



GLOBAL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTE

National Backgrounders – European Foreign Policy

Country Profile

France

Capital:	Paris
Geographical Size:	632 833.6 km ²
Population:	65 856 609 (2014)
Population as % of total EU population:	13% (2014)
GDP:	€ 2.060 trillion (2013)
Defense Expenditure:	€ 39.391 million (2013)
Official EU language(s):	French
Political System:	Semi-presidential republic
EU member country since:	1 January 1958
Seats in European Parliament:	74
Currency:	Eurozone member since 1 January 1999
Schengen area member?	Schengen Area member since 26 March 1995
Presidency of the Council:	12 times between 1959 and 2008

Source: Europa.eu

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a. Political System

The French political system (the “Fifth Republic”) is a semi-presidential republic. It is based on the powers of the President and the Prime Minister, which do not always belong to the same political party. The elected President names the Prime Minister according to the majority in the Parliament. France’s President, the head of state (currently François Hollande, the first socialist President for 17 years), has the most powerful position in the country. He is directly elected for a renewable term of five years, and his powers involve heading the armed forces, chairing the Council of Ministers, as well as possibly dismissing the National Assembly. All his domestic decisions must however be approved by the Prime Minister.

The French government exercises the executive power under the Prime Minister (currently Manuel Valls, Socialist Party). He is nominated by the National Assembly and appointed by the President, recommends Ministers to the President and then establishes their duties and responsibilities, while managing the daily affairs of the government. The current government is made of ministers from the PS in majority.

The legislative power is exercised by the French bicameral Parliament, composed of the National Assembly (*Assemblée Nationale*) and Senate (*Sénat*). The National Assembly (lower house) consists of 577 deputies, elected in a two-stage voting system for five years. It scrutinizes the business of the government and passes French laws. In addition, its position prevails in case of opposition with the Senate. French senators are 348 in total, proportionally representing the French people in the mainland, in the overseas territories, and abroad. They are indirectly elected by an electoral college, for six years.

The main French political parties are the Socialist Party (PS), the right-wing Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), and the far right-wing anti-immigrant National Front (FN). For the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic, the Socialist group had the majority in the Presidency and both chambers of the Parliament in 2012. However, the far right-wing National Front won elections in the Senate in 2014.¹

b. Foreign Policy

France’s foreign policy is influenced by national pride, identity and interests, and is conducted with large freedom of decision and autonomy of action by the French President, a legacy from President Charles de Gaulle. Within the “**Big Three**” **tacit alliance** (i.e. France, Germany, and the UK), France has a leading role in foreign policy, especially at the European level. It also has a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Its foreign policy is thus characterized by **strong activism**. France does not have a specifically oriented foreign policy, but actively pursues clear economic objectives, especially regarding export markets and inward investment. France’s foreign policy is audacious and individualistic, which sometimes costs it international support (e.g. when it called for a permanent fund to finance military operations undertaken by EU member states, or when it supported Syrian rebels)². According to J.-M. Guéhenno, director of the Saltzman Institute Center for International Conflict resolution, France must work with others in order to become “a true leader”, due to its limited and shrinking resources.³

¹ Darlington, R., “A short guide to the French Political System”, *Roger Darlington’s World*. Web. Accessed June 10, 2015. <http://www.rogerdarlington.me.uk/Frenchpoliticalsystem.html>

² Guéhenno, J.-M., “French foreign policy: activism or leadership”, *European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)*, March 7, 2014. Web. Accessed June 11, 2015.

http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_french_foreign_policy_activism_or_leadership

