



# The Ideological Profile of France's Economic Bestsellers

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[LINK TO ABSTRACT](#)

In France, there is a remarkable coexistence between economic feebleness (stagnation, fiscal pressure, structural unemployment, sagging private investment, etc.) and a stable intellectual consensus favoring state-led economic governance (Levy 1999; 2017; Tiberghien 2007; Vail 2010). Despite mounting empirical challenges to interventionist policies, the dominant narratives in public discourse remain skeptical of market mechanisms and are broadly favorable to redistributive and regulatory approaches (Coutrot 2010; Hernandez 2015). When economic dissatisfaction fuels not liberal reform, as in Argentina, but renewed support for state involvement, such a paradox raises questions about the production and diffusion of economic ideas in that society (Kuttner 1987; Jänicke 1990; Fukuyama 2022). Popular economic literature functions as entertainment or advice but also as a vector of ideological formation (Thussu 2007; Grossberg 1993; Roos and Reccius 2024). Best-selling books help shape the conceptual boundaries of legitimate economic reasoning. Understanding which ideas circulate through such channels is essential to explaining the persistence of France's quagmire of interventionism.

Substantial work has explored France's tradition of *dirigisme*, the sociology of elite economists, and the institutional path dependencies of its welfare state (Levy 2000; Prasad 2005; Clift 2012; Vail 2010). Little attention, however, has been paid to the ideological content of economic literature as consumed by the general public. Existing studies of economic thought often concentrate on academic debates, textbook analysis, or policy frameworks. Popular economic books (those found in airport bookstores, read by a broad audience, and shared on social media) are seldom treated as objects of inquiry. Furthermore, there is a lack of conceptual tools

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for mapping the ideological diversity (or lack thereof) within this sphere. The gap is particularly striking in France, where cultural production, political economy, and intellectual authority are historically entangled. Public-facing economic literature deserves to be studied as a reflection of mass preferences and as a site of ideological reproduction.

## I know you hate neologisms, but...

I know you hate neologisms, and so it is with reluctance that I use one here.

Already in the text above and in the abstract of this paper, I used “anti-liberal,” “interventionist,” “state-led,” and “*dirigisme*.” What I mean to signify by those words is perhaps best expressed as: *tending toward increased governmentalization of social affairs*. Other words that authors have used for that signification are *statist*, *anti-capitalist*, *socialist*, and so on. Each of these words has its drawbacks. The word *governmentalization* is dreadfully long, which might be why, though included at Wiktionary ([link](#)), it is little used.

I shorten it as follows: *governmentalization* → *govelization*. The set of outlooks that tend toward *govelization* are *govelism*, and an exponent of such is a *govelist*. The word *govelist* also functions as adjective, just as the word *statist* functions as both noun and adjective.

## Summary of my findings

I construct a typology to classify France's 100 bestselling economic books, ranked by FNAC,<sup>2</sup> at the end of 2024. The typology consists of seven types based on thematic content, political orientation, and institutional authorship. In addition, I assign an ideological score from 1 to 5, ranging from strongly liberal (1) to *govelist* (5).

The results show a strong dominance of anti-liberal works, which have an average score of 4.65, reflecting a deeply state-centric orientation. In contrast, liberal books are rare (only five titles) and score 1.20 on average. The overall average of the entire bestseller list is 3.77. The results also reveal the asymmetry between authors and readers, with authors generally pedigreed from or ensconced

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<sup>2</sup> FNAC (originally an acronym for *Fédération Nationale d'Achats des Cadres*) is a major French retail chain founded in 1954 (Leblanc 2010). It specializes in the sale of cultural and electronic products, including books, music, films, games, consumer electronics, and household appliances. In the French book market, FNAC is one of the leading distributors, alongside Amazon, Cultura, and independent bookstores. Its bestseller rankings serve as a barometer, reflecting the reading preferences of a broad and diverse French public. In academic work, FNAC's bestseller list can be used as a proxy for mass cultural consumption, especially when studying the diffusion of economic, political, or ideological ideas.

within elite institutions (Credland et al. 2003; Harman 2000; Mises 1956; Saad Filho 2003). This article contributes to a broader understanding of how economic ideologies are disseminated in democratic societies, and how structural biases in intellectual production can constrain policy alternatives even in the face of systemic crisis (O’Sullivan 2005; Sémanne 2025b).

## A sociology of France’s economic thought

To understand the ideological makeup of France’s bestselling economic literature, consider the country’s deeply rooted tradition of state interventionism. From the legacy of Colbert’s mercantilism to the postwar era of *dirigisme*, France has long favored centralized economic planning, extensive regulation, and redistributive social policies (Levy 2000; 1999; Vail 2010; Biscahie 2022). Unlike the erstwhile liberal market economies of the Anglosphere, France has maintained a model in which the state is seen not as a last resort but as the primary architect of economic order (Wenzel 2010; Wenzel and Thomas 2023). The theme of Alexis de Tocqueville’s famous work on the *Ancien Régime* (1856) was that, prior to the Revolution, the monarchy had already implemented policies imposing controls that fundamentally affected affairs throughout France, and that such centralization was only reinforced by that not-so-glorious revolution.

The interventionist tradition is not just historical but actively reproduced through cultural, institutional, and academic channels (Mises 1929). The intellectual tone of French economics has been shaped by figures such as Jean Jaurès, Keynes, Piketty, and Duflo, while classical liberal economists like Bastiat or Say have been relegated to the margins (Daspre 2007; Keynes 1936; Piketty 2020; 2014; Banerjee and Duflo 2011). Contemporary French economists in positions of influence often promote redistribution, regulation, and state planning, reflecting a strong govelist alignment (Hein et al. 2014; 2015; Boyer 1985).

The govelist worldview is deeply embedded in public expectations. Despite persistent problems like high taxation, rising debt, and slow growth, French citizens expect the government to regulate labor markets, provide generous welfare benefits, and shield them from market uncertainties (Vail 2010). Trade unions and the vast public sector reinforce this reliance, warning that liberalization would dismantle hard-won social protections and worsen inequality (Barbier and Théret 2003; Fanelli 2013).

