

France

Cosi Toms

Lynn University

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Dr. Leilani Baumanis

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Eiffel Tower and River Seine Sunset by Craig Fildes

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Introduction

France has a long and complex history, which has contributed to the creation of its modern-day state. The country possesses one of the most prominent cultures on Earth and has spread its influence in cuisine, linguistics, architecture, and the arts, among more (Every Culture, n.d.). France is one of the most prominent Western European nations, a key member in the European Union (EU) with a tremendous history, an integral political and governmental system, and one of the largest economies in Europe.

History and Gaul

In order to properly convey the vast and detailed history of France, it is appropriate to highlight a few fundamental and significant events in its early history, including the emergence of Gaul, the Roman and later Frankish conquests of the region, the reign of Charlemagne, and modern history regarding the French Revolution and the establishment of the five French Republics. French history, of course, is not limited to these events; however, key points were chosen in order to better explain the origins of France and the modern evolution of French culture, government, economy, and societal structure.

France is one of the oldest nations on Earth, with a vast history stretching back thousands of years. France dates to 600 BCE, when the Ionian Greek people first settled and created the city of Massalia, known today as Marseille. In the 3rd and 5th centuries, the Celts established France as a nation named Gaul. Over the period of Celtic rule in Gaul, Roman settlers began inhabiting different regions of the country, eventually conquering the southern part of Gaul before assuming control of the whole country in 52 CE, from which point they would rule for the next few centuries (Holloran, n.d.). After the fall of the Roman Empire, Gaul was taken over by the Germanic Franks, headed by Clovis I of the Merovingian dynasty. Clovis I was the first Frankish king to conquer and consolidate vast territories across the continent of Europe (Holloran, n.d.). He is also widely considered the founder of France, as he proclaimed Paris as the capital of his kingdom (Wilde, 2019). The Frankish Empire, or Francia, would continue as a strong and mighty force during in the ensuing years.

Charlemagne

One of the most prominent figures in early French history was Charlemagne, who in 771 became King of the Franks and established the Carolingians, his noble family, as the royal dynasty. Charlemagne was renowned for his militaristic and expansionist attitudes, a conqueror with a vision who brought the Kingdom of the Franks to the height of its power. The first individual to unite much of Western Europe since the fall of Rome, Charlemagne was named Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III in 800 (History.com, 2009). Charlemagne was a devout Christian, widely spreading the Christian faith during his reign. His court was instrumental in developing the educational and religious texts (Sullivan, 2022). Charlemagne was also a skilled diplomat, enabling him to establish steady relationships with the Kingdom of Denmark, Slavic tribes, Southern Italy's Lombards, Spanish Muslims, and the Gascons and Bretons. These relations helped protect the large territories controlled by the Franks and strengthen the Franks' cultural influence on the continent (Sullivan, 2022).

Charlemagne and the Franks's greatest opponents were the Saxons. Charlemagne's war against the Saxons spanned 30 years, ultimately claiming the lives of thousands of the Saxons during the course of the battles. The fight against the Saxons was violent, and it included pillaging, kidnapping, and thousands of executions. The Franks were eventually victorious over the Saxons and were able to acquire two large land masses between the Rhine and Elbe Rivers (Sullivan, 2022). Charlemagne's most notable land conquests were the Lombards region of Italy; the Avars, which today constitute Austria and Hungary; and Bavaria (History.com, 2009).

Charlemagne died in 814 after contracting an infectious lung disease. His legacy lives on, having earned the nicknames Charles the Great, Carols Magnus, and Father of Europe (Sullivan, 2022). Following Charlemagne's death, the reign of Louis the Pious began (History.com, 2009). During this period, the Treaty of Verdun was enacted in 843, officially dividing the land into East, Middle, and West Francia, with the West now known as modern day France (Wilde, 2019).

