



Your Guide to the **French Government**

French-American
Foundation

Statement of Purpose

The French-American Foundation is the principal non-governmental link between France and the United States at leadership levels and across the full range of the French-American relationship.

The purpose of the French-American Foundation is to strengthen the French-American relationship as a vital component of the trans-Atlantic partnership.

Founded in 1976, the French-American Foundation is also committed to ensuring that the French-American relationship should be vivid and relevant for the new generations that have come of age since the end of the Cold War.

MAYA press
www.mayapress.net - t: 212-260-5869

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INTRODUCTION

France, a founding member of the European Union, has a population of 62.8 million (including overseas territories) and is the sixth largest economy in the world.

In spring 2007, a year before the highly anticipated American presidential elections, France held its presidential and legislative elections. Elected in May 2007, President Nicolas Sarkozy represents a generational shift in France's leadership.

What follows is your guide to the French government and a brief overview of the French political system.



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French President Nicolas Sarkozy

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

France is a republic of which the executive branch is led both by a President and a Prime Minister. Current President Nicolas Sarkozy and Prime Minister François Fillon belong to the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), the center-right political party. Unlike the

U.S. President who is elected indirectly by the Electoral College, the French President is elected directly by universal suffrage for a five-year term and serves as the Head of State. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and leads the Government.

DIVISION OF POWERS

The President names the Prime Minister, presides over the Cabinet, serves as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and concludes treaties. He may also dissolve the National Assembly, the more prominent of the two chambers of Parliament. Most of the President's powers are subject to countersignature by the Prime Minister. In the event of a national emergency, the President may assume comprehensive powers. Under normal circumstances,

however, the President may not introduce legislation or regulations but instead may only make recommendations to both Parliament and the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister directs and supervises the operations of the Government. The Prime Minister is also responsible for the implementation of laws and, unlike the President, has the authority to introduce bills in Parliament.

FRENCH PRESIDENT NICOLAS SARKOZY

Nicolas Sarkozy, 52, officially took office as President of the Republic on May 16, 2007, following his election on May 6 with 53.06% of the votes. The son of a Hungarian immigrant, Sarkozy is an attorney by education and went into politics at the age of 22. Throughout his political career, he has held many positions, including city councilor, mayor, Deputy in the National Assembly, Minister of the Budget, Finance Minister, and lastly, Minister of

the Interior under President Chirac. Elected on the promise of change and strong leadership, he is recognized on both the right and the left as a skilled politician and a commanding orator. Sarkozy is considered more pro-U.S. than most French politicians. Some view him as departing from traditional French social and economic policies in favor of American-style economic reform. Nicolas Sarkozy is married and has three children.

PRESIDENT SARKOZY'S AGENDA

Domestic Priorities

- Loosen constraints on employment laws, notably the 35 hour-work week. (France's current unemployment rate is approximately 8%.) Encourage overtime and higher earnings. Ease hiring and lay-off restrictions. Reduce the duration of unemployment benefits.
- Implement tax cuts and incentives to encourage wealth creation and attract investors.
- Reduce the number of civil servants.
- Adopt a rigorous immigration policy by toughening measures on illegal immigration.
- Promote educational success and social mobility for immigrant and minority populations.

International agenda:

- Take the lead on climate change issues.
- Revitalize the European Union, which has gained momentum towards reform at the EU Summit of June 2007. Strengthen ties with European partners, especially Germany. Create a unified European defense identity.
- Invigorate the France-U.S. relationship.
- Promote a Mediterranean union as a link between Europe and Africa. Work with Africa to design a policy of controlled immigration and ambitious economic development.
- Be at the forefront of the defense of human rights at the international level.



Leifvane © Service Photographique de la Présidence de la République

G8 Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, June 2007



The New Cabinet

PRIME MINISTER FRANÇOIS FILLON AND THE CABINET

The Cabinet

The third component of the executive branch is the Cabinet. The Cabinet is a Council of Ministers appointed by the President based on recommendations by the Prime Minister. Ministers (*ministres*) are the most senior members of the Government; Secretaries of State (*secrétaires d'Etat*) assist ministers in particular areas of their portfolio. The number of ministries as well as the nature of their responsibilities can vary.

Prime Minister François Fillon, 53, is a former Minister for National Education, Higher Education and Research (2004-2005), as well as a former Minister of Social Affairs, Employment, and Solidarity (2002-2004). He has also held positions as Senator and Deputy in the National Assembly, and was the director of Mr. Sarkozy's successful presidential campaign. A moderate, Mr. Fillon is said to believe in social inclusiveness and has gained a reputation as consensual reformer.

COMPOSITION OF THE CABINET

Appointed on June 19, 2007, Prime Minister Fillon's cabinet comprises 15 ministers, 16 Secretaries of State and one High Commissioner.

Affirming the presidential priority given to climate issues, the Ministry of Environment is the highest-ranking ministry in the current government.

The cabinet demonstrates President Sarkozy's determination to bring about gender parity

amongst its members. Women represent half of the ministers, three of whom are in charge of high-profile ministries.

