



# A theory of predatory welfare state and citizen welfare: the French case

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## Abstract

In this paper, we argue that the welfare state is an outcome of modern mass (total) warfare. The total war economy requires the participation of all citizens, erasing the differences between the military and citizens. Consequently, the war economy benefits from succoring the civilian population. The total war effect explains why a predatory state undertakes welfare programs, one of the contributions of the present paper. While the welfare state is closely related to total warfare, social welfare is not. Fraternal social welfare organizations in the United States predate the New Deal and the rise of welfare state. Similarly, the French welfare system was born as *citizen* welfare and not as *state* welfare. In fact, welfare programs were initiated in 1871 during the Paris Commune by workers under the name of *la sociale* and were recreated as self-managed citizen groups in 1945 before being displaced by government welfare programs. A second contribution of this paper is to explore the re-appropriation effect, or the way self-managed citizen welfare was transformed into a welfare state through a three-stage reform process manifesting itself in 1946, 1967 and 1996.

**Keywords** Citizen welfare · La Sociale · Predatory state · State re-appropriation effect · Total war effect · Welfare state

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## 1 Introduction

According to Charles Tilly (1985), war created the state in Western Europe. In that sense, he advocated a predatory approach to the state's formation.<sup>1</sup> While Tilly's thesis about the predatory nature of the state was crystal clear with regard to the warfare state, how can the welfare state be analyzed in light of a predatory theory of state? Shouldn't we distinguish two general contradictory types of state, namely a protective (welfare) state and a predatory state? That is the first question to be addressed herein. We will argue that such a dichotomy is not valid. Our thesis is an extension of Tilly's contention: *the welfare state is an outcome of modern mass (total) warfare*. The total war economy requires the participation of all citizens, erasing the differences between the military and ordinary citizens. Consequently, the war economy benefits from succoring the civilian population. The total war effect explains why a predatory state undertakes welfare programs, one of the contributions of the present paper.

Political scientists, sociologists, social historians and reformers already have noted that mass warfare has been a pacemaker of the welfare state. Titmuss (1958) pioneered that idea, to be followed by many other scholars (see Obinger and Petersen 2015 for a recent overview). New political economists and economic historians recently have explored and tested the relationship between total warfare, nation-building and the welfare state (Aghion et al. 2012; Alesina and Reich 2013; Alesina et al. 2017; Caprettini et al. 2018).<sup>2</sup> By contrast, a second strand of literature insists on a tradeoff between guns and butter, and underlines the negative impact of warfare on welfare spending (see Gal 2007 for a recent survey).

Our general theory builds upon path-dependency models of welfare spending (Olson 1982; Holcombe 2005) and the vast literature on the symbiotic relationship between total war and the welfare state within a predatory approach to the state (Vahabi 2016a, b). *Welfare spending increases the state's capacity to engage in total war*. Since internal political stability is a prerequisite for victory, all types of governments, including military ones, seek to insure mass compliance in achieving official war goals. Along with nationalistic or patriotic propaganda, and repression of warfare's enemies, welfare spending may secure mass loyalty and increase self-sacrifice (see Holcombe 2019; Leeson 2012, 2013 on the role of ideology). This is what Vahabi (2016b, p. 161) has called the state's domestication technique. A recent study of New Deal spending and patriotism during World War II lends credence to that idea by showing that "US counties receiving more relief payments during the 1930s bought more war bonds, sent more volunteers to the armed forces, and were home to more soldiers displaying conspicuous gallantry on the battlefield.... These

<sup>1</sup> By a predatory state, we mean a state that "would specify a set of property rights that maximized the revenue of the group in power, regardless of its impact on the wealth of the society as a whole" (North 1981, p. 22). It would promote the private interests of dominant interest groups inside the state (such as politicians, the army and bureaucrats) or influential private groups with strong lobbying powers (Vahabi 2016a, b). Mainstream economics disregards such a type of state and assumes a contractual state that plays the role of social-wealth-maximizer. Does a predatory state mean a budget-maximizing state or a bellicose one? Following Usher (1992), we consider taxation to be a form of predation and budget-maximizing to be a characteristic feature of a predatory state. Predation is not inconsistent with a bellicose state, since war often has provided an excellent pretext for maximizing the state budget. Not only has the army benefited from a war economy and politicians from an uncontested political authority; some private enterprises have secured colossal rents thanks to their privileged partnerships with the state's most influential groups. Max Weber has called it 'booty' or 'political capitalism' (Weber 1922/1968, pp. 164–166; see also Vahabi 2004).

<sup>2</sup> In another vein, Ly (2007) examines charitable donations to terrorist organizations to show the symbiotic relationship of welfare and warfare.

results are in line with an interpretation that emphasizes individuals reciprocating towards the nation state if their national government came to their aid in bad times” (Caprettini et al. 2018, p. 23).

While the welfare state is closely related to total warfare, social welfare is not. Fraternal social welfare organizations in the United States predated the New Deal and the rise of the welfare state. As documented extensively by Beito (2000), three types of fraternal groups dominated the late nineteenth century: secret societies, sick and funeral benefit societies. The aid dispensed by organized charities and governments at the time was not only minimal, but stigmatized recipients. Mutual funds and fraternal societies were based on reciprocity and self-help. Fraternal societies were displaced by government welfare programs after the Second World War. “The shift from mutual aid and self-help to the welfare-state has involved more than a simple bookkeeping transfer of service provision from one set of institutions to another.... The old relationships of voluntary reciprocity and autonomy have slowly given way to paternalist dependency” (Beito 2000, p. 234). Interestingly, a similar transformation happened in France.

The French welfare system was born as *citizen* welfare and not *state* welfare. In fact, welfare programs were initiated in 1871 during the Paris Commune by workers under the name of *la sociale* and were recreated as self-managed citizen groups in 1945 before being displaced by government welfare programs. A second contribution of this paper is to explore that re-appropriation effect, or the way self-managed citizen welfare was transformed into a welfare state in light of a predatory theory of the state.

In doing so, the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews different approaches to public spending, particularly path dependency models within a public choice perspective. We then introduce a general theory of the predatory welfare state and discuss the French case of *la sociale* as a predecessor to government welfare. Section 3 investigates the role of mass warfare in the emergence of a centralized French welfare state. Finally, Sect. 4 documents French citizen welfare organizations in 1945, and then explains how that self-managed welfare system was reappropriated by the state in a three-stage reform process manifesting in 1946, 1967 and 1996. A short conclusion will follow.

## 2 Predatory welfare state: general theory

The expression ‘welfare state’ was first coined to describe Labor Britain after 1945: “From Britain the phrase made its way around the world.... Attempts were made to re-write nineteenth and twentieth century history, particularly British history, in terms of the ‘origin’ and ‘development’ of a ‘welfare state’” (Briggs 1961, p. 221). However, a key difference exists between the American and the European usages of the term. In the United States, a conventional demarcation line is drawn between social security and other welfare expenditures, notably including public assistance, allowances for single-parent families and Medicaid or health assistance. By contrast, in the European case, the term is an all-embracing concept capturing not only expenditures on health, pensions, and single-parent families, but also those devoted to labor-market retraining programs and improving housing conditions (Wilensky 1975). Comparing the American and European welfare states, the difference in usage often is blurred by adopting a middle-course theoretical benchmark. For example, borrowing Andreassen (1992, p. 336) and Overbye’s (1995, p. 317) definitions “encompasses both ‘social security’ and ‘welfare’ the way these concepts are used in the US debate, but excludes retraining programs and housing policies.”

What are the sources of the ‘welfare state’? Generally speaking, at least three explanatory approaches may be distinguished in the relevant literature. While the mainstream public goods approach to the state explains welfare spending as an outcome of the electorate’s altruistic preferences or benevolent paternalism<sup>3</sup> (Diamond and Mirrlees 1971; Mirrlees 1971; Brennan and Lomasky 1993), conventional public choice explains it in terms of rent-seeking activity of the beneficiaries themselves or bureaucrats (Niskanen 1971; Tullock 1983). The shortcomings of both approaches have been underlined by advocates of the insurance approach to welfare spending (Mueller 1989; Overbye 1995). That third approach explains welfare spending as a consequence of the demand for social insurance among various risk categories in the electorate rather than as altruistic or rent-seeking redistribution. Safety rather than income transfers has a stronger explanatory power in tackling at least three issues.

The first issue relates to the beneficiaries of welfare expenditures, such as the sick, the disabled, single-parent families, the unemployed and the elderly. Putting aside old-age pensioners that enjoy some lobbying prowess, the voting powers of other categories are not especially decisive and they often lack the means to organize effective pressure groups. A second puzzle is the difficulty in explaining why the beneficiaries of welfare spending have been able gradually to increase their relative shares of public expenditures since the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the problem with a distributional perspective is that income-transfer policy measures supposedly are inherently unstable (Tullock 1983, pp. 82, 83; Mueller 1989, p. 448), whereas existing welfare programs are stable to a large extent. The stability issue was examined in the pioneering work of Congleton and Shughart (1990). They tested Browning’s (1975) median voter model of public policy formation as well as an interest group model. Interestingly, their combined model worked better than either pure model. In a recent paper, Congleton et al. (2019) explore the post-sample explanatory powers of Congleton and Shughart’s (1990) estimates of three public choice models of social security benefit levels. They find that the three models perform well. Interestingly, the study indicates that interest group politics were more stable in the second half of the twentieth century than electoral politics with respect to social security benefits.

