958 and 1962 , in order to effectively run the government , de Gaulle adopted some extra- constitutional instruments. The first was the prohibition of government meeting outside the council of ministers formally on wednesday morning , chaired by himself. He also put in place political institutions ( the general secretariat of the presidency, the secretariat for Community affairs , and the presidential cabinet) at the Elysée Palace . Many important decisions were not taken by the council of ministers , but by smaller groups gathered in interministerial councils under the leadership of president. For some areas , such as foreign affairs, defense and Algeria , general de Gaulle had regular meetings with the minister of foreign affairs. Finally, he became the principal public spokesman of the government. He met presidential press conference which became the main forum where major policy changes were announced.

However in 1962, after the Algeria became independent, general de Gaulle proposed to strengthen this presidential style and to introduce the election of the president by universal suffrage (instead of election by an electoral college then in effect) (Odile Rudelle, « Le général de Gaulle et l'élection directe du président de la république », in Olivier Duhamel et Jean-Luc Parodi, dir, *La constitution de la Cinquième République*. Paris : Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, coll Références, 1985, 101-125). In addition, to achieve his goal , he decided to use article 11 of the constitution ( which provided a referendum for bills on "the organization of government" ) instead of article 89 (which provided two methods for constitutional revisions , both requiring the approval of parliament). The opposition, which could not act directly against the president , passed a motion of censure against the Georges Pompidou government. General de Gaulle immediately decided to dissolve the national assembly. The legislative elections were to take place after the referendum. Their results strengthened the presidential system : the constitutional revision was adopted by referendum on 28 october 1962 and the coalition that supported general de Gaulle won the majority of seats in the legislative elections on 18 and 25 november 1962 . On 5 and 19 December 1965, the first presidential election by universal suffrage was

organized and general de Gaulle was reelected . Presidential style of General de Gaulle was based on the following elements : a chief elected by a large electorate, a real head of the executive, with a power of initiative and arbitration , including to appoint the prime minister and the ministers and to dissolve parliament . From 1962, he has increased the presidential aspect of the system by rooting legitimacy leader in universal suffrage. At a press conference, on 31 January 1964 , he described the executive " is no longer the thing of the supporters , but of whom the head of state elected by the nation is the source and owner ." He also described the Constitution as "a spirit , institutions , a practice " but this power was less absolute than previously thought (Jean Lacouture, De Gaulle. Paris : Seuil, 1965 ; Stanley H. Hoffmann et Inge Hoffmann, De Gaulle, artiste de la politique. Paris : Seuil, 1973 ; Pierre Viansson-Ponté, Histoire de la république gaullienne. Paris : Fayard, 1980).

The first president of the 5th Republic, general de Gaulle, was also regarded as the benchmark for political communication (Jean-Marie Cotteret, « Les stratégies de communication des présidents de la république », Pouvoirs, no 41, mai 1987, 115-130). He multiplied television appearances to publicize his thoughts on domestic or international political situation and some of them have remained famous. He responded to questions from journalists at press conferences which were major political events. Under the Fifth Republic, the press conferences were an opportunity for presidents to account for their actions in responding to questions from journalists. French presidents have engaged in the performance on more or less regular basis. General de Gaulle has made seventeen press conferences during his ten years at the Elysée (between 1959 and 1969).

Upon his arrival to power in 1958, general de Gaulle understood any interest he might withdraw from the television. It has fast emerged as a new and more effective communication tool than radio. General de Gaulle has multiplied major press conferences to stage the exercise of his power. These press conferences were eagerly awaited at the time and the first president of the 5th Republic took the opportunity to grow his popularity. He made these press conferences a sort of personal high mass.

After the resignation of general de Gaulle in 1969 , Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing continued consolidation of presidential power . The successor of general de Gaulle , Georges Pompidou , was prime minister for six years and he knew he had seen records closely. But when he became president , relations with the prime minister that he had chosen , Jacques Chaban -Delmas , became quickly tense, following the declaration on 16 September 1969 on "new society" . The president realized that the prime minister had made a statement, without trying to have the agreement of the Elysée on fundamental issues addressed . It was a source of misunderstandings, disagreements and conflicts. The president sought to restore its pre-eminence . Foreign policy gave him the opportunity. He spent a lot of time and concerns . The style of Georges Pompidou could not be that of general de Gaulle. But he remained in line with the general. The big deal was the European stimulus for the enlargement of the EEC . Negotiations with Britain were facilitated by the victory of conservatives at the British general elections of 18 June 1970 and the good relations between Georges Pompidou and the new British Prime Minister Edward Heath. The " French veto " was finally lifted and the British, Danish, Irish and Norwegian governments signed the accession of their countries to the Common Market Treaty on 22 January 1972 . Georges Pompidou has also taken over the course of the press conferences at the Elysee. And the heir of general de Gaulle knew just as well use the theatrical aspect of these events.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing presented a style characterized by a strange mixture of technocracy and monarchy. He had problems with his coalition , but he developed a more monarchical style. Two terms have symbolized the style of the newly elected president , " novelty" and "change." From the outset, Valéry Giscard d'

Estaing has imposed a less tense style than its predecessors, more open to youth and daily concerns of French people. But he did not give up what was the fundamental contribution of the 5th Republic : the rule of president in institutions. Even more than General de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou , who dropped some sectors to ministers , Valéry Giscard d' Estaing intended to govern itself. He chose the Prime Minister and composed the government according his wishes and some « technicians » are placed in key positions . He also publicly instructed the prime minister with directives, multiplied restricted councils held at the Elysee palace, where were called only some ministers and senior officials. Political vision that determined the action of Valéry Giscard d' Estaing is exposed in the book he published in 1976, *Démocratie Française*. For him, the society of the 1970s was structured around a large "core group" , a middle class aspired to be governed in the center. Implying in his eyes was a peaceful political life where discussions should remain polite and dispassionate , serving a modern democracy reviving the principles of political liberalism. Valéry Giscard d' Estaing has multiplied initiatives to show that he was listening to the people ( press meetings without solemnity , multiplication of television interviews or unexpected operations such as a visit for detainees to a prison in Lyon, a breakfast made with garbage collectors or dinners with the president and his wife among ordinary citizens ) . Valéry Giscard d' Estaing has implemented a real experience of social liberalism : its attempt to govern the center was an exception in the political history of the 5th Republic. But this policy has faced political opposition : the fraction of the Gaullist majority. It especially had the misfortune to coincide with a reversal of economic conditions that was not a temporary crisis as in 1973-1974 , but a lasting historical phenomenon. It is the explanation of the limited results of the experiment and the ephemeral scope of its practices (Serge Berstein, « La révolution manquée de Giscard d'Estaing », *L'Histoire*, no 276, 1<sup>er</sup> mai 2003 ; Jean-Jacques Becker, « Valéry Giscard d'Estaing : l'échec d'un modéré », *Les Collections de L'Histoire*, no 14, 3 janvier 2002).

Skillful president before the cameras, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing wanted to renew the exercise of press conferences of his predecessors. During his term, he organized some "press briefings" in a very different part of the press conferences of General de Gaulle. Where General de Gaulle spoke of international politics by posing as the voice of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing was concerned with everyday life. But the exercise remained constrained, usually preceded by a long foreword and no real recovery. At the same time, press conferences given by American presidents were much less formal.

As general de Gaulle, François Mitterrand often seems distant, aware of his superior status as president and of its leading role in international relations. He made many speeches on the main principles. François Mitterrand was a complex and elusive character. "This man is a mystery, inhabited by thousand characters, from skeptical tactician to socialist seized by the fervor. Much has been said that François Mitterrand was elusive and it is not simple, nor to read, nor to clear. At times authentic character and artist in representation " (Franz-Olivier Giesbert, *François Mitterrand ou la tentation de l'histoire*. Paris : Seuil, 1977). When François Mitterrand was elected in 1981, we could expect a break with the previous model of presidential domination. The new president was the author of one of the most virulent attacks against the Gaullist presidentialism , The permanent coup (1964). He also often criticized the excessive presidentialization. But whatever may have been the earlier thoughts of the new president about the need to share the functions of leadership at the top , François Mitterrand followed the presidential model established by his predecessors . He used his own staff at the Elysée to follow political action in all areas and to stay well informed. He introduced some changes in the process of decision making of the government. The council of ministers on wednesday morning remained a formal meeting rather

than a real forum of discussion and collective decision. The president made very quickly understand that he did not intend to encourage discussion and that ministers should limit their remarks to matters within their departments. As for him, he was speaking when he wished it . The new president showed less enthusiasm than its predecessor for formal meetings of interministerial councils . The number of meetings of these bodies decreased significantly after 1981. François Mitterrand had close contacts with some ministers . But he left a trusted minister to deal with the application of a measure to which he agreed , without intervention or control .

François Mitterrand was not identified naturally with television as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. He had even less to occur there frequently than abuses of its predecessor were likely one of the elements of the failure thereof . He has spent with calculated discretion. However, he has not completely abandoned the practice of major press conferences. He chose for his first lecture, on september 24, 1981, an absolutely identical context to the room in which General de Gaulle spoke. Thereafter, François Mitterrand rarely used this form of communication, less than ten times during his fourteen year tenure . Follower of a strategy of scarcity in communication , François Mitterrand has always spaced interviews with the media . In two seven-year mandates , he rarely gave large press conferences, but at key moments of his presidency , eg the eve of the outbreak of the war in Iraq.

Jacques Chirac had a deep taste for political sway . Its constant changes have passed him for an inconstant . This way to embrace opposites became his presidential style . It was his way to embody the balance. There was in him a mixture of cynicism that made him the most foolish promises and sincerity that allows him to believe , at the time, he will be able to meet them. All his political career led him to reconcile opposites and to change his mind . He was from a family of radical and secular tradition. One who helped to set up in the department of Corrèze was one of the outstanding personalities of radicalism , the former council president of the 4th Republic, Henri Queuille . Jacques Chirac changed according to debates of the moment, but he always had a utilitarian view of the policy that consisted in bringing his party and himself to a single goal: to win . The advantage of the intellectual flexibility that Chirac was still adapting to what the French wanted . Many observers have questioned the thinness of its balance sheet and convictions of political leader. But for Jacques Chirac, the power was first a long fight. He managed to dominate for four decades the French political life despite the hates of his camp, the rivalry of its allies, and the onslaught of judges (Raphaëlle Bacqué, Chirac ou le démon du pouvoir. Paris : Albin Michel, 2002).