The new cabinet reaches across party lines. Several socialists as well as members of the center party were appointed to government posts. Bernard Kouchner, a prominent figure in the Socialist party, is now Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, while Hervé Morin, a key spokesperson of the centrist UDF (Union for French Democracy) party, is Minister of Defense.

This government also reflects a strong stance on promoting diversity. Judge Rachida Dati, Minister of Justice, is the first person of North African descent to hold such a high-ranking office. Other minority figures hold important positions in the cabinet.



© David Mandiboure - Malignon

Prime Minister François Fillon

CURRENT MINISTRIES AND THEIR MINISTERS ARE:



Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Public Works Jean-Louis Borloo

Number two in Prime Minister Fillon's cabinet, Jean-Louis Borloo is a former lawyer and former Minister of Employment.

This unprecedented super ministry of Environment was created to reconcile the imperatives of sustainable development and economic growth, to implement energy policy and to ensure the steady provision of energy resources in the context of the fight against global warming.



Ministry of the Interior and Overseas Departments Michèle Alliot-Marie

Former Minister of Defense (2002-2007), Michèle-Alliot Marie is the most experienced of President Sarkozy's staff members. A former lawyer, she holds a Ph.D. in law. She has held many positions throughout her political career, amongst them: Deputy in the National Assembly and in the European Parliament.



Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner

An outspoken figure from the left, Bernard Kouchner, M.D., was health minister and minister of humanitarian affairs in the cabinets of the late President François Mitterrand, prior to becoming United Nations governor of Kosovo (1999-2001). Co-founder of the Nobel prize-winning medical aid agency Doctors Without Borders (*Médecins sans Frontières*), Bernard Kouchner has always been a proponent of intervention in humanitarian crises. In 2003, he took position in favor of the Iraq war.

A popular political figure, Bernard Kouchner intends to give high priority to the defense of human rights as Minister of Foreign Affairs.



Ministry of Economy, Finance and Employment

Christine Lagarde

Christine Lagarde was formerly the Minister of Trade (2005-2007), and as such, participated in key world trade negotiations. Prior to that, she was a senior corporate lawyer at US law firm of Baker and McKenzie in Chicago. A graduate of the Institute of Political Science of Paris, Christine Lagarde is France's first female Minister of Finance. Beyond its traditional prerogatives in economic policy, this ministry encompasses the fields of industry and foreign trade. Christine Lagarde will represent France at the World Trade Organization and other international conferences. On the domestic front, she is to supervise Mr. Sarkozy's economic reforms, including tax cuts and measures to liberalize the job market



Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Co-Development

Brice Hortefeux

Brice Hortefeux was formerly Deputy Minister of Interior (2005-2007), and Deputy in the European Parliament. He graduated from the Institute of Political Science of Paris, and holds a degree in law.

This newly created ministry establishes a coherent design for and implementation of immigration policy, formerly the split purview of four different ministries.

It emphasizes the notion of integration, and aims to promote French Republican values and language as crucial vehicles to assimilation and French citizenship. Espousing a pragmatic approach, this ministry is also responsible for the conception of an ambitious policy of cooperation with African countries, in order to have an upstream effect on immigration.



Ministry of Justice

Rachida Dati

As former advisor to then Minister of Interior Nicolas Sarkozy, Rachida Dati specialized in youth delinquency and immigration issues. She holds Master's degrees in law and economics, and graduated from the prestigious National College of Magistrates in 1997.

Rachida Dati's nomination is seen as a symbol of President Sarkozy's commitment to promote minorities and revitalize the French political landscape.



Ministry of Defense

Hervé Morin

A graduate of the Institute of Political Science of Paris, Hervé Morin made the transition from civil servant to politician in 1989. He has held several political positions: mayor, Deputy in the National Assembly and special advisor to the Minister of Defense. In the outgoing National Assembly, Hervé Morin sat on the Defense Commission, and was spokesperson of the UDF (Union for French Democracy) center party group.

OTHER MINISTRIES AND MINISTERS

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries – Michel Barnier

Ministry of Labor, Society, and Solidarity – Xavier Bertrand

Ministry of National Education – Xavier Darcos

Ministry of Higher Education and Research – Valérie Pécresse

Ministry of Health, Youth and Sports– Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs – Christine Boutin

Ministry of Culture and Communications – Christine Albanel

Ministry of Budget, Public Accounts and Civil Service – Eric Woerth

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

France's Parliament consists of two chambers, the Senate and the National Assembly. Elected members pass statutes, vote on the budget and monitor the actions of the executive branch.



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

There are 577 deputies in the National Assembly. Like the Senate, the National Assembly is empowered to submit and amend bills and to vote on the budget. However, while both chambers must pass a bill for it to become a law, in the event of a disagreement between the two chambers, the Government can decide to give the National Assembly the last word in the legislative process. Unlike the Senate, the National Assembly has the power to cause a government to fall if a majority of the

total Assembly membership votes to censure it. In this case, the President forms a new Government. However, this procedure remains exceptional and has only happened once since the founding of the Fifth Republic by President de Gaulle in 1958.

