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Herrick Chapman. *France's Long Reconstruction: In Search of the Modern Republic*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2018. x + 405 pp. Notes and index. \$45.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 9780674976412.

Review by Kenneth Mouré, University of Alberta.

Reconstruction after a major war is generally concerned with the rebuilding of material damage. Herrick Chapman reframes France's postwar era as a "long reconstruction" that stretches from Liberation in 1944 to the end of the Algerian war. His ambitious agenda in *France's Long Reconstruction* is to tackle this hugely consequential transition for France—as an economic, social, and political community—from Vichy to the early Fifth Republic. The key developments in this national reconstruction of the state and the economy were undertaken in circumstances demanding democratic renewal, after Vichy's anti-democratic National Revolution had been swept away. Chapman is very conscious of the many continuities in state personnel and in policy ideas that guided developments across the dramatic regime changes, from Vichy to democratic governance in 1944-1946, and again in de Gaulle's return to establish the Fifth Republic in 1958.[1] His coverage stretches back not just to the dark years of Occupation, but also to the last years of the Third Republic.

The first chapter, "Liberation Authorities," sets parameters for his analysis. It covers the first months after Liberation, in which Charles de Gaulle and his *Commissaires de la République* worked to restore order, to reinstate the power of a central government badly compromised under Vichy, and to establish the legitimacy of this new government in French and Allied eyes through a renewal of democratic practice. Chapman complements insightful analysis of the structure and style of this state renewal under an imperious de Gaulle with close attention to the vital legitimizing role played at the grassroots level by popular demands. Local and regional liberation committees, unions demanding the nationalization of collaborationist businesses, and popular demands for improved food supply, increased rations, and suppression of the prospering black market, all influenced the restoration and democratization of the state. The tensions between these two levels of political direction, in seeking to renew a weak and compromised state, afforded greater potential influence to civil servants and expert advisors who would go on to play a dynamic role in modernizing the French economy and social welfare system.

The next chapters cover four critical "policy domains:" the study of sets of policy issues that generate particular networks of interaction between state policy makers, expert advisors, and all those in society who try to influence these policies and their administration.[2] This framing provides a broader approach than policy history focused on the state alone. The study of policy

domains looks more broadly at how state authority, popular demands and expert opinions are engaged in “social and political contestations.” The four domains examined by Chapman involve a reordering of state power, the modernization of the French economy, and the development of key social welfare measures. The first domain, covered in “Available Hands,” concerns the formulation of labor policy to meet France’s enormous reconstruction needs and the depletion of labor power during the war. Returning prisoners of war and conscripted labor from Germany after the Nazi defeat fell far short of meeting France’s reconstruction needs. German prisoners were employed, women were encouraged to rejoin the workforce, and the Commissariat général du plan estimated in 1946 that France would need at least 1.5 million new immigrants. Immigration policy became vital to French reconstruction. The creation of the Office national d’immigration in November 1945 was part of a serious state effort to recruit foreign labor. Chapman explores issues of workers’ rights, particularly for immigrants, and the racism in state policy that sought to favor the right kind of immigrants, “Nordic” types rather than Eastern Europeans and North Africans.

“Shopkeeper Turmoil” analyzes the rising tide of popular resistance, especially by shopkeepers and small and medium size business owners, to the continued use of Vichy-era economic controls after Liberation. The wave of protests and violence against state officials crested in the spring of 1947 with demonstrations and violence against the state offices responsible for price controls, suppression of the black market, and the confiscation of “illicit profits” gained through wartime collaboration and black markets. Chapman terms the 1947 protests a “rehearsal for revolt” (p. 81). Although the unrest subsided, populist protests erupted again with greater anger and greater political impact in the Poujadist movement beginning in 1953. These insurrections did change state policy: they resulted in the retreat of tax inspectors and changes in tax policy to appease popular discontents, a significant success for grassroots activism.

Family policies are the third domain, in “Family Matters,” covering from interwar and Vichy policy initiatives to the early Fifth Republic, and situating state concerns for family in the contexts of encouraging births (as “population” policy after Vichy’s emphasis on “family” had discredited that term in policy), family allowances, the development of new expertise on birthing and household management, and the increased mobilization of women in politics and their grassroots influence on state policies. Across the political fractures between Vichy, the Fourth and then the Fifth Republics, Chapman shows a strong continuity in state concerns and personnel, an increasing reliance on expertise, and an important tempering of state ambitions by the mobilization of women’s organizations, Catholic groups and trade unions. The fourth domain, the postwar nationalizations covered as “Enterprise Politics,” provides political context and a concise overview of policies and labor-management relations for the postwar nationalizations in the fields of banking, electricity, coal and the railroads.

This summary indicates the breadth of Chapman’s coverage. In content and argument, the chapters are admirably concise. His exposition blends established scholarship and new archival research with clear and perceptive analysis. Chapman wishes “to recapture the complexity, conflict, and open-endedness of the reconstruction era—to understand how people at the time saw their problems and options, how they fought with one another about the role of the state, how they absorbed their victories and defeats, and how they learned to defend their interests and convictions in an increasingly state-managed economy” (p. 16). In this he definitely succeeds, and he does so with great respect for the key players and their differences.