³ *Ibid.*

Within the EU, France pursues a foreign policy influenced by tacit agreements between the “Big Three”. France has one of the most **significant and ambitious** foreign policies within the Union: it participates in more than 20% of EU military expenditures, the highest percentage of the Union, together with the UK. Its involvement in multilateral diplomacy and its comprehensive approach make it a very **influential** country, capable of paralyzing the EU decision-making process and of making its concerns heard in other diplomatic forums (e.g. the UNSC). Indeed, the country notably has the fifth-largest economy in the world, a weighty military, nuclear weapon capacity, effective diplomacy, a globally promoted culture, and regional authority (e.g. in Africa). Also, the French President enjoys exceptional authority and freedom of action in the field of foreign affairs. However, this influence could decrease in the future because of the gradual strengthening of EU institutions (e.g. the recent establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) by the Lisbon Treaty). In addition, the global multipolar trend could endanger France’s position as one of the biggest global power.⁴

European Union (EU)

France was one of the founding members of the EU, and hosts the European Parliament and the European Ombudsman in Strasbourg. In addition, the current EEAS’ secretary general is the French Ambassador Pierre Vimont. It is the Secretary General of European Affairs and the French government that formulate France’s position and defends it before the EU institutions. The country notably rejected the idea of a constitutional treaty of the EU in 2005 together with Germany, which put an end to the ratification process of the latter document.⁵

According to Lehne’s publication *The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy* for Carnegie Europe, France has a central role in defining the scope and ambitions of the EU foreign policy. In fact, the country considers national foreign policy as a **core element of state sovereignty**, and the EU’s external relations as complementary to national foreign policy. It is opposed to reduce its national foreign policy for a stronger common European one. The author notes: “As foreign policy is seen as a core element of state sovereignty, it can be Europeanized only to the extent it remains French”⁶. France has always been more favorable to the **intergovernmental approach** than to the community method, and antagonistic of majority voting and of a stronger European Commission. However, Lehne argues that if the country wants to remain a global power, it has to become more involved in the common EU foreign policy. Furthermore, it should advocate “a real strengthening of the EU’s institutional capacity, in order to secure and promote European interests in a globalized world”⁷.

According to the European Foreign Council on Foreign Relations’ scorecard, France had a leading role in developing sanctions against **Russia**, remaining engaged in **Libya**, shaping a political and/or military response to **Daesh** (or ISIL), intensifying investments and relations with **India**, and responding to crises in **South Sudan** and the Central African Republic (**CAR**). It has also been promoting bilateral assistance to EAP countries, action to address the Ebola crisis, and actively fighting climate change. On the other hand, France has been reluctant to advance the conclusion of TTIP negotiations.⁸

⁴ Lehne, S., “The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy”, *Carnegie Europe*, July 2012, p. 13. Web. Accessed June 10, 2015. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/eu_big_three1.pdf

⁵ Hill, C. and Smith, M., *International Relations and the European Union*, 2nd Ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 315-317.

⁶ Lehne, S., “The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy”, *Carnegie Europe*, July 2012, p. 13. Web. Accessed June 10, 2015. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/eu_big_three1.pdf

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸ “France”, *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2015*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015. Web. Accessed November 17, 2015. <http://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/2015/countries/france>

c. Peace & Security Policy

According to scholar Bruno Tertrais, French President Hollande's view on foreign and security policy is overall in line with its predecessors: he is willing to continue the country's strong alliance with the US, maintains the former President's (Nicolas Sarkozy) choice to join NATO's military command highlighting the importance of a nuclear alliance, as well as continues and modernizes the country's nuclear deterrence. He however made some changes, for instance when he withdrew French armed forces from Afghanistan one year before the due date, and when he insisted on a **necessary UN mandate** in order to conduct peacekeeping and humanitarian operations (the opposite of Sarkozy's opinion). In addition, he conducted strong actions, including the regime change in Libya, the recapturing of Northern Mali, and the support provided to the Free Syrian Army.⁹