Observations regarding the stability issue are better explained when welfare programs are considered as safety nets for social risks (Baldwin 1990).<sup>5</sup> Market failures owing to asymmetric information (notably adverse selection), shared uncertainty, interdependent risks and missing financial markets partially explain *compulsory* (state) welfare schemes. By combining the theory of market failure with the concept of the median voter, the insurance approach provides a new version of public choice explanations for welfare expenditures. “By focusing on the insurance demands of the median voter, it is possible

<sup>3</sup> Skocopol (1992) argues that, compared to the British or European welfare states, the United States has a *maternalist* rather than a *paternalist* welfare state.

<sup>4</sup> For the data, see Overbye (1995, p. 314). According to *The Economist* (July 14th–20th 2018, p. 12): “Spending on ‘social protection’, such as pensions, unemployment insurance and assistance for the hard up, has risen from an average of about 5% of GDP in rich countries in 1960–20% today.” Elaborating the ascendancy of a predatory state in the United States, Galbraith (2009) also underlines that state intervention in healthcare, higher education, housing, and social security accounts for nearly 40% of US GDP. Moreover, the direct contribution of nonmilitary public spending at the federal, state, and local levels amounts to another 14% of GDP: “the United States is not a ‘free-market’ economy with an underdeveloped or withered state sector” (Galbraith 2009, p. 112).

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, Hecce et al.’s (2001, p. 64) test of causality between GDP and social protection expenditure in the European Union indicates the explanatory significance of citizens’ “sense of security”.

to construct a theory showing that welfare spending may have a majority backing, even though the immediate beneficiaries at any given position in time will be an (often weak and destitute) minority. It should further be emphasized that the policy outcomes resulting from the insurance demands of the median voter need not produce Pareto-superior outcomes” (Overbye 1995, pp. 322, 323).

The foregoing approach favors the *demand* side of the public sector, disregarding the *supply* side. Before Niskanen (1971), public choice focused almost exclusively on demand-side explanations dominated by the median voter model. As Holcombe (1989) argued aptly, the emphasis on the demand side of the political market implied that the public sector was a reflection of the median voter’s preferences. Accordingly, the size of a government is determined by democratic choices, which can change through time by, for example, extending voting rights to women, racial and other minority groups (Peltzman 1980; Meltzer and Richard 1981; Lott and Kenny 1999). Although Niskanen’s (1971) model also was built on the median voter, his assumption of budget-maximizing government bureaucracy shifted the attention towards the *supply* side.

## 2.1 From the demand to the supply side of political market

The literature on revenue-maximizing or budget-maximizing government emphasizes the *supply* side of political market. Thus, government size is not an outcome of collective choices consistent with the median voter’s preferences. As a revenue-maximizing Leviathan, government spends as much as it can subject to certain constraints. The constraints might be, among others, democratic institutions (Romer and Rosenthal 1978), constitutional constraints (Brennan and Buchanan 1980), deadweight losses associated with taxation (Becker and Mulligan 2003), and political opposition (Holcombe and Mills 1995).

The question of government size should not be conflated with government growth. The latter relates to the evolution of the state’s size in a dynamic setting (Holcombe 2005). Path-dependency models (Olson 1982; Holcombe 2005) capture government growth. Those models build upon the ratchet hypothesis to explain the growth of government from a supply-side perspective. Peacock and Wiseman (1961) pioneered the ratchet hypothesis and Ressler and Thompson (1985), Higgs (1987, 1991), Holcomb (1989, 1993, 1996, 2002, 2005), Eisner (2000) and Obinger and Petersen (2015) applied it by developing evolutionary models of government growth. The hypothesis focuses on governmental reactions during critical situations, such as wars and economic depressions, by ratcheting up expenditures. Once the crisis is over, expenditures decline, but their level never returns to the pre-crisis level. Accordingly, government growth may be explained by a series of upward jumps in government spending in response to crises, real or imagined. Higgs (1987, p. 62) distinguished between Big Government and big government. The former refers to a “wide scope of effective governmental authority over economic decision-making”, while the latter “denotes many resources employed in the performance of governmental functions, perhaps only traditional protective functions.” The ratchet effect is associated with Big Government. That point had been recognized by Peacock and Wiseman (1961) when they were exploring the war-induced transition to a command economy or ‘displacement effect’. They argued that the effect was a source of irreversibility since it would alter the citizens’ perceptions of tolerable levels of taxation and shift public revenues and expenditures upwards during wartime. They also underlined the ratcheting hypothesis by implying that war-induced higher tax rates and expenditures would never return to their prewar levels because of habituation effects, institutional rigidities and new war-related spending

obligations. To put it differently, path dependency explains why the state's revenue and expenditure never will return back to the peacetime level.

“The ratchet hypothesis appears at odds with the rational choice models of government growth (or government size), unless a past crisis causes people to believe that continued higher government expenditures can help avert a future crisis.... [A]fter the ratchet upward following World War I there was a substantial increase in the growth of non-military federal government spending and regulation in the 1920s, and after World War II non-military federal government expenditures rose from 7.8% of GDP to 10%, following military spending decreases in each case. Clearly, the non-military expenditure increases after those major wars were not a rational choice response to the crisis” (Holcombe 2005, p. 100).

Several mechanisms support the ratchet effect. (1) *Discontinuous evolution*: although incremental change is the norm in economic and institutional evolution (*natura non facit saltum*), periods of relative stability are punctuated by rapid, substantial, institutional changes that transform basic rules, policy instruments, agents' roles and state-society relationships. Discontinuous evolution or punctuated equilibrium is a response to intense exogenous or endogenous shocks such as wars and depressions. (2) *Increased state autonomy*: during a crisis the state can assume a far more autonomous role than society-based theories of politics or the median voter models may predict. Institutional innovations and radical reforms that might be resisted during normal periods can be executed by the state owing to the emergency situation. (3) *Irreversibility*: the changes introduced during a crisis often are permanent. New agencies are created and older ones expanded. Path dependency captures the initial historical situation and the institutional rigidity that comes into being once the change becomes institutionalized. As Higgs (1991) has argued, war results in an expansion of the public sector and thus has a ratcheting effect on the growth of government. After the First and Second World Wars, the fiscal demands of the state and the number of public sector employees never returned back to prewar levels. New taxes, such as income and war-profit taxes, were introduced during the First World War (for example, France in 1915 and Canada in 1917). In the United States, a country where tax increases notoriously are resisted, a fiscal revolution materialized during the Second World War. Enforcement of an income tax could hardly have been imagined before the war but, once implemented, citizens did not rebel against a *fait accompli*. Borrowing Johnson and Koyama's (2017, p. 2) definition of state capacity in terms of the ability to enforce its rules and to raise taxes, total wars led to high-capacity welfare states.

Path-dependency models clearly are compatible with the social insurance approach. Market failures prevail during random shocks, such as wars and economic depressions, because of *shared uncertainty* rather than asymmetric information. Shared uncertainty is inseparable from random shocks, i.e., situations in which both sellers and buyers of insurance are unable to estimate the risks they confront. That scenario differs clearly from an asymmetric information situation wherein sellers or buyers of insurance are able to form subjective risk estimates (Dryzeck and Goodin 1986). Under shared uncertainty, the state can play the role of “insurer of last resort” since in a situation in which risk calculation is impossible, the “population is likely to seek recourse to various types of ‘decision rules under uncertainty’, such as [assigning] the same probability to all outcomes, or to follow a minimax-decision rule.... [P]rovided that voters are risk-averse ... the application of such rules will sway the electorate (including those who would otherwise have perceived themselves as good risks) in the direction of preferring compulsory insurance” (Overbye 1995, p. 327). Managing shared uncertainty warrants an authority capable of defining the decision rules that can be followed by all agents. Unless challenged, the state often provides such a ‘legitimate’ authority.

## 2.2 The total war effect and the welfare state

We propose an original version of the path-dependency explanation for the welfare state in terms of a total war effect. Corwin (1970, p. 4) defines a “total war” by its “functional totality”: “the politically ordered participation in the war effort of all personal and social force, the scientific, the mechanical, the commercial, the economic, the moral, the literary and artistic, and the psychological.” In a word, the whole society transforms into a “war machine” (Pick 1993).<sup>6</sup> Total warfare often is adopted in reference to the twentieth century’s two global wars “fought among industrialized powers” (Porter 1994, p. 150). However, Obinger and Petersen (2015, p. 204) extended modern mass warfare to the wars over the 1860–1960 period, including the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871).

Contrary to wars of religion and those wars that Toynbee (1950) called ‘The sport of Kings’, one of the major characteristics of large-scale modern war is that it is not limited to military professionals; it involves everyone and everything. All citizens are forced to participate in it in one way or another. It is a mobilization of the entire economy for the purpose of war. Accordingly, a predatory warfare state benefits from supporting social welfare programs.

