

3 Cabinet dynamics and ministerial careers in the French Fifth Republic

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Introduction

France has operated under two constitutional regimes since the end of the Second World War, the purely parliamentary Fourth Republic (1946–58) and since then the semi-presidential Fifth Republic. The immediate cause of the Fourth Republic's demise was the open refusal by the French military to countenance the decolonization of Algeria, but the Algerian Crisis was itself rooted in the structural weakness of the Fourth Republic: the country's deep-seated social cleavages combined with the Fourth Republic's permissive proportional representation electoral system to produce legislative assemblies that were too fragmented and polarized to maintain stable cabinets. The chronic cabinet instability of the Fourth Republic thus left French civil servants and military officers in the regions and colonies to their own devices, unconstrained by and ultimately resentful of civilian executive authority. The crisis was averted by de Gaulle agreeing to return to power, but he did so on the condition he be given a free hand to draft a new constitution. This draft constitution was put to referendum on 28 September 1958, and endorsed overwhelmingly by the French electorate. The Fifth Republic came into force on 4 October 1958.

The Fifth Republic is an innovative fusion of presidential and parliamentary government. The Constitution outlines a dual executive composed of a President, popularly elected since 1962, and a Prime Minister who has the confidence of the majority of the legislature. Article 8 of the Constitution establishes the relationship between the two executive officers, empowering the President to appoint the Prime Minister and, on the advice of the Prime Minister, other cabinet ministers. Article 8 also allows the President to terminate the Prime Minister's appointment when the latter tenders the government's resignation.¹ Similarly, the President terminates the appointments of other cabinet ministers on the Prime Minister's advice. In addition to the powers of appointment and dismissal provided by Article 8, the President is granted the power to chair meetings of the Council of Ministers (i.e. the cabinet) (Article 9) and dissolve the National Assembly (Article 12). Finally, the Constitution designates the President as the 'guarantor of national independence, territorial integrity and observance of treaties' (Article 5) and commander-in-chief of the armed forces (Article 15). These last two articles allow the President to dominate the conduct of French foreign policy.

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The Prime Minister's powers flow from Articles 20 and 21 (Chagnollaud and Quermonne 1996: 337–8). Article 20 empowers the government 'to determine and conduct the policy of the Nation', whilst Article 21 places the government under the direction of the Prime Minister. In constitutional theory, then, the Prime Minister recommends cabinet ministers to the President, sets governmental policy and determines the boundaries of departmental competencies (Elgie 1993: 10). The chief constraints on these Prime Ministerial powers are, first, that the ministerial appointments require the President's approval, and secondly, that ministerial office is incompatible with parliamentary office (Article 23), i.e. ministers cannot sit in parliament and, should they hold a parliamentary seat, must resign it before taking up ministerial office.²

There are several classes of ministers within the government. The lowest rank is comprised of junior ministers, *Secrétaires d'Etat*. Above *Secrétaires d'Etat* one finds three classes of ministers, *Ministres d'Etat*, *Ministres délégués* and *Ministres* (Chagnollaud and Quermonne 1996, 295–8).³ The first of these titles is an honorific reserved for prominent or long-serving politicians, and its usage has declined over time. *Ministres délégués* are ministers who are responsible for a specific policy or function, often within the bailiwick of a larger portfolio (e.g. European Affairs within the Foreign Affairs portfolio). *Ministre* is the more typical title, identifying the holder as responsible for a specific portfolio. French cabinets averaged 36 ministers (all ranks) between 1968 and 2002 (16.5 *Ministres*, 4.5 *Ministres délégués*, 2.4 *Ministres d'Etat*, and 12.5 *Secrétaires d'Etat*), but have also grown slightly larger as time has passed. Indeed, while much was made of Sarkozy's intention to reduce the size of the cabinet, Fillon's second cabinet (June 2007) grew to 32 members, his first having included only 21 members.

The informal rules of the game in French politics

Thanks to the bipolar nature of the French party systems and the important role of pre-electoral agreements, French governments are usually formed within a couple of days of an election (Thiébaud 2000). A strict reading of the Constitution suggests that the Prime Minister controls the management and direction of the cabinet. The President, after all, cannot appoint or remove ministers without the Prime Minister's initiative and, moreover, the President is required to do so upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister. Things work differently in practice, however. The crucial variable is whether the President's party (or coalition) controls the National Assembly. A President who enjoys the support of a parliamentary majority is the cabinet's dominant political figure, in charge of its composition, membership and political direction. In 1976, for example, Giscard d'Estaing created a post for a junior minister of industrial affairs without informing the Prime Minister. Ministers have also been appointed by the President against the advice of the Prime Minister (Safran 1998). For example, in 1974, Giscard d'Estaing appointed Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber against Prime Minister Chirac's wishes (Knapp and Wright 2006).