The French Revolution

Fast-forwarding to the 1700s, the French Revolution reshaped the French government and

forged a blueprint for revolutions across the globe. French peasants were angered by inequalities between the lower class and the aristocracy. They wanted rights that they did not have under feudalism. This era also saw the creation of a class called the *bourgeoisie*, an upper-middle class of commoners who accumulated some wealth and financial stability. In the 1780s, the French population was growing, increasing the demand for basic necessities as well as the price of goods (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022c). In 1787, a series of economic and political reforms were proposed by the bourgeoisie through a governing assembly called the Estates-General. The Estates-General was a parliamentary body that represented the clergy, aristocracy, and Third Estate (commoners). Louis XIV tried to appease the reformists, but his attempts failed. Political turmoil ignited the revolution against the monarchy and aristocratic classes. The revolution began with the famed Storming of the Bastille. The violent and lengthy revolution would go on from 1787–1799. The conclusion of the revolution came about when most of the upper classes had been executed or left France (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022c). The French Revolution laid the groundwork for other revolutionary acts by groups across the globe, including in France's own empire and in the recently established United States of America.

The Establishment of the French Republics

Over the centuries, the system of French government has entered various phases, known as “Republics.” Currently, France is in its Fifth Republic. The First Republic was created in 1792 at the conclusion of the French Revolution. A National Convention occurred in 1792 when political parties and citizens gathered to discuss how the new government should function. The First Republic came to an end when in 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte, a respected general, declared himself emperor following great military successes (Boissoneault, 2017). The French grew frustrated by poor economic conditions and low quality of life under the reinstated monarchy. The citizens eventually revolted, and a Second Republic was formed in 1848 after King Louis-Philippe was dethroned and Napoleon's nephew, Napoleon III, became president. Positive reforms were passed during this Republic, such as ending slavery, enacting a free press, and establishing welfare programs for the vulnerable. However, the Second Republic ended when Napoleon III declared himself emperor. He was ultimately the last

monarch of France, and the Third Republic was put in place when he was exiled following a failed war with Prussia (Boissoneault, 2017).

The Third Republic lasted 70 years but was plagued by instability and a high turnover rate in government. It was ended by the German occupation of France during World War II. The Fourth Republic was established following the war, aiming to generate prosperity in France following the brutal global conflict. However, the Fourth Republic also faced high rates of government turnover. The Fourth Republic ended during the Algerian War, when France was fighting against the Algerian independence movement. Charles de Gaulle, France's future president, was brought in to write a new constitution for France, which officially established the Fifth Republic. Though the constitution has been amended numerous times during the Fifth Republic, it remains an important basis for the current French governing system (Boissoneault, 2017).

Problems and Views

The challenges that Gaul faced when it was founded were primarily due to culture and political conflicts. The power struggle between the multiple groups indicated the desire for people to achieve power. During the 5th and 3rd centuries, achieving power and success meant accumulating land and defeating enemies. Rome was successful in accomplishing that, having gained control of Gaul from the Celts. Charlemagne's empire also achieved success in gaining power and expanding their land through violent battles. Despite this, the war against the Saxons took a tiresome 30 years to win. This not only took a significant matter of time, energy, and effort, but thousands of human lives were lost in the battles between the Saxons and the Franks. Another key challenge was Charlemagne's desire to spread Christianity across the world. Those who did not believe in or convert to Christianity faced discrimination and persecution.

The French Revolution put into focus the social issue of wealth inequality. There was a large disparity between the working class, the bourgeoisie, and the aristocracy, which resulted in a notoriously brutal revolution that signaled the end of the French monarchy and the rise of the working class. The French Revolution laid the groundwork for other revolts that around the world in the following century.

The French Republics faced the challenges coinciding with political upheaval that would ultimately warrant significant political changes. Some of the most prominent challenges that occurred during the evolving republics were high rates of ministers assuming governmental positions before abruptly leaving, the exile of Napoleon III, and the Algerian War. France has endured much political instability over the course of its history, and the formation of the republics correlates to these issues (Boissoneault, 2017).

Politics

France's current governmental system is a semi-presidential republic. France's parliament represents the country's 18 districts. The districts are made up of 13 metropolitan areas within mainland France and five overseas realms under French jurisdiction (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). Semi-presidential systems merge presidential and parliamentary government types, meaning there is a president elected by the people, and a prime minister appointed by the president. The current French government and Fifth Republic is based on the French constitution (Bernard et al., n.d.). The constitution was enacted in 1958, declared France a free and democratic nation, and includes rules for any amendments that may be made in the future (Global Edge, n.d.). This is notable as France has amended its constitution several times since 1958 in order to meet the needs of the current government. Currently, the president of France and chief of state is Emmanuel Macron, and the prime minister, who is also the head of government, is Élisabeth Borne (Global Edge, n.d.). France has also been a member nation of the EU since 1958. This allows the French public to participate in elections for the EU Parliament, where they are represented in Brussels by 74 ministers, and also facilitates trade between member nations (Buswell, 2022).