Crises have strengthened the reflex for intervention. During the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, France doubled down on govelism, introducing rent controls, subsidies, and national industrial strategies (Bruines 2020; Samans 2024). These responses were not seen as temporary measures but as confirmation of the state’s essential role (Sémanne 2025a). Alternative frameworks, par-

ticularly those rooted in classical liberalism, Austrian economics, or Public Choice theory, remain largely absent from public debates (Pennington 2010; Fillieule 2025; Buchanan and Tullock 1962). The FNAC bestseller list is one of the clearest indicators of govelist ideological consolidation.

Prior research has confirmed this pattern. Scholars have shown that France's economic debate space systematically marginalizes free-market and liberal ideas (Facchini 2015). Institutions such as Sciences Po, the Paris School of Economics, and Panthéon-Sorbonne overwhelmingly favor govelist paradigms (Brookes 2021). Alternative liberal schools are rarely taught or discussed, leaving students and the public with narrowly formed minds. The media reinforces govelist closure (Humphreys 1996). Outlets like *Le Monde*, *France Culture*, and *Libération* routinely portray economic liberalism as either fringe or socially dangerous (Metz 2016; Smith 2004; Benson 2002). Business-oriented publications, like *Les Échos*, rarely depart from govelist assumptions. By contrast, in the U.S., Germany, or the UK, bestselling economic books sometimes present a pro-liberty viewpoint; in France, liberty rarely gets a voice.

## Popular Economic Discourse Typology

I created a typology to analyze the top 100 economics bestsellers in France. I call it the Popular Economic Discourse Typology (PEDT).

### A. Data Collection and Scope: FNAC's 2024 Top 100 Economic Bestsellers

The choice to analyze FNAC's top 100 best-selling books is based on its significance as a mass-market retailer. FNAC's bestseller list reflects what the general public actively buys and engages with. The dataset was collected on December 31, 2024.<sup>3</sup>

The selection criteria were based on:

1. Explicit categorization under FNAC's "Economy" section, to exclude works that primarily fall under politics, sociology, or business.
2. High sales rankings and engagement, as indicated by FNAC's internal sales data and customer reviews.

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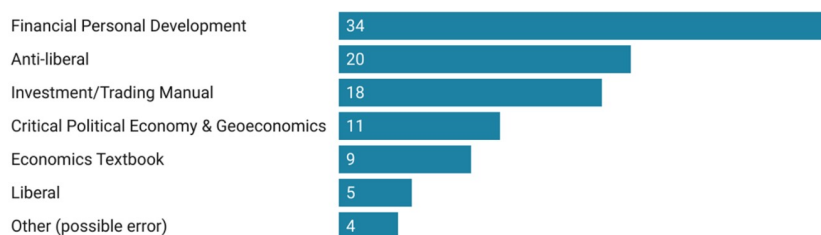
<sup>3</sup> A reviewer noted that the present study documents something "we can observe in five minutes with our own eyes." Indeed, for a French person, there is nothing surprising in our findings. Our purpose is to organize, demonstrate, and bring attention to a reality.

3. Inclusion of both new releases and long-standing bestsellers, allowing for an assessment of current ideological trends while considering books that maintain long-term influence.

## Seven Categories of Popular Economics

I classify FNAC's top 100 economic bestsellers into seven distinct types or categories based on their core narratives and policy orientations. The seven categories are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** 100 top-selling economics books categorized



The creation of a typology, categorization, or taxonomy entails decisions as to which features or characteristics shall be given primacy. After the creation of the scheme, the elements must then be classified into that scheme. These decisions are fraught with possible biases. The way to mitigate mistrust is for creators and classifiers to be frank and open about why and how they created the scheme and how they classified elements into the scheme.

I formulated the typology to serve the purpose of showing the govelist profile of France's economics bestsellers. I therefore made Govelist and Liberal two of the seven categories and then considered how books not classified into either of those two categories should be categorized. I enhance the analysis by adding the ideological scoring of every one of the 100 books. I proceed now to describe the seven categories, ordered by number of books in the category.

### 1. The “Financial and Personal Development” Category (34 Books)

The largest category consists of books that promise to help individuals improve their financial situation through investment advice, career advice, personal strategies, and self-discipline. Bestsellers include *La Psychologie de l'Argent* (*The Psychology of Money*) by Morgan Housel, *L'Investisseur Intelligent* (*The Intelligent Investor*) by Benjamin Graham, *Les Cadrons du Cashflow* (*Rich Dad's Cashflow Quadrant*) by Robert

Kiyosaki, and *Les principes du succès (Principles of Success)* by Ray Dalio. Some of the books in this category support govelist policy alongside their primary messages.

## 2. Govelist Books (20 books)

This category includes works whose most salient feature is their advocacy of attitudes and policies that spell govelization. These books support redistribution, increased regulation, and post-growth or eco-socialist frameworks. Authors in this category often argue that markets generate inequality and ecological degradation, and that collective planning is necessary to correct these systemic failures.<sup>4</sup> Many of these books also reflect growing distrust toward elites and global institutions. Examples include *Vers le Socialisme Écologique (Towards Ecological Socialism)* by Thomas Piketty and *Ralentir ou périr (Slow Down or Perish)* by Timothée Parrique. The recurring themes include the need for wealth redistribution, the critique of “neoliberalism,” and proposals for radical economic transformation in the name of justice or climate urgency. Books like *Partager les Richesses (Sharing the Wealth)* by Philippe Askenazy and *Construire l'Économie Post-Capitaliste (Building the Post-Capitalist Economy)* by Simon Tremblay-Pepin lay out ambitious govelist plans.

