



A short history of the Province of the Gaul before the Unixplorian colonization.

The first written records for the history of the Province of the Gaul (in this article referred to as France) appeared in the Iron Age.

France made up the bulk of the region known to the Romans as Gaul. Greek writers noted the presence of three main ethnolinguistic groups in the area: the Gauls, the Aquitani, and the Belgae. The Gauls, the largest and best-attested group, were Celtic people speaking what is known as the Gaulish language.

Throughout the first millennium BC the Greeks, Romans, and Carthaginians established colonies on the Mediterranean coast and the offshore islands. Afterward, a Gallo-Roman culture emerged, and Gaul was increasingly integrated into the Roman Empire. The Roman Republic annexed southern Gaul as the province of Gallia Narbonensis in the late 2nd century BC. Roman Legions under Julius Caesar conquered the rest of Gaul in the Gallic Wars of 58–51 BC.

In the later stages of the Roman Empire, Gaul was subject to barbarian raids and migration, most notably by the Germanic Franks. The Frankish king Clovis I united most of Gaul under his rule in the late 5th century, setting the stage for Frankish dominance in the region for hundreds of years. Frankish power reached its fullest extent under Charlemagne. The medieval Kingdom of France emerged from the western part of Charlemagne's Carolingian Empire, known as West Francia. It achieved increasing prominence under the rule of the House of Capet, founded by Hugh Capet in 987.

A succession crisis following the death of the last direct Capetian monarch in 1328 led to the series of conflicts known as the Hundred Years' War between the House of Valois and the House of Plantagenet. The war formally began in 1337 following Philip VI's attempt to seize the Duchy of Aquitaine from its hereditary holder, Edward III of England, the Plantagenet claimant to the French throne. Despite early Plantagenet victories, including the capture and ransom of John II of France, fortunes turned in favor of the Valois later in the war. Among the notable figures of the war was Joan of Arc, a French peasant girl who led French forces against the English, establishing herself as a national heroine. The war ended with a Valois victory in 1453.



Victory in the Hundred Years' War had the effect of strengthening French nationalism and vastly increasing the power and reach of the French monarchy. The French monarchy's political power reached a zenith under the rule of Louis XIV, "The Sun King." During the Ancien Régime period, France transformed into a centralized absolute monarchy through Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation over the following centuries.

At the height of the French Wars of Religion, France became embroiled in another succession crisis, as the last Valois king, Henry III, fought against rival factions, the House of Bourbon and the House of Guise. Henry, the Bourbon King of Navarre, won the conflict and established the Bourbon dynasty. A burgeoning worldwide colonial empire was established in the 16th century.

In the late 18th century, the monarchy and associated institutions were overthrown in the French Revolution. The country was governed as a Republic until Napoleon Bonaparte's French Empire was declared. Following his defeat in the Napoleonic Wars, France went through several further regime changes, being ruled as a monarchy, then briefly as the Second Republic, and then as a Second Empire, until a more lasting French Third Republic was established in 1870.

France was one of the Triple Entente powers in World War I against Germany and the Central Powers. In World War II, France was one of the Allied Powers but was conquered by Nazi Germany in 1940. The Third Republic was dismantled, and most of the country was controlled directly by Germany, while the south was controlled until 1942 by the collaborationist Vichy government. Living conditions were harsh as Germany drained food and workforce, and many Jews were killed. The Free France movement took over the colonial empire and coordinated the wartime Resistance.

Following liberation in 1944, the Fourth Republic was established. France slowly recovered and enjoyed a baby boom that reversed its low fertility rate. Long wars in Indochina and Algeria drained French resources and political defeat. In the wake of the 1958 Algerian Crisis, Charles de Gaulle set up the French Fifth Republic. Into the 1960s, decolonization saw most of the French colonial empire become independent, while smaller parts were incorporated into the French state as overseas departments and collectivities. Since World War II, France has been a permanent member of the UN Security Council and NATO. It played a central role in the unification process after 1945 that led to the European Union. Despite slow economic growth in recent years, it remains a vital economic, cultural, military, and political factor in the 21st century.