Governmental Structure

The French government, not unlike its American counterpart, is divided into legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The executive branch is headed by the president and his or her cabinet, which includes ministers appointed by the president and prime minister. The legislative branch represents parliament, consisting of the senate and the national assembly. These ministers are elected by the people. The Senate has 348 seats and consists of ministers from all 18 districts of France. The French National

Assembly has 577 seats, and ministers are elected every five years, similar to presidential elections. The judicial branch consists of the Court of Cassation and the Constitutional Council. Judges who serve on the Court of Cassation are appointed by the president for life terms. These referred judges are recommended by the High Council of the Judiciary. The French judicial system also contains appellate courts, regional courts, first instance courts, and administrative courts (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.-b.). The Court of Cassation is similar to the U.S. Supreme Court, as it is the highest court in France, the judges serve life terms, and are appointed by the president.

Election Process and Overview

France's presidential election involves a two-round system. A candidate who receives an overwhelming majority of votes in the first round can be elected president immediately. However, this is a rare and unlikely outcome. In the first round of the election, there are multiple candidates to vote for. The second round narrows to the top two candidates with the most votes. They then contend in a second round of votes to determine who will win the presidency (Breedon, 2022). France allows any qualifying candidate to run in their governmental elections, meaning if you are able to vote in France, you have the right to run for public office (Buswell, 2022). Once the president is elected, he or she will choose a prime minister and form a new government. Prime Ministers tend to be from allied political parties (Buswell, 2022). France has multiple political parties. Current President Emmanuel Macron founded his party in 2016, La République En Marche. The party is a centrist liberal party. Despite this, critics claim the party has slowly moved right since its 2017 victory. Macron's first election in 2017 saw En Marche win 280 seats in parliament, an overwhelming majority for the newly formed party. Macron's victory indicated a desire of the French people for fresh leadership. The second largest party, Les Républicains, is the main conservative party in France. It was former President Nicolas Sarkozy's party, and it advocates for traditional conservative views in government and economics. In France's two most recent elections, the ultra-right wing Rassemblement National (National Rally) gained support. The party, originally named the National Front, is led by Marine Le Pen, daughter of the party's founder Jean-Marie Le Pen. The party is controversial; its campaigns focus on nationalistic views and are notorious for being

anti-immigration, anti-Muslim, and intolerant of many people's differing religious and social ideologies. Though Le Pen has been the lead opposition in the last two presidential campaigns, the party has not been successful in gaining many parliamentary seats. Additional political parties that have gained seats in the senate and assembly include the *Parti Socialiste* (Socialist party), *Mouvement Démocrate* (Democratic Movement), and *Union des Démocrates et Indépendants* (Union of Democrats and Independents) (Buswell, 2022). In the first round of the 2022 French presidential election, Macron won 27.8% of the vote, leaving Marine Le Pen with 23.2%, and other candidates with even smaller totals. In the second round, Macron won by 58.5%, while Le Pen received 41.5% of the vote (Politico, 2022). In 2017, Macron won by a narrower margin in the first round, taking 24.0% of the vote, while Le Pen received 21.3%. In 2017, Macron won the presidency in the second round by gaining an overwhelming 66.1%, while Le Pen received 33.9% (Politico, 2022). Macron had a much higher majority of the vote in 2017 than 2022.

Problems and Views

France's government system is similar to those of other countries in the West. They hold public elections, have multiple political parties, and are not governed according to religious beliefs. A prominent challenge for the French political parties is winning a majority of seats. For Macron, his party successfully gained a majority of seats within the French Parliament in 2017 and won against Le Pen with 33% more votes than she garnered. This is a contrast to Macron's 17% majority in the most recent presidential election (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.-b.). This illustrates how Macron had a more difficult time winning over the public in 2022 and is also indicative of public perception and approval of Macron's first term. In the first round of voting, one-third of the votes were cast for the ultra-right-wing party (Breedon, 2022). Typically, when a party wins by a narrow margin, it makes their term and agenda difficult to fulfill due to political divisions within the government and the wider French population. Despite the close call, over half of the public rejected an ultra-right-wing party that does not represent the diversity or honor the culture of the French people today.

