Le Tigre et Sa Jungle:
A Comparative Study of the Political Development of Georges Clemenceau and the French Third Republic (1871-1906)

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May 2009

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is the culmination of an interest in Georges Clemenceau and the French Third Republic begun in the fall of 2007 during my junior year at Sciences-Po, Paris. I was a student of Professor Nicolas Roussellier in his class “La France: histoire d’une nation politique (1880-1990)” and was in the conférence of Professor Christophe Gracieux. Without their stimulating lectures and discussions, the inspiration for this thesis would not have happened. I would especially like to thank Professor Gracieux for his bibliographical references throughout the course of this year.

Back at Georgetown, Professors Tommaso Astarita and Jean-Max Guieu have been invaluable to me throughout this process. I must extend a particular thanks to Professor Astarita for editing sections of this thesis up until the eleventh hour, and to Professor Guieu for the innumerable bibliographical and factual references. Without your help, I cannot imagine what this thesis would look like.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents and my sister for their continual support over the course of this project. Here it is, Mom, Dad, and Kate, the final product.

To EJB
Introduction: The Third Republic and French Political History

In the 220 years since the French Revolution, France has experienced five republics, two empires, three monarchies, and the Vichy Regime. The Third Republic, which lasted from 1870 to 1940, occupied nearly one third of this period—longer than any other regime. Yet this relative durability masks two of the distinctive features of the Republic—a tenuous and precarious beginning and, even once firmly established, systemic governmental instability. In an effort to offer an interpretation of this apparently contradictory duality, this thesis will explore the history of the Third Republic through analysis of its seminal statesman and its seminal crisis—Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929) and the Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906).

In spite of its status as the first stable post-Revolution regime, in the latter half of the twentieth century the Third Republic suffered from a very poor public perception. The Republic was generally associated with 1940, the humiliating defeat at the hands of the Nazis, and the agony of the Vichy regime. In this light, the prevailing interpretation of the Republic was that its weaknesses occasioned its decline. Indeed, Charles de Gaulle believed the Fifth Republic (1958-present) he had founded to be the political opposite of the Third, an official interpretation that informed public sentiment. Chief among these weaknesses was systemic governmental instability. In its seventy year history, the Republic had 108 governments, none of which lasted longer than three years. The constantly changing face of the président du Conseil (the formal title of the Prime Minister of the Third and Fourth Republics) led to post-factum identification of parliamentary politics with theater, and the parliament of the Third Republic itself became the object of mockery, which has led to an enduring legacy of anti-parliamentarism.
Often, these critiques were based on the inauspicious ending of the Republic and thus ignore the rich political legacy the regime bequeathed to its democratic successors. Indeed, the more positive images of the Republic focus on the development and expansion of the Republican “Model” or “Tradition” that definitively established republicanism as the consensus regime in France. Under the Third Republic, France underwent a dramatic period of political socialization—the entirety of the male population became involved in political life. The period of 1880 to 1914 is referred to as the Belle époque, a period of artistic, literary, and musical flourishing accompanied by the definitive establishment of universal participatory democracy for men. While the flaws of the regime were numerous, the Third Republic was one of the most intense moments of democracy in French political history.

The National Assembly, or Parliament, viewed as the purest expression of the nation, was the most important institution of the Republic, a phenomenon that gave rise to the prevailing political doctrine of *parlementarisme*. The Parliament held a monopoly over political life; the President of the Republic was forbidden from directly addressing the people, and all legislative initiative had to pass through the Parliament. The primacy of the Parliament led to the development of the conception of anonymous government, a practice that depersonalized politics and eliminated the traditional role of a popular figurehead. This was due to a profound fear of césarisme—a derisive term which referred to the phenomenon of overly ambitious and charismatic political personalities—instilled following the election and subsequent coup and establishment of the Second Empire by Napoleon III in 1852. While the *parlementarisme* of the Republic prevented a repeat of 1852, the alliances of the individual deputies\(^2\) shifted constantly, and with no strict party structure to ensure discipline, efficient and dynamic governance became impossible.

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\(^2\) The members of the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the National Assembly.
While the fundamental importance of the Parliament produced the Republic’s greatest weakness in its systemic governmental instability, it also allowed for the Republic’s greatest attribute—its capacity to adapt to, outlast, and overcome political crises. In its most elemental form, French history from 1871 to 1906 is the history of the Republic’s successful negotiation of a series of crises, culminating with the Dreyfus Affair, which challenged but ultimately confirmed the place and strength of the regime. Considering the constantly shifting power dynamics in the Parliament, the absence of lasting political parties, the series of crises faced in the early years of the regime, and the weak powers of the executive, the quotidian politics of the Third Republic were complex, precarious, and ruthless—a veritable “jungle.” In this thesis I will explore the workings of this jungle by focusing on the career of one of its most fearsome inhabitants, the “Tiger,” the well-earned sobriquet of Georges Clemenceau.

Proclaimed on September 4, 1870, from the ashes of the Second Empire following the defeat of Napoleon III at the hands of the Prussians at Sedan on September 2, the Republic would stumble through several episodes of uncertainty, notably the 1871 Commune of Paris, before constitutional laws could be passed in 1875. The Republic’s first parliaments were populated by royalists who nearly succeeded in restoring a monarchical regime. Indeed, in substance the Republic did not begin to resemble its final form until after the decisive electoral victories of the moderate and Radical Republicans in 1877 and the election by the National Assembly of Republican Jules Grévy to the presidency in 1879. Following this definitive conquest of power, the Republicans subsequently promulgated legislation to create a truly Republican system. This passage from a failed royalist restoration, which culminated in the refusal of the would-be king, the Count of Chambord, to accept the tricolore flag in 1873, to a
Republican majority took place in banal terms—there was no revolution, no schism, thus, no foundation myth to romanticize. Nevertheless, the Republic thereafter suffered a series of crises, culminating in the Dreyfus Affair, an episode that revealed the extent to which France remained divided politically and socially despite a twenty-five year old political regime. The Dreyfus Affair pitted the doctrine of la raison d’État against the rights of the individual, a confrontation that carried profound implications for the nature of French republican government. Its successful resolution strengthened republican values in the national consciousness.

In all its characteristics the history of the Third Republic is inextricably linked to the evolution of the career of Georges Clemenceau. To understand the man one must understand the Republic, and vice versa. In this thesis, I shall analyze the political development of the Republic as it parallels the development of Clemenceau himself, with particular emphasis on the seminal events of the Dreyfus Affair.

Georges Eugene Benjamin Clemenceau was born on September 28, 1841, in Mouilleron-en-Paredes, a small village in the Vendée. Any study of Clemenceau’s political career must consider the influence of his Protestant mother and atheistic, staunchly Republican father on young Clemenceau. It is difficult to understatement the influence of Benjamin Clemenceau on his son’s development, both intellectually and politically. Benjamin, born in 1810, was a child of the Enlightenment. A physician by training, he viewed science as the engine of human progress, and instilled the same values in his son.

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3 This notion is the thesis of Michel Winock, expressed in La France politique, Paris: Seuil, 1999, pp. 151-165.
Following completion of medical studies in Paris, Georges Clemenceau went to the United States as a journalist, as a correspondent for the Parisian newspaper *Le Temps*, to cover the Civil War, during which time he developed a profound admiration for Abraham Lincoln. Following the war he disregarded his father’s instructions to return home and instead settled in New York. After his father ceased furnishing allowances, he became an instructor of French at an all-female high school in Connecticut, where he met the woman who eventually became his wife, an American named Mary Plummer.

Clemenceau and his bride returned to France for the twilight of the Second Empire, and following its collapse he left the family estate in the Vendée for Paris. Through the help of a friend of his father from their participation in the July Revolution of 1830, the devout Republican Etienne Arago, Clemenceau became the mayor of the eighteenth *arrondissement*\(^5\), the neighborhood of Montmartre, a working-class area with strong political leanings to the left. During the confused and emotional period following the capitulation at Sedan, the Prussian siege of Paris, and the establishment of the Commune in March 1871, Clemenceau managed his district deftly, winning municipal and later parliamentary elections. His views during this period were on the far left of the Radical Republican spectrum—as left as possible without being a partisan of the collectivists or any of the other numerous proto-socialist groups. He enacted several classic republican reforms, including a ban on religious education. Though he represented one of the most left-leaning districts of Paris, he never condoned armed opposition against the provisional government of Adolphe Thiers, and, once a member of the provisional Chamber of Deputies, he worked to reconcile the Communards and Thiers right until the infamous Bloody Week (*la Semaine sanglante*) of May 21-28, 1871. This, a traumatic episode

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\(^5\) Paris is divided into twenty administrative districts, or *arrondissements*. The village of Montmartre was incorporated into Paris as the eighteenth *arrondissement* in 1860.
of civil war, was Clemenceau’s introduction to national politics, and his experiences during this period informed the rest of his first parliamentary career. The intransigence of the legitimate government and the Commune continued after the Bloody Week, rendering reconciliation between the right and the left impossible. Yet, as a devoted republican and legalist, Clemenceau refused to advocate any unlawful behavior against the regime. Clemenceau’s adherence to legalism would eventually become part of the legacy of the Third Republic until its collapse in 1940—a strict commitment on the part of its leaders and major figures to the established order and a refusal to combat it by unlawful means.

Clemenceau’s first parliamentary career in the Third Republic began in 1876 and lasted until 1893. During this first career, two different pictures of Clemenceau emerged, based on his changing parliamentary role. During the first phase, Clemenceau was a fierce extreme left member of the Radical Republicans and began to gain his reputation as the tombeur de ministères—the destroyer of governments. While Clemenceau would not receive his nickname of “le Tigre” until his arrival at the Ministry of the Interior in 1906, elements of the personality that earned him this sobriquet were visible in first parliamentary career. The moniker referred to Clemenceau’s apparent preference for politically destructive behavior over engaging in substantive debate with his peers. His rivalry, notably over colonial policy, with Jules Ferry, parliamentary leader of the Opportunists and thrice Prime Minister, came to encapsulate most of this first period. Clemenceau ruthlessly and skilfully attacked his opponents, and while he often won, his ferocity frustrated and alienated his colleagues. By 1885, following disappointing election results for the Radical Republicans, as well as having faced multiple defeats on the question of institutional and social reform, Clemenceau toned down his assaults on the moderate Republicans and curtailed his speeches in the Chamber. Nevertheless, these political differences

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6 Watson, *Political Biography*, pp. 130-137.
often devolved into personal quarrels, and the aggregate weight of these animosities eventually led to his downfall following the Panama Scandal, a corruption crisis that implicated numerous members of the National Assembly, in 1893.
Chapter I: Narrative History of the Third Republic—Origins to the Dreyfus Affair

The Dreyfus Affair shook the Third Republic to its core and shocked French leaders and the public with the fissures it revealed within French society. Yet, the Affair also grew out of a number of earlier crises, the last and most profound of a series of tumultuous episodes dating from the difficult beginnings of the Republic in 1870. In this chapter I will offer a summary of these crises, of how they affected Georges Clemenceau, and of their impact on the development of the regime. Also pertinent to proper contextualization of the Dreyfus Affair is an understanding of the functioning of the political system and the dominant political currents of the Third Republic.

The collapse of the Second Empire following the defeat of Emperor Napoleon III at Sedan on September 2, 1870, in the words of historian Serge Berstein, “brutally redistributed the playing cards of French political life.” A double fear dominated the political psyche in the power vacuum of French politics that existed following the capitulation. The traumatic episode of the Commune of Paris in 1871 led to the formation of a conservative Republic that left the door open to the possible creation of a constitutional monarchy. Nevertheless, the political decisions made in the aftermath of the fall of the Second Empire and the suppression of the Commune set France inexorably on the path towards republicanism. The Republic stumbled from crisis to crisis in its first two and a half decades, yet each time found itself reinforced, having vanquished and incorporated its various former adversaries. This process of republican consolidation led to the fashioning of a regime very different from that established by the initial compromise of 1875.

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By the time of the start of the Dreyfus Affair in 1894, the nature of the regime had been solidly established due to a series of successes of the Republic in the face of numerous existential challenges, such as the constitutional crisis of May 16, 1877, the Boulanger Affair of 1887-1889, and the Panama Scandal of 1889-1893. The primary characteristic of the Third Republic was the notion of *le parlementarisme souverain*, the primacy of the National Assembly, notably the Chamber of Deputies, over the executive, the President of the Republic, and the government. This led to another prominent feature of the regime—governmental instability. From 1870 to 1940, the end of the regime, there were 108 governments, none of which retained power for longer than three years. The fear of a political entrepreneur à la Napoleon III prevented the rise of any single political figure and explains in large part the constantly shifting face of the leader of the government.  

The official birth-date of the French Third Republic is September 4, 1870, though it took nearly a decade for the regime to fully justify its title. Having received word of Napoleon III’s capitulation following defeat at the hands of the Prussian Army at Sedan, the *Corps législatif* debated over a course of action. Failing to reach a consensus, however, on September 4 several Republican members of the *Corps législatif*, motivated by a popular movement at the doors of the Palais Bourbon, marched to the Hôtel de Ville to proclaim the Third Republic. Yet, with neither an armistice nor a peace treaty signed, the most immediate concern was of national security, and following various negotiations the deputies of the legislative body adopted plans for a provisional government—the Government of National Defense. Notable among the ministerial

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10 The Palais Bourbon, located on the left bank of the Seine at the intersection of Boulevard Saint-Germain and the Quai d’Orsay, is home to the National Assembly.
choices were staunch Republicans Léon Gambetta as Minister of the Interior and Jules Favre as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Interestingly, not a single member of the vociferous and increasingly pertinent Parisian extreme left played a role in the provisional government. This initial fracture encapsulates the dichotomy between the Parisian extreme left and the moderate Republicans, between Paris and the rest of France, which culminated with the traumatic episode of the Paris Commune of March through May 1871.

The signing of an armistice on January 28, 1871 reflected the desire of most moderate Republicans and those familiar with the sentiments of the more conservative and rural provinces to formally end the conflict with Bismarck. This position stood in stark contrast to the sentiments of the Parisian extreme left revolutionaries and most Radicals, who viewed the armistice as a betrayal of the sacrifices made by Paris, who had endured a siege since September 19, 1870, on behalf of all of France. The elections of the National Assembly on February 8, 1871 further underscored these divisions between Paris and the provinces.

Bismarck did not view the provisional government as legitimate and a provision of the armistice provided for the election of a National Assembly with which a peace treaty could be negotiated. Announced on January 29 and scheduled for February 8, the elections took place under difficult circumstances. The Prussians occupied forty departments (administrative districts established following the Revolution of 1789), 400,000 men were held prisoner, and the ten-day period between the announcement and day of election did not allow for a true electoral campaign. The results reflected this confused atmosphere. The candidates of the conservative Right won a resounding victory—of the 675 elected deputies there were 400 Monarchists (divided between 220 Orléanists and 180 Legitimists)\textsuperscript{12}, 250 republicans, and a handful of

\textsuperscript{12} This split divided the supporters of the Orléanists and the Bourbons, the two remaining monarchical families. The Orléanists ruled France from 1830 to 1848 during the July Monarchy, following the Revolution of 1830. The
Bonapartists. The campaign centered on the question of the war, specifically whether to continue hostilities or to negotiate a peace. The Monarchists almost universally sought an end to the conflict, as did conservative and moderate Republicans, led by Adolphe Thiers. The Radical Republicans, led by Gambetta, and the extreme left, however, wished to continue the war. Indeed, while the Republicans were in accordance as to the nature of the regime, the question of the war proved divisive. The Monarchists won everywhere except in large cities and the traditional bastions of the left, notably in the south-east and the Midi region.

While the overwhelming victory of the Monarchists revealed the division between urban and rural France, the results were not an accurate barometer of public opinion—France in 1871 was not hugely in favor of the restoration of the monarchy. Rather, in the confused and dramatic context of February 1871 the largely rural and conservative electorate sought stability and peace, in this instance represented by the Monarchists.\textsuperscript{13} Nevertheless, one third of the resultant \textit{Chambre rurale}\textsuperscript{14} was landed aristocrats and represented traditional social authorities.

Moreover, divisions existed within the republican camp itself, further reducing the potential for the emergence of a true republic. In Bordeaux on February 17 the Assembly elected Thiers in a near-unanimous vote as “Head of Executive Power of the French Republic.” Thiers, though himself a conservative Republican and former Orléanist, would not publically pronounce on the nature of the regime, a republic or monarchy, until the conclusion of a peace treaty. This agreement became known as the “Pact of Bordeaux.”

The choice of Thiers deserves further attention, as it highlights a fundamental characteristic of the early development of the Third Republic. Indeed, it may appear curious that

\textsuperscript{13} Bourbons were the remaining direct descendants of the monarchy deposed in 1789 and again in 1830. For a complete discussion of the different currents of the Right in France, see René Rémont’s classic, \textit{Les Droites en France}, Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982.

\textsuperscript{14} Republicans used the derisive nickname of “rural Chamber” to refer to social composition of the Deputies.
the Monarchists, with a nearly two-to-one parliamentary advantage, chose Thiers, a Republican, to head the government, instead of installing either the Duke de Broglie, the Orléanist heir, or the Count of Chambord, the Legitimist heir, at the head of a monarchical regime. Yet, just as internal divisions pitted the Republicans against each other, so too did dissent hamper the Monarchists. Thus, Thiers’ rise was, while not accidental, not intentional—he came into power as the result of a lukewarm, not wholly satisfying compromise.

If the Monarchists were unable to agree on the nature of the new regime, the Republicans were themselves no clearer. At the time of the birth of the Third Republic, two images of the notion “republic” existed in France, directly tied to France’s two republican experiences. The First Republic of 1792-1794 evoked images of the Terror and the guillotine of Robespierre, the corrupt and incompetent Directory, and the series of violent coups d’état that characterized the early years in post-Revolution France, images that did little to incite popular enthusiasm. The Second Republic of 1848-185, characterized by conservatism, universal male suffrage, the establishment and maintenance of order and stability, and the exclusion from the political scene of more radical figures, presented a more palatable alternative. Indeed, Thiers, a principal figure of the Second Republic, sought a refashioning of this kind of regime in the Third Republic, and the experience of the Commune of Paris from March to May of 1871 gave this conception a certain degree of legitimacy.

The Commune pitted Paris against Versailles, with all the aesthetic and ideological conflicts that accompany such an opposition. Following a series of violent incidents and sensitive to the rising tensions in the capital, the government, which had moved from Bordeaux to Paris, subsequently moved to Versailles on March 10, a move harshly criticized by Republicans sympathetic to Paris’ struggle. In return for enduring the Prussian siege, Thiers
effectively “decapitalized” the city.\footnote{Winock, La fièvre, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1986, p. 16.} Thus, outside the walls and removed from the siege was the National Assembly of the February 8 elections—dominated by Monarchists, populated by traditional elites (known traditionally as \textit{les notables}\footnote{Daniel Halévy, \textit{La fin des notables}, Paris: Grasset, 1930.} led by a conservative Republican, and reflective of national weariness of war, expressed by the primarily rural electorate. Residing within the besieged city was a tenuous combination of Radical Republicans, members of the extreme left, and in the wealthier \textit{arrondissements}, notably in the west of the city, more conservative citizens sympathetic to the Assembly at Versailles.