Jacques Chirac made also a moderate use of the press conference. He avoided to organize this type of confrontation with the press. In twelve years of mandate, Jacques Chirac gave only four press conferences, especially at the beginning of his term in une 1995, in an attempt to justify the merits of the resumption of nuclear testing. There resorted to another on april 1998 on the issue of the euro, which was to become a reality on 1 January 1999. He did it again on april 2004, still on the European issue on the eve of the enlargement of the European Union to ten new countries.

Nicolas Sarkozy took care of everything, for better or for worse. He distinguished himself for never wanted to do anything like the others . It was a matter of style, but also a matter of generation as the first president born after World War II . The willingness of the candidate of the "change " and the " uninhibited right" to break all codes manifested upon his arrival to power in may 2007. His behavior in the first months of his five-year mandate contributed, by their symbolic end, to a rapid and dramatic fall in popularity of Nicolas Sarkozy (over 60 % in september 2007 , less than 35 % in february 2008), a deficit of image he has never managed to

restore to the eyes of a large majority of French people . The style of Nicolas Sarkozy has never ceased to be a transgression. It was a mixture of temperament , will, intrepidity , taste provocation. And it hurt him terribly . He appeared as a hyperactive president , " hyper- president " or " omni- president " as many have portrayed . Nicolas Sarkozy quickly relegated his prime minister, François Fillon, at the rank of "collaborator" , putting his own power working in the service of a country which had, he said, need to be awakened after twelve years of « chiraquisme » , and five years of « cohabitation ». "They say omnipresident. I prefer to be told that, rather than lazy king. We knew it " he said in January 2009 , during a rare press conference held at the Elysee Palace in its governance. The government style of Nicolas Sarkozy was marked by media saturation between ads and effectiveness measures (Erik Neveu, « Les politiques de communication du président Sarkozy », in Jacques de Maillard et Yves Surel, dir, Les politiques publiques sous Sarkozy. Paris : Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2012, chap 1). Overexposed, he focused on his person all the criticism , an attitude hailed as a sign of courage and portrayed by his supporters , on the contrary , as proof of his egocentrism. He found himself in the position of having a complicated economic record to defend, with the impact of the global financial crisis that erupted in September 2008. Nicolas Sarkozy thought he had found a solution by comparing the situation in France with those of other European countries worse off , always citing statistics that contrived him the best. In the matter of foreign policy, the style of Nicolas Sarkozy was further marked by pragmatism and opportunism (Sophie Meunier, « La politique étrangère de Nicolas Sarkozy. Rupture de fond ou de style ? », in Jacques de Maillard et Yves Surel, dir, Les politiques publiques sous Sarkozy. Paris : Presses de Sciences Po, 2012, chap5).

Nicolas Sarkozy promised to dust the ritual of the press conference, neglected by past presidents. On January 2008, the president held its first press conference. Unlike its predecessors , the new president was very fond of these big press conferences. Supporters or detractors, all observers recognized expertise in this perilous exercise . Very comfortable , Nicolas Sarkozy perfectly mastered the codes of modern political communication. It usually answered questions directly, even embarrassing , and did not hesitate to consistently play the closeness he had with the journalists.

François Hollande does not delegate anything, but also does not decide anything. This is the inverse of Nicolas Sarkozy , who had held him , for better or for worse . At the beginning of its mandate, François Hollande wanted to find a more traditional presidential operation. He took the opposite of Nicolas Sarkozy . He left the prime minister , Jean- Marc Ayrault, govern and he was in withdrawal . He placed the presidential action in the long term. Unlike Nicolas Sarkozy , he felt that the presidential action might not be instantaneous. This is a return to a temperate governance. The posture of a « normal president" was effective in gaining power , but it does not not enough to govern effectively. Critics are strong. Olivier Duhamel stresses that François Hollande suffers from the inadequacy of its political culture , acquired at the running of the PS , with the exercise of authority imposed by presidential function. Pierre Avril says that " hyperpresidence Sarkozy was the five-year mandate on a strong fashion . With Holland, it was the five-year mandate on a muddy mode " (Jean-Baptiste de Montavallon, « Les institutions, abri et piège pour Hollande », Le Monde, 15 novembre 2013). Two characteristics naturally attached to the office of the president were met : the ability to make decisions , then the propensity to exercise authority. Gradually, however, he refocused power at the Elysee. But over the wishes of 31 December 2013, then the press conference on 14 January 2014 , he announced that he personally now follow a number of records. The symbolism of the presidency was also weakened after several cases. The "normal" presidency walked away.

Each of the few press conferences of previous heads of state remained as a testament to their personal style. François Hollande, who promised to govern differently, yet has chosen to take this ultra-classic format. The current president held its third press conference on 14 January 2014.

The analysis of the different styles of government of French presidents shows a very wide range of behavior in the direction of the country. First there were the presidents who have shown a strong tendency to take care of everything ( Valéry Giscard d' Estaing and Nicolas Sarkozy ) . Their style of government was based on an open communication policy . There were also the presidents who have shown a marked tendency to stagnation, for reasons of « cohabitation » or reasons of blockage within the majority ( Jacques Chirac and François Hollande ) . Finally there were the presidents who have shown a strong tendency to deal with foreign affairs , defense and institutions, but left to premiers and ministers the care of others affairs, except in exceptional circumstances ( general de Gaulle , Georges Pompidou and François Mitterrand ) . The main conclusion that emerges from the comparison of styles of French presidents is the strong tendency to take care of everything and open communication policy does not necessarily lead to strong leadership. However, presidents are only concerned with their reserved area and are only involved in the domestic affairs in exceptional circumstances have demonstrated strong leadership .

## **2 . Beliefs, values and political commitments of Presidents.**

French presidents hold certain beliefs, values and political commitments. They adopted a pragmatic attitude to the many problems posed by the evolution of French society, even if some of them did not hesitate sometimes to assert their ideological positions at the beginning of their mandate.

Again, general de Gaulle has provided the best example of this type of attitude. He was recalled to power to keep Algeria in French territory. Himself has stated its desire to keep French Algeria. But he went through various stages before accepting the independence of this country. He first proposed the "peace of the braves" , addressed to the Algerian rebels ( 23 October 1958 ), then the referendum on self -determination on 8 January 1961 , and finally the referendum on the independence of Algeria on 8 April 1962. The change of opinion on the Algerian issue was fought by the " pieds-noirs " of European origin during the « days of the barricades » (24 January-1st February 1960) , followed by a coup attempt led by some general officers , with the support of a part of the army ( 21 April 1961 ) . But this change of attitude on the part of General de Gaulle received the support of a large part of the metropolitan population on the occasion of the referendums on the Algerian question on 8 January 1961 and on 8 April 1962 . Both referendums have provided strong popular support for the Algerian policy of general de Gaulle and brought the " presidential gaullism " at near unanimity (75, 26% in 1961 and 90.71 % in 1962) .

But General de Gaulle was not only pragmatic . He has also consistently defended some designs that formed the basis of what has been called the " gaullisme ". Among these designs, appears first the strengthening the state as a unifying factor in French society and to fight against the divisive factors (political parties, trade unions, pressure groups ... ) . He especially sought to limit the role of political parties . When he created , on 14 April 1947 , his own political party , it was not entitled party, but rally ( Rassemblement du Peuple Français ). Another design strongly defended by General de Gaulle was the strengthening of the independence of France , in order to enable it to maintain its position in the hierarchy of nations. Foreign policy led by general de Gaulle was characterized by a few major events: the decision to build a nuclear weapon in order to equip the French army of

a deterrent , the decision to leave the military organization of the Atlantic Alliance , the refusal of British membership for the Common Market, because of a too close alliance between the United Kingdom and the United States , the Luxembourg compromise on unanimity in Europe , the Phnom Penh speech on the Vietnam War and the diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1964. A final design of General de Gaulle was the need to establish appeased relationship between employers and workers through the participation of workers to capital and business management. General de Gaulle did adopt some measures in this direction , despite the hostility of labor unions .

Georges Pompidou was particularly pragmatic in the management of public affairs. He was chief of staff for general de Gaulle when he was at the Hotel Matignon as president of council at the end of 1958 , then prime minister, chosen to succeed Michel Debré, from 1962 to 1968. So he had learned a lot from de Gaulle and was therefore able to adapt to all the changes of situation. But he had his own ideas : he was conservative and therefore not favorable to ideas of the "new society" advocated by prime minister Jacques Chaban -Delmas on 16 september 1969 , and the two advisors thereof , Simon Nora and Jacques Delors. These new ideas were the resumption of the research presented by sociologist Michel Crozier in his book , *La société bloquée*. However, Georges Pompidou has developed a strong industrial policy , which corresponded to the period of strong growth in the French economy. The main thrust of the president was the industrialization of France , condition of its power . The orientation of the sixth economic plan toward the " industrial imperative " bore the mark of Georges Pompidou. He put a policy of creation or consolidation of French industrial international groups by seeking to stimulate innovation and export . He amplified industrial policy, started under the presidency of General de Gaulle, when he was already the main contractor. Politically, he became aware of the weakening of « electoral gaullism » and he did not hesitate to break with the practice of presidential or technocratic governments to strengthen electoral majority with extra centrists and independent and republicans who joined his candidacy in the presidential election of 1969. This presidential majority was the first example , even embryonic , of a coalition government since the beginning of the 5th Republic.

Valéry Giscard d' Estaing was more pragmatic. It corresponded to the model of a moderate and centrist politician who is the basis of the French political tradition. He wanted the spokesman of the French middle class (" two in three French "). He also considered that France had become a "middle power" , which went against the thinking of General de Gaulle and the gaullists , in favor of maintaining France as a "great power " with nuclear weapons and a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations. He continued to hold in hand foreign policy. But he was constantly suspected of wanting to influence policy in a more "Atlantic" and "European" sense than its predecessors . He played a major role in leading European meetings in accordance with German chancellor Helmut Schmidt. He supported the idea of creating a European Council meeting periodically with heads of state or government. But the question of the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage ( 1976) raised a number of reservations from the gaullists. However, he started the liberalization of French society, including a favorable support to abortion policy (1975) and giving the citizen majority to 18-year young people (1974). The project on abortion (1975 ) caused , in parliament and in the country, very violent battles and was adopted by a disparate majority that accounted a small fraction of the political right-wing majority . He also burst ORTF in various institutions, including a company radio and three TV channels ( 1974). But he had no means of his policy. The party he created and directed, the independent republicans , was a center-right party , which was a minority within the presidential and parliamentary majority. Moreover, his arrival to power corresponded to the

onset of the crisis that hit the world economy after the Yom Kippur war and the rising price of oil. It would not be aware of the scale of the crisis, based on the fear of electoral repercussions.

