The French Catastrophe

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Introduction:

In any country that holds presidential elections, the elections are usually considered important not only by the politicians hoping to be elected but also by the electorate who votes. While most presidential elections take place without much controversy, some are completely surrounded by it. The French presidential election of 2002 is a good example of a controversial election. The French presidential election of 2002 not only evoked feelings of fear and shame within the French people, but it also caused great concern for the rest of Europe and other countries directly tied to France. It showed the whole world that politics should always be taken seriously and that people should never take their freedom to vote lightly.

The French presidential election of 2002 began like any other election in France's history. Many newspapers and polls showed that Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, and Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister of the Republic, would be the two final candidates after the first round (le premier tour). Therefore, no one expected any other candidate aside from Chirac or Jospin to make it into the second round (le deuxième tour). Another politician, Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front, a radically rightist party, had been gaining numbers in all of the polls before the first round; however, no one really considered him to be a serious candidate. After all, who would vote for a known racist and fascist into the second round? After Le Pen beat Jospin in the first round, the French people soon realized the seriousness of this presidential election, and there was nothing that could be done to undo this horrible mistake that had already been made. Although the French knew that there was one chance to redeem themselves,
they would have to unite behind a man who had proved in the past to be a mediocre leader at best.

While uniting behind Chirac would save France's democracy, it would not repair the damage that had already been done. France had now lost some of its credibility in the democratic Western world by voting a racist, extremist man into its second-round. Though Le Pen had rightfully won his way into the second-round through France's democratic free elections, he presented a threat not only to Chirac, but to the whole government. In all, France's democratic elections had both preserved and destroyed its democracy for a short time. The French now had to pull themselves out of a catastrophic event that could make or break their democracy and do so showing the outside world that France was still a strong force in the democratic arena.

In this thesis, a catastrophe will unfold. The history of the election will be told in its entirety from the beginning to the end. Numerous periodicals, polls, and web sites will be used to gauge not only the history of the election but also the responses of the people who the election affected. The French responses will, of course, take precedence followed by another French-speaking country, Belgium. Then various English-speaking countries' reactions will follow. By using editorials, letters to the editors, and opinions, the reactions will be authentic from people in each country, and the issues surrounding the election will be divulged.
Chapter 1

Act I: The Beginning of the Catastrophe

The period before the first-round French presidential election of 2002 was almost predictable by most election standards. The candidates were campaigning, and numerous polls were taken to rank the candidates. Although most polls listed the two front-runners to be Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin, a new, surprising name, Jean-Marie Le Pen, was also making most of the major polls as a third candidate. At the time, however, no one predicted that he would qualify for second-round elections, for the French were convinced that a man so against their democratic ideals could advance on to the second-round and possibly win the presidency.

A) Before the First Round

The first-round of the French presidential elections was held on April 21, 2002. During this initial election, each candidate had an opportunity to reach a majority of the population in order to attain the presidency without having to stand for election in a second-round. However, if no candidate received a majority of the people's vote in the first-round, the top two ranking candidates in the first-round would move on to the second round where a final decision would be made by a majority vote (Tagliabue 3). These democratic elections had always served France's democracy well in the past, and there was nothing unusual about the approaching election to change that feeling.

Before the first-round election even took place on April 21, however, it was obvious that there would be a second-round election. Not one of the candidates had anywhere near a majority in any of the polls taken in France before the first-round. Thus,
the French electorate suspected that they would have to vote in two rounds to elect a president.

As early as January, polls appeared in *Le Figaro*, a prominent, slightly conservative newspaper in France, stating that Chirac and Jospin were leading in the presidential race. Chirac would receive a predicted 28% of the first-round vote while Jospin would receive a predicted 23%. According to this newspaper, pollsters had already predicted the second round as well: Chirac would receive a predicted 52%, and Jospin would receive a predicted 48% ("Sondages"). From the beginning, it seemed almost unimaginable that any other candidate aside from Chirac or Jospin could make it into the second-round, at least according to prominent, trusted sources.

Another poll in *Le Monde*, another a prominent French newspaper but one slightly to the left, predicted the presidential results as well. While Chirac started out his candidacy with 23% and had only grown to 24% as the first-round approached, Jospin had actually decreased a percentage point from mid-February's 22% (Courtois). Although most people might have seen this as a good indication that the French people might be unhappy with both candidates, most French citizens still did not seem alarmed.

Along with most of the French people, the majority of the world would never have predicted the actual results in the first-round of the elections. In fact, one *New York Times* journalist who was following the French election very closely, John Tagliabue, referred to the competitors of Chirac and Jospin as "a gaggle of lesser candidates" (Tagliabue 3). Moreover, he only ranked three out the fourteen remaining candidates as having a substantial amount of votes among the French electorate. Arlette Laguiller, a member of a leftist splinter party for worker's struggle, would receive a predicted 10%.
Jean-Pierre Chèvenement, a leader of the citizen's movement and anti-right and anti-left politics, would receive a predicted 9%; Jean-Marie Le Pen would receive a predicted mere 9% (Tagliabue 3).

While Jean-Marie Le Pen did not appear on any presidential list as a serious candidate, *The Financial Times* out of London did predict Le Pen to take third place in the first-round election. Even after this prediction, though, most pollsters and commentators still did not take Le Pen seriously. In fact, the author Victor Mallet, of the article who predicted him as third place with 10% of the final vote even wrote, "His star is waning." Mallet, along with countless others, did not see Le Pen as a threat. Mallet even mentioned that Le Pen almost did not qualify for the first-round election, since he did not receive the 500 required signatures. Le Pen apparently had trouble receiving his last 100 signatures, a situation that resulted from a split in the National Front party; and he barely made the deadline to run for president (Mallet 8). With Le Pen's supporters having a hard time rallying around him because of this division in the National Front, he did appear to be somewhat of a "gaggle" candidate. But again, no one really knew what would happen in the first-round election.

While everyone predicted Jospin and Chirac as the final candidates in the second-round, most French had still not even decided whom they were going to vote for in the first round. Many of the polls were predicting the final outcomes prematurely so. Moreover, fifteen days before the first-round, many French voters were not even worried about voting in the first-round. In fact, they were only worried about the second-round between Jospin and Chirac! At that time, almost three-quarters of the electorate had already decided to wait until April 30 to decide on a final candidate by watching the
traditional televised presidential debate where both of the final candidates face each other to debate over issues important to the French people (Courtois). Therefore, most French voters only saw the first-round as a formality, and they were more focused on voting in the second-round.

With only ten days until the first-round election, almost 40% of the French electorate remained undecided. This number was twice the normal 20% ten days before any first-round election in the past few elections, while 30% of the French electorate said they may not vote at all, which was 10% up from the last seven years.

Three main issues seemed to have affected the undecided voters. First, they did not have an interest in the present government at hand, for they saw the government as ineffective. Further, they felt that the two predicted final candidates, Jospin and Chirac, were running almost the same campaigns. They were campaigning on the same issues even though they represented two different ideological parties, and they were not taking a clear stance on any of the issues that they were basing their campaigns on. Moreover, they were treading in the middle on all of the main issues in the election (Courtois). Finally, they were unmotivated to vote, for they saw their vote as making no difference. Little did the French know just how important their voting stance in the first-round election would be for the outcome of the whole presidential election.

B) Dramatis Personne

The two candidates who ended up emerging from the first-round elections had little if anything in common, and many struggled to understand the reasoning behind the French electorate for choosing two completely different candidates. Jacques Chirac, who had been involved in politics from a very young age, was the "safe" bet. He was not only
the President of the Republic at the time of the election, but he also had a large following in the polls. In the past few years, however, the French had begun to question his leadership, and many wondered if he had the support to proceed and win the second-round. After all, he had been linked in recent years with as many as half a dozen scandals in the French government.