The state organizes the whole economy and allocates the full domestic labor force according to the needs of war. The increasing scale and growing intensity of war stimulates the state’s particular concern for the quantity and quality of its population’s biological evolution. Titmuss (1958) distinguished four stages in the progression of biological interests.

The first stage is a concern about the quantity of men available for battle or the population percentage of men able to participate in military activity.

The second stage is about the quality or ‘fitness for service’ of military and naval recruits. The psychological dimension of such fitness increasingly becomes important for the state.

The third stage in this progression is a growing concern about the health and well-being of not only the standard of fitness of men of military age, but also the whole population and, in particular, that of children—the next generation of recruits. That stage was reached in Britain at the beginning of the century during the Boer War and continued through the First World War. For example, in 1917, the first instalment of a free national health service was offered to both civilians and soldiers alike for the treatment and prevention of venereal disease. It led finally to the National Health Service in 1948.

The fourth stage is a growing concern about ‘civilian morale’ or what Cyril Falls (1941) called ‘demostrategy’. According to Titmuss’s interpretation, that meant, in military terms, “that the war could not be won unless millions of ordinary people, in Britain and overseas,

<sup>6</sup> In rational conflict theory, war is regarded as part of the bargaining process to achieve peace. Accordingly, the advocates of rational conflict theory interpreted Clausewitz’s (2006/1827) ‘total’ or ‘absolute’ war as a war that *never happens in reality* (Sánchez-Pagés 2009). The only type of war that was assumed to be ‘rationally conceivable’ was Clausewitz’s ‘battle’ (limited confrontation) to remove misconceptions or asymmetric information between the belligerent parties. That interpretation suffers from a major shortcoming, however, namely revolutionary wars. In such wars against tyranny, the objective is the total destruction of the enemy and not in reaching a compromise. In fact, Clausewitz’s total war explicitly pertained to revolutionary wars that were effective against tyranny. He defined ‘total war’ with respect to its *objectives* rather than its *means*. For him, total war implied a war to the last, targeting the complete destruction of the enemy’s military might, its political system or even its culture. He did not describe ‘total war’ in terms of using modern industrial means requiring the mobilization of the entire society. In this paper, we are using total war in the latter sense.

were convinced that we had something better to offer than had our enemies—not only during but after the war.... It was a call for social justice; for the abolition of privilege, for a more equitable distributions of income and wealth; for drastic changes in the economic and social life of the country” (Titmuss 1958, p. 82).

War on a large scale erased the distinctions between the civilian and non-civilian and exposed the entire population to the war’s requirements and consequences. “The distinctions and privileges, accorded to those in uniform in previous wars, were greatly diminished. Comprehensive systems of medical care and rehabilitations, for example, had to be organized by the state for those who were injured and disabled. They could not be exclusively reserved for soldiers and sailors, as in the past, but had to be extended to include civilians as well—to those injured in the factories as well as the victims of bombing” (Titmuss 1958, pp. 82, 83). It is noteworthy that the impact of war progressed not only from non-civilians to civilians, but also from civilians to non-civilians. For instance, educational and artistic facilities in the form of music, drama and the arts available to civilians in wartime could not be limited to them and had to be extended to military forces.

The welfare state was an outcome of the predatory state’s need to develop cooperation between civilians and non-civilians for the successful prosecution of war. If such cooperation is thought to be essential, then inequalities must be reduced and the pyramid of social stratification must be flattened. “War socialism” is the policy of a predatory state engaged in a total war in which the war is not conducted solely by military professionals. Gustav Stolper already had predicted a drastic and long-lasting rise of big government in 1915, which later was known as a ‘displacement effect’ in the economics literature: “The most important shifts [caused by war] will affect the relations between the market economy and the state economy. War has extended the scope of state influence to a degree that, arguably, never will return to its previous level. The heavy interference of the state into the right of self-determination of its citizens, the comprehensive regulation of production and consumption, not only for the purpose of war conduct but also for the sake of general social purposes, create a precedent whose repercussions can hardly be eliminated in peacetime” (quoted in Obinger and Petersen 2015, pp. 211, 212).

The importance of the ratchet effect in conjunction with crises notwithstanding, our argument underlines an original factor in grasping the emergence of the welfare state, namely the total war economy. That point has not been explored sufficiently in the ratchet effect literature. As argued previously, welfare policies are advantageous for the state since organizing a total war economy requires mobilizing all citizens, thereby erasing the differences between the armed forces and ordinary civilians. The supply side of the political market, notably the creation of higher state capacity for waging a total war, and path dependency (related to displacement effect) explains the predatory nature of the welfare state as a revenue-maximizing entity.

### 2.3 French citizen welfare: *la Sociale*

The Franco-Prussian war started in July 1870 and ended with Napoleon III’s surrender at Sedan in September 2, 1870. The Second French Empire collapsed; the Third Republic was ushered in on September 4, 1870. Following the Third Republic, a second phase of that conflict, known as the revolutionary war, started in September 4, 1870, when the

*Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale* was proclaimed; it ended in February 1871.<sup>7</sup> Following the defeat, the Paris Commune began in an improvised riot that transformed into a revolution on 18 March 1871, when the army failed to remove the guns of Montmartre. On May 29, the Paris Commune was crushed completely.

The Franco-Prussian War has been characterized as a “forerunner” of modern mass warfare (Taithe 2001, pp. 22–37). But that mass war did not lead to a welfare state.<sup>8</sup> It may be argued that defeat in war was the cause of relationship not materializing,<sup>9</sup> even though that explanation is not plausible in light of other historical evidence. For example, according to the data provided by Obinger and Petersen (2015, p. 221), “war significantly pushed spending levels up in exactly those countries which had suffered from a high number of casualties and severe destruction on their homeland territory during both World Wars such as Germany, Belgium, Austria, France, Italy.” But the French case is not characterized by just the absence of relationship between the warfare and welfare states in 1870–1871; it is rather the emergence of *la Sociale* and the “politics of care” (Taithe 1999) in the absence of a strong central authority.

The term ‘social’ often is used in French as an adjective and its usage as a noun is problematic even for native French speakers. However,

it is as a noun that it acquired real political significance in 1870–1, becoming a political cry. What is meant is complicated. It sums up all aspirations to a social state, a democratic and redistributing form of government integrating what was called ‘the social question’. Under the term ‘social question’ all sorts of political agendas could be filled, from Napoleon III’s ‘extinction of pauperism’ to hygienic slum clearance or trade unionism. *La Sociale* also encompassed a complete renegotiation of all social relationships and all hierarchies and especially the establishment of a society of equals before the judiciary and economic laws. (Taithe 2001, p. 53)

The partisans of *la Sociale* called for both requisitions of food and rationing in September 1870. But most of the interventions taking place in 1870 happened at the local and departmental levels; the state often tried to control a posteriori a number of initiatives that were not its own. Among those measures was a moratorium on rents or debts, which postponed the full impact of the war on trade and private incomes. In fact, “*La Sociale* was at work largely because the state was so frail that it could not prevent it happening” (ibid, p. 57). For example, Lyon and Marseille funded “the war effort by raising new taxes based on income or the value of capital through long-term borrowings” (ibid, p. 57). The initiatives remained local and did not extend to national level before the First World War.

<sup>7</sup> Although the war ended officially in February, it continued in the east of France. “The badly devised armistice led to the destruction of the second largest French army. Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, the elections of 8 February were organized on a purely war or peace platform” (Taithe 2001, p. 178). The Third Republic established in September 1870 lasted until 1940, when France’s defeat by Nazi Germany in World War II led to the formation of the Vichy government.

<sup>8</sup> It should be remembered that the expression ‘welfare state’ does not exist in French. Its French translation is ‘Etat providence’, a controversial term, referring to the provision of social protection by a central state that acts as divine intervenor.

<sup>9</sup> In fact, Thomas Marshall (1965, p. 82) claimed that “the experience of total war is ... bound to have an effect on both the principles of social policy and the methods of social administration. But the nature of this effect will depend to a considerable extent on the fortunes of war—on whether a country is invaded or not, on whether it is victorious or defeated, and on the amount of physical destruction and social disorganization it suffers.”

In our opinion, *la Sociale* was a French invention that can be defined by two qualities: (1) the provision of social protection and insurance against social hazards; (2) the political self-organization of citizens against the state in response to conditions of war. *La Sociale* was a non-predatory model of social protection based on citizens' resistance during war-time. It was 'citizen welfare' and not 'state welfare'. This alternative welfare system was founded at the lower echelons of the municipal administration that developed a program later imitated by the Paris Commune.

A power vacuum undoubtedly existed that the municipal authorities filled using the paternalist welfare network established by previous governments in Paris. According to Taithe (1999, p. 236),

Within French society the war also called for the state to assume a patriarchal and protective role that it had neither the ambitions nor the ability to fulfil. The politics of care, the duty to care, came to the fore when the state proved unable to deliver the victory that justified the war effort, the self-censorship and the collective emotional and physical investment in war. *La Sociale* and the Commune grew from the war and from the siege because so much of government and legitimacy became attached both to a hypothetical victory and to the duty of caring for the city at war. The failure to deliver the war, the unwillingness to deliver *la Sociale*, this new social compact between citizen-soldier and state guarantor of social and political rights, prompted the 18 March insurrection.