Of course, the membership of the cabinet is typically the result of consultation between the President and Prime Minister (Wright 1989: 86). However, these

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examples show that during periods of unified government it is the President who has the upper hand. The premiership in these periods takes on the character of a presidential deputy, and certainly Presidents at the head of unified governments have not shied away from sacking their Prime Ministers. De Gaulle set the precedent early on by sacking his first two Prime Ministers, Debré and Pompidou. Pompidou's case is especially illustrative in that he was sacked after just having led the Gaullists to a landslide victory at the legislative elections of 1968 (*Time* 1968). Pompidou's transgression was to hint at his succession to the presidency (Wright 1989), and his subsequent sacking reveals an important maxim of French politics under unified government, namely, that Presidents dismiss Prime Ministers who are either too unpopular or too popular. As Elgie (1993: 1) notes:

When things go well, the President often receives the credit. When things go badly, the Prime Minister usually takes the blame. If things go very badly, and the President starts to be criticised, then the Prime Minister is replaced. If things go very well and the Prime Minister starts to be praised, then the Prime Minister is also replaced.

Things change markedly under cohabitation, the Prime Minister becoming the dominant player in the cabinet and in domestic politics more broadly, the President retiring into his *domaine réservé* of defence and foreign affairs. Prime Ministers do not have untrammelled power to appoint, dismiss or reshuffle ministers during *cohabitation* (divided government), however. Elgie (1993: 50) notes, for example, that Mitterrand vetoed Chirac's appointment of Léotard as Minister of Defence in March 1986. Now, Léotard did get into cabinet as minister of Culture and Communication, and Chirac managed to replace Jacques Fournier, a Mitterrand ally, with Renaud Denoix de Saint Marc, a gaullist, as head of GSG (the French Secret Service). These examples indicate that even during cohabitation Prime Minister Chirac's ability to appoint and dismiss ministers was constrained by President Mitterrand. Stevens (1992: 103) suggests that in these situations reshuffles will take the form of a bargain between the two executives.

The dual executive nature of the Fifth Republic would seem to place French ministers in the position of having to serve two masters, especially during periods of cohabitation. The safety valve in the system is a convention of ministerial autonomy – which is itself less a constitutional ideal than a tacit recognition of a particular set of incentives and constraints. First, the Fifth Republic's dual executive facilitates this sort of ministerial autonomy because it allows ministers to circumvent the Prime Minister by appealing to the President directly (Elgie 1993: 32–3). Secondly, many French ministers have their own power bases as heads of party factions (*courants*).⁴ In the Parti Socialiste (PS), for example, Chevènement, Rocard, Mitterrand, Strauss-Kahn, Jospin, Fabius, Hollande, and Dray were all ministers and factional chieftains (Knapp 2004: 167). Ministers have also been able to amass independent political capital via the French device of *cumul des mandats*, that is, the accumulation of other elected offices. Many deputies and ministers seek mayoral or other positions to secure a power base upon which to solidify their political careers.⁵ Thirdly, French ministers are provided with the

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institutional resources to operate independently. French ministers have cabinets of advisers loyal to them personally, head highly centralized departments and are less subject individually to parliamentary scrutiny than ministers in purely parliamentary systems (Thiébaud 1994: 140–1). Finally, mutual self-interest induces ministers to keep to their own portfolios, a tradition labelled *cloisonnement* or ‘compartmentalization’ (Stevens 1992: 104; Elgie 1993: 30–1).

Ministerial selection

French Prime Ministers are not restricted to choosing ministers from the membership of the National Assembly, and frequently look to the civil service, academia or the private sector for ministerial recruits. This flexibility means that the set of people from whom French Prime Ministers select their ministers is neither strictly defined nor fully observed. Indeed, one observes only the people to whom the Prime Minister has offered (and who have accepted) cabinet office. This selection bias complicates efforts to make accurate statements about ministerial selection in France. Even if we observe a high proportion of lawyers among French ministers, for example, it remains possible that the proportion of lawyers is just as high in the (unobserved) set of those eligible for cabinet office, and that practising law is statistically independent of cabinet membership.

We require some other frame of reference with which to put our data on ministerial selection in context. One comparison to draw is between the Fifth Republic’s first cabinet, Debré I (1959–62), and its successors. Debré I was dominated by politicians who had built their careers under the parliamentary institutions of the Third and Fourth Republics, and so comparisons between Debré I and later cabinets provide a sense of how the complexion of the French cabinet has changed over time and of how it has responded to the transition to semi-presidential government. We focus on three ministerial characteristics, academic training (at the Ecole Nationale d’Administration (ENA), in particular), gender and political experience prior to obtaining ministerial office. Other traits are almost certainly relevant to ministerial selection, but these three characteristics afford us some basis for inferring whether longitudinal changes in the make-up of the French cabinet reflect the changing importance of certain selection criteria or simply mirror changes in the composition of the recruitment pool.