The Radicals and the extreme left, while divided over how to respond to the election of the \textit{Chambre rurale}, were united in their feeling of betrayal at the signing of the armistice on January 28. At the time of the signature of the armistice Paris had been isolated and starved for over four months. It is therefore not difficult to understand the indignation and incredulity encapsulated by Victor Hugo, elected as a representative of Paris: “For five [\textit{sic.}] months, Paris’ struggle has astonished the world; Paris, in five months as a Republic, has acquired more honor than it lost during the nineteen years of empire… it has more than saved the life of France, it has saved its honor. And you dare challenge Paris!”\footnote{As cited in Winock, \textit{La fièvre}, pp. 14-15.}

Historians choose March 18 as the Commune of Paris’ crossing of the Rubicon—it was the day of rejection of the authority of the then still-provisional, but legal, government. Thiers issued an order for a number of cannons to be removed from the Butte of Montmartre, the highest point in the capital. Located in the eighteenth \textit{arrondissement}, Montmartre was a working-class neighborhood that had strong ties with the extreme left. The members of the National Guard refused to relinquish their arms, and by the mid-afternoon a mob had overpowered and detained the two generals sent to perform the removal. Desperate to avoid the
ultimate degeneration of law and order Georges Clemenceau, the mayor of the eighteenth, attempted in vain to calm the situation. He later remarked that that day he witnessed the phenomenon known as blood-lust, as Generals Lecomte and Thomas were executed by the frenzied mob.\(^\text{18}\)

As Winock observed, “the word ‘crisis’ is too weak to adequately describe the tumult and agony” of the experience of the Commune.\(^\text{19}\) From March 19 until the conclusion of the Bloody Week (May 21-28) a state of civil war existed between the legitimate government and the Commune of Paris. Most remarkable for purposes of this thesis is the effect of intransigence on the parts of both the government at Versailles and the Commune, rendering any compromise or peaceful resolution impossible. A small handful of Republicans, notably Clemenceau, were indefatigable in their efforts to act as mediators, but by the end of March, it was clear that no conciliation was possible. As Emile Zola noted following the vote of March 23 by the Assembly to organize battalions to march on Paris by a vote of 433 to 29, “if indeed history one day notes that the insurrection pushed the country into the abyss, it will add that the organized and legitimate government did everything it could to render the fall mortal.”\(^\text{20}\) With both sides hopelessly blinded by their own passions, the streets of Paris were the scene of wholesale massacre during the Bloody Week.

Paris lost roughly 100,000 inhabitants over the course of the final week of combat, though the longer lasting effects of the Commune lay in its reverberations in the politics of the early Republic—the bitter hatred and intransigence that existed during the Commune marked

\(^{18}\) Watson, Political Biography, p. 37.

\(^{19}\) Winock, La fièvre, p. 13. See picture of the Hôtel de Ville de Paris, destroyed during the Bloody Week in appendix B.

\(^{20}\) As cited in Winock, Ibid., p. 25.
political interactions well after the cessation of hostilities.\textsuperscript{21} The Commune became the fundamental point of reference for all future members of the extreme left and for some Radical Republicans.\textsuperscript{22} One’s legitimacy as a member of the extreme left was predicated upon one’s involvement in or position on the Commune. The split between the extremes of the political society—the extreme left and the Monarchists—revealed fundamental differences regarding issues that remained divisive questions over the course of the Third Republic, notably the role of the Church in public life.

Following the horror of the Commune, the members of the National Assembly began to work to find a monarchist solution to the question of the nature of the regime. The 400 Monarchists in the Assembly believed Thiers was leading what was initially conceived as a temporary regime towards permanence. Yet, as in the immediate aftermath of the February 1871 elections, internal divisions doomed the prospect of the restoration of a monarchy. The personal ambitions of the concerned parties began to clash, and in October 1873, when the moment came for the Legitimist heir, the Count of Chambord, to assume the throne, he refused over the issue of the maintenance of the \textit{tricolore} flag, symbol of 1789 and its revolutionary heritage. While the French people may have voted for the Monarchists under the extraordinary conditions of February, 1871, the return of the white flag, symbol \textit{par excellence} of the \textit{Ancien Régime}, was inconceivable.

The Republic, through a process of awkward and painful stumbling, appeared for the moment to have been definitively established. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to underscore the difficult beginnings of the regime. As has been illustrated, the debut of the Third Republic was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Winock, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 48.
\item \textsuperscript{22} To this day members of the Socialist and Communist Parties pay homage on May 28 to the last Communards executed at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in the twentieth \textit{arrondissement}.
\end{itemize}
without any positive, iconic moment appealed to by all parties, such as the American Revolution. From its beginning, the Third Republic was an unsatisfying compromise, writ large. The foundational legacy of the regime was one of defeat, humiliation, confusion, and, as illustrated by the episode of the Commune of Paris, civil war. Following the failure of the Monarchists to achieve their essential goal, the Republic existed in a state of bizarre limbo, characterized by Halévy as the “Republic of Dukes,” a reference to the ironic composition of the National Assembly. The Third Republic continued in this vein, seemingly engaged in a political charade. The Left became increasingly synonymous with “Republic” while the opposite was true for the largely Monarchist Right, until, in 1879, following definitive electoral conquest of the Chamber of Deputies by the Republicans, the political reality and the name of the regime finally began to resemble each other.

The Constitutional Crisis of March 16, 1877

The Third Republic was a regime without a constitution for four years, until, under the Presidency of Marshall MacMahon, the Assembly adopted les lois constitutionnelles of 1875. While the history of these laws is not directly germane to this discussion, three features of the Republic, henceforth officially constituted, warrant mention. First, France became only republic in Europe except Switzerland, which was a small, federal entity. Secondly, the National Assembly was a bicameral institution divided between the lower Chamber of Deputies and the upper Senate. Thirdly, the President of the Republic, elected by the National Assembly and represented the executive authority, was officially head of state, and held the power to dissolve

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23 Winock, La fièvre, p. 50.
24 Under the Third Republic the président du Conseil, the Prime Minister, was the head of government.
the Chamber of Deputies. In reality, however, the specific functional modalities of this newly conceived system were left undetermined.

The nature of the regime, whether the executive or legislative branch would wield ultimate power, was the crux of the constitutional crisis of May 16, 1877. The Republicans, continuing their gains in influence, scored significant victories in legislative elections from January to March 1876. In the senatorial elections, the Republicans won ninety-two seats compared to 119 for the Right, a stunning result considering the architects and origins of the upper house. In the Chamber of Deputies, the Republicans, including the newly elected Georges Clemenceau, won 360 seats, compared with 150 for the Right. These conditions thrust into question the status of MacMahon, a Monarchist, as President of the Republic. On May 16, 1877, MacMahon decided to separate himself from the Prime Minister, the Republican Jules Simon, claiming, despite Simon’s wide majority in the Chamber, that the Prime Minister no longer enjoyed the support necessary to effectively exercise the functions of his office. In response, Simon resigned, and MacMahon appointed the Duke de Broglie in his place. This prompted 363 deputies, all loyal to Simon, to vote to condemn the ministry of de Broglie. Not to be outdone, MacMahon, in an attempt to resolve the conflict between the Chamber and the presidency, ordered the dissolution of the lower house.

The actions of the President raised the question of who held ultimate political primacy under the system of the Third Republic. Following special elections, the Republicans returned to the Chamber with equal electoral strength and reinforced legitimacy—twice in two years had the electorate voted for those who represented Republican views. In this context, it is not difficult to understand the tenacity with which the Republicans attacked the actions of MacMahon. The fear of césarisme on the part of an executive à la Napoleon III was still a legitimate fear, particularly

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25 Barjot, La France, p. 469.
when the view of a single individual opposed a reconfirmed expression of universal male suffrage. The Republicans thus viewed any attack on the Chamber as an attack on the liberty of the citizen. The crisis relegated the presidency to a subordinate role and, following the crisis of May 16, there was never again any attempt on the part of a President to dissolve the Chamber. This broad conception of Republicanism united the various groups of the Left against the actions of a divided Right and led not only to the victory of the Chamber in the May 16 crisis, but to the reinforced development of one of the fundamental characteristics of the Third Republic, *le parlementarisme souverain*, the notion of the primacy of the legislative branch.

The positive resolution of the May 16 crisis demonstrated that, despite its imperfections, the regime was resilient, and that the Republic was the desired form of government of the French people. This victory facilitated a deepening of the roots of the Third Republic, and began the process of democratization of the regime that gradually unfolded to the early 1880s. As scholars of the regime\(^\text{26}\) have illustrated, the gradual opening of the political enterprise and the decline in influence of the *notables* characterized the early years of the Republic. With the elimination of the Monarchist threat following the May 16 crisis, the regime counted one adversary fewer, but still had limited capacity to spread its influence to rally the populace behind the Republic. While the Republic lacked any foundational mystique, by the late 1870s, particularly after the events of 1879, the regime was settled.

Despite its endemic governmental instability, the Third Republic made significant accomplishments in the application of certain revolutionary ideals of 1789. The rejection of aristocracy in favor of meritocracy figured prominently throughout this period, notably with the reform of the educational system. With the Ferry Laws of 1881 and 1882 (named after then-
Minister of Education Jules Ferry), primary education became obligatory, free, and secular. Infused with a Republican pedagogy aimed at producing a youth fundamentally loyal to the Republic, the Ferry Laws became a touchstone of the recurring clash of the Republic with the Catholic Church. With the educational reforms came the rise in political pertinence of the classes moyennes. This nebulous sociological marker encompassed significant portions of the population of the Third Republic, from independent artisans to junior civil servants to members of the established bourgeoisie. One of the major successes of the regime, therefore, was achieving the républicanisation of significant parts of the population; while specific political opinions varied within the classes moyennes, the Republic as an institution enjoyed popular support. Moreover, many prominent political figures of the Third Republic came from these classes.

Throughout the early years of the Republic, left and center-left republicans engaged in a protracted conflict with the Catholic Church, culminating in the laws separating Church and State in 1905; conflict with the Church is a central theme of the politico-social discourse of the Third Republic. This conflict stemmed from one of the profound divisions of nineteenth-century France. In the aftermath of 1789 France divided between those who believed in the revolutionary notion of a secular state and those who remained religiously committed Catholics who opposed such secularization. Catholics sought the preservation of the Napoleonic Concordat of 1801, which had granted influential powers to the Catholic Church. Successive generations transmitted their respective beliefs, honed their rival philosophies, and the Third Republic gave occasion to the republicans to impose their interpretation, often within an anticlerical framework. The tensions between these two visions of France flared at several

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27 This term refers to a wider segment of society than its English cognate and carries political connotations closely linked with the importance of meritocracy in the Third Republic.
instances, notably during the establishment of the école républicaine by Ferry in the 1880s; the Boulanger Affair, an episode that culminated in a failed attempt to overthrow the Republic by General Georges Boulanger (1887-89); and the Dreyfus Affair.

The Boulanger Affair of 1887-1889

The 1870s were necessarily focused on institutional settlement, and with the 1880s the issue of France’s international status came to the fore forcefully. One of the primary features of the Opportunist Jules Ferry governments of the early 1880s was the development of French colonialism, utilized as a means to restore French grandeur. France was humiliated and diplomatically isolated on the continent following 1871, and Ferry, as well as many others, believed an expansion abroad was the most expeditious way to retain France’s status as a grande puissance, a major world power. Tied to this quest for a restoration of national honor was the collective fixation on an eventual revanche, or revenge, against the Germans. This permeated nearly every level of society, a phenomenon illustrated by the instruction of geography in the public primary schools. The map of France taught in schools still included Alsace and Lorraine, the two provinces lost to Germany in 1871, though with a special notation indicating their temporary administration by the Reich. Recognition of this national psychology helps explain the rise of General Georges Boulanger and the ensuing crisis that embroiled the Republic from 1887-1889.

Georges Boulanger, a career soldier who had entered the Army in 1856, was one of three generals who oversaw the repression of the Commune in May 1871, yet he became a symbol of Republicanism during the 1880s. In 1886, newly-elected Prime Minister Charles de Freycinet named him Minister of War. Boulanger gained immense popularity not only within the Army,
but among the general public as well. Boulanger was also a fierce proponent of *revanche* against the Germans, a characteristic that gained him immense popular support. This support drove him to the brink of overthrowing the Republic, but Boulanger’s supporters were highly variegated and internally contradictory, a fatal incoherence that ultimately immobilized the Boulangist movement.

For the purposes of this thesis the meteoric rise and precipitous demise of Boulanger is best observed through analysis of Georges Clemenceau’s involvement with the General. This experience exercised a marked influence on the second phase of his first parliamentary career (1885-1893). However, in order to discuss this relationship and understand its impact on the political development of both Clemenceau and the Republic, one must first analyze the elections of 1885 and their consequences on the parliamentary landscape.

In 1885, Clemenceau, a Radical deputy from Montmartre, was at the height of his power. He led the Radicals in the Chamber, led the opposition to the governing Opportunists, and many believed he would soon lead the government.\(^ {28} \) Despite these expectations, in order for Clemenceau to ascend to the premiership, he would have had to negotiate the mosaic composition of the Chamber. Indeed, this would have involved downplaying the central components of his political agenda, which, all together, did not constitute a majority view. His platform for the 1885 elections revolved around the reform of the constitution and of the judicial system, separation of Church and State, and the halting of colonial “adventurism,” all of which would not have garnered the necessary support to become Prime Minister.\(^ {29} \) Given that Clemenceau’s political prominence was predicated upon his role as the perpetual critic, particularly of the Opportunists, whose political creed he derisively described as “the politics of

\(^ {28} \) Duroselle, *Clemenceau*, p. 228.

systematic delay,” he would have been exposed to immense criticism if, once in power, he were to suddenly abandon his causes célèbres.30

From 1875 until 1885 elections took place under the system of scrutin d’arrondissement, whereby deputies were elected by single districts, one in each arrondissement. This system allowed for locally prominent figures to utilize their status in a small area to attain power. Reform of electoral laws was a major component of Radical programs, whose proponents sought and attained for the 1885 elections the implementation of the scrutin de liste. Under this system citizens elected a number of individuals within a larger area on a general ticket. The more nationally-minded Radicals believed that the scrutin de liste would be more favorable for them and the more moderate Republicans, as the voting areas were larger and candidates thus less beholden to local interests.

Instead of bolstering the position of the Republicans, however, the results of the October 1885 elections illustrated their internal divisions in dramatic fashion. The parliamentary rivalries between the Radicals and the Opportunists led to the production of competing lists that split the Republican electorate. The Right, despite its own heterogeneous composition, presented single and unique lists. The Republicans won the elections but saw their parliamentary majority decrease against the Monarchists, who made electoral gains for the first time since 1876.31 Moreover, the composition of the elected Left shifted—the Opportunists lost nearly 100 seats, while the numbers of their Radical colleagues increased.32 The ongoing economic difficulties confronting France contributed to these results. Beginning in 1882 the Republic experienced serious economic difficulties for the first time. The collapse in this year of the Union Générale bank sent shockwaves through society, stoking anti-Semitic fervor over the role of several

30 Winock, Clemenceau, p. 141.
31 Winock, Ibid., p. 142.
32 Winock, Ibid., p. 144.
prominent Jewish bankers. Édouard Drumont’s *La France juive*, an anti-Semitic history of Jewish infiltration of French society published in 1886, encapsulated this building wave of anti-Semitism. Moreover, grain prices had fallen drastically, putting pressure on the economy, and France, which was not as industrialized as Germany at this point, was ill-equipped to compensate. Additionally, the effect of the phylloxera outbreak on the wine-producing regions, particularly of the south, was devastating. The deteriorating economic situation led to an anti-government vote in 1885 and provided fertile ground in which Boulangism took root.

For his part, Clemenceau, the parliamentary leader of the Radicals, no longer represented Montmartre, but the Var. Clemenceau’s popularity in Paris had declined, and, through a relationship with the mayor of Toulon, he stood for election in this department on the Mediterranean coast.

Though not elected to the post of Prime Minister in the immediate aftermath of the elections of 1885, Clemenceau retained a prominent role in the Chamber. Indeed, without the backing of Clemenceau, it is unlikely Freycinet would have selected Boulanger as Minister of War in January, 1886. In the ever-shifting jungle of Third Republic parliamentary politics, Clemenceau, who sensed his imminent ascension, sought to identify himself with the popular Boulanger, one of the rare Republican generals. As the Freycinet government continued, however, the artificiality of Boulanger’s republicanism became increasingly apparent. Nevertheless, certain members of the National Assembly wished to capitalize on the popularity of the General, and invited Clemenceau to join in their project. At this point Clemenceau, wary

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33 See appendix B for the cover of this volume.
35 The department of the Var is located on the southeastern Mediterranean coast of France. Toulon, the traditional home of the French Navy, is the largest city, and St. Tropez is a major tourist destination.
36 Duroselle, *Clemenceau*, p. 244. Duroselle cites numerous letters and personal documents of parliamentary colleagues who attest to Clemenceau’s influence in the ascension of Boulanger.
of what he viewed as the latest expression of the French national obsession with “messianism,”
began to distance himself from Boulanger.\textsuperscript{37} The imprudence of Boulanger reconfirmed the
danger that Clemenceau sensed.

In April, 1887 a French border commissary was detained by German troops at the
Franco-German border. He was released shortly after, but Boulanger, a precocious man of the
media, made it a \textit{cause célèbre} and the resultant popular frenzy nearly drove the two countries to
war. The public called Boulanger “General Victory” and viewed him as the only member of the
government willing to stand up to Bismarck and defend French honor. Clemenceau, along with
many other members of the Chamber, denounced the General as risking a war for which France
was unprepared. The political fallout caused by this affair led to the collapse of the government
in May, 1887, and with it, of Boulanger as Minister of War.

The negative popular view of the regime, already shaped by the poor economic
conditions, was reinforced when it was revealed that Daniel Wilson, a deputy and son-in-law of
Jules Grévy, the President of the Republic, was selling Army decorations. Clemenceau
demanded the resignation not only of Wilson, but of Grévy as well. Always the parliamentary
tactician, Clemenceau sought to maneuver his way into the premiership, but his involvement
with Boulanger rendered this impossible.

In this atmosphere of heightened dissatisfaction with the Republic, Boulanger became a
greater threat to the regime once out of power. Many citizens, disgruntled over the “affairism”
that appeared to dominate the Chamber, over the economic situation, and over the
ineffectiveness of an “excessively unstable regime,” sought a “vast constitutional revision” with
the “dream of a…‘savior’” embodied in Boulanger.\textsuperscript{38} The support of numerous members of the

\textsuperscript{37} Duroselle, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 246.
\textsuperscript{38} Duroselle, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 243.
Monarchist Right as well as several ex-Radicals created an extra-parliamentary political movement that led Boulanger to run for election to the Chamber in 1889. After his election in Paris his most ardent supporters urged him to lead a march to the Palais Elysée and claim power, but when the decisive moment came, he refused. The Republic, through the actions of the Chamber, quickly mobilized against him and Boulanger fled to Belgium, where he committed suicide on the grave of his mistress in September 1891.

The Boulanger Affair posed a fundamental challenge to the Republic, but in the end the regime demonstrated its resilience and, despite governmental instability, its capacity to adapt and evolve. The experience of Boulanger also highlighted the exalted role of the Army in the institutional hierarchy of the Republic, an exalted status that would be at the center of the Dreyfus Affair. Although the Republic remained intact, the period following the Affair from 1889 to 1893 was “one of the darkest” of Clemenceau’s life. Beginning in 1888, it became increasingly clear that Clemenceau would not ascend to power, even as a minister. The successor to Grévy as President of the Republic was Nicolas Sadi-Carnot, who owed his election entirely to Clemenceau. Nevertheless, Sadi-Carnot did not select Clemenceau as Prime Minister. Moreover, the Boulanger Affair led to the creation of enduring divisions and animosities that did not end with the death of Boulanger. Indeed, the inimical relationship between Monarchist deputy Paul Déroulède and Clemenceau, developed during the Boulanger Affair, continued well beyond 1891. The elections of 1889 did not bring renewed hope to Clemenceau, but rather ushered in the most difficult phase of his first parliamentary career when his intransigent reputation would lead to his fall.