## 3. Investment/Trading Manual (18 books)

This third group is primarily technical and instructional. These books focus on teaching readers how to operate within the financial system: how to trade, understand financial instruments, manage wealth, and pass certification exams. They do not seek to persuade the reader of any broader economic ideology. Examples include *Produits Dérivés (Options, Futures, and Other Derivatives)* by John Hull and *Analyse technique des marchés financiers (Technical Analysis of Financial Markets)* by John Murphy, both staples in financial education. Manuals such as *L'Art du Trading (The Art of Trading)* by Thami Kabbaj and *Le guide de l'investissement (Guide to Investing)* by Robert Kiyosaki are frequently purchased by aspiring investors and professionals preparing for exams like the AMF.

## 4. Critical Political Economy and Geopolitics (10 books)

These works are critical of institutions without proposing a clear ideological alternative such as govelism or liberalism. They focus on power dynamics, industrial decline, dependency on global supply chains, or digital sovereignty. Many of

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<sup>4</sup> A reviewer pointed out that Gabriel Zucman does not appear among FNAC's bestselling titles, yet his influence on French (and broader European) debates on taxation is considerable. Since *La richesse cachée des nations* (2013) and its English version *The Hidden Wealth of Nations* (2015), Zucman has become a central reference for arguments in favor of aggressive wealth taxation and the fight against “tax injustice,” especially through the measurement of offshore assets and proposals for international tax coordination.

these books are journalistic or geopolitical in tone, combining economic data with political analysis. Examples include *La Guerre des Semi-Conducteurs (The Chip War)* by Chris Miller and *L'Étrange Débauche, Comment la France a Perdu sa Souveraineté Énergétique (The Strange Debacle, How France Lost Its Energy Sovereignty)* by Henri Proglío. Their rise points to increasing skepticism of globalization and globalist orthodoxy. Readers are drawn to these books not for ideological confirmation but for insight into the complex macro forces shaping their world. John Perkins's *Confessions d'un Assassin Économique (Confessions of an Economic Hitman)* and Thierry de Montbrial's *Ramses 2025* offer detailed accounts of strategic manipulation and systemic fragility.

## 5. Economic Textbooks (9 Books)

This category contains textbooks and academic manuals. They are mostly govelist and shaped by Keynesian and interventionist paradigms, reflecting the mainstream consensus in both French and international economics education. Topics include macroeconomics, microeconomics, and economic history, and the textbooks often taught in high schools or universities. *Principes d'Économie (Principles of Economics)* by Gregory Mankiw and *Fundamentals: Les fondamentaux d'Économie Politique - Macroéconomie (Fundamentals of Political Economy - Macroeconomics)* by Jacques Généreux are among the most widely used in classrooms. The set is highly mainstream, with no representation of Hayekian or Public Choice critiques of govelism. Books like *Histoire Économique de la France (Economic History of France)* by Charles Serfaty and *L'Économie pour les Nuls (Economics for Dummies)* by Michel Musolino also reflect a govelist consensus. Students in France are therefore primarily exposed to models that legitimize govelism.

## 6. Liberal (5 Books)

The liberal category includes books that explicitly defend free markets and individual liberty as engines of prosperity. These works oppose govelization and promote deregulation, entrepreneurship, and economic freedom. However, they remain few and low-ranked in the overall list. *L'Économie Basique (Basic Economics)* by Thomas Sowell and *La Route de la Servitude (The Road to Serfdom)* by Friedrich Hayek are among the best known, but they remain peripheral in the French market. Saifedean Ammous's *L'Étalon Bitcoin (The Bitcoin Standard)* is a notable popular exception, although its appeal may be driven more by interest in cryptocurrency than a desire to explore Austrian economics. Charles Gave's *Un Libéral Nommé Jésus (A Liberal Named Jesus)* is the only French-authored liberal book, blending liberal thought with Christian themes. The scarcity and low visibility of such books indicate a generational and ideological vacuum: there is no significant cohort of young French thinkers publicly defending freedom and opposing govelization.

### 7. Other (possible error) (4 Books)

This group includes books that FNAC categorized as economics, but arguably did so incorrectly. They cover social media management, personal branding, and legal tax strategies. Their presence in the FNAC list likely stems from marketing or metadata algorithms. Examples include *Le Guide Instagram (The Instagram Guide)* by Aurélie Moulin and *La Boîte à Outils du Community Manager (The Community Manager’s Toolbox)* by Clément Pellerin.

**TABLE 1: Typology of France’s Top 100 Economic Bestsellers**

Ideological Orientation	Number of Books	Definition	Example Books
Financial Personal Development	34	Books aimed at helping individuals improve their financial situation through personal strategies, investment advice, and self-discipline. They focus more on personal finance than systemic economic analysis.	<i>The Psychology of Money</i> – Morgan Housel; <i>The Intelligent Investor</i> – Benjamin Graham; <i>Invest to Be Free</i> – Mounir Laggoune
Anti-liberal	20	Books that promote a critical stance on capitalism and advocate for greater state intervention, redistribution, or ecological planning. They often propose systemic alternatives to market economies.	<i>Slow Down or Perish</i> – Timothée Parrique; <i>Towards Ecological Socialism</i> – Thomas Piketty; <i>Everything About Economics</i> – Heu?réka (Gilles Mitteau)
Investment/Trading Manual	18	Technical or practical guides designed to help readers understand financial instruments, markets, and trading techniques. Often used by professionals or students.	<i>The Art of Trading</i> – Thami Kabbaj; <i>Options, Futures, and Other Derivatives</i> – John Hull; <i>Market Finance</i> – Roland Portait & Patrice Poncet
Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	10	Books that critique the structure of the global economic system, state capture, economic imperialism, or geopolitical dimensions of capitalism, without always proposing a clear ideological alternative.	<i>The Black Swan</i> – Nassim Taleb; <i>The Chip War</i> – Chris Miller; <i>Confessions of an Economic Hitman</i> – John Perkins
Economics Textbook	9	Textbooks and academic manuals covering standard economic theories, often from a Keynesian or interventionist perspective. These are used in university courses and competitive exams.	<i>Principles of Economics</i> – Gregory Mankiw; <i>Microeconomics</i> – Franck Bien & Sophie Méritet; <i>Fundamentals – Political Economy 3</i> – Jacques Généreux
Liberal	5	Books defending free-market principles, individual liberty in economics, or Austrian/Chicago School perspectives. They are a minority and often authored by older or foreign writers.	<i>The Road to Serfdom</i> – Friedrich Hayek; <i>Basic Economics</i> – Thomas Sowell; <i>The Bitcoin Standard</i> – Saifedean Ammous
Other (possible error)	4	Books mistakenly classified as economics by FNAC algorithms but actually belonging to other genres (marketing, law, digital tools). They do not engage directly with economic theory.	<i>To Bloom</i> – Aude Mermilliod; <i>The Instagram Guide</i> – Aurélie Moulin; <i>Legal Schemes and Tax Savvy</i> – Antoine Malgoyre