The March 18 revolution in Paris largely was triggered by the lack of state capacity to deliver *la Sociale* and assume the 'politics of care'. The state's inability to 'domesticate' citizens generated the insurrection. While the responsibility for the war, the defeat, and even the rationing were attributed to the government, the de facto rationing powers, charity visits and policing practices were initiated by the self-serving municipalities. They combined aid and self-governance into small-scale responses to the state of emergency. The Commune political project originated from the confusion between local and national jurisdictions. Those disputes revolved around what Taithe (1999, p. 99) called the Parisian 'politics of care'.

The French social service prior to World War I can be characterized in terms of private charity and localism (Smith 2003). Hospital administration was the essence of localism: "French hospitals, then, were local poles of power and allegiance, important cultural centers for the civic elite, and one of the last vestiges of the *Ancien Régime*. They were redolent of the old corporate order which the revolution had sought to destroy" (ibid, p. 8). The vast majority of the nation's public assistance expenses were borne by the communes (there were, and are, 36,000 of those elemental and often miniscule political-territorial units). "At the beginning of the twentieth century, local and private initiatives were still paying for 60 percent of national hospital expenses. The central state played only a marginal role, with the nation's ninety departments ... covering most of the remaining 40 percent" (ibid, p. 15). In 1870–1871, two major sources of anti-statism were evident: one was the French localism and the other was the Paris Commune representing 'citizens in arms'.

The mass militarization of the time did not stem from the army. It largely was an outcome of mass participation in an improvised civilian war effort. Parisian workers were armed to defend the country, side by side with the army. The leaders of mass militarization rejected the military values of hierarchical obedience related to traditional army discipline. "While calling all men to arms, revolutionary leaders like Flourens denounced the traditional military systems. The traditional categories or spheres of 'civilian' and 'military' are only valid when one excludes the other: they disappear when one sphere embraces the

values of the other” (Taithe 2001, p. 24). In fact, a dual power emerged in Paris: the frail state’s military power, on the one hand, and the nascent military power of Parisian ‘citizens in arms’, on the other. The former was not able to deliver *la Sociale* and the latter still was insufficiently strong to implement it at national level. In our view, the key to understanding the French puzzle is to grasp the relationship between mass warfare and *la Sociale* within the context of that dual power. The state’s re-appropriation of *la Sociale* or the ‘politics of care’ required a complete process that could be initiated only in the aftermath of Paris Commune’s demise and the rise of a newly strong state on the eve of the First World War.

Interestingly enough, *la Sociale* reappeared in 1945: it was reborn in the aftermath of the Third Republic (1870–1940) through national resistance to Fascism by civil society in general and, especially, by workers’ trade unions. The state capitulated after the armistice of 1940. But resistance characterized all those who chose to fight on following the armistice. “Vichy and the resistance can be treated as parallel, yet antagonistic, historical forces” (Kuisel 1981, p. 128). A dual power arising during the German occupation, characterized by resistance both in the army and civilian associations, on the one hand, and the Vichy government, on the other hand. A new interpretation of *la Sociale* was reignited in exile in December 1941. The Commission for Economic and Social Problems, composed of a small cadre of exiles in London, was created by De Gaulle to prepare an initial report on social policy under the direction of Hervé Alphand. The report was inspired by Keynes, Beveridge and the example of wartime economic and social policy.<sup>10</sup> “British wartime planners impressed the French subcommittee with their approach to social justice. The British had shown the way by introducing a minimum wage and free social services financed by a progressive income tax” (Kuisel 1981, p. 310). One of the major issues during the most intense period of discussion in the summer and fall of 1942 was how the economy should be directed. According to Kuisel (1981, p. 161), “there was the choice between a statist and a syndicalist-corporatist method. Should authority lay with the state *fonctionnaire* or with self-regulating corporatist bodies, which included labor, and an economic and social parliament?”

France’s Social Security system was created without the state in 1945. The next sections will dwell on the originality of the French Social Security program as a self-managed system by workers and other groups of civil society. It will be shown that the whole history of the welfare state in France might be summarized as a *re-appropriation of social security by the state* traversing three stages in 1946, 1967 and 1996.

### 3 From warfare state to the emergence of the welfare state (1871–1932)

The aim of this section is to analyze how the French state, born by wars, was renewed after 1870–1871 by the progressive emergence of *la Sociale* (welfare policies) thanks to the Paris Commune. The transition from traditional social policies, marked by the influence of both *Ancien Régime* institutions and post-Revolutionary *laissez-faire*, to welfare state policies was channeled through the experience of total war. The French predatory welfare state emerged in response to citizen welfare that had been trampled during the “bloody week” of

<sup>10</sup> See Boris (1963) for understanding the influence of the Beveridge plan on the French resistance in exile.

March 1871.<sup>11</sup> Mass war against a demonized enemy was a good way to justify high levels of taxation, centralization of decision-making and intrusion into private life (notably with regard to health issues). We characterize the total war effect as the progressive abolition of the separation between the military and civil dimensions of society, making possible state intervention where it had not intervened before. The total war effect is present at the origins of the predatory welfare state. However, central state power still was challenged by local authorities (notably communes and counties), charities, mutual aid societies and trade unions.

### 3.1 Social security institutions before the emergence of French welfare state

Until the end of the nineteenth century, the French state mainly was a product of war, as Charles Tilly once suggested, although different incarnations of the French state refrained from intervening significantly into the economy. André and Delorme (1991, p. 52)<sup>12</sup> established that the state's share of GDP was relatively small throughout the centuries. Public spending amounted to 10% of GDP in 1789, 11.7% in 1815, 11% in 1872 and 12.6% in 1912. In 1872, public expenditure primarily was allocated to maintaining the army (26.4%), to paying interest on the public debt (41.5%), and to financing expenses linked to national sovereignty obligations (such as courts, police and law enforcement). The state also invested in transport infrastructure (6.7%). During the same period, “public regulatory, promotional, and entrepreneurial functions were minimal” (Kuisel 1981, p. 8).

The French state traditionally was opposed to any interference in markets and social protection. Henri Hatzfeld (1971) called such non-interference the “liberal objection”. It was believed that the state's obligation to assist people in need would result in institutionalized laziness among the poor, and it would be dangerous to transform a moral duty into a legal debt. Such mistrust regarding state intervention on social issues explains the low level of social expenditures. In 1872, the share of state expenditures for social affairs amounted to 2%, that of education 2.1%, for housing, 0.6% and for veterans, zero percent (André and Delorme 1991, p. 53). The roots of those public budget allocations might be sought in the institutions of the *Ancien Régime*, in which the church assumed central functions in instruction, public worship and charity for the poor (Guillaume 1994). With the outburst of a laic Revolution, in a context of declining religiosity, charity was secularized and became public assistance. Local levels of governance were in charge of French public assistance owing to parishes' organizational legacies.

Hospital administration is a salient illustration of both localism and marginal state concern for social questions. Funded and governed by the church (Imbert 1947, 1988), hospitals initially did not have medical functions, and their patient populations included pregnant women, the poor, orphans, the sick, the elderly, mentally and physically disabled people without families to support them. Hospitals were strongly rooted in the local power network through the influence of parish churches. Along with the retreat of faith, charity was replaced progressively by beneficence. Local elites then used hospitals not only as reception centers, but also as confinement centers for vagabonds and beggars in a context of vagrancy's phobia. Localism had the advantage of being in control of population flows.

<sup>11</sup> Bloody week refers to the week during which the Republic crushed the Paris Commune in March 1871.

<sup>12</sup> For data on the evolution of the state's expenditure in France, see also André and Delorme (1983) and Fontvieille (1976).

In 1815, hospital expenditures represented 0.38% of GDP, 0.45% in 1833 and less than 0.6% until 1870 (Domin 2008a, p. 117).

The development of capitalism made the *Ancien Régime's* social institutions obsolete for the growing labor class. Industrialization, technological progress, urbanization and demographic factors had destructive effects on traditional means of socialization, such as the family, the church and corporations (Kerr et al. 1960; Wilensky and Lebeaux 1965). According to Robert Castel (1995), the challenge faced by societies since the Middle Ages is to resolve integration and disaffiliation crises (see also De Swaan 1988). Vagrants of the Middle Ages were in a situation similar to the wretched of the nineteenth century. They were considered as 'dangerous classes' by central powers since they were not integrated into society. In fact, the contradiction between economic development and traditional social institutions resulted in a violent confrontation around the social question.

If the crushing of the Paris Commune was the founding act of the Third Republic, that political regime could not put an end to the tension between the state and citizen welfare. Indeed, the Republic was less authoritarian than the Second Empire; it legalized certain forms of self-government that formerly were prohibited: trade unionism (1884), mutual aid (1898) and private associations (1901). The *laissez-faire* paradigm remained dominant with regard to social protection, and the first laws had only a minor impact on that issue. Some laws were voted on the questions of public assistance for the poor regarding health-care (1893), childhood assistance (1904) and pensions (1905). They granted considerable leeway to local authorities to define the scope of assistance.