39 The Palais Elysée is the residence of the President of the Republic.
40 Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 260.
The Panama Scandal and the End of the First Parliamentary Career

The malaise Clemenceau experienced following his failure to ascend to the premiership was coupled with a diminished stature in the Chamber of Deputies following the elections of 1889. The lack of Clemenceau’s involvement in the organization of a Radical-Social parliamentary group in 1892 further underscored his decline in status. Camille Pelletan, Clemenceau’s colleague and fellow Radical from the days of the Commune, formed the group instead.41 It was against this backdrop of decreased prominence and isolation from his political brethren that exploded the Panama Scandal, a corruption affair that shook the National Assembly from 1892 to 1893 and led to the end of Clemenceau’s first parliamentary career.

Following his success with the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps, eager to realize another public works breakthrough, turned his sights towards Panama. Given de Lessep’s prior triumph investors were initially numerous and generous, and in 1879 the Panama Canal Company was chartered. As work commenced, however, the company realized it would need more capital. Eager to keep public perception positive and capital coming, the company cultivated cozy relationships with journalists and distributed hefty commissions to bankers. In 1885 the company sought to issue lottery bonds to assuage their financial troubles, a move that required governmental approval. From this date on the web of corruption expanded to include parliamentarians in addition to journalists and bankers.42

The news that broke the Affair was the revelation that the company promised to pay Cornelius Herz, the German Jewish industrialist who was a major backer of Clemenceau’s

41 Watson, Political Biography, p. 122.
42 Watson, Ibid., p. 123.
struggling newspaper, La Justice, ten million francs if the government approved a financing bill. Various developments ensued and on December 20, 1892 the scandal erupted in the Chamber.\textsuperscript{43} While newspaper reports and parliamentary investigations had revealed the involvement of numerous members of the National Assembly, Clemenceau was never officially implicated in any malfeasance. Nevertheless, his enemies, most notably Déroulède, pounced on Clemenceau’s relationship with Herz. What ensued was the proliferation in the Chamber and in the press of libelous claims that Clemenceau was in the employ of foreign governments as well as Jewish financiers. While baseless, these charges made Clemenceau’s political position extremely precarious, and he spent the entire electoral campaign of 1893 attempting to repudiate them.

On August 8 Clemenceau gave an electoral speech in Salernes, an impassioned defense of his character as a Republican and his integrity as a deputy. In the speech he detailed his commitment to the ideals and the institutions of the Republic since the beginning of his adult life and responded to the bogus charges of having accepted bribes. In the speech he candidly revealed all of his financial arrangements, a dramatic step for a public official, particularly in France. That Clemenceau felt compelled to provide to his audience a detailed account of his personal financial status, given French mores regarding \textit{la vie privée}, particularly of public officials, underscores how precarious his situation must have been. After having enumerated his sources of income and financial obligations, many of which remained outstanding, he remarked on “the extent of the admissions that we reduce disinterested servants of the Republic” and wished that “the shame of this humiliation be visited upon those who made these confessions necessary.”\textsuperscript{44} Despite his candor, however, Clemenceau was unable to withstand the torrent of accusations thrust upon him by certain elements of the national press, notably \textit{Le Petit Journal} of

\textsuperscript{43} Watson, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{44} As cited in Duroselle, \textit{Clemenceau}, p. 297.
Ernest Judet, and he lost his seat as deputy of the Var on September 3, 1893, the victim of a calumnious and concerted campaign.

While the Panama Scandal did not threaten the existence of the regime on an existential plane in the same sense as the Boulanger Affair had, this episode was damaging for the reputation of the National Assembly, the principal symbol of the Republic. Although institutionally settled, the regime’s status among the population remained lukewarm, reflective of the Republic’s ambiguous beginnings and difficult establishment. The trials of the regime were not through, however, as the events of the 1894 sparked a crisis that embroiled France for the next twelve years.
Chapter II: The Dreyfus Affair

In late 1894 Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish Alsatian artillery captain, was court-martialed for suspected treason. He stood accused of the unpardonable offense of selling Army secrets to Germany. The État-Major (General Staff) of the Army reached a verdict summarily—Dreyfus was found guilty on all accounts, received a public cashering in the courtyard of the École militaire, and was banished to l’Île du diable, a desolate rock off the coast of French Guiana. Public sentiment overwhelmingly supported the Army and the government—indeed, at this time even Clemenceau, who later became one of the captain’s most ardent defenders, went to great lengths in his initial condemnation of Dreyfus. Following the 1894 decision, with the exception of the condemned’s family, universally in France, across geographic, political, and social divisions, Dreyfus was the object of the highest scorn, guilty of having betrayed la Patrie in the worst conceivable fashion. Following the conclusion of the trial, the Dreyfus court-martial faded from public view. With Dreyfus’ exile and removal from the public eye, the case ceased to be a topic of discussion. Only his brother, Mathieu, and a handful of others, convinced of the captain’s innocence, attempted to keep the case in public view, hoping for a chance at redemption. This seemed initially a vain hope, yet soon this episode would develop into the Third Republic’s most dramatic crisis, and reveal major divisions across French politics, society, and culture.

Context of l’Affaire

The 1890s were a period of relative stabilization in French politics, as the Republic had succeeded at vanquishing and integrating its old enemies. While there were still profound

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45 The lectures of Professor Nicolas Roussellier of October 16 and 23, 2007 given at Sciences-Po, Paris helped me formulate this section.
variances in the political views of the members of the Chamber of Deputies, these debates took place within the Republican framework. The Monarchists, the Bonapartists, the Catholics, and the Socialists found themselves unable to challenge the basic structures of the Republic.

By the 1890s the Monarchists no longer constituted a serious opposition in the Chamber or to the Republic itself. To the extent that Monarchists still existed at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, they occupied only a marginal role in civil and political society. The Bonapartists, whose most serious contestation of the Republic failed with Boulanger, also found themselves relegated to the political margins by the 1890s. With the death in 1879 of the last remaining Bonapartist heir, the “Imperial Prince” Louis Napoleon, what remained were romanticized visions of the victories of the Napoleonic Wars, and the contributions of the Civil Code and the administrative system. If anything, the “Bonapartists” of the 1890s yearned for a stronger executive à l’américaine.

Relations between Catholics and the Republic were constantly strained, primarily over the issue of the role of the church in educational and state affairs. This conflict had crystallized during several notable episodes, yet in 1892 Pope Leo XIII called for the Ralliement (rallying) of French Catholics to the Republic. No longer did Catholics pose an obstacle to the Republic on an institutional level, as they accepted the regime and were loyal citizens, though they continued to critique the Ferry Education Laws of 1881 and 1882.

The repression of the Paris Commune left a bitter legacy of hostility between the Republic and the extreme left. However, the Chamber adopted an amnesty law for former Communards in 1880, a project of fundamental importance to Clemenceau given his role during
the events of the spring of 1871. By this time a new generation of French Socialists\(^46\) had emerged, less revolutionary than their Communard predecessors and more willing to accept the regime and work within its framework. The Program of St. Mandé of Alexandre Millerand, a Socialist whose views typified those of the younger generation, adopted in 1896 by a significant number of his colleagues, called for participation within the Republic in order to effect gradual social reforms to prepare the moment of an eventual revolution.

As these cases illustrate, on the eve of the Dreyfus Affair everything appeared to be going well for the Republic from an institutional point of view. It had succeeded in integrating all its former enemies, a success made possible by its conquest of the peasant class of rural France, which, it must be recalled, had voted in favor of the Monarchists in 1871. The failure of the Radicals to win support for their more ambitious social reforms and the control of the Premiership by the Opportunists until the mid-1880s formed a moderate Republic that, by the early 1890s, was enjoying some of the most stable years of its history.

The Republic’s stability did not rest solely on institutional or political matters, however. The Army was the *Arche-Sainte* (“the covenant”) of the Republic—that is, it was the physical embodiment of the regime, and with the National Assembly, was the most important institution of France during this period. It represented national honor and unity, and any attack on the Army was therefore an attack on the Republic and France itself. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the memory of the humiliating defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1870 led to the development of a national fixation on an eventual Army *revanche*. The Army came to symbolize this national hope and thereby became part and parcel of the Republican tradition. The

\(^46\) While the SFIO (Section française de l’internationale ouvrière), the first truly “Socialist” party of France, did not form until the Congress of Paris in 1905, the usage of the term is appropriate to designate the various currents of the French extreme left at this time.
particularities of the Ministry of War further underscore the special status attached to the Army. The Ministry operated with semi-autonomy, thus insulating it from the endemic political instability of the Republic. The regime also used the Army as a means of integrating would-be opponents. Some members of the nobility still pursued careers in the Army, and by placing these individuals at the center of Republican ideology, the regime increased their individual prestige and assured their loyalty to the Republic. The refusal of other generals to support a Army coup by Boulanger in 1889 highlighted the devotion of these once potential rivals to the Republic.

While the Army symbolized national unity, it had itself become a method of producing this unity among male citizens, following the passing of the Universal Conscription Law of 1889. The obligation to serve was central to socio-political life. The law required all men capable of Army service to serve three years of active duty followed by seven years of reserve. The law also democratized the recruitment process and the Army became the site of mixing young men of different geographic and social milieus, as well as the products of both the Catholic and Republican school systems. The centrality of the Army to the Republic helps explain the far-reaching impact of the Dreyfus Affair not only on the regime and its representatives, but the country as a whole.

**The Events**

In September 1894 a cleaning lady paid by the French Army intelligence services to search through “wastebaskets, mailboxes, and cloakrooms” discovered among the papers of the German Army attaché, Maximilien von Schwartzkoppen, the document that sparked the Dreyfus

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Affair—an unsigned and undated handwritten memorandum torn into six pieces.48 The document stated that a further delivery of information on various Army secrets, including a firing manual for field artillery, would be forthcoming. A copy of the infamous bordereau (memorandum), was passed to a member of the Army intelligence services, Major Hubert-Joseph Henry, who in turn showed it to his superior, Colonel Jean Conrad Sandherr. Sandherr distributed it among the top level of the Army and to the minister of war, General Auguste Mercier. The internal investigation that ensued produced a single theory—given the wide variety of information referenced in the bordereau, the traitor must have been a stagiaire (intern), as the apprenticeship for these men required six-month stints in the four sections of the General Staff. The closing remark of the bordereau, “I am off on maneuvers,” coupled with the suspicion that the traitor had to have been a stagiaire, limited the number of potential suspects. Dreyfus’ name was proposed, and comparison of his handwriting with that of the document proved to the top brass that he was the traitor.

The similarity of scripts, in reality far less striking than Mercier and his colleagues believed, was however only the foundation of the portrait of the “traitor Dreyfus” that subsequently emerged. In 1872, following the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine by the Germans, inhabitants of these two regions were forced to choose between German and French citizenship. Half of the Dreyfus family moved to Paris, and Alfred (born in 1859), a product of the Republican model of education, wished to see his home reclaimed for France, studied at the prestigious École polytechnique, and became an artillery officer following graduation. Though this was technically forbidden, he occasionally returned to Alsace to visit the other half of the family in Mulhouse. These visits, combined with his fluency in German and, above all, his status as a Jew, made him the perfect suspect—he could be easily vilified and all accusations

48 Burns, France and the Dreyfus Affair, p. 21.
would be easily believed. Dreyfus was arrested on October 15, 1894, and charged with treason. By the time of the court-martial in late December, public opinion had been aroused by inflammatory and often anti-Semitic journalism, notably in *La Libre Parole* of Édouard Drumont, *L’Intransigeant* of Henri Rochefort and *Le Petit Journal* of Ernest Judet.

The trial, from December 19 to 22, took place within the Army justice system and was closed to the public because of the classified information discussed. The prosecution’s case rested heavily on the account of Alphonse Bertillon, a famous criminologist and developer of numerous investigatory techniques but not an expert in graphology, who testified to the similarity of the scripts. The prosecution utilized Bertillon’s testimony as scientific proof provided by an “expert” with no connection with the Army. Additionally, members of the Statistical Section⁴⁹ of the General Staff, namely Colonel Armand Mercier du Paty de Clam and Henry, committed numerous irregularities in order to transform the limited existing evidence into a convincing catalogue of treason.⁵⁰ Dates on recovered discarded documents were altered to fit the timeline of the initial discovery of the bordereau, and most notably, the torn correspondence between the German Army attaché and his Italian counterpart, Alessandro Panizzardi, was reconstituted to implicate Dreyfus. The court did not reveal the existence of this dossier, thereby convicting Dreyfus on evidence that neither he nor his lawyer ever saw. All considered, the pronouncement of Dreyfus’ guilt was a mere formality, and his public cashiering at the École militaire courtyard on January 5, 1895, was a public spectacle of immense proportion. What was curious about the degradation ceremony was not that it occurred, but rather its extent and public nature. That the Army and the government went to such spectacular ends in publically chastising Dreyfus, while viewed by the public as an appropriate response to his having betrayed the

⁴⁹ This was the official name of the Army intelligence services, so adopted to obscure the division’s true purpose.
⁵⁰ Burns, France and the Dreyfus Affair, p. 70.
Republic and the Army, appeared to others, notably Clemenceau, as gratuitous. Such suspicions were well-founded, as future revelations proved.

A complete history of the Dreyfus Affair would be complex and lengthy, and it is thus necessarily beyond the scope of this thesis. 51 My focus here will be on the role of Georges Clemenceau through the various phases of the Affair. Clemenceau initially was as convinced of the guilt of Dreyfus and of the regularity of the process as almost all of France was. Questions regarding the regularity of the 1894 trial did not arise publically for nearly two years, but eventually the Affair involved all elements of French society.

On September 15, 1896, the Parisian daily *L’Éclair* published a story revealing the existence of the secret pieces of evidence that had been the bases of Dreyfus’ conviction. The story roused limited public interest, but did not produce an official denial, which led Lucie Dreyfus, the condemned’s wife, to petition the Chamber of Deputies for justice. The request was rejected, and Henry, in an attempt to finish fully with the Dreyfus case, forged and modified incriminating letters between the German and Italian Army attachés to further incriminate the captain.

While Henry was thus committing crimes of his own, Lieutenant-Colonel Marie-Georges Picquart, a graduate of the prestigious St. Cyr Army Academy and an official in the General Staff, who had been named Sandherr’s successor as head of Army intelligence in July 1895, had begun his own investigation into the Dreyfus case. In March 1896 Picquart received from the same wastebasket agent the “*petit bleu*” document, a letter from the German Army attaché to Major Ferdinand Waslin Esterhazy, the true traitor. From March until September Picquart

personally investigated Esterhazy and became convinced of the latter’s guilt. Worried that Picquart may begin to discover the Henry forgeries the General Staff relieved him of his duties and reassigned him, eventually to Tunisia in January 1897.

Despite his removal from Paris, Picquart managed to communicate his discoveries to his lawyer, Louis Leblois, who in turn revealed the information to then Vice-President of the Senate, Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, on July 13, 1897. Scheurer-Kestner, born in 1833, was at this time an elder statesman of the Republic, an old opponent of the Empire, and one of the few remaining members from the National Assembly of the tumultuous early years of the regime. A native of the same city in Alsace as Dreyfus, Scheurer-Kestner’s patriotism and established commitment to the Republic were beyond question, and his engagement on the part of Dreyfus during the fall of 1897 began to create the Dreyfus “Affair” as such. Indeed, on November 1, 1897, Clemenceau entitled his first public writing concerning Dreyfus since the court-martial “L’Affaire Dreyfus.” While he was not the first to call it as such, by engaging the case of Dreyfus issue he gave momentum to the nascent affair. Clemenceau’s contributions to the public debate as a journalist were in ample company—the circulation of newspapers increased greatly during the Affair, subsequently giving greater influence to authors, journalists and the print media, a phenomenon reflected by the emergence of the intellectuals as a powerful new political force.

Despite Scheurer-Kestner’s status in the Senate and the beginning of his concern with the episode, his attempts to bring justice to the Affair were met with fierce opposition. Indeed, the December 4 proclamation by Prime Minister Jules Méline that “il n’y a pas d’affaire Dreyfus” encapsulates the extent of institutional opposition to any attempts at reviving the Dreyfus case. Scheurer-Kestner was also the target of libelous, unfounded attacks.

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on his patriotism in the press, and was forced out of the Senate when his colleagues refused to renew his status as vice-president in January 1898. Though Scheurer-Kestner was convinced of Dreyfus’ innocence, he was in a small minority at this time.

What was of far greater concern, and indeed what drove France to split between Dreyfusard and Antidreyfusard, was the legitimacy of the doctrine of *la raison d’État* (roughly, “national interest”). In other words, was the State justified in circumventing its own laws in order to convict a suspected traitor? As will be discussed in the following chapter, Clemenceau was not initially convinced of Dreyfus’ innocence, but called for the revision of the trial on the basis of the irregularity of the captain’s conviction. Clemenceau’s allegiance throughout the Dreyfus Affair thus rested not with Dreyfus himself, but with a commitment to the rule of law.

A significant portion of the population did not share Clemenceau’s view, a phenomenon underscored by the virulence of the press campaign undertaken on the pages of several major newspapers by the Antidreyfusards, who viewed the demand of a retrial as a Jewish plot. While this thesis cannot give a detailed account of the Antidreyfusard press, one must bear in mind the extent of the vitriol and its impact on the Affair. Caricatured depictions and demonization of prominent Antidreyfusard and Dreyfusards were commonplace in the adversarial press. Accusations of treachery and calls of “vive l’armée!” were ubiquitous in the Antidreyfusard press, as well as the occasional “mort aux Juifs” (death to the Jews).

On January 13, 1898, following the scandalous exoneration of Esterhazy in an internal investigation, Émile Zola, a renowned author and friend of Clemenceau, published the article

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53 See the cartoon of Caran d’Ache in appendix B.  
55 See the caricature of Clemenceau from the “Museum of Horrors” series in appendix B.
that truly put fire to the “Affair.” In “J’accuse...!”, Zola, in an open letter to President of the Republic Félix Faure, indicted numerous figures from the Army, including the Minister of War General Auguste Mercier, Chief of the General Staff Pierre de Boisdeffre, Deputy Chief of Staff Arthur Gonse, and Lieutenant-Colonel Armand Mercier du Paty de Clam for orchestrating and permitting such a gross miscarriage of justice. This earned Zola and the director of the newspaper L’Aurore libel trials, which led to the conviction of the former and his self-exile to England in July.

The years of 1898 and 1899 were the crux of the Affair; by the summer of 1899 Dreyfus returned for his retrial before the Army Tribunal in Rennes, which took place from August 11 to September 9, 1899. Following the conviction of Zola, the Dreyfusard movement appeared moribund. With the suicide of Henry after the discovery of his falsified and forged documents in August 1898, however, the calls for revision became irresistible. Despite the defense’s evidence and even the earlier admission of Esterhazy on June 3 that he was the author of the bordereau, which effectively identified him as the original traitor, the Rennes tribunal found Dreyfus guilty “with extenuating circumstances” and sentenced him to ten years imprisonment. Given the potential for public riots and the Army’s reticence to admit its mistakes and wrongdoings, the verdict was unsurprising. Nevertheless, Dreyfus received a presidential pardon on September 19. The decision to accept the pardon split the Dreyfusards, some of whom, notably Clemenceau, argued that the acceptance of a pardon implied an admission of guilt, and wished to continue to lobby for a legal victory. This division permanently soured relations between Clemenceau and Dreyfus, a split that further illustrates that the true interest of Clemenceau in the Affair lay beyond the wronged individual.

