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Emile Chabal, *A Divided Republic: Nation, State, and Citizenship in Contemporary France*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 314 pp. \$99.99 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781107061514.

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*A Divided Republic: Nation, State, and Citizenship in Contemporary France* provides a detailed and well-researched examination of how the French political sphere and political language have changed in the past three decades following the *Trente Glorieuses*. More than just a political history, Emile Chabal brings together a multitude of sources to address how the French national narrative has changed since the 1980s. Moments such as Francois Mitterrand's presidential victory in 1981 or the French bicentennial in 1989 (the same year as the *affaire du foulard*, or headscarf affair, and the fall of the Berlin Wall) are framed as what political scientists refer to as "critical junctures." Simply put, "critical junctures are characterized by the adoption of a particular institutional arrangement from among two or more alternatives."<sup>[1]</sup> These junctures are critical due to their distinctive legacies, which make it difficult to return to the initial moment before such a change was made.<sup>[2]</sup>

This illuminating book is divided into two parts. Part one addresses the return of neo-Republicanism and the continuing writing and rewriting of the French national narrative. Part two addresses the revival of French liberalism since the late 1970s. Yet Chabal is careful to note how the boundaries between republican and liberal politics are not so rigid, as "it is perfectly possible for political actors to use both languages at different times or for different audiences" (p. 6). Neither is either of these political languages completely unified or coherent. Rather, Chabal focuses on how actors themselves assert their republican or liberal *bona fides*. Throughout the book, Chabal puts forth a new interpretation of contemporary French political life, by focusing on elite actors, including political and civil society activists, career politicians, intellectuals and academics, and journalists. He emphasizes juxtaposing these actors and their ideas with their contexts, and argues that understanding the tension between liberalism and neo-republicanism is key to understanding modern French politics. These are tensions that go beyond normal Left versus Right distinctions.

Part one begins with a distinction between two narratives of republicanism--transformative and institutional--both of which emphasize unifying the Republic and downplaying differences. Chabal first positions these narratives in a historical context, focusing on the French Revolution in 1789 and the Third Republic from 1870 to 1940. The transformative narrative references the French Revolution and "republican values," including *laïcité*. The institutional narrative emphasizes, as the name suggests, the Republic as an institution and political regime. This is exemplified by historian Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de memoire*, which sought to situate the Republic as the true embodiment of the nation, and historian Maurice Agulhon's work on Marianne as a symbol of the Republic. Chapter two examines how we should think about the relationship between neo-republicanism and French Marxism (or the end thereof), by discussing the trajectories of intellectuals (and former Marxists) Alain Finkielkraut and Régis Debray, and their political influence (Chabal smartly includes how French Marxism was different from Marxism in different national contexts, most notably in its emphasis on political matters over economic and labor). For example, Debray became disenchanted with Marxism in the 1970s and later

argued for the need for a strong republican state. Finkelkraut decried the debasement of Western values in *l'école républicaine* and later supported the restrictive nationality legislation passed in 1993.

After discussing the intellectual roots of neo-republicanism, Chabal argues in chapter three that Socialist politics in the 1980s helped to cement neo-republicanism's influence in the political sphere. He discusses how the language of neo-republicanism was present in the presidency of François Mitterrand, and further traces its influence in three public debates: the headscarf and the *burqa*, the *loi sur la parité* (or equal representation of women in politics), and the question of regional languages. For example, through the 2009 ban on the *burqa* (strictly speaking, a ban on the "concealment of the face in a public space" approved by the Assemblée Nationale and the Sénat in 2010), we see how neo-republicanism became the dominant discourse in discussions on *laïcité*, as the full veil was framed as a fundamental threat to the French Republic. Interestingly, with the debate on equal representation of women in politics, the language of neo-republicanism was used both for and against proposed changes. Chabal also emphasizes how these debates went beyond "normal" Left versus Right distinctions and were based on the idea of a strong Republic and the fear of communitarianism.

Chapter four discusses how neo-republicanism played out in the postcolonial context, specifically how *la intégration* was framed using the language of neo-republicanism directed at post-colonial immigrant communities, or migrants from former French colonies. Chabal discusses the absence of academic engagement with postcolonial immigration, with the exception of historian Gérard Noiriel's *Le Creuset Français* [*The Melting Pot*]. The implications of this were stark: "There was no space for the experience of immigrants or foreigners within the French national narrative, despite the fact that France had a higher rate of immigration in relation to the overall population than the United States for long periods in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (pp. 82-83). This is a helpful reminder of how national narratives or narratives of national identity often do not correspond with demographic realities, either historically or in the present. Yet Chabal smartly critiques Noiriel for downplaying colonialism and conflating the challenges of "ethnic" integration and social integration. As Chabal writes, "it is telling that the scholar who did most to rehabilitate immigration as an object of serious study in the 1980s France simultaneously found himself reproducing a number of neo-republican assumptions" (p. 85).