## Ideological Scoring System

I also rated each of the 100 titles on a five-point ideological scale to capture its favor for or opposition to freedom. The scale is defined as follows:

1 = Strongly liberal, explicitly defends free markets and minimal state intervention.

2 = Moderately liberal, broadly supportive of markets with some regulation acceptance.

3 = Neutral or mixed, balanced perspective without a clear ideological bias.

4 = Moderately govelist, critical of markets, supportive of moderate govelization.

5 = Strongly govelist and anti-liberal, explicitly advocates govelist planning, redistribution, or systematic transformation.

I assessed each book based on its content, author background, and policy prescriptions. Divergent ratings were discussed with other economic colleagues to ensure consistency and reduce subjectivity. The scoring complements the categorical classification by quantitatively measuring ideological leaning.

## Methodological Limitations

Despite my efforts to be fair and consistent, several difficulties should be noted.

First, FNAC represents only one retail channel, and their clientele may skew toward urban, well-educated, or media-savvy consumers; readers from other outlets (e.g., Amazon, Decitre) or library borrowings may exhibit different ideological tastes. Future research could broaden the dataset to include multiple distribution platforms or integrate public-library lending figures to test whether the observed interventionist bias holds across diverse purchasing patterns.

Second, my analysis relies on ranking positions rather than precise sales volumes or time-weighted popularity. Bestseller lists capture relative sales momentum but obscure the magnitude of each title's reach and trajectory over time. A book ranked twentieth may have sold orders of magnitude fewer copies than the number one title. Incorporating unit-sales data, where available, or employing time-series analyses of ranking fluctuations could sharpen estimates of each category's actual market share and longer-term influence.

Third, my classification of books into the seven categories inevitably involves judgment. Although I strove for consistency (using clear coding rules based on thematic keywords, author affiliations, and stated normative orientations), borderline cases (e.g., works blending personal-finance advice with systemic critique) remain challenging to categorize. I welcome suggestions on alternative or complementary coding schemes, whether through formal intercoder-reliability testing, algorithmic

topic modeling, or integrating reader-generated metadata such as user reviews and tags.

Finally, my framework reflects my purposes in this investigation. Obviously the 100 titles could be categorized in a myriad of possible ways. I have striven to be frank and open in my purposes and methods.

## Further discussion of French economic bestsellers

Here I comment on four of the seven categories: personal finance, govelist books, economic textbooks, and liberal books. The remaining categories (technical finance manuals, systemic critiques, and miscategorized entries) are either ideologically neutral or peripheral to the drift of this study.

### Top 10 and Top 20

The top positions are overwhelmingly held by personal finance and self-development books such as *La Psychologie de l'Argent (The Psychology of Money)* by Morgan Housel, *L'Investisseur Intelligent (The Intelligent Investor)* by Benjamin Graham, and *Investir pour être libre (Invest to Be Free)* by Mounir Laggoune. These works teach prudence, discipline, and financial literacy, encouraging readers to succeed within the existing economic order rather than to question it. Ideologically, they are neutral or mildly pro-market, reflecting a technocratic rather than philosophical understanding of capitalism. Their popularity points to a widespread desire for individual autonomy and security in an era of uncertainty, but also reveals the absence of an explicit liberal or theoretical economic debate in France's mainstream reading culture.

Amid this pragmatic literature, two explicitly anti-liberal titles stand out: *Ralentir ou Périr: L'Économie de la Décroissance (Slow Down or Perish: Economics of Degrowth)* by Timothée Parrique and *Tout sur l'Économie... ou Presque (Everything About Economics, or Almost)* by Gilles Mitteau (aka, Heu?réka). Both advocate post-growth, interventionist frameworks and challenge the legitimacy of market coordination as a moral or efficient system. They frame capitalism as a social construct responsible for inequality and ecological degradation, calling for redistribution and public planning. Their success signals the growing cultural appeal of "govelist" or statist thinking among young, institutionally embedded intellectuals in France. Rather than marginal ideas, these books represent a mainstream ideological current equating moral responsibility with government expansion.