56 See the picture of the front page of L’Aurore from January 13, 1898 in appendix B.
57 Drouin, “Bref contexte,” in Clemenceau, L’Iniquité, p. 34.
The debate on the Dreyfus Affair continued past the pardon. Clemenceau reentered parliamentary politics in 1902 as a senator from the Var, and in March 1906 finally entered the government as Minister of the Interior. Despite the personal animosity between him and Dreyfus, it was under Clemenceau’s impulsion as Minister of the Interior that Dreyfus was rehabilitated on July 13, 1906. Three months later when Clemenceau became Prime Minister he named Picquet, who had become a Brigadier General, Minister of War. At his own request, Dreyfus received an honorable discharge in 1907, and on June 4, 1908, the ashes of Zola were transferred to the Panthéon58, a fitting and symbolic conclusion to the Affair.

58 The Panthéon is, in the words of Patrick Marnham in Resistance and Betrayal, New York: Random House, 2000, p. 9, “a ‘Temple of Fame,’ a last resting place for the great men who…fought for Liberty…[with] gilt letters over the west doors the motto ‘Aux Grands Hommes la Patrie reconnaissante’ (To Its Great Men, Their Country’s gratitude).” Zola’s ashes share tomb XXIV with those of Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo.
Chapter III: Clemenceau and the Court-Martial

Following the legislative elections of August 1893, Clemenceau found himself defeated in his district in the Var, the victim of a concerted smear campaign in the press. At the basis of the campaign lay various accusations of corruption and treason stemming from involvement in the Panama Affair. Wrongfully implicated in the Affair, Clemenceau suffered repeated defamatory attacks in the pages of the press organs of the Right, notably in *Le Petit Journal*, one of the most widely-circulated French dailies at this time. Run by one of Clemenceau’s enemies, Ernest Judet, *Le Petit Journal*, though based in Paris, hounded Clemenceau’s campaign throughout the summer of 1893. The issue of August 19, the eve of the first round of elections, depicted a caricature of Clemenceau on the front page “in white tails and a shimmering top-hat, dancing in front of several ballerinas and juggling four sacks filled with pounds sterling.”

The paper accused Clemenceau of selling himself to the English, as demonstrated by the inclusion of a caricatured English infantryman, complete with red top-coat and protruding teeth, in the bottom-left corner of the illustration. The myth of Clemenceau as a foreign agent stemmed from his financial dealings with the unscrupulous Cornelius Herz, a German Jewish financier at the center of the corruption scandal of the Panama Affair, who had invested in Clemenceau’s daily newspaper, *La Justice*, from 1883 to 1885. Although no evidence proving Clemenceau’s corruption ever surfaced, *Le Petit Journal* continued to run calumnious stories replete with bogus accusations.

As David Watson notes, after the 1893 defeat, Clemenceau was ruined in all domains of his life—politically and professionally, personally, and financially. Clemenceau’s situation

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was indeed inauspicious—politically he was vanquished, and professionally, he had lost his principal employment of seventeen years. His personal life was in a similarly unfavorable state. He had divorced his wife, the American Mary Plummer, and he was never particularly close with his two adult daughters. Finally, at this time he experienced grave financial problems. Jobless, he had no source of revenue, and thus no way to appease his many creditors. The commercial failure of *La Justice* aggravated this situation, and the debts accrued by the paper remained outstanding until 1905, eight years after its dissolution in 1897.63 Indeed, Clemenceau felt “neglected in my home, betrayed in my friendships, let go by my party, ignored by my constituents, suspected by my country…I am crippled by debts, and I have nothing, nothing, nothing.”64 At the edge of the abyss, Clemenceau turned to the pen in order to give order and direction to his life.

Clemenceau’s introduction to journalism had come during his stay in the United States in the 1860s. He was then a journalist for the Parisian daily newspaper *Le Temps* and covered the beginnings of Reconstruction. His return to France did not end his career as a writer. Indeed, he continued to write various articles, and in order to further establish his political credibility in 1880 he founded, with the majority of his inheritance, *La Justice*.65 Following his electoral defeat in 1893, Clemenceau assumed operational control of the newspaper, fired nearly the entire staff, and wrote practically all the articles himself. Nevertheless, he soon realized such a situation was not sustainable, decreased his activity at *La Justice*, and began to write for other papers, such as *La Dépêche* of Toulouse, *Le Journal, L’Echo de Paris*, and above all *L’Aurore*, where he became political editor just prior to the Dreyfus Affair.

65 Watson, *Political Biography*, p. 68.
During this period of wanderings in the wilderness Clemenceau’s writings were not limited uniquely to journalism. Between 1895 and 1903 he published several volumes of philosophical articles, as well as a novel in 1898 and a play in 1901. The critical reception to these works was tepid—one does not retain a strong impression of Clemenceau the philosopher, playwright, or novelist. The poor quality of these philosophical, theatrical, and fictional works did not, however, demonstrate a lack of intellectual capacity on the part of the author. As Maurice Barrès, the Monarchist and celebrated author of the time, noted, it was rather the result of the failed adaptation of an extraordinary orator to a new means of expression. Clemenceau, Barrès remarked, had the potential to be ‘‘an excellent writer’ if he had chosen his subject better.’’66 Indeed, in 1902, Clemenceau’s publisher, the Dreyfusard Pierre-Victor Stock, advised him to seek other means of earning a living.67

The Dreyfus Affair confirmed the assessment of Barrès regarding Clemenceau’s potential excellence as a writer. The qualities that made Clemenceau a talented orator—short sentences and direct and occasionally brutal language—were the same that made him a great journalist, above all, an engaged journalist. Universally recognized among his parliamentary peers as being direct, effective, and always clever and shrewd, Clemenceau developed throughout the Dreyfus Affair a journalistic style worthy of his future nickname—le Tigre. L’Aurore became his new battlefield; the pages of the newspaper replaced the Palais Bourbon. In addition to reshaping his identity following the devastating electoral loss of 1893, Clemenceau’s journalistic engagement and success during the Affair relaunched his political career. Without the pen, and without the

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67 Watson, Political Biography, p. 145.
Dreyfus Affair, Clemenceau’s reentry into politics as a senator in 1902 would have been inconceivable.⁶⁸

Although Clemenceau eventually became one of the most effective and dedicated Dreyfusards, at the moment of the initial condemnation of Dreyfus he was critical of the decision as not harsh enough. In his article “Le Traître” (The Traitor), published on Christmas of 1894, he expressed his opinion of the insufficiency of the punishment and viewed the reasoning of the judges as curious. He noted with particular interest the lack of uniformity in the application of the pertinent laws: “punish the traitor, but establish equal discipline for everyone.”⁶⁹ He judged bizarre the status of capital punishment, which, according to him “ought to be preserved for the most serious of crimes…treason” and not for “a child of twenty years guilty of having thrown a button of his tunic at the head of the Conseil de guerre.”⁷₀ Though Clemenceau in the text remained on principle an opponent of the death penalty, he called into question the status of the punishment under French law. The ultimate penalty must be reserved for the ultimate offence, which, he reasoned, is treason, yet under French law at the time, the death penalty was not applied in cases of political crime.

The article includes other examples in order to underline the apparent arbitrary application of the Army code, and Clemenceau concluded that the tolerance of disorder “at the top would lead to the same result as treason,” that is, the ultimate weakening of the Republic.⁷¹ Clemenceau was disgusted with what he perceived as cowardice and weakness on the part of the heads of the Army in their inability to apply their own regulations in a uniform manner.

⁶⁸ Watson, Ibid., p. 145.
⁷₀ Clemenceau, Ibid., pp. 60-61. This refers to the execution of a junior member of the Army who was executed on what Clemenceau deemed to be arbitrary grounds.
⁷¹ Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 62.
Nevertheless, Clemenceau did not call for revision of the trial. Despite certain bizarre aspects of the tribunal’s proceedings, Clemenceau noted that the verdict was the unanimous decision reached after a four-day trial that transpired regularly. His reservations notwithstanding, at no point did Clemenceau question the legitimacy of the process, a fact that further highlights his commitment to legality and to the established nature of the Republic.

This article is perhaps the most interesting in all of *L’Iniquité*, the first in a series of seven volumes in which Clemenceau later compiled most of his journalistic writings during the Affair. *L’Iniquité* covers the period from the court-martial of 1894 to the end of July 1898. The article is a presentation of the same principles of justice and law in the service of a condemnation of Dreyfus that Clemenceau later used in support of the captain. Clemenceau based the essential elements of his argumentation on respect of the rule of law and the equality of all citizens before the law. The law, according to Clemenceau, is absolute and categorical in its exigencies, and it must be applied uniformly in order to contribute to civil society. This exigency must be most seriously applied to the Army, the symbol of the Republic. The implication of these notions is clear—the Army, if it is to merit its elevated status, must be exemplary in all its actions, most importantly in its application of justice, one of the fundamental principles of the Republic.

It is exactly this vision of justice and the Army that Clemenceau adhered to throughout *L’Iniquité* and the events of the Affair. The 161 other articles in *L’Iniquité* all bear witness to this conviction, albeit utilized in service of a different goal. Clemenceau never changed his opinion on the underlying principles of the Dreyfus Affair. Indeed, his attachment to legality partially explains the tenacity with which he later lobbied for the revision of the court-martial. It was not any attachment to the individual Dreyfus that incited Clemenceau to action, but the cause that Dreyfus represented—the clash between the doctrine of *la raison d’Etat* and justice
and the rights of the individual, and a certain vision of what the Republic ought to stand for, rooted in his legalist past.
Chapter IV: Clemenceau and “J’Accuse…!”

There are 665 articles in the seven-volume collection of Clemenceau’s writings during the Dreyfus Affair, most of which he wrote for L’Aurore where he became political editor shortly after the founding of the paper in October 1897. Beginning in 1899, Clemenceau began to collect his articles for publication, an oeuvre published by the Dreyfusard Pierre-Victor Stock over four years totaling 3,300 pages. The volumes and their constituent articles provide profound insight into Clemenceau’s views, and, considered together, reveal the development and shifts in his expression of his beliefs over the course of the Dreyfus Affair. The first volume of the collection, L’Iniquité, was published in 1899 and contains 162 articles from December 25, 1894, the moment of Dreyfus’ initial condemnation, to July 23, 1898, a dark time for the Dreyfusards following Emile Zola’s condemnation and subsequent exile to England the following week. While each of the 162 articles of L’Iniquité have individual importance, the most interesting and subsequently most revelatory of Clemenceau’s evolution as a Dreyfusard are those that take place around the time of major events of the Affair. As noted in the previous chapter, the first article in the volume, “Le Traître,” published on Christmas of 1894, delivered an acute condemnation of the “traitor” Dreyfus but also revealed Clemenceau’s attachment to the rule of law and the universal application of justice. These underlying principles reappear throughout L’Iniquité, and indeed throughout the entire oeuvre, though in service of a completely contrary position than that presented in late 1894.

For nearly three years following Dreyfus’ initial condemnation Clemenceau did not write about Dreyfus, as his case had faded from public view. Nevertheless, the second article in

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72 In his introduction to his 2001 edition of L’Iniquité, noted Dreyfus Affair scholar Michel Drouin divided these 162 articles chronologically into six parts (see Annex A). For simplicity of analysis I will adhere to this partitioning, though it is important not to think of each of the six divisions as representative of clear and distinct opinions, but rather as a method of separating the articles as they correspond to major developments of the Affair.
L’Iniquité, appropriately entitled “L’affaire Dreyfus,” written on October 31, 1897, and published November 1, opened with a question marked by a degree of exasperation and incredulity: “is it truly impossible to finish once and for all with this story?” 73 The impetus for the article was the uproar over the claim of the vice-president of the Senate, Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, that he possessed “incontestable pieces of evidence of the innocence of Dreyfus.” 74 While Clemenceau remained faithful to the initial condemnation, evidence again of his commitment to the regular process of justice—“the good faith of the judges ought not to be called into question” 75—he noted that Scheurer-Kestner, an acquaintance of thirty years, was not a man to take a position without a solid basis. Moreover, the credibility and patriotism of Scheurer-Kestner were beyond question, particularly given his status as a representative of Alsace-Lorraine. 76 In the article Clemenceau did not question Scheurer-Kestner’s patriotism, but rather beseeched him to make public the “incontestable” proof of innocence so as to finish with the Affair and reassure public opinion.

On November 1, Clemenceau met with Scheurer-Kestner in the office of the senator, and detailed the interaction the following day in the article, “Encore l’affaire Dreyfus” (Again the Dreyfus Affair). Scheurer-Kestner arranged the meeting, the first between the two men “since several months.” 77 During the meeting, Scheurer-Kestner revealed neither the supposed proofs of innocence nor his plan of action, yet Clemenceau found his friend’s “attitude so clear, his speech so resolute, and his confidence so profound” that it was impossible not to be impressed. 78 Clemenceau again took pains to establish the credibility of Scheurer-Kestner and the convincing

74 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 63.
75 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 63.
76 Despite the loss of these départements to Germany following the Franco-Prussian War, the elected French representatives of the territories continued to hold office, hence Scheurer-Kestner’s continued status as Senator.
77 Clemenceau, “Encore l’affaire Dreyfus,” in L’Iniquité, p. 64.
78 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 64.
nature of his motivation for engagement. Scheurer-Kestner was not acquainted with any member of the Dreyfus family, nor did he seek to embarrass and weaken the Republic, but rather was struck by “extremely strong reasons to believe and act,” placing himself in the precarious position of questioning the Army. The declaration of Scheurer-Kestner that Dreyfus was the victim of a “dreadful judicial error” was thus all the more unsettling for Clemenceau. On one hand, he was deeply committed to upholding the established processes of the Republic and held a particular disdain for a convicted traitor for his betrayal. On the other hand, however, his profound respect for Scheurer-Kestner forced him to reexamine these initial positions. Scheurer-Kestner took action out of a sense of duty to the Republic, a motivation that resonated most deeply with Clemenceau. Indeed, while Clemenceau did not yet believe in the innocence of Dreyfus following the meeting, he argued that, given the “notable presumptions of error, the trial must be revised.” From this point forward, Clemenceau advocated the revision of the trial on technical grounds. From this point of view, the guilt or innocence of Dreyfus, or indeed the person of Dreyfus himself, became immaterial for Clemenceau. What was of ultimate import for him was the rule of law—the regular application of justice.

While, following the November 1 meeting, Clemenceau was convinced of the necessity to revise the trial, his patience with Scheurer-Kestner began to wear thin. A week had passed since the senator had declared the existence of his exonerating evidence, yet he still had not made any public revelation. Scheurer-Kestner’s delay in presenting his evidence was the result of arrangements he made with an old friend, the head of the General Staff, General Jean-Baptiste Billot. On November 3 Scheurer-Kestner presented the evidence of his discovery of the true identity of the traitor, Ferdinand Walsin-Esterhazy, to Billot and Prime Minister Jules Méline.

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79 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 65.
80 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 66.
Billot promised an internal investigation, leaving Scheurer-Kestner in the unenviable position between the Scylla of compromising an official inquiry and the Charybdis of withholding the publication of his “incontestable” exonerating evidence. Scheurer-Kestner promised silence whilst the inquiry was underway, thus making him a target for a confused and inflamed press.\textsuperscript{81}

Though Clemenceau in no way attacked or questioned the patriotism of his old friend, his article of November 8, “La pleine lumière” (Full Light), expressed frustration over the non-publication of the “incontestable” proofs, and illustrated further exasperation on the part of the author. This is apparent from the opening sentence of the article, wherein Clemenceau stated that, while he would not call into the question “the scruples—quite honorable, I’m sure—that have heretofore restrained him, it is impossible to keep the public waiting in uncertainty any longer over the question of whether Dreyfus is the victim of a judicial error or not. All the newspapers blindly discuss the issue while having nothing concrete to grab hold of.”\textsuperscript{82} Scheurer-Kestner’s delay became, “for public opinion, intolerable.”\textsuperscript{83} Given the place of the Army in the Third Republic, given the content and implications of Scheurer-Kestner’s claims, and given the status of Scheurer-Kestner himself, it is difficult to imagine the extent of public confusion and indignation prevalent in late 1897. Clemenceau underscored this phenomenon, noting the reaction of some who believed that to question the infallibility of the judges was to be Dreyfus’ accomplice in treason, while others “[sought] a second Louis XIV to revoke once more the Edict of Nantes” a reference to Scheurer-Kestner’s Protestantism.\textsuperscript{84} While Clemenceau expressed frustration over Scheurer-Kestner’s delay, he was alarmed by these extreme reactions,

\textsuperscript{81} Drouin, “Bref contexte,” in Clemenceau, L’Iniquité, p.39.
\textsuperscript{82} Clemenceau, “La pleine lumière,” in Ibid., p. 66.
\textsuperscript{83} Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 66.
\textsuperscript{84} Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 67. The Edict of Nantes, a landmark of religious tolerance in Europe, was decreed by Henri IV in 1598, and granted protection to French Protestants following the Wars of Religion of the sixteenth century. Louis XIV revoked the Edict in 1685, effectively outlawing Protestantism and leading to the flight of French Protestants. Scheurer-Kestner was a Protestant.
“symptoms of mental dispositions quite foreign to the healthy virility of a people confident in itself.”85 In other words, why, if the people firmly believed in the institutions and laws of the Republic, did the calling into question of the legitimacy of a judicial decision by Scheurer-Kestner provoke such an outrage? This statement presaged the widespread conflict that later divided the entire population over the Dreyfus Affair. While there may or may not have existed a concrete lack of confidence as referenced by Clemenceau, the Republic was not as solidly rooted as the external signs of stabilization of the 1890s appeared to indicate. Clemenceau’s concern about what the Affair had begun to reveal about the status of French institutions and politics, and possibly even character. Indeed, as the Dreyfus Affair progressed it continually exposed and deepened this insecurity.

As a response to this perceived impotence, Clemenceau presented a measured position—if there be traitors among the citizens of the Republic, let “us nail them to the post of infamy, but it is perhaps not excessive to ask that we first examine their guilt.”86 The strength of the Republic, Clemenceau argued, lay in the rule of law. Treason against the Republic was to be punished with the utmost severity, but the Republic must not betray itself by ignoring its own laws. In addition, this position was an expression of precisely the kind of confidence, and thus reasonable response, that Clemenceau believed was lacking at the time. He thought that such a reexamination ought to place because the process that condemned Dreyfus had been irregular. If, as one of the judges stated, the “conviction was reached in the chamber of the tribunal on the production of a piece of evidence submitted to the tribunal apart from the accused and his lawyer,” then it was unsurprising that Dreyfus was found guilty. Indeed, in such a system, it

85 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 67.
would be impossible for any innocent person to escape conviction.⁸⁷ Such procedural irregularity, Clemenceau wrote, would have shocked Robespierre himself, for even during the trials of La Terreur, which outlawed counsel for the defense, the accused were made aware of the charges levied against them.⁸⁸ While the content of this article illustrates again Clemenceau’s commitment to legality, the rule of law, and his profound republicanism, the conclusion of “La pleine lumière” reveals a touch of apprehension and eagerness to be rid of the Affair. What he ultimately sought at this point was “peace of mind” and “la lumière, la pleine lumière.”⁸⁹

Clemenceau wrote the three articles discussed above, “L’affaire Dreyfus,” “Encore l’affaire Dreyfus,” and “La pleine lumière,” between November 1 and 19, 1897. These dates correspond with Clemenceau’s engagement as a partisan for the revision of the trial. These articles provide valuable insight into the nascent Dreyfusard within Clemenceau. While he expressed concern over certain invectives aimed at Scheurer-Kestner’s claims, these attacks were civil and paltry relative to what the Antidreyfusard press would later produce on a daily basis. Comparatively undistracted by such vitriol, Clemenceau in these early articles revealed his most fundamental convictions and opinions that informed his view and his future actions as the Affair unfolded. As these three articles, as well as “Le Traître” (The Traitor), illustrate, Clemenceau’s fundamental preoccupations during this period all relate to his abiding commitment to republicanism. For Clemenceau, the most important features of republican government were

⁸⁸ Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 67.
⁸⁹ Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 68. Lumière in this sense is a metaphor for truth, the full truth, and also a reference to the Enlightenment conception of knowledge.
those that completely distinguished it from its undemocratic predecessors—the Empires and the Ancien Régime.  