Economics

France has the 7th largest economy in the world (OEC, n.d.). It benefits from being a member of the EU and having strong trade relations, economics, financial markets, and employment rates. France ranks 18th in the world in unemployment and is 108th in consumer inflation in 2021 (Global Road Warrior, n.d.). The country's exports produce \$472 billion in revenue, and chiefly consist of wine, cosmetics and perfume, as well as transportation materials (Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d.) The main industries of the economy consist of defense, education, medicine and healthcare, social welfare, public administration, and agriculture (European Union, n.d.-b.). France's agricultural production primarily centers on grains, dairy, vegetables, and wine. Related, and equally integral industries, include forestry, livestock, and commercial fishing. France has one of the most substantial forest areas in Europe and has coastlines totaling more than 2,000 miles. This allows France unique access to the natural resources of forestry and fisheries (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022b). France is able to profit, like other nations, from their natural resources through paths such as trade.

Gross Domestic Product and Gross National Product

France's gross national product (GNP), which measures the monetary value of French goods within a given year, was valued at \$3.045 trillion in 2021 — a record high for France (CEIC, n.d.). France's gross domestic product (GDP), which measures the monetary value of all services and finished products, was valued at \$2.4 trillion in 2021 (World Bank, n.d.) These key data points reflect the fiscal and economic wellbeing of France (Fernando, 2022). Additionally, France's GDP per capita, which measures the GDP per individual, was valued at \$38,210 for 2021 (World Bank, n.d.). In general, France has shown economic indicators related to the country's GDP, GDP per capita, GNP, and through their profitable imports and exports with trade partners despite challenges currently facing the global economy like supply chain disruptions and intermittent COVID-19 lockdowns in major manufacturing centers in China. France also has strong employment and inflationary statistics compared to other developed nations, which helps further analyze various factors of the country's present economic climate.

European Union and Trade

France depends heavily on its EU membership to boost profits from its wealth of domestic natural resources, and to import the products and resources not available in the country. The EU aids in bridging the gap between member nations who have access to essential goods and services, and those which do not. For France, the EU accounts for 54% of their traded exports, and they import 66% of goods from the EU member nations (European Union, n.d.-b.). One particularly integral natural resource France depends on importing is energy. This is due to the lack of natural energy resources available in France. The energy imported into France consists of coal, natural gas, and minerals (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022b). Energy resources are important as they help power electricity in homes, electric vehicles (EVs), heating, and many more vital daily functions (Alderman, 2022). This is especially important as Europe heads into winter and is currently facing a serious energy crisis due to a natural gas shortage as a result of Russia shutting down its Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which supplied Europe with the majority of its required supply.

Problems and Views

France has one of the strongest economies in Europe and the world, accounting for a large amount of trade within Europe and globally, as their culture holds tremendous influence on the sale of goods abroad. A great challenge France currently faces is its lack of energy resources. Europe is in the midst of a severe energy crisis. Energy resources provide the backbone on powering electricity, EVs, and homes. Since many European nations lack natural gas sources, many countries are facing tough decisions in the lead-up to winter. Russia has cut off natural gas to most European nations as retaliation for the embargoes much of the world placed on Russian goods as a result of the invasion of Ukraine. Macron has taken measures to try to mitigate the damage, enacting a 50-page plan that includes pleas for people to cut back on energy consumption in every way possible. The measures include lowering heating in homes to 19 degrees Celsius, working from home when possible in order to conserve the lighting and energy in buildings, and avoiding use of cars when possible or carpooling as an alternative (Alderman, 2022). This is an effort to slash consumption among and retain as much energy as possible

on the continent. France is not alone in this endeavor; other European governments have launched their own plans to reduce consumption (Alderman, 2022). The energy crisis is arguably the largest problem facing many European nations, perhaps aside from the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine.

Part One Summary

France is one of the most culturally significant nations on Earth, and their evolution as a nation, and the various empires that ruled it, contributed to spreading of French culture abroad. Their political past, including the French Revolution, planted the seeds for democratic revolutions that followed, including globally like the American Revolution and its fight for independence from Great Britain. Today, France enjoys the distinction of being one of the largest economies in the world, as well as one of the largest and most important EU member nations. France is renowned for its culture regarding gastronomy, the arts, architecture, and for its booming economy (Every Culture, n.d.).

