

History of France

Country

France

Capital

Paris

Location

Western

Europe, bordering the Bay of Biscay and English Channel, between Belgium and Spain, southeast of the UK; bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Italy and Spain

Size

547,030 sq km

Terrain

mostly

flat plains or gently rolling hills in north and west; remainder is mountainous, especially Pyrenees in south, Alps in east

Climate

generally

cool winters and mild summers, but mild winters and hot summers along the Mediterranean; occasional strong, cold, dry, north-to-northwesterly wind known as mistral

Languages

French

100%, rapidly declining regional dialects and languages (Provençal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish)

Nationality

noun: Frenchman(men), Frenchwoman(women)

adjective: French

Religion

Roman Catholic 83%-88%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 1%, Muslim 5%-10%, unaffiliated 4%

Currency

euro (EUR)

Exports

machinery and transportation equipment, aircraft, plastics, chemicals, pharmaceutical products, iron and steel, beverages

Gaul

Gaul (Latin Gallia, Greek Galatia) is the region of Western Europe occupied by present-day France, Belgium, western Switzerland and the parts of the Netherlands and Germany on the west bank of the Rhine river.

In English the word Gaul also refers to a Celtic inhabitant of that region in ancient times, but the Gauls were widespread in Europe by Roman times, speaking the Gaulish language. Besides the Gauls living on the territory of modern-day France, there were the Lepontii who had settled in the plains of northern Italy (Gallia Cisalpina), and the Helvetii who settled to the north of the alps, in Raetia.

Gauls under Brennus sacked Rome circa 390 BC. In the Aegean world, a huge migration of Eastern Gauls appeared in Thrace, north of Greece, in 281 BC. Another Gaulish chieftain named Brennus, at the head of a large army, was only turned back from desecrating the Temple of Apollo at Delphi at the last minute, alarmed, it was said, by portents of thunder and lightning. At the same time a migrating band of Celts, some 10,000 fighting men, with their women and children and slaves, were moving through Thrace. Three tribes of Gauls crossed over from Thrace to Asia Minor at express invitation of Nicomedes I, king of Bithynia, who required help in a dynastic struggle against his brother. Eventually they settled down in eastern Phrygia and Cappadocia in central Anatolia, a region henceforth known as Galatia.

Name

In English usage the words Gaul and Gaulish are used synonymously with Latin Gallia, Gallus and Gallicus. However, the similarity of the names is probably accidental: The English words are borrowed from French Gaule and Gaulois, which appear to have been borrowed themselves from Germanic *walha-, the usual word for the non-Germanic people (Celts and Romans indiscriminately), cf. Wales, Cornwall, Walloons and Vlachs. Germanic w is regularly rendered with French gu / g (cf. guerre = war, garde = ward), and the diphthong au is the regular outcome of al before a following consonant (cf. cheval ~ chevaux). Gaule can hardly be derived from Latin Gallia, since g would become j before a (cf. gamba > jambe), and the diphthong au would be incomprehensible. Cf. The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (OUP 1966), p. 391; Nouveau dictionnaire etymologique et historique (Larousse 1990), p. 336.

Roman Gaul

Roman rule in Gaul was established by Julius Caesar, who defeated the Celtic tribes in Gaul 58-51 BC and described his experiences in *De Bello Gallico* (About the Gallic War). The war cost the lives of more than a million Gauls, and a million further were enslaved. The area conquered by Caesar was called Gallia Comata: literally, "long-haired Gaul." The area was subsequently governed as a number of provinces. On December 31, 406 the Vandals, Alans and Suebians crossed the Rhine, beginning an invasion of Gallia, and Roman rule in Gaul ended with the defeat of the Roman governor Syagrius by the Franks in AD 486.

Gaulish tribes

Caesar divided the people of Gaul into three broad groups: the Aquitani; Galli (who in their own language were called Celtae); and Belgae. In the modern sense, Gaulish tribes are defined linguistically, as speakers of dialects of the Gaulish language. While the Aquitani were probably Vascons, the Belgae would thus probably be counted among the Gaulish tribes.

Julius Caesar's comments on these people from his book, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, are worth quoting;

“All Gaul is divided into three parts, one of which the Belgae inhabit, the Aquitani another, those who in their own language are called Celts, in our Gauls, the third.

All these differ from each other in language, customs and laws.

The river Garonne separates the Gauls from the Aquitani; the Marne and the Seine separate them from the Belgae.

Of all these, the Belgae are the bravest, because they are furthest from the civilization and refinement of [our] Province, and merchants least frequently resort to them, and import those things which tend to effeminate the mind; and they are the nearest to the Germans, who dwell beyond the Rhine, with whom they are continually waging war; for which reason the Helvetii also surpass the rest of the Gauls in valor, as they contend with the Germans in almost daily battles, when they either repel them from their own territories, or themselves wage war on their frontiers. One part of these, which it has been said that the Gauls occupy, takes its beginning at the river Rhone; it is bounded by the river Garonne, the ocean, and the territories of the Belgae; it borders, too, on the side of the Sequani and the Helvetii, upon the river Rhine, and stretches toward the north.

The Belgae rises from the extreme frontier of Gaul, extend to the lower part of the river Rhine; and look toward the north and the rising sun.

Aquitania extends from the river Garonne to the Pyrenaeen mountains and to that part of the ocean which is near Spain: it looks between the setting of the sun, and the north star."

Roman Gaul

Roman Gaul consisted of an area of provincial rule in what would become modern day France, Belgium, Luxembourg,

and western Germany. Roman control of the area lasted for nearly 600 years. The Roman Empire began its take-over of what was Celtic Gaul in 121 BCE, when it conquered and annexed the southern reaches of the area. Julius Caesar completed the task by defeating the Celtic tribes in the Gallic Wars of 58-51 BCE.

Geographical divisions

• • • * Gallia Cisalpina or "Gaul this side of the Alps", was an area of the Po Valley in modern Italy.

• • • * Gallia Narbonensis formerly Gallia Transalpina or "Gaul across the Alps". The area originally conquered and annexed in 121 BCE in an attempt to solidify communications between Rome and the Iberian peninsula.

• • • * Gallia Comata or "long haired Gaul". Comata encompassed the lands gained through the victory over the Celts in the Gallic Wars, and would be divided into three provinces.

• • • • • * Gallia Aquitania

• • • • • * Gallia Belgica

• • • • • * Gallia Lugdunensis

Language and culture

The Gaulish language and cultural identity would, in the five centuries between Caesar's conquest and the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, undergo a syncretism, and evolve into a hybrid Gallo-Roman culture. The Druid religion which existed in the area was ordered suppressed by Emperor Claudius I, and Christianity was introduced. The last pockets of Gaulish speakers appear to have lingered until the 6th century. The Gallo-Roman, Vulgar Latin, language of the period then transformed, under various linguistic influences, into the dialects of the modern French language. The Roman administration finally collapsed as troops were withdrawn south 455-475 and the Visigoths, the Burgundians, and the Franks replaced the Empire.

Franks

The Franks or the Frankish people were one of several west Germanic federations. The confederation was formed out of Germanic tribes: Salians, Sugambri, Chamavi, Tencteri, Chattuarii, Bructeri, Usipetes, Ampsivarii, Chatti. They entered the late Roman Empire from present central Germany and settled in northern Gaul where they were accepted as a foederati and established a lasting realm (sometimes referred to as Francia) in an area that covers most of modern-day France and the western regions of Germany (Franconia, Rhineland, Hesse), forming the historic kernel of both these two modern countries. The conversion to Christianity of the pagan Frankish king Clovis was a crucial event in the history of Europe.

The Frankish realm underwent many partitions and repartitions, since the Franks divided their property among surviving sons, and lacking a broad sense of a *res publica*, they conceived of the realm as a large extent of private property. This practice explains in part the difficulty of describing precisely the dates and physical boundaries of any of the Frankish kingdoms and who ruled the various sections. The contraction of literacy while the Franks ruled compounds the problem: they produced few written records. In essence, however, two dynasties of leaders succeeded each other; first the Merovingians and then the Carolingians.

The Merovingian kings claimed descent of their dynasty from the Sicambri, a Scythian or Cimmerian tribe, asserting that this tribe had changed their name to "Franks" in 11 BC, following their defeat and relocation by Drusus, under the leadership of a certain chieftain called Franko. The ethnonym has also been traced to a *frankon "javelin, lance" (Old English *franca*, compare the Saxons, named after the *seax*, and the Lombards, named after the battle-axe; the throwing axe of the Franks is known as the *Francisca*), but conversely, the weapon may also have been named after the tribe. The meaning of "free" (English *frank*, *frankly*) arose because after the conquest of Gaul, only Franks had the status of freemen.

Initially two main subdivisions existed within the Franks: the Salian ("salty") and the Ripuarian ("river") Franks. By the 9th century, if not earlier, this division had in practice become virtually non-existent, but continued for some time to have implications for the legal system under which a person could go on trial.

The earliest records of the Franks

The earliest Frankish history remains relatively unclear. Our main source, the Gallo-Roman chronicler Gregory of Tours, whose *Historia Francorum* (History of the Franks) covers the period up to 594, quotes from otherwise lost sources like Sulpicius Alexander and Frigeridus and profits from Gregory's personal contact with many Frankish notables. Apart from Gregory's History there exist some earlier Roman sources, such as Ammianus and Sidonius Apollinaris.

Gregory states that the Franks originally lived in Pannonia, but later settled on the banks of the Rhine. Additional early sources likewise relate that the Franks migrated in prehistoric times from the mouth of the Danube on the Black Sea, to the Rhine, where they adopted their name (circa. 11 BC) in honour of a hereditary chieftain called Franko – replacing the earlier tribal name Sicambri (or Sugambri) – said to be an offshoot of the Cimmerians or Scythians. This legend of a Scythian or Cimmerian background is thus consistent with the origin legends of nearly all other European nations as well.