This shows that, in spite of **budget cuts**, France is willing to have an **active security policy** to protect its interests and values. Overall, Hollande has conducted a cautious, pragmatic, and conservative security policy, similar to former socialist French President Mitterand. Lehne explains this surprising activism by new security priorities and incentives, including the threat that extremist Islamic groups constitute for Europe.¹⁰ The recent multiple **terrorist attacks** on France (January and November 2015) led to a radical development of French security and defense policy. President Holland called on November 17 to join French, US and Russian forces in a global coalition against Daesh (or ISIL). During a joint session of Parliament, he committed to increasing security spending and strengthening anti-terrorism laws. French warplanes have already been conducting air strikes targeting key jihadists locations in Raqqa (Syria), as a result of the coordinated attacks killing 129 in Paris on November 13.¹¹

European Union (EU)

France is one of the only EU countries having armed forces able to project power to other regions, as well as the will and tradition to do so (together with the UK). It is thus a very important country for the EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), which the country has promoted since its creation by the St. Malo Declaration in 1998. It has been advocating the **pooling and sharing** of resources and **Europeanization** of security for a long time. In 2014, France has been contributing to 16,32% of the ATHENA mechanism budget (financing of EU military operations), the highest contribution after Germany (21,48%)¹². However, France seems to use EU institutions in order to upload its national preferences at the EU level,¹³ and the EU security policies are currently facing a slowdown as a result of the financial and economic crisis, which still retains the attention of foreign policy leaders and demands a high level of resources.¹⁴

⁹ Tertrais, B., "Leading on the Cheap? French Security Policy in Austerity", *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2013, p. 47-49. Web. Accessed June 12, 2015.

https://www.frstrategie.org/barreCompetences/questionsDefense/doc/twq_36.pdf

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47-49 and 53.

¹¹ Balmer, C. "France seeks global coalition against Islamic States, launches new strikes", *Reuters*, November 17, 2015. Web. Accessed November 17, 2015. http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/17/us-france-shooting-iduskcn0t22iu20151117?utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_content=564ab59504d30158135ed3b5&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter#iwtCuM7YxUqYwoBq.97

¹² Council of the European Union, *Financing of military operations: the ATHENA mechanism*, Jan. 2014. Web. Accessed Oct. 13, 2015. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139880.pdf

¹³ Terpan, F. "France: Between National Grandeur and European Commitment", In Balfour, R., Carta C., and Raik K. (ed.), "The European External Action Service and National Foreign Ministries", *The Globalisation, Europe, Multilateralism Series*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, p. 105.

¹⁴ Lehne, S., "The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy", *Carnegie Europe*, July 2012, p. 20-21. Web. Accessed June 10, 2015. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/eu_big_three1.pdf

France is willing to act independently, using the CSDP and EEAS as **complementary tools** for training, equipment and advice. According to Benoît Gomis, associate editor of *European Geostrategy*, France's reintegration into NATO, its close partnership with the UK (the CSDP's weaknesses), and the German dominant position in the EU have influenced its approach to the CSDP. He argues the country has lost faith in EU defense and security, and favors **bilateral agreements** in the field, especially with the UK (due to their common interests, objectives, military capacity and willingness to deploy). The French-British Lancaster House Treaties (2010) on defense and security cooperation illustrate such attitude.¹⁵ The former French Defense Minister Mr. Vedrine thus said in 2012: "unless there is a strong reawakening of political determination to make Europe a global power, to prevent it from becoming powerless, and dependent, all of the arrangements for the Europe of Defense will be nothing more than incomplete or lifeless words on paper"¹⁶.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

France has been a member of NATO since its creation in 1949. It hosts various agencies of the organization, such as the NATO Helicopter Management Agency and the NATO Hawk Management Office. The country notably participated in the Kosovo Forces Mission (KFOR) as one of the largest troop-contributing countries with 7400 troops.¹⁷ For the period 2014-2015, France participated in about 11% of NATO's common-funded budgets and programmes, which is above the majority of other NATO members, except for the US (about 22,5%), Germany (about 14,5%), and the UK (about 10,5%)¹⁸.

