

## P-5 COUNTRY PROFILES

### FRANCE

#### **General Information**

<i>Official Name:</i>	French Republic
<i>Capital:</i>	Paris
<i>Population:</i>	64,473,140
<i>Major Languages:</i>	French, German, Arabic, Occitan, Portuguese, Italian, and Spanish
<i>Major Religions:</i>	Roman Catholicism – 44% are unreligious
<i>Regional/Economic Organizational Membership:</i>	ACCT, AfDB, AsDB, Australia Group, BDEAC, BIS, CCC, CDB, CE, CERN, EAPC, EBRD, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, EIB, EMU, ESA, ESCAP, EU, FAO, FZ, G- 5, G- 7, G-10, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IEA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Inmarsat, InOC, Intelsat, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO, ITU, MINURCA, MINURSO, MIPONUH, MONUA, MTCR, NATO, NEA, NSG, OAS, OECD, OPCW, OSCE, PCA, SPC, UN, UNSC, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNIFIL, UNIKOM, UNITAR, UNMIBH, UNOMIG, UNRWA, UNTSO, UNU, UPU, WCL, WEU, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WToO, WTrO, and the ZC, etc.

#### **Governmental System**

The government of France is a semi-presidential system determined by the French Constitution of the fifth Republic, in which the nation declares itself to be “an indivisible, secular, democratic, and social Republic.” The constitution provides for a separation of powers and proclaims France's “attachment to the Rights of Man and the principles of national sovereignty as defined by the Declaration of 1789.” A popular referendum approved the constitution of the French Fifth Republic in 1958, greatly strengthening the authority of the presidency and the executive with respect to Parliament. The constitution does contain a bill of rights in itself, but its preamble mentions that France should follow the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, as well as those of the preamble to the constitution of the Fourth Republic. This has been judged to imply that the principles laid forth in those texts have constitutional value, and that legislation infringing on those principles should be found unconstitutional if recourse is filed before the Constitutional Council. Also, a recent modification of the Constitution has added a reference in the preamble to an Environment charter that has full constitutional value.

Among these foundational principles, one may cite: the equality of all citizens before law, and the rejection of special class privileges such as those that existed prior to the French Revolution; presumption of innocence; freedom of speech; freedom of opinion including freedom of religion; the guarantee of property against arbitrary seizure; the accountability of government agents to the citizenry.

The national government of France is divided into an executive, a legislative and a judicial branch. The President shares executive power with his appointee, the Prime Minister. The cabinet globally, including the Prime Minister, can be revoked by the National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament, through a "censure motion"; this ensures that the Prime Minister is always supported by a majority of the house.

Parliament comprises the National Assembly and the Senate. It passes statutes and votes on the budget; it controls the action of the executive through formal questioning on the floor of the houses of Parliament and by establishing commissions of enquiry. The constitutionality of the statutes is checked by the Constitutional Council, members of which are appointed by the President of the Republic, the President of the National Assembly, and the President of the Senate. Former Presidents of the Republic also are members of the Council.

The independent judiciary is based on a civil law system which evolved from the Napoleonic codes. It is divided into the judicial branch (dealing with civil law and criminal law) and the administrative branch (dealing with appeals against executive decisions), each with their own independent supreme court, the courts of cassation for the judicial branch and the Conseil d'Etat for the administrative branch. The French government includes various bodies that check abuses of power and independent agencies.

France is a unitary state. However, the various legal subdivisions—the regions, departments and communes—have various attributions, and the national government is prohibited from intruding into their normal legal operations.

France is a founding member of the European Community and later the European Union. As such, France has transferred part of its sovereignty to European institutions, as provided by its constitution. The French government therefore has to abide by European treaties, directives and regulations.

## **Foreign Policy**

France's permanent representation abroad began in the reign of François I, when in 1522 he sent a delegation to the Swiss. Despite its reduced presence following decolonization, France still has substantial influence in the world. France has the world's second largest network, second to the network of the United States.

France is a member of the United Nations and serves as one of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council with veto rights. It is also a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Indian Ocean Commission (COI). It is an associate member of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and a leading member of the International Francophone Organization (OIF) of fifty-one fully or partly French-

speaking countries. It hosts the headquarters of the OECD, UNESCO, Interpol, Alliance Base and the International Bureau for Weights and Measures. In 1953 France received a request from the United Nations to pick a coat of arms that would represent it internationally. Thus the French emblem was adopted and is currently used on passports.

French foreign policy has been largely shaped by membership of the European Union, of which it was a founding member. In the 1960s, France sought to exclude the British from the organization, seeking to build its own standing in continental Europe. Since the 1990s, France has developed close ties with reunified Germany to become the most influential driving force of the EU, but consequently rivaling the UK and limiting the influence of newly-inducted East European nations. France is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, but under President de Gaulle, it excluded itself from the joint military command to avoid the supposed domination of its foreign and security policies by US political and military influence. In the early 1990s, the country drew considerable criticism from other nations for its underground nuclear tests in French Polynesia. France vigorously opposed the 2003 invasion of Iraq, straining bilateral relations with the US and the UK. France retains strong political and economic influence in its former African colonies and has supplied economic aid and troops for peace-keeping missions in the Ivory Coast and Chad.

### **Issues Summary:**

Issue 1: Europe → France is a key power in Western Europe because of its size, location, strong economy, membership in European organizations, strong military posture and energetic diplomacy. France generally has worked to strengthen the global economic and political influence of the EU and its role in common European defense and collective security.