The influence of Clemenceau’s father, Benjamin, on the development of his son’s republican views cannot be understated. Benjamin Clemenceau was a devout republican who had fought in the Revolution of 1830, and his relation with his eldest son, Georges, was complicated and revolved around the transmission of several fundamental philosophical and political beliefs. Benjamin formed the republican mind of his son through conversations and readings outside his normal schoolwork. As he was an atheist, the heroes of the Revolution of 1789, whose lives and beliefs he instilled in the young Georges, were the closest things to religious figures in Benjamin’s life. Benjamin’s ultimate goal for his son was to work for the full application of the Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen of 1789, the progress of which, he believed, had stalled. Benjamin, a doctor by training, also placed fundamental importance on science and the scientific method, and raised his son to hold the same beliefs. Indeed, it is unsurprising that the works and philosophies of Claude Bernard (celebrated for his essays on experimental medicine), Auguste Comte, Charles Darwin, and John Stewart Mill were so significant for Georges. Benjamin’s belief was that meaningful social action could only take place if motivated by a philosophy based on science.

Clemenceau’s father reserved a rare disdain for the Ancien Régime, the Empire, and particularly the Second Empire. Indeed, in March 1858 the Imperial police arrested Benjamin on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government following the failed assassination attempt of Italian revolutionary Felice Orsini on Napoleon III. This episode, along with the teachings of his father, exercised a profound influence on Clemenceau and his view of the Empire. His distaste

90 Ancien Régime refers to the monarchy prior to the Revolution of 1789.  
91 Despite the fact that his mother was a devout Protestant, Clemenceau adopted his father’s view of religion, remaining an atheist during his adult life.
for the Empire was so deep-seated that in a letter to Scheurer-Kestner on July 23, 1870, less than a week into the Franco-Prussian War, he expressed remorse over the possibility of both French victory and defeat: “whatever happens,” he wrote, “this war will be a terrible disaster.”92 A French victory would solidify the Empire and bolster its prestige, while defeat at the hands of the Prussians would be devastating for the country. Clemenceau’s most essential belief, however, was that victory for the Empire meant defeat for republicanism, and defeat for the Empire would lead to the proclamation of a Third Republic. This is not to say that Clemenceau lacked patriotism—indeed not, when we consider, for example, his actions and behavior as mayor of the 18th arrondissement and deputy of the department of the Seine to the National Assembly during the Commune. What the letter reveals is the profundity of Clemenceau’s commitment to republicanism and its natural concomitants—rule of law, equal justice, lack of arbitrary government—even before the birth of the Third Republic. Indeed, the articles written during the Dreyfus Affair illustrate a continuity of fundamental conviction in Clemenceau. While in 1897, having been an active participant in the Republic since its foundation and having been a member of the Chamber of Deputies for seventeen years, he had a more pragmatic and nuanced view of republicanism in its practice, the undergirding framework was essentially the same as expressed in the letter of 1870 and likely existed well before that. The staunch belief in the hallmarks of republicanism remained, as did the abhorrence of contrary practices, a position increasingly apparent in his articles as the Dreyfus Affair continued.

Drouin’s third division of L’Iniquité highlights the articles dating from November 20, 1897, to January 3, 1898, a period of increased virulence in the debate and acrimony among public opinion and press outlets. The content of Clemenceau’s articles in this period reflects this

92 Clemenceau to Scheurer-Kestner, July 23, 1870, as cited in Watson, Political Biography, p. 34.
heightened tension and also articulates his outrage against practices he believed unbefitting of a republican government. In article XV, “La raison d’État,” published on November 26, 1897, Clemenceau attacked the doctrine of “reasons of state.” At the crux of the Dreyfus Affair was the opposition between la raison d’État and the rights of the individual, and, while in late November 1897 the Affair had not yet taken its most dramatic turns, Clemenceau very early detected and criticized the reasoning of the Antidreyfusards. If there was one doctrine that stood in irresolvable contradiction to the principles of the Republic, Clemenceau argued, it was la raison d’État. Every effort of “our revolutions [has] been directed against it, and I now see it reappear obliquely in democratic government at the very moment when we believed it eradicated from the institutions that we attempt to develop through universal suffrage towards liberty and justice.” In this, the opening sentence of the article, one can perceive the entire extent of the Dreyfus Affair as well as Clemenceau’s position.

The language is that of an effective orator, and as Maurice Barrès, the Monarchist and celebrated author of the time, noted, is direct and brutal. One also sees Clemenceau’s clear opposition of la raison d’État with democracy, liberty, and justice. The implication is clear—the doctrine is completely contrary to the fundamental principles of republican government. Popular government “is, by definition, the transparent government of public opinion, where all citizens, public and private, have for supreme guarantee of their honor, of their life, and of their property, open and impartial justice.” The question posed by the “lamentable” Dreyfus Affair was whether a man, no matter who, can be “condemned…for any crime, based on pieces of evidence

93 There is no fully satisfying translation of raison d’État, though “reasons of state” or “national interest” express the general idea.
95 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 88.
that neither he nor his lawyer have seen.”  

If, Clemenceau argued, *la raison d’État* were a legitimate justification for not revealing classified documents or denying a retrial, “then we are residing, under the veneer of civilization, in a state of mental barbarity.”  

Arbitrary justice and justification by “national interest” were the practices of the *Ancien Régime* and the Empires, Clemenceau argued, and had no place in the Republic. For Clemenceau, the doctrine represented perversion of the rule of law. The outrage that characterized the article stemmed from his belief that the irregularity of the Dreyfus case had subverted the very fundamentals of the Republic.  

Clemenceau took pains to restate that he does not believe in Dreyfus’ innocence, indeed the latter must be presumed guilty given that he was initially found as such, but argued that “judges, as they are men, are fallible” and that the “law of laws, which states that no man can be condemned without having been previously heard over the charges alleged against him,” must be respected.  

The opinions Clemenceau expressed in the article further illustrate that to him the personal aspects of the Affair, the individual fate of Captain Dreyfus, were ultimately insignificant. Though this view was present in previous articles, none of the predecessors of “*La raison d’État*” illustrate this notion with such lucidity.

Clemenceau’s indignation was at once a denunciation of reasons of state and a defense of republicanism. Deeper still, the opinions expressed with great clarity in the article were in service of the *Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme*, which assured the equality of all citizens before the law. While Clemenceau wrote “*La raison d’État*” as the Dreyfus Affair began to crystallize and thrust the Republic into turmoil, it underscores again the continuity of republican conviction developed during his youth and his interactions with his father. Given this personal history and the depth of conviction highlighted in previous writings, it becomes clear why the

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challenge to the fundamental characteristics of the Republic posed by justification by *raison d’État* produced such an aggressive tone in the article.

Additionally, “La raison d’État” appeared two days subsequent to Emile Zola’s first article concerning the Dreyfus Affair, entitled “Scheurer-Kestner,” published on November 25 in *Le Figaro*. At this time the newspaper still supported the campaign for a revision of the trial, and the public engagement of Zola, a venerated literary figure, gave more momentum to this position. Zola’s article, characterized by panache worthy only of a novelist, was not so much a discussion of the need for revision, but rather a defense of the “great and wise” Scheurer-Kestner. 99 Zola wrote of the unimpeachable character of Scheurer-Kestner, and praised the senator’s “debate for truth in service of justice” as “the most heroic of all struggles.” 100 Rhetorical flourish aside, the principles evoked by Zola framed the Dreyfus Affair as a campaign for Justice and Truth beyond the specific realm of the Republic. The content of Zola’s article could have referred to almost any situation in which a man is attacked for questioning the prevailing public sentiment. This article, informed by commitment to broader principles of justice and truth and carrying a more philosophical tone, provides an interesting complement to the articles of Clemenceau, infused with profound republican sentiment. While the lines of reasoning of the two men were different, they were in support of the same fundamental principles. The engagement of Zola also raised the profile of the Dreyfus Affair, giving it a newfound scope. While Zola hereby exposed himself to demonization and the rancor of the *Antidreyfusards*, his action ensured that the Affair maintained a prominent position in contemporary society, despite the declaration of Prime Minister Méline on December 4 that

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“there is no Dreyfus Affair.” The final line of Zola’s first article, “truth is on the march, and nothing will stop it,” though a bold claim, proved true, as would begin to appear just three days later.

The publication in Le Figaro on November 28, 1897, of the “The Uhlan Letter” stoked the flames of the budding Affair and cast further doubt on the legitimacy of the Dreyfus conviction. The public denunciation of Esterhazy by Mathieu Dreyfus on November 15 had caused a stir in the office of the General Staff and occasioned an internal investigation two days later led by General Georges Gabriel de Pellieux. Esterhazy’s status among his peers in the Army was less than sterling, and he poorly conducted his personal affairs, having contracted large debts with one of his former mistresses, Madame de Boulancy. Several letters written by Esterhazy to Boulancy found their way to Scheurer-Kestner, who, following protocol, informed the officers leading the internal investigation. While the General Staff ignored the letters, they found their way first to Mathieu Dreyfus, and then to Le Figaro. The content of the “Uhlan Letter” unmistakably identifies Esterhazy as the true traitor. The most damning line in the letter read: “‘if tonight someone told me that I would be killed tomorrow as a captain of the uhlan [the lance carrying mounted soldiers of Germany] running a sword through the French, I would certainly be perfectly happy.’” Esterhazy also expressed his contempt for the French people, stating that while he “would not hurt a little puppy…I would kill one hundred thousand Frenchmen with pleasure…there is the merrymaking I dream of. So be it.”

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102 Burns, France and the Dreyfus Affair, p. 87.
103 As cited in Burns, Ibid., p. 88. Emphasis in original.
104 As cited in Burns, Ibid., pp. 88-9.
remarks were outrageous in and of themselves, given that he was an officer in the French Army, what was the most scandalous was the striking resemblance between the handwriting of Esterhazy and the script of the bordereau, the document that was used to convict Dreyfus in 1894. The commotion caused by the publication of the letter, three days after the engagement of one of the most influential literary personalities of the period, forced those who had had their doubts about the revision campaign to reconsider, as well as envisioning the interest of those who had heretofore ignored the Dreyfus Affair altogether.

Clemenceau’s fierce reaction to the “Uhlan Letter” reflected the increasing tension over the burgeoning Affair. Despite the publication of the letter and the conspicuous connection to the bordereau, the General Staff did not increase the intensity of their investigation, but rather appeared to protect Esterhazy. After restating the most shocking pieces of the letter, Clemenceau, in the article “Qui?” (Who?), published on November 29, asserted that “an officer of the French Army does not write such an abominable sentence by accident.”

Clemenceau further referenced the testimony several of Esterhazy’s peers, who pronounced, as soon as he became implicated, that he was the true traitor. As the previous chapter discussed, the Army held a place of supreme importance in the Third Republic, and for such irregularities to take place therein was tantamount to weakening the Republic itself. The most important question became: who was protecting Esterhazy? A group of deaf and blind men, Clemenceau wrote, appeared to be in command of one of the Republic’s sacrosanct institutions, and by extension, of the defense of the nation. As he later wrote, further underscoring the place of the Army in the Third Republic, “the Army is not this or that general who pretends to place himself above the law, it is all of France, since all the French are soldiers.”

105 Clemenceau, “Qui?” in L’Iniquité, p. 100.
“Qui?” is one of the most revelatory of the articles from the end of 1897. Clemenceau wrote it in response to a concrete testimony of the true traitor in the Dreyfus Affair, which, in his view, revealed inexplicable and unacceptable obfuscation on the part of the Army commanders. The article deconstructed the text of the letter, reviewed the implications of the remarks, and expressed confusion and indignation over the weakening of the bases of the Republic by certain individuals in direct, incisive language, just as in the previously discussed articles. What is significant from a developmental perspective in “Qui?” is Clemenceau’s direct confrontation of individuals on the General Staff of the Army concerning specific issues. While he was careful to aim his criticisms at individuals, such as the members of the General Staff, and not at the institution of the Army—as cited above—the agents of the Antidreyfusard press, many of whom had already had antagonistic relationships with Clemenceau since his days as a member of the Chamber of Deputies, disregarded this nuance and accused him, along with other Dreyfusards, of seeking to subvert the Arche-Sainte (“the covenant”) of the Republic, thereby committing the same treason as Dreyfus himself. Despite the Antidreyfusard attacks, the efforts of the government to downplay the extent of the Dreyfus Affair and the intrigues at the Ministry of War, the truth, as Zola had declared in late November, continued its inexorable march.

Several “weeks of madness”107 consumed the debate during the month of December, which gave occasion to some of Clemenceau’s more sensationalistic writings. These articles did not veer from his firmly established commitment to republicanism and the rule of law, and, while they are interesting for their rhetorical value and as documents of the Dreyfus Affair, they do not reveal any significant transformations in his opinions, nor did they address any new topics. Rather, the issue of the Esterhazy investigation dominated the focus of Clemenceau and the press

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107 Drouin, “Bref contexte,” in Clemenceau, Ibid., 42.
during this time. In early January 1898, in order to appease inflamed public opinion, the government and the Ministry of War arranged for a court-martial of Esterhazy before a War Tribunal (Conseil de guerre). Clemenceau’s articles from January 4 to January 12 all of discussed with the Esterhazy trial, which took place on January 10 and 11.

The scandalous acquittal of Esterhazy on January 11, given the circumstances of the trail, was predictable, though the proceedings of the case were curious. The trial of Esterhazy was in essence a trial in absentia of the former chief of Army intelligence, Colonel Georges Picquart, the man who had initially brought to light the suspicious actions of Esterhazy in 1896. The crowd pleasing acquittal of Esterhazy aroused less passion in Clemenceau than the irregularity of the trial, whereby Picquart, who was not present, was the object of numerous unsubstantiated accusations. In article LI, “Divagations judiciaires” (Judicial Ramblings), published on January 12, Clemenceau was blasé and sarcastic over the “foreseeable acquittal…of…this Uhlan who, henceforth, by order of General Billot, is part of the honor of the French Army.” Yet, in order to “remain faithful to its Uhlan…the government…must now pursue the famous syndicat, guilty of having doubts over Esterhazy.” This double critique revealed the skeletal structure of the apparatus of official obfuscation in the Esterhazy trial. Not only had the Ministry of War arranged the trial to prevent discussion of the evidence against Esterhazy, but the civilian power, namely the Méline government, had sought to provide further cover to the Army by accommodating Billot and his subordinates at every juncture. With the engineered trial and acquittal of Esterhazy, the level of objectionable official conduct dating from the beginning of

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109 This term normally refers to professional unions, yet in this case carries more nefarious connotations. In the context of the Dreyfus Affair, it refers to a construct of the anti-Semitic and Antidreyfusard press. This apocryphal syndicat was purportedly a “union” of individuals who sought the rehabilitation of Dreyfus in exchange for payment from Jewish power brokers. This anti-Semitic, fear-mongering sensationalism was a standard feature of the Antidreyfusard press and was not regarded as outrageous or inappropriate by popular opinion at the time.
November 1897 had reached a critical point—the Dreyfus Affair now involved all the powers of
the Republic.

On January 13, 1898, two days after the foreseeable conclusion of the Esterhazy trial, 
L’Aurore published on its front page the article that truly gave the Dreyfus Affair its iconic
status—the famous article “J’Accuse…!” by Émile Zola. After Le Figaro abandoned its
campaign for the revision of the trial on December 18, 1897, Zola had to search elsewhere for
newspapers that shared his Dreyfusard views. Zola, an acquaintance of Clemenceau, began
contributing to L’Aurore, and it was Clemenceau who suggested the title of the article. Zola
wrote “J’Accuse” in the form of an open letter to the President of the Republic, Félix Faure,
wherein, after outlining some of the most egregious irregularities of the conduct of the
government following the 1894 trial, he accused numerous individuals of malfeasance and
obstruction and miscarriage of justice. The most notable of these accusations was Zola’s claim
that the Conseil de guerre had, two days earlier, knowingly and under order exonerated a man
whom the judges knew to be guilty. As Zola knew, this accusation constituted libel, and, on
January 18, Billot brought suit against him and Alexandre Perrenx, the managing director of the
newspaper. During the ensuing lawsuit, Fernand Labori, who later represented Dreyfus before
the War Tribunal in Rennes in 1899, represented Zola, while Albert Clemenceau, the younger
brother of Georges, represented Perrenx. Though not a lawyer by training, Georges Clemenceau,
M.D. petitioned and received authorization to act as assistant counsel during the trial as well.

The involvement of Clemenceau during the Zola trial represented his full engagement as
a Dreyfusard of the first order.\footnote{Duroselle, Clemenceau, pp. 430-464.} Clemenceau’s public pronouncements during the trial
illustrated his fundamental conceptions of republicanism perhaps even more lucidly than his
articles. His most salient arguments concerned the relationship between civil and Army society in the Republic. The object of the société militaire was to remake France a military power following the humiliating defeat of 1870, hence the sacred character bestowed upon the Army. Parallel to this notion, however, was the desire to establish a civil society, to “be free from all personal despotisms or oligarchies and to found in our country a democracy of liberty and equality” based on the rule of law. The only goal of military society, Clemenceau argued, is to defend civil society, and the two must thus operate in transparent harmony. The highest duty of military society, therefore, is to protect the principles that underlie civil society, a duty, Clemenceau argued, wholly neglected by those implicated in the Dreyfus Affair. He included in his remarks another rejection of la raison d’État in favor of the rights of the individual, for “when the rights of one man are infringed, the rights of all men find themselves in peril, the rights of the nation itself. We love our country…but the country is not just the soil. It is the locus of rights and justice to which all men are attached.” He also presented again his position regarding the Army. Those who criticized and questioned the actions of the General Staff in no way sought to weaken the Army, but indeed to preserve its strength. If, he argued, the Army warranted its vaunted status as the embodiment of the Republic, it ought to be exemplary in the application of justice and the respect for the rule of law, the fundamental principles of the Republic.

In the courtroom setting, “assistant counsel” Clemenceau presented his case in clear terms, utilizing the same vocabulary of justice, truth, and the rule of law found in his articles. The speech ended with an appeal to the jury to “seize the hour…in this tragic moment of our

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112 The text of his speech given during the Zola Trial was reproduced as article LXXI, “Procès de Zola et de L’Aurore,” in L’Iniquité.
113 Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 437.
history before the unknown.”

It is evident here why Clemenceau was such a captivating orator and successful politician. His reasoning was clear, his language was direct, and his conclusion sought to place an immense burden on those responsible for rendering a verdict. Though Clemenceau knew that Zola had committed libel, he used his position at the trial to highlight the broader implications of the Affair. His actions on behalf of *L’Aurore* during the Zola trial mark the beginning of the period of Clemenceau’s most ardent engagement as a *Dreyfusard*, an effort that would only end following the retrial of Dreyfus in Rennes in September, 1899.

