The Extreme Right in France
From Pétain to Le Pen

J.G. Shields, Aston University, UK

‘admirable scholarly verve ... a brilliant book’
Rod Kedward, Emeritus Professor of History, University of Sussex

‘a truly original, scholarly, and valuable book ... complex and fascinating’
Roger Griffin, Professor in Modern History, Oxford Brookes University

‘very impressive thoroughness and exactitude on this complicated subject’
Robert O. Paxton, Professor of Social Sciences Emeritus, Columbia University

‘extremely valuable’
Robert Gildea, Professor of Modern History, Oxford University

‘a brilliant piece of scholarship ... vastly superior’
Tim Peace, European University Institute, Florence

‘ce beau travail, d’une grande richesse d’informations et d’analyses’
Pierre Nora, Académie Française

A comprehensive historical study of the extreme right in France from the Vichy regime to the present day.

This wide-ranging and authoritative book examines the resurgence of right-wing extremism in France from a historical perspective, tracing the political lineage of Le Pen and the FN through key figures and movements on the French extreme right since 1940. Part 1 devotes chapters to the Vichy regime, the aftermath of the Occupation, the Poujadist movement, the Algerian War, the ‘Nouvelle Droite’, and extreme-right ideology and activism in the 1960s and 1970s. Part 2 analyses the electoral rise of the FN, its evolving programme and exploitation of salient issues, the geography and sociology of its electorate, its exercise of local power, and its impact on national political culture in contemporary France. The FN, it is argued, represents both the latest manifestation of a long tradition of right-wing radicalism and a complex new phenomenon within the changing social and political dynamics of France today.


This is an essential book for all readers with an interest in French and European politics and modern history.

About the author: James Shields is Professor of French Politics and Modern History at Aston University. He is the first holder of the American Political Science Association’s Stanley Hoffmann Award (2007-09) for his writing on French politics.