Table 3.1 shows the distribution of these traits across French cabinets. The figures for the Debré cabinet in the first row are followed by the figures for the remaining 30 cabinets clustered in two ways. First, we group the governments by periods of left or right government. Secondly, to provide a more balanced picture of long-term development, we group governments into 15-year periods. To maintain comparability across cabinets and to avoid double-counting individuals, we confine our sample to the initial membership of each cabinet and record data only for an individual’s first ministerial office.⁶

Table 3.1 Educational background, gender and political experience of French ministers (percentages of initial ministers)

Cabinets	Dates	Educational background		Women	Prior political experience				N	
		ENA	IEP		Parliamentary (deputy or senator)	Local politics (regional Councillor or mayor)	Ministerial cabinet	Party position		None
Debré I	9.1.59–14.4.62	0	28.6	0	61.2	0	23.8	4.8	9.5	21
Pompidou I – Barre III	14.4.59–13.5.81	13.4	16.4	3.0	73.1	3.0	7.5	4.5	11.9	67
Mauroy I – Fabius I	21.5.81–20.3.86	17.1	4.9	14.6	61.0	4.9	4.9	4.9	22.0	41
Chirac II	20.3.86–10.5.88	50.0	15.0	5.0	75.0	5.0	15.0	0	5.0	20
Rocard I – Bérégovoy I	10.5.88–29.3.93	29.0	12.9	16.1	51.6	3.2	12.9	3.2	29.0	31
Balladur I – Juppé II	29.3.93–2.6.97	13.5	24.3	18.9	83.8	5.4	2.7	2.7	5.4	37
Jospin	2.6.97–6.5.02	22.2	11.1	33.3	55.6	0	11.1	11.1	0	9
Raffarin I – III	6.5.02–31.5.05	20.6	20.6	26.5	50.0	17.7	11.8	2.9	17.7	34
Pompidou I – Chirac I	14.4.62–25.8.76	12.5	16.1	1.8	75.0	1.8	7.1	5.4	10.7	56
Barre I – Rocard II	27.8.76–15.5.91	25.6	10.0	10.0	63.3	4.4	7.8	3.3	20.0	90
Cresson I – Raffarin III	15.5.91–31.5.05	20.4	20.4	24.8	63.4	9.7	8.6	3.2	11.8	93
Total		18.9	16.5	12.7	65.8	5.4	9.2	3.9	14.2	260

Note: To avoid double counting and ensure a fixed numerical base we have constructed these categories so that they are nested in one another from right to left in the table. The broadest category is therefore parliamentary experience; ministers counted in this column may also have experience in local politics, whereas those listed with experience in local politics are those without any parliamentary experience. Similarly, those who are counted as having local political experience may also have experience as cabinet advisers, but not the reverse. These percentages do not add up to 100 because a small percentage of ministers remaining have experience as Members of the European Parliament.

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Ministerial selection and the ENA

The ENA is one of several *Grandes Ecoles* which serve as training grounds for France's administrative and political elite. What sets the ENA apart from its competitors and what we find useful, however, is the fact that the ENA was founded only in 1945; hence its first cohort of 100-odd graduates (known as *énarques*) was just entering the ministerial recruitment pool at the advent of the Fifth Republic.⁷ In contrast, many of the other *Grandes Ecoles* are over a century old, and so the number of their graduates in the ministerial recruitment pool can be assumed to have been stable throughout the Fifth Republic. Using one of these schools as a comparative base (we chose the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris (IEP) founded in 1872) allows us to assess just how quickly the *énarques* penetrated the cabinet and how relatively advantageous an ENA education has been to ministerial aspirants.

It took some time for a critical mass of *énarques* to build up in the recruitment pool and enter the cabinet. Indeed, no *énarque* held a portfolio in Debré's initial cabinet, though one, Giscard d'Estaing, was the junior finance minister and was soon promoted.⁸ By the next wave of cabinets, however, 12.5 per cent of ministers were *énarques*, almost the same percentage as IEP graduates. Even so, it would take another 10–12 years for the first cohort of *énarques* to reach a retirement age of 65 and for their number in the recruitment pool to stop growing. This suggests that *énarques* enjoyed a success rate in securing ministerial office in the 1970s that was out of all proportion to their numbers in the recruitment pool. The fact that *énarques* and IEP graduates remained in parity in the ministry in the 1990s indicates that this advantage has subsided, though given the ENA's small size (producing less than a fifth of the number of graduates as the IEP) it remains very large.⁹

Ministerial selection and gender

Article 23 makes ministerial office incompatible with parliamentary office, but in doing so it frees French Prime Ministers to look outside parliament for their ministers. This removes two barriers to ministerial office that operated under the Fourth Republic: the need for ministerial aspirants to be selected as a candidate for parliamentary office and to win a seat in the National Assembly. These barriers have proved difficult for French women to overcome, and so one might expect women's cabinet representation to have outstripped their parliamentary representation in the Fifth Republic.¹⁰ This did not occur. Debré's initial cabinet contained no female ministers, with Nafissa Sid Cara joining the cabinet only as a junior minister via a reshuffle. The situation remained largely unchanged through the 1970s and 1980s. The breakthrough (relative to past levels of female cabinet and parliamentary representation) came in 1991 with the elevation of Edith Cresson to the premiership, the first woman to occupy the post. Even so, only 24.8 per cent of new ministers were women over the period 1991–2005 and the percentage of women in the French cabinet remains below parity, achieving a maximum of 34.4 per cent of the posts in Fillon's present cabinet.

