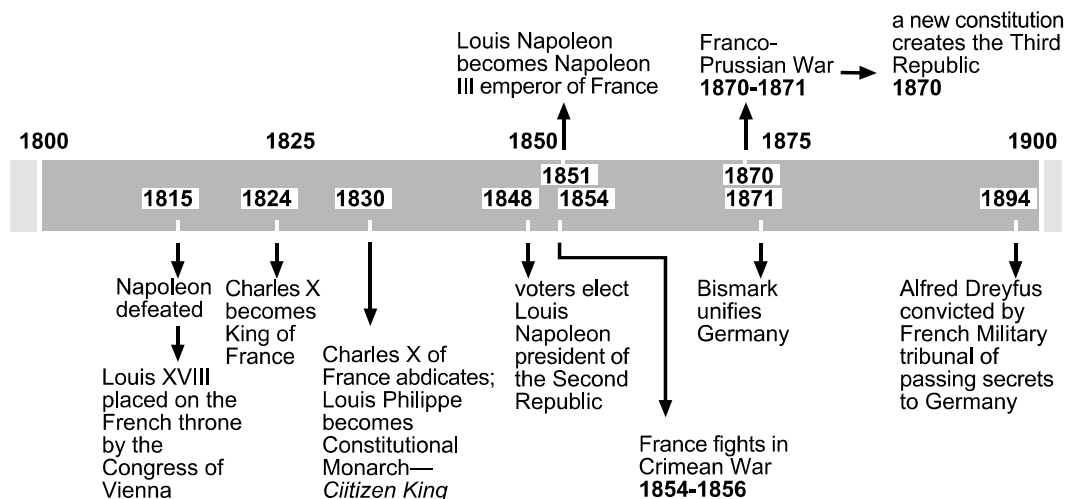


France (1815-1900s)

The Overthrow of the French Monarchy

After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, France grew increasingly unstable. Royalists, who believed in the Metternich system, wanted to return to the absolute monarchy form of government that had ruled in pre-revolutionary France. Liberals, determined to limit the power of the monarchs, wanted the people to be given more control over their own lives and more representation in government. Royalists and liberals did have one common bond—both groups wanted a strong France. The French Revolution had given the people of France a deep feeling of **pride** and nationalism.

Timeline of France (1800s)



In 1830 the popular king Louis Philippe tried to identify with the common people. He called himself the *Citizen King*. However, by 1848, the French people, especially the growing working class, had become unhappy with Louis Philippe. They were upset because he favored the wealthy upper-middle class at the expense of the *lower* class. Eventually, angry mobs gathered in Paris to protest Louis Philippe's policies. French troops fired on the protesters, and some of them were killed. This bloodshed ignited a revolution. Crowds marched to the king's palace and forced Louis Philippe to leave France. Once again in France's history, the people had overthrown their king.

The Rise of the Second Empire

In 1848 the French people formed a new government called the *Second Republic*. The Second French Republic included a constitution and a president elected by the people. Louis Napoleon, the nephew of Napoleon, was elected president. However, Louis Napoleon wanted more power. Three years after his election in 1851, with the support of the army, Louis Napoleon successfully overthrew the Second Republic and set up the Second Empire. He called himself *Emperor Napoleon III*.

The Second Empire lasted from 1851 to 1870. During this period, Napoleon III ruled with the support of the army. During the first 10 years of rule, Napoleon III placed France under strict control. Many French people were put in jail. Napoleon III placed newspapers under government control and abolished freedom of speech. He outlawed political parties or labor unions. **Candidates** for government office needed to be approved by the government before they could run for office. Napoleon III avoided **criticism** by strengthening the economy. Banks were encouraged to make loans at low **interest** rates. This helped the middle class by providing them with money to start businesses. An excellent railway system was built throughout France. Working-class people earned better wages than ever before. Under Emperor Napoleon III, Paris became the world's most beautiful city.

Ways Napoleon III Stayed in Favor with the People

- strengthened the economy
- encouraged banks to make loans at low interest rates
- built an excellent railway system throughout France
- better wages earned by working-class people
- Paris became the world's most beautiful city

One of Napoleon III's major goals was to make France as great a power in world politics as it had been under his uncle, Napoleon. In 1854 Napoleon III saw his chance to do this. He sent troops to war to show France's strength. It was, however, the beginning of the end of Napoleon III's reign.