In 1966, French President Charles de Gaulle decided to remove France from the NATO military command structure, in order to maintain the country's global independence. In 2009, former President Sarkozy decided to fully reintegrate the country into NATO, assuring that it will not affect the independence of its **nuclear capacity** but rather increase French transatlantic influence. This action took place as part of the former President's efforts to bring the US and France closer. As a result, France had to increase its defense budget.¹⁹ Following the conflict in Ukraine, the current President Hollande faced the dilemma of being both a Russian and a NATO ally. Indeed, France suffers from deteriorating bilateral relations with Russia, while it faces pressure from NATO and EU to apply sanctions on Russia.²⁰

¹⁵ Gomis, B. "France steers away from CSDP" In Fiott, D. (ed.) *The Common Security and Defence Policy: National Perspectives*, Egmont Institute, No. 79, May 2015. Web. Accessed June 22, 2015. <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ep79.pdf>

¹⁶ Chelotti, N. "EU, CSDP and Mali: an increasing French disappointment?", *UCL European Institute*, February 2013. Web. Accessed June 16, 2015. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/european-institute/highlights/eu-mali>

¹⁷ Cody, E. "After 43 years, France to rejoin NATO as full member", *The Washington Post*, March 12, 2009. Web. Accessed June 16, 2015. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/11/AR2009031100547.html>

¹⁸ "NATO Common-Funded Budgets & Programmes", *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Web. Accessed September 22, 2015. http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_06/20140611_20140601_NATO_common_funded_budgets_2014-2015.pdf

¹⁹ Cody, E. "After 43 years, France to rejoin NATO as full member", *The Washington Post*, March 12, 2009. Web. Accessed June 16, 2015. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/11/AR2009031100547.html>

²⁰ Tunakan, B. "France to make a choice between NATO and Russia", *Daily Sabah*, January 7, 2015. Web. Accessed June 16, 2015. <http://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2015/01/07/france-to-make-a-choice-between-nato-and-russia>

United Nations (UN)

France is one of the founding members of the United Nations. It is a permanent member of the **UN Security Council** and of the **Conference on Disarmament**, and thus has a central role in decision-making within the organization. In 2013-2015, France was the third UN contributing country (participating in 7,22% of UN Peacekeeping budget), behind the US and Japan²¹. It recently held the presidency of the UNSC in March 2015, and notably organized a public debate on **children in armed conflict** during its mandate.²² It is the second largest contributor among the permanent members of the UNSC (behind China).²³ As of September 2015, France had 912 nationals involved in UN missions, mostly in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 825 contingent troops, but also in the Western Sahara (MINURSO), in the CAR (MINUSCA), in Mali (MINUSMA), in Haïti (MINUSTAH), in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and in the Golan Heights (UNTSO)²⁴.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

France is part of the OSCE since its creation in 1973 as the *Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe*. Recently, the Organization played a role regarding the conflict in Ukraine. It deployed its **Special Monitoring Mission** (SMM) and organized the signature of the **Minsk Agreements** (Minsk I & II) between Ukraine, Russia, the Donetsk's People Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic (September 2014), supported by the French President and the German Chancellor. France is particularly involved in the Ukraine crisis through the work of the OSCE: it co-chairs the Minsk Group (with the US and Russia). Recently, the OSCE's mission's mandate has been extended and complemented by UN support, in order to successfully implement the Minsk Agreement's aim for a complete ceasefire in the Donbass region of Ukraine.²⁵ In 2014, France participated in 10,4% of the OSCE's unified budget with €14.828.603, and had 34 nationals involved in the organization's staff²⁶.

Council of Europe (CoE)

France is one of the founders of the Council of Europe, created in 1949. Its **headquarters** are notably situated in Strasbourg, including the European Court of Human Rights. In 2015, France contributed €37.281.238 to the CoE's budget.²⁷ Recently, it has been facing a controversy regarding its failure to ban smacking children in accordance with the European Social Charter²⁸.