François Mitterrand was the first socialist president of the 5th Republic. He was the first secretary of the Socialist party at the time of his victory in the presidential election of 1981. He was a socialist and wanted to apply the common program of government, signed with the communists. His first step was very ideological . Indeed, he quickly asked parliament to vote numerous nationalizations and to allow the government to follow a policy of state intervention in the economy. In his first television interview , on december 1981 , François Mitterrand explained that "French socialism" is not Marxism , but also it is not social democracy . Nationalizations were an essential instrument of this socialism. He also made constant references to social justice. He moved quickly to increase social benefits , to modulate the income tax and to create a tax on large fortunes. He also took some great decentralization laws , the suppression of the death penalty and the control of private and Catholic teaching. But the difficulties in voting and implementing some of these reforms have forced François Mitterrand to adopt a more pragmatic posture. The « cohabitation » period (1986-1988), after the socialist defeat of 1986 and the formation of a right-wing government led by Jacques Chirac , also explained a significant adaptation to the new reality . Some observers have sometimes claimed that Mitterrand was not really a socialist , but rather a progressive republican . We must not forget that he has been quickly adapted to the presidential office with all its powers , though he had strongly criticized the functioning of the institutions of the 5th Republic in a book entitled *The coup d'état permanent*. He was also one of the first in 1965 to join the presidentialist reading of institutions , in appearing against general de Gaulle , who was the incumbent, and in facilitating the rally of the left-wing parties to this mechanism of designation that was the election of the president by direct universal suffrage. The second term was the highlight of the adaptation of the French economy to European integration and globalization . The single market and the financial market liberalization were adopted during the presidency of François Mitterrand, who had converted to open borders and to the free movement of goods, services and people. François Mitterrand, who in the 1950s was a supporter of the European cause, used his presidential powers to encourage the completion of the European single market. With the disappearance of the old mobilizing myths from the left , he tried the economic modernization as a national goal to make the country more competitive. Under the leadership of its former minister of finance , Jacques Delors, appointed president of the European Commission, the 1992 year has become the symbolic goal of economic efforts of Europe to build a unified market. François Mitterrand played an active role in the unification process of Europe . So he placed his second term under the emblem of a reformist center-left , forward-looking (Jack Hayward, « Le changement idéologique : l'épuisement de l'élan révolutionnaire », in Peter A. Hall, Jack Hayward et Howard Machin, *L'évolution de la vie politique française*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1990, chap 1). In foreign policy, Mitterrand remained rather firm on its traditional positions. He argued the Atlantic alliance and criticized the Soviet positions in the euro-missile crisis, especially during a speech to the Bundestag in early 1983. He reaffirmed the primacy of strategic nuclear deterrence, with the decision to order the construction of a new nuclear submarine, the affirmation of his personal faith in the credibility of deterrence. It has always been favorable to the division of Germany, before bowing to the facts.

Jacques Chirac was certainly one of the most pragmatic of the 5th Republic presidents. This pragmatism is the result of a long practice as prime minister or minister. He was also mayor of Paris from 1977 to 1995, but more importantly he was the President of the General Council of the Corrze département, a rural area in the south

west of France , which has long been a land of the French radicalism and the electoral stronghold of one of the great radical notables of the 4th Republic, and former president of council, Henri Queuille . Some observers have compared Jacques Chirac to the latter, reflecting the pragmatism of the president. Elected in 1995 on a program to reduce the social divide of the French society, Jacques Chirac was forced to implement a program of economic and social reforms. The adopted measures led to a strike in December 1995, which involved a large number of employees, and that lasted for a month. Jacques Chirac was forced to retreat . He constantly referred to the Gaullist principles of independence for France in the field of international relations. With the support of his minister of foreign affairs and former secretary general of the presidency , Dominique de Villepin , he refused to associate with the United States in a military alliance formed to overthrow President Saddam Hussein and change Iraqi regime. Jacques Chirac has always been the architect of a policy favorable to the Arab countries and has consistently established a personal relationship with some Arab heads of state , including those who were most hostile to the United States.

Nicolas Sarkozy was certainly the most pragmatic of all the French presidents since 1958. It has often been presented as a supporter of liberalism, especially in economic matters. The practice of power by Nicolas Sarkozy has, in fact, been more marked by pragmatism. He did not hesitate to recommend measures, even progressive, to enhance his popularity with the public. The explanation for this discrepancy between theory and practice, between the program and the practice stems in large part to the impact of the economic and financial crisis of 2008, which required all heads of state and government to recourse to the intervention of the state to find solutions to the crisis.

The current president François Hollande was elected on a platform that included 60 actions during the five-year mandate. It was a left-wing program, supported by the Socialist Party. During the presidential campaign , François Hollande has developed a favorable discourse to traditional theories of the French left-wing parties. One of the formulas concerned his opposition to the world of finance. His program also included certain measures in favor of the liberalization of French society , the most emblematic was the recognition of "gay marriage ." The first months of his presidency were marked by the implementation of some of these measures , despite the reluctance of some part of the population , which was expressed at several events . But the economic difficulties of France ( high unemployment, government expenditure) led François Hollande to advocate more pragmatic measures, including through research of social consensus with negotiations between the social partners . He even said the " social democratic " nature of this policy, which represents a break with the traditional ideology of the French left-wing parties, which have always asserted a socialist and not a social democrat ideology. This policy should lead to the signing of a "pact of responsibility."

Thus, if we consider the positions of each of French presidents, it is possible to classify general de Gaulle, Georges Pompidou, François Mitterrand, François Hollande as the most idealistic presidents. But the assertion of their ideas and their designs (« gaullisme » and socialism) did not stop them to be pragmatic in certain circumstances. However, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Jacques Chirac, and above all Nicolas Sarkozy can be considered as the most pragmatic presidents. Their reference to liberalism or « gaullism » did not stop them to adapt their practice to political circumstances

### **3 . The supports. Premiers and ministers and counselors of French presidents.**

French presidents must have the continued support of prime ministers and ministers and advisors they choose. That is why they have consistently taken great care to select people who are loyal and close to them. Loyalty has always been a key factor . Governments are therefore marked by the personality of the president. There is an unwritten principle of the 5th Republic, which means that the government proceeds from the president. Most often, whatever the people who occupied the Hotel Matignon and whatever the degree of cohesion of the parliamentary majority , the prime minister is more or less emerged as the "collaborator " or the " chief of staff "of the president . But with three episodes of "cohabitation" between 1986 and 1988 , from 1993 to 1995 and from 1997 to 2002 , things have changed. The prime minister in a period of « cohabitation » was in possession of powers to take full charge of head of government. The president lost much of its authority and influence , although he retained the presidential powers granted to him by the constitution. Ministers are appointed by the president on the proposal of the prime minister. But presidents have heard to stamp the composition of the government by their authority. The presence of some ministers in the government responds to the will of the president, not at the proposal of the prime inister . During periods of "cohabitation" , the disqualification of certain persons has been attributed to the refusal of the president. He also has its own services ( Patrice Verrier, Les services of the Présidence de la République. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France , 1971). The services of the president remained reduced in size. They rarely exceeded thirty people. It must be added officers from the particular military staff of the president.

General de Gaulle appealed to " faithfuls" ( Michel Debré and Georges Pompidou ) to run the government . Under his presidency, the various governments consisted with parliamentarians, but there were also high civil servants. Due to the incompatibility of parliamentary and ministerial mandatess , these governments were " technocratic », at least partially . But their origin explained the dominance exercised by the president. Michel Debré , prime minister that general de Gaulle had personally chosen in 1959, perhaps had disagreements but always he relied ultimately to the president for policy choices in areas ( Algeria, defense policy and foreign policy ) for which the President could claim some constitutional power . Michel Debré also allowed general de Gaulle to decide on the choice of ministers , on the whole organization of the decision-making in the government and all other questions. The prime minister knew that his hold on power depended entirely on the goodwill of the president, to the extent that he was not himself the true leader of the majority. General de Gaulle chose ministers not as leaders of parties or fractions, but for their personal qualities and skills . Indeed, he appointed high civil servants to key ministries , bypassing the parties and the parliament, which had hitherto been the main channels of selection . This corresponded to the idea of separation of powers that General de Gaulle proposed to establish through the prohibition enshrined in the constitution, to combine the post of minister and the mandate of deputy or senator . But we must look for another reason for the appointment in his desire to "depoliticize" certain areas of government action in appointing experts or technocrats. In 1962, he replaced Michel Debré by Georges Pompidou, a banker, but who was the chief of staff of general de Gaulle, when it became the president of council of the 4th Republic (June 1958 - January 1959). The new prime minister has played a more important role in the definition of policy, the management of parliament and the formation of public opinion through the media. It soon became an influential leader. Indeed, thanks to the support of the president and his majority, he developed all his skills for debate and decision-making and appeared soon as the successor of General de Gaulle.

The leadership of a French president depends on its ability to provide not only a government, but also a team of advisors and effective institutional arrangements (Samy Cohen, *Les conseillers du président : de Charles de Gaulle à Valéry Giscard d'Estaing*. Paris : PUF, 1980). When general de Gaulle moved to the Elysee, on 9 January 1959, one of his very first acts was to build a team of personal assistants. He recruited the majority of high civil servants who had his full confidence, and some of whom had been part of his entourage in London, Algiers and the provisional government. The prevailing idea was that only high civil servants, "servants of the state" had the qualities of dedication, discretion and competence to deal with the "affairs of state." Key collaborators of general de Gaulle, with the exception of Jacques Foccart, general secretary for the Community from March 1960 to May 1969, came from the « grands corps » of the state. General de Gaulle was based on four main military and civilian officials, called to advise every evening and individually, which was within their sector: state affairs for the general secretary of the presidency; contacts with the population for the chief of staff, African affairs and military matters for the general secretary for the Community and for the head of particular military staff. There was a permanent relationship between the head of state and his close circle of collaborators. These four "major" were high civil servants with « gaullist » spirit, that is to say, dampened with statesmanship and respectful for methods of a leader, once known.