Modern scholars of the period of the migrations have similarly suggested that the Frankish Confederacy emerged from the unification of various earlier, smaller Germanic groups (including the Sugambri, Usipeti, Tencteri, and Bructeri) who inhabited the Rhine valley and lands immediately to the east – a social development perhaps accelerated by increasing upheaval in the area arising from the war between Rome and the Marcomanni beginning in 166, and subsequent conflicts of the late 2nd century and the 3rd century. A region in the north-east of the modern-day Netherlands – north of the erstwhile Roman border – bears the name Salland, and may have received that name from the Salians – likewise, the island of Sjælland in Denmark.

Around 250, one group of Franks, taking advantage of a weakened Roman Empire, penetrated as far as Tarragona in present-day Spain, plaguing this region for about a decade before Roman forces subdued them and expelled them from Roman territory. About forty years later, the Franks had the Scheldt region under control and interfered with the waterways to Britain; Roman forces pacified the region, but did not expel the Franks.

The Frankish Empire Foundation

In 355–358, the later Emperor Julian once again found the shipping lanes on the Rhine under control of the Franks and again pacified them. Rome granted a considerable part of Gallia Belgica to the Franks. From this time on they became foederati of the Roman Empire. A region roughly corresponding to present-day Flanders and the Netherlands south of the rivers remains a Germanic-speaking region to this day. (The West Germanic language known as Dutch predominates there now.) The Franks thus became the first Germanic people who permanently settled within Roman territory.

From their heartland, the Franks gradually conquered most of Roman Gaul north of the Loire valley and east of Visigothic Aquitaine. At first they helped defend the border as allies; for example, when a major invasion of mostly East Germanic tribes crossed the Rhine in 406, the Franks fought against these invaders. The major thrust of the invasion passed south of the Loire river. (In the region of Paris, Roman control persisted until 486, a decade after the fall of the emperors of Ravenna, in part due to alliances with the Franks.)

The Merovingians

The reigns of earlier Frankish chieftains – Pharamond (about 419 until about 427) and Clodio (Chlodio) (about 427 until about 447) – seem to owe more to myth than fact, and their relationship to the Merovingian line remains uncertain.

Gregory mentions Chlodio as the first king who started the conquest of Gaul by taking Camaracum (Cambrai) and expanding the border of Frankish territory south to the Somme. This probably took some time; Sidonius relates that Aetius surprised the Franks and drove them back (probably around 431). This period marks the beginning of a situation that would endure for many centuries: the Germanic Franks became rulers over an increasing number of Gallo-Roman subjects.

In 451, Aetius called upon his Germanic allies on Roman soil to help fight off an invasion by the Huns. The Salian Franks answered the call, the Ripuarians fought on both sides as some of them lived outside the Empire. Gregory's sources tentatively identify Meroveus (Merovech) as king of the Franks and possibly a son of Chlodio. Meroveus was succeeded by Childeric I, whose grave, rediscovered in 1653, contained a ring that identified him as king of the Franks.

Clovis

Childeric's son Clovis engaged in a campaign of consolidating the various Frankish kingdoms in Gaul and the Rhineland, which included defeating Syagrius in 486. This victory ended Roman control in the Paris region. In the Battle of Vouille (507), Clovis, with the help of the Burgundians, defeated the Visigoths, expanding his realm eastwards down to the Pyrenees mountains.

The conversion of Clovis to Trinitarian Roman Christianity, after his marriage to the Catholic Burgundian princess Clothilde in 493, may have helped to increase his standing in the eyes of the Pope and the other orthodox Christian rulers. Clovis' conversion signalled the conversion of the rest of the Franks. Because they were able to worship with their Catholic neighbours, the newly-Christianized Franks found much easier acceptance from the local Gallo-Roman population than did the Arian Visigoths, Vandals or Burgundians. The Merovingians thus built what eventually proved the most stable of the successor-kingdoms in the west.

Stability, however, did not feature day-to-day in the Merovingian era. While casual violence existed to a degree in late

Roman times, the introduction of the Germanic practice of the blood-feud to obtain personal justice led to a perception of increased lawlessness. Disruptions to trade occurred, and civic life became increasingly difficult, which led to an increasingly localized and fragmented society based on self-sufficient villas. Literacy practically disappeared outside of churches and monasteries.

The Merovingian chieftains adhered to the Germanic practice of dividing their lands among their sons, and the frequent division, reunification and redivision of territories often resulted in murder and warfare within the leading families. So though Clovis drove the Visigoths out of Gaul, at his death in 511, his four sons divided his realm between themselves, and over the next two centuries his descendants shared the kingship.

The Frankish area expanded further under Clovis' sons, eventually covering most of present-day France, but including areas east of the Rhine river as well, such as Alamannia (today's southwestern Germany) and Thuringia (from 531). Saxony, however, remained outside the Frankish realm until conquered by Charlemagne centuries later.

After a temporary reunification of the separate kingdoms under Clotaire I, the Frankish lands split once again in 561 into Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgundy, which had been absorbed into the Frankish realms through a combination of political marriage and force of arms.

In each Frankish kingdom the Mayor of the Palace served as the chief officer of state. A series of premature deaths beginning with that of Dagobert I in 639 led to a series of under age kings. By the turn of the 8th century, this had allowed the Austrasian Mayors to consolidate power in their own hereditary regency, laying the foundation for a new dynasty: their descendants the Carolingians.

The Carolingians

The Carolingian kingship traditionally begins with the deposition of the last Merovingian king, with papal assent, and the accession in 751 of Pippin the Short, father of Charlemagne. Pippin had succeeded his own father, Charles Martel, as Mayor of the Palace of a reunited and re-erected Frankish kingdom comprised of the formerly independent parts.

Pippin reigned as an elected king. Although such elections happened infrequently, a general rule in Germanic law stated that the king relied on the support of his leading men. These men reserved the right to choose a new "kingworthy" leader out of the ruling clan if they felt that the old one could not lead them in profitable battle. While in later France the kingdom became hereditary, the kings of the later Holy Roman Empire proved unable to abolish the elective tradition and continued as elected rulers until the Empire's formal end in 1806.

Pippin solidified his position in 754 by entering into an alliance with Pope Stephen III, who presented the king of the Franks a copy of the forged "Donation of Constantine" at Paris and in a magnificent ceremony at Saint-Denis anointed the king and his family and declared him *patricius Romanorum* ("protector of the Romans"). The following year Pippin fulfilled his promise to the pope and retrieved the Exarchate of Ravenna, recently fallen to the Lombards, and returned it, not to the Byzantine emperor again, but to the Papacy. Pippin donated the re-conquered areas around Rome to the Pope, laying the foundation for the Papal States in the "Donation of Pippin" which he laid on the tomb of St Peter. The papacy had good cause to expect that the remade Frankish monarchy would provide a deferential power base (*potestas*) in the creation of a new world order, centred on the Pope.

Charlemagne

Upon Pippin's death in 768, his sons, Charles and Carloman, once again divided the kingdom between themselves. However, Carloman withdrew to a monastery and died shortly thereafter, leaving sole rule to his brother, who would later become known as Charlemagne or Karl der Große (Charles the Great), a powerful, intelligent, and modestly literate figure who became a legend for the later history of both France and Germany. Charlemagne restored an equal balance between emperor and pope.

From 772 onwards, Charles conquered and eventually defeated the Saxons to incorporate their realm into the Frankish kingdom. This campaign expanded the practice of non-Roman Christian rulers undertaking the conversion of their neighbours by armed force; Frankish Catholic missionaries, along with others from Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England, had entered Saxon lands since the mid-8th century, resulting in increasing conflict with the Saxons, who resisted the missionary efforts and parallel military incursions. Charles' main Saxon opponent, Widukind, accepted baptism in 785 as part of a peace agreement, but other Saxon leaders continued to fight. Upon his victory in 787 at Verdun, Charles ordered the wholesale killing of thousands of pagan Saxon prisoners. After several more uprisings, the Saxons suffered definitive defeat in 804. This expanded the Frankish kingdom eastwards as far as the Elbe river, something the Roman empire had only attempted once, and at which it failed in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (9 AD). In order to more effectively Christianize the Saxons, Charles founded several bishoprics, among them Bremen, Munster, Paderborn, and Osnabruck.

At the same time (773â€“774), Charles conquered the Lombards and thus could include northern Italy in his sphere of influence. He renewed the Vatican donation and the promise to the papacy of continued Frankish protection.

In 788, Tassilo, dux (duke) of Bavaria rebelled against Charles. Quashing the rebellion incorporated Bavaria into Charles' kingdom. This not only added to the royal fisc, but also drastically reduced the power and influence of the Agilolfings (Tassilo's family), another leading family among the Franks and potential rivals. Until 796, Charles continued to expand the kingdom even farther southeast, into today's Austria and parts of Croatia.

Charlemagne's kingdom survived its founder and covered much of Western Europe from 795 until 843 when a treaty split it amongst his grandsons: Central Franks ruled by Lothair I (green), East Franks ruled by Louis the German (yellow), and Charles the Bald led West Franks (purple).

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Charles thus created a realm that reached from the Pyrenees in the southwest (actually, including an area in Northern Spain (Marca Hispanica) after 795) over almost all of today's France (except Brittany, which the Franks never conquered) eastwards to most of today's Germany, including northern Italy and today's Austria. In the hierarchy of the church, bishops and abbots looked to the patronage of the king's palace, where the sources of patronage and security lay. Charles had fully emerged as the leader of Western Christendom, and his patronage of monastic centres of learning gave rise to the "Carolingian Renaissance" of literate culture.

On Christmas Day, 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charles as "Emperor of the Romans" in Rome in a ceremony presented as if a surprise (Charlemagne did not wish to be indebted to the bishop of Rome), a further papal move in the series of symbolic gestures that had been defining the mutual roles of papal auctoritas and imperial potestas. Though Charlemagne, in deference to Byzantine outrage, preferred the title "Emperor, king of the Franks and Lombards", the ceremony formally acknowledged the Frankish Empire as the successor of the (Western) Roman one (although only the forged "Donation" gave the pope political authority to do this), thus triggering a series of disputes with the Byzantines around the Roman name. After an initial protest at the usurpation, in 812, the Byzantine Emperor Michael I Rhangabes acknowledged Charlemagne as co-Emperor. The coronation gave permanent legitimacy to Carolingian primacy among the Franks. The Ottonians later resurrected this connection in 962.