²¹ "Financing Peacekeeping", *United Nations Peacekeeping*, 2015. Web. Accessed June 29, 2015. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>

²² "United Nations", *France Diplomatie*, November 2013. Web. Accessed June 16, 2015. <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/united-nations/>

²³ "Peacekeeping", Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York, March 2015. Web. Accessed June 16, 2015. <http://www.franceonu.org/Peacekeeping>

²⁴ "UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country", *United Nations Peacekeeping*, September 30, 2015. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015. http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/sep15_3.pdf

²⁵ Delattre, F. "Ukraine: OSCE must continue to fully play its role ensuring successful implementation of Minsk Agreements", *Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York*, March 2015. Web. Accessed June 17, 2015. <http://www.franceonu.org/Ukraine-OSCE-must-continue-to>

²⁶ The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Annual Report 2014*, July 2015. Web. Accessed September 1, 2015. <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/169971?download=true>

²⁷ "France", *The Council of Europe*, 2015. Web. Accessed June 22, 2015. <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/france>

²⁸ Coleman, J. "France violates treaty on smacking – Council of Europe", *BBC News*, March 4, 2015. Web. Accessed June 18, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31727515>

Strategic Culture

The French strategic culture is characterized by intense **threat perception** in policy-making, particularly with regard to terrorism, drug-trafficking, protection of French expatriates, nuclear and ballistic proliferation, and the risk of disruption of energy flows. It is focused on the **global responsibilities** France considers to have, such as defending universal values and protecting civilian populations through humanitarian interventions, mainly because of its permanent seat in the UNSC. In addition, the recent reluctance of the US to military intervene in countries where they do not have direct interests pushed France – and its British “strategic twin” – to take action and to **lead by default**. Their joint action in Libya and Syria illustrates this point. As exposed by Bruno Tertrais, these circumstances explain the sudden French **interventionism**, especially in medium-sized operations such as in Mali, and in cooperation with European partners, because of the country’s tight budgetary and financial situation.

France’s strategy is concentrated on Europe, as well as the areas of Northern and West Africa and the Middle East, where the country has economic, cultural and political ties. Indeed, France is highly concerned about security issues in countries related to Europe, because of their potential impact the continent’s stability. This is illustrated by the continued French presence in Chad to prevent the state’s downfall, and by the relations maintained with many other countries to remain present in Africa. Furthermore, strategic issues in Asia are of great importance for the current French president, to which he answers with military intelligence. Since the end of the 20th century, France has also established new partnerships with Gulf countries (e.g. the United Arab Emirates and Qatar) and emerging powers (e.g. India and Brazil). This shows its ability to adapt to shifts and long-term challenges.²⁹

d. Economic Policy

European Union (EU)

French economy is currently characterized by **structural issues** such as a rigid labor market, high unemployment, an increasing debt, loss of competitiveness, and unsustainable social systems. In addition, the country’s taxes and social contributions are high, but not enough in order to cover state expenses, and the budget deficits have been reduced, but remain unsustainable.³⁰ Facing loss of its competitive edge in Europe and slow growth in the country, Hollande directed France’s economic policy towards **spending cuts** and **tax breaks**, in order to compensate high social charges for employers and stimulate investment, as well as rearrange the welfare state system. This was controversially received by the French people, as Hollande was elected on the left, but seems to take a center-oriented path. Prime Minister Valls, then Interior Minister, responded to the critiques by explaining that those changes should have taken place during the past ten years, when the PS was the opposition party.³¹

According to recent forecasts, France’s economic recovery will remain modest. Indeed, French businesses are likely to continue behaving on the basis of **uncertainty** and **loss of confidence** under the current government. With this regard, the OECD suggested that France should carry out more ambitious economic reforms, in order to boost potential growth and

²⁹ Tertrais, B., “Leading on the Cheap? French Security Policy in Austerity”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2013, p. 54-55. Web. Accessed June 12, 2015.