Social Infrastructure

Modern life in France maintains a deeply rooted tradition in its history and customs. Attributes of life in France include social infrastructure, cultural environment, and business practices. Regarding social infrastructure, the French educational system, healthcare system, and the social justice system play integral roles. The cultural environment in France is shaped by its renown cuisine, the arts, French values, and the French language. As a booming hub of commerce, France's business culture consists of the primary companies, biggest industries, and their highly successful trade relations around the world.

Education

In France's education system, school is mandatory for pupils aged 6–16. Homeschooling is rare because the French government places high restrictions and regulations on the practice; therefore, most students attend mainstream institutions. At age 16, students can attend upper secondary school or vocational school (Holloran, 2022). The school calendar starts in September and ends in late June or early July. This term schedule is not uncommon in Europe; however, term dates vary by region.

France's Ministry of Education is responsible for setting the standards for curriculum, term calendars, and other aspects of the French education system.

France's core curriculum emphasizes foreign languages and mathematics, in particular (Holloran, 2022). Typical school days run from 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday (Holloran, 2022). This practical schedule aids students whose parents work full time. Workdays in France typically span 9 a.m.–6 p.m. Thus, if parents enroll their children in extracurricular or after school programs, they will be able to pick them up from school. This also ties into the family values of France as they are known for maintaining a good work-life balance. In fact, in 2000, France passed a law to reduce working hours from 39 hours/week to 35 hours/week in order to help improve the overall quality of life for French families and the general population (Passport to Trade, n.d.-b.). For higher education, French university fees are low at around €100–€400/year for citizens (Study.EU, 2020). This incentivizes the French to gain higher education qualifications, which in turn results in a more educated and capable workforce and populace. There is also wide availability for vocational schools and other career paths for younger French citizens. The French societal structure is far different to that of the U.S., where many students are burdened by heavy sums for university and access to medical care.

Healthcare

France has a universal health coverage system, which enables all French citizens to have access to quality medical care and treatment without the high cost of insurance premiums or other medical expenses. Since its establishment, the Statutory Health Insurance (SHI) has evolved dramatically. When the SHI first began, only employed or retired citizens were eligible; coverage for self-employed people was extended in 1966, and then coverage for the unemployed emerged in 2000 (Durand-Zaleski et al., 2020). In 2016, the SHI became universal, meaning all French citizens were eligible to be covered by health insurance (Durand-Zaleski et al., 2020). This measure allowed all French citizens to benefit. Access to medical care is fundamental to maintaining a healthy population, especially when people take better care of themselves and take preventative care measures for illness. The French medical system is managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, and Women's Rights. This agency oversees its

Regional Health Agencies, and it serves as the governmental body dedicated to meeting the objectives of the national health system. There are several sub-agencies within the ministry, including the French Health Products & Safety Agency, Agency for Information on Hospital Care, the National Health Authority Agency, and more (Durand-Zaleski et al., 2020). As a result of this approach, French citizens reap the benefits by being able to better care for their health and longevity long term. While no system is perfect, the French have the benefit of not paying for private health insurance.

Social Justice Issues

Over the past decade, France experienced social justice challenges and concerns relating to law enforcement, migrant protection, discrimination, counterterrorism, and human welfare and rights (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Such challenges have been felt by many across the country. In 2020, France saw a rise in the use of force against protestors during demonstrations. Additionally, there have been alarming reports from migrants and asylum seekers in France regarding their treatment by officials. Another pressing issue for many in France is domestic violence and abuse, which - like in other nations - spiked during the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown.

In most countries, protests and demonstrations aim to make the voices of particular groups, and particularly marginalized groups, of people heard. France is not unfamiliar with these kinds of civil demonstrations. In fact, a culture of social change and movements stems from the days of the French Revolution and other significant uprisings throughout the country's history. The French are widely known to participate in many social demonstrations and protests throughout the year. In some situations, protests can become rowdy, causing clashes. In some situations, protests can become rowdy, causing clashes between law enforcement and civilians. In 2018 and 2019, French police were criticized for using a special kind of tear gas, GLI-F4, and other potentially hazardous methods to halt demonstrations (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Tear gas is a dangerous substance to use against a crowd; its hazardous side effects include blindness, fatalities, respiratory failure, or severe burns to victims (Moss, 2020). In addition to protest-related controversies, French law enforcement have been accused of racial discrimination against ethnic minorities, specifically targeting minorities for pat downs and invasive