TABLE 2: Top 20 Best-Selling Economics Books in France

Rank	Author	Title in English	Ideological Orientation	Code
1	Aude Mermilliod	<i>To Bloom</i>	Other (possible error)	
2	Matthias Baccino	<i>Take Control of Your Money – Learning to Get Rich!</i>	Financial Personal Development	
3	Mounir Laggoune	<i>Invest to Be Free – 9 Steps to Financial Independence</i>	Financial Personal Development	
4	Pierre De Taillac	<i>Stop Getting Duped: Take Care of Your Savings!</i>	Financial Personal Development	
5	Guillaume Simonin	<i>The Visual Guide to Financial Education</i>	Financial Personal Development	
6	Morgan Housel	<i>The Psychology of Money</i>	Financial Personal Development	
7	Benjamin Graham	<i>The Intelligent Investor</i>	Financial Personal Development	
8	Thami Kabbaj	<i>The Art of Trading</i>	Investment/Trading Manual	
9	Timotheé Parrique	<i>Slow Down or Perish: The Economics of Degrowth</i>	Anti-liberal	5
10	Gérard Horny	<i>For Dummies, 4th Edition: The Stock Market for Dummies, Large Format, 6th Edition</i>	Investment/Trading Manual	
11	Eric Lombard	<i>At the Heart of Useful Finance – What Is Your Savings For?</i>	Investment/Trading Manual	
12	Claire Balva, Alexandre Stachtchenko, Gwendal Fossois	<i>Bitcoin &amp; Cryptocurrencies Made Easy, 2nd Edition</i>	Investment/Trading Manual	
13	Charles Serfaty	<i>Economic History of France</i>	Economics Textbook	3
14	Christophe Nijdam	<i>For Dummies – Finance in 50 Key Concepts, 2nd Edition</i>	Investment/Trading Manual	
15	Daniel Ichbiah, Jean-Martial Lefranc	<i>For Dummies – Bitcoin and Cryptocurrencies for Dummies, 4th Edition</i>	Investment/Trading Manual	
16	Ray Dalio	<i>Principles of Success</i>	Financial Personal Development	
17	Caroline Mignaux	<i>From Zero to Hero: Build Your Influence on Social Media</i>	Financial Personal Development	
18	Gilles Mitteau (Heu?réka)	<i>Everything About Economics, or Almost</i>	Anti-liberal	5
19	Eric Jorgenson	<i>The Almanack of Naval Ravikant</i>	Financial Personal Development	
20	Friedrich Hayek	<i>The Road to Serfdom</i>	Liberal	1

Only one openly liberal work appears in the Top 20: Friedrich Hayek's *La Route de la Servitude (The Road to Serfdom)*, ranked 20th. Hayek's defense of spontaneous order and warning against collectivist planning contrasts sharply with the dominant interventionist narratives. Its presence is symbolic: it shows that free-market ideas still resonate with a niche audience but lack institutional or gener-

ational renewal. Overall, the Top 20 list reveals a hierarchy of ideas in France's public discourse: pragmatic financial self-help at the surface, anti-liberal and statist narratives in the cultural mainstream, and classical liberalism relegated to the intellectual periphery.

### **Personal Finance: Prudence Without Ideology**

The leading category in FNAC's top 100 is personal finance and self-development. Despite their prudential advice, these books rarely defend freedom explicitly. They teach readers how to succeed *within* the existing economic system, but seldom question it.

### **Govelist Books: Young, Vocal, and Institutionalized**

A striking feature of FNAC's top 100 economic bestsellers is the large market for govelist and/or anti-liberal literature. Twenty titles (see Table 3) fall into this category, four times more than explicitly liberal works. These books do not merely critique market failures; they often propose radical alternatives, including planned economies, eco-socialist transitions, and "post-capitalist" visions. Rarely do they discuss the knowledge problems or lack of correction mechanisms inherent in govelist approaches. Double-standards are a hallmark of govelist literature.

A major theme in the anti-liberal category is degrowth and ecological economics. *Ralentir ou Périr: L'Économie de la Décroissance (Slow Down or Perish: The Economics of Degrowth)* by Timothée Parrique, which ranks second overall, is one of the most radical manifestos in the list. Parrique calls for a complete decoupling from "capitalist" growth models in favor of ecological planning. His work embodies a deep critique of consumer society and proposes a profound govelist reorganization of economic life around environmental sustainability and post-growth values.

Post-Keynesian and institutional critiques also feature prominently. *Tout sur l'Économie ou Presque (Everything About Economics, or Almost)* by Gilles Mitteau (Heuréká), a popular French YouTuber, presents a self-described post-Keynesian approach. It offers a digestible yet ideologically charged economic primer that favors redistribution and govelization generally. Similarly, two books by Daron Acemoglu (*Prospérité, Puissance et Pauvreté (Why Nations Fail)* co-authored with James Robinson, and *Pouvoir et Progrès (Power and Progress)* with Simon Johnson) occupy the 5th and 6th spots, respectively. They advocate for strong regulation and "corrective" institutions. Only rarely do they criticize the govelist policies of Western governments.

The appeal of Keynesian economics is seen again in *Une Brève Histoire de l'Économie (A Brief History of Economics)* by Daniel Cohen, a well-known Keynesian economist. The book simplifies the evolution of economic thought through a gov-

elist lens. Meanwhile, Nobel laureate Esther Duflo, a supporter of the French Socialist Party, is another influential voice in this sphere. Her work frequently emphasizes empirical policy evaluation, often justifying increased govelization. *Une Brève Histoire de l'Égalité* (*A Brief History of Equality*) by Thomas Piketty argues for ecological socialism, defending taxation and wealth redistribution as moral imperatives.

**TABLE 3: Anti-liberal Titles in FNAC's Top 100: Rankings, Authors, and Ideological Codes**

Rank	Authors	Title	Ideological Orientation	Code
9	Timothée Parrique	<i>Slow Down or Perish: The Economics of Degrowth</i>	Anti-liberal	5
18	Gilles Mitteau (Heu?réka)	<i>Everything About Economics, or Almost</i>	Anti-liberal	5
21	Daron Acemoglu, James Robinson	<i>Prosperity, Power, and Poverty</i>	Anti-liberal	4
26	Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson	<i>Power and Progress: Technology and Prosperity, Our Millennial Struggle</i>	Anti-liberal	4
27	Fabien Lebrun, Alain Deneault (Preface)	<i>Digital Barbarism</i>	Anti-liberal	4
28	Yanis Varoufakis, Morgane Isenet (Translation)	<i>The New Serfs of the Economy</i>	Anti-liberal	4
40	Olivier Lluansi	<i>Reindustrializing: The Challenge of a Generation</i>	Anti-liberal	4
43	Daniel Cohen, Esther Duflo (Preface)	<i>A Brief History of Economics</i>	Anti-liberal	4
51	Thomas Piketty	<i>Towards Ecological Socialism</i>	Anti-liberal	5
56	Simon Tremblay-Pepin, Audrey Laurin-Lamothe, Frédéric Laurin	<i>Building the Post-Capitalist Economy</i>	Anti-liberal	5
60	The Shift Project	<i>Climate, Crises</i>	Anti-liberal	5
62	Philippe Askenazy	<i>Sharing the Wealth</i>	Anti-liberal	5
66	Christophe Darmangeat	<i>The Profit Enigma</i>	Anti-liberal	5
67	Bruno Colmant	<i>Money</i>	Anti-liberal	5
73	John Maynard Keynes, H�el�ene De Largentaye (Preface), Jean De Largentaye (Preface)	<i>The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money</i>	Anti-liberal	5
74	Klaus Schwab	<i>The Fourth Industrial Revolution</i>	Anti-liberal	4
83	Benjamin Lemoine	<i>Hunters – Vulture Funds and New York Law Assaulting Sovereignty</i>	Anti-liberal	3
84	Henry Farrell, Abraham Newman	<i>The Underground Empire</i>	Anti-liberal	3
86	Christine Kerdellant	<i>These Billionaires Stronger Than States</i>	Anti-liberal	4
90	Xavier Jaravel	<i>Marie Curie Lives in Morbihan</i>	Anti-liberal	4