His past leadership positions, though, gave him a stronger support system than Le Pen. Chirac started his political career as a student. He briefly sold the communist L'Humanité for a while and eventually joined the French army to become a lieutenant in the Algerian War siding with General De Gaulle against the extreme-right wing at the time. In 1962, he served in posts in the cabinet of Georges Pompidou, who was then Prime Minister of France. He quickly became a good friend of Pompidou and used their relationship to enhance his political career.

In 1974, he became the youngest Prime Minister ever to serve in France. Then, in 1976, he founded his own party based on "French-style labour socialism." Furthermore, in 1977, he re-established the office of Mayor of Paris and held it for many years until he became interested in national politics again and ran for president in 1995 ("The Foibles" 14). His first presidency was hardly successful, and many feared that his second term would not be any better.

Therefore, the doors opened to a new candidate with an old rhetoric who was not afraid to take a stance on "questionable" issues. Jean-Marie Le Pen was anything but a "safe" candidate, but he was a candidate whom the French had supported continuously over the years. Le Pen, who referred to the Nazi gas chambers of World War II as a "detail" of history, was admittedly racist. He also confessed to being neo-fascist.
Though 73 years old at the time of the presidential elections, he was still known for his effective oratory.

The French presidential election of 2002 was not the only presidential election he had ever run in either. He participated in both the 1988 and 1995 elections receiving 15% of the vote. Therefore, he was a fairly prominent candidate. His main campaigning ideas always centered around the same subjects: immigration, crime, and the European Union. He had been against all three issues throughout his political career. Not only had Le Pen been against the idea of the European Union from its beginning, promoting a greater France instead, he was also against the euro calling it "the currency of occupation" (Mallet 8).

Though a former paratrooper for the French army, Le Pen had not held any major political offices as Chirac had, but it never stopped him from trying to attain a high office. His racist policies, though, and his lack of parliamentary support always thwarted his attempts at attaining a higher political position (Graham and Minder 1).

His fondness for Nazi-era slogans like "work, family, Fatherland" also slowed his political career, for most of the French population found his political ideals appalling. He advocated the return of the guillotine in capital punishment cases, and he wanted to stop immigration into France and retard the globalization of the French economy ("France In a Mess" 26). With all of these political and social ideals, Le Pen had never been considered a serious candidate by most in the French system, for he stood for undemocratic ideals and policies. He proved, however, in 2002 that he was a formidable force and that some of his ideals were not as unacceptable in the French democracy as one had originally thought.
C) The Catastrophe: The First-Round Election Results

The first-round election results were definitely not what most of the French electorate would have expected or what most of the rest of the world would have expected for that matter. On April 22 with 99.33% of the votes counted, The Financial Times of London listed Chirac with 19.62%, Le Pen with 17.08%, and Jospin with 16.04%. To confuse and confound these results, there were a record 28% abstentions were cast as well (Graham and Minder 1). Not only had the French people voted for someone like Le Pen, an extremist, many had decided not to vote at all out of protest to the lackluster election. With many French voters giving up their constitutional right to vote so easily, some wondered just how strongly the French supported their democratic values. After all, if free elections are one of the main principles of a democracy, and a large percentage of the population ignores their duty to vote, does that mean that they feel as if the democratic system is failing them?

Upon hearing the news that he had received only 16% of the final vote, Lionel Jospin decided to retire from politics and to take full blame for his failure in the election. With Jospin's loss in the first-round, his defeat marked only the second time since 1969 that a candidate of the left had not made it into the second-round (Marlowe 1). Jospin's defeat, which was surprising for most French people, came from a poor campaign according to Gérard Courtois in an article that appeared just shortly after the first-round in Le Monde. According to the article, Jospin's campaign was not only carried out poorly, but his voting percentages stemmed from a fragmented left. Many of the votes that the electorate had cast for the candidates of the left were split among too many candidates to help any of them to win a majority. This failure of unity by the left, in
effect, helped Le Pen (Courtois). It made it easier for him to win a majority since the right was not nearly so fragmented.

While Jospin's campaign did not prove successful, Chirac's campaign was not exactly a clear win either. With his vote total of 19.62%, he had by far the lowest total ever for a front-runner in any presidential election in French history since the founding of the Fifth Republic in 1958 (Daley 1). One writer in Le Monde, Bernard Le Gendre, even insinuated that Chirac's campaign had probably helped Le Pen's overall victory, for Chirac's campaign had run a minimal campaign. No one felt as if he or his associates had expended much effort into his campaign. Chirac was passive about issues, and many considered his campaign simply unacceptable (Le Gendre). Therefore, his minimal style of campaigning may have actually helped his right running mate, Le Pen, who ran an engaging, energetic campaign.

Le Pen, who chose to campaign on substantive issues that mattered to the people, did enjoy a successful campaign. In fact, it was his most successful campaign ever. According to some, though, it should have been expected. One Irish Times article stated that Le Pen's victory should not have surprised anyone. After all, Le Pen's approval ratings were climbing each week in the presidential polls while Jospin's were drastically falling. Also, according to the author of the article, Lara Marlowe, Le Pen always fared better in actual elections over presidential polls (Marlowe 12).

While Le Pen's popularity surprised many, it was a long in coming. Le Pen won his way into the second-round for a number of different reasons. At the time of the first round, the extreme parties, especially the extreme right, had won approval of many French voters. The extreme right was popular with the young people, the working
classes, and the older, more prosperous regions of France (Courtois). Not only did the extreme right have popularity among populous groups in France, but also many French people felt that the two major parties of Jospin and Chirac had lost their true identity and connection to the French people long ago. Further, Chirac's party had lost its traditional ground and had become too centrist and equivocal on many issues (Rouart). Le Pen simply sought different options than the two expected front-runners.

Le Pen, nevertheless, who campaigned heavily on crime and immigration, the two most important issues in France at the time, took a stance on issues even if some did like not like his ideas. With four million foreigners living in France, many French felt that immigration was a huge, on-going problem. Over the last 25 years, hundreds of North Africans had migrated to France, settling in mainly populous city areas, and causing many native French citizens to feel unsafe. With 150 "no-go" urban districts and recently constructed housing developments in France popping up, often overrun by North African gangs where neither police or emergency services would go without some sort of reinforcement, the French were scared of their country controlled by immigrants (Mallet 6). Since Le Pen campaigned heavily on both crime and immigration, he received a large percentage of his votes from people who worried about those issues.

Not only did Le Pen campaign on crime and immigration, but he also campaigned on other issues that both Chirac and Jospin would not touch. He stated openly that he was opposed the European Union and to the inevitable globalization that was resulting from France's involvement in the E.U. Since many French were fearing France's lose of its own identity and its weakening of power to the E.U., some felt compelled to vote for candidates who were against an enlarged European community (Courtois). In fact, 40%
of the electorate felt so strongly against the E.U. that they voted in favor of candidates against this policy in the first-round (Gordon 23). By opposing the heightened role of the E.U., Le Pen, gained more votes.

While Le Pen may have campaigned on radically conservative issues, his campaign may have been considerable enhance by the poor turnout of the French electorate. With voter turnout dropping every year, some candidates who would ordinarily not receive many votes could actually stand a chance at winning. Over the pat 40 years, France's voter turnout had fallen from 69.7% to 56.4%. With a 19% drop in voter turnout, barely over a majority of the country was electing the officials in government ("The Worst System" 12). The object was for Le Pen to encourage his own supporters to vote as he so often did.