Upon Charlemagne's death on January 28, 814 in Aachen, he was buried in his own Palace Chapel at Aachen.

Later Carolingians

Charlemagne had several sons, but only one survived him. This son, Louis the Pious, followed his father as the ruler of a united Empire. But sole inheritance remained a matter of chance, rather than intent. When Louis died in 840, the Carolingians adhered to the custom of partible inheritance, and the Treaty of Verdun in 843 divided the Empire in three:

1. Louis' eldest surviving son Lothair I became Emperor and ruler of the Central Franks. His three sons in turn divided this kingdom between them into Lotharingia, Burgundy and (Northern) Italy. These areas would later vanish as separate kingdoms.

2. Louis' second son, Louis the German, became King of the East Franks. This area formed the kernel of the later Holy Roman Empire, which eventually evolved into modern Germany. For a list of successors, see the List of German Kings and Emperors.

3. His third son Charles the Bald became King of the West Franks; this area became the foundation for the later France. For his successors, see the List of French monarchs.

Subsequently, at the Treaty of Mersen (870) the partitions were recast, to the detriment of Lotharingia.

On December 12, 884, Charles the Fat reunited most of the Carolingian Empire, aside from Burgundy.

In late 887, his nephew, Arnulf of Carinthia revolted and assumed the title as King of the East Franks ('Germany'). Charles retired and soon died on January 13, 888. Odo, Count of Paris was chosen to rule in the west ('France'), and was crowned the next month.

The Carolingians were 10 years later restored in France, and ruled until 987, when the last Frankish King, Louis V, died

Carolingian legacy

Although an historical accident, the unification of most of what is now western and central Europe under one chief ruler provided a fertile ground for the continuation of what is known as the Carolingian Renaissance. Despite the almost constant internecine warfare that the Carolingian Empire endured, the extension of Frankish rule and Roman Christianity over such a large area ensured a fundamental unity throughout the Empire. Each part of the Carolingian Empire developed differently; Frankish government and culture depended very much upon individual rulers and their aims.

Those aims shifted as easily as the changing political alliances within the Frankish leading families. However, those families, the Carolingians included, all shared the same basic beliefs and ideas of government. These ideas and beliefs had their roots in a background that drew from both Roman and Germanic tradition, a tradition that began before the Carolingian ascent and continued to some extent even after the deaths of Louis the Pious and his sons.

Crusaders and other Western Europeans as "Franks"

Because the Frankish kingdom dominated Western Europe for centuries, terms derived from "Frank" were used by many in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and beyond as a synonym for Roman Christians (e.g., al-Faraj in Arabic, farangi in Farsi, Feringhi in Hindustani, and Frangos in Greek). During the crusades, which were at first led mostly by nobles from northern France who claimed descent from Charlemagne, both Muslims and Christians used these terms as ethnonyms to describe the Crusaders. This usage is often followed by modern historians, who call Western Europeans in the eastern Mediterranean "Franks" regardless of their country of origin. Compare with Rhomaios, Rumi ("Roman"), used for Orthodox Christians.

France in the Middle Ages

France in the Middle Ages is, for the purpose of this article, the history of the region roughly corresponding to modern day France from the death of Charlemagne in 814 to the middle of the 15th century. The Middle Ages in France were marked by (1) the Viking invasions and the piecemeal dismantling of the Carolingian Empire by local powers, (2) the elaboration of the seigneurial economic system and the feudal system of rights and obligations between lords and vassals, (3) the growth of the Capetian dynasty and their struggles with the expanding Norman and Angevin regions, (4) a period of artistic and literary outpouring from the 12th to the early 14th centuries, (5) the rise of the Valois dynasty, the protracted dynastic crisis of the Hundred Years' War and the catastrophic Black Death epidemic, and (6) the expansion of the French nation in the 15th century and the creation of a sense of French identity.

Medieval France and the French Geography

Discussion of the size of France in the Middle Ages is complicated by distinctions between lands personally held by the king (the "domaine royal") and lands held in homage by another lord. The notion of res publica inherited from the Roman province of Gaul was not fully maintained by the Frankish kingdom and the Carolingian Empire, and by the early years of the Capetians, the French kingdom was more or less a fiction. The "domaine royal" of the Capetians was limited to the regions around Paris, Bourges and Sens. The great majority of French territory was part of Aquitaine, the Duchy of Normandy, the Duchy of Brittany, the Comte of Champagne, the Duchy of Burgundy, and other territories. In principle, the lords of these lands owed homage to the French king for their possession, but in reality the Capetian king in Paris had little control over these lands, and this was to be confounded by the uniting of Normandy, Aquitaine and England under the Plantagenet dynasty in the 12th century.

Philippe II of France undertook a massive French expansion in the 13th century, but most of these acquisitions were lost both by the royal system of "apanage" (the giving of regions to members of the royal family to be administered) and through losses in the Hundred Years War. Only in the 15th century would Charles VII of France and Louis XI of France gain control of most of modern day France (except for Brittany, Navarre and areas to the east and north).

The weather in France and Europe in the Middle Ages was significantly milder than during the periods preceding or following it. Historians refer to this as the "Medieval Warm Period", lasting from about the 10th century to about the 14th century. Part of the French population growth in this period (see below) is directly linked to this temperate weather and its effect on crops and livestock.

Demographics

France in the Middle Ages was the most populated region in Europe (and the third most populous country in the world, behind only China and India), although there were great differences in density between the populated north and the relatively unpopulated south. In the 14th century, before the arrival of the Black Death, the total population of the area covered by modern day France has been estimated by some at around 20 million (this would again be the population of France in the 1600s). Paris, the largest city in Europe, may have had upwards of 200,000 inhabitants. The Black Death killed an estimated one-third of the population from its appearance in 1348. The concurrent Hundred Years' War slowed recovery. It would be the early sixteenth century before the population recovered to mid-fourteenth century levels (see Demographics of France).

In the early Middle Ages, France was a center of Jewish learning, but increasing persecution, and a series of expulsions in the 14th century, caused considerable suffering for French Jews (see History of the Jews in France).

Language

Up to roughly 1340, the Romance languages spoken in the Middle Ages in the Northern half of what is today's France

are collectively known as "ancien francais" ("Old French") or "langues d'oïl" (languages where one says "oil" to mean "yes"): following the Germanic invasions of France in the fifth century, these Northern dialects had developed distinctly different phonetic and syntactical structures from the languages spoken in Southern France (collectively known as "langues d'oc" or the Occitan language family, of which the largest group is the Provençal language). The Western peninsula of Brittany spoke Breton, a Celtic language. Catalan was spoken in the South, and Germanic languages and Francoprovençal were spoken in the East.

The various "Langues d'oïl" and "Langue d'oc" dialects developed into what are recognised as regional languages today. Languages which developed from dialects of Old French include: Bourguignon, Champenois, Franc-Comtois, Francien (theoretical), Gallo, Lorrain, Norman, Anglo-Norman (spoken in England after the Norman Conquest of 1066), Picard, Poitevin-Saintongeais, and Walloon. Languages which developed from dialects of the Occitan family include: Auvergnat, Gascon, Languedocien, Limousin, Provençal.

Because of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, medieval French was also spoken in the Anglo-Norman realm, including England, from (1066-1204).

From 1340 to the beginning of the seventeenth century, a generalized French language became clearly distinguished from the other competing Oil languages. This is referred to as Middle French ("moyen francais") and would be the basis of Modern French. Although French gradually became an important cultural and diplomatic language, it made few inroads into Occitan and other linguistic regions other than in areas where the French monarchy had established significant control.

Among educated elites, clerics and members of the clergy, medieval Latin was the predominant diplomatic and legal language in France until the middle of the 16th century.

Historical OverviewThe Carolingian Legacy

During the latter years of the elderly Charlemagne's rule, the Vikings made advances along the northern and western perimeters of his kingdom. After Charlemagne's death in 814 his heirs were incapable of maintaining any kind of political unity and the once great Empire began to crumble. Viking advances were allowed to escalate, their dreaded longboats were sailing up the Loire and Seine Rivers and other inland waterways, wreaking havoc and spreading terror. In 843 the Viking invaders murdered the Bishop of Nantes and a few years after that, they burned the Church of Saint-Martin at Tours. Emboldened by their successes, in 845 the Vikings sacked Paris.

The Treaty of Verdun of 843 divided the Carolingian Empire, and Charles the Bald ruled over Western Francia, roughly corresponding to the territory of modern France.

During the reign of Charles the Simple (898-922), Normans under Hrolf Ganger were settled in an area on either side of the Seine River, downstream from Paris, that was to become Normandy.

The Capetians

The Carolingians were subsequently to share the fate of their predecessors: after an intermittent power struggle between the two families, the accession (987) of Hugh Capet, Duke of France and Count of Paris, established on the throne the Capetian dynasty which with its Valois and Bourbon offshoots was to rule France for more than 800 years.

The Carolingian era had seen the gradual emergence of institutions which were to condition France's development for centuries to come: the acknowledgement by the crown of the administrative authority of the realm's nobles within their territories in return for their (sometimes tenuous) loyalty and military support, a phenomenon readily visible in the rise of the Capetians and foreshadowed to some extent by the Carolingians' own rise to power.

The old order left the new dynasty in immediate control of little beyond the middle Seine and adjacent territories, while powerful territorial lords such as the 10th and 11th-century counts of Blois accumulated large domains of their own through marriage and through private arrangements with lesser nobles for protection and support.