searches of personal possessions (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Another social challenge relates to migrant children in France, who are often unaccompanied by parents or guardians. The French National Human Rights Consultative Commission (CNCDH) reported that migrant children without guardians are not afforded the same rights and general welfare that they should be under French law. During COVID-19 lockdowns in France, it was reported child welfare services had failed to provide shelter and support to migrant children. One particularly alarming case occurred in July 2020, when several migrant children were living in a park in central Paris for a month before officials retrieved the children and provided aid.

In general, migrants in France are treated poorly. Asylum seekers and migrants frequently deal with discrimination, abuse, and intolerance in their day-to-day lives. France's authorities often fail to provide the welfare rights and support that are entitled to these people (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The report is damaging to the reputation of France and its local officials. One cannot absolve all social responsibility simply due to another's nationality. If migrants arrive in France, they are entitled to certain rights under French law. France's social and welfare services, in particular, have a responsibility to carry out their duties and properly care for the children, regardless of ethnicity or socioeconomic background.

Some additional sociological concerns relate to the rise in domestic violence and women's rights. Many feminist organizations have been vocalizing their desire to see better measures help all individuals experiencing abuse. During the initial French COVID-19 lockdown, there was a 30% increase in reported domestic violence altercations in the first week. A percentage of these instances resulted in fatalities of women. Another factor in women's rights is the advocacy efforts to end violence against women and workplace harassment. The CNCDH is one of these organizations dedicated to ending domestic violence for all (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Additional social issues include the environment and climate change, human welfare, counterterrorism, and the rights of individuals with disabilities (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Challenges and Overview

Most of France's core challenges relate to its social infrastructure. In terms of social justice, France is currently dealing issues ranging from discrimination and violence to human welfare. Arguably, the most pressing of these concerns seems to be the treatment of the migrants and asylum seekers in France. Migrants were not only not given the entitlements they are guaranteed under French law, but they reportedly also faced harassment and abuse from police officers (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Despite the issues with social justice in modern day France, the French do have well managed establishments, such as their educational system and healthcare systems, which benefit the French people.

Cultural Influence, Religion, and Language

French values can be summarized in the phrase, "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*," a motto featured on the national emblem of France that translates to liberty, equality, and fraternity (Zimmerman & Gordon, 2022). This phrase is similar to that of America's "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as featured in the Declaration of Independence (George, 2020). These sayings are used widely in their respective nations, and they reflect the common values of the country. France, as a cultural hub, has been influenced by its diverse populations. In France, the official language is French, German, Flemish, Arabic, and Italian are widely spoken (Explore France, 2021). The most widely practiced religion is Catholicism, the primary religion of France that accounts for just over 80% of the nation's religion. The second is Islam at roughly 10% of the population. These are followed by Protestant Christianity and Judaism, which is actively practiced by 1–2% of France (Commisceo Global, n.d.). Like many European nations, France's population represents a diverse range of cultures, languages, customs, etiquette, and values that contribute to the fabric of French society.

The French are well known for having a strong sense of national pride. The French take great disdain for any criticism of their nation or culture. Lambasting or deprecating humor as it relates to French culture is considered a faux pas (Zimmerman & Gordon, 2022). While this may seem obvious, some nations share humor regarding criticism of their cultures and traditions, as seen for example in the

U.S. and U.K.

Food Culture

Another significant part of French life is gastronomy. France is widely associated with its rich and classic cuisine and produce, such as baguettes, butter, fresh seasonal vegetables, and delectable pastries. The country's food culture is not limited to its famed recipes like boeuf bourguignon or ratatouille, but also the emphasis placed on eating and sharing meals with loved ones (Europe, 2021). Europeans value spending time together over meals; for many European households, meals tend to be a time to gather as a family in a relaxed setting, without electronics, and a time to catch up. Food remains a popular pastime for the French. Many take great care and focus on preparing delicious meals with quality produce. French cooking focuses on seasonal produce (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd., n.d.). Related to dining, there are several etiquette rules that visitors should keep in mind when visiting a French household. Showing up on time, sending gifts to thank the host, dressing formally, having good table manners, and waiting for the host to initiate when the meal begins with "*bon appetit*" are commonplace (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd., n.d.) These may seem trivial, but people from more casual and relaxed cultures should be mindful of these French practices.