Ministerial selection and political experience

One reason why women's cabinet representation remains anchored to their lower levels of parliamentary representation is that the recruitment pool for ministers remains dominated by parliamentarians. Article 23 notwithstanding, 60–75 per cent of French ministers have prior experience as a deputy or senator. This far exceeds the proportion of ministers who arrive only with experience in local politics, as adviser in a ministerial cabinet or after having held an extra-parliamentary party position. Of course, these positions are not mutually exclusive, and many ministers with parliamentary experience were also mayors, cabinet advisers or party executives. This fact hardly dilutes the essential message of these data: parliamentarians claim two of every three ministerial positions. As Gaxie noted in reaching a similar conclusion to ours, winning a national election (i.e. a seat in the National Assembly) is almost a necessity for advancement to the cabinet in the Fifth Republic (Gaxie 1986: 66). In addition, ministers who come to the cabinet from politics (rather than from the civil service) also tend to secure more politically important posts (Gaxie 1986: 68–9).

The Fillon cabinets deserve a special mention with regard to political experience. Fillon's first cabinet included among others a former socialist minister, Bernard Kouchner, as well as Hervé Morin of the Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF) who had lent his support to Bayrou on the first ballot in the preceding presidential election. The composition of the first Fillon cabinet was perceived to be a strategic move to split the opposition and neutralize arguments that Sarkozy's right-wing agenda needed to be balanced by a left-leaning legislature in the upcoming legislative election.

Ministerial career patterns

Taking ministerial tenure as a metric of regime stability, Huber and Martinez-Gallardo (2004) argue that the standard view of a chronically unstable Fourth Republic being replaced by a stable Fifth Republic is overdrawn. This is not because ministers in the Fourth Republic managed to accumulate more experience than one might expect given the regime's high level of cabinet instability, but because the Fifth Republic's stability has not extended to ministerial longevity. Our data echo this message, but there are two points on which we diverge. First, whereas Huber and Martinez-Gallardo suggest that the initial surge in ministerial experience and stability in the early years of the Fifth Republic has declined over time, our data show no such trend. Secondly, our data indicate that the Fifth Republic has succeeded in replacing the statesmen of the Fourth Republic with its own stable core of *ministrables*.

Huber and Martinez-Gallardo argue that the relationship between ministers' portfolio experience (time spent in a specific office) and ministers' cabinet experience (time spent in any cabinet post) provides important information on the cabinet's dynamics. Low levels of portfolio experience combined with high levels of cabinet experience, for example, suggest a cabinet of musical chairs with core *ministrables* regularly exchanging portfolios. The distinction between portfolio

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experience and cabinet experience is a useful one, but in focusing on just the ten most prominent portfolios Huber and Martinez-Gallardo ignore the experience that ministers accumulate as they climb up the ministerial pecking order. A full picture of ministerial careers requires that one tracks both the lateral movement of ministers across portfolios and their vertical movement in the ministerial hierarchy. We use a three-tiered ranking of ministerial positions to track the vertical movement of ministers. The lowest rank is comprised of junior ministers, *Secrétaires d'Etat*. For the ranks above *Secrétaires d'Etat* we use Warwick and Druckman's (2006) portfolio salience measures to divide portfolios into two sets, one containing the twelve most salient 'major' portfolios, the other the remaining 'minor' portfolios.¹¹ As *Ministres d'Etat* tend to hold major portfolios, we count them as a major portfolio in cases where the title appears without a portfolio. Similar reasoning leads us to count *Ministres délégués* as minor portfolios unless there are clear indications to the contrary (e.g. Laurent Fabius as *Ministre délégué auprès du ministre de l'économie et des finances, chargé du budget* in Mauroy's first cabinet). This leaves us with three ranks of ministers: junior ministers, minor ministers and major ministers.

With this ranking system in place we can measure first the time spent in any specific post, secondly the time spent at a given rank, and thirdly the overall length of ministers' careers, from the time they first enter the government until they depart from their final posts. We present these data in Table 3.2, broken down by decade over the course of the Fifth Republic so as to be comparable with Huber and Martinez-Gallardo's data. The average number of months ministers spend in any specific office is between 10 and 15, with no evidence of systematic increases or decreases during the Fifth Republic, not even with the *alternance* of 1981. Much the same is true of ministerial careers, which range only between four and five years on average. One pattern that we observe in the data is that ministers spend about twice as long at a given rank as they do in any specific post, and further that their careers span twice as long again as the average time they spend at a given rank. This pattern suggests that a typical ministerial career in the Fifth Republic involves a minister gaining 24–30 months' experience in two different posts before advancing in rank to spend an additional 24–30 months at two more posts.

