

# France

## Key facts in 1929

**Area:** 550'960km<sup>2</sup><sup>[1,2]</sup>

*With colonies:* 12'897'960km<sup>2</sup><sup>[3]</sup>

**Population:** 41 Million<sup>[4]</sup>

*With colonies:* 103.4 Million<sup>[3,4]</sup>

**Life expectancy:** 54.2 Years<sup>[5]</sup>;

*With Colonies:* ~39 Years<sup>[5,40,41]</sup>

**Literacy rate:** 91.8%<sup>[6]</sup>;

*With Colonies:* ~41%<sup>[42]</sup>

**Biggest Minorities:** Vietnamese, Khmer, Algerians, Tunisians, Moroccans<sup>[3]</sup>

**Select Main Cities:** Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Nice, Lille, Bordeaux

*In colonies:* Hanoi, Saigon, Phnom Penh, Dakar, Algiers, Casablanca, Djibouti, Antananarivo<sup>[3]</sup>

**Neighboring countries:** Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, Spain, Andorra, Brazil, Netherlands.

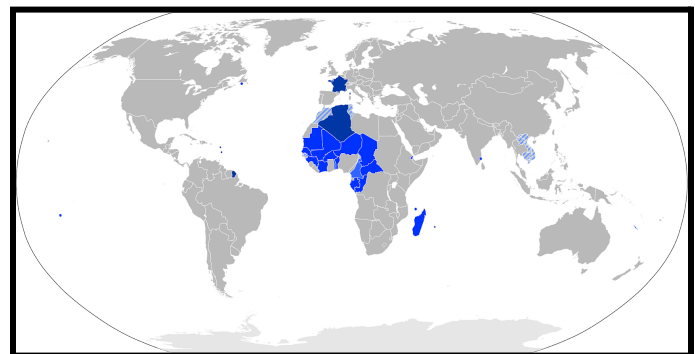
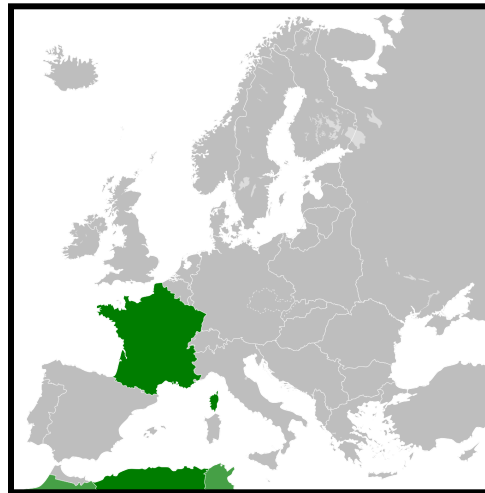
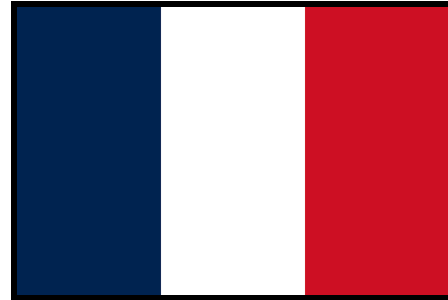
*With Colonies:* Italian Tripolitania, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Belgian Congo, Angola (Portugal), Spanish Guinea, British Cameroon, Nigeria, Gold Coast, Liberia (US), Portuguese Guinea, Gambia (Britain), Spanish Morocco, British Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea (Italy) Siam (Thailand), Burma, China, British India, British Palestine, Turkey<sup>[3,7,8,9]</sup>

**Sea Access:** Atlantic Ocean, North Sea and Mediterranean Sea, English Channel

*With colonies:* Indian and Pacific Oceans, South China Sea, Caribbean Sea, Red Sea<sup>[9]</sup>

**GDP:** 25'400'000'000 \$1929<sup>[10]</sup>

*With Colonies:* 28'300'000'000<sup>[10,39]</sup>



## Recent Historical Background

In the decades leading up to 1929, France experienced a tumultuous period marked by significant political, social, and economic upheaval. Following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871<sup>[11]</sup>, which resulted in the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany, France embarked on a period of rapid industrialization and modernization under the leadership of figures like Georges Clemenceau<sup>[12]</sup>. France faced internal conflicts such as the Dreyfus Affair<sup>[13]</sup>, a divisive political scandal highlighting prevalent anti-Semitism in French society. Externally, France participated in World War I (1914-1918) as a key member of the Allied Powers, enduring immense human and material losses<sup>[14]</sup>. Additionally, the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-1919 swept across France, causing widespread illness and death<sup>[15]</sup>. Economic difficulties persisted, culminating in the Great Depression of 1929<sup>[16]</sup>, which further exacerbated existing social tensions and economic hardships.