The area around the lower Seine, ceded to Scandinavian invaders as the Duchy of Normandy in 911, became a source of particular concern when Duke William took possession of the kingdom of England in the Norman Conquest of 1066, making himself and his heirs the King's equal outside France (where he was still nominally subject to the Crown).

Worse was to follow. A protracted succession dispute among William's descendants ended in 1154 with the coronation of Henry II. Henry had inherited the Duchy of Normandy and the County of Anjou from his father, Geoffrey of Anjou, and in 1152, he had married France's newly-divorced ex-queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, who ruled much of southwest France. After defeating a revolt led by Eleanor and three of their four adult sons, Henry had Eleanor imprisoned, made the Duke of Brittany his vassal, and in effect ruled the western half of France as a greater power than the French throne. However,

disputes between Henry's descendants over the division of his French territories, coupled with Richard I's lengthy absence during, and imprisonment while returning from, the Third Crusade, allowed Philip II to recover influence over most of this territory. After the French victory at the Battle of Bouvines in 1214, the English monarchs maintained power only in southwestern Duchy of Guyenne.

The 13th century was to bring the crown important gains also in the south, where a papal-royal crusade against the region's Albigensian or Cathar heretics (1209) led to the incorporation into the royal domain of Lower (1229) and Upper (1271) Languedoc. Philip IV's seizure of Flanders (1300) was less successful, ending two years later in the rout of her knights by the forces of the Flemish cities at the Battle of the Golden Spurs near Kortrijk (Courtrai).

The Hundred Years War

The death of Charles IV in 1328 without male heirs brought the Valois dynasty to the throne under the Salic law, though this was disputed by English kings in the Hundred Years' War.

The extinction of the main Capetian line (1328) brought to the throne the related house of Valois, but as Philip IV's grandson, Edward III of England claimed the French crown for himself, this helped inaugurate the succession of conflicts known collectively as the Hundred Years' War. The French claimed that the crown couldn't pass through a woman (Philip IV's daughter was Isabella, whose son was Edward III). So instead the Valois dynasty came to power - Philip VI, son of Charles of Valois, was king from 1328-1350. This, in addition to a long-standing dispute over the rights to Gascony in the south of France, and the relationship between England and the Flemish cloth towns, led to the Hundred Years' War of 1337-1453. The following century was to see devastating warfare, peasant revolts in both England (Wat Tyler's revolt of 1381) and France (the Jacquerie of 1358) and the growth of nationhood in both countries.

French losses in the first phase of the conflict (1337-1360) were partly reversed in the second (1369-1396); but Henry V's shattering victory at the battle of Agincourt in 1415 against a France now bitterly divided between rival Armagnac and Burgundian factions of the royal house was to lead to his son Henry VI's recognition as king in Paris seven years later under the 1420 Treaty of Troyes, reducing Valois rule to the lands south of the Loire River.

France's humiliation was abruptly reversed in 1429 by the appearance of a restorationist movement symbolised by the Lorraine peasant maid Joan of Arc, who claimed the guidance of divine voices for the campaign which rapidly ended the English siege of Orleans and ended in Charles VII's coronation in the historic city of Reims. Subsequently captured by the Burgundians and sold to their English allies, her execution for heresy in 1431 redoubled her value as the embodiment of France's cause.

Reconciliation between the king and Philippe of Burgundy (1435) removed the greatest obstacle to French recovery, leading to the recapture of Paris (1436), Normandy (1450) and Guienne (1453), reducing England's foothold to a small area around Calais (lost also in 1558). After the war, France's emergence as a powerful national monarchy was crowned by the "incorporation" of the Duchy of Burgundy (1477) and Brittany (1532), which had previously been independent European states.

The losses of the century of war were enormous, particularly owing to the plague (the Black Death, usually considered an outbreak of bubonic plague), which arrived from Italy in 1348, spreading rapidly up the Rhone valley and thence across most of the country: it is estimated that a population of some 18-20 million in modern-day France at the time of the 1328 hearth-tax returns had been reduced 150 years later by 40% or more.

Early Modern France

Early Modern France is the portion of French history that falls in the early modern period from the mid 15th century to the end of the 18th century (or from the French Renaissance to the eve of the French Revolution). During this period France evolved from a feudal country to an increasingly centralized state (albeit with many regional differences) organized around a powerful absolute monarchy which relied on the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings and the explicit support of the established Church.

Early Modern France and the French Geography

During this period, France expanded to nearly its modern territorial form through the acquisition of Picardy, Burgundy, Anjou, Maine, Provence, Brittany, Franche-Comte, Flanders, Navarre, Roussillon, the Duchy of Lorraine, Alsace and Corsica. Only the Duchy of Savoy, the city of Nice and some other small papal (like Avignon) and foreign possessions would be acquired later. France also embarked on exploration, colonization and mercantile exchanges with the Americas (New France, Louisiana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Guyane), India (Pondichery), the Indian ocean (Reunion), the Far East and portions of Africa.

The administrative and legal system in France in this period is generally called the Ancien Regime (see below).

Demographics

The Black Death had killed an estimated one-third of the population of France from its appearance in 1348. The concurrent Hundred Years' War slowed recovery. It would be the early sixteenth century before the population recovered to mid-fourteenth century levels. With an estimated population of 17 million in 1400, 20 million in the 1600s, and 28 million in 1789, until 1795 France was the most populated country in Europe (above even Russia and twice the size of Britain and Holland) and the third most populous country in the world, behind only China and India (see Demographics of France).

These demographic changes also lead to a massive increase in urban populations, although on the whole France remained a profoundly rural country. Paris was one of the most populated cities in Europe (estimated at 400,000 inhabitants in 1550; 650,000 at the end of the 18th century). Other major French cities include Lyons, Rouen, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Marseille. These centuries saw a number of periods of epidemics and crop failures due to wars and climatic changes (historians speak of the period 1550-1850 as the "Little Ice Age"): in 1693-1694, France lost 6% of its population; in the extremely harsh winter of 1709, France lost 3.5% of its population (in the past 300 years, no period has been so proportionally deadly for the French, both World Wars included).

Language

Linguistically, the differences in France were extreme. Before the Renaissance, the language spoken in the north of France was a collection of different dialects called Oil languages. By the 16th century there had developed a generalized form of French (called Middle French) which would be the basis of the standardized "modern" French of the 17th and 18th century (in 1539, with the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterets, Francis I made French alone the language for legal and juridical acts). Nevertheless, in 1790, perhaps 50% of the French population did not speak or understand this modern French; the southern half of the country continued to speak one of the Occitan languages (such as Provençal) and other inhabitants spoke Breton, Catalan, Basque, Flemish, and Franco-provençal. In the north of France, regional dialects of the various langues d'oïl continued to be spoken in rural communities. France would only become a linguistically unified country by the end of the 19th century.

History of Early Modern France

The Early Modern period in French history spans the following reigns:

• • • * Valois Dynasty

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• • • • • • • • • • o Henry II and Catherine de Medici

• • • • • • • • • • o Francis II

• • • • • • • • • • o Charles IX

• • • • • • • • • • o Henry III

• • • • • * House of Bourbon

• • • • • • • • • • o Henry IV

• • • • • • • • • • o the Regency of Marie de Medici

• • • • • • • • • • o Louis XIII and his minister Cardinal Richelieu

• • • • • • • • • • o the Regency of Anne of Austria and her minister Cardinal Mazarin

• • • • • • • • • • o Louis XIV

• • • • • • • • • • o the Regence of Philip II of Orleans

• • • • • • • • • • o Louis XV

• • • • • • • • • • o Louis XVI

French Renaissance

For the cultural and artistic movement in France from the late 15th century to the early 17th century, see French Renaissance.

Despite the beginnings of rapid demographic and economic recovery after the Black Death of the 14th century, the gains of the previous half-century were to be jeopardised by a further protracted series of conflicts, this time in Italy (1494-1559), where French efforts to gain dominance ended in the increased power of the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperors of Germany.

Barely were the Italian Wars over, when France was plunged into a domestic crisis with far-reaching consequences. Despite the conclusion of a Concordat between France and the Papacy (1516), granting the crown unrivalled power in senior ecclesiastical appointments, France was deeply affected by the Protestant Reformation's attempt to break the

unity of Roman Catholic Europe. A growing urban-based Protestant minority (later dubbed Huguenots) faced ever harsher repression under the rule of King Henry II. After Henry II's unfortunate death in a joust, the country was ruled by his widow Catherine de Medici and her sons Francis II, Charles IX and Henry III. Renewed Catholic reaction headed by the powerful dukes of Guise culminated in a massacre of Huguenots (1562), starting the first of the French Wars of Religion, during which English, German and Spanish forces intervened on the side of rival Protestant and Catholic forces.

The conflict was ended by the assassination of both Henry of Guise (1588) and Henry III (1589), the accession of the Protestant king of Navarre as Henry IV (first king of the Bourbon dynasty) and his subsequent abandonment of Protestantism (1593), his acceptance by most of the Catholic establishment (1594) and by the Pope (1595), and his issue of the toleration decree known as the Edict of Nantes (1598), which guaranteed freedom of private worship and civil equality.

France in the 17th and 18th centuries

France's pacification under Henry IV laid much of the ground for the beginnings of France's rise to European hegemony, although at his death in 1610, the Regency of his wife Marie de Medici suffered from internal conflicts with the noble families.

Henry IV's son Louis XIII and his minister (1624-1642) Cardinal Richelieu, elaborated a policy against Spain and the German emperor during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) which had broken out among the lands of Germany's Holy Roman Empire. An English-backed Huguenot rebellion (1625-1628) defeated, France intervened directly (1635) in the wider European conflict following her ally (Protestant) Sweden's failure to build upon initial success.

After the death of both king and cardinal, the Peace of Westphalia (1648) secured universal acceptance of Germany's political and religious fragmentation, but the Regency of Anne of Austria and her minister Cardinal Mazarin experienced a civil uprising known as the Fronde (1648-1653) which expanded into a Franco-Spanish War (1653-1659). The Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659) formalised France's seizure (1642) of the Spanish territory of Roussillon after the crushing of the ephemeral Catalan Republic and ushered a short period of peace.