This picture of a typical ministerial career is somewhat misleading, however. Notice that the overall means in Table 3.2 are high relative to the decade-by-decade means. This suggests the presence of a coterie of experienced ministers scattered

Table 3.2 Average time in the French government

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Months in post</i>	<i>Months in rank</i>	<i>Months in government</i>
1960s	14.3	26.6	57.2
1970s	10.2	24.6	48.9
1980s	12.6	25.0	51.8
1990s	12.8	26.7	64.6
2000s	13.4	22.0	54.0
Overall	15.3	28.2	58.3

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amongst a large group of ministerial transients; only when this long-lived coterie is collected together, not dispersed across the decade-by-decade subgroups, does it noticeably affect the overall means. This view is buttressed by evidence set out in Figure 3.1, which shows the number of posts held by ministers through their careers. Most ministers hold only a single post, and the median number of posts held is just two, but about 10 per cent of ministers hold five or more posts in their careers. A similar picture emerges from Figure 3.2, which shows the length of ministerial careers in the Fifth Republic. The career length distribution is highly skewed to right with most careers lasting less than 50 months. Nevertheless, some 20 per cent of ministers have careers that are at least twice as long. The ministers in this class are among the most prominent figures of modern French politics: Giscard d'Estaing, Chirac, Faure, Raffarin, Rocard, Bérégovoy, Couve de Murville, Cresson, Juppé, Sarkozy, and Fabius to name a few.

It is worth considering the career path of one of these long-lived ministers in detail. Jacques Chirac's career serves as a good example both because Chirac built his career entirely within the confines of the Fifth Republic and because he served in so many capacities.¹² Chirac's ministerial career began on 6 April 1967 with his appointment as *Secrétaire d'Etat* and it was only after his fourth stint as a junior minister that he was promoted to *Ministre délégué*. Eighteen months later, in 1972, Chirac was given his first major portfolio, becoming *Ministre de l'agriculture et du développement rural*. Chirac then served briefly as *Ministre de l'intérieur* in 1974 before securing the premiership itself.

On resigning the premiership on 25 August 1976, Chirac's career trajectory takes a turn that would be considered unusual in many democracies. Chirac

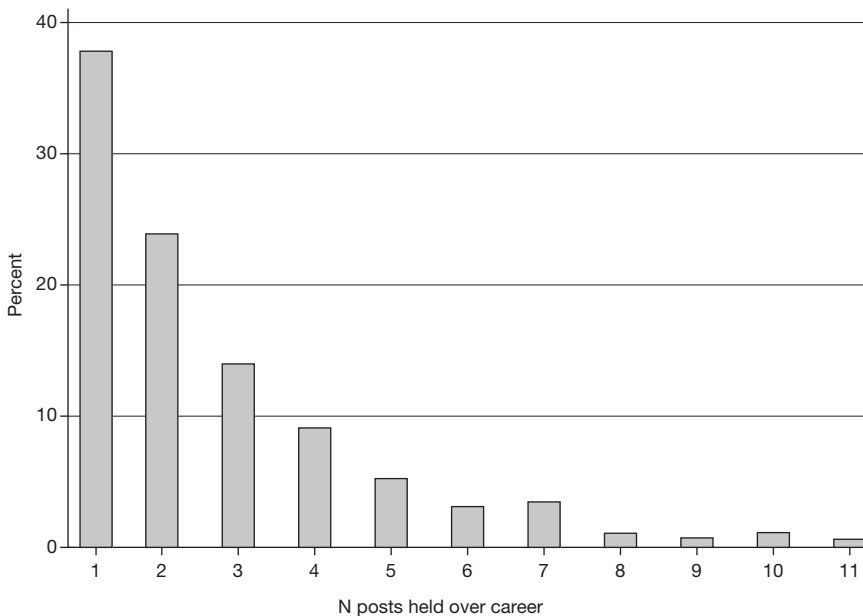


Figure 3.1 Number of offices held by Ministers in the French Fifth Republic

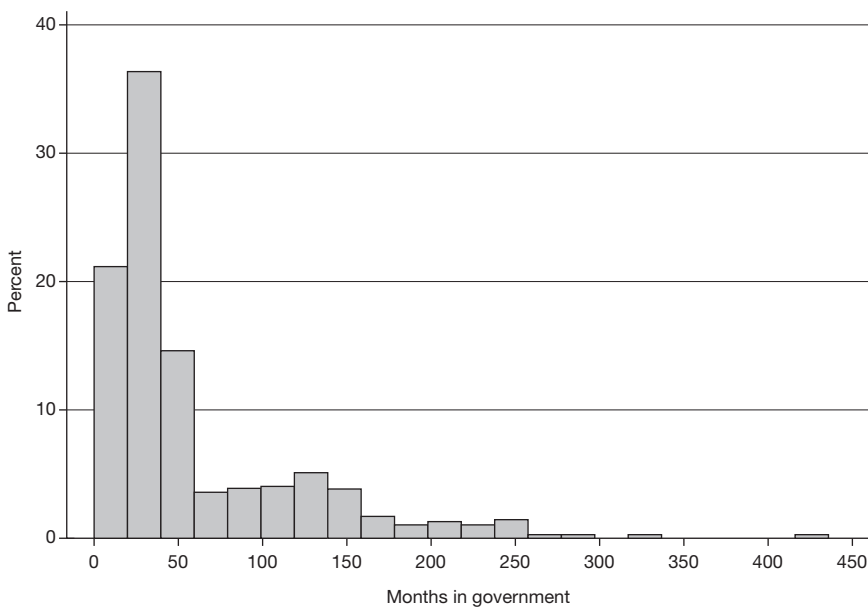
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Figure 3.2 The length of ministerial careers in the French Fifth Republic