The publication of “*J’Accuse*” also signified the emergence of the intellectual class as a political force in French society. “Intellectual” in the context of the Dreyfus Affair referred to “*hommes de plume et de pensée*, who, in going beyond their specific professions…made known their opinions among the public either on affairs of state or questions of justice.” Prior to the publication of “*J’Accuse*” the librarian of the *École normale supérieure*, Lucien Herr, distributed a petition among the academics of Paris demanding Dreyfus’ retrial. Herr’s petition soon drew signatures from those beyond the academic realm, attracting attention from prominent artists and authors as well. Clemenceau, in his article “À la dérive” (Adrift) published on January 23 noted the emergence of “all these *intellectuals*, who have come from all corners of the sky, who group themselves around a single idea [of the pursuit of justice].” The engagement of the intellectuals gave momentum to the *Dreyfusard* cause and signified the emergence of a new force in French politics.

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116 Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 445.
Henceforth, the entirety of France divided itself into two irreconcilable camps—the *Dreyfusards* and the *Antidreyfusards*. As was the case with Clemenceau (and the majority of prominent *Dreyfusards*), the import of the Affair did not rest with the individual fate of Dreyfus, but with the implications for the Republic. The division between the two groups, thus, was not simply a quarrel over the innocence or guilt of Captain Dreyfus, but over two distinct visions of the Republic and over the limits of state power. It was this dichotomy that gave the Dreyfus Affair its lasting impact and explains why it became the seminal crisis of the Third Republic. Although by the 1890s the Republic was settled, the Dreyfus Affair was a struggle about what a republic would mean. The Affair did not threaten the Republic as an institution, but it affected what the regime would mean for the population and for France.
Chapter V: Clemenceau and the Vindication of Dreyfus

Following the second trial and condemnation of Zola on July 18, 1898, the Dreyfus Affair appeared to be finished. Zola, the most prominent of the Dreyfusards, was in exile in England, and Picquart was still embroiled in his clash with the Army justice system. Had the government simply said nothing more of the Affair, it may have eventually faded from view. Nevertheless, the Méline government was voted out and the new government that came to power on June 28 under Prime Minister Henri Brisson wished to definitively dismiss the Affair, a task assigned to the new Minister of War, Jacques Marie Eugène Godefroy Cavaignac.

Cavaignac’s approach was direct—one July 7 he gave his first speech in the Chamber designed at crushing what was left of the Dreyfusard momentum by referencing pieces of “evidence” from the classified file had been used as the basis of Dreyfus’ conviction. The most damning document disclosed by Cavaignac was the letter that was used as uncontestable proof of Dreyfus’ guilt fabricated by Major Hubert-Joseph Henry (what became known as the “faux Henry”) to appear as written by Italian Army attaché Alessandro Panizzardi to his German counterpart, Maximilien von Schwartzkoppen. However, the tactic of Cavaignac had the exact opposite of the desired effect; by making the document public, he invited scrutiny of it and subsequently gave the Dreyfusards second life. While the Chamber voted l’affichage119 of Cavaignac’s speech, on August 13 Captain Louis Cuignet discovered that the letter was a forgery. Cuignet’s discovery was ironic, as not only was he an avowed anti-Semite, he believed in the guilt of Dreyfus. He was also a friend of Henry (the author of the forged letter), and was

119 This refers to the practice whereby the Chamber voted to have particularly rousing speeches posted in all the town halls of France.
only investigating the document after being directed to do so by Cavaignac.\footnote{Cavaignac ordered the investigation into the document only after he revealed it in his speech before the Chamber on July 7. Clemenceau sarcastically made light of this series of actions, and wondered if Cavaignac always leapt before he looked.} Cuignet nevertheless reported his findings to the Minister as well as to the public. Henry (who had been promoted to colonel since his days as a forger), under pressure from an embarrassed Cavaignac, admitted to having fabricated the letter and was arrested on August 30. Incarcerated at the Mont-Valérien Army fortress in suburban Paris, Henry was found dead the following day, his throat slit by a razor left in his possession.\footnote{Mont-Valérien was a base of operations for the forces that quelled the Commune during the Bloody Week of May 1871. Under the Occupation the Nazis used it as a prison for captured members of the Resistance.}

The official inquiry into the matter concluded that he committed suicide, even though the razor was found closed in his left hand though Henry was right-handed.\footnote{Jean-Max Guieu, “Les agressions criminelles de l’Affaire Dreyfus,” (presentation, conference celebrating the centenary of the transfer of Zola’s ashes to the Panthéon, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, October 22, 2008, p. 15.} In declaring his guilt, Henry nevertheless made an appeal that resonated with the supporters of la raison d’État. Though he may have committed a crime in forging the letter, he did so out of patriotism, convinced that his “patriotic forgeries” were in the service of his duty to protect France.\footnote{Guieu, Ibid., p. 3.} This conception of political virtue lay at the heart of the Antidreyfusard philosophy, and it was this conception that Clemenceau attacked in his article “Tout croule” (Everything Collapses), published on September 1.

“The truth on the march,” wrote Clemenceau, referencing Zola’s expression, “I believe it is before us…for too long we have accumulated lies…[and now] everything collapses at once: the edifice is in ruins.”\footnote{Georges Clemenceau, “Tout croule,” in Vers la réparation, Paris: Stock, 1899, p. 117.} Clemenceau could barely conceal his Schadenfreude—he took “a particular pleasure” in the recent events, and ironically wished to thank Cavaignac for producing
This gratification notwithstanding, Clemenceau did not allow his writing to devolve into the sensationalistic and self-indulgent “I told you so” type. Rather, he framed the developments of August 1898 within the same context that had defined his writings throughout the Affair. Once again, Clemenceau’s line of argument rested upon the primacy of the rule of law, all the while critiquing the actions of those entrusted with power, a further testament to his ultimate interests in the Dreyfus Affair: “[Cavaignac] must now begin to see how dangerous it is for a government to deliberately violate all laws in favor of criminals over an innocent.”126 In “Tout croule,” Clemenceau interpreted the actions of Cavaignac through the lens of the rule of law. What appeared was an impressive body of work, but one with no foundation. The discovery of the forgery by Cuignet and the subsequent admission and suicide by Henry dealt a lethal blow to this intricately constructed artifice. Following the events of August 1898 the Brillon administration found itself mired in, as Clemenceau noted, “a total debacle.”127 Indeed, as he demonstrated, the convictions of Zola and Dreyfus, as they were “obtained by the production of fabricated evidence,” no longer had “any meaning,” nor did the outrageous acquittal of Esterhazy in January, for the same reason.128

While he remained wedded to his beliefs in the rule of law, by the beginning of September 1898, Clemenceau’s writings begin to contain heightened instances of sarcasm, due to a developing disgust with the actions of the government and the General Staff. At the beginning of his Dreyfusard campaign Clemenceau was concerned only with the irregularity of the process by which Dreyfus had been condemned, but as the wrongdoings and malfeasance of the General Staff and of the governments became increasingly apparent, so too did his indignation. By

125 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 117.
126 Clemenceau, Ibid., 117.
127 Clemenceau, Ibid., 118.
128 Clemenceau, Ibid., 120.
September 1898, however, Clemenceau’s indignation, while still present, was now imbued with a nearly bemused incredulity at how perverse the actions of the government and the General Staff were. Moreover, given the farcical nature of these actions, Clemenceau became increasingly convinced of Dreyfus’ innocence. This is apparent in “Tout croule” in his prognostication over what would happen to Colonel Picquart, the former chief of Army intelligence who had proclaimed prior to Cuignet that the letter forged by Henry, the centerpiece of Cavaignac’s July 7 speech, was indeed inauthentic. The widespread “dishonest disposition” that characterized the General Staff led to Picquart’s arrest, and the same disposition, Clemenceau argued, would lead to Picquart’s condemnation “in a few days.”

The disdain for those involved with obfuscation appeared in his proposition that “perhaps [Prime Minister Brisson] would even like [Picquart] judged legally, since he isn’t Jewish.” With this Clemenceau underscored another critical question posed by the Dreyfus Affair—whether the Republic would extend its protections to all citizens, definitively establishing the equality of individuals before the law.

The anti-Semitism that Clemenceau referenced in “Tout croule” was part of a larger cultural trend that the Dreyfus Affair exacerbated. Anti-Semitism in France at the end of the nineteenth century was threefold: religious, racial, and social. Social anti-Semitism, the most prominent of the three, held that Jewish individuals had taken hold over significant parts of France’s economy, and that it was thus necessary to protect non-Jews from this takeover. The crash of the Union Générale bank in 1882, evoked in chapter I in connection with the 1885 elections, stoked anti-Semitic sentiment and gave credence to this perception of French society.

129 Clemenceau, Ibid., 119.
130 Clemenceau, Ibid., 119.
as a divided between non-Jewish citizens and an economically powerful Jewish “Other.”

At the basis of these three types of anti-Semitism was a widespread feeling that Jews were a separate and foreign race who did not properly fit into French society. This sentiment was especially prevalent among the aristocracy, conservative Catholics, and certain members of the Army, all groups prominent among the Antidreyfusards.

The elective French conception of nationhood also contributed to the development of social anti-Semitism. In 1882 Ernest Renan, a historian and member of the Académie française, articulated what has become the enduring definition of the French nation. For Renan, the nation was “a soul, a living spiritual principle” that was based on “the common possession of a rich legacy of memories” and “the desire to live together.” For Renan, thus, “the existence of a nation is…a daily plebiscite.” In Renan’s estimation, if France existed it was because the people of France chose to make it so. Conservative groups in France regarded Jews as outside this construct of the nation because they believed Jews were beholden to foreign loyalties of faith or capital. Therefore, it was easy to accept that Dreyfus, a Jew whose loyalty, in this perception, lay not with the French nation but elsewhere, was guilty. The Affair ultimately illustrated the hollowness of this claim, however, and proved that the Republic protected the Jews and regarded them as full citizens.

Religious considerations did not inform Clemenceau’s interpretation of the Affair. Indeed, Clemenceau defended Dreyfus not because the captain was Jewish, but because he embraced a conception of the Republic and the nation that included Jews. The ultimate concern for Clemenceau in the Affair was not religious, but rather lay in the pursuit of justice and truth.

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131 Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 450.
132 Established by Cardinal Richelieu under Louis XIII in 1635, the Académie officially regulates the French language.
134 Renan, Ibid., p. 27.
This is evident in considering the titles of his articles. According to Duroselle, of the 665 articles in Clemenceau’s seven-volume collection of his writings on the Affair from 1894 to 1903, five contain the word “Juif”\(^{135}\) in the title: three from L’Iniquité, published in 1900, and two from La Honte, published in 1903. Moreover, Clemenceau never made mention of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the anti-Semitic text that appeared in Europe at the turn of the century.\(^{136}\) Thus, while cries of “mort aux Juifs!” (death to the Jews!) may have been a common refrain among Antidreyfusards, Clemenceau defended Dreyfus not because he was Jewish, but because he was the victim of injustice.

Clemenceau’s volume *Au pied du Sinaï*\(^{137}\) (At the Foot of Mount Sinai), an account of his travels in Galicia published at the height of the Affair in 1898, gives penetrating insight into his attitude towards Jews. His description of Busk, a small city located on the western edge of present-day Ukraine that was once home to a thriving Jewish population, is most revelatory. Clemenceau observed that the dominant force of Busk was “the grimy Jew, anxious and gentle, attentive to all matters of industry and trade.”\(^{138}\) Yet, Clemenceau did not expand this observation to a broader critique of Jewish capitalism. While there may have been some wealthy Jews, Clemenceau noted, there were rich individuals of all nationalities and persuasion, and “the problem of capitalism [was] not the problem of race or religion. The Jewish proletariat [was] possibly the most miserable of all.”\(^{139}\) He also concluded that the notion of the “Jewish question” was not organic, but was rather the construct of other religions, and in the case of France, of Catholicism. Clemenceau believed the existence of this phenomenon in France was due entirely to the “clerical party [of Antidreyfusard Édouard] Drumont [owner of the newspaper

\(^{135}\) *Juif* (masculine) or *juive* (feminine) is both a noun and an adjective in French.


\(^{138}\) As cited in Duroselle, *Clemenceau*, p. 453.

La Libre Parole], the Church, the generals, [and] the high-ranking Christian bankers.”¹⁴⁰ In Clemenceau’s estimation, thus, the essential questions of the Affair were not religious, but rather concerned matters of individual liberty and the rule of law.

On September 2, Clemenceau, in his article “Le bilan” (The Assessment), gave a clear summary of the recent events surrounding the admission and death of Henry. The head of the General Staff, Boisdeffre, had resigned “and Colonel Henry, as a favor, slit his own throat. Two dead.”¹⁴¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Armand du Paty de Clam, who contributed to the file of forgeries used to convict Dreyfus in 1894, and Esterhazy, despite overwhelming evidence of their wrongdoing, were free men. Generals de Pellieux and Gonse, both fingered in “J’Accuse,” were preparing their next moves, while Cavaignac and Brisson, the two men “who gave the impulse to this drama” remained ministers of the regime under the presidency of Félix Faure.¹⁴² The sarcasm that began to appear in “Tout croule” reappeared with his interpretation of Cavaignac, “who is such a good minister that he wishes to remain so, and after having led the government of France to become the laughingstock of the world, he thinks he still has the necessary authority to” continue overseeing the Army.¹⁴³ This is not to suggest that Clemenceau deliberately diminished the gravity of the Dreyfus Affair—indeed, his comments would indeed have been more humorous had they not implicated the foundations of the Republic—but by September 1898 he wished to underscore the laughable the actions of the government and General Staff had become.

¹⁴⁰ Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 454.
¹⁴² Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 122.
¹⁴³ Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 122.
Clemenceau found that this generalized incompetence crystallized around the refusal on the part of the Antidreyfusards both within and without the corridors of power to admit any error whatsoever. Even after Henry admitted having fabricated the letter and took his own life to prevent reprisal, Cavaignac refused to change his opinion on the guilt of Dreyfus. The absurdity of this position, “even for the deputies…who count for nothing following their unanimous vote for the affichage of a lie,” was too much.\footnote{Clemenceau, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 124.} Even if the letter had been authentic, as Clemenceau discussed in his article on September 3, “\textit{Le dossier ultra secret}” (The Ultra-Secret File), this would have reconfirmed the illegality of Dreyfus’ trial, as the letter had never been shown to the defense.\footnote{As cited in Watson, \textit{Political Biography}, p. 150.} Moreover, Clemenceau expressed confusion over Cavaignac’s handling of Henry following the admission of fabrication. The Mont-Valérien Army fortress was utilized as a jail for “disciplinary punishments” and had no connection to the judicial authorities who, presumably, would have been interested in investigating the colonel’s malfeasance.\footnote{Clemenceau, “\textit{Le bilan},” in \textit{Vers la reparation}, p. 126.} While Cavaignac had demonstrated himself competent at temporarily evading the questions of responsibility, Clemenceau closed his article with a prescient prediction—that “with [Cavaignac] or against him, we will conclude [this Affair] by putting the whole truth out in the open.”\footnote{Clemenceau, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 126.}

In the crazed atmosphere that took hold following the Henry admission and suicide, Cavaignac was forced to resign as minister of war on September 3. According to Clemenceau in his article that appeared the following day, “\textit{Hautes complicités},” (High Complicity) this was because Cavaignac “did not want to hear any talk of a revision [of Dreyfus’ trial].”\footnote{Clemenceau, “\textit{Hautes complicités},” in \textit{Ibid.}, p. 131.} While Cavaignac (as well as the other members of the government) refused to do so, in the aftermath of the revelations of inauthenticity, even several Antidreyfusard newspapers began to call for

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Clemenceau, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 124.
\item As cited in Watson, \textit{Political Biography}, p. 150.
\item Clemenceau, “\textit{Le bilan},” in \textit{Vers la reparation}, p. 126.
\item Clemenceau, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 126.
\item Clemenceau, “\textit{Hautes complicités},” in \textit{Ibid.}, p. 131.
\end{thebibliography}
revision. As Clemenceau noted in “Haut complicités” papers such as “La Lanterne, L'Echo de Paris, Le Journal, Le Soleil, Le Journal des Débats”—all previously Antidreyfusard—had “all dramatically announced themselves in favor of a retrial.”149 Yet in spite of the mounting popular support for a revision, Brisson refused to act. Clemenceau, in “Le retour offensif des faussiers” (The Offensive Return of the Forgers), published on September 22, fiercely criticized Brisson for his inaction, and wondered whether the Prime Minister was “more stupid than cowardly or more cowardly than stupid” and concluded “both” to be appropriate, indicative of the more impatient and scathing tone of his writing during this period.150

The critiques against Brisson continued, and on September 27 the government found itself politically obligated to send the Dreyfus case to be reviewed by the Court of Cassation. Nevertheless, the government fell and the moderate Charles Dupuy assumed power on November 3. Dupuy remained in office until June 22, 1899.151 Dupuy did not take an official stance on the Affair and strove to remain neutral. However, on February 16, 1899 President Félix Faure, who had been notoriously hostile to the Dreyfusards, died after sustaining a heart attack in his office. The following day Clemenceau remarked that Faure’s death “does not make one man the fewer in France. But there is a position vacant, and claimants will not be lacking…There will be an auction for the right to succeed to his throne, to continue the abominable work…For my part, I vote for [Senator Émile] Loubet.”152 Clemenceau believed Loubet was “not involved to any degree with liars, forgers, [or] accomplices to treason that orbited around M. Félix Faure.”153 Loubet was elected by the National Assembly, a choice

149 Clemenceau, “Hautes complicités,” in Ibid., p. 32.
151 Dupuy served as Prime Minister five times under four different presidents. His fourth and fifth governments succeeded each other, interrupted by the death of Félix Faure (his third president) on February 16, 1899.
152 As cited in Watson, Political Biography, p. 150.
153 As cited in Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 444.
which pleased those in favor of revision but was a source of great chagrin for the

Antidreyfusards.

The heightening of tensions subsequent to the election of Loubet revealed not only how deeply divided French society was, but more importantly that the Affair threatened the existence of the Republic itself. The Antidreyfusard discontent came to a head during the public funeral of Faure on February 23 when the nationalist and fierce Antidreyfusard Paul Déroulède attempted to instigate a coup. Déroulède was charged with treason but was acquitted in May. Tensions flared again in the aftermath of the June 3 decision of the Court of Cassation, which found in favor of Dreyfus, who was to be brought back to France to be tried once again before a Army tribunal. The next day, a Monarchist aristocrat, Baron Christiani, struck Loubet with a cane during the races at the Longchamp Racecourse in western Paris. While the baron was arrested, the aggression was highly symbolic. Although in reality only a figurehead, the president was the head of state, and the attack thus represented contempt not only for Loubet personally, but for the institution he represented—the Republic. The following week the president returned to the racecourse, though this time he was a celebrated figure in a massive republican demonstration. The racetrack, generally a site of the “anti-republican rich” became the host of a “great demonstration of republicanism.”

Parliamentary politics mirrored the popular affirmation of the Republic of early June. The attack on Loubet had a galvanizing effect and on June 22 Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau became Prime Minister and formed what was referred to as the “government of Republican Defense.”