Government's economic policy remained reluctant to interfere in markets. The "liberal objection" against compulsory public protection kept the state in its traditional role. In 1912, on the eve of the First World War, the state's share in GDP was 12.6%, only 1.6 percentage points more than it was in 1872, and only 2.6 points more than that of 1789. The real detonator of the welfare state's emergence was total war. The army's expenses went up from 26.4% of the budget in 1872, to 37.7% in 1900 (André and Delorme 1991, pp. 52, 53). We can note the first signs of the welfare state's emergence in the population policies implemented in preparation for total war.

### 3.2 Population policy and the total war effect

Beyond vagrants' and dangerous classes' control, the state's concern for social policy expanded to population-related biological issues (Titmuss 1958). Population policy is a typical feature of the predatory welfare state insofar as it pushes the ambivalence between protection and predation to its extremity. It is hard to challenge the reality of protection offered by the state to its citizens: family allowances, assistance for large families, maternity care, particular attention to military personnel's healthcare, and so on. But such protection was a necessary condition of preparing for a total war, and in that sense it was a political and economic prerequisite for the emergence of the predatory welfare state. As predicted by the total war effect, people progressively were seen by government as a coherent mass (civilians and soldiers) available for achieving the (total) war's goals. Regimentation of the entire population against a common enemy justifies new fields of interventions for the state.

The issue of depopulation became a state matter at the end of the nineteenth century when it appeared that the natural balance of births and deaths routinely was negative (Becchia 1986). That was the case in 1890, 1891, 1892, 1895 and 1900. The threat of declining population sizes in France explicitly was related to French military weakness relative to

Germany should war again break out. According to a statement attributed to German General Von Moltke, “Since 1871 France loses a battle each year” (quoted in Becchia 1986, p. 210). Germany was a role model for the French state with two million children born during the 1900–1910 period, whereas France counted only 800,000 births. Accordingly, Louis-Lucien Klotz, the head of Treasury and Police department, stated that “the fight against depopulation is a primordial factor for national defense” (quoted in Becchia 1986, p. 212). The state’s interest in natalist policies was supported and strengthened by intense lobbying activity bolstered by numerous associations, particularly stemming from religious and military origins (De Lucas Barusse 2009).

The first population policy measures related to the political autonomy of citizens by liberalizing marriage (1907)<sup>13</sup> and by criminalizing abortion and contraception propaganda (1920). In parallel, politics built a public system that encouraged people to reproduce. Job guarantees (1909) and salary replacements (1913) were established to support women during pregnancy and maternity. In 1920, a birth bonus was paid for the third child and beyond. In 1932, the law on family allowances concluded the initial population policy interventions. Accordingly, the financing of family funds became compulsory for employees and employers. That law covered 4.2 million people. In addition to the size of the population, the French predatory welfare state strived to control the quality of births (Cahen 2014). In the name of protecting the children’s future, the state progressively established an intrusive pregnancy control regulation. The law required prenatal medical exams (funded by the state) and established supervision of delivery facilities (1928). All such devices showed that the army now was conceived as an extension of the civilian population whose behavior must be governed in a context of mass warfare.

If the emergence of welfare state began with population policies, it also was marked by an evolution of the army’s relationship to healthcare. Here, too, protection analytically was inseparable from predation. Invented during the nineteenth century, military hygienism can be defined as the “prevention and preservation of the great mass of men who participate in national defense” (Rasmussen 2016b, p. 71). The issue of ‘selected recruits’ is central to understanding the ambivalence between protection and predation. Universal conscription (1905) was seen as a problem for military doctors since it was likely to be a source of massive infection for their fellow soldiers. That concern explains why physicians were granted considerable authority to exclude recruits by convening a review board. From a military hygienist’s viewpoint, “troops are thought of as human capital that should be preserved in the name of their economic value, while death and treatment of patients curb this capital.... The selection does not stem from a humanitarian vision aimed at protecting young men from the rigors of barracks life, but from a rationalized and business-like approach of the military tool, according to a perspective of maintaining a capital” (Rasmussen 2016b, pp. 76 and 82). The care provided for the army anticipated contemporary public health problems such as the issue of vaccination. Typhoid fever was the first large epidemic of the First World War that permitted updating of publicly funded prevention-intervention programs (Rasmussen 2008).<sup>14</sup> The army then constituted an experimental laboratory for public policy, thereby precipitating the erasure of the separation between civil and military.

A final element of the French welfare state’s population policies before the Great War was what Titmuss called ‘civilian morale’. In order to gain people’s consent to participate

<sup>13</sup> For example, the Lemire Law (June 21, 1907) reduced the marriage age to 21 without parental consent and defrayed marriage legal costs.

<sup>14</sup> See Viet (2016a) for the case of tuberculosis.

actively in mass warfare, the population needed to believe in their nation's cause as the best among all other nations. The French state defined itself as the nation of equality (and Revolution) and spread a sort of cult of the (Third) Republic. One of the well-known aspects of that phenomenon was the development of public education. The Jules Ferry laws on primary schooling and education (1881, 1882 and 1886), prior to other social laws, were emblematic of the process of nation-building. Those laws advocated a patriotic defense of the Third Republic, and opposed both confessional teaching as well as socialist and anarchist ideas. Teachers became the "black Hussars" of the Republic.

The preparation for war reshaped identities. For example, even French socialists' political and trade union leaders, who theoretically were internationalists, started to support nationalist policies in the name of the *Union sacrée* (sacred union) against external enemies. In the face of threats of war, social divisions were put aside for the benefit of national defense. The sacred union called for 'patriots' to pay the "blood tax" (Horne 1989). Every individual was summoned to contribute to the national effort by making participation in military service compulsory. However, the new obligations also created a state debt owed to its citizens. War justified a new form of solidarity that could be observed in the relationship between the state and the citizen army's health: "In the contract between the state and the armed nation, the nation is subject to the payment of the blood tax, but conditional on the state's commitment to undertake its health protection" (Rasmussen 2016a, p. 73). Again, the government sought to erase the differences between the soldier and the civilian to justify the extension of its wartime prerogatives.

If the early signs of the emergence of the French predatory state might be traced back to population policies, the share of the state budget devoted to social issues remained small until the Great War. In 1912, the total public budget amounted to 12.6% of GDP. Only the education budget increased significantly from 1872 to 1900, integrating the effect of Jules Ferry's laws. Education spending increased from 2.7% to 7.4% of the total state budget, whereas the budget devoted to veterans and other social intervention fell from 2 to 0.8% (André and Delorme 1991, pp. 52 and 53). Although population policies predicted the French predatory welfare state, the Great War was the cause.

### 3.3 The Great War and the total war effect

The French predatory welfare state took off with the First World War. As predicted by the ratchet hypothesis, a radical crisis generates a non-transitory surge in state expenditures. Nevertheless, WWI revealed something more specific. The state's political and economic omnipresence could be explained by the convergence of civil and military worlds related to mass warfare. The total war effect homogenized society and submitted it to state power. War's material and human destruction is so significant that the state seems to be the last resort insurer for life's uncertainties and the impossibility of returning to normal economic activity. That is especially the case with war-disabled persons, widows and orphans. The state appeared to be the only institution capable of securing national solidarity (protector), while it leads people to war with its disastrous consequences (predator).

The First World War is a clear saltation in terms of public spending and in the state's scope. The ratio of public expenditures to GDP rose from 12.6% in 1912 (8.8% for the central state, 3.8% for local administrations)<sup>15</sup> to 32.8% (27.8% and 5%, respectively) in 1920.

<sup>15</sup> In the French administrative system, local authorities or administrations include communes and counties.

In 1930, while the share of the defense budget in public expenditure declined to 31.7% compared to 37.7% in 1900, welfare state expenditures reached 12% for veterans compared to 0% in 1900. Similarly, non-military social expenditures increased to 4.3% of the total 1930 budget, compared to 0.8% in 1900. Those evolutions became possible with the creation of a general income tax during the initial war phase in 1914 (Piketty 2018).<sup>16</sup> The level of mandatory tax levies, which was stable between 1872 and 1912 (8.1% and 8.7% of GDP), rose significantly in 1920 to attain 12.5% of GDP (André and Delorme 1991, pp. 52–56).

Mass warfare gives rise to new categories of people and needs that must be addressed, both to guard against revolutionary social outbursts and to ensure new forms of solidarity born on the battlefield (comrades in arms). Although the war was over, the battlefield now extended to civilian life. In 1919, a law was passed in order to finance spending for war invalids, widows and orphans. The law gradually was extended to professional soldiers (1920), to Alsatians and Lorrainers who fought for Germany (1923) and to wartime casualties before the First World War (1927). The recipients represented 1,060,000 invalids, 630,000 widows and orphans and 875,000 offspring (Sauvy 1965, p. 185). In 1933, veteran pensions' reached a peak of 14.9% of state spending (Delorme and André 1983, p. 410).