Along with all of these issues surrounding the first-round election, it was no wonder that Le Pen made it into the second-round. He had many odds in his favor along with some good campaigning that made him very successful in his run for presidency. The reactions of the French to his win, however, may not have been what he was hoping for. Their reactions alone crushed his expectations of having a good campaign for the second-round.
Chapter II

Act II: Reaction to the Catastrophe

After the first-round took place in the French presidential election, the French knew, along with the rest of the world, that their democracy was at stake. Le Pen, a man who stood against democratic values, had been elected into the second-round, and it shocked everyone. The French now realized that their freedom was at stake if their democracy was to fall into the hands of a man like Le Pen. Therefore, they decided to rally support for Chirac to try to unite the country once again behind a man who stood for democratic values even if he was not known as the best leader for the country. The rest of the world, however, had to watch and hope that the French were successful and that Chirac would win.

A) After the First-Round

As one might have expected, the French population did not react well to a known racist being elected into the second round of the presidential elections of 2002. Once the damage was done, however, there was not much they could do to prevent Le Pen from becoming the next president of the Republic except for vote against him. After the first round election results, the majority of the French people became determined to unite against Le Pen and his racist platform. His election into the second round not only marked a catastrophic event in French history, but it made the French and the world question the strength of France’s democracy. This one man had the ability to destroy or strengthen the French system, and only time would tell how the French would choose to deal with this threat to their freedom.
While everyone reacted to the election results in different ways, many French expressed the same feeling as a writer, Jean-Marie Rouart, in Le Figaro. He wrote, "On a honte d'être française (sic)." He summed it all up by saying, "We are ashamed to be French." Though a powerful statement, it conveyed what most were feeling. While his article centered mostly on what had gone wrong in the first-round elections, it also gave some advice for all French people. "Réduire l'avancée de Le Pen. Et donc voter Jacques Chirac sans hésiter." ("Reduce Le Pen's advance. And then vote for Jacques Chirac without hesitating.") According to Rouart, the Republic was at stake, and voting for Chirac was the only solution to saving it (Rouart).

Another article published in Libération stated that the French people had a choice to make. "Ce choix est le suivant: la dictature ou la démocratie" ("This choice is the following: dictatorship or democracy"). The article went on to say that, "il faut choisir Chirac, car ce nom, aujourd'hui et maintenant, c'est celui de la République française." ("It is necessary to choose Chirac, because his name, today and now, is that of the French Republic") (Rouchant 21). The author of this article, Eric Rouchant, did not believe by any means, that Le Pen should be the next president. On the other hand, he also did not think that French could deny their duty to vote in the second-round as they had in the first round. He wrote, "Aujourd'hui, c'est oui c'est non. Refuser de choisir, c'est refuser de défendre la République". ("Today, it is yes or no. Refusing to choose, it is refusing to defend the Republic.") Rouchant, while obviously anti-Le Pen, was also anti-apathy toward the French people. Whether or not the French agreed with the author and voted for Chirac, he at least wanted to persuade them to vote. According to Rouchant, the
French needed to care about what happened in their government, or France might no
longer have freedom as one of its main privileges and ideals (Rochant 21).

While many French articles after the first round reflected the sentiments above,
some also chose to try to understand what happened and not just say, "Vote Chirac." One
French writer in *Le Figaro*, Max Gallo, tried to view the election from a broader
perspective. He stated that those who did not vote for Le Pen by ideology did so by their
sheer confusion. In his opinion, the left and the right in the first round did not draw clear
ideological lines for people to follow. Instead, they tried to take centrist ideals on most
issues, and it left voters feeling marginalized and even abandoned. They turned,
therefore, to those candidates who were not afraid to take a stand like Le Pen. According
to Gallo, the French would take the results from the election seriously and see that the
State was in peril. Further, conditions had to change to avoid a recurrence of this difficult
situation (Gallo).

The French were not the only ones worried about the outcome of the election and
the future affects of its results. Other countries around the world had definite opinions
over the results in the election too, but no one understood it completely. Many countries
wondered whether or not France could rebound from such a catastrophic event and once
again rally for democracy. In Belgium, another French-speaking country, the general
reaction was one of surprise and sadness. In *Le Soir*, a prominent Belgium newspaper in
Brussels, one article stated, "Ce matin, la Seine devrait déborder des larmes qu'on a envie
de verser en pensant aux milliers d'hommes et de femmes qui, à travers l'histoire, ont
donné leur vie pour que cette terre soit celle de la liberté" ("This morning, the Seine
should be overflowing with the tears of those who long to shed when thinking of the
millions of men and women who, throughout history, have given their lives for this land to stand for liberty") ("Excuse-les"). The election took place in France, but it affected the whole world. No one understood how a country that promoted and practiced freedom could abdicate power to a man so against the ideas of the French Republic. If freedom was one of the French Republic's main ideals, then electing a man like Le Pen who wanted to take many individual freedoms away from the people threatened France's democracy. Not letting the French have a choice in democratic elections, however, would make France a tyranny. No matter how France acted in the near future, a threat to their democracy was still very prominent.

Another article expressed Belgian sentiment, and it continued to report daily events taking place in the period after the first-round election. Another article in Le Soir stated that many famous people all over France had decided to speak out against Jean-Marie Le Pen. In fact, many artists and athletes had gotten together to make a video cassette against the extreme right (Meskens).

While Chirac was obviously against Le Pen and also protesting his election into the first-round, he shocked the French and the Belgium public in refusing to participate in the upcoming, traditional debate to take place just before the election. In the past, the presidential debate had been used by many to inform the voting public on the strength of candidates in the second-round of the election. This election, however, was destined to be different. By refusing the debate, some called Chirac cowardly, but he did not seem to mind. He said, "Je n'ai pas peur de Jean-Marie Le Pen. J'ai peur de l'extrême droite pour la France" ("I am not afraid of Jean-Marie Le Pen. I am afraid of the extreme right for France") (Meskens). By refusing to debate Le Pen, Chirac not only denied his opponent
the right to express his platform to the public on national television, but he also broke the tradition of the debate which had taken place without any problems since 1974 (Meskens).

By denying Le Pen a forum in the presidential debate, some said that Chirac was working the election in his favor. If Le Pen could not address the French through his rhetoric, then probably fewer of his potential voters would at the urnes to vote for him. In a letter right before the second-round, Chirac wrote to the voters of France and stated his loyalty to the Republic. He said, "J'ai entendu votre message. Beaucoup d'entre vous ont exprimé un puissant besoin de renouveau de notre démocratie. Le temps de la volonté et de l'action est venu. Jamais élection présidentielle n'aura a ce point mis en jeu notre fidélité à l'idéal démocratique" ("I have heard your message. Many among you have expressed a powerful need to renew our democracy. The time for will and action has come. Never has a presidential election put our faith in the democratic idea at stake") (Meskens). By having the current government support him, Chirac was almost capable of addressing the French on any medium of communication in order to get his final thoughts across before the second round elections. With Le Pen lacking the support and the apparent financial backing, he was not so fortunate. Le Pen's only hope was that the French would overlook the propaganda that Chirac was publishing and disseminating.

Chirac had the support of the French and other French-speaking countries such as Belgium, but other Europeans nations, such as Great Britian, defended his position too. While many British did support Chirac over Le Pen, many also did not think that he deserved the victory that would undoubtedly be handed to him. Although his victory would mean a condemnation of fascism, it would not mean that Chirac had done a good
job as a president and deserved to be re-elected. After all, his first-round election percentage of the French public who voted for him was hardly stellar.