During the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), France was the dominant power in Europe, aided by the diplomacy of Richelieu's successor (1642-1661) Cardinal Mazarin and the economic policies (1661-1683) of Colbert. Renewed war (the War of Devolution 1667-1668 and the Franco-Dutch War 1672-1678) brought further territorial gains (Artois and western Flanders and the free county of Burgundy, left to the Empire in 1482), but at the cost of the increasingly concerted opposition of rival powers.

Following the seizure of the (then separate) English, Irish and Scottish thrones by the Dutch prince William of Orange in 1688, the anti-French "Grand Alliance" of 1689 inaugurated more than a century of intermittent European conflict in which Britain would play an ever more important role, seeking in particular to keep France out of the Netherlands (the Dutch provinces and the future Belgium, then under Spanish rule).

After the Nine Years War of 1689-1697 gained France only Haiti (lost to a slave revolt a century later), the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) ended with the undoing of Louis's dreams of a Franco-Spanish Bourbon empire: the two conflicts strained French resources already weakened by disastrous harvests in the 1690s and in 1709, as well as by the revocation (1685) of the Edict of Nantes and the consequent loss of Huguenot support and manpower.

The reign (1715-1774) of Louis XV saw an initial return to peace and prosperity under the regency (1715-1723) of Philip II, Duke of Orleans, whose policies were largely continued (1726-1743) by Cardinal Fleury, prime minister in all but name, renewed war with the Empire (1733-1735 and 1740-1748) being fought largely in the East. But alliance with the traditional Habsburg enemy (the "Diplomatic Revolution" of 1756) against the rising power of Britain and Prussia led to costly failure in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763).

On the eve of the French Revolution of 1789, France was a predominantly rural country ruled by an absolute monarch and the aristocracy under the now-called ancien regime, very backwards in many ways (for instance, torture was considered an appropriate means of extracting confessions in criminal trials; there was no freedom of religion, except that Protestantism was tolerated). The ideas of the Enlightenment had however begun to permeate the educated classes of society.

Political Structure of the Ancien Regime

The political structure of the early modern period in France is often referred to as the Ancien Regime. It was the result of centuries of nation-building, legislative acts (like the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterets), internal conflicts and civil wars. Much of the medieval political centralization of France had been lost in the Hundred Years War and the Valois Dynasty's attempts at re-establishing control over the scattered political centers of the country were hindered by the Wars of Religion. Much of the reigns of Henry IV, Louis XIII and the early years of Louis XIV were shaped by powerful internal

conflicts which protested against this centralization.

The need for centralization was directly linked to the question of royal finances and the ability to wage war. The internal conflicts and dynastic crises of the 16th and 17th centuries (the Wars of Religion, the conflict with the Habsburgs) and the territorial expansion of France in the 17th century demanded great sums which needed to be raised through taxes, such as the *taille* and the *gabelle* and by contributions of men and service from the nobility.

One key to this centralization was the replacing of personal "clientel" systems organized around the king and other nobles by institutional systems around the state. The creation of the *Intendants* -- representatives of royal power in the provinces -- would do much to undermine local control by regional nobles. The same was true with the greater reliance shown by the royal court on the "*noblesse de robe*" as judges and royal counselors. The creation of regional *parlements* had initially the same goal of facilitating the introduction of royal power into newly assimilated territories, but as the *parlements* gained in self-assurance, they began to be sources of disunity.

Despite efforts by the kings to create a centralized state, France in this period remained a patchwork of local privileges and historical differences. The south of France was governed by written law adapted from the Roman legal system, the north of France by common law (in 1453 these common laws were codified into a written form). Administrative (including taxation), legal (*parlement*), judicial, and ecclesiastic divisions and prerogatives overlapped. Certain provinces and cities had won special privileges (such as lower rates in the *gabelle* or salt tax). The French nobility struggled to maintain their own rights in the matters of local government and justice. Many of these irregularities would continue until the French Revolution imposed a radical suppression of administrative incoherence.

The Economy of Early Modern France

Figures cited in the following section are given in *livre tournois*, the standard "money of account" used in the period.

Economy of the "Grand Siecle"

Louis XIV's glory was irrevocably linked to two great projects -- military conquest and the building of Versailles -- both of which required enormous sums of money (from 1664-1690, 81 million *livres* were spent on the chateau, 11 million *livres* alone for the year 1685; the vast sums needed for its construction were often in competition with military expenditures). Louis XIV's economic policy was largely the creation of his minister of finances, Jean-Baptiste Colbert.

Colbert's mercantile system used protectionism and state sponsored manufacturing to attract foreign money to France by the production of luxury goods. The state established new industries (the royal tapestry works at Beauvais, French quarries for marble), took over established industries (the Gobelins taping works), protected inventors, invited workmen from foreign countries (Venetian glass and Flemish cloth manufacturing), and prohibited French workmen from emigrating. To maintain the character of French goods in foreign markets, Colbert had the quality and measure of each article fixed by law, and severely punished breaches of the regulations.

Unable to abolish the duties on the passage of goods from province to province, Colbert did what he could to induce the provinces to equalize them. His regime improved roads and canals. To encourage trade with the Levant, Senegal, Guinea and other places for the importing of coffee, cotton, dyewoods, fur, pepper, and sugar, Colbert granted privileges to companies like the important French East India Company (founded in 1664), but none of these ventures proved successful. Colbert achieved a lasting legacy in his establishment of the French royal navy; he reconstructed the works and arsenal of Toulon, founded the port and arsenal of Rochefort, and the naval schools of Rochefort, Dieppe and Saint-Malo. He fortified, with some assistance from Vauban, many ports including those of Calais, Dunkirk, Brest and Le Havre.

Colbert's economic policies were a key element in Louis XIV's creation of a centralized and fortified state and in the promotion of French glory, including the construction of Versailles, but they had many failures: they were overly restrictive on workers, discouraged inventiveness and had unreasonably high tariffs.

The Revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685 created additional economic problems: of the more than 200,000 Huguenot refugees who fled France (to Prussia, Switzerland, England, Ireland, United Provinces, Denmark, and eventually America), many were highly educated skilled artisans and business owners (tapestries, weaving, silver smiths, plate making) who took their skills, businesses (and in some cases their Catholic workers) with them. The expansion of French as a European *lingua franca* in the 18th century and the modernization of the Prussian army have also been credited to them.

The wars and the weather at the end of the century brought the economy to the brink: in 1683 the national deficit was 16 million *livres*; from 1700-1706 it was 750 million *livres*; from 1708-1715 the deficit reached 1,1 trillion *livres*. To increase tax revenues, the *taille* was augmented, as too the price of official posts in the administration and judicial system. With the borders guarded, international trade was severely hindered. The economic plight of the vast majority of the French population -- predominantly simple farmers -- was extremely precarious, and the effects of the "Little Ice Age" made themselves felt in dead cold winters and crop failures from the 1680s on (as stated above, in 1693-1694, France lost

6% of its population; in the extremely harsh winter of 1709, France lost 3.5% of its population). Unwilling to sell or transport their much needed grain to the army, many peasants rebelled or attacked grain convoys, but they were repressed by the state. Meanwhile, wealthy families with stocks of grains survived relatively unscathed; in 1689 and again in 1709, in a gesture of solidarity with his suffering people, Louis XIV had his royal dinnerware and other objects of gold and silver melted down.

France in the nineteenth century

The History of France from 1789 to 1914 (the long 19th century) extends from the French Revolution to World War I and includes the periods of the First French Empire, the Restoration under Louis XVIII and Charles X (1814-1830), the July Monarchy under Louis Philippe d'Orleans (1830-1848), the Second Republic (1848-1852), the Second Empire under Napoleon III (1852-1871), and the first decades of the Third Republic (1871-1940).

France and the French in the 19th century Geography

At the time of the French Revolution, France had expanded to nearly her modern territorial limits. The nineteenth century would complete the process by the annexation of the Duchy of Savoy and the city of Nice (first during the First Empire, and then definitively in 1860) and some small papal (like Avignon) and foreign possessions. France's territorial limits were greatly extended during the Empire through Napoleon Bonaparte's military conquests and re-organization of Europe, but these were reversed by the Vienna Congress. In 1830 France invaded Algeria, and in 1848 this north African country was fully integrated into France as a department. With the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, France lost her provinces of Alsace and portions of Lorraine to Germany (see Alsace-Lorraine); these lost provinces would only be regained at the end of World War I.

Along with the conquest and annexation of Algeria, the late nineteenth century saw France embark on a massive program of overseas imperialism -- including French Indochina (modern day Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos) and Africa (the Scramble for Africa brought France most of North-West and Central Africa) -- which brought it in direct competition with British interests.

Demographics

Between 1795 and 1866, metropolitan France (i.e. without overseas or colonial possessions) was the second most populous country of Europe, behind Russia, and the fourth most populous country in the world (behind China, India, and Russia); between 1866 and 1911, metropolitan France was the third most populous country of Europe, behind Russia and Germany. Unlike other European countries, France did not experience a strong population growth from the middle of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. The French population in 1789 is estimated at roughly 28 million; by 1850, it was 36 million and in 1880 it was around 39 million (see Demographics of France).

Until 1850, population growth was mainly in the countryside, but a period of massive urbanization began under the Second Empire. Unlike in England, industrialization was a late phenomenon in France. The Napoleonic wars had hindered early industrialization and France's economy in the 1830s (limited iron industry, under-developed coal supplies, a massive rural population) had not developed sufficiently to support an industrial expansion of any scope. French rail transport only began hesitantly in the 1830s, and would not truly develop until the 1840s. By the revolution of 1848, a growing industrial workforce began to participate actively in French politics, but their hopes were largely betrayed by the policies of the Second Empire. The loss of the important coal, steel and glass production regions of Alsace and Lorraine would cause further problems. The industrial worker population increased from 23% in 1870 to 39% in 1914. Nevertheless, France remained an extremely rural society into the 20th century (more than 40% of the population were still farmers in 1914).