Before 1914, widows were excluded from existing social net systems. War altered the widows' situation and opened up new rights by virtue of the now-sacred union. The war killed about 1.3 million soldiers, who left behind about 680 000 widows, often young mothers (Chaineaud 2009). Widows accounted for 9.4% of the population in 1851 and 12.9% in 1911. While the legislative framework for taking widows in charge dated back to an 1831 law, “[i]t soon became clear that this law, which had been designed for colonial and other forms of limited warfare, was completely inadequate to the mass slaughter of the Great War” (Lanthier 2003, p. 257). The law of March 31, 1919, reformed pensions for widows. The benefits were less generous because of the larger number of widows, but it modified the status of widows: they became entitled-holders. The war was thought to be a social risk that rendered the status quo of assisted persons obsolete: “the gifts of yesterday have become a legal right” (Bette 2016, p. 81).

In addition to widows, the war changed the nineteenth century's conventions of assistance during childhood (Rivière 2016). Traditionally, the doctrine for admission to care was underpinned by the tenet of definitive abandonment: no children left to state assistance could be retrieved (in order to dissuade parents from abandoning their children). Since the beginning of the Great War, however, temporary admissions were facilitated for girls and sons of mobilized conscripts (i.e., temporary admissions increased by 30%); accordingly, the assistance administration requisitioned underused private buildings to manage overpopulations. War conditions altered the perceptions of families regarding the role of public authority: “abandonment is no longer seen as a faculty offered to parents by the establishment of ad hoc reception structures financed by public authorities, but as a consequence of the inadequacies of the welfare state” (Rivière 2016, p. 47).

The Great War also disrupted the legislative framework of housing policy (Gustiaud 2016). In August 1914, a broad moratorium on rent increases was established with generous compensation for homeowners. The war then changed the nature of housing policies radically. Previously, public policy focused on housing quality, but the post-war emergency was concerned about the availability of housing. Citizens' concerns also evolved in the

<sup>16</sup> The tax was adopted in 1914 and was first levied in 1915.

same direction: in a situation of scarcity, social housing was no longer about the poor, but affected everyone, particularly veterans and victims of war. The question attracted nationwide attention, leading to the Loucheur Act (1928), “daughter of the Great War” (Gusitaud 2016, p. 102), which planned the construction of 260,000 homes over 5 years, for both the working class and the middle class.

The Great War was an uncommon and deep crisis, which triggered a radical discontinuity in state expenditures. The irreversible nature of that phenomenon was linked not only to the ratchet hypothesis, but also to the total war effect. Blurring the border between civilian and military, mass warfare generated a need for national solidarity. After the time of “sacred union” and the “blood tax”, the state appeared to be the only remedy for millions of people. Policies for the war-disabled, widows and orphans explain a considerable part of the phenomenon of path dependency discussed in Sect. 2. Just after the war, who would question assistance to orphans? *Laissez-faire* gave way to the proliferation of economic planning: “Some form of permanent, rational, economic management was needed to supplement market forces and bring production and consumption into balance” (Kuisel 1981, p. 98). In 1938, the share of public expenditure in GDP reached 26.5%. However, it should be noted that the growth of the central state’s size (20.1%) and autonomy was disputed by local authorities (the size of which was 5.5%) and by the emergence of workplace (occupational) welfare (the share of which was 0.9%) (André and Delorme 1991, p. 52). The predatory welfare state also was contested by the citizen welfare organizations.

### 3.4 Tensions between the state and self-government

The emergence of the French predatory welfare state was not purely linear and without controversy. At three levels, state intervention was preceded or contested by self-government organizations: private systems of resource pooling, communes and labor unions.

Mass warfare generated human and material destruction that often were addressed by private pooling of resources. The state regained its power over those initiatives within a protector-predator logic that can be named the re-appropriation effect.<sup>17</sup> That process can be illustrated with the case of widows’ assistance. Before the Great War, private charities were the only actors willing to rescue widows. However, with the rapid influx of numerous donations during national collection drives, state control was strengthened with the creation of a distribution committee in June 1915 (Bette 2016). In 1916, the law required administrative authorization for the creation of charitable institutions and required transparency regarding the private accounts to justify the use of gifts and state subsidies. Charitable organizations that helped widows quickly found a worthy trusteeship by creating national offices. The question of social housing also shows the power of self-organization and private pooling of resources. The vote on the Loucheur law in 1928 was a boon for the very powerful associations of veterans. At the time, one in two Frenchman was a veteran, and nearly 3.5 million veterans affiliated with the existing associations. The actions of those groups illustrated that veterans were not passive but active: they self-organized to provide for their members all kinds of benefits, including social protection (Gustiaux 2016). The associations were involved in building several thousands of homes.

<sup>17</sup> See the next section for an elaboration of the re-appropriation effect through state control of citizen welfare.

A second source of competition for state power was the communes. Between 1872 and 1938, the share of local authorities' expenditures in GDP grew as fast as that of central state expenditures (2.8–5.5%). That observation reveals the key role of the local level in organizing economic decisions in France. Moreover, the local level's importance lends credence to the thesis of Timothy Smith (2003), according to which the slowness of the emergence of the French welfare state can be explained by localist opposition. At the turn of the twentieth century, France was still a nation of small property owners who were reluctant to engage in collective forms of solidarity. Local identities and authorities, as remnants of the *Ancien Régime*, raised "a crucial impediment to the building of the welfare state in France" (Smith 2003, p. 4). Burrowing in the archives of the City of Lyon, Smith documented a struggle for municipal autonomy against the state. When the National Assembly enforced a law to help the poor, communes reacted by explaining that they were the only institution that possessed the reliable local information necessary to judge who deserved assistance.

Throughout the Great War, cities implemented ambitious social policies to limit the adverse consequences of war and maintain morale, such as cheap housing, tuberculosis clinics and food aid (Rasmussen 2016a). Jay (1986) counterfactually demonstrated that during the war, against all odds, the life expectancies of civilians rose. Improved physical wellbeing plausibly can be linked to the municipalities' initiatives (Jay and Robert 2007). In cities like Paris, London and Berlin, local self-government resulted in appropriate policy-making on industrial mobilization, supply, and public health, meeting the basic needs of the population. The successes of the municipal war policy was then the crucible of state control of social protection (Smith 2003). By 'state control' we understand the process of re-appropriation of self-governed social protection by the state.

The third major element in challenging state control was trade unionism. French trade unionism is characterized by a tradition of criticism of the state and of war. Although French trade unions joined the Sacred Union in 1914, before the war and just at the start they were opposed to it, particularly because in their eyes, war was an expression of state power (Pauwels 2016). That challenge of the state's stranglehold over the nation can be illustrated by the truce between the French and Germans during Christmas 1914 (Brown and Seaton 1984). The framework is not anecdotal and explains why trade unions resisted state intervention in the realm of social protection. In fact, they did not trust the state. The welfare state thus was challenged both by liberals and trade unions influenced by socialist ideas.

Consequently, social insurance laws on health and pensions (1928–1930) and family allowances (1932) did not fall under the welfare state since the state did not run the relevant institutions. The laws were based on the principles of obligation to pay contributions as well as freedom of participation. Hence, employees could choose the insurance fund in which they would participate. Such a system, however, suffered from three major weaknesses. On the one hand, insurance funds were atomistic, preventing them from providing significant benefits. On the other hand, the insurance funds were not managed by the contributors themselves. Employers and religious authorities often managed them. The same was true of mutual assurance companies that often were managed by influential local people. Finally, the contributions were too small to allow the institutions to be effective. In 1938, social insurance expenditure accounted for 0.9% of GDP.

The march towards the Second World War reinforced tensions with the state. In a context of collaboration with the enemy (Paxton 1972), citizen resistance legitimized self-government for addressing social questions. Social security was the product of such resistance to the state.

## 4 Citizen welfare and the predatory welfare state

The modern history of the welfare state in France reveals its original character, since it emerged from national resistance by civil society, and particularly by workers' trade unions, to the German occupation. The state capitulated, and Social Security was recreated in 1945. *La Sociale* appeared once again in France. French Social Security was a model of self-government based on social insurance for workers and managed by the "interested parties".

In this section we develop the specific and original aspect of the French experience. Self-help welfare, *la Sociale*, challenged the welfare state. The history of French Social Security since 1947 thus can be viewed as a process of the state's re-appropriation of social protection. The re-appropriation effect, taken in different steps, led to a predatory welfare state. The state behaved as a predator by giving the power to new management bureaucracies as well as some private insurance institutions while providing a certain level of social protection for those who were most affected by its policy.

### 4.1 Post-second world war and French originality

It is a popular belief in France that French Social Security was born in the aftermath of the Second World War by an order dated 4 October 1945. However, as shown in Sect. 3, all social insurance institutions covering welfare risks already existed prior to the war. With the laws voted in 1928–1930 and 1932, direct assistance seemed to have been abandoned completely in favor of insurance. If the year 1945 still is widely remembered as the birthday of the French Social Security in the collective consciousness, it is because of a major innovation: the foundation of a general regime (*régime général*) for workers' social insurance managed by the "interested parties" themselves. The ambition of generalizing social protection in that way came from the project adopted by the National Resistance Council (an organization bringing together all political opinions to prepare for the period after the *Libération*), titled *Les jours heureux* (The Happy Days, CNR 1944).