Architecture, Fashion and the Arts

French architecture reflects its elaborate history. The beautiful and picturesque cities and villages espouse stylistic eras from Romanesque and Gothic to Baroque, Neoclassicism, and Haussmannien (Craven, 2018). The Eiffel Tower is arguably the most iconic piece of French architecture. The Alyscamps, a Roman necropolis in Arles, dates back to the time of Gaul. Medieval churches, such as the Notre-Dame de Paris and the Saint-Germain-de-Près, combine historic, artistic, and religious significance (Art in Context, 2022). French architecture and art remain attractive for tourists. For example, the Louvre's mixture of modern and classic architecture as well as its extensive galleries, including notable works such as Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, have made it world-famous (Zimmermann & Gordon, 2022).

The fashion industry plays a major role in French culture and economics. France is home to

some of the most notable fashion houses in the world, such as Chanel, Louis Vuitton, and Givenchy (Zimmerman & Gordon, 2022). The fashion and beauty industry dominated the top three of France's largest companies by market capitalization. These companies were LVMH, L'Oreal, and Hermès (Statista Research Department, 2022). The French enjoy dressing for everyday life. There is emphasis placed on wearing well-fitting and stylish clothing. It is considered polite to dress up, and unflattering casual wear is not generally worn (Zimmerman & Gordon, 2022).

Social Class and Family Values

In France, social class remains a prevalent focus among the public. Sayings, dialects, and jobs are associated with certain classes. Social classes in France include le proletariat (working class); les paysans (farmers, wealthy or not); le petit bourgeoisie (middle class, such as office workers, craftsmen, shop owners); and *la classe supérieure* (upper class) (Chevalier-Karvis, 2021). Colloquial sayings, in particular, are frowned upon in many contexts. Curse words and their translations are rarely used and considered severe (Chevalier-Karvis, 2021).

Traditional French families are responsible for caring for one another. They tend to be close, provide financial support if necessary, and be loving and supportive. French parents tend to take their role as caretakers seriously and prioritize raising successful children. There is no cultural precedence in marriage, and French people tend to marry for love, not responsibility. The average household includes two children (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd., n.d.).

When dealing with others, whether close friends or peers, the French follow customs. They tend to conduct themselves privately in these matters, but if speaking with a close friend, they can be open and comfortable. Having close friends and socializing is valued in France, friends tend to be involved in each other's daily lives (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd., n.d.). It is important to know French customs and to follow them when dealing with peers on a less personal level. Greetings in France tend to begin with handshakes and kisses on the cheek, and introductions are generally formal. First names are considered to be only for close friends (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd., n.d.).

Hofstede Insights Comparison

France, the U.S., and the U.K. were selected to compare the attributes of their general populations. In terms of power distance, France ranked 68%, meaning power structures are important in French society. Power is placed in parents, elders, and eventually superiors in the workplace. The U.K. was lower on the list, ranking 38%, despite social class playing a significant role in that society. Surprisingly, most British people feel that there should be minimal distance in social structure. The U.S. ranked 40% in power distance, meaning that hierarchy and inequality are applied in some areas of societal life and left out in others (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). France leans individualistic, ranking 71% on Hofstede's scale. People value themselves and their families above all else. The U.K. came in even higher, standing at 89%, and the U.S. ranked the highest at 91% (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

France is considered a slightly more "feminine" society, ranking at 41%. This means the French have a solid welfare system in place. Citizens work 35 hours per week on average, receive extensive paid leave from work, and they receive additional welfare benefits. The U.K., in contrast, is a far more masculine society, ranking 66%, focused on results and achievement, and not as much on collectivism. The U.S. ranks 62% masculine, which is evident when analyzing American culture. This ties into the high degree of individualism in the U.S. and the focus on achieving personal success and wealth rather than helping the community (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

Long-term orientation has France ranked at 63%, the U.K. at 51%, and the U.S. at 26%. Orientation had France ranked at 63%, the U.K. at 51%, and the U.S. at 26%. Uncertainty avoidance saw France overwhelmingly the highest, at 86%, The UK at 35%, and France at 46% (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

Challenges and Overview

France shares similar views and cultural patterns to the U.K. and U.S. The French also have a phrase similar to that of the inalienable rights of the U.S., "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*," (Zimmermann & Gordon, 2022). Despite this, France has unique characteristics to its own culture. These include their value and emphasis placed on mealtimes, customs, traditions, behaviors, social class, and more. French culture has influenced much of the world, specifically regarding its famous fashion, architecture, art, and

gastronomy. Its diverse population plays a large role in its cultural structure (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd., n.d.).