Chirac's low percentages in the first-round, though, did not surprise some British commentators. In fact, France's support of the extreme parties in the first-round did not surprise one British journalist at all. One anonymous writer referred to the incident as when a "modern democracy fails to reconnect with the people." According to this journalist for The Guardian in London, France was doing nothing but following a current European trend in favor of the extreme right. Only France had taken it a little farther than most by electing someone of Le Pen's character into its final presidential voting round ("National Dishonour" 19). With French voters feeling abandoned, they simply turned to a candidate with the right issues and a flair for the dramatic to help them feel connected to the elusive government. The candidate, who happened to be Le Pen, may not have been the right choice necessarily, but he did make the French voters care once again about the fate of their country.

While the British did not appear to be shocked by the amount of support for Le Pen, one British journalist, Jonathan Freedland, did write in an article for The Guardian that he was unsure "whether to laugh or cry" while watching from greater Europe. Comparing events in the leftist parties in France with the outcome of Al Gore in the 2000 presidential election in the United States, Freedland stated that the French people simply had too many candidates. Further, there were not that many solid candidates who could reach sufficiently competitive numbers in the first-round, unlike the presidential election in the United States. By having too many left candidates, the left, according to Freedland, was setting itself up for failure and for something as tragic as Le Pen for the
second-round. While Freedland apparently tried to understand events in France that evaded Le Pen to be qualify for the second round, he still chose to ridicule a country "that could pick a bigoted buffoon as a runner-up for its highest office" (Freedland 15). Although his reaction to France and Le Pen may have been severe, his reaction to Jospin was even worse. Freedland almost pinned the fate of whole election on Jospin's shoulders. By referring to Jospin as a "wooden technocrat, too lacking in the flesh-and-blood skills of modern electoral politics," he stated that Jospin's biggest mistake was fighting in "the second-round before he had survived the first" (Freedland 15). In Freedland's eyes, the French voters had not been the only ones to blame for the election results, but the candidates were just as much to blame for the catastrophe that resulted from the first-round.

Freedland, however, was not the only British journalist to blame the poor selection of candidates. A British citizen who wrote a letter to the editor of The Financial Times in London also felt that the overall performance of the candidates in the first round was a debacle. In Stephen Saint-Léger's mind the French people were not really to blame at all. By electing Le Pen into the second round, they were asking for help and not trying to hurt France. His motto for the French first round election was "if you are not heard when you speak, shout." In his view, when the French electorate felt under-represented in their own government, they decided to draw some attention to themselves. By voting for a man like Le Pen, they hoped to awaken the French politicians in France to the realization that the government was not addressing some issues. The French wanted their voices to be heard. Saint-Léger predicted that the first round election of Le Pen was just the beginning of a potentially huge problem in France.
If Chirac won the election, and if everything returned to a sort of normalcy, the next election might actually be worse than this one. Someone like Le Pen could possibly win (Saint-Leger 10)!

While some people in Britain feared that France could elect a politician like Le Pen in the future if the country did not remedy its problems fast; however, they did not fear such a catastrophe in Britain. One article in The Guardian listed a number of different reasons why this whole situation had happened in France and not in Britain. First, the political institutions in Britain dealt with racial equality, reducing racism, and barring places in government that could practice policies against immigrants and other races. Further, Britain's past governments had done well at meeting the people's needs for the most part, thereby discouraging extremists, such as Le Pen, to emerge in politics. In other words, the government had never let someone "runaway with issues such as crime and immigration," as Le Pen did. Basically, according to this article, the British were not necessarily better than the French. They just did not allow as much tolerance for men like Le Pen with such openly racist propaganda to gain powerful positions in government ("Le Pen and Britain" 17).

While the British may not have had tolerated men like Le Pen in the past, the French not only tolerated him but had elected him to run in the second-round. Although their tolerance for him in the past resulted in creating massive support for him throughout the country, the majority did not support him at any time and, especially, after the first-round election. According to an article in The Financial Times, massive anti-Le Pen demonstrations occurred almost everywhere after the first round election, and the overall riding slogan heard from the French was "better a crook than a fascist." With this slogan
not exactly being positive for Chirac or Le Pen, it did show that the French people were going to vote for whom they considered to be the lesser of two evils, Chirac (Graham 11).

It could have been worse though. According to one British journalist, there had been far worse slogans in France than the one after the first-round election. In the 1930s, a resounding slogan all over France against the right socialist premier rang out “mieux Hitler que Blum.” (“Better Hitler than Blum.”) Obviously the French people were a little extreme with that slogan, but they got their point across (Wheatcroft 18). Any slogan that compares two candidates in such negative terms is never a promising sign for the country, but to the French people, Chirac was the only hope for the future. They had to elect him.

In many respects, and in the minds of so many, Le Pen’s entry into the first-round was a catastrophe for France and for Europe in general, for a large, prominent democratic system was at stake. Many did not foresee, however, the global economic repercussions that a man like Le Pen could bring to an important country like France. In an article in The Financial Times written after the first-round election, Victor Mallet noted that the people of France were lucky to be a part of the European Union, an institution that Le Pen so outspokenly loathed. If the franc had been the currency of France at the time instead of the euro under the European Union, a predicted 40% drop in value of the franc could have occurred, leaving France in deep economic trouble (Mallet 6).

Amazingly, though, a man like Le Pen, who could bring economic trouble to a country like France, received a sufficient number of votes to qualify for the second-round. The British, along with the French, were outraged at this event, but they did not feel that Le Pen could win the second-round. In a poll taken after the election, The
Financial Times suggested that the overall forecast for the second round as 78% Chirac and 22% Le Pen. While Le Pen may have caused a stir, his hope for the future was dim (Graham and Minder 1).

Similarly, the United States did not approve of Le Pen being a candidate in the second-round election. In one article titled "The French Surprise" by The New York Times, an American journalist, Warren Hoge, charted the reaction of the presidential election not only in France but also throughout Europe. While many Europeans had commented on the election, some were more open with their opinions than others.

Britain's European Commissioner, Neil Kinnock, said that the election "throws a great dirty rock into the European political pool" (Hoge 10). Obviously for Kinnock, the election affected not only France but all of Europe as well. If a man like Le Pen, who was against the European Union, were to become president of a country as prestigious as France, there was a resounding danger for other countries in the future. Not only was Britain's European Commissioner speaking out against Le Pen, but Tony Blair, the prime minister of Britain, also had a few words to say against Le Pen. The day after the first-round election he encouraged all of French voters to got to the urnes and cast their votes for Chirac in order to "reject extremism of any kind" (Hoge 10). He, too, was obviously worried about a rise of another Le Pen type of candidate in other countries. By taking a stance against a man like Le Pen, Tony Blair and Neil Kinnock only hoped that other countries would learn from France's mistake and not elect anyone to their government like him.

While some chose to speak out against Le Pen in an orderly and politically correct fashion, others chose to attack not only him but also the French people for voting for him.
Some people throughout Europe ridiculed France for its election of Le Pen into the second-round because, in their view, France had often been quick to ridicule other countries in the past for the same problems. According to some Europeans, France could learn something from this election and maybe not be so quick to attack other countries in the future when extremist parties arose in their governments. Many just worried how France would handle such an election with not only Europe watching but most of the world. France's actions would set a precedent for the future, and many concerned Europeans wanted to set a clear precedent against extremists (Hoge 10).

By listing the reactions of the Europeans, the article "The French Surprise" voiced the opinions of many Europeans, but it did not chart American thoughts on the French first-round election. One editorial in the The New York Times, however, did set forth at least one American's opinion, and his reaction, along with that of most of the rest of the world, was one of surprise and fear for France and all of Europe. In the editorial, an anonymous writer hoped that French voters recover from their apathy toward the government, and that they could once again reconnect with their political parties before the election of Le Pen or other radical politicians to a major governmental office.