In contrast to other existing institutions, the *régime général* was based on three highly innovative principles (Friot 2012; Batifoulrier et al. 2019): (1) one unique insurance fund to pay all social benefits. Unlike earlier periods when small funds prevailed, the objective was to gather within a single fund all workers regardless of their occupations and all welfare contingencies (e.g., sickness, accidents at work, industrial illness, family, old age, and so on). The advantage of a single fund was that it could provide more generous financial guarantees, especially by making it possible to pool risks. (2) Unique and "inter-professional" (i.e., inter-branch) contribution rates on wages, involving funding benefits with a flat-rate industry-wide social tax. (The pre-war funds levied contributions on different bases, depending on the employers' and the employees' statuses.) The advantage of a flat-rate industry-wide contribution was that it removed differences in treatment among firms. (3) Stakeholders (employers and workers' trade-unions) managed the institution. Management of the social security system was placed in the hands of the "interested parties", a citizen democracy, notably including mutual societies and, above all, employees and their trade union representatives. The boards of directors of the primary funds (locally) were composed three-quarters of union representatives and one-quarter of employers' representatives. This institutional arrangement assigned the management of the institution to the workers themselves through their trade unions and mutual societies.

The workers' movement that created social security is essential to understanding the French experience. The French model in 1945 is unique because of the workers' self-government. French Social Security is not a state-based system. On the contrary, it was built to circumvent state power. That hostility finds its roots in the specific war experience and the role of the state in collaborating with the German occupying force. If, today, the role of Marshall Pétain and his government in collaboration is known widely, in 1945 the population also knew that 87% of all parliamentarians, with the exception of communists (who were impeached and hunted down), voted full powers to Pétain, and that employers also were compromised by the occupation forces (Lacroiz-Riz 2007, 2009). Conversely, armed and other civilian forms of resistance to German and Vichy institutions were undertaken mostly by workers. "In 1940 and in the shabby years of Vichy, the military elite, the business, financial and bureaucratic elite, and much of the ecclesiastical hierarchy had been discredited. Labor emerged as the group with the least responsibility for the nation's catastrophe. More positively, in the occupation labor had given France the greatest part of the Maquis, the most active elements of the Resistance, and the largest number of oppression's victims. In the plans for a new France, many of the reforms long preached by the unions were accepted as desirable and inevitable" (Lorwin 1952, p. 525).<sup>18</sup>

In Europe, war meant the breakthrough of democracy. Mass carnage had created a 'democratic imperative' that could not be expressed by the state. In France, the resistance movement had paved the way for more worker power in economic affairs and crowded the state out from social administration. French Social Security was a debt of war and the new citizen welfare was a response that took into account workers' requirements. In 1945, workers were autonomous and had unprecedented political power; they could impose their self-managed social protection.

At the time, the most famous plan aiming at restructuring social security in the post-war era was the British Beveridge Report, issued in November 1942, which became a key reference for social policy debates. French Social Security in 1945 departed sharply from that document. To gauge the gap, Titmuss's (1958) seminal work on the British case is a good indicator. Titmuss classifies social protection into three categories: (1) Social welfare is the public face of the welfare state and the traditional area of social administration and of the central government. It refers to benefits such as direct payments and universal services in order to assist the poor, the sick, the unemployed, pensioners and other beneficiaries. (2) Fiscal welfare operates only through the medium of the fiscal system: income and other direct tax-and-transfer schemes. (3) Occupational welfare distinguishes benefits received over and above national insurance by an employee as a result of his job. It includes vouchers, workplace nurseries, travel subsidies, use of company vehicles, entertainment expenses, sports and gym club memberships and so on.

Titmuss highlights occupational welfare in order to show that British social protection also entails benefits for the middle classes. In fact, in Britain, social protection was reduced to public welfare ("the dole") in citizens' eyes and provided assistance only for the poorest at the expense of the middle classes. "The aggregate redistributive effects of social service activity since 1948 have wholly or largely represented a transfer of resources from rich to poor" (Titmuss 1958, p. 38). The tendency to see social policies as something for 'them' rather than 'us' (Sinfield 1978, p. 138) led to a decline in social cohesion.

<sup>18</sup> We intentionally cite an old reference from the early 1950s to show that in the aftermath of the war everyone was convinced that the state as well as the business, financial and bureaucratic elites were discredited because of their collaboration. The same point also has been underlined in Wiewiorka (2013) more recently.

The French experience of 1945 cannot be pigeonholed into Titmuss's three categories. Since French social security was not state-dependent, public welfare payments were irrelevant. Occupational welfare was of no great concern; nevertheless, the state played an important role only in legislation that facilitated that type of assistance (Mann 2009). However, it was neither the state nor private companies that built the French social safety net. The conceptions of redistribution in Britain and France diverged radically. In Britain, following Titmuss's thinking, social policies represented the collective consciousness, or general will, of society as a whole, within an 'idealist' tradition (Offer 1999). In France, interest groups (labor unions, in particular) were decisive in creating the balance of political forces that determined social legislation. Workers' self-government and the notion of wage labor (*salariat*) were linked to class conflict (Barbier 2013; Friot 2012).

No such a thing as a benevolent government or "Robin Hood" planner led the transformation. The French historical configuration explains why the trade unions became the major institution of social protection. In France, the General Labor Confederation (*Confédération Générale du Travail*, CGT), the major<sup>19</sup> trade union organization, while officially independent of political parties was, in practice, closely aligned with the Communist Party.

During the same period, the formerly dominant players had lost some of their power. Private health insurance (*mutuelles*—mutual societies), which controlled social insurance before the war on the workers' behalf, had been discredited because of their poor results and their opposition to the *regime général* in 1946. Mutual benefit societies joined the social security system in exchange for authority to jointly manage health insurance "co-payments" (called *ticket modérateur*), resulting in double supervision of prices for prescription drugs and medical care.

In France, as elsewhere, doctors influenced the crafting of social protection. In 1945, however, their power was weakened by the "Council of the Order" for doctors, created by the Vichy government. That order stained the ethical reputations and commitment of the medical profession, undermining their claim to self-regulation (Jaunait 2005). It also made it more difficult to pursue their professional lobbying against socialized medicine (Domin 2018b). They did, however, manage to preserve their bargaining powers with respect to the fees they could charge patients. Hence, the social security system had to negotiate directly with doctors over allowable fees for service.

## 4.2 The re-appropriation of the social security by the state

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the French social security system is not the outcome of consensus but of conflict. The idea of citizen-centric welfare was unacceptable to many political, economic and social forces. Opposition was so strong that little room was left for negotiation, and the central government progressively took control. The central state's power had grown considerably through the development of nationalization programs and planning processes after the war (Nord 2016). Social security was an exception since it was

<sup>19</sup> In April 1946, the CGT claimed 5.5 million members (Lorwin 1952, p. 526).

not under the state's direct control.<sup>20</sup> Workers' self-government and the "general regime" strongly opposed the continuous movement of French power to the center.

The history of the French social security since 1945 is a history of more power for the state, what we call "state-ization" (the French word is *Etatisation*). The progressive state-ization of French social security may be described both in terms of the objectives pursued and the means employed. The history of the state's reappropriation of social security can be divided into three stages, namely: 1946, 1967 and 1996. These reforms frequently relied upon special legal processes (decrees)<sup>21</sup> at each stage. The decrees were legislative acts that the government introduced to bypass the citizenry's power.

The first stage began in 1946, during which year the principle of a unique insurance fund was challenged successfully. Several special funds were created or continued beside the *régime général* by distinguishing various occupational categories: farmers, the self-employed, government workers, business executives (i.e., white collar employees), and so on. While mutual societies seemed to have disappeared, they obtained in 1947 the possibility of co-managing some insurance funds with unions (the Morice Act). The multiplication of funds was associated with the dissolution of the social and financial unity of the general scheme against the principle of a flat-rate industry-wide contribution and unique and an interprofessional (inter-branch) contribution rate on wages (Da Silva 2017).

As an extension of those institutional changes, the 1949 debate in the National Assembly dealt with the foundation of social security's institutions and not just with its applications (Batifoulier et al. 2019). Workers' power now came under criticism. As Paul Reynaud (former president of the *Conseil de la République Française*) argued: "The only real control should be by the Parliament ... since only the Parliament has the right to require information and clarification over everything.... [W]hat are the contributions imposed by the state? This is the very definition of the tax, an income benefit required by the public power.... It is always a levy exacted by the state pursuant to an Act regardless of whether the payment is made to the fiscal administration or to the social security funds." (JORF 1949, p. 4554)

Finally, relative agreement materialized around the idea that the social security system belonged to the workers. Despite a very advanced line of critical argument, the 1949 debate did not fully call the institution into question.

The year 1967 marked the second key event in the state's reappropriation of the social security system. The Fifth Republic (created in 1958) was based on a strong and centralizing state embodied by General De Gaulle. The number of sectors of the economy under public control grew. "By the 1950s the principal institutions of public economic management in France were in place.... Nationalized enterprises came under direct state control.... National economic planning was a major instrument for orchestrating public policy and private actors.... [T]he state also possessed impressive regulatory powers: investment, credit, prices, wages, and foreign trade were all, in some measure, subject to state control" (Kuisel 1981, p. 253).