https://www.frstrategie.org/barreCompetences/questionsDefense/doc/twq_36.pdf

³⁰ “France”, *Sustainable Governance Indicators*, 2014. Web. Accessed June 18, 2015. http://www.sgi-network.org/2014/France/Economic_Policies

³¹ n.a. “Which way for Mr. Hollande?”, *The Economist*, February 16, 2013. Web. Accessed June 18, 2015. <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21571900-elected-left-frances-president-seems-be-veering-towards-centre-which-way-mr>

confidence in the country. The French Parliament however disagrees with this position, and rather advocates to reverse pro-business policies, which would be more leftist. Valls' government nonetheless stated it would stick to its economic plans, in order to fix the national structural problems preventing economic growth and well-being.³²

In 2014, the European Commission threatened to reject France's 2015 budget, as it was not respecting the deficit-reduction target. French Ministers answered these warnings with a very Eurosceptic point of view, stating that the Commission could not reject the budget of any state. The Commission however recently gained authority to police national budgets, as France's behavior could endanger the credibility of the newly established EU powers. It seems absurd that the Eurozone's second largest economy would be allowed to disregard economic rules, while austerity measures are imposed on smaller countries.³³

In its 2015 report, the European Commission states that a **limited recovery** is expected in France, supported by stronger private consumption. The high unemployment rate (10,2% in 2014) and government deficit and debt (4,3% and 95,2% of GDP in 2014) will however remain constant, which increases vulnerability. Furthermore, France's export market shares have decreased, because of the low profitability of exporters (mainly due to high cost of labor), which restricts their capacity to invest and innovate. As a result, the country's cost competitiveness is greatly affected, and the economic negative developments taking place in France could significantly affect other Eurozone countries. The report indicates other macroeconomic issues, such as: services market rigidities, high administrative burden, high public expenditures, high tax burden, etc.³⁴

Economic Diplomacy & Foreign Trade

As economic recovery is high on the French government's agenda, the country needs to increase its export market shares, and therefore support French companies abroad, attract foreign investors in France, and work on the European and international regulatory framework in order to better support the country's economic interests. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs established an **Action Plan** dedicated to economic diplomacy, which focuses on: the Business and the Global Economy Directorate, increased mobilization of the network abroad, ministerial visits with an economic dimension, promotion of French innovation, attracting foreign investment to France, mobilizing soft power tools, visas, support for expatriation, better communication with businesses, and ministry staff.³⁵ Recently, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, Laurent Fabius, initiated "speed dating" meetings between ambassadors and entrepreneurs, which took place during the 2015 Ambassadors' Conference (August 24 to 28). Its aim was to promote French companies that want to expand internationally.³⁶

³² Horibin, W. "France's Economic Recovery Will Remain Modest, Forecasts Show", *The Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 2015. Web. Accessed June 18, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/frances-economic-recovery-will-remain-modest-forecasts-show-1428004801>

³³ Chazan, D. "France quarrels wit EU over economic policy", *The Telegraph*, October 7, 2014. Web. Accessed June 18, 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11146201/France-heads-for-deficit-battle-with-EU.html>

³⁴ European Commission, "Country Report France 2015", *Commission Staff Working Document*, Brussels, February 2015. Web. Accessed June 9, 2015. http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015_france_en.pdf

³⁵ "Economic Diplomacy & Foreign Trade", *France Diplomatie*, May 2013. Web. Accessed June 18, 2015. <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy-1/economic-diplomacy/>

³⁶ "Economic Diplomacy – Ambassadors' Conference – Opening of registration for #1ambassadeurEntrepreneur, an unprecedented session of business meetings between ambassadors and entrepreneurs (May 29, 2015)", *France Diplomatie*, 2015. Web. Accessed June 18, 2015.