According to the prediction in the editorial, French voters would more than likely elect Chirac president once again, but the new fear approaching, the parliamentary elections in June, was the next hurdle to conquer. With the extreme right doing so well by having Le Pen in the second-round, worry over support for a large number of extreme right seats in parliament was definitely a concern ("Disgruntled Voters" 22).

Challenge: Adapting to Globalization," stated his concern for France on a global scale. With half of the French vote going to anti-globalization candidates in the first-round, many trade partners of France, one being the United States, had begun to worry about their future with France. Many throughout the world had not only lost faith in France after the first-round, but they had also lost confidence in France's ability to be involved in world affairs in the future. For the United States, the election of Le Pen into the second-round was disturbing. Since France was often the European country often to appease American policies and actions, Americans had felt animosity towards the country. Especially with the recent rising problems with Iraq, Americans had not felt any French support and were worried about a country as powerful as France being against U.S. actions. For Americans, France's first-round election had shaken its reputation in the world "as a solid European and Atlantic ally committed to liberal values" (Gordon 23). Even if Chirac were to win, the situation remained unchanged: Le Pen was one of two candidates for the French presidency, and he enjoyed considerable support among the French electorate.

Since Americans were skeptical about the second round of the French election, many were anxious to hear about countermeasures against Le Pen. An article in The New York Times the day before the second round voiced the feelings and actions of the French people only hours away from the election. While French law prohibits a candidate from campaigning the day before the election, the candidates did not need to campaign. The French people were doing it for them. Although no one really campaigned for Le Pen, almost everyone was speaking out for Chirac. With such headlines as "vote for democracy", French voters just wanted everyone to vote this time and not to abandon
their duty to vote for Chirac. Chirac, who had become the only candidate for France as a democracy, was in almost every newspaper and headline in France. Although campaign advertising was prohibited, Chirac was getting more than his share of free publicity without even trying (Daley 4). With many predicting an undoubted win for Chirac, there was still a sense of fear for France in the future.

Americans were not the only ones afraid for France. In fact, as mentioned before, many Europeans were concerned about the repercussions the election would bring to France and its wider consequences for the European Union. Ireland, in particular, was concerned with the future unity of Europe after the French first-round election. An editorial in The Irish Times written just after the first-round described one Irishman's fear for Europe: "The performance of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the French presidential elections is a matter of concern to everyone in Europe who values democracy, human rights, and tolerance" (McLoughlin 13). Michael McLoughlin, the International Secretary of the Labour Party in Ireland, was obviously speaking out in the editorial not only for his party and its candidates but also for the majority of the Irish citizens who value democracy. McLoughlin went on to say that people should unite against Le Pen to prevent his success as well as others of the far right in future elections throughout Europe. Addressing all of Ireland he wrote, "All political leaders in this country must now state publicly that they will not countenance any dealings with Mr. Le Pen, should he be elected, and that he will be completely isolated by democratic leaders. This is a time for leadership from democrats" (McLoughlin 13). His words were justifiably powerful. In his mind and in the minds of many Irish people, Le Pen's first-round victory was frightening, and it could happen again someday, even in Ireland.
Another article in *The Irish Times* articulated a similar sentiment that the same type of election results in the French first-round presidential elections could very well happen in Ireland. According to Fintan O'Toole, the author of "Le Pen Vote a Wake-up Call For Democrats," the exact same situations that afforded the election of Le Pen in France were taking place in Ireland as well. He wrote,

"The political conditions in France are not all that different from those in Ireland. There is the public disillusionment with a political mainstream polluted by corruption. There is the replacement of serious ideological argument with a managerial, bureaucratic consensus. There is the deep smugness of an establishment that has been in power for decades. There is the self-satisfied apathy of a young electorate, which thinks that because it has nothing to do with politics, politics has nothing to do with it. There is the availability of a convenient target in a new immigrant population. And there is, above all, the widening gap between rich and poor [O'Toole 12]."

According to the author of the article, the probability of the same situation arising in Ireland was not too far stretched. O'Toole's only hope for the Irish people was that they could learn from France's mistakes and choose not to repeat them: "Le Pen has done us the timely favor of reminding us that the alternative to passionate commitment in politics is not bland consensus but barbarism" (O'Toole 12). In other words, by not caring about what happens in politics, people leave the door open for barbarous men.

Another article in *The Irish Times*, written by Lara Marlowe, pointed out that it was not just apathy that caused Le Pen's election into the second round. People were actually supporting Le Pen throughout the election more and more, and not many French
saw him as a threat. "The National Front leader's conviction that he would beat Mr. Jospin in the first round was treated as a delusion of grandeur" (Marlowe 12). No one thought that Le Pen had any sort of chance even with his numbers rising in almost every poll. The idea of Le Pen being so popular among the French people was hard to imagine. The French who had watched the extreme right parties spring up in other countries throughout Europe in recent times, like Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, and Austria, did not think that the same thing could happen in their country. When they confronted such a situation, they were unsure of any effective course of action, and the worrying over the results of the second round did not improve matters. While many politicians chose to rally around Chirac, they seemed "to confirm Mr. Le Pen's claim to be "the man of the people" versus "the man of the system"." According to Marlowe, "Mr. Chirac has cast himself as the saviour of democracy, human rights and his country's honour" while Le Pen has chosen to represent the people. "For both, it's the role of a lifetime" (Marlowe 12).

While Chirac's role of a lifetime was his portrayal of a man who had done nothing but good for his country, his actual actions had been anything but noble and good for France. Although half of the electorate had viewed him as a crook in the past, the other half had not found him to be a good president who would follow through with his promises. One article in *The Irish Times* written by Lara Marlowe pointed out the problem with not only Chirac's portrayal of himself after the first-round but also with other politicians in France including Le Pen. She wrote that during the first round of the presidential elections, "French politicians of the left and right had collided in a plot to colonise France with immigrants and steal taxpayers' money 'before tearing each other's
guts out.' Mr. Chirac was the worst of all" (Marlowe 11). According to Mr. Le Pen, he was not the source of confusion; Chirac was France's problem: "I'm not the one who shames France abroad. Chirac dirties France." According to Le Pen, Chirac's refusal of the traditional presidential debate proved that Chirac wanted to hide his past from the French people. According to Le Pen, "Chirac fears a debate without tele-prompters as a mole fears light." He even said that his enemies, along with Chirac, "reek of corruption" and "drip dirty money" (Marlowe 11). Whereas many of French had not liked Chirac for some time, they still would rather have seen him in office than Le Pen. Therefore while many "grimaced at the thought of voting for Chirac," they still admitted that they would support him(Marlowe 11).

While the people of Ireland viewed the election of Jean-Marie Le Pen into the second round as a disaster for France and Europe, another country, historically and culturally, close to France felt the same way. Canada saw the French election like almost every other country in the Western world: a complete catastrophe. Many Canadians, though, did not sympathize with the French. An editorial article in The Toronto Star stated that a man like Jean-Marie Le Pen, "a violent political dinosaur," would be unelectable in Canada. However, "in France, he's a presidential contender" ("France In a Mess" 26). Obviously, the writer of this article felt contempt for the French population's poor judgement of passing Le Pen to the second round in the presidential elections, but his contempt did not stop with just one statement. The anonymous author wrote, "If Parisians took to the streets yesterday proclaiming 'I'm ashamed,' they have every reason to be" ("France In a Mess" 26). By ending his article that the French people need to remember their values of liberty, equality and fraternity, the author was mocking them
for electing a man that really represented none of their potential beliefs or cultural values ("France In a Mess" 26).

Another article in *The Hamilton Spectator* criticized the French for their indifference to voting and the democratic process. Howard Elliot, author of the editorial "The World: Maybe Now They'll Come Out to Vote," got his point across very well over his concern for the French apathy in the first round of the presidential elections.