Issue 2: Germany → It views Franco-German cooperation and the development of a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) as the foundation of efforts to enhance security in the European Union. France cooperates closely with Germany and Spain, but relations with the United Kingdom are historically tense.

Issue 3: United Kingdom → From the Middle Ages onwards, France and England (later Great Britain, UK) were often enemies, and occasionally allies. However, in the beginning of the 20th century a policy of entente cordiale (cordial agreement) was started. France and the United Kingdom became allies, and despite occasional tensions (such as: the perception among some in France that the British abandoned France in 1940, see Battle of France and Mers-el-Kébir; the perception among a "minority" in Britain that the French wrongly opposed the 2003 Invasion of Iraq), remain so to the present day.

Issue 4: European Union → A chronic point of contention is the future of the European Union. Under French president Charles de Gaulle France opposed on several occasions the UK joining the European Economic Community (as the EU was then called). De Gaulle argued that the UK had extensive alliances outside Europe, especially with the United States, and was famously suspicious of its European neighbors. After the UK joined the EEC, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher argued for and won a reduction of its contributions to the EEC budget. As Prime Minister, Tony Blair expressed skepticism at French economic policies, but forged an alliance with President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Issue 5: Middle East → France established relations with the Middle East during the reign of Louis XIV. To keep Austria from intervening into its plans regarding Western Europe he lent limited support to the Ottoman Empire, though the victories of Prince Eugene of Savoy destroyed these plans. In the nineteenth century France together with the United Kingdom tried to strengthen the Ottoman Empire, the now “Sick man of Europe,” to resist Russian expansion, culminating in the Crimean War. In the post-World War II era French relations with the Arab Middle East reached a very low point. The war in Algeria between Muslim fighters and French colonists deeply concerned the rest of the Muslim world. The Algerian fighters received much of their supplies and funding from Egypt and other Arab powers, much to France's displeasure. Most damaging to Franco-Arab relations, however, was the Suez Crisis. It greatly diminished France's reputation in the region. France openly supported the Israeli attack on the Sinai Peninsula, and was working against Nasser, then a popular figure in the Middle East. The Suez Crisis also made France and the United Kingdom look again like imperialist powers attempting to impose their will upon weaker nations.

Issue 6: Egypt → France also pursued close relations with the semi-autonomous Egypt. In 1869 French workers completed the Suez Canal. A rivalry emerged between France and Britain for control of Egypt, and eventually Britain emerged victorious by buying out the Egyptian shares of the company before the French had time to act.

Issue 7: Germany → After the unification of Germany in 1871 Germany attempted to co-op France's relations with the Ottomans and was quite successful. In World War I the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers, and was defeated by France and the United Kingdom. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, France and Britain divided the Middle East between themselves. France received Syria and Lebanon.

Issue 8: Syria → These colonies were granted independence after the Second World War but France still tries to forge cultural and educational bonds between the areas, particularly with Lebanon. Relationships with Syria are more strained, due to the policies of that country. In 2005, France, along with the United States, pressured Syria to evacuate Lebanon.

Issue 9: Middle East → In the post-World War II era French relations with the Arab Middle East reached a very low point. The war in Algeria between Muslim fighters and French colonists deeply concerned the rest of the Muslim world. The Algerian fighters received much of their supplies and funding from Egypt and other Arab powers, much to France's displeasure. Most damaging to Franco-Arab relations, however, was the Suez Crisis. It greatly diminished France's reputation in the region. France openly supported the Israeli attack on the Sinai Peninsula, and was working against Nasser, then a popular figure in the Middle East. The Suez Crisis also made France and the United Kingdom look again like imperialist powers attempting to impose their will upon weaker nations.

Issue 10: Africa → France plays a significant role in Africa, especially in its former colonies, through extensive aid programs, commercial activities, military agreements, and cultural impact. In those former colonies where the French presence remains important, France contributes to political, military, and social stability. Many think that French policy in Africa - particularly where British interests are also involved - is susceptible to what is known as 'Fashoda syndrome'.

Others have criticized the relationship as neocolonialism under the name *Françafrique*, stressing France's support of various dictatorships, among others: Omar Bongo, Idriss Déby, and Denis Sassou Nguesso.

### **Relationship with the United Nations**

As delegate of the French government, expert on commissions or relevant councils for the United Nations, and chairman of the Consultative Commission on Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, René Cassin played a decisive role in drawing up the 1948 Declaration.

In financial terms, France paid in 6.30% of the regular UN budget in 2008 and is the 5th largest contributor to the UN behind the United States, Japan, Germany and Great Britain. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, France's contribution towards peacekeeping operations amounted to 7%. France provided 330 million Euros of the peacekeeping operations budget between July 2007 and June 2008 (i.e. 0.5% of a total global UN peacekeeping budget of 4.6 billion Euros).

### **Relationships with other United Nations Security Council Members**

P-5 Members: France's voting on Security Council issues is fairly predictable. France, Russia, and China are likely to vote together when it comes to many issues facing the Security Council especially when it comes to active roles in peacekeeping. France uses its veto power sparingly. It used it in 1976 on the question of the Comoros independence, when the island of Mayotte was kept in French territory due to the vote of the local population. The threat of a French veto of resolution on the Iraq war caused friction between France and the United States. France retains strong political and economic influence in its former African colonies and has supplied economic aid and troops for peace-keeping missions in the Ivory Coast and Chad.