

## **MEMBERSHIP POSITION: FRANCE**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Official Name:** French Republic

**Capital:** Paris

**Population:** 66, 259, 012

**Major Languages:** French (official) 100%, rapidly declining regional dialects and languages (Provençal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish)

#### **Major Religions:**

Roman Catholicism, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish

#### **Regional/Economic Organizational Membership:**

ADB (nonregional member), AfDB (nonregional member), Arctic Council (observer), Australia Group, BDEAC, BIS, BSEC (observer), CBSS (observer), CE, CERN, EAPC, EBRD, ECB, EIB, EMU, ESA, EU, FAO, FATF, FZ, G-20, G-5, G-7, G-8, G-10, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICRM, IDA, IEA, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, IGAD (partners), IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, InOC, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, MIGA, MINURSO, MINUSTAH, MONUSCO, NATO, NEA, NSG, OAS (observer), OECD, OIF, OPCW, OSCE, Paris Club, PCA, PIF (partner), Schengen Convention, SELEC (observer), SPC, UN, UN Security Council, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNIFIL, Union Latina, UNITAR, UNMIL, UNOCI, UNRWA, UNSC (permanent), UNTSO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, ZC

### **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 five-year term president shares executive power with his appointee, the prime minister, and the president also serves as the head of state of the country. 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 is composed of 577 seats for the National Assembly and 348 seats for 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. Members of the Senate serve six year terms and members of the National Assembly serve five year terms.

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. The Supreme Court of Appeals is appointed by the president from nominations of the High Council of the Judiciary. There is also the Constitutional Council which are composed of judges appointed by the president, Senate and National Assembly.

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.

Within the past year, France elected/appointed new leaders, President Francois Hollande, and Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault. President Hollande is one of two presidents ever elected to be of the Socialist Party. This will somewhat change the role of government in

France. While former President Nicolas Sarkozy and current President Hollande both turned to a “socialistic” financial approach in government and the economy, President Hollande favors a stronger socialist hold on issues such as social issues, foreign policy and education.

## **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, and it has 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. France has the second largest number of international mission, second only behind the United States.

## **ISSUES SUMMARY**

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.

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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 due to both of the countries wanting to be the main Western European power. The French-German cooperation is seen as the engine of European integration.

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.

A chronic point of contention is the future of the European Union, especially considering that France was one of the founding members 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. Now President Hollande, would like to see the presidents of the European Council and European Commission be combined into a single office directly chosen by the Members of the European Parliament.

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.

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.

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. President Hollande aims for a new contract of Franco-German partnership. He aims for common transport, energy, environment and military headquarters and initiatives.

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.

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.

In 1924, France claimed part of the Antarctic territory called the French Southern and Antarctic Lands. They have a permanent research base in the area with a population that fluctuates between 33 and 78 people. Although France has laid claims to this area for over eighty years, not all of the other nations recognize France's claim to this region of Antarctica.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UN**

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 contributes 6.123% of the regular UN budget in 2011 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 7.55% in the 2010-2011 budgetary year.

### **RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER UNSC 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, and has only used its veto power 18 times, the last time was in 1989, and France is the second only behind China in the least amount of times they have used their veto power. In 1956, France, along with the United Kingdom, used its veto power to veto a resolution to resolve the Suez Canal issue. 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 in 2002 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 peacekeeping missions in the Ivory Coast and Chad.

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The two countries were archenemies for centuries and fought against each other in World War I and World War II, but now Germany and France are working together as major proponents for further integration of the European Union and are sometimes described as —twin countries in their push for further integration.

France–India relations refer to bilateral relations between the French Republic and the Republic of India was established in 1947 and both nations have since established close co-operation in defense and commerce. Nicolas Sarkozy visited India in January 2008 and was the Chief Guest of the Republic Day parade in New Delhi. France was the first country to sign a nuclear energy co-operation agreement with India.

The relations between France and Portugal are situated in the context of European integration. The quality of the relationship between France and Portugal is also related to the position of the Portuguese community in French society (492,000 people in 2005). Accordingly, Portugal provided the largest contingent of European voters during the municipal elections in France in March 2008 (63,385 people).

This year is an important one for the bilateral relationship between France and South Africa. In 2011 France has assumed a double presidency of the G8 and G20, South Africa has been accepted as a rotating member of the United Nations Security Council and Durban will host COP 17, where the international community will attempt to tackle climate change together.

While France and Azerbaijan have diplomatic relations through the European Union and a few other committees, Azerbaijan leaders vow to keep strong ties with the new government transition. France was one of the first countries to recognize Azerbaijan's independence in 1991. Trade between the countries is composed of mainly energy products.

Colombia and France have had widespread relations in years past through treaties to increase commerce and navigation between the two nations. However, shortly in 2008, there were high tensions between the countries over the release of hostages held by the FARC. France and Colombia are however dynamically trading with one another through coal and agricultural products. France is one of the largest investors in Colombia's economy.

Guatemala and French relations are typically in good standing. They both welcome expanded human rights and technological expansion. France is particularly pleased with Guatemala's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty supported by France.

Relations between Morocco and France are tightly knit considering France is one of the leading investors, traders and customer in Morocco. The French support the Moroccan nation through being the leading lender to their nation with \$163 million in net payments in 2009. As far as education, Moroccan students are the biggest foreign students in France.

During a visit in 2011, Prime Minister Gilani of Pakistan, signed agreements to help relations between the countries. The documents between France and Pakistan stood as: a joint political declaration recalling the highlights of our partnership; a joint statement on cooperation in security representing our commitment to enhancing this cooperation in combating terrorism; and a joint declaration regarding the economic and trade partnership. France has also helped in financial aid to the country as well as security training in fighting against terrorism.

The French have upheld the goal of partnership between the EU and ACP nations. In 2010, France and Togo signed an agreement establishing a defense partnership that replaced the preceding defense agreement. France is also Togo's leading lender and trading partner.

France advocates for Security Council reform to better represents countries in today's world. France would like to see Germany, Japan, India and Brazil as permanent members as well as a stronger African presence.