The emergence of Waldeck-Rousseau illustrated, however, the continued reticence of the Radicals to wholly embrace the Dreyfusard cause. Waldeck-Rousseau, a conservative yet anti-

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154 Watson, Political Biography, p. 150.
155 Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 444.
clerical republican with Opportunist leanings, embodied the kind of deputy willing to confront the Church on a political level.\textsuperscript{156} On June 25, Clemenceu criticized the Radicals for their unwillingness to support Waldeck-Rousseau, and emphasized “the connection between the Dreyfus Affair…and the ideas for which the Republic stands. In the face of threats of the Monarchy and the Church, it is time for the republican party to get a grip of itself, and give the Republic a government.”\textsuperscript{157} By this point the Affair had become the central element in the political life of the Republic. Everything revolved around the Affair, a phenomenon highlighted by the prominence of the Affair in the election of Loubet. With ascendancy of Loubet, the finding in favor of Dreyfus by the Court of Cassation, and the formation of the Waldeck-Rousseau government, not a single major political obstacle remained on the path towards revision.\textsuperscript{158} For the Radicals to endanger this opportunity would have been devastating for the Dreyfusards. They quickly realized the implications of such obstruction and supported the new government.

The second trial of Dreyfus took place between August 7 and September 9 in Rennes in Brittany under extraordinary circumstances.\textsuperscript{159} The emotions sparked by the Affair were on full display, leading to an extremely tense situation within the city. The attempted assassination on August 14 of Fernand Labori, one of Dreyfus’ lawyers who had also defended Zola during his trials, encapsulated the potential for discord. Indeed, the trial was held in a provincial city instead of in Paris for fear of riots and general civil unrest. Despite all the developments that took place between Dreyfus’ original condemnation and the second trial, the Army tribunal

\textsuperscript{156} Watson, Political Biography, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{157} As cited in Watson, Ibid., p. 151.
\textsuperscript{158} Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 444
\textsuperscript{159} Marcel Thomas, L’affaire sans Dreyfus, Paris: Fayard, 1961, p. 20.
found him, by a vote of five to two, once again guilty of treason, though this time with “extenuating circumstances.”  

While it is difficult to imagine what such circumstances could have been, the second condemnation of Dreyfus was, as Clemenceau wrote in his article “Vers la Victoire!” (To Victory!), published on September 10, predictable. Given “the manner in which the debates were managed by the presiding judge [Colonel Albert] Jouast,” no other outcome was possible.  

Later in the article Clemenceau raised the question of the law once again. In response to those who “now say to us: shut up and accept the verdict! It’s the law,” Clemenceau asserted that “the law has been violated ten times, one hundred times, against Dreyfus and, to save him, we shall only appeal to the help of the law…we want justice by the law, and we shall have it.” In the darkest hour of the Dreyfusard campaign, Clemenceau returned to the principle that had guided him from the beginning of the Affair. He concluded the article by equating this pursuit of justice with “love of the fatherland, which we do not wish to see delivered to the hands of criminals who gained a victory through violation of the law.” For Clemenceau, those responsible for the second condemnation of Dreyfus, through the perversion of law and the miscarriage of justice, had destroyed France: “tomorrow the stupefied people shall search in vain for the remnants of the historic tradition that made us the earth’s foremost champions of law…what has become of the French?”

Following the condemnation, two potential courses of action confronted the supporters of Dreyfus. One would have led to appealing the decision and continuing to seek vindication within the judiciary framework. Clemenceau advocated this path, though it was fraught with

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160 Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 445.  
162 Clemenceau, Ibid., pp. 228-229.  
163 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 229.  
164 Clemenceau, Ibid., p. 229.
difficulty. The other option was to accept a presidential pardon, which carried the same legal weight as an acquittal. Author and politician Joseph Reinach, one of the earliest supporters of Dreyfus, argued for this route, and believed that it would carry the same weight in the public view as an acquittal. Waldeck-Rousseau also favored this course of action, as it would bring a decisive and immediate end to the recent unrest stirred by the Rennes trial. Moreover, as Hannah Arendt claimed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the prospect of an international boycott of the *Exposition Universelle*, scheduled for November 1900, caused by the international outrage stirred by the Dreyfus Affair, loomed large in the minds of the members of the government and of the National Assembly. The pardon, Arendt claimed, expeditiously resolved the issue of the second conviction and allowed the *Exposition* “to open under the brightest of commercial skies.”

While Arendt’s assertion that the prospect of a boycotted *Exposition* was the “*deus ex machina*” that led to the pardon is exaggerated, the repercussions of such an event were no doubt discussed by parliamentarians and members of the government at the time. As Clemenceau argued, however, the acceptance of a pardon implied recognition of guilt on the part of Dreyfus. This division within the *Dreyfusard* camp revealed again Clemenceau’s true interest in the case. While he felt pity for the wrongfully condemned, he had fought “for the general principle of justice in the conduct of the affairs of the State” and the acceptance of a pardon would make obtaining justice impossible.

Clemenceau’s initial bitterness over the prospect of a pardon is well documented, notably in Reinach’s *Histoire de l’affaire Dreyfus*, where the resultant portrait is one of a man who

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was insensitive to the personal dimensions of the Affair and who wished to protract the struggle to accumulate political capital against the Church.\textsuperscript{169} Clemenceau and the prominent socialist figure Jean Jaurès expressed their opinion that the acceptance of the pardon was “shameful [and] dishonorable.”\textsuperscript{170} On September 11, 1899 at the office of deputy Alexandre Millerand took place a meeting of some of the most politically prominent Dreyfusards. Mathieu Dreyfus, brother of the condemned, would not proceed with seeking the pardon without the unanimous consent of those present, including Clemenceau. After discussion, Clemenceau finally ceded, recognizing that “if I were the brother, I would accept [the pardon].”\textsuperscript{171} Thus, on September 19, Loubet signed the pardon, and the same day Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, the former senator who was one of the few parliamentarians to ever fight for Dreyfus’ cause and without whose actions the Affair would not have broken out, died. While Clemenceau, ever intransigent and a man of principle \textit{par excellence} may have wished to continue the pursuit of justice, his concession revealed that he was not ultimately insensitive to the human dimensions of the Affair.

Clemenceau’s eventual also underscored the fact that, while he had been out of elected office for nearly six years, he remained a politician at heart and recognized when to accept a \textit{fait accompli}.

The root of Clemenceau’s bitterness over the pardon lay not in the personal injustice visited upon Dreyfus, but in the fact that those who had actually committed crimes and overseen perversion of the rule of law would not be brought to justice. With the pardon came the expectation that Dreyfus would not seek legal restitution, which left the door open for the amnesty law of December 1900. The law, proposed by none other than Mercier, the Minister of War who orchestrated the initial condemnation in 1894 and had been elected to the senate in January 1900, rendered impossible any investigation into those accused (and proven) to have

\textsuperscript{169} Watson, \textit{Political Biography}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{170} As cited in Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 449.
\textsuperscript{171} As cited in Duroselle, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 449.
engaged in malfeasance during the Affair. The amnesty law placed, in the words of Zola, “in the same pot men of honor and hoodlums.”\textsuperscript{172}

In the aftermath of the Rennes decision and the pardon Clemenceau’s status as political editor at \textit{L’Aurore} became increasingly tenuous. Despite its role as one of the preeminent \textit{Dreyfusard} publications, the paper struggled financially. As a result, salaries were reduced, but Clemenceau, still struggling with his personal finances following the \textit{La Justice} debacle, refused to accept a pay cut. Moreover, he began to quarrel with another contributor, Urbain Gohier. Gohier was a raucous individual whose articles were characterized by sensationalistic attacks on the Army, much to the annoyance of Clemenceau, who went to great lengths to emphasize that he was not criticizing the Army itself, but the conduct of certain individuals. Clemenceau nevertheless supported Gohier’s right to express himself on the grounds of free speech. It is therefore easy to sympathize with Clemenceau’s irritation when, following the acceptance of the pardon, Gohier claimed that he alone had fought for the Dreyfus case on general grounds. Thus Clemenceau briefly left \textit{L’Aurore} (he would return in 1903) and established his own weekly magazine, \textit{Le Bloc}, which published its first issue on January 27, 1901. Though the publication was expensive and attracted only a small readership, it was influential among the political and intellectual élites.\textsuperscript{173} What was extraordinary about \textit{Le Bloc} was that it was entirely written by Clemenceau. As Duroselle noted, this meant that Clemenceau wrote between 38 and 40 pages on average each week.\textsuperscript{174} These articles thus give invaluable insight into this transitional period of Clemenceau’s life.

Matters of domestic politics dominated the pages of \textit{Le Bloc}, notably the subjects of strikes and the actions of the Church and the Jesuits; these were the most prominent and

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\textsuperscript{174} Duroselle, \textit{Clemenceau}, p. 456.
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controversial issues in French politics after Dreyfus’ pardon, and the latter was tied to the Affair by the Church’s visible role among the _Antidreyfusards_. Clemenceau was disappointed by the actions of General André, the second minister of war under Waldeck-Rousseau, who reinstated a Monarchist general whose actions, such as asking his soldiers to believe in God, represented for Clemenceau hostility to the Republic. Relatively absent from the sixty total issues of _Le Bloc_ are articles dealing with the Dreyfus Affair and with economic and financial problems.

With the total control Clemenceau exercised over the publication came the total responsibility to produce it. The prodigious amount of writing took its toll on Clemenceau, and he became dissatisfied with his profession of nine years: “to write was only to act halfway.”

The magazine lasted until March 1902 when, consumed by the senatorial campaign in the department of the Var, where he last held his seat as a deputy, Clemenceau could no longer continue to write. Although the Dreyfus Affair excited Clemenceau, it ultimately also frustrated him, as in his role of as a journalist he could only write, not act. While journalism facilitated the revitalization of Clemenceau’s life and the sharpening of his political philosophy, by 1902 he had grown restless in his role as an observer and leapt at the opportunity to reenter the corridors of power.

Clemenceau’s return to politics was occasioned by the death of one of the life senators appointed in 1875. Pursuant to the scheme of apportionment of senate seats, the Var, the former home of Clemenceau’s constituency from his latter days as deputy, received the seat, which was to be filled by a general election. That Clemenceau would reenter politics as a senator was ironic, as since its creation, and as late as 1896, Clemenceau had criticized the institution for

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175 Duroselle, _Ibid._, p. 460.
177 Duroselle, _Ibid._, p. 468.
being anti-democratic. Moreover, he had been isolated from parliamentary politics; his contempt for parliamentarians was well-documented throughout the Dreyfus Affair. In 1901, when the Radicals formed the Radical Republican and Radical-Socialist Party, Clemenceau ridiculed them in *Le Bloc* and had no contact with those who formed the party, some of whom had been close colleagues in his previous career, such as Camille Pelletan, with whom his contact dated to the Commune. Nevertheless, after conversations with several close friends, including Pierre-Victor Stock, his publisher for the collections of articles on the Dreyfus Affair, he ran for the office and won with little trouble in April 1902. The tone of the campaign stood in marked contrast to the wild experience of 1893, and henceforth Clemenceau enjoyed a comfortable base for the remainder of his career.\(^{178}\) His status in the senate was powerful but peculiar. Watson’s assessment of Clemenceau during the early stage of his second parliamentary career is particularly apt—while he was perhaps the most authentic Radical, Clemenceau was not officially a member of the Radical parliamentary group, and was never anything more than a “freelance” supporter of the Radical government of Émile Combes, which lasted from June 1902 to January 1905, a government Clemenceau eventually helped topple.\(^{179}\)

The Left, in a coalition called the *Bloc des gauches* (left-wing Bloc), won a slim majority in the 1902 elections (298 of 591 deputies), but the Radicals and the Radical-Socialists comprised the most important of this group. The elections of 1906 reinforced the position of the Bloc, which assured a stable and lasting place for Radical governments. Indeed, this was the height of what historians refer to as the “Radical Republic,” the period from 1898 to 1914.\(^{180}\)

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\(^{180}\) This notion is discussed at length in Madeleine Rebérioux, *La République Radicale?* Paris: Seuil, 1975.
The Bloc comprised the Radical and Radical-Socialists, as well as the majority of parliamentary Socialists. 181

Among the top priorities of the leftist government was the relationship between Church and State. The Dreyfus Affair had revealed the influence of the Church was capable of wielding on public affairs, which led the Radical Republicans to embark on a process of increasingly intense secularization. For as moderate and cautious as the Waldeck-Rousseau government had been with regards to the Church, the Combes government was radical and aggressive. In 1902, Combes, in applying the 1901 Law of Associations promulgated under Waldeck-Rousseau that differentiated authorized and unauthorized religious Orders, declared that all Catholic schools be closed, as they had not received proper authorization from the State. The concern over the influence of the Church on the education of French youth had been a preoccupation of the republicans since the beginning of the regime, and had contributed to the promulgation of the Ferry Laws of 1881 and 1882 that provided for free, obligatory, and secular primary education. When the Radical leaders examined the histories of the principal villains of the Dreyfus Affair, they noticed that a large number of them had received Catholic and often Jesuit education. This highlighted a wider division regarding the role of the Church in society, despite the secularization of public education. In order to end this division, some republicans, including Combes, believed it was necessary to take the Ferry Laws one step further and establish a state monopoly on education, eliminating the pedagogical role of the Church.

While Clemenceau, like Combes, was an avowed anti-clericalist, the specifics of their views clashed, notably over the issue of the monopolie scolaire. Clemenceau articulated his

181 The failure at the Wagram Congress in 1900 of the Socialists to unify into a single party divided those into two camps: the reformists who supported the governments of the Bloc, and the revolutionaries, notably the unionists of the CGT (Confédération générale du travail), the oldest trade union, founded in 1895. These sorts of divisions were common among western European socialists in the decades prior to World War I.
position in a speech before the senate on October 30, 1902, which, along with another given on December 17, 1903, was published with under title Discours pour la liberté (Discourse on Liberty). The speeches give profound insight into the development of Clemenceau’s views on liberty, in this case as expressed in the context of the conflict between the Republic and the Church. Clemenceau’s legitimacy as an anti-clericalist was well-established, but his experience as an observer and commentator in the Dreyfus Affair left him with an acute attachment to individual liberty and an equally acute suspicion of State power. In the speech he underscored the difficulty of attempting to institute a liberal regime in a country where a large portion of the citizens were deeply attached to an intrinsically illiberal institution. This was an ambitious and worthy undertaking, argued Clemenceau, but he balked at what he viewed as the exchange of one tyranny for another. He declared himself as the opponent of “the omnipotence of the secular State” and accused Radical Senator Eugène Lintilhac, the architect of the monopole scolaire, of “transferring the spiritual power of the Pope to the State.”

Clemenceau’s conception of the State identified it as a “monster dripping with human blood, responsible for all the oppression under which humankind has suffered,” and as such, he could not support this application of the Law of Associations.

Clemenceau’s speech, viewed today, was imbued with a degree of foresight, as it identified the bases and lambasted the dangers of totalitarianism. For Clemenceau, political authority was legitimate only insofar as it guaranteed the rights and protections of the individual and restricted them only when they came into conflict with those of others. Any State action beyond this constituted tyranny. This interpretation of the role of the State is much more

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183 As cited in Watson, Ibid., p. 159.
184 Watson, Ibid., p. 160.
reminiscent of English classical liberalism à la Locke or Mill\textsuperscript{185} than of the Jacobin conception that has dominated French politics since the nineteenth century. In this sense Clemenceau’s view was, as Duroselle claimed, quite “original,” and also recognized the dangers of the ideologies that tore apart Europe in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{186}

Following the debate over the Law of Association, anti-clericalism shifted its focus away from the institutions of the Church to the whole relation between the Church and the State. At the center of this new conflict was the Concordat, established by Napoleon in 1801. Under this arrangement all Catholic priests had become state functionaries and the State nominated all bishops. While this arrangement allowed the State to control the activity of the Church to a certain degree, by 1905 it was clear that separation was a necessity. The explicit desire to end the Concordat had figured prominently among certain republicans since the 1869 Belleville Program of Gambetta, and following the victory of the Radicals in the 1902 elections it received increased attention. In the process of secularizing and de-Christianizing social life, the link preserved between the State and the Church by the Concordat became anachronistic: the State no longer needed the aid of the Church in civic life. Conflict with the Church over the statements of Pope Pius X in the spring of 1904 led to the breaking of diplomatic relations between France and the Holy See on July 30.\textsuperscript{187}

The Combes government, which fell on January 17, 1905, collapsed in part due to the personal animus between the prime minister and Clemenceau. Clemenceau was not satisfied with the government’s handling of the deteriorating relations with the Holy See, and in the fall of

\textsuperscript{185} Clemenceau was familiar not only with Mill’s views but was personally acquainted with the Englishman as well. Prior to traveling to the United States in 1865, Clemenceau stopped in London and met Mill and received his permission to translate into French Auguste Comte and Positivism, which he completed in 1866 (Duroselle, Clemenceau, p. 69).
\textsuperscript{186} Duroselle, Ibid., p. 476.
1904 was outraged by revelation of the spy network constructed by General André, the minister of war, to determine whether or not certain officers attended mass. Clemenceau, at this point actively contributing to L’Aurore, wrote several scathing articles in January 1905 that contributed to the fall of the government. The *tombeur de ministères*, it appeared, was back.\(^{188}\)

The parliamentary deliberations over the Separation Law of 1905 were a continuation of one of the most contentious debates raised by the Dreyfus Affair—the relationship between Church and State. The preparation of the Law began under the Combes government, but was taken up with greater vigor under the government of Maurice Rouvier by the Socialist deputy Aristide Briand. Though his anti-clericalism may have been profound and achieving the separation of the Church and State had been a life-long goal of his, Clemenceau played only a minor, and somewhat obstructive, role in the drafting and passing of the Law. He viewed it as not firm enough, and during the summer of 1905 led a press campaign against it, to the chagrin of many republicans who believed he would endanger the whole endeavor.\(^{189}\) Clemenceau’s objections to the text of the Law lay in the composition of Article 4, which dealt with the *associations culturelles* which were to oversee church buildings and property. These associations were to be in concord with the “general rules of organization of the religion,”\(^ {190}\) which Clemenceau believed put those dealing with the Catholic Church under papal control. In Clemenceau’s interpretation, the law gave the hierarchical structuring of the Church the support of French law, “which was repugnant to republican legality.”\(^ {191}\) Nevertheless, Clemenceau realized the importance of the Separation Law, and, despite his misgivings, voted in favor,

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\(^{188}\) A number of centrist deputies had also grown weary of the perceived pettiness of Combes’ methods, and support from the Socialists could no longer be counted on following the 1904 International Congress of Amsterdam.

\(^{189}\) Watson, *Political Biography*, p. 162.


\(^{191}\) Watson, *Political Biography*, p. 162. This principal misgiving was ultimately rendered moot when Pope Pius X refused to let Catholics participate in the *associations culturelles* and, officially condemned the Separation Law in his encyclical *Gravissimo Officii* of August 10, 1906.
contributing to its passage on December 9, 1905, thereby establishing one of the greatest legacies of the Dreyfus Affair. By passing the Law, which remains in force today, the National Assembly brought to a close the question over the role of the Church in public life and definitively established secularism an enduring feature of the Third Republic.
Conclusion: Impact of the Dreyfus Affair

The formal conclusion of the Dreyfus Affair came in July of 1906, during Clemenceau’s stint Minister of the Interior in the government of Jean Marie Ferdinand Sarrien (March 14 to October 19, 1906).192 Following the demonstration of Dreyfus’ innocence by Jaurès in the Chamber in April of 1903, the Ministry of War began an investigation, which led to the Court of Cassation undertaking its own investigation. The Court’s deliberations began on June 15, 1906, and on July 12, nearly seven years after his second condemnation in Rennes, Dreyfus was legally rehabilitated after being proclaimed innocent. While Clemenceau ceased his journalistic activity following his entry into government, it is likely that he would have reveled in the opportunity to comment on this final rendering of justice. The following day Dreyfus was reinstated to the Army with the rank of major. Picquart, the man had who made the discoveries of the forged documents, was reintegrated as well and was promoted to rank of brigadier general. On July 20 Dreyfus was named a Knight of the Legion of Honor, one of the highest marks of distinction that can be conferred upon a French citizen. After attaining the premiership on October 25, Clemenceau named Picquart as Minister of War, a fitting sign of justice for another former victim of the Affair.