<sup>20</sup> Social security was not an outcome of nationalization. The post-war nationalization program was a response to the wartime collaborationist attitude of many private employers. The state took control of certain companies whose owners were so discredited (Kuisel 1981). This initiative was in line with the establishment of 'économie dirigée' (planned economy) as a prolongation of war socialism. The problem of social security was entirely different, since workers and trade unions such as CGT had not been tainted by collaboration. Interestingly, "the CGT withdrew from the planning apparatus in 1947.... Similarly, unions lost control of the government boards of the nationalized firms in the 1950s" (Kuisel 1981, p. 259).

<sup>21</sup> "Ordonnances" in French.

But social security remained the last major “bastion of resistance” to state control. The conversion to state control originally was proposed by the *hauts fonctionnaires* (senior civil servants) in charge of economic affairs. The emergence of the finance ministry as a super-ministry and the center of economic management transformed the debate on social security into a debate on better governance and made the political issue a question of good budget management.

That position was advocated by a paternalistic critic of the institution in 1967. The minister (and professor of economics) Jean-Marcel Jeanneney claimed that he wished to defend the spirit of 1945, but went on to recommend better governance. Furthermore, the government attacked two major tenets of the *régime général*: self-government and one fund for covering different risks. The minister justified his strategy in the name of transparency: “that is achieved by a strict distinction of contributions according to their attribution. This distinction is reflected in institutional terms by the creation of three clearly separated national funds.... Lastly we decided that these funds so laden with new responsibilities to be managed by boards of directors of a new type, based on equal representation in just the same way as the administration of a large number of institutions created by collective agreements since 1945” (JORF 1967, p. 4105).

The 1967 decrees separated risks into three insurance funds with specific coverage missions: sickness (including industrial illnesses and accidents), old age and family. The change weakened the institutions by diluting their power and financial capacities. Moreover, the reform put an end to the self-government of the social security system by substituting election nominations and by reducing workers’ power on boards. Since 1946, workers had had only 50% of the seats on family insurance funds. In 1967, that seat limit was extended to the boards of health and old age insurance programs. Hence, while employees lost their power to 50% of the seats, employers gained 50% of the seats. The government decided to give to the employers the same prerogatives as employees, while welfare benefits were not paid to employers but to employees. Social security no longer was the workers’ property. In 1945, in an effort to reject the bureaucratization and subordination of social security to purely budgetary considerations, workers implemented the self-management of its institutions. In 1967, public authorities accused workers and trade unions of having captured the social security system by neglecting and abusing budget constraints (Duchesne 2018).

The third step in reappropriating social security by the state started in 1996. The so-called “Plan Juppé”<sup>22</sup> defined a line within the governmental sphere according to which the state would be better at containing spending than the workers (Bonoli and Palier 2007). Budget limitations became a key constraint in transforming social security to reduce its deficits. Accordingly, the Ministry of National Solidarity<sup>23</sup> was rebaptised as the “Ministry of Accounts,” despite the trade unions’ criticisms of giving pride of place to purely financial logic (Palier 2010). The increase of expenditure linked to longevity and medical progress has served as a justification for the state’s re-appropriation.

But the re-appropriation effect is not just a problem of budget shrinkage. It was as if the instrument had become the issue, the means replacing the ends and budget shrinkage per se becoming the welfare policy (Monnereaud 2009). The state’s stronger role in organizing social security has not reduced the deficit in the context of focusing on debates about the

<sup>22</sup> Alain Juppé was the French prime minister in 1996.

<sup>23</sup> The ministry was in charge of managing the social security.

social security “hole”.<sup>24</sup> Despite the failure of the deficit reduction policy, civil servants supported the re-appropriation process because it increased state control over social expenditure.

In order to empower the state, laws were enacted to authorize Parliament to vote every year on the annual budget for the entire social security system as well as on targets for expenditure’s growth. That new parliamentary power allowed the state to control social security, thus ending France’s historical insurance model: henceforth, it would be the state that decided which part of its budget should be allocated to the financing of social security. The new logic of intervention strengthened state power and crowded out trade unions from social security administration. That transformation was in line with a major reform of public finance that allocated general tax revenues to the system’s fiscal administration rather financing benefits with social contributions (i.e., compulsory contributions levied on wages) co-administered by workers and employers.

With the creation of the CSG<sup>25</sup> in 1991 and its further development in 1996 and 1997, French social security evolved from a traditional social insurance system towards a tax-based funding system, relying on state fiscal administration for obtaining financial resources. Social contributions declined considerably, from 79.6% of total receipts in 1980 to 61.2% in 2015. Over the same period, taxes increased from 2.1 to 24.5%.

Over the past four decades, institutional reforms have enhanced the state’s capacity to regulate social security, leading to reinforced state control and, at the same time, a loss of self-managed social security by citizens.

Decision makers and managers were closer to the state. In the domain of pension schemes or family allowances, trade unions no longer were “veto players”. In healthcare, in order to give more direct management to state representatives, a new body (UNCAM—the National Union of Health Insurance Organisations, created in 2004) institutionalised centralized public regulatory authority to oversee the decisions taken with regard to medical treatments and services paid for by public health insurance.

The new organization, created by the state, also was managed by state agencies and technical bureaucracies such as the *Haute Autorité de Santé*<sup>26</sup> (French National Authority for Health or Health regional agency), a new supervisory authority created to enable the Ministry of Health to control the hospital sector. Hospital administration became the essence of centralization. Reform subordinated the director of each hospital to the regional health agency and the director of those agencies became “health commissioner”, appointed by the Minister of Health in order to strengthen the central government’s influence. “Created under the guise of modernizing public health policy, these agencies merged the regional and local offices of the Ministry of Health and the health insurance funds to improve regional coordination in providing care. Instead of respecting the principle of autonomy that guided the founding of these regulatory agencies, these reforms in fact helped the Ministry of Health regain control of the hospital sector” (Nay et al. 2016, p. 2240).

The chain of command was clear. It went straight from the Minister of Health to the director of the hospital, whose powers were strengthened, but subordinated to the central state. Because of this state-ization, the roles and powers of medical professionals and of

<sup>24</sup> This is an image constantly referred to in the French media pertaining to the social security deficit.

<sup>25</sup> In French, CSG stands for *contribution sociale généralisée* (Generalized Social Contribution).

<sup>26</sup> The equivalent of NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) in the United Kingdom. The HAS dispenses reliable information about quality-certification and accreditation criteria. It draws up lists of drugs of low actual clinical benefit that are subject to de-reimbursement.

local authorities were reduced. Countervailing powers, especially in financial matters, were weakened. Doctors no longer were the “bosses” of the hospital but had to comply with the orders of the management. While the hospital often was the largest employer in small towns and played an important role in the domestic economy, local authorities were pushed out of governance.

An important part of the history of French social security can be observed in the process of re-appropriation of social security by a predatory state. The purpose of the 1945 system was to introduce self-government based on everyone’s participation in formulating the rules under which they operated. It was about implementing a non-state expression of the general interest as first incarnated in *la Sociale*. Yet the properties of the citizens who created the 1945 system were expropriated. Citizen welfare challenged the welfare state. The expansion of state control is based on an ideology of “the state as owner”, assimilating the “public thing” (*res publica*) within the authority of the state.

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper, we argued that the welfare state was an outcome of modern mass (total) warfare. Our general theory built upon path dependency models of welfare spending and upon the vast literature on the symbiotic relationship between total war and the welfare state within a predatory approach to the state. Subsequently, we introduced the French welfare system as an alternative model. Although the French system also was the outcome of total war, it was born as *citizen* welfare and not *state* welfare. The roots of this self-managed welfare can be traced back to *la Sociale* in 1871.

Reviewing the French case, we showed that *la Sociale*, or the establishment of social protection mechanisms based on the self-government of citizens, emerged from resistance to the Third Republic in a context of total war against Prussia, the starting point for competition between “citizen welfare” and “predatory welfare”. After the extermination of the Parisian resistance, the central state lacked capacity to shoulder the ‘politics of care’ and deliver *la Sociale*. It was only with the Great War that predatory welfare took off. With its violence and reformulation of solidarity (e.g., comrades-in-arms, national unity), the Great War created new categories of population that the state must take care of: invalids, orphans, widows, veterans. The share of public expenditure in GDP then accelerated unprecedentedly, justifying the creation of new taxes such as the income tax. The development of the welfare state was not to everyone’s taste and met resistance in the associative worlds of the communes and trade unions. The social insurance institutions created at the time were not the responsibilities of the state, but rather were managed by friendly societies and private companies.

The Second World War was characterized in France by a separation between, on the one hand, the state that collaborated with the German occupying forces and, on the other hand, whole swaths of civil society (especially the workers) that organized the resistance. That experience explains the uniqueness of the French social security system in comparison with other European models, especially that of England. The moral and military collapse of the state gave rise to the reappearance of the same alternatives that emerged during the time of the Paris Commune: between state and citizenship and between predatory welfare and citizen welfare. The social security system of 1946 was established as citizen welfare: it was not the state that ran the institution, but workers and employers.

Finally, we demonstrated that the whole history of the French welfare state in the second half of the 20th century consisted of reappropriating self-managed citizen welfare programs by the state in a three-stage reform process in 1946, 1967 and 1996.

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