Georges Pompidou has chosen the president of the National Assembly, in office since 1959, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, to run the government he wanted, marked by both continuity and openness. The political temperament of the new prime minister, as his career, implied that he was able to embody the openness and continuity. The government was composed mainly of politicians. Social policy of the new prime minister did not match the temperament of the president. It showed a disagreement between the head of state and the prime minister. He has agreed to resign on 5 July 1972, a few weeks after having obtained, with an overwhelming majority, the confidence of the National Assembly. The president did not approve the action of his premier. This episode showed that political responsibility of the prime minister and the government before the president was not excluded. The resignation of prime minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas was called at the initiative of the president. He was replaced by Pierre Messmer, who was to give confidence to the « gaullists » and to not interfere with the action of the president. He was, for long years from 1960 to 1969, the minister of the armies of general de Gaulle, a faithful servant of a policy set primarily in the « reserved area » of the head of state.

Georges Pompidou integrated in pretty much the same reasoning as general de Gaulle to form his presidential staff. It also recruited among high civil servants. The key collaborators of Georges Pompidou also came from the « grands corps » of the state. Their presence at the Elysee was due to their commitment to Georges Pompidou as prime minister from 1962 to 1968. The major role was that of general secretary of the Elysee, the position held by Michel Jobert from 1969 to 1973 and by Edouard Balladur from 1973 to 1974. The structure of the general secretariat was stable between 1969 and 1974, with a political collaborator beyond hierarchy, Pierre Juillet, a general secretary, a deputy general secretary, a chief of staff, eight to ten advisers, not to mention the personal military staff of resident Pompidou. The general secretariat of the presidency from 1969 to 1974 was organized hierarchically. Advisors must inform the president about the governmental activity of the ministry they follow (they attend ministerial committees), prepare public interventions of Georges Pompidou. If the role of information and collaboration is obvious, they do not have decision-making power. However, they have an important role in coordinating governmental action. Collaborators of Georges Pompidou

monitor their counterparts in various ministerial departments, contact by phone or meet chiefs of staff, and advisers of different ministers.

At the beginning of the presidential term of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the choice of the prime minister, Jacques Chirac, was not a surprise. Since the presidential campaign, it was expected to Jacques Chirac as the new prime minister, because of support for the candidate Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and not for the « gaullist » candidate Jacques Chaban-Delmas. The composition of government was accompanied by a presentation by the head of state himself on television, which strongly emphasized the presidential direct intervention in the choice of most ministers. The government included many independent republican ministers, chosen among the leaders of the parliamentary group and some personal friends of the president. There were many disagreements between the president and the prime minister, but also in the majority. On 25 August 1976, the resignation submitted to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing by Jacques Chirac was of a different nature than that of Jacques Chaban-Delmas in 1972. Unlike disguised dismissal, it reflected a desire to break, based on the finding that the head of state did not give him the means of its policy. It expressed a genuine resignation. The choice of Raymond Barre, minister of foreign trade, which had never been either deputy or senator, not belonging to any political party, was a renewed affirmation of freedom in the choice of a president: it is him, and not the parliament, that makes the authority of the prime minister. This change of prime minister merely confirmed the "presidentialism". Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, too, also recruited from among senior officials to form his presidential cabinet. He brought his advisers mainly from the Ministry of Finance. Employees of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing were therefore the vast majority of public servants. It thus amplified the trend already observed in his two predecessors. Institutional transformations in 1958 went hand in hand with a decline in recruitment policies and supporters to the benefit of the public servants. Recruitment is characterized by a strong dominance of the great bodies of the State.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, too, also recruited from among high civil servants to form his presidential cabinet. He brought his advisers mainly from the ministry of finance. The collaborators of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing were therefore in the vast majority civil servants. It thus amplified the trend already observed with his two predecessors. Institutional transformations in 1958 went hand in hand with a decline in political recruitment at the benefit of the high civil servants. Recruitment is characterized by a strong dominance of the « grands corps » of the state.

François Mitterrand chose Pierre Mauroy as prime minister on 21 May 1981. He had some problems with him because of the support he had given to the socialist rival of François Mitterrand, Michel Rocard. But Pierre Mauroy had emerged as the man who had as his primary concern the unity of the Socialist party and it was a major factor in the concerns of the new president. This government was short-lived and was modified after the parliamentary elections on 14 and 21 June 1981. The second Mauroy government was marked by the importance given to the representation of major political movements of the left (socialists and communists), the presence of non-parliamentary and personal choices of the president. He also had talks with the Communist party on the distribution of ministerial portfolios. Disputes about private education in 1984 took a decisive importance for the life of Mauroy government and they caused an end in July 1984. François Mitterrand then chose Laurent Fabius, characterized by its young age (38 years). Ten years of his political career took place in the wake of François Mitterrand. He has been close to him since 1974, he was his chief of staff. He was probably the best suited to the president, stating his desire to modernize France and eager to tighten the reins in the second half of his term.

After the parliamentary elections of March 1986, characterized by the victory of right-wing parties, the President considered the majority outcome of the polls and there was a weakening of its authority and influence. The leaders of the RPR and UDF met after the elections, and asked the president to choose the leader of the largest group of new parliamentary majority, in this case Jacques Chirac. It was far from the conditions in which were made until all the appointments of prime ministers of the 5th Republic. Prime minister Jacques Chirac chose himself ministers. Until then, some ministerial appointments were due to personal choice of the president who imposed his choice to the prime minister. It could not be the same in March 1986. But it seems that there was at least presidential refusals to some proposals, those of Jean Lecanuet to the foreign affairs ministry and François Leotard to the defense ministry.

After the return of the socialists after the 1988 presidential election, François Mitterrand appointed Michel Rocard, his rival in the Socialist party, as prime minister. The president then found much of its authority and influence. It was also a break from the constant practice since the beginning of the 5th Republic which wanted the president appoints a politician close to him. But the second seven-year term of François Mitterrand was characterized by the use of two other prime ministers, Edith Cresson, who became the first woman to hold this position, and Pierre Bérégovoy, who was the former general secretary of the Elysee, before occupying the position of minister of finance.

François Mitterrand had a second period of "cohabitation" after the defeat of the socialists and the right-wing victory in the legislative elections of 1993. Once again, François Mitterrand has lost much of its authority and influence. The president appealed not to the leader of the main party of the right-wing majority, always Jacques Chirac, to become prime minister because he has refused to try a new experience of "cohabitation", but the former finance minister the first period of "cohabitation", Edouard Balladur. The appointment of ministers by the president did not cause reluctance on his part, contrary to what happened in 1986.

The recruitment of a staff by François Mitterrand had a more political tone. The main core of the team consisted of the personal staff who worked for the first secretary of the Socialist party. These were men accustomed to working with François Mitterrand. Their training was very heterogeneous. They were almost all members of the Socialist party or close to it. François Mitterrand gave also a place for his personal friends. There were only a few high civil servants. In total, François Mitterrand was at the Elysée with the most highly "political" team, known since the beginning of the 5th Republic, but also the most professionally diverse. That where the civil servants were the least likely (they were only about a third of the workforce). That where the proportion of « enarques » was lower (it was about a quarter when she was about two-thirds under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, half under Georges Pompidou, third only on the last years of the presidency of general de Gaulle) (Samy Cohen, « Les hommes de l'Elysée », *Pouvoirs*, no 20, 1981, 87-100; Jean-Marie Colombani, *Un semestre de pouvoir socialiste. III : L'entrée en force du militantisme à l'Elysée*, *Le Monde*, 15-16 novembre 1981). The relationship between the president and his entourage are made as before on a hierarchical basis. The president regularly worked with a minority of "great counselors." Only these men saw François Mitterrand daily. It quickly stood close to François Mitterrand a double circuit of information running concurrently. Overlapping jurisdictions, hitherto carefully avoided, have become a new feature of presidential work. Such a system does not displease François Mitterrand to the extent that it secured him a more complete information. But it provoked tensions within the entourage (Samy Cohen, « Les hommes de l'Elysée », *Pouvoirs*, no 20, 1981, 87-100).

The 1995 presidential election has led the former prime minister, Jacques Chirac , as the new president. He appointed a loyal and close collaborator from 1976 , deputy mayor of Paris from 1983 to 1995, Alain Juppé, as prime minister from 1995 to 1997. But after an unfortunate decision to dissolve , he was taken to appoint a new prime minister , the socialist Lionel Jospin. The victory of the "plural left" in the 1997 parliamentary elections allowed Lionel Jospin to become prime minister and to inaugurate the third "cohabitation" . The reelection of Jacques Chirac during the 2002 presidential election allowed him to appoint two prime ministers, politically close to him , first from may 2002 to may 2005, Jean -Pierre Raffarin, a centrist senator, then from may 2005 to may 2007 , Dominique de Villepin , a former diplomat who was the collaborator of Jacques Chirac as general secretary of the Elysee from 1995, during his first term , then minister of foreign affairs ( 2002-2004) and minister of home affairs (2004-2005) in the government of Jean -Pierre Raffarin.

The team of collaborators around Jacques Chirac was reduced. Each councilor had a large and clearly defined area. The team had only one chief: Dominique de Villepin, a diplomat, who worked with Jacques Chirac since the early 1980s. All notes passed by him. He saw almost everything. He knew almost everything. To ensure the coherence and mutual information of the team, he met it every morning in his office. Head of the army and the diplomacy, Jacques Chirac has made a substantial team for these two supreme responsibilities. Outside the military , they were diplomats who were there best represented (six for the first, five for the latter) . This team consisted of twenty-one people , in addition to the military , while there were up to fifty-five in the last years of the presidency of François Mitterrand. The « enarques » were numerous. Despite his desire to avoid the presence of advisers not clearly under his command, Dominique de Villepin did not prevent that Jacques Chirac makes appeal to three men who were not included in the official chart but had an office . Formal and informal advisers were here to inform the president , to assist him in its deliberations , being attentive to society, to show prospective and creative. Asked to not directly affect the activity of ministers, they should not become mired in daily action. Thus, as in period of "cohabitation" , there was not necessarily a representative of the Elysée in interministerial committees. When there was one, there was no question for him to influence the decisions that were made there (Thierry Bréhier, « Jacques Chirac impose son style à la présidence de la République », *Le Monde*, 28 juin 1995 ; Raphaëlle Bacqué, *Chirac ou le démon du pouvoir*. Paris : Albin Michel, 2002).