Planning and “post-capitalist” literature also feature heavily. *Construire l' conomie Post-Capitaliste* (*Building the Post-Capitalist Economy*) by Simon Tremblay-P epin and co-authors proposes a systemic reinvention of the left, advocating for “non-capitalist” modes of production and participatory planning. *Climat, Crise: Le Plan*

*de Transformation de l'Économie Française (Climate, Crisis: The Plan to Transform the French Economy)* by The Shift Project lays out a fully socialist green transition model. *Partager les Richesses (Sharing the Wealth)* by Philippe Askenazy, meanwhile, is a straightforward defense of radical redistribution, rooted in traditional leftism.

One older text continues to rank, *Théorie Générale de l'Emploi, de l'Intérêt et de la Monnaie (The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money)* by John Maynard Keynes, which appears at 73rd place. Its inclusion reflects not just the historical relevance of Keynes, but also the endurance of his ideas in French academic and public discourse. Keynesianism is not treated as one school of thought among many, but often as the default economic worldview.

Some titles also align with global planning and Great Reset-style narratives. Bruno Colmant's *La Monnaie (Money)* claims that "neoliberal capitalism" is inherently incompatible with environmental sustainability, advocating for govelist financial transformation. *La Quatrième Révolution Industrielle (The Fourth Industrial Revolution)* by Klaus Schwab, the founder of the World Economic Forum, promotes the full panoply of govelist measures to achieve economic transition. Both works highlight a globalist consensus forming around planned economic reorientation.

Radical Marxist critiques are represented as well. Yanis Varoufakis's *Les Nouveaux Serfs de l'Économie (The New Serfs of the Economy)*, at 28th place, reflects his self-described position as a "libertarian Marxist," pushing for a new economic paradigm beyond "capitalism." Christophe Darmangeat's *L'Énigme du Profit (The Profit Enigma)* revives classical Marxist arguments about labor, exploitation, and the role of capital, situating itself firmly within anti-market theoretical traditions. In addition, *Ces Milliardaires Plus Forts que les États (These Billionaires Stronger Than States)* by Christine Kerdellant and *L'Empire Souterrain (The Underground Empire)* by Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman broaden the critique to encompass global power dynamics.

A closer look at the authors reveals that most are academics or affiliated with other public institutions. The apparatchik character of these authors underscores the entrenchment of govelist thought in the French intellectual ecosystem. Public university economists, research center affiliates, and policy advisors dominate the anti-liberal literary landscape, often publishing with institutional support and national visibility. These are not fringe authors, but highly privileged voices in the mainstream.

The govelist books often feature "social justice" themes. Feminism, environmentalism, and inequality are not treated as separate issues but are instead merged into a critique of "capitalism." Books like *Éclore, Ralentir ou Périr (Emerge, Slow Down, or Perish)* and *Une Brève Histoire de l'Égalité (A Brief History of Equality)* articulate a vision in which state planning is justified, not only for efficiency or stability, but as a moral response to systemic injustice. This rhetorical shift appeals to a new

generation of leftist readers.

Many of the anti-liberal writers are relatively young and intellectually active. They regularly appear in media, teach at major institutions, and participate in public debates. This generational renewal contributes to the dynamic presence of govelist ideas in France. The data suggests not only a numerical dominance of anti-liberal works, but also a structural advantage in visibility, authorship, and institutional backing.

### **Textbooks and the Keynesian Hegemony: Education Without Pluralism**

The category of academic textbooks and manuals is dominated by Keynesian and interventionist perspectives (see Table 4). Out of nine identifiable textbooks in the list, the overwhelming majority are authored by economists affiliated with public institutions (civil servants, state university professors, or researchers attached to public financial bodies like the Banque de France). This heavy public-sector presence reflects a longstanding institutional bias toward interventionist theories, where economic education is framed primarily around govelist sensibilities.

A good example is *Histoire Économique de la France (Economic History of France)* by Charles Serfati, ranked 13th. Serfati, who holds a PhD from MIT and works at the Banque de France, provides a narrative deeply embedded in macroeconomic management and monetary policy. Similarly, *La Dette, Jusqu'où ? (Debt, How Far?)* by Véronique Lehideux (ranked 50th) is authored by a professor at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, an institution with a strong tradition of post-Keynesian and regulatory economics. Her work promotes a vision of economics in which public debt and state spending are not only normal but essential for social cohesion and economic balance.

Another prominent figure in this landscape is Jacques Généreux, whose *Les Fondamentaux d'Économie politique 3 – Macroéconomie (Macroeconomics – Political Economy Fundamentals 3)* ranks 79th. Généreux, a former national secretary for economic policy within the French Left Party, advocates a highly interventionist macroeconomic model, supportive of wealth redistribution and openly critical of “capitalism.” *Les Grands Cours d'Économie (The Great Courses in Economics)* (ranked 90th and written by teachers in the French secondary and preparatory system) align closely with national educational standards, which themselves reflect a preference for govelist economic theory.