## Political Situation

In 1929, France was governed by the Third Republic, characterized by a parliamentary system with a President serving as head of state.<sup>[17]</sup> The prevailing ideology leaned towards republicanism and liberalism, with a specific emphasis on secularism (Laïcité)<sup>[18]</sup>. The current president was Gaston Doumergue, but the Prime Ministers Aristide Briand<sup>[19]</sup>, who served many times as Prime Minister and had ample influence on French society, and Raymond Poincaré<sup>[20]</sup>, his successor, were more influential in state decisions. In the 1928 French Legislative elections, the main parties were the center-right alliance between the “Republican Left” and the “Independent Radicals”, earning 126 seats, the conservative “Democratic and Republican Union” with 182 seats, the Socialist “French Section of the Workers' International” with 99 seats, the center-left “Radical Socialist Party” with 124 seats. Smaller parties include the French Communist Party, as well as the “Republican-Socialist Party”<sup>[21]</sup>. In 1929, France faced a late economic crisis due to the US stock market crash, exacerbated by a weak domestic market, an overvalued franc, and a fall in industrial production that led to a significant rise in unemployment.<sup>[22,23]</sup>

## Economic Situation in 1929

In 1929, France's economy was characterized by a reliance on small and medium-sized businesses, which formed its primary economic backbone.<sup>[24]</sup> The preceding decade witnessed rapid growth, exemplified by industrial production multiplying by more than 2.5 during it<sup>[16]</sup>. France also experienced an increase in labor rights in the post-World War I-era, with collective bargaining and the 8-hour-workday being passed into law during the two years after the war ended.<sup>[25]</sup> Being an industrialized imperialist nation, France's

imports mostly comprised resources necessary for industrial production such as wool and cotton as well as coal and petroleum while mostly exporting manufactured goods such as thread and fabric as well as machines and chemicals. Despite a trade surplus in previous years, France had a trade deficit of several billions of Francs in both 1928 and 1929.<sup>[26]</sup>

## Military Strength in 1929

French tanks included the homemade Renault FT, the Schneider CA1 as well as the Saint-Chamond from World War I, each with distinct features and roles in military operations.<sup>[27]</sup> The French army also operated one of the most developed military aircraft systems, with over 3608 planes being available after the end of World War I<sup>[29]</sup> The French Navy also was well-equipped, using over 110 Submarines, 64 torpedo boats as well as an Aircraft carrier.<sup>[31]</sup> The French military boasted a funding of 3% of the French GDP in 1929, thus bringing it to \$713'960'979 of that time.<sup>[10,32,33]</sup>

<b>Key Facts about Military Strength of France</b> <sup>[10,27,28,29,30,31,32,33]</sup>	
Active personnel	426'000
Tanks	~500
Cavalry	~1000
Other vehicles	Unknown
Ships	~300
Planes	~4000
Funding in 1929\$	713'961'000

## Allies/Enemies/Existing territorial disputes in 1929

Allies: United Kingdom (Entente Cordiale)<sup>[34]</sup>; Poland (Franco-Polish Alliance)<sup>[35]</sup>; Belgium (Franco-Belgian Accord of 1920)<sup>[36]</sup>; Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia (Little Entente)<sup>[37]</sup>

Enemies: Germany (1923 French occupation of Ruhr due to lack of coal delivery by Germany)<sup>[38]</sup>

## Some of the Main Goals for the 1930s

1. Economic Recovery from Great Depression crisis
2. Social and Political Unity given the rising left-wing and right-wing movements
3. Stabilizing foreign relations to avoid a new war.

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