While Noiriel sheds a light on the place of immigration in the French national narrative, he does so using the language of neo-republicanism. Post-colonial immigration became increasingly framed as a threat to the Republic, and part of *la fracture sociale*, which was also invoked in the wake of the 2005 uprisings in the *banlieues*. This language of the Republic in danger or threatened is a common trope of neo-republicanism. From 1989 to 2013, the *Haut Conseil à l'Intégration* (HCI) was the institutional arm for the "French model of integration," and stressed the importance of shared values and the *lien social* (social bond). This neo-republican language was also employed to ignore discrimination based on ethnic origin, including using positive discrimination, or affirmative action, as remedies for discrimination and also against the collection of ethnic statistics. *La communautarianisme* is the ultimate example of *la fracture sociale*, a threat to the Republic by dividing it along community lines.

The last chapter in part one discusses how the Anglo-American world has served as a counter-model against which French national identity has been continually debated and constructed. Chabal charts the increasing prevalence of *le modele anglo-saxon* in French political discourse, as Britain and the United States become easily conflated. "Anglo-Saxon" represents free-market capitalism (including deregulation and free trade) and an identity politics of multiculturalism. For example, the 2005 uprisings were portrayed as an example of American-style multiculturalism penetrating French society, or riots *à l'anglo-saxonne*, as French demographer Michèle Tribalat termed it. This fear of the all things Anglo-Saxon was also present in discussion about changes to the French language and critiques of Britain's influence on European politics.

Part two shifts to discuss French liberalism in recent decades which, while not as coherent or “strong” as French neo-republicanism, nonetheless sought to challenge it by, among other things, arguing for a reassessment of the need for a strong nation-state and for an openness towards ideas from outside of France. As in part one, part two begins with the intellectual origins of this liberal revival by examining philosopher and sociologist, Raymond Aron. In particular, he focuses on how Aron has been memorialized through his journal, *Commentaire*, which he founded, and the Institut Raymond Aron at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Following this, chapter seven examines the work of François Furet and Pierre Rosanvallon, who interpreted French history differently than did the neo-republicans. In doing so, Chabal shows how liberalism emerged as a “critique of the left *from* the left” (p. 159), which differs from its trajectory in the United States and the United Kingdom. What is particularly interesting regarding French liberalism is the reluctance of its adherents to adopt the term “liberal.” Rather, Chabal positions particular individuals as liberal for contributing to a liberal critique of French political life.

In chapter eight, Chabal returns to France’s postcolonial context, this time considering how multiculturalism, colonial memory, and ethnic identity politics fit within the liberal revival. In particular, he demonstrates how the neo-republican color-blind model of *intégration* has been challenged in recent decades. In the mid-1980s, there was a brief period of ethnic identity politics, or *la droit à la différence*, in which minority identity was more openly discussed. This included the rise of *Beur* literature and politics, the *Marche pour l’égalité et contre le racisme* (or *Marche des Beurs*) in 1983, the formation of SOS Racisme, an anti-racist organization, and the French academy’s engagement with multiculturalism. Sociologist Michel Wieviorka argued for an appreciation of diversity and differences within contemporary French society, which also challenged neo-republicanism’s framing of the nation as coherent and united. This is similar to challenging France’s silence around its colonial past and acknowledging it as part of French history: “by targeting the moral foundation of republicanism—that is, its historical narrative—it has ensured that colonial memories will continue to haunt France for years to come” (p. 198). Despite the various memory laws that were passed during this period, Chabal notes that this period was short-lived. Yet it still led to an openness regarding race, ethnicity, and difference in French society, Chabal argues. However, considering the evidence marshaled to explain the dominance of the neo-republican framework, one wonders if the acceptance of multiculturalism within France is a bit overstated.

Chapter nine covers the growing appeal of the “language of crisis,” a way of critiquing the role of the state and politics more generally, as well as emphasizing economics (in contrast to the emphasis on the nation in neo-republicanism). In this blocked society, or *la société bloquée*, there is a “detachment of the elites from the people” or a “crisis of representation” (p. 211). The pervasiveness of the language of crisis could also be seen in the television program *Vive la crise!*, and journalist François de Closets’s essays. Sociologist Michel Crozier used this term to describe contemporary French society and argued for reforms in administration, the social system, and the political system. Others pushed for reforms of the welfare state, including health care provisions, and higher education, including the status distinctions between universities and the *grandes écoles*. The final chapter considers the political implications of this liberal revival which, while not as dominant as neo-republicanism’s impact on politics, has nonetheless been influential for both the left and the right. This includes the *deuxième gauche*, what Chabal refers to as the liberal strand of the non-communist left, and Michel Rocard, who spoke of two political cultures on the French left (centralizing versus decentralizing). For the right, the relationship to liberalism is charted through the activities of *Club de l’Horloge* and Club 89, the writings of Jean-Yves Le Gallou, and the political trajectories of Alain Madelin and Jean-Pierre Raffarin, all of which sought to promote free-market values.

Chabal concludes this book with a reflection on the lack of consensus in contemporary French politics, discussing the perceived gap between political rhetoric and practice due to an underestimation of the role of French liberalism. By putting French liberalism in its rightful place in the French political

sphere, we can better understand the relationship between nation, state, and citizens. By focusing on the two political languages—neo-republicanism and liberalism, Chabal provides not only a thorough examination of contemporary French politics, but also a much-needed intervention into the role of immigration, colonialism, and minority politics in French national identity. More than well written, *A Divided Republic* is an important book.

#### NOTES

[1] Jim Mahoney, “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology,” *Theory and Society* 29(2000): 507-548, p. 513.

[2] Mahoney; Ruth Berin Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

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