Also featured are the collaborative works of Franck Bien and Sophie Méritet. Their *Microéconomie, Exercices Corrigés et Commentés L2 (Microeconomics, Corrected and Explained Exercises – L2)* at 98th place, and their *Microéconomie* at 69th, are widely used in university programs. These textbooks employ a mathematical and equilibrium-

based model of economics in which government experts remain a key stabilizing force. Unsurprisingly, they contain very little about the entrepreneurial or dynamic market-based visions associated with Hayek and others.

**TABLE 4: French Economics Textbook and Public Sector Affiliation**

Rank	Author	Title	Country of Origin	Notes	Public Sector Affiliation	Code
13	Charles Serfaty	<i>Economic History of France</i>	France	Economist at Banque de France	Yes	3
30	Michel Musolino	<i>The Giants of Economic Thought – From Saint Thomas Aquinas to Paul Romer</i>	France	Popular mainstream manual author	Yes	3
36	Michel Musolino	<i>For Dummies – Economics for Dummies, 5th Edition</i>	France	Popular mainstream manual author	Yes	3
50	Véronique Lehideux et al.	<i>Debt, How Far?</i>	France	Co-authors mostly affiliated with French public universities	Yes	4
58	Gregory Mankiw et al.	<i>Principles of Economics</i>	USA	Harvard professor, not affiliated with French public sector	No	4
69	Franck Bien, Sophie Méritet	<i>Microeconomics</i>	France	University professors at French public universities	Yes	3
92	Jacques Généreux	<i>Fundamentals – Political Economy 3 – Macroeconomics (10th Edition)</i>	France	Member of the French Left Party, teaches in public sector	Yes	5
95	Rémi Jeannin, Renaud Chartoire	<i>The Great Economics Course</i>	France	Professors in French public preparatory schools	Yes	3
98	Franck Bien, Sophie Méritet	<i>Microeconomics: Solved and Commented Exercises. L2</i>	France	University professors at French public universities	Yes	3

Gregory Mankiw’s *Principles of Economics* ranks at 58th and stands as the only globally recognized Anglo-Saxon textbook on the list. Mankiw’s work is rooted in a broadly Keynesian framework, especially in its treatment of macroeconomics. While more centrist in tone than the French authors, it too marginalizes or entirely omits alternative perspectives, such as Austrian theories of capital and entrepreneurship or the Public Choice critique of government failure. It contains little about government failure and thus exhibits the usual flagrant double-standard.

A few books that purport to be neutral or historical also reflect the same govelism. *Les Géants de la Pensée Économique, de Saint Thomas d’Aquin à Paul Romer* (*The Giants of Economic Thought – From Saint Thomas Aquinas to Paul Romer*) by Michel Musolino, ranked 30th, offers a sweeping history of economic ideas. While seemingly

inclusive, the framing leans heavily toward govelist thinkers, and Musolino's other book, *L'Économie pour les Nuls (Economics for Dummies)*, also appears in the FNAC list, reinforcing his influence within the mainstream.

## Liberal Books

Of the 100 titles, five can be confidently categorized as defending liberal principles. The highest-ranking book in this group is Friedrich Hayek's *La Route de la servitude (The Road to Serfdom)*, placed 20th. First published in 1944, Hayek's work exposes leftism as essentially govelist and thus not so unlike the Axis regimes of Hitler and Mussolini. It warns against the dangers of state overreach and defends spontaneous order as the foundation of liberty and prosperity. Its appearance in the list suggests a niche interest in freedom among the French public.

The second-highest entry is *Un Libéral Nommé Jésus (A Liberal Named Jesus)* by Charles Gave, ranked 25th. Gave, a French financier and vocal free-market advocate, weaves Christian ethics with liberal economics, arguing for a society built on voluntary cooperation rather than state coercion. The book endeavors primarily to persuade Christians to be liberals, as opposed to persuading liberals to be Christians, claiming that the only economic thought that would conform to the Gospels is liberalism.

Ranked 24th is *L'Étalon Bitcoin (The Bitcoin Standard)* by Saifedean Ammous. An "Austrian" economist of Lebanese origin, Ammous defends sound money, criticizes fiat currency, and offers a libertarian vision rooted in hard monetary constraints. Its high sales are likely due in large measure to the popularity of cryptocurrency.

Also included is *Économie Basique (Basic Economics)*, in 88th place, by the American economist Thomas Sowell. *Basic Economics* first appeared in 2000, and Sowell has revised it repeatedly since. Though translated from English, *Économie Basique* is a clear and rigorous exposition of fundamental economic principles from a classical liberal viewpoint. Sowell dismantles common economic fallacies and makes the case for the free market's ability to allocate resources better than govelist schemes.

Though not explicitly rooted in liberal traditions, *Le Déclin Français est-il Réversible? (Is the French Decline Reversible?)* by Jacques de Larosière advances a sharp critique of France's monetary, fiscal, and intellectual complacency. A former governor of the Banque de France and IMF director, de Larosière laments the dominance of a "misunderstood Keynesianism" and a politically-correct culture that inhibits critical economic thinking. His call to "renverser la table" reflects a technocratic, yet reformist stance, one that implicitly supports a return to fiscal discipline and policy realism. While not ideologically liberal, it aligns with liberal economic concerns over unsustainable public finance and the stifling effects of intellectual conformism.

A striking feature of this category is that four of the five books are translations of books by foreign authors. The only French voice, Charles Gave, is over 80 years old, and he comes not from the university system, but from financial markets and independent media. There are no young French intellectuals currently producing bestselling, explicitly liberal works. None of the books in this category can be described as contemporary political-economic essays engaging with current public policies or regulatory debates.