e. Other Diplomatic Priorities

Priorities at the European Level

After the terrorist attacks that took place in France in 2015, France had to take some new security measures. New anti-terror laws are to be passed this year. In addition, the former head of French domestic intelligence agency Mr. Squarchini called for better cooperation of national intelligence services, for the necessary introduction of passenger data collection, and for the needed improved framework legislation. The French conservative opposition is notably asking for an equivalent of the US “Patriot’s Act” in France, which will give national intelligence services powers to collect data and fight terrorists, which Prime Minister Mr. Valls opposes.³⁷

Nonetheless, a landmark intelligence bill was passed in the National Assembly in early May 2015, intending to legalize activities that French spies were already practicing. It still has to go through the Senate, which is expected to pass the law. The bill advocates **mass surveillance** in the form of devices installed on the server of French Internet services (*boîtes noires*) collecting data which could help prevent possible terrorist attacks, but also collective violence and disruptions of public order. It was received with high criticism, as the bill does not address issues concerning financial resources or human rights and transparency, and also does not say anything about what to do with the information collected. As a result, it is indeed compared with the US “Patriot’s Act”, as they similarly have been hurried through the legislature after a terrorist event.³⁸

Priorities at the Global Level

Due to Mali’s position as a drug trafficking platform and to the presence of jihadists and French hostages in the country, France has continued its attention to the region. When rebels (The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, MNLA) attacked the local government to gain the independence of **Northern Mali** in early 2012 (which was eventually taken by jihadist forces), President Hollande advocated for an international intervention led by African countries to restore Mali’s integrity. This was ensured by a UNSC Resolution in late December of that year. In addition, France launched a rapid offensive in early 2013, as requested by the local president on behalf of collective self-defense, which eventually turned into a serious ground offensive (*Operation Serval*). In April 2013, more than 4000 French troops were deployed in the country and the region. Eventually, jihadist fighters were either killed by the French and African troops or left the country. Afterwards, the French operation in Mali was compared with the US one in Afghanistan, due to their strategic similarities. In fact, the mission confirmed the French armed forces’ efficient capabilities and individual counterterrorism abilities.³⁹ With this regard, Mr. Hollande was often criticized as he “fights

<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy-1/economic-diplomacy-foreign-trade/events-2134/article/economic-diplomacy-ambassadors>

³⁷ Riegert, B. “France ups security, considers new laws after terrorist attacks”, *Deutsche Welle*, January 13, 2015. Web. Accessed June 18, 2015. <http://www.dw.de/france-ups-security-considers-new-laws-after-terrorist-attacks/a-18188627>

³⁸ Groll, E. “Le Petit Problème With France’s New Big Brother”, *Foreign Policy*, May 5, 2015. Web. Accessed June 18, 2015. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/05/le-petit-probleme-with-frances-new-big-brother/>

³⁹ Tertrais, B., “Leading on the Cheap? French Security Policy in Austerity”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2013, p. 49-52. Web. Accessed June 12, 2015. https://www.frstrategie.org/barreCompetences/questionsDefense/doc/twq_36.pdf

extremists in Mali while supporting them in Syria”. The reason given is the difference made between jihadist terrorists of Africa and fighting Islamists of the Middle East.⁴⁰

As a result of a growing awareness of Mali’s strategic importance for Europe, the EU established a CSDP military training mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) in January 2013, in order to train and re-organize the local armed forces and eventually restore the country’s territorial integrity. But this late reaction shows that the EU defense and security capabilities and responses are limited, which explains why France unilaterally operates in the country, and slowly distances itself from the CSDP.⁴¹

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⁴⁰ Tertrais, B., “Leading on the Cheap? French Security Policy in Austerity”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2013, p. 54. Web. Accessed June 12, 2015.

https://www.frstrategie.org/barreCompetences/questionsDefense/doc/twq_36.pdf

⁴¹ Chelotti, N. “EU, CSDP and Mali: an increasing French disappointment?”, *UCL European Institute*, February 2013. Web. Accessed June 16, 2015. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/european-institute/highlights/eu-mali>

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