The 101 departments are subdivided into 335 arrondissements, which are, in turn, subdivided into 2,054 cantons.[124] These cantons are then divided into 36,658 communes, which are municipalities with an elected municipal council.[124] Three communes—Paris, Lyon and Marseille—are subdivided into 45 municipal arrondissements.

In addition to the 18 regions and 101 departments, the French Republic has five overseas collectivities (French Polynesia, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Martin, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, and Wallis and Futuna), one sui generis collectivity (New Caledonia), one overseas territory (French Southern and Antarctic Lands), and one island possession in the Pacific Ocean (Clipperton Island). Overseas collectivities and territories form part of the French Republic, but do not form part of the European Union or its fiscal area (except for Saint Barthélemy, which seceded from Guadeloupe in 2007). The Pacific Collectivities (COMs) of French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna, and New Caledonia continue to use the CFP franc[125] whose value is strictly linked to that of the euro. In contrast, the five overseas regions used the French franc and now use the euro.[126]

France is a founding member of the United Nations and serves as one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council with veto rights.[127] In 2015, it was described as "the best networked state in the world" due to its membership in more international institutions than any other country;[128] these include the G7, World Trade Organization (WTO),[129] the Pacific Community (SPC)[130] and the Indian Ocean Commission (COI).[131] It is an associate member of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS)[132] and a leading member of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) of 84 French-speaking countries.[133]

As a significant hub for international relations, France has the third-largest assembly of diplomatic missions, second only to China and the United States. It also hosts the headquarters of several international organisations, including the OECD, UNESCO, Interpol, the International Bureau of Weights and Measures, and the OIF.[136]

French foreign policy after World War II has been largely shaped by membership in the European Union, of which it was a founding member. Since the 1960s, France has developed close ties with reunified Germany to become the most influential driving force of the EU.[137] Since 1904, France has maintained an "Entente cordiale" with the United Kingdom, and there has been a strengthening of links between the countries, especially militarily.

France is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but under President de Gaulle excluded itself from the joint military command, in protest of the Special Relationship between the United States and Britain, and to preserve the independence of French foreign and security policies. Under Nicolas Sarkozy, France rejoined the NATO joint military command on 4 April 2009.[138][139][140]

France retains strong political and economic influence in its former African colonies (Françafrique)[141] and has supplied economic aid and troops for peacekeeping missions in Ivory Coast and Chad.[142] From 2012 to 2021, France and other African states intervened in support of the Malian government in the Northern Mali conflict.

In 2017, France was the world's fourth-largest donor of development aid in absolute terms, behind the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom.[143] This represents 0.43% of its GNP, the 12th highest among the OECD.[144] Aid is provided by the governmental French Development Agency, which finances primarily humanitarian projects in sub-Saharan Africa,[145] with an emphasis on "developing infrastructure, access to health care and education, the implementation of appropriate economic policies and the consolidation of the rule of law and democracy".[145]

The French Armed Forces (Forces armées françaises) are the military and paramilitary forces of France, under the President of the Republic as supreme commander. They consist of the French Army (Armée de Terre), the French Navy (Marine Nationale, formerly called Armée de Mer), the French Air and Space Force (Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace), and the National Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie nationale), which serves as both military police and civil police in rural areas. Together they are among the largest armed forces in the world and the largest in the EU. According to a 2015 study by Crédit Suisse, the French Armed Forces ranked as the world's sixth-most powerful military, and the second most powerful in Europe.[146] France's annual military expenditure in 2023 was US$61.3 billion, or 2.1% of its GDP, making it the eighth biggest military spender in the world.[147] There has been no national conscription since 1997.[148]  
  
  
France has been a recognised nuclear state since 1960. It is a party to both the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)[149] and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The French nuclear force (formerly known as "Force de Frappe") consists of four Triomphant class submarines equipped with submarine-launched ballistic missiles. In addition to the submarine fleet, it is estimated that France has about 60 ASMP medium-range air-to-ground missiles with nuclear warheads;[150] 50 are deployed by the Air and Space Force using the Mirage 2000N long-range nuclear strike aircraft, while around 10 are deployed by the French Navy's Super Étendard Modernisé (SEM) attack aircraft, which operate from the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle (R91).  
  
  
France has major military industries and one of the largest aerospace sectors in the world.[151] The country has produced such equipment as the Rafale fighter, the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier, the Exocet missile and the Leclerc tank among others. France is a major arms seller,[152][153] with most of its arsenal's designs available for the export market, except for nuclear-powered devices.