The French seem to have found the ultimate cure for political apathy. All you need are the right ingredients. Take a sorry cast of political establishment characters, including a scandal-plagued socialist premier and president too many people don't trust. Add in a homophobic, xenophobic right-wing zealot. Stir in economic uncertainty, growing unemployment and a sneaking feeling that economic union with the rest of Europe isn't going to be the panacea some people claimed it would be. Mix it all together, heat and voilà, you're ready to serve up a shock that turned the country on its ear, saw the ouster of the socialist premier and the rise to near-credibility of the right-wing zealot. All of a sudden, voter apathy is dead (Elliot 14).

For Elliot, the French total lack of interest in their government created the problem of Le Pen being elected into the second round, and his feeling towards the French was one of disgust.

Terrified by visions of skinheads and racists in power, French voters all of a sudden care--very deeply--about their fragile democracy. People who before this probably didn't even know the candidates, let alone get out to vote, are now
passionate advocates, wearing badges that say "Smash the Nazis" and carrying signs that declare "Non" (Elliot 14).

According to Elliot, the French did after the election what they should have done before and during the election. They took a stance against a man who could ruin their country. Elliot's hope for France's future, though, was not was not totally abandoned. The French election could not only set a precedent for better political interest in France in the future; it could also be a lesson for the rest of Europe. People need to care about their country's elections and governments. Otherwise, a very scary situation could arise to strip a country of its fundamental beliefs (Elliott 14).

Another editorial article published in the Canadian National Post stated the similar statements as the previous article on the effects of the election on France and Europe. A troubling situation for this writer was not only the fact that Le Pen qualified for the second-round but also the realization that for the second time in the current French republic there was not a socialist on the final presidential ballot. With a trend of many European countries leaning towards the extreme right including Germany and Italy, the author predicted that politicians like Le Pen could appear and win in every government's elections throughout Europe. While the author did cite that Le Pen could have been elected on his stance on crime and immigration, many voted for him out of consideration of France's five million Arabs, who are often considered a huge part of both crime and immigration issues. The author still did not agree, however, with the choice of the French to send Le Pen to the second-round. At the end of his article, he warned, "Mr. Le Pen will lose the run-off election to Mr. Chirac. But if Europe's mainline parties continue to ignore issues that are increasingly troubling to voters, France may one morning wake
up to find the next Le Pen in the Élysée Palace" ("France's Nasty Choice" 21). Obviously this writer's concern for Europe was just as great as his concern for France.

Whereas some Canadians may have been concerned about Europe as well as France, others chose to concentrate more on the possible French vote for a man that stands for so many values that run counter to France's stance of human liberty and rights. In an opinion article written by Ben Mulroney for London Free Press, Le Pen's political and social ideas are clear and unequivocal; and Mulroney expresses the reasons for the popularity of Le Pen, who is so lacking in political appeal.

Jean-Marie Le Pen is a lot of things. He is a French presidential candidate, a reactionary, a xenophobe and a racist... To Le Pen and his followers, Islam is part of the greater scourge of the mingling of ethnicities that has weakened French civilization. For this reason, they say, France must rid itself of these threats, weaknesses and impurities. Replace the word France with Germany, and Islam with Judaism and you've got Mein Kampf, the Sad, Sad Sequel...Le Pen also stands for the staples of fascism: Military build-up, commercial protectionism and political isolationism (Mulroney 6).

Although Mulroney did not have a great opinion of Jean-Marie Le Pen, he also stated that Le Pen was doing one thing that most radical politicians were not doing: he was working "from within the political system" (Mulroney 6). While many radicals (like Osama bin Laden) have always chosen to work from outside a governmental framework, Le Pen was enacting his change to France from within the political system. By doing this, Le proved that France truly did have a democracy when even a man like himself had an equal say in his government. Instead of bombing buildings and hijacking planes, however, Le Pen
decided to use words to disseminate his message. Obviously, he had a huge influence in doing just that, for he was a final French presidential candidate!

Mulroney was grateful that Le Pen could work within the French system and be heard, but he was also worried about the future when Le Pen or his followers would possibly feel marginalized or discounted. Such consequence could be disruptive for France and Europe. Mulroney showed his obvious distaste for not only Le Pen but also Chirac who had decided not to participate in the traditional televised presidential debate.

Never mind that they majority of France wants to see this debate, what is appalling is Chirac is weakening French democracy by not taking on the candidate chosen by the voters of the republic...And what message does this send to Le Pen and his supporters? They might see this as the entrenched political powers refusing to play the rules that they, themselves established. Mulroney's biggest fear was that Le Pen and his followers might one day start to work outside the political system because of this presidential election, and then France would have even bigger problems to deal with (Mulroney 6).

While Mulroney did not obviously agree with Le Pen's political and social policies, he did applaud him for working within the political system. An editorial article written by Samuel Kalman in *The Toronto Star*, though, did nothing to applaud Le Pen or his followers. In fact, Kalman blatantly voiced his distaste both for Le Pen and his followers and the masking of their true values. By campaigning largely on the issue of crime, Le Pen gained great support from the French people. Kalman stated, however, that Le Pen and his followers are not really concerned with crime. Rather, "for Le Pen and the Front National, crime is not the real issue; it's just a mere code word for race-
baiting" (Kalman 10). In reality, they were not concerned with real crime; in fact, they had committed crimes themselves. According to Kalman, Le Pen physically attacked a member of the European parliament a few years ago, and many of his high-ranking party members have been known to "engage in local scare tactics against immigrants" (Kalman 10). For a party and its leader to be so concerned with crime, one would think that they would not commit crimes. Clearly, Kalman voiced his disgust with Le Pen’s masking of his real feelings, and he also expressed his disgust with Le Pen’s personal values: "His organization proposes an agenda that Canadians, and most French men and women, find utterly despicable." Unlike most Canadians, however, Kalman was repelled by Le Pen and not really the French people for voting for him (Kalman 10).

While Kalman thought that most French people despised Le Pen, another Canadian, Haroon Siddiqui, put forward a different opinion. According to Siddiqui in an opinion article in The Toronto Star, some French voters actually supported Le Pen for his ideals. While most of Le Pen's votes came from white areas close to large immigrant populations, he did receive votes from all over France. The fact that most of his votes seemed to be from mostly white males who were poor and uneducated suggests that racism was a problem for the French people. If it was not, the voting percentiles would show a greater variety of voters.

To add to the voting percentages received by Le Pen, a poll taken across France suggested that six in ten French citizens believed that "there are too many people of foreign origin, by which they mean non-whites" (Siddiqui 17). According to the same poll, an even larger number of French citizens thought that there were too many Arabs in France or Muslims. Some 38% of those polled also believed that there were too many
blacks. Obviously, a national poll does not lie; racism was an issue in France. Any one who says that if elected, he "would deport illegal immigrants, pay legal immigrants to leave, stop the construction of mosques, ban the hijab and the yarmulke, and give preferential treatment in jobs, housing and social services to the 'French'," is obviously racist (Siddiqui 17). Any one who would supported Le Pen knowing his stance on immigrant issues was also obviously somewhat racist.