returned to parliament, secured the chairmanship of the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR), won and gave up a seat in the European Parliament, and become mayor of Paris (an office he retained until 1995). When he returned to government on 20 March 1986, Chirac returned as Prime Minister. Chirac's second term as premier (and France's first experience with cohabitation) lasted two years until socialist electoral gains forced him out of office. Even this was not the end of Chirac's political career: Seven years later, on 7 May 1995, he was elected to the presidency. What we find instructive here, and quite unique to French politics, is the capacity of a small subset of French ministers to build up and fall back on alternative bases of political power so that they can leave and return to ministerial office, repeatedly and over long periods of time.

How typical is Chirac's career? How many ministers fall by the wayside after holding just one or two government posts for every Jacques Chirac who manages to move from portfolio to portfolio while climbing steadily up the ministerial pecking order? Table 3.3 helps us answer this question. For each minister we know what position the minister held just previously (i.e. $p-1$) and what position he held next (i.e. $p+1$). Cross-tabulating every minister's past and future positions as in Table 3.3 thus provides an overall sense of ministerial advancement and mobility in the Fifth Republic.¹³ The bottom row of Table 3.3 indicates that any given point in time we can expect 36.9 per cent of French ministers to be exiting the government, 17.4 per cent to be acting as *Secrétaires d'Etat*, 24.1 per cent to be holding minor portfolios, and 21.6 per cent to be holding major portfolios. Three things stand out in Table 3.3. First, between 35 and 40 per cent of all ministers are out of government within two periods, and, except for ministers in major portfolios,

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Table 3.3 Career advancement and mobility among French ministers. Vertical axis: position at $p - 1$. Horizontal axis: position at $p + 1$. Cell entries are row percentages, with the raw numbers shown in parentheses

	<i>Outside</i>	<i>Secrétaire d'Etat</i>	<i>Minor portfolio</i>	<i>Major portfolio</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Outside</i>	36.7 (181)	22.2 (108)	26.7 (131)	14.3 (70)	490
<i>Secrétaire d'Etat</i>	37.4 (104)	34.9 (97)	17.6 (49)	10.1 (28)	278
<i>Minor portfolio</i>	38.2 (110)	5.2 (15)	32.3 (93)	24.3 (70)	288
<i>Major portfolio</i>	35.3 (85)	2.1 (5)	16.2 (39)	46.5 (112)	241
<i>Total</i>	36.9 (479)	17.4 (226)	24.1 (312)	21.6 (280)	1297

exit from the government is the most likely destination. Indeed, 14 per cent of all French ministers (181 of 1,297) are out of government after serving in a just single post. Secondly, alongside this picture of transience is one of stability: Ministers who still hold a post (i.e. $p+1$ is not 'outside') are most likely to be in a position of the same rank. This is especially true of holders of major portfolios, 46.5 per cent of whom retain a high-level cabinet position (though perhaps not the same one). Thirdly, fewer than 25 per cent of junior ministers or minor portfolio holders at any given point in time move on to a higher office. The corollary of most ministers exiting or remaining in place is that only a minority of French ministers advances in office.

Departing from government

The short spells that French ministers spend in any specific post are largely due to frequent government terminations. What tends to happen is that every 18 months (on average) the Prime Minister brings his or her government to a formal end. Sometimes the Prime Minister stays in place, and the government is remade within days with many of the same ministers reappointed. On other occasions, however, the Prime Minister is replaced and a wholly new cabinet is formed. This process is often triggered by election results of some sort, and between presidential, parliamentary, cantonal, municipal, and European elections there is almost always an election for a French Prime Minister to respond to. Some recent examples show the range of conditions under which this process of government termination and reformation unfolds:

1. *The Socialist victory at the June 1997 parliamentary elections.* In 1997, Chirac dissolved the National Assembly to trigger early parliamentary elections. Chirac's gambit backfired, however, and the PS and their allies won the election. Faced with a hostile parliamentary majority, Chirac was forced to accept Alain Juppé's resignation and install Lionel Jospin as the new Prime Minister.

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2. *The Presidential and parliamentary elections of May–June 2002.* Following his re-election and Jospin's resignation, Chirac appointed an interim government led by his own party's Jean-Pierre Raffarin. Notwithstanding his party's success in the legislative election the following month, Raffarin tendered his government's resignation, but Chirac immediately reappointed Raffarin and the government was reformed.

3. *The regional elections of March 2004.* The Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) suffered a significant setback at the March 2004 regional elections. Raffarin responded by tendering his resignation, but again Chirac reappointed Raffarin to the premiership and the government was reformed, though with many personnel changes.

4. *The referendum to ratify the EU constitution in May 2005.* Chirac and the government championed the ratification of the EU constitution and, following its defeat, Raffarin tendered his resignation for a third time. This time Chirac accepted and appointed Dominique de Villepin as Prime Minister.