In the 19th century, France was a country of immigration for peoples and political refugees from Eastern Europe (Germany, Poland, Hungary, Russia, Ashkenazi Jews) and from the Mediterranean (Italy, Spanish Sephardic Jews and North-African Mizrahi Jews).

France was the first country in Europe to emancipate its Jewish population during the French Revolution. In 1872, there was an estimated 86,000 Jews living in France (by 1945 this would increase to 300,000), many of whom integrated (or attempted to integrate) into French society, although the Dreyfus affair would reveal anti-semitism in certain classes of French society (see History of the Jews in France).

With the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, 5000 French refugees from these regions immigrated to Algeria in the 1870s and 1880s, as did too other Europeans (Spain, Malta) seeking opportunity. In 1889, non-French Europeans in Algeria were granted French citizenship (Arabs would however only win political rights in 1947).

Language

Linguistically, France was a patchwork. In 1790, perhaps 50% of the French population did not speak or understand French. The southern half of the country continued to speak one of the Occitan languages (such as Provençal) and other

inhabitants spoke Breton, Catalan, Basque, Flemish, Franco-provencal, Alsatian and Corsican. In the north of France, regional dialects of the various langues d'oïl continued to be spoken in rural communities. France would only become a linguistically unified country by the end of the 19th century, and in particular through the educational policies of Jules Ferry during the French Third Republic. From an illiteracy rate of 33% among peasants in 1870, by 1914 almost all French could read and understand the national language, although 50% continued to understand or speak a regional language of France (in today's France, only an estimated 10% still understand a regional language).

Historical OverviewThe Period of the French Revolution

Louis XVI of France's reign saw a temporary revival of French fortunes, but the over-ambitious projects and military campaigns of the 18th century had produced chronic financial problems. Deteriorating economic conditions, popular resentment against the complicated system of privileges granted the nobility and clerics, and a lack of alternate avenues for change were among the principal causes for convoking the Estates-General which convened in Versailles in 1789. On May 28, 1789, the Abbe Sieyes moved that the Third Estate proceed with verification of its own powers and invite the other two estates to take part, but not to wait for them. They proceeded to do so, and then voted a measure far more radical, declaring themselves the National Assembly, an assembly not of the Estates but of "the People".

Louis XVI shut the Salle des Etats where the Assembly met. The Assembly moved their deliberations to the king's tennis court, where they proceeded to swear the Tennis Court Oath (June 20, 1789), under which they agreed not to separate until they had given France a constitution. A majority of the representatives of the clergy soon joined them, as did forty-seven members of the nobility. By June 27 the royal party had overtly given in, although the military began to arrive in large numbers around Paris and Versailles. On July 9, the Assembly reconstituted itself as the National Constituent Assembly.

On July 11, 1789, King Louis, acting under the influence of the conservative nobles, as well as his wife, Marie Antoinette, and brother, the Comte d'Artois, banished the reformist minister Necker and completely reconstructed the ministry. Much of Paris, presuming this to be the start of a royal coup, moved into open rebellion. Some of the military joined the mob; others remained neutral. On July 14, 1789, after four hours of combat, the insurgents seized the Bastille prison, killing the governor and several of his guards. The king and his military supporters backed down, at least for the time being. After this violence, nobles started to flee the country as emigres, some of whom began plotting civil war within the kingdom and agitating for a European coalition against France. Insurrection and the spirit of popular sovereignty spread throughout France. In rural areas, many went beyond this: some burned title-deeds and no small number of chateaux, as part of a general agrarian insurrection known as "la Grande Peur" (the Great Fear).

On August 4, 1789, the National Assembly abolished feudalism, sweeping away both the seigneurial rights of the Second Estate and the tithes gathered by the First Estate. In the course of a few hours, nobles, clergy, towns, provinces, companies, and cities lost their special privileges. The revolution also brought about a massive shifting of powers from the Roman Catholic Church to the State. Legislation enacted in 1790 abolished the Church's authority to levy a tax on crops known as the "dime", cancelled special privileges for the clergy, and confiscated Church property: under the Ancien Regime, the Church had been the largest landowner in the country. Further legislation abolished monastic vows. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, passed on July 12, 1790, turned the remaining clergy into employees of the State and required that they take an oath of loyalty to the constitution. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy also made the Catholic church an arm of the secular state.

Looking to the United States Declaration of Independence for a model, on August 26, 1789, the Assembly published the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Like the U.S. Declaration, it comprised a statement of principles rather than a constitution with legal effect. The Assembly replaced the historic provinces with eighty-three departements, uniformly administered and approximately equal to one another in extent and population; it also abolished the symbolic paraphernalia of the ancien regime – armorial bearings, liveries, etc. – which further alienated the more conservative nobles, and added to the ranks of the emigres.

Louis XVI opposed the course of the revolution and on the night of June 20, 1791, the royal family fled the Tuileries. However, the next day the overconfident king had the imprudence to show himself. Recognised and arrested at Varennes in the Meuse late on 21 June, he returned to Paris under guard. With most of the Assembly still favouring a constitutional monarchy rather than a republic, the various groupings reached a compromise which left Louis XVI little more than a figurehead: he had perforce to swear an oath to the constitution, and a decree declared that retracting the oath, heading an army for the purpose of making war upon the nation, or permitting anyone to do so in his name would amount to de facto abdication.

Meanwhile, a renewed threat from abroad arose: Leopold II, Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick William II of Prussia, and the king's brother Charles-Phillipe, comte d'Artois issued the Declaration of Pilnitz which considered the cause of Louis XVI as their own, demanded his total liberty and the dissolution of the Assembly, and promised an invasion of France on his behalf if the revolutionary authorities refused its conditions. The politics of the period inevitably drove France towards war with Austria and its allies. France declared war on Austria (April 20, 1792) and Prussia joined on the Austrian side a few weeks later. The French Revolutionary Wars had begun.

In the Brunswick Manifesto, the Imperial and Prussian armies threatened retaliation on the French population should it resist their advance or the reinstatement of the monarchy. As a consequence, King Louis was seen as conspiring with the enemies of France. January 17, 1793 saw King Louis condemned to death for "conspiracy against the public liberty and the general safety" by a weak majority in Convention. The January 21 execution led to more wars with other European countries. Louis' Austrian-born queen, Marie Antoinette, would follow him to the guillotine on 16 October.

When war went badly, prices rose and the sans-culottes (poor labourers and radical Jacobins) rioted; counter-revolutionary activities began in some regions. This encouraged the Jacobins to seize power through a parliamentary coup, backed up by force effected by mobilising public support against the Girondist faction, and by utilising the mob power of the Parisian sans-culottes. An alliance of Jacobin and sans-culottes elements thus became the effective centre of the new government. Policy became considerably more radical.

The Committee of Public Safety came under the control of Maximilien Robespierre, and the Jacobins unleashed the Reign of Terror (1793â€”1794). At least 1200 people met their deaths under the guillotine â€” or otherwise â€” after accusations of counter-revolutionary activities. In 1794 Robespierre had ultra-radicals and moderate Jacobins executed; in consequence, however, his own popular support eroded markedly. On July 27, 1794, the French people revolted against the excesses of the Reign of Terror in what became known as the Thermidorian Reaction. It resulted in moderate Convention members deposing and executing Robespierre and several other leading members of the Committee of Public Safety. The Convention approved the new "Constitution of the Year III" on 17 August 1795; a plebiscite ratified it in September; and it took effect on September 26, 1795.

The new constitution installed the Directoire and created the first bicameral legislature in French history. On November 9, 1799 (18 Brumaire of the Year VIII) Napoleon staged the coup which installed the Consulate; this effectively led to his dictatorship.

Napoleon and the French Empire

In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte, a brilliant military general who had participated in the French Revolutionary Wars of 1796, 1797 and 1798, seized power as First Consul (see French Consulate), and in 1802 he was made First Consul for life. Bonaparte attracted more power and gravitated towards imperial status, gathering support on the way for his internal rebuilding of France and its institutions. He gradually dampened opposition and -- using exile, systematic bureaucratic oppression, and constitutional means -- in 1804, the Senate granted him the title of emperor. The French Empire (or the Napoleonic Empire) (1804-1814) was marked by the French domination and reorganization of continental Europe (the Napoleonic Wars) and by the final codification of the republican legal system (the Napoleonic Code).

By 1804, Britain alone stood outside French control and was an important force in encouraging and financing resistance to France. Napoleon lacked the resources to attempt an invasion of Britain or to defeat the Royal Navy at sea, and his one attempt to do so ended with defeat at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Napoleon resorted instead to economic warfare and instituted an embargo (the Continental System), forbidding his allies and conquests from trading with the British.

Portugal was the only European country that openly refused to join the Continental system. After the Treaties of Tilsit of July 1807, Napoleon attempted to capture the Portuguese Fleet and the House of Braganza, to occupy the Portuguese ports and to expel the British from Portuguese soil, and failed. King John VI of Portugal took his fleet and fled to Brazil with a Royal Navy escort. The Portuguese population rose in revolt against the French invaders, the Duke of Wellington's British Army intervened and the Peninsular War began in 1808.

Ultimately the embargo failed. Its effect on Great Britain and on British trade is uncertain, but the embargo is thought to have been more harmful on the continental European states. Russia in particular chafed under the embargo, and in 1812, that country reopened trade with Britain, provoking Napoleon's invasion of Russia. The disaster of the march on Moscow would lead to Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Nations in 1813 and his abdication in 1814.

After an initial forced exile on the island of Elba, Napoleon briefly returned to power (the Hundred Days of 1815), but the imperial dream was finally crushed by the defeat of Waterloo and Napoleon was definitively exiled to the island of Saint Helena in the south Atlantic.