While the various crises of the Third Republic until 1894 greatly impacted the course of the development of both Clemenceau and the regime, the Dreyfus Affair was by a wide margin the most important for both. As we have seen, following the elections of 1893, Clemenceau was a broken man in all aspects of his life. His transition to the life of an author was difficult, yet with the Dreyfus Affair he found his voice and, in the process, revitalized his tenacious

192 Clemenceau succeeded Sarrien as Prime Minister on October 25, 1906, and also retained his post as Minister of the Interior.
personality. The near-constant stream of articles during the Affair allowed Clemenceau to reinvent himself and to sharpen his political views. While Clemenceau’s political philosophy did not undergo any fundamental modification during the Affair, his daily writings allowed him to clearly articulate and identify his beliefs. What gave the writings of Clemenceau their resonant character was the seriousness of their subject matter—in his recognition of the gravity of the Affair, Clemenceau identified his beliefs as clearly as possible. The seminal question posed by the Affair was what being a Republic meant for France. The Affair presented in stark terms two opposing visions, taken up respectively by the Dreyfusards and the Antidrefusards. The seminal crisis of pre-World War I France was thus for Clemenceau the ultimate episode not only of self-identification, but of his conception of the essential nature of republican government.

Just as the Affair revivified Clemenceau, so too did it become the mythe fondateur, to borrow Winock’s phrase, of the Third Republic.\textsuperscript{193} The Dreyfus Affair, in its entirety, gave the Republic both a mystique and a political culture that had heretofore been lacking. Having survived the most serious of its crises, the Republic, as envisioned by the republicans, was henceforth definitively established. The Republic from this time on became identified with the defense of the universal values of justice and truth, and with the primacy of the inviolable rights of the individual over the raison d’État. This mystique was fueled by a corpus of texts that came to symbolize the legend of the struggle of the Dreyfusards—among many others, the seven volumes of articles of Clemenceau, the collections of articles of Zola, and “The Proofs” of Jaurès. Even the medium of film has provided various depictions of the Affair. This oeuvre is remained a legacy of republican pride. This mystique ushered in a new era in French society.

with the intellectuals, their role as the foremost protectors of justice and truth established during the Affair, as “a sort of republican clergy.”

While the Affair divided French society into Dreyfusard and Antidreyfusard, the events of 1894-1906 also occasioned a clash of two conceptions of nationalism. Since the Revolution nationalism had been associated with the Left, steeped in the Republican tradition. Republican nationalism was, to an extent, open, due to the elective conception of the nation articulated by Renan. What had emerged with Boulanger and exploded during the Dreyfus Affair was the “nationalism of nationalists.” This closed conception of nationalism, tied to the Right and to the Antidreyfusards, such as Édouard Drumont, was based on the notion of an interior enemy that threatened the “real” France. Thus, while the Republican nationalism was an open and positive doctrine that reaffirmed the glory of France, the nationalism that took hold during the Dreyfus Affair was closed and was characterized by the dread of decline. While those who espoused the latter conception of nationalism were defeated in the Affair, the strength of their doctrine grew following 1906 and led, ultimately, to the rise of Marshall Pétain and the fall of the Republic in 1940.

The political culture left behind by the Dreyfus Affair was that of Republican Defense. In the years following the Affair, France definitively established itself as a secular state, which culminated with the Separation Law of 1905. Secularism in this context was not the exclusion of religion, but the end of the ecclesiastical supervision of political and civil society, the logical conclusion of the desire to create a secular France. The successful surmounting of the Affair also marked the definitive acceptance of the parliamentary Republic, the status of which had

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194 Winock, Ibid., p. 164.
196 Winock, Ibid., p. 326.
197 Winock, Ibid., p. 331.
previously been a source of constant contestation. The constitutional laws of 1875, a compromise between republicans and Monarchists, did not immediately identify the Republic with the Parliament. Moreover, the Radicals made the suppression of the senate one of the prime features of their campaign platforms until the 1890s. In spite of the occasionally tumbling performance on the part of parliamentarians, the Dreyfus Affair concluded by definitively installing the *parlementarisme à la française*. The regime was not one dominated by ambitious political personalities nor was it plebiscitary—it was characterized by the fluidity between the parliamentary majority and the government. The integration of the Socialists under the Waldeck-Rousseau (with Alexandre Millerand, the first socialist minister in Europe, as Minister of Commerce) and particularly the Combes governments illustrated this fluidity. Combes, during his government the leader of the left wing Bloc, of which the Socialists were participants, worked with them, particularly through Jaurès, to pass social legislation as well as the steps towards secularization.¹⁹⁸

The legacy of the Dreyfus Affair was thus twofold. First, it furnished the Third Republic with a foundational myth that definitively established the place and meaning of the regime. Secondly, it cemented the republican political culture, which heretofore had lacked any coherent definition or identity. The Dreyfus Affair made the Third Republic more than simply a system of government—as Clemenceau insisted throughout the Affair by vindicating Dreyfus the Republic proved that its principles and protections, founded on the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, extended to all its citizens, even those on the margins.

¹⁹⁸ Winock, Ibid., p. 332.
Epilogue: Clemenceau in Power

In March of 1906 Clemenceau was sixty-four and, following the collapse of the Rouvier government, finally entered the cabinet. He assumed the post of Minister of the Interior of the Sarrien government. He called himself “an old beginner”\(^{199}\) and for the first time was forced to be part of the constructive process of governance. Clemenceau’s political career until this point, as has been demonstrated, was one of constant opposition. He made his reputation out of being the perpetual opponent and critic, even when it came to legislative initiatives that identified with his most fundamental beliefs, as illustrated by his marginal role in the creation of the Separation Law. As Watson noted, unlike many of his parliamentary colleagues, who were trained as lawyers and were thus more suited to the task of drafting laws, Clemenceau was a physician and his capacities as a parliamentarian lay elsewhere.\(^{200}\) However, this can only partially account for his lack of interest in the constructive elements of parliamentary life. Indeed, what made Clemenceau great were his intransigence and his unwillingness to compromise when principles were at stake. Clemenceau was therefore was the opposite of the type that enjoyed the most success in the jungle of Third Republic politics. Mild-mannered figures, such as Brisson and Freycinet, were in power far more than their more strong-willed colleagues.\(^{201}\) This was due to the conception of anonymous government that depersonalized politics and eschewed popular leaders that dominated parliamentary politics throughout the Third Republic, a reflection of a residual fear of charismatic political personalities instilled with the experience of Napoleon III. These resolute qualities in Clemenceau, born during his first parliamentary career and developed and hardened during his time as a journalist throughout the Dreyfus Affair, made him a brilliant and fearsome opponent (hence “the Tiger” and “the destroyer of governments”), but complicated

\(^{199}\) As cited in Watson, Political Biography, p. 167.
\(^{200}\) Watson, Ibid., pp. 167-8
\(^{201}\) Watson, Ibid., p. 135.
his transition to the exercise of power, as his handling of the various strikes of 1906 and 1907 illustrated.

Once in power, Clemenceau’s intransigence and strong rhetoric led him to take actions in seeming contradiction to his expressed principles of a limited role of the State with regards to personal liberty. As was the case for many European governments of the time, he confronted occasionally violent labor agitation. Indeed, following the Amiens Congress of October 1906 the CGT explicitly sought to promote social disorder through strikes. In the strikes Clemenceau saw a threat to the fabric of French society, and thus he had in these cases no qualms in quashing individual rights and expanding the power of the State. Though Clemenceau at times sought conciliation, he emphasized his repressive policies, the opposite tactic of colleagues who faced similar situations.202 Thus, quickly, the Tiger, one of the heroes of the Dreyfus Affair, became un homme à poigne, a man of law and order, and gained his new epithet, le premier flic de France, the first cop of France.

202 Watson, Ibid., p. 192.
Appendix A: Chronological Division of L’Iniquité of Michel Drouin

1. I. December 25, 1894.
2. II-VIII. November 1, 1897 – November 19, 1897.
5. LII. January 14, 1898.
Appendix B: Illustrations

1. Destroyed Hôtel de Ville of Paris after the Bloody Week of May 21-28, 1871.
2. Cover of Édouard Drumont’s *La France juive*, 1886.
   a. Lorraine Beitler Collection at the University of Pennsylvania, http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/dreyfus/coll_description.cfm
4. Georges Clemenceau – Caricature from the “Museum of Horrors” series
5. Front page of *L’Aurore*, January 13, 1898
6. “Un diner en famille” – Caran d’Ache (Emmanuel Poiré), *Le Figaro*, February 14, 1898
   b. The captions read: “And above all, let’s not talk about the Dreyfus Affair…” and “…they talked about it.”
Appendix C

Composition of the Georges Clemenceau government (October 25, 1906 – July 20, 1909)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior</td>
<td>Georges Clemenceau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undersecretary of State</td>
<td>Albert Sarraut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Justice</td>
<td>Adolphe Maujan (from July 20, 1907)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Justice (and Public Worship, from January 4, 1908)</td>
<td>Jean Guyot-Dessaigne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undersecretary of State</td>
<td>Aristide Briand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Stephen Pichon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Finance</td>
<td>Joseph Caillaux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of War</td>
<td>General Marie-Georges Picquet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undersecretary of State</td>
<td>Henry Cheron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of the Navy</td>
<td>Gaston Thomson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alfred Picard (from October 22, 1908)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Public Education, Fine Arts, (and Public Worship until January 4, 1908)</td>
<td>Aristide Briand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaston Doumergue (from January 4, 1908)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undersecretary of State for Fine Arts</td>
<td>Henri Dujardin-Beaumetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Public Works, Posts, and Telegraph</td>
<td>Louis Barthou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undersecretary of State for Post and Telegraph</td>
<td>Jules Simyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Commerce and Industry</td>
<td>Gaston Doumergue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Agriculture</td>
<td>Jean Cruppi (from January 4, 1908)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Colonies</td>
<td>Joseph Ruau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of Labor and Social Security (new ministry created by Clemenceau)</td>
<td>Raphaël Millies-Lacroix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>René Viviani</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D
Chronology of Georges Clemenceau and the Third Republic

1841
- September 28 – Birth of Georges Eugene Benjamin Clemenceau

1870
- July 19 – Declaration of war against Prussia
- September 2 – Capitulation of Napoleon III after the Battle of Sedan
- September 4 – Proclamation of the Third Republic

1871
- January 28 – Armistice with Prussia
- February 8 – Victory of Monarchists in the legislative elections
- March 18 – Execution of Generals Thomas and Lecomte, beginning of the insurrection of the Commune of Paris

1873
- October 27 – Refusal of the Comte de Chambord to accept the tricolore flag

1875
- February 24, 26 – Passage of the Constitutional Laws

1876
- February-March – Legislative elections, Clemenceau becomes deputy

1877
- May 16 – Dissolution of the Chamber, beginning of the Constitutional Crisis

1879
- January 30 – Election of Jules Grévy as Prime Minister

1880
- July – Amnesty granted to former Communards

1881
- June 16 – Ferry Law on free public education

1882
- March 28 – Ferry Law on obligatory and secular public education

1885
- March 30 – Fall of the Ferry government

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203 This chronology is based off those found in Berstein & Winock, L’Invention de la démocratie, pp. 487-491, and Drouin (ed.), in Clemenceau, L’affaire Dreyfus: L’Iniquité, pp. 28-35.
- October 4 – 18 – Legislative elections held under scrutin de liste scheme

1886
- January 7 – Boulanger named Minister of War

1889
- January 27 – Boulanger elected as deputy but refuses to instigate a coup

1892
- Fall – Explosion of the Panama Scandal in the National Assembly

1893
- August-September – Legislative elections, Clemenceau loses seat in Chamber

1894
- December 19-22 – Court martial of Dreyfus

1895
- January 5 – Cashiering of Dreyfus at the École militaire

1896
- May 30 - St-Mandé Program of Alexandre Millerand

1897
- January 6 – Colonel Picquart sent to Tunisia
- October 19 – Founding of L’Aurore
- November – Engagement of Clemenceau for the revision of the trial
- November 28 – Publication of the “Uhlan Letter”
- December 18 – Le Figaro abandons its campaign for retrial

1898
- January 10-11 – Trial and acquittal of Esterhazy
- January 13 – Publication of “J’accuse...!”
- February – Trial of Zola and managing director of L’Aurore
- July 7 – Speech of Cavaignac, publication of the faux Henry
- August 13 – Cuignet discovers the forgery of Henry
- August 30 – Suicide of Henry
- September 3 – Cavaignac resigns

1899
- June 3 – Court of Cassation breaks Dreyfus’ conviction, Dreyfus brought back to France for retrial
- August 7 – September 9 – Retrial before the War Tribunal in Rennes, Brittany. Second conviction of Dreyfus
- September 19 – Dreyfus pardoned. Death of Scheurer-Kestner

1900
- April – Exposition Universelle in Paris
- September 28-30 – Socialist congress of Wagram
- December 27 – Law of amnesty prevents further prosecution of criminals of the Dreyfus Affair

1901
- June – Founding of the Radical and Radical-Socialist parties
- July – Law of Associations passed under Waldeck-Rousseau
1902
- April-May – Legislative elections, victory for the *Bloc des gauches*. Reentry of Clemenceau into politics as senator of the Var
- September 29 – Death of Zola

1904
- March – November – Court of Cassation investigates case of Dreyfus
- July – France breaks diplomatic relations with the Vatican

1905
- December 9 – Law of Separation of the Church and State

1906
- March 14 – Formation of the Sarrien government, with Clemenceau as Minister of the Interior.
- May – Legislative elections, major success for the *Bloc des gauches*
- July 12 – Court of Cassation declares Dreyfus innocent
- August 10 – Pope Pius X, in his encyclical *Gravissimo Officii*, forbids French Catholics from forming the *associations culturelles* required by the Law of Separation
- October 25 – Formation of the Clemenceau government, with Clemenceau as Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, and Picquart as Minister of War

1907
- April-June – Strikes of state employees and wine producers of the south
Note on Primary Sources

The primary source base of this thesis was drawn primarily from three volumes (L’Iniquité, 1899; Vers la réparation, 1899; and Injustice militaire, 1902) of the seven-volume series of articles on the Dreyfus Affair published by Georges Clemenceau from 1899 to 1903. The former, as well as the seventh volume of the series (La Honte, 1903), are available through Gallica, the online database of National Library of France. The latter two are also available through Gallica as well as through the digital preservation partnership between Google and the libraries of Harvard University and the University of Michigan. Also available from Gallica are all of the issues of Le Bloc (1901-02).

The other writings of Clemenceau, such as his fictional and philosophical works, and his travel accounts, are interesting from a biographical perspective, and their content provides insight into the attitudes and beliefs of the Tiger.

Beyond Clemenceau’s doctoral dissertation, his fictional, philosophical and theatrical works, and the collection of articles on the Dreyfus Affair, there exists very little published primary material of his. His parliamentary speeches, aside from a select few that have been published separately, such as his speeches before the National Assembly during his wartime premiership, published in 1968, can only be accessed through consultation of the Journal officiel of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate. Also available, first published in 1993 and reedited in 2008, is the correspondence between Clemenceau and Claude Monet.

As Watson noted, relative to their British counterparts French statesmen did not publish to a similar extent their personal papers. Clemenceau is extreme in this regard, as Watson, Duroselle, Newhall, and Winock all state in their bibliographies, as towards the end of his life,
Clemenceau ordered the majority of his personal papers burned. The largest collection of remaining archival material, including manuscripts and some surviving correspondence, was housed until recently at the Musée Clemenceau, located at the Tiger’s former residence on rue Franklin in the sixteenth arrondissement of Paris. According to Winock and the museum’s website (http://www.musee-clemenceau.fr/archives.html), these archives have since been transferred to the manuscript division of the National Library. While the National Library has, according to Winock, begun the process of digitizing these documents, none have yet (May 2009) been made available for online consultation.

Duroselle’s Essai documentaire gives a highly detailed account of both the published and unpublished primary documents of Clemenceau. Since the transfer of the archival materials to the National Library, the documents have been further classified, as Winock noted in the bibliography to his 2007 volume. Listed below is not a complete list of works by Clemenceau, simply those pertinent to this thesis.

Works by Clemenceau


Other Collections of Primary Documents


Note on Secondary Material

The literature concerning the Third Republic constitutes sea of volumes. As my introduction to the Third Republic came while studying under Professors Nicolas Rousselllier and Christophe Gracieux of Sciences-Po, Paris, my bibliographical choices reflect their references. It is thus that the works of two historians in particular feature prominently in this bibliography: Serge Berstein and Michel Winock, both also of Sciences-Po and major figures of Third Republic scholarship.

Biographies of Georges Clemenceau are also highly abundant, some written even during his lifetime. The consensus opinion among historians, however, is that the first major scholarly study of Clemenceau’s career is David Robin Watson’s Clemenceau: a Political Biography, first
published in 1974 and reedited in 1976. Watson made excellent use of the documents at his disposal, including the diary of Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, but was unable to access the archival materials then held at the Musée Clemenceau. The authoritative biography of Clemenceau is Jean-Baptiste Duroselle’s *Clemenceau*, published in 1988. Unlike Watson, Duroselle was granted access to the documents in the possession of the Musée Clemenceau, and his volume remains the standard reference to this day. David Newhall also benefitted from consulting these documents in writing *Clemenceau: a Life at War*, published in 1991, though he arrives at many of the same conclusions as Watson and Duroselle. Finally, the work of Winock, which was greatly anticipated given the scholar’s reputation, contributes little more to previous efforts, contains no footnotes, and is essentially a synthesized version (568 pages) of Duroselle (1,077 pages). The work of Jack Ellis, *The Early Life of Georges Clemenceau*, published in 1980, is an interesting inquiry into the life of Clemenceau until 1893. Ellis’ volume is a work of psychoanalytical history, and he based his interpretations of Clemenceau on theories expounded by contemporary psychologists. While very interesting, Ellis did not question the validity or explore the critiques of the theories upon which he predicated his conclusions. Nevertheless, the volume presents another interpretation useful in the study of Clemenceau.

Scholarship on the Dreyfus Affair is also voluminous, and I am very grateful for the help of Professor Jean-Max Guieu for his bibliographical references. Jean-Denis Bredin’s *L’affaire Dreyfus*, published in 1983, is considered to be the current work of reference for an overview account of the Affair. Specialized inquiries into the Dreyfus Affair abound as well, though given the narrow scope of this thesis I was unable to consult many of them. Hannah Arendt’s interpretation of the Affair in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, though tailored to fit into the broader scope of the volume, provides an interesting account that presents the major events in a
succinct manner. Michel Drouin’s *L’affaire Dreyfus de A à Z* is a collection of short articles on the major individuals and social forces of the Affair and was very useful in obtaining a basic understanding of the Affair viewed from a variety of perspectives.

**Works on the French Politics and Third Republic**


**Works on Georges Clemenceau**


**Works on the Dreyfus Affair**


Other Sources


