

## Council of Ministers of France

### Welcome

Bienvenue!

My name is Manu Venkat, though I will go by Nicolas Sarkozy in committee. I am from central New Jersey, and am a sophomore and an urban studies concentrator. I have been doing model UN since the beginning of high school, and have loved every minute of it. I spend my free time playing tennis and flying small aircraft as a certified private pilot.

I hope you are all looking forward to the conference. During your time in committee, you will be faced with crises that will test your creativity and ability to work as part of a team. Your actions will impact other committees in the joint crisis, and their choices will affect you. It is imperative that you come to the conference well prepared, and ready to realistically represent your position. Your time with us will be intense, but it will also be a lot of fun! Take the time to get to know your fellow delegates, and take advantage of all the great events we will be hosting during your down-time.

I look forward to seeing you all in the Fall.

Bonne chance!  
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### Country Background

FRANCE IN THE PAST: The end of the second World War brought about a period of rapid change for France. A new constitution was drafted which created a parliament-dominated government, known as the French Fourth Republic. The first international relations issue the republic faced was the creation of the state of Israel in the late 1940's. The French

supported Israel and supplied it with weapons, as the state helped protect French interests in the region, namely the Suez Canal. In 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel attempted to nationalize the canal but was quickly defeated by a coalition of French, British, and Israeli forces. The United States exerted heavy diplomatic pressure on the coalition to cease hostilities, which strained US-France relations.

During the Cold War period, France slowly began losing control of its colonial territories. During the First Indochina War in 1954, France's Indochinese colonies were made independent. Instability in Algeria led to the fall of the French government in 1958, which necessitated the creation of a new constitution in 1958 which granted the president much more power. The first president of the new "Fifth Republic" was former general Charles DeGaulle, a strong proponent of French diplomatic and defense independence. In 1966, France withdrew from NATO's integrated military command, which DeGaulle believed reinforced American and British supremacy and undermined French strategic autonomy in the European sphere. The French government, however, remained aligned with NATO in conflicts such as the bombing of Yugoslavia. During the 1960's, France performed nuclear weapons tests and enlarged its "Force de Frappe" (nuclear weapons strike force). It concurrently invested huge amounts of capital in a civilian nuclear energy program.

The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which formally created the modern day European Union, marked a turning point in French international relations. The fervent independence and pride that had defined the French people was tempered by a desire to unlock the economic and diplomatic potential of a stronger, more unified Europe.

Jaques Chirac served as president from 1995 through 2007. He focused on fighting rampant unemployment, as well as protecting France from terrorism. France supported the

2001 international military operation in Afghanistan, but strained its relations with the United States by fiercely opposing the invasion of Iraq.

**CURRENT SITUATION:** The current president of France is Nicolas Sarkozy. Elected in 2007, he has focused on improving the economic and unemployment situation, fighting racial intolerance, and strengthening relations with the United Kingdom and United States. Recent months have seen a large decline in his popularity rating.

Under Sarkozy's leadership, France fully rejoined NATO in early 2009 and re-integrated its military into the integrated NATO command. Its nuclear force, however, remains separated from the NATO command. While France had become used to strategic autonomy from its 43 years away from the military alliance, French-NATO ties will likely continue to grow stronger under Sarkozy's leadership.

The European Union was hit hard by the recent economic downturn. Southern European countries in particular have seen their economies shrink and have faced debt crises. The Eurozone recently had to provide a bailout package for Greece, and if the worldwide economic situation worsens, it is very possible that other EU nations will need similar assistance. Out of all the EU member states, France has fared relatively well economically during the last few months. There are signs that the French economy is beginning to rebound. Unemployment still plagues the country, however, and the government was forced to step in and create jobs, among other measures, to keep the unemployment rate from growing further during the crisis. As a result, state control and regulation of the economy increased during the recent past.

France produces a remarkably high percentage of its energy from nuclear power (79%), and exports almost a fifth of its electricity to neighbors. It is a world leader in

cheap and clean energy production, and relies very little on fossil fuel imports.

### Committee Information

Our committee simulates a group of ministers, so we will be running a much more informal type of parliamentary procedure than you might have experienced in a UN General Assembly or similar committee. We envision our time to be spent between moderated caucuses (which may or may not have a speaking time limit) and unmoderated caucuses. This, however, is just an outline of committee procedure: if the committee decides that a change in procedure should be made, we will be flexible and make the necessary corrections.

There are a few methods which you can use to communicate to bodies outside the committee or issue orders. The most important tool at your disposal is a directive, voted on by the group, which specifies an action to be taken. Directives do not need to be in Model UN Resolution format, but need to be written clearly and specify the exact action to be taken, which government, military, or other group is taking the action, and the quantity of troops, supplies, or money to be used, if applicable. Each minister can write individual department directives and pass them in directly to the chair if the action clearly falls within that minister's scope of power. A unilateral directive is an effective way to take quick, emergency action, but delegates **SHOULD NOT** write unilateral directives on issues that the committee would probably like to discuss or that do not have full committee support (in other words, **DO NOT** use them to circumvent committee voting procedure). You can write memorandums to other governments or organizations to communicate a desire for them to take a specific action, to provide information on a subject, or to send a representative to the committee. Keep in mind

that, with the high price of airfare, we may not be able to bring in some representatives whose presence is requested. Memorandums are voted on by the committee. Finally, if you wish to communicate a message to the general public, a press release may be drafted and voted upon.