The Restoration

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Following the ouster of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1814, the Allies restored the Bourbon Dynasty to the French throne. The ensuing period is called in French "The Restoration" and is characterized by a sharp conservative reaction and the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic Church as a power in French politics. Louis XVIII, brother of the deposed Louis XVI, ruled from 1814-1824 and was succeeded by his brother Charles X in 1824.

Despite the return of the House of Bourbon to power, France was much changed from the era of the Ancien Regime. The egalitarianism and liberalism of the revolutionaries remained an important force and the autocracy and hierarchy of the earlier era could not be fully restored. The economic changes, which had been underway long before the revolution, had been further enhanced during the years of turmoil and were firmly entrenched by 1815. These changes had seen power shift from the noble landowners to the urban merchants. The administrative reforms of Napoleon, such as the Napoleonic Code and efficient bureaucracy, also remained in place. These changes produced a unified central government that was fiscally sound and had much control over all areas of French life, a sharp difference from the situation the Bourbons had faced before the Revolution.

Louis XVIII, for the most part, accepted that much had changed and pursued a moderate course while in power. Charles X of France, however, took a far more conservative line. He attempted to compensate the aristocrats for what they had lost in the revolution, curbed the freedom of the press, and reasserted the power of the church. In 1830 the discontent caused by these changes culminated in an uprising in the streets of Paris, known as the July Revolution. Charles was forced to flee and a member of the Orleans branch of the family, Louis-Philippe d'Orleans, ascended the throne, and ruled, not as "King of France" but as "King of the French" (an evocative difference for contemporaries).

July Monarchy

Louis-Philippe's "July Monarchy" (1830-1848) is generally seen as a period during which the haute bourgeoisie was dominant. Louis-Philippe, who had flirted with liberalism in his youth, rejected much of the pomp and circumstance of the Bourbons and surrounded himself with merchants and bankers. Ruling as a constitutional monarch, Louis-Philippe left much of the governing to the parliament. The period was one of economic growth, and also major change in the Catholic Church, as it dropped much of its rigidly reactionary views. At the same time the church became seen as less of an enemy by the left.

Despite this, the July Monarchy remained a time of turmoil. A large group of Legitimists on the right demanded the restoration of the Bourbons to the throne. On the left, republicanism remained a powerful force. Late in his reign Louis-Philippe became increasingly rigid and dogmatic and his Prime Minister, Francois Guizot, had become deeply unpopular, but Louis-Philippe refused to remove him. The situation gradually escalated until the Revolutions of 1848 saw the fall of the monarchy and the creation of the Second Republic.

Second Republic

The Revolution of 1848 had major consequences for all of Europe: popular democratic revolts against authoritarian regimes broke out in Austria and Hungary, in the German Confederation and Prussia, and in the Italian States Milan, Venice, Turin and Rome.

The revolution in France had brought together classes of wildly different interests: the bourgeoisie desired electoral reforms (a democratic republic), socialist leaders (like Louis Blanc, Pierre Joseph Proudhon and the radical Auguste Blanqui) asked for a "right to work" and the creation of national workshops (a social welfare republic) and for France to liberate the oppressed peoples of Europe (Poles and Italians), while moderates (like the aristocrat Alphonse de Lamartine) sought a middle ground. Tensions between groups escalated, and in June 1848, a working class insurrection in Paris cost the lives of 1500 workers and eliminated once and for all the dream of a social welfare constitution.

The constitution of the Second Republic which was ratified in September 1848 was extremely flawed and permitted no effective resolution between the President and the Assembly in case of dispute. In December 1848, a nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, was elected as President of the Republic, and pretexting legislative gridlock, in 1851, he staged a coup d'etat. Finally, in 1852 he had himself declared Emperor Napoleon III of the Second Empire.

Second Empire

France was ruled by Emperor Napoleon III of France from 1852 to 1870. The era saw great industrialisation, urbanization (including the massive rebuilding of Paris by Baron Haussmann) and economic growth, but Napoleon III's foreign policies would be catastrophic.

After participation in the Crimean War, Napoleon intervened in the questions of Italian independence. He declared his intention of making Italy "free from the Alps to the Adriatic", and with the victories of Montebello, Magenta and Solferino France and Austria signed the Peace of Villafranca in 1859. Austria ceded Lombardy to Napoleon III, who in turn ceded it to Victor Emmanuel; Modena and Tuscany were restored to their respective dukes, and the Romagna to the pope, now president of an Italian federation. France received Savoy from Piedmont.

Napoleon also tried to establish the emperor Maximilian in Mexico, but in 1867 French troops were forced on a humiliating withdrawal before an ultimatum of the United States (see French intervention in Mexico).

A protracted conflict with Prussia led to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. By the capitulation of Sedan the Empire lost its major source of support (the army), Paris was left unprotected and emptied of troops, and on September 4, 1870 the republican deputies of Paris at the hotel de ville constituted a provisional government. The Empire had fallen, the emperor was a prisoner in Germany, and France now embarked on the era of the Third Republic.

The Third Republic

With the humiliating defeat of Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and the fall of the second Empire, the French legislature established the Third Republic which was to last until the military defeat of 1940 (longer than any government in France since the Revolution). The birth of the republic saw France occupied by foreign troops, the capital in a popular socialist insurrection -- the Paris Commune (which was violently repressed by the new republic) -- and two provinces (Alsace-Lorraine) annexed to Germany. Feelings of national guilt and a desire for vengeance ("revanchism") would be major preoccupations of the French throughout the next half century.

The initial republic was led by pro-royalists, but republicans (the "Radicals") and bonapartists scrambled for power. The Radicals eventually gained power in the last two decades of the century, but crises like the potential "Boulangist" coup d'etat (see Georges Boulanger) in 1889, showed the fragility of the republic. The Radicals' policies on education (suppression of local languages, compulsory education), mandatory military service, and control of the working classes eliminated internal dissent and regionalisms, while their participation in the Scramble for Africa and in the acquiring of overseas possessions (such as French Indochina) created myths of French greatness. Both of these processes transformed a country of regionalisms into a modern nation state.

In an effort to isolate Germany, France went to great pains to woo Russia and the United Kingdom to its side, first by means of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894, then the 1904 Entente Cordiale with the U.K, and finally, with the signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente in 1907 this became the Triple Entente, which eventually led Russia and the U.K. to enter World War I as Allies.

Distrust of Germany, faith in the army and native French anti-semitism combined to make the Dreyfus Affair (the unjust trial and condemnation of a Jewish military officer for treason) a political scandal of the utmost gravity. The nation was divided between "dreyfusards" and "anti-dreyfusards" and far-right Catholic agitators inflamed the situation even when proofs of Dreyfus' innocence came to light. The writer Emile Zola published an impassioned editorial on the injustice, and was himself condemned by the government for libel. Once Dreyfus was finally pardoned, the progressive legislature enacted the 1905 laws on laicite which created a complete separation of church and state and stripped churches of most of their property rights.

The period and the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century is often termed the belle epoque. Although associated with cultural innovations and popular amusements (cabaret, cancan, the cinema, new art forms such as Impressionism and Art Nouveau), France was nevertheless a nation divided internally on notions of religion, class, regionalisms and money, and on the international front France came repeatedly to the brink of war with the other imperial powers, including Great Britain (the Fashoda Incident). World War I was an inevitability, but its human and financial costs would be catastrophic for the French.

France in modern times

The History of France from 1914 to today spans the political regimes of the Third French Republic, the Vichy Regime, the French Fourth Republic and the French Fifth Republic, and includes World War I and World War II. For specific information on today's France, see [France](#) or [Portal:France](#).

France and the French in the 20th century

In 1914, the territory of France was different from today's France in two important ways : most of Alsace and the northeastern part of Lorraine had been annexed by Germany in 1870, and the North-African country of Algeria had been established as an integral part of France (a "departement") in 1848. France would reacquire Alsace-Lorraine at the end of World War I and lose them again, temporarily, to Germany during World War II. Calls for Algerian independence became common after 1945, but with one million Europeans living there, France refused to grant independence until a bloody colonial war (the Algerian War of Independence) had turned into a French political and civil crisis; Algeria was given its independence in 1962, unleashing a massive wave of immigration from the former colony back to France.

Demographics

Unlike other European countries, France did not experience a strong population growth in the mid and late 19th century and first half of the 20th century (see [Demographics of France](#)). This would be compounded by the massive French losses of World War I -- roughly estimated at 1.4 million French dead including civilians (see [World War I casualties](#)) (or

nearly 10% of the active adult male population) and four times as many wounded (see World War I#Aftermath) -- and World War II -- estimated at 593,000 French dead (one and a half times the number of U.S. dead), of which 470,000 were civilians (see World War II casualties). From a population of around 39 million in 1880, France still had only a population of 40 million in 1945. The post-war years would bring a massive "baby boom", and with immigration, France reached 50 million in 1968. This growth slowed down in 1974.

Since 1999, France has seen an unprecedented growth in population. In 2004, population growth was 0.68%, almost reaching North American levels (2004 was the year with the highest increase in French population since 1974). France is now well ahead of all other European countries in population growth (except for the Republic of Ireland) and in 2003, France's natural population growth (excluding immigration) was responsible for almost all the natural growth in European population (the population of the European Union increased by 216,000 inhabitants (without immigration), of which 211,000 was the increase in France's population alone, and 5,000 was the increase in all the other countries of the EU combined).

Today, France, with a population of 60 million (or 63 million with overseas territories) is the third most populous country of Europe, behind Russia and Germany.

Immigration in the 20th century differed significantly from that of the previous century. The 1920s saw great influxes from Italy and Poland; in the 1930-50s immigrants came from Spain and Portugal. Since the 1960s however, the greatest waves of immigrants have been from former French colonies: Algeria (1 million), Morocco (570,000), Tunisia (200,000), Senegal (45,000), Mali (40,000), Cambodia (45,000), Laos (30,000), Vietnam (35,000). Much of this recent immigration was initially economical, but many of these immigrants have remained in France, gained citizenship and integrated into French society. Estimates vary, but of the 60 million people living in France today, close to 4 million claim foreign origin. This massive influx has created tensions in contemporary France, especially over issues of "integration into French society" and the notion of a "French identity", and in recent years the most controversial issues have been with regards to muslim populations (at 7%, Islam is the second largest religion in today's France; see Islam in France).