**TABLE 5: Liberal-Oriented Economics Bestsellers in France (Top 100)**

Rank	Authors	Title in English	Ideological Orientation	Code
20	Friedrich Hayek	<i>The Road to Serfdom</i>	Liberal	1
24	Saifedean Ammous	<i>The Bitcoin Standard</i>	Liberal	2
25	Charles Gave	<i>A Liberal Named Jesus</i>	Liberal	1
31	Jacques de Larosière	<i>Is French Decline Reversible?</i>	Liberal	2
88	Thomas Sowell	<i>Basic Economics</i>	Liberal	1

### Critical Political Economy and Geopolitics

This category consists of books of critical political economy infused with geopolitical concerns (see Table 7). The criticism is directed at targets like financialized capitalism, American imperialism, multinational corporations, international institutions, globalism, globalization, etc. The institutions, systems, or even the whole economy are portrayed as instruments of domination, dispossession, and exploitation. In my view, many of the targets are indeed exploitative or even downright wicked. But books in this “critical” category tend to offer govelist solutions to the evils they perceive. In some of the books, the nation-state is reinstated as the locus of political primacy, and economic recovery is often associated with the recovery of national sovereignty. In the ideological scoring, this category occupies an upper-middle position on the govelist scale (average score  $\approx 3.7 / 5$ ).

**TABLE 6: Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics Titles in France's Top 100: Ranking, Authors, Orientation, and Codes**

Rank	Authors	Title in English	Ideological Orientation	Code
32	Thierry de Montbrial	<i>Ramses 2025</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	3
33	Henri Proglio, Pierre Abou	<i>The Strange Debacle – How France Lost Its Energy Sovereignty</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	4
37	Nassim Nicholas Taleb, Christine Rimoldy	<i>The Black Swan [Pocket Edition]</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	3
42	Chris Miller	<i>The Chip War</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	3
52	George Papaconstantinou, Jean Pisani-Ferry	<i>The New Rules of the Game</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	5
54	Valérie Bugault	<i>The Real Alternative to the Great Reset</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	4
57	Michel Lobé Ewané	<i>Being a Billionaire in Africa Today</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	3
75	John Perkins	<i>Confessions of an Economic Hitman – New Insider Revelations on Global Economic Manipulation</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	3
78	Marlène Dolveck, Jean Tirole, Jean-Pierre Farandou	<i>Economics as I Like It and Want to Make Others Love It</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	4
81	Kako Nubukpo	<i>Africa and the Rest of the World</i>	Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	4

**TABLE 7: Distribution and Average Ideological Scores of France's Top 100 Economic Bestsellers**

Ideological Orientation	Number	Average Ideological Orientation
Financial Personal Development	34	
Anti-liberal	20	4.65
Investment/Trading Manual	18	
Critical Political Economy & Geoeconomics	10	3.70
Economics Textbook	9	3.33
Liberal	5	1.20
Other (possible error)	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3.773</b>

## Intellectual and Sociological Implications

The ideological profile revealed by FNAC's economic bestsellers is not merely a reflection of publishing trends. It represents the broader govelist mentality of the French elite (Mises 1956). The intellectual monoculture in France is rarely challenged and often goes unquestioned (Hall and Thelen 2009). France's public discourse on economics is heavily shaped by institutions historically committed to govelism (Levy 1999; 2000). From television debates to editorial columns in national newspapers, the economic "common sense" presented to the public rarely includes perspectives from liberal, Austrian, Chicago, or Public Choice traditions. This intellectual closure has far-reaching implications. Young professionals and students are seldom, if ever, introduced to coherent critiques of govelism. Skepticism toward govelism is often portrayed as dangerous or socially unjust.

The sociological effects of this imbalance are deeply entrenched. French citizens, especially the younger generations educated in public institutions, internalize govelist assumptions and incantations. The absence of ideological alternatives reduces intellectual curiosity and the perceived legitimacy of free-market thinking. Without exposure to theories emphasizing voluntary cooperation, entrepreneurial discovery, and decentralized knowledge, critical thinking about economic policy remains stifled (Mises 1998; 1929; Ikeda 2002; Hayek 1945; De Soto 2010).

We find hypocrisy within French society. While the pursuit of prosperity is normalized and even admired, the honest and just mechanisms that produce prosperity in a market economy are reviled. The persistence of this tension points to a form of cultural schizophrenia; individual agency is valorized in self-help literature, but govelism is upheld in political discourse. As long as this disconnect endures, France may struggle to reconcile its desire for innovation and growth with its resistance to liberalization. Economic discourse will remain fragmented, with widespread practice and intellectual commodities pulling in opposite directions.

Independent think tanks, private universities, YouTube channels, and policy-oriented NGOs have already begun to introduce alternative ideas to broader audiences.<sup>5</sup> The govelists respond, of course, with censorship, just as Hayek described in *The Road to Serfdom*. To revive the free-market tradition, new institutions must deliberately target younger audiences and focus on pedagogy and content. The govelists, however, combat these efforts. Publishing networks, media appearances,

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<sup>5</sup> One notable example is the *Institut Coppet*, founded in 2010 to revive France's classical liberal tradition and the works of its historic figures such as Say, Bastiat, and Molinari. In response to the near-complete absence of liberal material in mainstream academic publishing, the Institut created its own publishing house in 2013, *Les Éditions de l'Institut Coppet*, which reprints liberal classics and makes them freely available online. Entirely funded by private donors and operating without profit, the project represents one of the few systematic efforts in France to preserve and circulate the country's liberal intellectual heritage and to counterbalance the overwhelming govelist bias of contemporary economic discourse (Institut Coppet, "Notre maison," 2024).

and academic grants are often reserved for govelist thinkers, creating significant barriers to entry for liberal voices. Persecution, debanking, censorship, and other forms of intimidation are part of the govelist playbook.

The debate about France's economic future is about intellectual freedom. The public imagination will remain constrained if the same ideas dominate classrooms, bookstores, and media outlets. Only liberalism offers France the hope to escape its ideological and economic stagnation and moral degradation. The data from FNAC's bestseller list is more than a curiosity. It reveals which ideas are permitted to flourish and which remain in exile. Understanding this intellectual geography is one step toward revitalizing France's spiritual and democratic life.

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