The Crimean War

In 1853 Russia invaded the Turkish (or *Ottoman*) Empire in the Middle East. Russia claimed that it needed to protect endangered Orthodox Christians living in Turkey. To do this, Russia needed to control the Bosphorus—the **straits** connecting Russia's ports in the Black Sea with the Mediterranean Sea. France, however, had its own interests to protect. It did not want Russia to gain power and territory in the Middle East, particularly Palestine. After Turkey declared war on Russia, Napoleon III decided to act.

Along with the British, the French sent an army to help Turkey. From 1854 to 1856, the French, Turkish, and British armies fought the Russians in the *Crimean War*.



During the Crimean War, Napoleon III convinced the French people that France had once again become an important European and world power. He did this by controlling what the newspapers printed about France's victories and losses in the war. The Crimean War was the first war covered by newspapermen who were at the scene of the battles. However, most of what the newspapers published was exactly what the French government wanted the French people to read. France gained little but glory in the Crimean War.

The Fall of the Second Empire

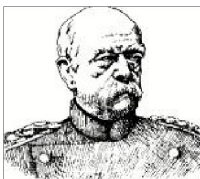
Between 1861 and 1871, the French people began opposing the policies of Napoleon III. To maintain his hold on power in France, he continued his ban on many rights, including freedom of speech, and he formed a secret police to spy on groups that he suspected of being disloyal. Napoleon III also continued fighting costly and difficult wars abroad. After he became ill, he was no longer able to control policies and events in France.

The election of 1869 in France proved that Napoleon III was losing popularity with the people. The candidates chosen by Napoleon III received only a few more votes than the opposition candidates. Many French people realized that the Second Empire was about to collapse. All it would take was a major crisis.

The Franco-Prussian War

The crisis that led to Napoleon III's defeat was the Franco-Prussian War. The cause of the war between France and Prussia seems foolish now. Napoleon III needed a war to unite the French people and save his government. The Prussian prime minister, Otto von Bismarck, needed a war to achieve his goal of unifying Prussia and the German Confederation into one country. The Franco-Prussian War was a hopeless attempt by Napoleon III to achieve nationalistic goals.

Otto von Bismarck



Otto von Bismarck made Germany a powerful and united nation based on *blood and iron* (war and weapons). However, in 1871, after the unification of Germany, Bismarck turned to peace.

He kept Germany out of European wars, started a reform program that included a plan of health insurance, old-age pensions, and low-rent housing to keep workers loyal to the empire.

The immediate cause of the Franco-Prussian War had to do with events in Spain. After a revolution in 1868, Spain's queen Isabella II was overthrown. Prussian king William I wanted his distant cousin Leopold I, a Hohenzollern prince, to become the new Spanish king. Napoleon III of France opposed Leopold I as king of Spain because he did not want a Prussian ally on the southern border of France, and he also feared Prussia's growing power in Germany. The Prussian king, William I, ignored Napoleon III's opposition, but Leopold voluntarily withdrew his name as

a candidate for the throne. Bismarck provoked a war between France and Prussia by altering a telegram sent to Napoleon III to include an exchange of insults. Newspaper coverage of the incident enraged the French. In response, France declared war on Prussia in July 1870.

Prussia and the German states, under Bismarck's leadership, invaded France. The French army was too weak to stop the Germans' advance. In September, a large French army under the personal command of Napoleon III was defeated in northeast France. Napoleon III was captured. The German army continued to advance towards Paris. France's capital city fell on January 28, 1871.