Nicolas Sarkozy , elected president in may 2007, has appointed François Fillon as prime minister. He was a deputy, minister several times since 1993. He retained this position for the duration of the five-year term of Nicolas Sarkozy . He retained as presidential advisers many of those who had accompanied him during his last functions as minister of the home affairs ( may 2002 - march 2004 and june 2005- march 2007) and as minister of finance (march 2004 -november 2004) . The general secretariat of the Elysée was provided by a prefect , Claude Gueant, from may 2007 to february 2011 , followed by an inspector of finance , Xavier Musca , from february 2011 to may 2012 . Presidential cabinet of Nicolas Sarkozy included an expanded and organized team of communicators, advertisers and pollsters. Presidential communication also had many interventions from general secretary general of the Elysee and special advisor, Henri Guaino.

François Hollande was elected president in may 2012. On 15 may 2012, he appointed Jean-Marc Ayrault, who was the president of the Socialist parliamentary group in the National Assembly since 1997, as prime inister. The general secretariat of the Elysee is headed by a prefect, Pierre-René Lemas, which belongs to the same class of ENA that François Hollande, If the president has entrusted this responsibility to him, it is

because they are longtime friends. He symbolizes a « left-wing prefect » sanctioned by Nicolas Sarkozy for political reasons, when he was prefect of the Lorraine region.

The power of the president to appoint the prime minister and ministers , as well as his own advisers , gives them the ability to appoint faithful men or women close to him, loyal to his person. Presidents have benefited more or less of that power. Indeed, two types of circumstances can lead to a weakening of the authority and influence of the president: a disagreement between the president and the prime minister on the policy to be followed or a situation of "cohabitation" , when the president and the prime minister does not belong to the same camp , the same majority . The first hypothesis concerned the resignation of Jacques Chirac in conflict with Valéry Giscard d' Estaing in 1976, but also the withdrawal of Jacques Chaban -Delmas ( 1971) and Michel Rocard ( 1991 ) . These circonstances reflected a desire of the president to reaffirm its rule and appoint a person closest to him . The second hypothesis was the three cases of " cohabitation " , when the president is obliged to bow to a new hostile majority. Georges Pompidou , Valéry Giscard d' Estaing and François Mitterrand have experienced situations of the first type . François Mitterrand, once again, and Jacques Chirac lost also much of their authority in situations of "cohabitation" . The only element that allowed the president to keep some authority and influence is the loyalty of the members of the presidential cabinet . They can control the actions of ministers and assist the president in the preparation and knowledge of the great issues .

#### **4 . The structures . Institutional parameters of political capital.**

The political system of the 5th Republic is akin to what some call the « semi- presidential system » ( Maurice Duverger, " A new political system model: semi -presidential government ' , European Journal of Political Research Vol 8 , No. 2, 1980 , 165-187 ). Some authors, however, insisted on the presidential supremacy by saying that the president, elected by direct universal suffrage, is the holder of a « state power » , which is an independent variable in relation to the parliamentary majority (Georges Burdeau, « La conception du pouvoir selon la constitution du 4 octobre 1958 », Revue Française de Science Politique, vol 9, no 1, mars 1959, 87-100 ; Jean-Louis Quermonne, «La notion de pouvoir d'Etat et le pouvoir présidentiel sous la Ve République »in Mélanges Léo Hamon. Paris : Economica, 1982). Under a « semi- presidential system », the president is elected by direct universal suffrage. He therefore has an important political legitimacy. He also has powers granted by the constitution, including the right of dissolution, the exercise of this power crisis (article 16 of the constitution) , the use of the referendum and the right to appoint the prime minister. But the government is responsible for the determination and conduct of the country's policies. It is also responsible to the National Assembly. It must obtain the support of a parliamentary majority. To work perfectly , the French political regime necessitate therefore the existence of a close relationship between the president, the prime minister and the government, and the parliamentary majority.

French presidents are elected by direct universal suffrage since the constitutional reform of 1962. No president has been elected on the first ballot. All presidents have been elected in the second round with a more or less absolute majority. French President therefore has a strong legitimacy provided by this absolute majority. The voting system with two rounds allows it to benefit from this legitimacy. He is not in the situation of some Latin American presidents elected in the first round and with only a simple majority .

De Gaulle (1965) : 55.19 %

Pompidou (1969) : 58.21 %

Giscard d'Estaing (1974) : 50.81 %

Mitterrand (1981) : 51.75 %

Mitterrand (1988): 54, 02 %

Chirac (1995) : 52.64 %

Chirac (2002) : 82.21 %

Sarkozy (2007): 53.06 %

Holland (2012): 51.64 %

But the French presidents face a number of limitations and constraints that may limit their authority and influence. The most important are formed by the action of their political parties or their parliamentary majority , the role of high administration , the weight of the Constitutional Council . But there is also a special situation with such « semi- presidential system » which is the situation where the president no longer has a parliamentary majority, which has been called "cohabitation" .

The most important limits and constraints on the leadership of presidents are first formed by the action of their political parties or their parliamentary majority. These factors may limit the flexibility of presidents. The latitude of action was more or less strong according presidents.

The relationship between presidents and the party that supports them was different at times . At the beginning of the 5th Republic , the influence of political parties has been reduced for several reasons. First there was the structural weakness of political parties in the French political history. French political parties have long been a party of notables, without real organization, including at national level . The only exceptions were the SFIO socialist party and especially the Communist party. Then there was the hostility towards the " party regime », which was the term used by general de Gaulle and his supporters to condemn the political and governmental instability of the previous republics. The " party regime " has been blamed for the division of French society and the permanence of divisions within it. The party founded by general de Gaulle in 1947 was not named party , but rather was considered as a rally ( Rally of the French People , RPF ) . There is finally the habit to declare a presidential candidacy outside parties without prior appointment procedure implemented by the party, but with support after the application. It must appear like that of a single man . It must allow this man alone to demonstrate leadership qualities, during the presidential campaign, and to get a strong democratic legitimacy on his name.

Many candidates in the French presidential elections have long been in a position of distrust towards political parties. These candidates declared their candidacy first, before seeking the support of their own party or other parties. There were nevertheless candidates nominated by their own party. These parties were often small extreme left-wing parties, which refused the idea that the application was primarily the result of a personal initiative, but which thought that the application is rather the result of a collective choice. Apart from these few cases, the applications were the evidence of a personalization of presidential competition. The first objective of the presidential election was to give legitimacy to the elected president from the people above political parties.

The first three presidents ( general de Gaulle , Georges Pompidou , Valery Giscard d' Estaing ) have declared their candidacy either during a televised speech , or by a press release. With the candidacy of François Mitterrand in the presidential election of 1981 , there has been a first , but timid, appearance of the major parties . François Mitterrand , who was the first secretary of the Socialist party, but who had already been twice candidate in the presidential elections of 1965 and 1974 , had to face the candidacy of a rival within his own

party, Michel Rocard. But he has soon abandoned and François Mitterrand was alone socialist candidate . But to strengthen his position, he sought and obtained the support of the Socialist party during an extraordinary congress of the party. After this episode , on 1988, François Mitterrand took over the traditional mechanism of nomination : first a television interview with journalists to announce the nomination, then a vote of a socialist congress. The following presidents ( Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy ) have followed the same path . The big novelty was reached with the designation of the current president , Francois Hollande, by an open primary election. The current president therefore has a dual legitimacy : that provided by a majority vote of the voters wishing to participate in this primary election , not necessarily belonging to the Socialist party and that provided by the victory in the second round of the 2012 presidential election.

General de Gaulle wanted to be a candidate of rally and unanimity and not only a majority candidate and he did not wish to create and to lead a new political party, after his failure in the success of his party, RPF , created in 1947. Georges Pompidou was not the leader of the « gaullist » political party ( UNR Union for the New Republic ) at the time of his candidacy in the presidential election of 1969, following the resignation of general de Gaulle. Some observers have even claimed that he was not a member. But he managed to build a strong and stable parliamentary majority by uniting the right and the center, which was the first step towards « bipolarisation » of French politics. The fact to appear as the de facto leader of the majority gave him an image of strong leader. The first two presidents, general de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou became great leaders without having to appear as party men . Political parties have played a very small role in their appearance in politics. But they were able to use them as useful tools in their ascension into a position of leadership.

The third president, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, was, meanwhile, the founder and president of a small party (FNRI, National Federation of Independent Republicans), mainly composed of parliamentarians who had left the National Centre of Independents and Peasants (CNIP), the formation of the conservative and moderate right to support general de Gaulle after 1962. To some extent, it has emerged as a single man, without great party for support. But an active campaign allowed him to win the presidential election of 1974. This single man, with a minority party within a strong « gaullist » majority, has never allowed him to develop strong leadership.

The relationship between the president and his political party were very different with the following Presidents ( François Mitterrand, Jacques Chirac , Nicolas Sarkozy , François Hollande ) . All four were president and first secretary of their party before becoming president . François Mitterrand was first secretary of the Socialist Party from 1971 to 1981. After resigning from his position as prime minister on 26 july 1976 , Jacques Chirac announced his intention to renovate the « gaullist » party UDR (Union of Democrats for the Republic ) on october 1976 . At the national conference of the party on 5 december 1976, the UDR is dissolved to form the Rally for the Republic (RPR) . Jacques Chirac was elected president with 96.52 % of the votes of militants. He remained president of the RPR until the announcement of his candidacy for the 1995 presidential election . Nicolas Sarkozy was elected president of the UMP (Union for a Popular Movement ) in november 2004 by activists with 85.09 % of the vote and resigned in may 2007 after his election to the presidency. François Hollande was first secretary of the Socialist party from 1995 to 2011. So these candidates were party men , not men alone. Their application was still prior to the vote of the party's nomination for two of them ( François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac ) . But the procedure has become different with Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande . What matters is now the party's nomination . With François Hollande , it goes even further , since his appointment is the result of an open primary election organized by the Socialist Party (Rémi Lefebvre,