Eastern-European and North-African Jewish immigration to France largely began in the mid to late 19th century. In 1872, there was an estimated 86,000 Jews living in France, and by 1945 this would increase to 300,000. Many Jews integrated (or attempted to integrate) into French society, although French nationalism led to anti-semitism in many quarters. The Vichy regime's collaboration with the Nazi holocaust led to the extermination of 76,000 French Jews (the Vichy authorities however gave preferential treatment to "integrated" Jews who had been in France from two to five generations and who had fought in World War I or held important administrative positions in the government), and of all other Western European countries, this figure is second only to Germany; but many Jews were also saved by acts of heroism and administrative refusal to participate in the deportation (three quarters of France's Jewish population was spared, a higher proportion than any other European country touched by the holocaust). Since the 1960s, France has experienced a great deal of Jewish immigration from the Mediterranean and North Africa, and the Jewish population in France is estimated at around 600,000 today.

At the turn of the century almost half of all Frenchmen depended on the land for their living, and up until World War II, France remained a largely rural country (roughly 25% of the population worked on the land in 1950), but the post-war years also saw an unprecedented move to the cities: only around 4% of the French continue to work in farms and 73% live today in large cities. By far the largest of these is Paris, at 2.1 million inhabitants (11 million in the Parisian region), followed by Lille, Lyons, Marseille (upwards of 1.2 million inhabitants each). Much of this urbanization takes place not in the traditional center of the cities, but in the suburbs (or "banlieues") that surround them (the cement and steel housing projects in these areas are called "cites"). With immigration from poorer countries, these "cites" have been the center of racial and class tensions since the 1960s.

French Identity

Through the educational, social and military policies of the Third Republic, by 1914 the French had been converted (as one historian has put it) from a "country of peasants into a nation of Frenchmen". By 1914, most French could read French and regional languages had been greatly suppressed; the role of the Catholic church in public life had been radically altered; a sense of national identity and glory was actively taught. The anti-clericalism of the Third Republic profoundly changed French religious habits: in one case study for the city of Limoges comparing the years 1899 with 1914, it was found that baptisms decreased from 98% to 60%, and civil marriages before a town official increased from 14% to 60%. Yet, the eradication of regionalisms and the anti-clerical nature of the Third Republic would create a backlash in the second half of the century: independentist movements sprung up in Brittany, Corsica and the Basque regions, while the Vichy Regime (echoing Nazi racial propaganda) actively encouraged local "folk" traditions and Catholicism which they saw as truer foundations for the French nation.

This loss of regional and traditional culture (language and accent, local customs in dress and food), the poverty of many rural regions and the rise of modern urban structures (housing projects, supermarkets) have created tensions in modern France between traditionalists and progressives. Compounding the loss of regionalisms is the role of the French capital and the centralized French State. Developed from the French Revolution (itself an improvement on the centralized state

of the absolute monarchy), the centralized French State in the 20th century has had expansive powers in all aspects of French daily life (social security, industry, education, employment, transportation). The post-war years also saw the state take control of a number of French industries. The modern political climate has however been for increasing regional power ("decentralization") and for reduced state control in private enterprise ("privatization").

Historical Overview From World War I to World War II

World War I (1914-1918) brought great losses of troops and resources. Fought in large part on French soil, it led to approximately 1.4 million French dead including civilians (see World War I casualties), and four times as many casualties (see World War I aftermath). The stipulations of the Versailles treaty were severe: Alsace and Lorraine were returned to France; Germany was required to take full responsibility for the war and to pay war reparations; the German industrial Saarland, a coal and steel region, was occupied by France.

France in the 1920 and 1930s was torn on many fronts.

The French far right expanded greatly and theories of race and anti-semitism proliferated in many quarters. Numerous conservative political groups sprang up, including the Croix de Feu which, like its larger rival Action Française (founded in 1898, Action Française supported a restoration of the monarchy and of Roman Catholicism as the state religion) advocated national integralism (the belief that society is an organic unity) and organized popular demonstrations in reaction to the Stavisky Affair, hoping to overthrow the government.

In the congress of Tours in 1920, the French Socialist Party was split in two and the left-wing of the party broke away and formed the French Communist Party. The remaining Socialist Party, led by Leon Blum, regrouped as the French Section of the Workers' International (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière or SFIO). In 1924 and again in 1932, the Socialists joined with the Radical Party in the "Coalitions of the Left" (Cartels des Gauches), but refused actually to join the non-Socialist governments led by the Radicals Edouard Herriot and Edouard Daladier. In 1934, the Communists changed their line, and the three parties came together in the Popular Front (1936-38), which won the 1936 elections and brought Blum to power as France's first socialist prime minister. Within a year, however, his government collapsed over economic policy and also over the issue of the Spanish Civil War.

In the 1920s, France established an elaborate system of border defences (the Maginot Line) and alliances (see Little Entente) to offset resurgent German strength and in the 1930s, the massive losses of the war led many in France to choose a policy guaranteeing peace, even in the face of Hitler's violations of the Versailles treaty and (later) his demands at Munich in 1938; this would be the much maligned policy of appeasement. In some milieus in France, including people in the government and the army, there was also a defeatist movement which saw in Hitler's Germany not a rival that France should confront, but a force that France should accommodate.

In September, 1939 Hitler invaded Poland, and France and England declared war. Both armies were mobilized to the Western Front, but for the next 8 months neither side made a move: this would be called the "Phoney War". The German Blitzkrieg began its attack in May 1940, and in six weeks of savage fighting the French lost 130,000 (twice the number of American losses at Normandy in 1944) and the British army was routed (the Dunkirk boat lift). France surrendered to Nazi Germany on June 24, 1940. Nazi Germany occupied three fifths of France's territory (the Atlantic seaboard and most of France north of the Loire), leaving the rest to the new Vichy collaboration government established on July 10, 1940 under Henri Philippe Pétain. Its senior leaders acquiesced in the plunder of French resources, as well as the sending of French forced labor to Nazi Germany; in doing so, they claimed they hoped to preserve at least some small amount of French sovereignty. After an initial period of double-dealing and passive collaboration with the Nazis, the Vichy regime passed to active participation (largely the work of prime minister Pierre Laval). The Nazi German occupation proved costly as Nazi Germany appropriated a full one-half of France's public sector revenue.

On the other hand, those who refused defeat and collaboration with Nazi Germany, such as Charles de Gaulle, organized the Free French Forces in UK and coordinated resistance movements in occupied and Vichy France.

After four years of occupation and strife, Allied forces, including Free France, liberated France in 1944. Paris was liberated on August 25, 1944. On September 10, 1944, Charles de Gaulle installed his provisional government in Paris. This time he remained in Paris until the end of the war, refusing to abandon even when Paris was temporarily threatened by German troops during the Battle of the Ardennes in December 1944.

The Post-War Period

France emerged from World War II to face a series of new problems. After a short period of provisional government initially led by General Charles de Gaulle, a new constitution (October 13, 1946) established the Fourth Republic under a parliamentary form of government controlled by a series of coalitions. The mixed nature of the coalitions and a consequent lack of agreement on measures for dealing with colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria caused successive cabinet crises and changes of government. The war in Indochina ended with French withdrawal in 1954.

The May 1958 seizure of power in Algiers by French army units and French settlers opposed to concessions in the face of Arab nationalist insurrection led to the fall of the French government and a presidential invitation to de Gaulle to form an emergency government to forestall the threat of civil war. Swiftly replacing the existing constitution with one strengthening the powers of the presidency, he became the elected president in December of that year, inaugurating France's Fifth Republic.

In 1959, in an occasion marking the first time in the 20th century that the people of France went to the polls to elect a president by direct ballot, de Gaulle won re-election with a 55% share of the vote, defeating Francois Mitterrand.

However, French society grew tired of the heavy-handed, patriarchal Gaullist approach. This led to the events of May 1968, when students revolted, with a variety of demands including educational, labor and governmental reforms, sexual and artistic freedom, and the end of the Vietnam War. The student protest movement quickly joined with labor and mass strikes erupted. At one point, de Gaulle went to see troops in Baden-Baden, possibly to secure the help of the army in case it were needed to maintain public order. However, the June 1968 legislative elections saw a majority of Gaullists in parliament. Still, May 1968 was a turning point in French social relations, in the direction of more personal freedoms and less social control, be it in work relations, education or in private life.

In April 1969, de Gaulle resigned following the defeat in a national referendum of government proposals for the creation of 21 regions with limited political powers. Succeeding him as president of France have been:

- • • * Gaullist Georges Pompidou (1969-1974)
- • • * Independent Republican Valery Giscard d'Estaing (1974-81)
- • • * Socialist Francois Mitterrand (1981-95)
- • • * neo-Gaullist Jacques Chirac (elected in spring 1995).

While France continues to revere its rich history and independence, French leaders increasingly tie the future of France to the continued development of the European Union (EU). During President Mitterrand's tenure, he stressed the importance of European integration and advocated the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on European economic and political union, which France's electorate narrowly approved in September 1992.

Current President Jacques Chirac assumed office May 17, 1995, after a campaign focused on the need to combat France's stubbornly high unemployment rate. The center of domestic attention soon shifted, however, to the economic reform and belt-tightening measures required for France to meet the criteria for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) laid out by the Maastricht Treaty. In late 1995, France experienced its worst labor unrest in at least a decade, as employees protested government cutbacks.

On the foreign and security policy front, Chirac took a more assertive approach to protecting French peacekeepers in the former Yugoslavia and helped promote the Dayton Agreement negotiated in Dayton, Ohio and signed in Paris in December 1995. The French have stood among the strongest supporters of NATO and EU policy in the Balkans.

Source http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_France