Deputies in the National Assembly are elected to five-year terms by direct universal suffrage in a two-round system of elections. Every five years, the full National Assembly is up for re-election.

THE NEWLY ELECTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (JUNE 2007)

In the new National Assembly, the President's party, the UMP, holds the majority of seats with 313 deputies out of 577. Its main rival party, the Socialist party and its allies, holds 208 seats. The other political parties at the National Assembly are: the UMP center-right allies (32 deputies); the independent pro-European center

MoDem (3); the Communist party (15); the Green party (4). Two deputies are independent.

The current National Assembly should be in place until the end of President Sarkozy's first term of office in 2012. As the UMP holds the majority, the French President should be ensured a reasonable degree of political stability.

SENATE

The Senate's legislative powers are similar to those of the National Assembly. The Senate submits and amends bills as well as votes on the budget. However, the National Assembly can overrule the Senate in the legislative process in the case of a disagreement. Unlike the National Assembly, the Senate cannot be dissolved. Members of the Senate are elected indirectly by electoral colleges in their

districts and serve six-year terms. Every three years, half of the Senate is up for re-election. There are 331 seats in the Senate, including twelve senators representing French nationals living abroad. The next Senate elections will be held in September 2008. Fifteen new seats will gradually be added to the Senate over the next two elections in 2008 and 2011.





HIGHLIGHTS FROM NICOLAS SARKOZY'S VICTORY SPEECH

May 6, 2007 (as reported by the BBC)

My dear compatriots, as I speak to you this evening, at this time which, as everyone understands, is exceptional in a man's life, I feel enormous, sincere, deep emotion. From a very young age I have felt incredible pride at belonging to a great, an old, a beautiful nation, that of France. I love France as you love someone dear, someone that has given me everything. Now it is my turn to give back to France what France has given me.

National pride

The French people have spoken and have chosen to make a break with the ideas, the customs and the behaviour of the past. I am thus going to restore the status of work, authority, standards, respect, merit. I am going to give the place of honour back to the nation and national identity. I am going to give back to the French people pride in France.

Getting France moving

The French people have opted for change. I shall be implementing this change because this is the mandate I have received from the people and because France needs it - but I shall do this with all of the French people. I shall do it in a spirit of unity and in a spirit of fraternity. I shall do it in such a way that no one is left with the feeling of being excluded, of being left to one side.

'Back in Europe'

I want to issue an appeal to our European partners, to whom our destiny is profoundly linked, to tell them that my whole life I have been a European, that I believe deeply, that I believe sincerely in European construction, and that tonight France is back in Europe.

America and climate change

I want to issue an appeal to our American friends, to tell them that they can count on our friendship, which has been forged in the tragedies of history which we have faced together.

I want to tell them that France will always be by their side when they need it, but I also want to tell them that friendship means accepting that your friends may think differently and that a great nation such as the United States has a duty not to put obstacles in the way of the fight against global warming, but on the contrary to take the lead in this fight, because what is at stake is the fate of humanity as a whole. France will make this battle its primary battle.

The Mediterranean and Africa

What was done for the union of Europe 60 years ago, we are going to do today for the union of the Mediterranean.

I want to issue a call to all Africans, a brotherly call, to tell Africa that we want to help it, to help Africa to vanquish

illness, to vanquish famine, to vanquish poverty, to live in peace. I want to tell them that we are going to work together on decisions concerning a policy of controlled immigration and a policy of ambitious development.

Tolerance and tyranny

I want to issue a call to everyone in the world who believes in the values of tolerance, freedom, democracy, humanism, to all those who are persecuted by tyranny, by dictatorships. I want to tell all of the children throughout the world, all of the ill-treated women throughout the world - I want to tell them that it will be France's pride and its duty to be at their side.

France will not abandon the women who do not have freedom. France will be on the side of the oppressed of the world. This is France's message, it is France's identity, it is France's history.

(www.news.bbc.co.uk)

FRANCE'S INTERNATIONAL AGENDA

On July 1, 2008, France will take the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The EU Council Presidency is held by each Member State on a rotating basis for a period of six months. During this time, the Presidency represents the European Union, speaking on behalf of all Member States at major international conferences.

INSTITUTIONAL/OFFICIAL FRENCH AND EU SITES*

**all sites listed below are available in English*

France

French Presidency

www.elysee.fr

Prime Minister

www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr

Minister of Foreign Affairs

www.diplomatie.gouv.fr

National Assembly

www.assemblee-nationale.fr

Senate

www.senat.fr

Embassy of France in the United States

www.ambafrance-us.org

European Union

European Commission

www.europa.eu

European Parliament

www.europarl.europa.eu

European Central Bank

www.ecb.int/bc

EU Council Presidency

www.eu2007.org

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information or to inquire about membership of the French-American Foundation, you may:

- contact us at:
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- or visit our website at:
www.frenchamerican.org.

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