Les primaires socialistes. La fin du parti militant. Paris : Ed Raisons d'Agir, 2011). . This change had important implications for the nature of presidential leadership. French political parties have suffered the consequences of presidentialisation of the French political life, with the election of the president by direct universal suffrage (Gérard Grunberg et Florence Haegel, *La France vers le bipartisme ? La présidentialisation du PS et de l'UMP*. Paris : Presses de Sciences Po, 2007). They became real " presidential machines ". Their control has been a rivalry between those who considered themselves as " presidentialiable ." A future candidate for the presidential election must gain power within a political party to have any chance of getting his inauguration. Following the election, the party became the "party of the president." It is , in principle, disciplined. But a political party is never completely homogeneous. It is always subject to shocks from the confrontation, more or less visible, between different currents , factions or clans. The president is subjected to various pressures from different groups within the party. But a strong relationship binds the president and his party , especially because he continues to control it by monitoring the appointment of his successor at the head of the party . The consequence is that the president is often more popular within his party than outside ( Jean-Louis Thiebault, « France. The personalisation of leadership and French political parties », in Jean Blondel and Jean- Louis Thiebault , eds, *Political Leadership , Parties and Citizens : The personalization of leadership*, London: Routledge, november 2009 , chap 9)

French presidents must continue to control their party, but they must also demonstrate their ability to create , retain and increase their electoral majority. On this point, they have adopted different attitudes. General de Gaulle was not a member of any political party. He believed that political parties were factors of division of French society and therefore advocated building an organization that can bring together the French people. In 1947, he created the Rally of the French People (RPF ), but his approach has failed. He therefore dissolved the organization in 1954. On his return to power in 1958 , he distanced himself from the new political party claiming « gaullist » , UNR (Union for the New Republic ) . What interested him was the extent of the majority in the presidential elections and referenda held by him, and not the presence of a parliamentary majority. It is then possible to distinguish the presidential majority from the parliamentary majority . The first form at the time of presidential election with parties supporting, in view of the second round , the future winning candidate and constituting a popular majority. The parliamentary majority results from the coalition of parties that wins the most seats in the National Assembly after the second round of legislative elections. At that time , the two majorities had not the same length or the same magnitude. The absence of a parliamentary majority led the two prime ministers ( Michel Debré and Georges Pompidou ) to negotiate agreements to construct changing majorities.

The election of Georges Pompidou has led to the emergence of the concept of stability of the parliamentary majority to support government action. The support for his candidacy led to form a stable parliamentary majority, with the gaullists, some centrists and the independant republicans. The capacity of Georges Pompidou to form a majority represented an important turning point in the evolution of French political system. The magnitude of the presidential majority went to tapering, and was closer to that of the parliamentary majority. Governments led by members of the « gaullist » party (Jacques Chaban-Delmas and Pierre Messmer) maintained the same composition of the majority.

Valéry Giscard d' Estaing has maintained the same majority. But a change has occurred in the balance of forces within it. Valéry Giscard d' Estaing belonged to a minority party in the parliamentary majority , the

independent republicans ( FNRI ) . To compensate for the weakness of his party, he called to direct the government a member of the « gaullist » party , the majority party of the parliamentary majority ( Jacques Chirac ) . The too unbalanced relation of forces led to the departure of the head of government who resigned in July 1976. The composition of the parliamentary majority has not changed, but Giscard d'Estaing appointed a university without political membership (Raymond Barre) as prime minister. This unusual situation since the beginning of the 5th Republic has led to many crises because of pressure from the majority of the majority and threats to withdraw support to the government.

François Mitterrand first constituted a majority on the basis of a common program of government between socialists and communists. This majority was also the result of a reciprocal withdrawal in the second round of presidential and legislative elections. The Socialist party had an absolute majority in the National Assembly. It was thus possible to govern alone , but compliance with the agreement between the two parties led François Mitterrand to hope the presence of communist ministers in the first government of his first seven-year term, led by Pierre Mauroy . The coalition between socialists and communists lasted until 1984. The communists do not wish to participate in the new government , led by Laurent Fabius, with the support of the socialist parliamentary group, which had the majority in the National Assembly. François Mitterrand even temporarily lost the support of any majority in the parliamentary elections of 1978, won by the right-wing parties. This has opened a first cohabitation period ( 1986-1988). Yet the president managed to reverse the situation by winning the 1988 presidential election . But he could not find an absolute majority to govern. The various governments of Michel Rocard, Edith Cresson and Pierre Bérégovoy were minority governments , which remained only because of the absence of a homogeneous opposition, the construction of changing majorities to vote for the proposed legislation or the use of article 49-3 of the constitution that allows the government to ask for the vote of confidence on a text and this text is considered adopted if a motion of censure is not filed and adopted. François Mitterrand did not seek to expand the majority in alliance with other political formations located in the center. He only poached some centrist parliamentarians to become a minister, without being able to speak of enlargement of the majority. François Mitterrand had a second period of cohabitation from 1993 to 1995 , due to the wide success of the right-wing parties in the 1993 legislative elections .

Jacques Chirac was president and founder of the RPR. But he submitted his candidacy by a statement to the press in November 1994, taking by surprise the head of government, Edouard Balladur, belonging to his own party, the Rally for the Republic (RPR). Divided by the existence of these two candidates from its ranks, the RPR has supported neither candidate. Jacques Chirac finally won the 1995 presidential election with the support of a majority consisting of two parties of roughly equal strength, RPR and UDF, despite the rivalry during the first round of voting with the prime minister, Edouard Balladur. Re-elected easily in 2002, it has retained the same majority. But he has strengthened his majority by getting the two parties that supported him merged under the banner of a new party, the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP).

Nicolas Sarkozy has won the support of the new party in the presidential election of 2007, which allowed him to govern with a stable majority for five years. The French have elected a leader who promised to break with the past and whose energy, dynamism and ambition. But he accumulated too much personal power , ignoring the parliament , manipulating the media. He was characterized as an hyperpresident. And he lost the 2012 presidential election.

François Hollande won this 2012 presidential election with the support of an absolute left-wing majority (PS, Parti Radical de Gauche and Europe-Ecologie-Les-Verts). He was nominated as candidate of the Socialist Party after winning an open primary election organized by this party at the fall of 2011. The French voters elected a leader who promised to break with the style of his predecessor and who wished to be a « normal » president.

The relationship between presidents and political parties which support them have been of a different nature . General de Gaulle was above political parties and let his prime ministers to take care of the organization and control of the main party of the majority, as well as the majority who supported the president and the government . Other presidents have consistently directly or indirectly oversee the affairs of the political party to which they belonged before becoming president . They managed to place their trusted men to positions of responsibility and sought to have their men, in which they have full confidence, in key positions ( the general secretary or the first secretary of the party, the chairman of the parliamentary group , the president of the National Assembly ). They have institutionalized certain forms of dialogue between the government and the party. But the parliamentary groups often had great difficulty in acquiring constraints and reflexes of a government party. They were not always taken to the discipline, simply because their first official became president.

The role of the state and hence the high administration has always been powerful in French political life. The 5th Republic has not escaped the influence (Francis de Baecque, Jean-Louis Quermonne, dir, Administration et politique sous la Ve République. Paris : Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, coll Références, 2<sup>e</sup> édition, 1982 ; Ezra Suleiman, Les hauts fonctionnaires et la politique. Paris : Seuil, 1976 ; Pierre Birnbaum, Les sommets de l'Etat. Paris : Seuil, 1976). The practice to appeal to high civil servants, who were not members of parliament, to occupy ministerial office was mostly used by general de Gaulle at the beginning of the 5th Republic. These ministers were chosen for positions of high responsibility , supposed to be part of the president « reserved area » ( foreign affairs, defense , home affairs ). This notion of "reserved area" has served and still serves to justify the claim that the president's powers are divided between a " reserved area , where he would be called upon to exercise them fully, and an open area where he would simply draw the major options , leaving the government to determine and conduct the policy. This notion was rejected by general de Gaulle himself, but it constantly fed the political debate in the 5th Republic.

General de Gaulle appealed to many officials without parliamentary mandate for positions of ministers ( Maurice Couve de Murville , Wilfrid Baumgartner, Pierre Guillaumat Louis Joxe, Bernard Chenot , Pierre Messmer, Lucien Paye ... ) . He showed his desire to rule over the political parties. This practice is an important factor in explaining the nature of presidential leadership at the time of General de Gaulle. The percentage of this practice has evolved. It represented 39.5% of ministers and secretaries of state in 1959. It fell to a much lower level under Georges Pompidou , who was hostile to this formula (from 0-7 % depending on the governments that succeeded during his presidency ). It regained some importance under Valéry Giscard d' Estaing (achieving a proportion which fluctuated between 18.4 and 34 % according to the government) and under François Mitterrand. This practice has grown thanks to the presidentialisation of the political system. From the moment the government proceeded from the head of state and the incompatibility between ministerial mandate and parliamentary mandate applied, the line between politics and public management of the state spent less between government and administration than between parliament and government (Dominique Chagnollaud, Jean-Louis

Quermonne, *Le gouvernement de la France sous la Ve République*. Paris : Fayard, 1996). This practice also showed that the French high administration was a real political force. It also brought the demonstration of the capacity shown by high civil servants to take roles that traditionally belonged to notables and activists. All high civil servants have not become full members of the political class . But some of them have played a political role and held positions at the joint between administration and politics, or in discretionary jobs. Others have invested directly political power by allegiance to the parliamentary majority and by serving the government or the parliament (Jean-Luc Bodiguel, Jean-Louis Quermonne, *La haute fonction publique sous la Ve République*. Paris : PUF, 1983 ; Jean-Louis Quermonne, *L'appareil administratif de l'Etat*. Paris : Seuil, 1991).