The policy domain chapters are followed by two chapters adding detail on the personal commitments to the renovation of the state and the important influence of French efforts to maintain control of Algeria. “Reformer Dilemmas” compares the career trajectories and the accomplishments of Pierre Mendès France and Michel Debré, both former Resistance members, and deeply committed to establishing a new, modern republic after the war. Mendès France and Debré both developed policy expertise and sought stronger state direction. But their strategies for change diverged. Mendès France emphasized popular support and criticized overreliance on experts and executive power at the expense of popular sympathy and an engaged citizenry. Debré valued technocratic authority (he was a key advocate and the “guiding spirit” in the creation of the *École nationale de l’administration* in 1945) to provide the expertise needed for a strong executive authority to direct policy and development.<sup>[3]</sup> Both were strong advocates of robust state planning and the use of expert advice. Both had significant influence on state policy, with Mendès France as premier bringing an end to the war in Indochina, while Debré helped write the constitution of the Fifth Republic and led its first government.

The final chapter, “Algerian Anvil,” elucidates the importance of the French commitment to Algeria in the increasing state role in population management that engaged with populations in both Algeria and France, as well as in economic and social planning, French labor needs, and increasing use of the executive powers of the president. The French battle to retain control of Algeria engages policy and contestations of power across the policy domains covered in earlier chapters. The conclusion to the war in 1962 brings an end to the crises that altered power distribution in the early Fifth Republic, leaving a system that had stabilized with a stronger state, an accepted and visible reliance on technocrats, and with ongoing tensions between the centralized state direction and the democratic forces needed to resist and reverse unpopular projects and to legitimate new state efforts.

Does this stretching of the time frame and the scale of “reconstruction” work? Reconstruction is typically limited to the years of physical rebuilding after the war. As such, it makes a brief but essential appearance as the first phase in the period Jean Fourastié characterized as *les trente glorieuses*. The thirty glorious years from 1945 to 1975, more recent assessments have shown, were not all that glorious, and numbered fewer than thirty.<sup>[4]</sup> Chapman’s long reconstruction, stretching from the Occupation to 1962, deals with far more than rebuilding the material damage. He analyzes the redesign of the Republic itself, in a process that was ambitious, contested, incomplete, had no clear plan at its outset and, by its nature, has no final conclusion. Rather, the new state was better able to adapt to change, and as such would be a work in progress. By the summer of 1962, the state had succeeded in significant modernization of the economy (with its strongest growth ahead in the 1960s), the consolidation and extension of the French social welfare system, and an extended rearrangement of the decision-making powers and the structure of government.

In the early 1960s, Stanley Hoffmann surveyed the cascade of political upheavals in France since the Great Depression and assessed the changes that were still then underway, transforming the French political community. He famously characterized the Third Republic as a “stalemate society” in which a comparatively weak state preserved a society balanced between rural-agrarian traditions and industrial modernization, with a weak state to provide protection without strong interference or direction, a regime that had “plenty of brakes and not much of a motor.” Hoffmann concluded (in “Paradoxes of the French Political Community”) that changes since 1930, “the most

far-reaching since the French Revolution,” had destroyed the stalemate society. But Hoffmann reserved judgment as to whether a new, stable system had yet been achieved.[5]

Chapman’s work reconsiders this period and ends in 1962, not with the closing of an era or a tidy resolution of tensions in the exercise of power, but with a new republican order in place to provide strong executive power, greater influence and visibility for technical expertise, and a continuing need for popular mobilization to ensure respect for democratic representation. The French search for a “modern Republic” had renovated and renewed French politics, reoriented the French economy towards Europe, and established an economic dynamism that would provide strong growth for the next decade. Renewal, then as now, remained essential for the republic to develop new initiatives and adapt to changing demographic and social conditions. *The Long Reconstruction* is a masterfully executed reconsideration of the reordering of the French state and economy, accessible and lucid in its analysis, fresh in its interpretations, and a major contribution to our understanding of France’s postwar transformation.

## NOTES

[1] Attention to such continuities and to the politics involved in this period can be found in important earlier works, most notably in Richard F. Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France: Renovation and Economic Management in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Andrew Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal, 1940-1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Michel Margairaz, *L’État, les finances et l’économie: Histoire d’une conversion 1932-1952* (Paris: CHEFF, 1991); and Philip G. Nord, *France’s New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[2] See Paul Burstein, “Policy Domains: Organization, Culture, and Policy Outcomes,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 327-350.

[3] Nord, *France’s New Deal*, 147.

[4] See Rémy Pawin, “Retour sur les ‘Trente Glorieuses’ et la periodization du second XXe siècle,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 60 (2013): 155-175, and Céline Pessis, Sezin Topçu and Christophe Bonneuil, eds., *Une autre histoire des ‘Trente Glorieuses’: Modernisations, contestations et pollutions dans la France d’après-guerre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013).

[5] Stanley Hoffmann, “The Effects of World War II on French Society and Politics,” *French Historical Studies* 2 (1961): 28-63, and “Paradoxes of the French Political Community,” in Stanley Hoffmann et al., *In Search of France* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 1-117.

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