Siddiqui worried about the support of so many French for Le Pen, as well as, the far right trend throughout Europe. In fact, other European countries were trying to mask their racist sentiments as France had in the past. If such a prominent country as France could elect a man like Le Pen into the second round of the presidential election, other less important countries could do the same. Siddiqui urged Europeans to stop masking their racist tendencies and to try to begin to rid themselves of such prejudices. "Europe will neither have social cohesion nor the full benefits of immigration until it comes to terms with its racism, overt or subtle. Hypocritical breast-beating over the anti-Semitic Le Pen and other far-right xenophobes merely postpones the moment of truth" (Siddiqui 17). Siddiqui saw France's mistake as a way for all of Europe to admit its past mistakes and to stop disguising the truth (Siddiqui 17).
Chapter III

Act III: Hope after a Catastrophe

Once the second-round results were tabulated, the French could breathe more easily, for Chirac had defeated Le Pen by a large majority. Moreover, the future for the Republic did not appear to be so grim. The French once again stood united behind a democratic government, and they were determined to keep their democracy intact. Although they knew that they would have to regain international credibility in the democratic arena, they reestablished a solid foundation for a democratic government. A renewed relationship between the government and the French presented to the world a France that was ready to recover from the damages inflicted by the first-round election.

A) The Second-Round Election Results

Although the first-round election results of the French presidential elections, of 2002, were anything but expected, the second-round election results were expected. As predicted directly after the first round took place on May 6 2002, Chirac received 82% of the final vote leaving Le Pen with just 18%. With Parisians and other French citizens pouring into the streets to celebrate a victory for democracy and for France as a republic, many French voiced their relief at over an election gone wrong. One French citizen said, "What's clear is that for the French and regarding the rest of the world, this is a relief" (Hamaide 1). With people everywhere in France shouting "Long live liberty. And Vive la France." it was clear that the French people got the outcome that they wanted (Frost and de la Hamaide 1).

The numbers in the second-round restored confidence in the democratic process, and the French still saw a sturdy climb ahead in righting the wrong of the first-round
election. With Chirac winning so soundly in the second-round, his duty to the French was going to be a hard to fulfill. Along with so many worries having been placed on him between the first and second round, Chirac now had to react to the upcoming appointment of his new prime minister and the parliamentary elections in June. As many were blaming the rise of extremism in France on the cohabitation in government, it was clear that Chirac had work to do. (Cohabitation is the splitting of the parliament and the presidency on ideological lines. In France’s case, the left had dominated the parliament during Chirac’s presidency while Chirac was a member of a rightist party. Therefore, the government was a mixture of political ideologies, and there was not much agreement between the two, resulting in a poor legislative process.) If his center-right party did not succeed in winning a majority, his government would once again be in cohabitation, which apparently did not please the French people. After the second-round, the French wanted to see a strong government. Their first-round election results proved that alone. After all, many French voters chose a racist man, who had a strong stance on the right issues, hoping to wake up other politicians to how much power the French electorate really had ("President Knows" 11).

Although the future was grim for Chirac's government in some ways, there was also reason for optimism in French politics. During the first-round election, many French had decided to abstain from voting from lack of interest either in politics or in the candidates and the presidency in general. After the first-round, however, a renewed interest took place in voting all over France. The French once again became interested in the role of politics in their government especially with the presidency, and they turned out in massive numbers to vote in the second-round of the presidential elections. An
article in *The Financial Times* in London stated that exit polls taken the night of the election suggested that 80% of the French people had voted. Almost a third of France's potential voters had abstained in the first-round or had simply cast blank ballots; the second round produced a renewed interest in the presidential election.

With Chirac receiving so many votes along with the renewed interest from the French public in politics, some said that this confidence and mandate enabled him to reset the course of his presidency. Strong support from a clear majority helped forge Chirac's success at turning the country away from the extremists and men like Le Pen. If Chirac could start his new government out correctly, he could turn the country around. Since Le Pen had hoped to receive nothing less than 30% in the second round, he was clearly disappointed. But Chirac was also disappointed, for he had wanted Le Pen to receive less than 15% the vote to demonstrate his potential adversary as "a spent force." With Chirac so clearly the winner, hope for the future of France was still very bright (Johnson 7).

Hope for Chirac and France was especially bright considering the change in the attitude of the French people, especially so readily in Chirac's favor after the first-round election. A man who had once been referred to as "Supermenteur" (Superliar) before the first-round election was now called "Supermeneur" (Superleader). Though quite a switch, it did demonstrate that the French were willing to forgive Chirac for his past indiscretions and give him a new chance to rebuild the country's shattered morale. As one Frenchman noted, "Mr. Chirac was re-elected not based on a programme, as in 1995, but with a simple mandate to enable our democracy to live fully." Obviously, the French were expecting much from Chirac, and everyone was just hoping that he could live up to their challenge ("France Humbles" 1).
Even with the majority of the country behind Chirac, he still had to worry about those who supported Le Pen or even some of his ideas. In a poll taken on May 29, just shortly after the second-round election, 28% of those questioned said that they supported Le Pen on most of his issues, a huge climb from the 11% who supported him in 1999. Along with that figure, only 49% of those questioned said that they were totally opposed to the National Front (Le Pen's party) while 63% had been opposed in 1999. Ironically, however, 70% of those polled did see the National Front and Le Pen as dangerous while only 33% had felt the same in 1999 (Henley 15). With such a huge change in French sentiments from 1999 to 2002, it was obvious that French opinion could differ drastically over just a short time. With Chirac's biggest worry being the fast-changing French opinion, he and his government had much to prove in leadership and policy.

Chirac worried about French opinion, and he had a right to be concerned. Since the French parliamentary elections were to take place on June 16, Chirac hoped that the renewed interest in politics and government would sway the votes in favor of his party, thereby avoiding a split in the government and the difficulties of cohabitation. Clearly, Chirac won the second-round with the help of many leftists voters, but it was uncertain whether or not those same voters would return to leftist policies or remain with the right. Several polls suggested that the center-right could win, but other polls predicted leftist leanings; and many French were worried over the extent of Le Pen's party and its effects on the incoming government. The center-right was concerned about the number of votes the extreme right could muster, and the left worried about another fragmentation, like the one that had happened in the first-round. In brief, all sides were ready to fight for their share of parliamentary seats (Daley 15).
B) The Second Round Election Reactions: Rebuilding a Torn Democracy

For the French, the obvious reaction of the second-round election results was one of relief. They no longer had to worry if their democracy was in eminent trouble, and it produced a feeling of pride in their country for overcoming the threat from Le Pen and his followers. In an article in *Liberation* on May 6 a day after the second-round elections, July Serge described his feelings after hearing the results.

Dans un élan de communion nationale, la démocratie triomphe: liberté, égalité, fraternité. C'est un «ouf» de soulagement, mais c'est aussi une sorte de serment national que les électeurs viennent de prononcer. En quinze jours, la société française a massivement transformé le second tour de la présidentielle en plebiscite des valeurs démocratiques, pour une société fraternelle et ouverte, de dialogue et de respect, de modernisation économique et social, pour une France européenne. Face à la menace lepeniste et ses idées de fermeture et de ségrégation, le pacte républicain est renouvelé.

In an outburst of national communion, democracy triumphs: liberty, equality, fraternity. It's an «ouf» of relief, but it is also a kind of national oath that the voters came to deliver. In fifteen days, the French society massively transformed the second presidential round with the publicity of democratic values, for a fraternal and open society, of dialogue and respect, of economic and social modernization, for a European France. In the face of Le Peniste threat and his ideas of closure and segregation, the republican pact was renewed) (Serge 3).
Not only did July Serge feel that the republic of France was renewed, but he also suggested that Chirac had much to do to restore confidence and to present leadership.

For Serge and for most French, Chirac would now have to represent all of France and its values. The next few months would prove whether or not France was ready for its new challenge of trusting the government to provide sound policy for its citizens (Serge 3).

The Belgians also realized that France had an arduous test to re-establish its government firmly. One journalist writing in the Brussels newspaper, *Le Soir*, Joelle Meskens, stated that the worst was still ahead, and that the Belgians knew, along with the rest of the world, the very considerable challenges that the French had to confront.