Other limitations and constraints leadership Presidents are made by the action of the Constitutional Council (Louis Favoreu et Loïc Philip, *Le Conseil Constitutionnel*. Paris : PUF, coll Que-Sais-Je, no 1724, 2013; Pierre Avril et Jean Gicquel, *Le Conseil Constitutionnel*. Paris : Montchrestien, coll Clefs, 2011; François Goguel, « Le Conseil Constitutionnel », *Revue du Droit Public*, janvier-février 1979). This institution may limit the flexibility of presidents. The Constitutional Council has acquired a political authority whose development was promoted by repeated practice of alternation. The actual practice since 1974 of a review of the constitutionality of laws by the Constitutional Council provided a counterweight to the « presidentialism » of the political system. This counter was fundamental because of the emergence of a stable parliamentary majority , which was likely to reduce the guarantees of civil liberties. However, some observers have criticized the lack of independence of the institution from political power. Indeed , the nine members of the Constitutional Council are appointed by thirds every three years, with three members by the president of the Republic , three by the president of the National Assembly , and three by the president of the Senate. President of the Constitutional Council is appointed by the President of the Republic, without necessarily from among the members appointed by him. Critics also focused on the fact that the members of the Constitutional Council were rarely selected among senior judges . The Council appears partly composed of politicians and high civil servants, sensitive to political considerations. But more than their method of appointment, the independence of the members is that their mandate can not be renewed. Former Presidents of the Republic are ex officio members of the Council. But only , Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy sat there . However, the latter announced that he " resigned " from Council on 4 July 2013 . Indeed, the Council had rejected his electoral campaign accounts for the 2012 presidential election . Consequently, he was not entitled to reimbursement of its expenses and he should return to the treasury that was paid in advance to him (Patrick Roger, « Nicolas Sarkozy 'démissionne' du Conseil Constitutionnel », *Le Monde*, 4 juillet 2013). Yet, as the Constitutional Council recalled it, Nicolas Sarkozy had not simply the legal opportunity to resign . Membership gives former presidents an automatic right to sit . And when this right is automatic , you can not give it up. It is technically impossible for Nicolas Sarkozy to leave the Constitutional Council. He may, however , as he announced, refuse to sit and to forego his salary . But he remains , in law , one of the members of the institution (Samuel Laurent, « Pourquoi Sarkozy ne peut pas 'démissionner' du Conseil Constitutionnel », *Le Monde*, 5 juillet 2013).

But the French presidents face limits and even greater constraints which can significantly reduce their leadership. It is the particular situation of this type of « semi- presidential system » : it is the situation where the president does not or no longer have a parliamentary majority, which has been called "cohabitation" (Marie-Anne Cohendet, *La cohabitation, leçons d'une expérience*. Paris : PUF, 1993). Indeed , in a situation of this type, the prime minister and the government found the fullness of their function of determination and conduct of

policy of the country, according to constitutional rule in article 20 of the constitution. They had the support of the parliamentary majority. The president's power is thus limited to exceptional powers, provided in the constitutional text. Presidential leadership is weakened. « Cohabitation » characterized the first seven-year term of François Mitterrand. The 1986 elections saw the victory of the alliance of right-wing parties RPR -UDF . François Mitterrand called the leader of the alliance, Jacques Chirac , to run the government . This is the first « cohabitation » that lasted until the 1988 presidential election. The second cohabitation occurred during the second term of François Mitterrand from 1993 to 1995, following the victory of the alliance of right-wing parties RPR -UDF . But the chief executive of the alliance, Jacques Chirac , has refused to re-occupy the office of prime minister for a second period of « cohabitation ». The president then appealed to Edouard Balladur to run the government (Edouard Balladur, *Le pouvoir ne se partage pas. Conversations avec François Mitterrand*. Paris : Fayard, 2009). The second « cohabitation » lasted until the 1995 presidential election , which saw the victory of Jacques Chirac . Jacques Chirac had a broad and solid majority , which was elected in 1993, and appointed Alain Juppé to run the government . However , he declared the dissolution of the National Assembly in 1997. The left-wing parties won after dissolution and the third « cohabitation » began and lasted until 2002 election. But unlike the first two « cohabitations » , the third is a « cohabitation » between a right-wing president and a leftist prime minister , government and parliamentary majority .

The risk of a new cohabitation is now reduced, due to the reduction in five years of the length of the legislative mandate, which was aligned with that of the National Assembly. The election of a parliamentary majority, hostile to the president, in principle deprive it of any authority on the government, responsible to the National Assembly . The president 's own powers are exceptional powers, except dissolution. The appointment of the prime minister gives him a limited margin of maneuver. In fact, all the presidents have wanted to preserve their rule . François Mitterrand agreed with the practice that allowed him , in two successive « cohabitations » , to save most of presidential power , both in foreign and defense policy as well as in constitutional matters. In a message to parliament on 8 april 1986, a few days after the election of a hostile majority in the National Assembly, he relied heavily on article 5 of the constitution. He outlined the areas where he could exercise his authority or arbitration: regular functioning of government, continuity of the state , national independence, territorial integrity, respect for treaties. He also added the obligation to guarantee the independence of the judiciary and to ensure the rights and freedoms defined in the Declaration of Human Rights of 1789 and the preamble of the 1946 constitution . The presence of a majority hostile to the president in the National Assembly was not enough to impose a purely parliamentary practice of the political regime . François Mitterrand decided to not remain inactive . Hence the diarchy at the top which resulted in foreign policy and defense . Hence , during the first cohabitation, the exercise of a right of veto against three ordinances . This practice resulted from a broad interpretation of article 5 of the constitution, determining the scope of the presidential office . It gave birth to a genuine agreement on a convention of the constitution on the existence of a power-sharing between the president and the government.

## **5 . The context. The importance of contextual factors in the trajectories of leadership. Different types of policies circumstances, favorable or unfavorable .**

French political life was marked at the beginning of the 5th Republic by the war in Algeria . General de Gaulle has exercised all responsibilities on a matter for which he was recalled to power. Also many decisive

Algerian policy guidelines were established by the statements of general de Gaulle. An event had a considerable influence on the evolution of the powers of general de Gaulle : the « days of the barricades » in Algiers in January 1960. A concentration of power at the Elysee seemed necessary . It was at this time that were formed at the Elysee various specialized committees, including the Committee for Algerian affairs which included not only ministers , but also high civil servants and personal staff of the president. The « putsch » of some generals in April 1961 led , too, to a strengthening of presidential powers due to the decision taken by general de Gaulle to use article 16 of the constitution to restore the proper functioning of the state, stopped by the coup of generals. Article 16 was used to take exceptional, but temporary , measures which were necessary in the wake of events in Algeria : a state of emergency , special courts , arrests without judicial warrant, extension of the length of administrative detention. General de Gaulle used two referendums ( 8 January 1961 and 8 April 1962 ) to advance the resolution of the Algerian conflict . The objective was to prove that the French people were favorable to his Algerian policy . However, these two referendums had a plebiscitary character , a character of affirmation of confidence in a man. The war in Algeria was therefore a key factor in explaining the presidential leadership under the 5th Republic.

This presidential leadership was further strengthened by the decision taken by General de Gaulle to hold a referendum on changing the method of electing the president and the use of direct universal suffrage. Until then, the president was elected by a college of electors, consisting mainly of local elected officials. The choice of election by direct universal suffrage had been considered but rejected at the time of the drafting of the new constitution in 1958. General de Gaulle wished his successor had a strong democratic legitimacy. The use of direct universal suffrage led to a vigorous debate between « gaullists » and all other left-wing and right-wing parties. General de Gaulle chose the battle, the popular support against elected officials. The shock was severe , but it led to the victory of the " yes" advocated by General de Gaulle and the « gaullists » in the referendum held on 28 October 1962 ( 61.75 % of "yes" ) .

General de Gaulle also faced the turmoil of the European construction. Despite reservations on European integration , expressed on the occasion of the quarrel of the European Defence Community (EDC) (1954) , general de Gaulle accompanied the accelerated implementation of EU policy in seeking support in a strong Franco-German agreement ( trip to Germany in September 1962 and the Elysee treaty on 22 January 1963). But reservations were expressed on several occasions to show his hostility to integration and supranationality: first against the candidacy of Britain into the Common Market and then against the transfer of sovereignty to the European Commission, which led to the severe crisis of 1965. At a press conference on 14 January 1963 , general de Gaulle ended, in a very emphatic manner, the possibility of Britain entering the Common Market. The crisis of June 1965 led to abstain from any contact with the European Commission in the months that followed. It was the policy of the "empty chair ." He has also consistently emphasized the idea of national independence and the refusal of subordination to the United States, including leaving the military organization of NATO , deciding the construction of a nuclear strike force , choosing to recognize Communist China. The strike force was the occasion of a crystallization of all the opposition to « gaullism » . The project on nuclear force was discussed in parliament at the end of 1960. It was during three successive motions of censure , bringing together all opponents of left-wing and right-wing parties , but without success. Foreign policy has been absolutely fundamental to General de Gaulle (Alfred Grosser, *La politique extérieure de la Ve République*. Paris : Seuil, 1965).

After the departure of general de Gaulle in 1969 , Georges Pompidou and Valery Giscard d' Estaing continued the consolidation of presidential power . They identified key policy priorities , set the limits of their coalitions and controlled political action in foreign affairs , defense and institutional reforms. The two presidents also spoke very often in other policy areas , according to their personal interests and according to more or less politically sensitive issues. Valery Giscard d' Estaing , however, led a European policy break with the « gaullists ». His close personal relationship with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt debouched on a series of important steps forward : the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, the EMS and especially reconciliation with Germany, which made the Paris-Bonn axis the central part of the European integration process.

When François Mitterrand was elected in 1981, we could expect a break with the previous model of presidential domination. He had , indeed, denounced , often with fierce words, excessive presidentialisation. But continuity was the rule. François Mitterrand took important decisions in the international arena , but also in the domestic field. The crisis that led to the devaluation in march 1983 and the protests against the 1984 project to integrate the private schools in the public system meant that crucial decisions were adopted by François Mitterrand. The change of orientation of economic policy was decided by the president at the devaluation of march 1983. The culmination of this period of seemingly unlimited control of the president on domestic policy was reached in uly 1984 when François Mitterrand withdrew the proposed education reform, accepted the resignation of prime minister Pierre Mauroy , named Laurent Fabius at Matignon at the head of a government without the Communists. In 1986, when the socialists lost their majority in the National Assembly , François Mitterrand returned to his role as leader of the defense and foreign affairs policies . He has definitely shifted government policy in the direction of Atlantic solidarity . His firm defense of the deployment of Pershing missiles was an important expression of his alignment with NATO. The role of François Mitterrand was important to facilitate the creation in 1985 of the single European market. He also appeared as one of the strongest supporters of a single currency and a European central bank.

Jacques Chirac came to the presidency in 1995 in a difficult economic situation. The solutions adopted to try to resolve led to the social crisis and strikes of december 1995. Political difficulties that followed led Jacques Chirac to dissolve the National Assembly in 1997. The victory of the left-wing parties led to a third period of « cohabitation ». Reelected in 2002, Jacques Chirac subsequently showed great prudence in the management of governmental affairs. The leading role of Jacques Chirac was limited to questions of foreign affairs and defense policy, and some personal interventions about home affairs. One of the most significant initiatives was to take a stand against the Iraqi war and to refuse the participation of France in the armed intervention in the military coalition formed by the Americans.