The first and fourth cases involve the constitutional replacement of one government by another. The second and third cases, on the other hand, are effectively cabinet reshuffles in the French style. In all these cases, however, ministers' appointments are formally terminated. Consequently, it is not surprising to learn that, of the 1,307 ministerial posts in our dataset, 1,131 (86 per cent) were ended by a government termination. A more accurate account of ministerial attrition in France requires tracking how many ministers are reappointed to the government after these terminations. We do this in Table 3.4 which lists the six ways in which the ministerial appointments in our data set end: A cabinet termination – followed by reappointment or not, a reshuffle from one post to another exclusive of those that take place as a result of termination, the end of an interim appointment, resignation and death. Most ministers (54.2 per cent) are reappointed following a government termination, with two-thirds of these reappointments seeing the minister take up a different office in the government. Another 8 per cent of cases are shuffled independently of a cabinet termination. A further 32.4 per cent of ministers are not reappointed. In many of these cases, the ministers are effectively sacked, but in others the ministers are not reappointed because their government has suffered an electoral defeat (see example 1 above). The remaining appointments are ended because their holder dies, has completed an interim appointment or resigns.

Table 3.4 Reasons for the end of French ministerial appointments

	<i>N</i>	%
Cabinet termination without reappointment	423	32.4
Cabinet termination followed by reappointment	708	54.2
Reshuffle	105	8.0
Resignation	60	4.6
End of interim appointment	6	0.5
Death	5	0.4
<i>Total</i>	1307	

Reasons for resignation

Resignations are only a small fraction (4.6 per cent) of all ministerial exits, but because they are often connected to important political events they deserve attention. Policy differences are one reason for resignation, and several cases can be cited, e.g. Pierre Sudreau's resignation as Minister of Education in 1962 in protest against the direct election of the President and Jean-Pierre Chevènement's resignations, first as Minister of Research and Industry in 1983 in protest against Mitterrand's changed course on economic policy and, then, from his post as Minister of Defence in 1991 in protest over the Gulf War. A resignation on the grounds of policy disagreement is also a means by which ministers distance themselves from the government and establish themselves as independent electoral actors. Rocard's resignation from Fabius's government in April 1985 is one example of this sort of resignation, as he intended to be a Presidential candidate for the left had Mitterrand retired.

Ministers are also forced from office by policy failures, though again there is a significant difference in the way these events are handled in France as opposed to Britain. In France, Article 68-1 of the Constitution makes ministers criminally liable for their actions in office. Article 68-1 has only been invoked once to date, in 1999 when Laurent Fabius, Georgina Dufoix and Edmond Hervé were charged with manslaughter on account of having failed in their official capacities to protect France's blood supply from HIV contamination in the mid-1980s.¹⁴ All three were out of office by the time the trial occurred, and so one can only conjecture as to how the process might have affected their ministerial tenures; Hervé and Dufoix have not held ministerial office since.

Resignations have also been guided by informal rules adopted by government leaders. Bérégovoy initiated the principle that ministers placed under investigation were required to resign from their post, and this principle has remained in place with Bernard Tapie resigning in 1992, Alain Carignon, Gérard Longuet and Michel Roussin in 1994, Dominique Strauss-Kahn in 1999 and Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres in 2002.¹⁵ Other prime ministers, e.g. Fillon, have insisted that ministers who run for election resign if they fail to win a seat. Alain Juppé, minister of the environment, transportation and energy and number two in Fillon's cabinet, was forced to resign after losing the Bordeaux constituency in 2007.

Personal scandals provide a third ground for resignation, and on this front we do not lack for examples. Financial scandals are especially frequent in France, and a party-financing scandal in the 1990s that encompassed almost every political party suggests that some of the problems are systemic rather than personal in nature.¹⁶ It is not just the number of ministers allegedly involved in corrupt activities that is startling, but their stature: Dominique Strauss-Kahn, a former finance minister, Alain Juppé and Pierre Bérégovoy, former premiers, and Chirac, himself, have all been accused of financial wrong-doing. One should not come away thinking that French ministerial careers are especially vulnerable to personal scandals, however. They are, in fact, fairly resistant: Of the 39 scandals we documented involving sitting ministers, only 13 led to resignation.¹⁷

54 *The selection of ministers in Europe***Conclusions**

The Fifth Republic is a hybrid of parliamentary and presidential government. The introduction of a dual executive has certainly changed French cabinet dynamics. This is especially noticeable during periods of unified government, when the Prime Minister and the government are driven by the President's political agenda. Thus, we observe prime ministers handing in their resignations and their governments terminated to protect the President. In other ways, however, the Fifth Republic has left longstanding cabinet dynamics intact. French ministerial careers have remained stubbornly parliamentary in nature, a repeatedly vacated and reoccupied seat in the National Assembly (or failing that, in the Senate) remaining the primary power base of most French ministers. And French ministers, at least those who hope to become part of the regime's core set of *ministrables*, must develop alternative power bases. French ministerial careers are not long, but they are flexible and the government permeable; provided a *ministvable* remains politically active, in parliamentary, municipal or European politics, a French minister can repeatedly enter and exit government.