In keeping with our desire to let you control as much of this committee as possible, we will not pre-determine an order for the two discussion topics. The committee will vote to choose the order.

### Committee Positions

I, as chair, will be playing the role of Nicolas Sarkozy. Our committee director will be Prime Minister François Fillon. The following positions will be played by delegates:

- Minister of Defence: Herve Morin
- Minister of Foreign Affairs: Bernard Kouchner
- Minister of Transportation: Dominique Bussereau
- Minister of Justice: Michele Alliot-Marie
- Minister for the Economy, Industry, and Employment: Chistine Lagarde
- Minister of Health and Sports: Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin
- Minister of Higher Education and Research: Valérie Pécresse
- Minister of the Interior: Brice Hortefeux

### Topic 1: France and Islam

**BACKGROUND:** The end of World War II saw an increase in Muslim immigration to France. The influx peaked in early 1970 but has continued at a high rate through the present. Most immigrants were male, and hailed from France's former colonies in Northern Africa, including Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. They served as laborers during post-war reconstruction and continued to fill similar roles as the French economy expanded.

Throughout the years, France has had problems with the assimilation of Muslim immigrants. During the decades of strong economic growth, the government constructed housing projects in the suburbs to house this segment of the population. The infrastructure and services provided to these districts, however, were scaled back dramatically over the last two decades. Inferior education generally relegated the children of immigrants to the lowest economic class, and poor Muslims began to protest the lack of opportunity afforded to them. This anger peaked during the infamous 2005 Paris suburb riots, where largely young, Muslim crowds destroyed an estimated €200 million in property and burned public buildings. These events, as well as the economic slowdown of the past decade, has caused French public sentiment towards North Africans to take a turn for the worse.

French society is based on *laïcité*, or the complete removal of any religion from government affairs and the prohibition of government involvement in religion (in short, a completely secular society). Religion is considered a very private matter, and many frown upon the display of religious symbols or garb in public. This viewpoint has manifested itself in policy and the legal system, and has led to some friction between Muslims and the rest of the French population. In 1989, a number of Muslim girls were expelled from a school in Criel for wearing headscarves. Their action was deemed in violation of Education Minister François Bayrou's ban on "ostentatious religious insignia" in public schools. This action led to lawsuits and vehement demonstrations among Muslims and some non-Muslims in France and surrounding nations. From the 1990's through the present there have been a number of similar cases regarding the wearing of the niqab. This has led to an increase in the number of privately funded Muslim schools, where current bans on religious garb do not apply.

A few major Muslim cultural and political organizations exist in France. In 2002, as Interior Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy helped create the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM). The organization has no official legal status, but acts as the representation of the Muslim community before government. The CFCM recognizes a number of smaller organizations in France. Notable among them are the Federation of French Muslims and the Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF). Each group has a different ethnic composition and set of goals.

Radical Islamist movements, generally originating in Algeria, have made their way to France. The French government has expelled upwards of 30 radical activists and French intelligence keeps close watch on a number of others. Terrorist attacks, most notably the metro bombings of 1995 masterminded by the Algerian Islamic Movement, have also affected France.

**CURRENT SITUATION:** There are no official statistics regarding the ethnic composition of France's population because of *laïcité*, but experts estimate that over four million Muslims reside in France, making Islam the second most represented religion in the nation. The French Muslim community faces high unemployment rates and other economic hardships, and studies have shown that it is harder for French Citizens from North Africa to obtain white-collar jobs. The majority of Muslims perform low-paying, menial labor.

Anti-Muslim sentiment has manifested itself in a number of ways. In June of 2010, a group of Parisians organized a "sausage and booze" protest against Muslims (who are forbidden from eating pork or consuming alcohol). There have been Islamophobic speeches and even anti-Muslim hate crimes perpetrated. A fear that Islam is threatening the French culture of secularism has led to more intense denouncements of the niqab, on

the grounds that it represents the subjugation of women. The French Parliament recently passed a resolution that condemns the niqab and that declares it "contrary to the values of the Republic." The Parliament is currently discussing a legal ban on the niqab, which would place fairly harsh penalties on wearers of the garment but much stricter consequences on any husband or family member who forces a woman to cover themselves. Civil rights groups and world leaders, including U.S. President Barack Obama, have expressed their desire that the law is not passed, as they feel that the measure would infringe on freedom of religious expression. Nonetheless, the majority of French citizens polled approved of a potential ban. In addition, cultural experts have noted that, as the Qur'an does not mention any need for women to cover their faces, a ban would not actually restrict religious expression. This conclusion is not universally accepted, however.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:** Even though Islam is a prominent issue in French politics, it is important to note that the situation in France is actually fairly positive compared to situations in other nations. French Muslims, compared to Muslims in other Western nations, show fairly successful integration, and have the highest opinions of their non-Muslim countrymen. Many experts say that these shallow statistics hide more troubling truths, and that there are certainly a number of issues that need to be discussed. Foremost among them: How can the French government deal with the inequality of opportunity between Muslims and Non-Muslims. How can the living conditions of Muslims living in poor banlieues be improved? Would efforts targeted specifically towards the well-being of Muslims be in violation of *laïcité*? Would they also run the risk of promoting communitarianism?