The arrival of Nicolas Sarkozy was a break with the previous situation. The new president has shown an amazing fairly and quickly voluntarism in economic and social fields. But the beginning of the great economic and financial crisis has challenged this attitude. Throughout his presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy has sought to reduce the impact of the crisis at the national level but also at European level.

François Hollande 's victory is the result of the failure of Nicolas Sarkozy , but also its ability to provide innovative solutions for resolving the crisis. But François Hollande quickly disillusioned. Results in the fight against unemployment, cuts in public spending and tax reform were bad and therefore brought the new president to adopt a new economic and social policy in terms of competitiveness and flexibility. He proposed a « pact of

responsibility » to obtain the support of the social partners for the successful implementation of this new policy, on a consensual basis. Concerned about the economic and social issues, Hollande has relatively little interest in defense issues and foreign policy . The only exception is the involvement of the French army in internal conflicts in some African countries such as Mali and the Central African Republic.

## **6 . The collapse of presidential leadership.**

The analysis of the different factors to explain the presidential leadership in France shows that we are witnessing a gradual weakening and even more certainly a collapse of presidential leadership.

General de Gaulle had a very strong presidential style, with great qualities of communication . Some even talked about his charisma. He showed a strong tendency to deal with major issues that arose with the French society on the Algerian affair , the place of France in the world and restoration of its economic strength and its currency , but he left the prime ministers, he chose for their faithfulness and loyalty, as well as ministers, the task of managing the common affairs of the government , except in exceptional circumstances. He constantly refers to a number of principles and values that have been a true doctrine , the « gaullisme » . He was capable of proposing a mobilizing story about the development of France . To do this, he could count on the support of the faithfuls, devoted to his person , because of personal ties which sometimes went back to « France Libre » in Algiers, London or the resistance . He did not suffer the limitations and constraints imposed by the activities of the party and its parliamentary majority, by the high administration and by the Constitutional Council. The context of the war in Algeria allowed General de Gaulle to appear as the "leader" or "guide" with vision and courage, with a goal and determination to implement policies leading at the end of the war and thus the negotiated independence of Algeria . Its popularity has always been strong , even if there has been a depletion shortly before the events of May 1968. His leadership has been strong and consistent .

Leadership of general de Gaulle's successors suffered relative to this reference. However, Georges Pompidou was able to maintain a high level of leadership. He presented a strong presidential style , similar to that exercised by general de Gaulle, with constant reference to the values and principles that had guided his action. He assured the transformation of the party system with the appearance of the polarization and the strengthening of the « gaullist » party . He enjoyed good health of the economy to push forward the industrialization policy . But it is with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing that was experienced the first shift of presidential leadership . His presidential style wanted to break with its two predecessors. He tended to take care of everything. He wanted to appear young , open to society. He used a lot of television . This is the first evidence of the conversion to presidential communication. Communication specialists occupied a central place in the power devices . This is from Valéry Giscard d' Estaing that is installed bandwagon of public opinion, that presidents do nothing to convince public opinion, but decided to follow it, that they scrutinized the polls on their popularity. Many efforts are fruitless , because the popularity of Valery Giscard d' Estaing reached lower and lower levels. His leadership is also weakened by the small party that supports him, by his minority situation within the majority, by the too late (1978) character of the creation of a true "party of the president," the Union for French Democracy (UDF) . Valery Giscard d' Estaing was mainly the first president to face the economic crisis that would strike France for many decades . But he did not or failed to take the steps that would be required . This failure did not offset the few success stories in the field of social reforms and that of foreign policy.

François Mitterrand found a certain level of leadership, particularly because of the personal style he was able to introduce in the management of public policies. He showed, as his « gaullist » predecessors, a strong tendency to deal with foreign affairs, defense issues and institutional problems, leaving the prime ministers and ministers to take care of current affairs, except in exceptional circumstances. François Mitterrand was not identified as naturally as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to television, but he used some communication techniques in an attempt to strengthen its leadership. He also felt that his leadership would be even more durable he less exposed to television. He has spent with calculated discretion. It was not very popular in all of its activities. From François Mitterrand, presidents have arranged a "état de grâce" in the aftermath of the election, due to the rally or the indulgence of some of their opponents, followed by a gradual disenchantment. François Mitterrand was displayed as a socialist, but at the same time he was able to show great pragmatism. He received support from the faithfuls he placed at different positions and retained control over the Socialist Party, but that party, divided into factions, has sometimes undermined his rule. But he mostly suffered two periods of « cohabitation », during which his leadership was challenged. But it is one of the paradoxes of the 5th Republic: a president whose action has been losing elections has rebuilt a new popularity in the impotence of "cohabitation". And François Mitterrand, down five years (1981-1986) from 54% to 39% dissatisfied, back to 61% after nine months of "cohabitation" (Jean-Luc Parodi, « Baromètre IFOP-JDD : 50 ans de hauts et bas », Le Journal du Dimanche, 1<sup>er</sup> mars 2009). He did well at the end of the first "cohabitation" (1988) by getting his reelection as president. But the second "cohabitation" was more difficult for him, because of the serious electoral defeat of the Socialist party in legislative elections in 1993 and the disease that decreased.

Jacques Chirac has never managed to impose a particular style of leadership. He tended to take care of everything. Its popularity is often remained low. By november 1995, Jacques Chirac began a turning point in its policy. Reducing the "social fracture", the theme of presidential campaign, went after the reduction of public deficits. The prime minister, Alain Juppé, has announced a plan on pensions and social security. Jacques Chirac's popularity collapsed with 27% of people satisfied. A year prior to the end of his second term in june 2006, Jacques Chirac falls again to 27% satisfied on its action. Yet he used doctors in communication (including his daughter Claude Chirac) to increase its popularity. This has led to a copycat to ensure the public. In addition, he was a pragmatist, who hesitated in defending its own doctrine. Founder and president of the RPR, he continued to closely monitor the organization and action of his party. However, he faced the rebellion of some of his followers, worried by the presidential successive defeats of their leader (1981 and 1988). Jacques Chirac has suffered most of the third period of « cohabitation » that has reduced its leadership. He did not then show an ability to overcome this weakness and remained lower until the end of his second term.

Nicolas Sarkozy wanted to introduce a true break in the leadership style of French presidents. He decided to take care of everything and thus demonstrated overwhelming activity. Some people talked about him as "hyperprésident." It must be said that his mandate began in the heart of the great economic and financial crisis of 2008. To try to resolve this crisis, he has increased its activities domestically and internationally. On this occasion, he showed some negotiating skills in meetings of the European Council of heads of state or government. But there was also a certain helplessness and therefore a lower leadership. This weakening was due to several reasons: excessive conversion to communication and the role of "spin doctors"; a bandwagon of public opinion; an addiction to television, surveys and social networks; the shortening of the electoral cycle with the introduction of five-year term in 2001; the reference to short-term and immediate effect to the decision.

Nicolas Sarkozy has never been really popular . Nicolas Sarkozy 's situation was unprecedented : the prime minister , François Fillon, was more popular than the president , while since the beginning of the 5th Republic, presidential popularity has always exceeded that of the prime minister , except minor and rare exceptions (Georges Pompidou- Jacques Chaban- Demas or Jacques Chirac – Dominique de Villepin ) . Traditionally it is the president that is perceived as the real boss , that is the visible face of the executive couple. Nicolas Sarkozy has been unpopular eight months after his election in 2007 . It reached its lowest level in april 2011. The five-year term of Nicolas Sarkozy has accelerated the phenomena of unpopularity. He also met the constraints represented by the actions of judges , and the decisions of the Constitutional Council .

François Hollande , too, wanted to introduce a real break with the style of his predecessor. He wanted to become a "normal" president. He delegated much to the prime minister and members of the government. But the accumulation of difficulties led him to want to take over the management of government affairs , with more or less success. The European context is not easy . He found himself in the midst of the deficit caused by public debt of some European countries (Greece, Ireland, Spain, Portugal ) and the crisis of the eurozone. For lack of preparation for the management of financial crises in Europe, François Hollande wanted to play the formation of a coalition of countries regrouping heads of state and government of France , Italy and Spain , causing an irritation of traditional partner of France in Europe , Germany . After many hesitations, François Hollande has opted for an alliance with the German government , as part of an unbalanced partnership . But the European context is not the sole explanation of the difficulties of leadership of François Hollande, because there is also the particularly difficult economic context within : rising unemployment, rising public debt , weak foreign trade. He has failed to adopt a policy of reforms and the measures have been very inadequate. He gives the impression of being powerless to solve all these problems. He is found in a situation of high unpopularity . Social issues always cause lower levels of popularity. He became the most unpopular president since 1958 (20 % satisfied in November 2013).

In conclusion, it is possible to say that only two Presidents ( General de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou ) were able to demonstrate a high level of leadership. These two presidents did not care of everything and they were able to delegate to the prime minister or ministers, responsible for the current business of government. They were not members of a political party, but they were able to gather changing majorities on important issues . The context of the war in Algeria, the Cold War , the beginning of the European integration and the rehabilitation of the French economy has allowed them to develop all the necessary qualities to become a great leader. François Mitterrand found in an enough close attitude. He did not care of everything and was able to delegate , reserving personally important decisions about the end of the Cold War, the reunification of Germany , the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and the creation the single market. He managed to develop close relations with German chancellor Helmut Kohl, but also pacified relations with U.S. President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. But he has had some problems in relations with the Socialist party, too divided into rival factions. He especially faced two episodes of "cohabitation" (1986-1988 and 1993-1995) that were negative for the exercise of leadership.

Some presidents ( Valéry Giscard d' Estaing, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy ) wanted to fix everything by themselves. They were in a close relationship with their party that they headed for more or less time . They also have had extensive use of political communication , with the help of doctors in communication

who played a central role in the devices in power. They showed little commitment to implement reforms. They were particularly unpopular . Their failure to demonstrate leadership qualities led them to experience high levels of unpopularity . The last president , Francois Hollande , is found in the same situation, after two years of the presidency . He is even the most unpopular president since the beginning of the 5th Republic. In november 2013 , Francois Hollande has collapsed at 20 % of positive opinions and concentrated on his person 79 % of negative opinions (Baromètre IFOP-JDD, Le Journal du Dimanche, 17 novembre 2013). Never has a president under the 5th Republic known so little satisfied (Jean-Luc Parodi, « Deux Français sur dix satisfaits », Le Journal du Dimanche, 17 novembre 2013)