Notes

- 1 An English translation of the French Constitution of 4 October 1958 can be obtained online from the National Assembly's website, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/english/8ab.asp> (last visited 9 March 2007).
- 2 Zarka (2000) is a useful guide to the constitutional arrangements and norms of France's semi-presidential regime.
- 3 *Garde des sceaux* (Keeper of the Seals) is another ministerial title, but one that is held alongside the justice portfolio. Debré's initial cabinet also listed four *ministres conseillers*, all of whom were indigenous political leaders of major French colonies. Once these colonies became independent, the title disappeared. We exclude these *ministres conseillers* from our analysis.
- 4 This is a more recent development; prior to Mitterrand's presidency ministers tended to emerge from the civil service rather than from party politics (Thiébaud 1994). About 35 per cent of the ministers since 1959 have had background in the civil service (Lacam 2000: 115).
- 5 Prime ministers Mauroy (Lille in Nord), Mollet (Arras in Pas-de-Calais) and Fabius (Grand-Quevilly in Seine-Maritime) all held mayorships, and among ministers Defferre (Marseille in Bouches-du-Rhône), Soldani (Draguignan in Var), and Chevènement (Belfort) held mayorships. Article 23 forbids members of the government from simultaneously holding another public office, so ministers must resign from any other such office before assuming government office.
- 6 At this stage of the analysis we exclude junior ministers.
- 7 If the first cohort of *énarques* graduated in 1948 (coursework at the ENA takes three years) at about 25 years of age, they would have required some 10 years of professional and political seasoning before they were eligible for ministerial office. (Only two ministers out of the 314 in our full sample assumed office before they were 35; Jacques Soustelle and François Mitterrand were 33 and 31 years old, respectively, on first assuming ministerial office.) This would mean that the first cohort of *énarques* would have been eligible for ministerial office in 1958. Although our sample contains ministers during the Fifth Republic, some ministers may have first entered office during the Fourth Republic.
- 8 Giscard d'Estaing was also an alumnus of the Ecole Polytechnique, another of the established *Grandes Ecoles*, however.

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- 9 In the absence of exact numbers on the number of graduates from each school we cannot say precisely how much more likely an *énarque* was to be selected as a minister than an IEP graduate, and we should keep in mind that over time the number of ministers who have attended both schools has also grown.
- 10 Matland's (1998) data show that only 4.3 per cent of National Assembly deputies were women in 1980, and only 10.9 per cent in 1997. As of October 2007, 13.3 per cent of French deputies were women (http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/tribun/g2.asp#P-1_0 (visited 7 October 2007)).
- 11 The twelve major portfolios are: the premiership, finance, interior, justice, foreign affairs, education, defence, budget, agriculture, labour, industry and planning.
- 12 An English translation of Chirac's biography can be found at http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/anglais/the_President/biography/biography.39706.html (visited 20 March 2007).
- 13 It may seem counter-intuitive not to use ministers' present positions (i.e. p) in the cross-tabulations – but by definition a minister cannot have been outside the government at both $p-1$ and p . Of course, cross-tabulating ministers' immediate past and future positions blinds the analysis to cases in which an individual moves from a low-ranking position at $p-1$ to a higher position at p , and then down again at $p+1$. Empirically, however, this is a minor issue: in only 17 cases did a government member at $p-1$ assume a higher office at p followed by a lower office at $p+1$. Similarly, in only 16 cases did a minister move from a higher office to a lower office and then back to a higher office. Thus, these irregular career trajectories represent just 2.5 per cent of the data.
- 14 Fabius, Dufoix and Hervé were Prime Minister, Social Affairs Minister and Secretary of State for Health, respectively, in Fabius's government. See, e.g., Bosia (2007), Chalaby (2004) and *British Medical Journal* (1998).
- 15 See http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/049/article_26173.asp (visited 6 February 2007).
- 16 The scandal resulted in a number of convictions of ministers or former ministers, including Henri Emmanuelli of the PS, François Léotard of the Parti Républicain (PR) and the UMP, Pierre Méhaignerie of the Centre des Démocrates Sociaux (CDS) and Gérard Longuet of the PR.
- 17 Half the scandals involved financial misconduct. Many instances of financial misconduct come to light only after the ministers have left office. Of 43 ministers placed under legal investigation for financial misconduct between 1990 and 2000, only five were in office at the time (Adut 2004).

Note on sources

Our data on ministerial appoints are derived from *Les gouvernements et les assemblées parlementaires sous la Vème République 1958–2004* (Paris: Assemblée nationale, July 2004). Biographical data come primarily from *Who's Who in France*, though for ministers who held office early in the Fifth Republic, Benoit Yvert's *Premiers ministres et présidents du conseil: histoire et dictionnaire raisonné des chefs du gouvernement en France, 1815–2002* (Paris: Perrin, 2002) and websites at the Académie française (<http://www.academie-francaise.fr/>) and Ordre de la Libération (<http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/>) proved helpful. Information on political scandals is taken from *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*.

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