According to Meskens, the *cohabitation* of the government from 1997 had caused the French people to lose their connection with the government, and it had also possibly made the presidency represent little more than a figurehead position, like the sovereigns in England, the Netherlands, Denmark or Sweden. Thus, the French had not felt the impact of the presidential election until after the first-round election of Jean-Marie Le Pen. For Meskens, the problems in France during and after the presidential elections were not going to be easily dispelled; and, if another *cohabitation* were to take place in June, Meskens predicted many more future problems (Meskens).

While Belgians were worried about France's future, the British were worried concerned about the effect of France's election on their country and the European Union. One British writer commented in *The Guardian* in London that France's election of Le Pen into the second round had proved that Europe was not as liberal and democratic as one had originally thought. Madeleine Bunting also wrote that Europeans who were thought to be mainly rationalist were now also considered materialist. By voting for a
man like Le Pen who wanted to restructure France's total economy, the French proved the significance of economic concerns. For them, the current free-market capitalism throughout Europe did not create a collective identity for the French people. The capitalism only made them feel alienated and alone (Bunting 13). Therefore, if France's economy suffered in the future from complications over mixed globalization feelings, Britain's economy would also suffer since it was a major trading partner with France.

Another British journalist, Michael Gonzalez, commented in The Guardian that France's election was partly caused by the economy but also by Le Pen's ideas. According to Gonzalez, "what happened in France was indeed the result of the EU, and specifically the euro." For the most part, the French did not want the euro, but in this situation, it proved to be a valuable asset to the French economy. If the euro had not been in France at the time, the inflation of the franc would have killed France's economy (Gonzalez 16).

The British were not just worried about the effect the election had on France's economy, but they were also concerned with the resilience of the country after such an election. One British journalist, named Dominique Moisi, was skeptical about Chirac's leadership in the new government. Would he prove successful in overcoming the stigma surrounding the first-round of the presidential election? Could someone formerly termed the "superliar" be able to become respected again? With many people referring to this election as Chirac's last chance to prove to himself, Moisi wondered if he could do his job successfully.

The British also questioned the future of France if cohabitation were to take place once again in parliament. For some called the presidential election the September 11 of
French politics, British citizens speculated on the French reaction to such a big
catastrophe in their government. If *cohabitation* happened again, the British, along with
the Belgians, feared that France might not fully recover from its problems that had
surfaced during the election (Moisi 17).

Like the British, Americans were also anxious about the outcome of the upcoming
parliamentary elections in France. In an article in *The New York Times* just after Chirac's
win in the second round, Chirac's best hope, according to one journalist, lay in his ability
to draw a strong majority in the upcoming parliamentary elections. If he succeeded, he
would add to the gains enjoyed by the right, sweeping parts of Europe; and would cement
a trend of rightist influence more securely. For the left, their main goal would be to re­
establish a leftist support system once again. With the first round election obviously
hurting the center-left in France, the left's need to regain support was eminent. With no
party showing a clear majority after the second round, many Americans were concerned
on the just split in the new parliament between the major parties contending for seats
(Tagliabue 8).

Worries in parliament aside, many Americans were initially shocked by the man
who Chirac chose to be the new prime minister of France just two days after the second­
round election. Jean-Pierre Raffarin, a businessman, was chosen to be the interim prime
minister, and his lack of government experience shocked many. However, according to
one journalist in *The New York Times*, his appointment did make some sense. Chirac, a
crafty man, picked someone to represent the provinces. In selecting a man to deal with
people outside Paris, he was attempting to placate a large segment of the population who
had voted for Le Pen. Moreover, by designating a businessman to deal with small
business owners in particular, Chirac had hoped that he would satisfy some of the needs of those who voted against him in the first round (Tagliabue 16). For the time being, many Americans and people all over the world just hoped that Chirac's appointment of Raffarin would solve some of the governmental problems in France.

Another factor that should have alarmed Americans about France according to The Toronto Star in Canada was that some French consider the United States an enemy. A poll taken in France that ranked the top terrorist threats to France gave the United States a shocking 31 percent. The Canadian who wrote this article stated, however, that it was not the people necessarily of the United States that represented enemies. The policies of the United States, specifically globalization, caused many French to turn against the U.S. In fact, the presidential elections have proved, in general, that many French were against globalization more profoundly than one had originally thought. For in the presidential election, not only did a large amount of French vote for the extreme right, but they also voted for the extreme left, which was also against globalization. According to this journalist, globalization could be a good thing for France if the French people choose to see it that way. If not, another politician, like Le Pen, could inseminate himself in the future if the French government did not attempt to alleviate French fears of a global economy (Crane 2).

With concerns about men, like Le Pen, taking over not only France but other European Union countries, one Irish editorialist wrote in The Irish Times of Dublin that his concern for France reflected his apprehension for all of Europe. With many worried about the upcoming parliamentary elections of France, this article stated that the electorate needed to reconnect with the government, and that the only way to do that was
"to tackle the issues thrown up" by the presidential campaign. With Le Pen receiving one in five French votes, many Irish were afraid that his support system would be too strong for the major parties to break without a huge effort. By addressing the needs of the French set out in the campaign of Le Pen, this article stated that France should be concerned not only about its own country but also about its relationship with its neighbors in Europe. Not only were France's concerns important to France, they were also important to the wider E.U. which was at least encouraged by the results of the second round ("A Good Result" 15). Thanks to Chirac’s overwhelming victory, many Irish would sleep more soundly, along with many others around the world.
Chapter IV

Conclusion:

The controversial French election obviously affected many people throughout the world. Although it did not drive democratic France to oligarchy, tyranny, or chaos, it did challenge France's democratic values. It also awakened the citizens in other democracies in Europe and abroad to the power of an electorate. When the French became dissatisfied and even disgruntled with governmental policies, they rebelled by voting for a man who was not afraid to challenge the traditional governmental ideals. Jean-Marie Le Pen, may not have been the candidate whom many would have wanted to see as the president of France, but his election into the second-round proved the need for change in the country.

While Jean-Marie Le Pen did not win the second-round or even receive a large number of votes, he did affect French political history. Not only did an extremist politician make it to the second-round in France's presidential elections, but he did so from within the political system. Although no one in France disputed his legitimacy in making it into the second-round, many disputed his legitimacy as a candidate. Was he really the type of man whom the French wanted to see as their next president? Or had the French finally had enough with underachieving politicians who speak about greatness but rarely accomplish anything? Regardless of the reasoning behind his election into the second-round, Le Pen proved that France did practice a fair democracy, but it was not as stable as most had thought.

Le Pen's success in the first round may have shown that France had a fair democratic process, but his failure in the second-round proved the French still had hope for their democracy as a whole. After losing the second-round, Le Pen and his party, the
National Front, hoped to obtain a fair number of parliamentary seats in the June 16th elections. The National Front, however, did not receive even one, proving that many French voters were ready to destroy Le Pen and his followers in the government.

Although Le Pen and his followers received no votes, other right parties did. Chirac's center right party won around 400 seats, and the French government would no longer be one of *cohabitation*, a wish that many people all over the world saw come true (Chalmers 11).

For many followers of the French elections of 2002, there could not have been a better ending to such a tragic tale. While the future of France appears to be bright, the French government still has many challenges to re-establish a strong government with its people. The government, though, seems to be confronting these issues. France is now trying to focus more on its own affairs and to overcome its own problems rather than becoming involved in foreign policy as much as it has in the past. By refusing to become involved in the U.S. war in Iraq, for instance, France has risked the alienation of a strong ally. Rather, the government listened to its people who are against the war effort. With the French government finally listening to its people once again, France's democracy appears to be strengthening. The catastrophic first-round is now an experience to contemplate and to learn from, and it is hoped that the French will not repeat the same nightmare in the foreseeable future.
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