Main Industries, Companies, and Monopoly

Tourism, beauty, fashion and textiles, chemical production, auto industry, aircraft materials, electronics, and gastronomy make up the largest portion of France's industries (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). The largest percentages of the workforce are employed in agriculture, service-oriented fields, manufacturing, and industry-related work (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.-a.) France is known for its fashion and textiles industries. In fact, the top largest companies in France are dominated by the fashion and beauty industry: LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy), worth \$347 billion; L'Oreal Paris, the world-famous cosmetics company, worth \$194.89 billion; and Hermès, a historic luxury fashion house, worth \$142.34 billion. These three companies took the top three spots in France's largest companies by market capitalization (Statista Research Department, 2022). Fashion and beauty are key economic indicators in France, receiving a large portion of revenue because of it.

Trade Agreements, Regulations, and Partners

Some notable trade agreements between France and other nations have occurred within the EU. Some 54% of exports from France and 66% of imports to France are with the EU (European Union, n.d.-b.). France's largest European trade partner is Germany, accounting for 14% of total trade. France's other largest trade partners in Europe and North America include Italy, the U.S., Belgium, and Spain (World Integrated Trade Solutions, n.d.). The EU could be considered as a regional trade alliance for France; however, their trade is not limited to just the EU or U.S., having external trade partners in other continents. France has trade partnerships with Japan, Singapore, Canada, Colombia, and Peru, among more (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, n.d.). France is an active member of the European Council. They help establish the rules and vision for the EU, including setting trade guidelines and measures (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, n.d.). As one of the largest EU nations, their EU ministers and the president have a lot of influence and power in the EU. France is known to

have extensive and highly regulated trade barriers. France adheres to the EU's guidelines for import tariffs, meaning all products that are imported into France are subject to the EU's Combined Nomenclature (CN). The CN allocates certain products in certain categories. In addition to this, those who are trying to import goods into France must be familiar with the Integrated Tariff, which is a guide to France's import rules, including and elaborating on the EU's measures (International Trade Administration, n.d.). Benefits of France's EU membership, as relevant to trade, include the collective use of the euro, economic prosperity, foreign relations, and steadiness for businesses and governments. The EU also has extensive economic guidelines for its member states to ensure safety and success for its member nations (European Union, n.d.-a.).

Business Etiquette

For those conducting business in France, there are several etiquette rules to follow when dealing with the French. Foremost, introductions are formal; it is impolite to refer to a person by their first name before getting to know them and being asked to. Introductions should include one's given and surname. The French prefer *Monsieur* or *Madame* to any other form of greeting or introduction. It is important to dress professionally as a sign of respect. Light handshakes are preferred. Hands must be on the table during mealtimes as a sign of honesty and respect. One should avoid being pushy, be polite, and never interrupt when another person is speaking (Ronin, 2013).

Conclusion and Part Two Summary

France's primary industries are fashion, gastronomy, beauty, and transportation materials. These industries are also contributing factors to France's booming trade exports. In addition to their EU trade partners, France has branched out and conducts a great amount of trade with North America and many Asian and Latin American nations. France's trade rules are aligned with those of the EU, and France is a key member of the European Council that puts these measures in place. France is awarded many benefits for their EU membership, and many businesses choose to be headquartered there in order to be awarded those benefits. In France, business culture can be complex; for individuals dealing with the French, there are key etiquette guidelines to follow. These include ensuring you are professional, formal, and polite when

dealing with French counterparts.

France has an extensive social infrastructure, strong cultural influence, a strong economy and solid trade industry. The social infrastructure has evolved over past decades, and many aspects of the modern-day system can be linked to the country's 12th century origin. French culture stems from the country's diverse populations, languages, religions, and customs, and France's booming economy and trade is highly linked to its EU membership and strategic partners around the world. All of these attributes have contributed to the successes of modern-day France.

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