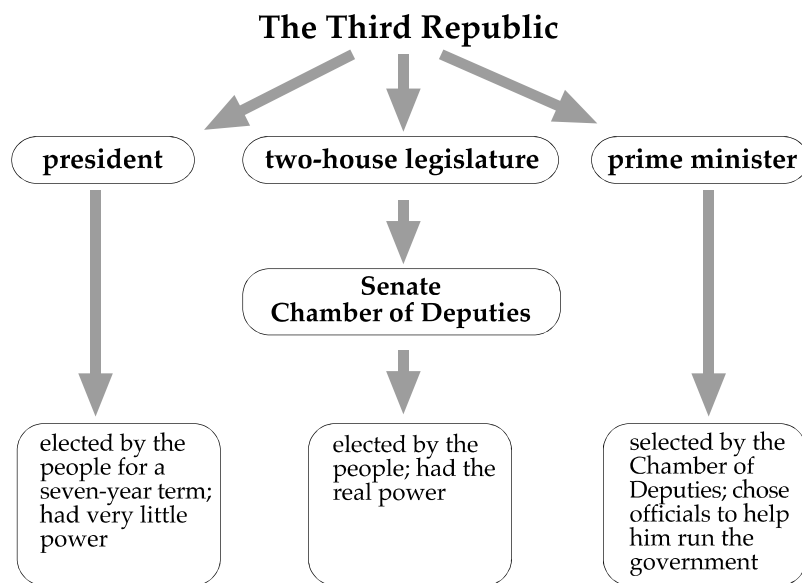
The war lasted only six months. In February of 1871, peace talks began at Versailles, and France signed a treaty agreeing to pay Germany five billion francs. The French lost the valuable coal- and iron-producing **provinces** of Alsace and Lorraine on the German border. France also lost its pride. Napoleon III was overthrown, and the Third Republic was created in France. (Prussian Prime Minister Bismarck did achieve his goal: Prussia and the German states united into the new country of Germany.)



ragged young soldiers

The Third Republic

The history of the Third Republic in France is a history of problems and crises. The Third Republic lasted for 70 years (1870–1940). Under the Third Republic, France had a president, a two-house legislature (the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies), and a prime minister. The president was elected by the people for a seven-year term. He had very little power. The power under the Third Republic rested in the Chamber of Deputies. The deputies were elected by the people. The Chamber of Deputies selected the prime minister. The prime minister then chose officials to help him run the government. Therefore, he was most likely to be a member of the political party with the most members in the Chamber of Deputies.



This system of government may have seemed effective. However, the Third Republic constantly faced major problems.

- There were too many political parties. This made it impossible for any one political party to gain a **majority** of seats in the Chamber of Deputies. As a result, it was difficult for one political party to form a government. In order to govern, **coalitions**, alliances of many political parties had to be formed. Most coalition governments under the Third Republic lasted about nine months. This multiparty system resulted in a very unstable political situation throughout the Third Republic. In the first 10 years of the Third Republic, 50 coalition governments were formed.
- There was widespread **corruption** among the government and army officials.
- Those people (the Royalists) who wanted to bring back the monarchy worked against the Third Republic. At one time, the Royalists, with the support of the Church and the army, nearly succeeded in overthrowing the republic.

The Dreyfus Affair

Of all the problems and crises the Third Republic faced, the Dreyfus Affair was the most dangerous to its survival. Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish army officer, was charged with spying for the Germans. He was convicted and imprisoned on Devil's Island. Slowly, the public was made aware that the evidence on which Dreyfus was convicted was not true. The public learned that some of the highest ranking members of the French government, army, and Church knew all along that Dreyfus was innocent. In fact, many of these high-ranking officials had lied about Dreyfus. These people falsely charged Dreyfus because he was Jewish. These people were **anti-Semites**. Anti-Semites are persons who hate Jews.

A famous writer named Emile Zola wrote an open letter entitled "I Accuse." In this letter, Zola told the story of the Dreyfus case and accused the French government of anti-Semitism. A very talented and respected man named Georges Clemenceau (Kle-mon-so) argued in defense of Dreyfus. Clemenceau learned that the monarchists, army, and some churchmen were behind the falsehoods. Clemenceau convinced the government to free Dreyfus. In 1906 his conviction was overturned. He was reinstated in the army and awarded the Legion of Honor.

The Dreyfus Affair had three important results.

1. It showed the amount of anti-Semitism in France and throughout Europe.
2. It strengthened the Third Republic by making the French people aware of the dangers of the Royalists.
3. It led to the separation of Church and state in France; the Church no longer controlled the public school.

Review

Although King Louis Philippe styled himself as the Citizen King, he favored the wealthy at the expense of the lower classes. After he was forced from France's throne, the French people formed the Second Republic. Its president, Louis Napoleon, quickly overthrew the republic and set himself up as Emperor Napoleon III, head of France's Second Empire (1851–1870). He abolished many of the people's rights in order to maintain control. In an effort to unite the people in his support, he began to enter foreign wars. He was captured during the Franco-Prussian War.

In 1870 France set up its Third Republic (1870–1940). Citizens' rights were restored, but some groups (Royalists, army, and the Church) attempted to destabilize the government. The Dreyfus Affair almost toppled the Third Republic, but in the end, the affair strengthened the people's support for their government and led the French government to make many political and social reforms in France.