Does French military or economic involvement in the Muslim World have any

impact on terrorism and security in the homeland? Do harsher measures need to be taken to guard against the threat of extremist or violent Islam?

Does the niqab truly represent a threat to French values? Even if it is, would a ban on the niqab be in violation of other French values, notably freedom of religious expression?

## Topic 2: Iran

**BACKGROUND:** France enjoyed friendly relations and close economic ties with Iran prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Pahlavi Era leaders arranged for Iran to gain a share of enriched uranium production from Eurodif, a European consortium. The revolution caused an enormous shift in diplomatic relations between the two states. France refused to provide Iran with the uranium share it had purchased, although it eventually returned Iran its investment. France backed Iraq in the Iraq-Iran War of the 1980's, and sold over five billion dollars worth of arms and supplies to Saddam Hussein's regime, raising eyebrows in some Western nations. In 1986, France was forced to strike a deal with Iran to ensure the release of French citizens being held prisoner by Hezbollah in Lebanon. This involved France expelling the People's Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI), and organization which advocated the overthrow of the Islamic government in Iran. Later, in 2003, the French government acted to shut down the PMOI from using France as a base for their operation.

France-Iran relations further soured as the Iranian government defied international will and pushed forward with its nuclear program. France, along with the United States and United Kingdom, has staunchly supported harsh sanctions against the regime. It has also supported the IAEA in its efforts regarding Iran's nuclear program.

**CURRENT SITUATION:** Although French diplomatic relations with Iran have deteriorated dramatically over the past decade, there still exist economic ties between the two nations. France supplies over six percent of Iran's imports, consisting mostly of automotive goods. France obtains a small percentage of its hydrocarbon imports from Iran.

France sees the nuclear issue as a much larger priority than the preservation of its trade with Iran, and thus has remained a very strong supporter of harsh and punitive economic measures against the country. Sarkozy and the French government strongly backed a fourth round of sanctions passed by the UN Security Council in mid-June, 2010. Soon thereafter European leaders expanded their scope to improve their effectiveness, as Europe collectively comprises an enormous portion of Iran's trade. This latest round of sanctions is also noteworthy because the Russian Federation supported it. The non-Western major powers backing down from their defense of the Iranian government leaves the regime more vulnerable to both economic and (looking into the possible future) military measures being used against it by the international community. This gives the latest round of sanctions hope of succeeding where the previous three have failed.

While France has not been afraid to push for harsh punishments for Iran, it has also repeatedly called for negotiations between Iran and the P5 (plus Germany). Iran continues to refuse, often demanding that sanctions be lifted before any substantial negotiations take place. In May of 2010, Iran, Brazil, and Turkey met to sign an agreement whereby Iran would exchange much of its low-enriched uranium in exchange for fuel to be used for a medical research reactor. While this deal marks a step forward in cooperation between Iran and the international community, it does little to hinder Iran's approach towards nuclear weapons capability, which experts predict is one to three

years away.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:** The situation in Iran evolves day by day, and it is inevitable that there will be noteworthy developments in the time between the completion of this background guide and the beginning of the conference. There are a number of questions, however, that will remain central to the issue: How can France and the international community take advantage of Russia's new position to place further pressure on Iran. How can Europe, as Iran's major trading partner, collectively come up with more effective methods to pressure Iran? Is there anything that our government can do unilaterally to achieve its diplomatic goals? What will the our plan of action be if Iran gains full nuclear weapons capability?

#### Final Tips:

Make sure you are fully researched on each of the two topics before you get to Brown in the Fall. Most importantly, make sure you **KNOW YOUR MINISTER'S POSITION** (or at least France's position) **ON THE ISSUES**.

It is also important that your research goes well beyond the two topics listed in this background guide. It's a big world out there, and crises can occur anywhere. In an emergency, you won't have time to find a computer, go online, and research France's position on some issue. It's best if you know it already.

A lot of times in crisis committees, the chair gets flooded with tiny directives written by single delegates. This is **NOT** what we are looking for. What we want to see is real collaboration, and the creation of larger directives that are more representative of the entire body's views.

Finally, while we expect you all to be on your A-game when committee is in session, don't spend all your breaks and free time stuck in the committee room working on MUN stuff.

Take advantage of this time to explore our campus, try eateries on Thayer, and talk to any student you find about any college-related questions you may have. Model UN conferences are a great chance for you to get a peek at college life.

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