



## A STATISTICAL AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF FRANCE

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### Abstract

France is another European country that we hear a lot of discussion about, both political and economic. It is true that France has a long economic history, but is it another economic power of Europe today? The purpose of the authors in this paper, is to do an evaluation of the economy of France to see what the true economic story is about France. For that purpose a lot of economic data will be presented and discussed, as well as present several statistical models.

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### 1. Historical Background

The history of a nation is very important, because the history prepares us of what will become of the country. In the next few pages, we are going to present some events in the French history that were instrumental of its development. This will include a brief timeline, with some of the most important events over the years.

France is found in Western Europe, bordered by the English Channel, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, as well as the Mediterranean. Today it is one of the most modern nations in the world, and a leader in Europe. It is a permanent member of the United Nations, and by 2009 rejoined the NATO, after it was withdrawn in 1959 by De Gaulle.

France was the result of the breakup of the Carolingian Empire, and Hugh Capet became the king of West Francia during 987. During the early years there were a lot of wars with the English Monarchs over land, and these wars continued against the Habsburgs.

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The best years of the French royal power, were the years of the reign of Louis XIV, 1642 – 1715, during which time the French culture dominated Europe. This power collapsed fairly quickly after Louis XIV, and was followed by the French Revolution in 1789. At that time the republic was formed, but it was taken over by Napoleon and his wars, which caused France to dominate Europe until it defeat.



The following are some key figures in the French history:

King Louis XIV 1638 – 1715. King Louis became a king while still a minor in 1642. His success earned him the name “The Sun King”.

Napoleon Bonaparte 1769 – 1821. Napoleon was a Corsican, and he trained in the French army. He was very successful, and this enabled him to take over and turn France into an empire.

Charles de Gaulle 1890 – 1970. De Gaulle became the leader of the French forces during World War II, after which he became the Prime Minister. After retirement he created the French Republic and its constitution and ruled until 1969.

In the pages that follow, we are going to present a timeline of France’s history. For obvious reasons we cannot present everything that took place, but we will try to show some of the most important events.

10000 B.C. Paleolithic Age

5000 – 2500 B.C. Neolithic Age

260 Foundation of the Gallic Empire by Postumus, forming Hispania, Germania and Britannia.

274 Battle of Chalons, victory of the Roman Empire over the Gallic

Empire.

451 Battle of the Chalons, where the Romans under Theodoric I stopped Hunnic Invasion in Gaul.

511 Clovis died, his kingdom was divided among his four sons.

732 Battles of Tours, Charles Martel inflicted a major defeat on the invading armies of the Umayyad Caliphate.

768 Charlemagne and Carloman I were proclaimed Kings of the Franks after their father’s death.

800 Charlemagne coronated Imperator Augustus by Pope Leo III.

1214 Battle of Bouvines. The French army defeated a combine English – Flemish force.

1414 Hundred years’ war, (1415 – 1429). An English army under King Henry V landed in the North of France.

1572 St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre of French Protestants.

1789 The French Revolution began with the storming of the Bastille.

1803 France sold Louisiana to the United States.

1804 Napoleon declared emperor by the senate, and he crowned himself emperor in Notre – Dame de Paris.

1806 Napoleon dissolved the Holy Roman Empire.

1815 Hundred Days: Battle of Waterloo.

Napoleon exiled in Saint Helena, Louis XVII became King.

1821 Death of Napoleon.

1914 Germany declares war on France.

1939 France declared war on Germany.

1944 Liberation of Paris.

1959 Charles de Gaulle became the first president.

2015 1.3 million people demonstrate in Paris against terrorism and for

Freedom of speech.



As mentioned earlier, it is almost impossible to present all the events that took place in France over the years, so the above events are just a sample of the most important ones.

## **2. Current Literature/Statistical Analysis**

In this next section, which will be followed by statistical models, the authors are going to present and discuss the current economic conditions in France. Along with that, we are going to present a lot of economic data for about 50 years that will help us reach a conclusion whether France is an economic superpower or not. Based on the data, we might be able to make some recommendations about the French economy.

France, from studies previously done, has an economic freedom score of 66.0, and this score makes France the 64<sup>th</sup> freest economy in 2020. Having said that, it is important to say that economic freedom in France has increased by more than 2 points since 2011, and that included areas such as control of government spending, fiscal freedom as well as labor freedom. Overall, France remains one of the most modern countries in the world, and as far as European countries are concerned, it plays a leading role.

The French economy, even though is considered to be “Socialist”, the government has privatized many large companies such as Air France, France Telecom, and others. The French economy is not all that good. It also has its problems. It's GDP increased by 2.26% in 2017, a little higher than the previous year which was 1.2% and down to 1.75% during 2018. On the other hand, its unemployment rate rose from 7.8% in 2008 to 10.2% in 2015, and then down to 9.0% in 2017. Also the budget deficit rose from 3.3% of GDP in 2008 to 7.5% of GDP in 2009, although it came back down to 2.2% in 2017. Finally its public debt rose from 68% of the GDP to 95% in 2014 and up to 97% in 2017. As can be seen in this information, France is having its own economic problems just like everyone else.

At this point, we would like to present some current figures, to give the reader a better picture of the economic conditions in France. In 2017 France had a GDP of \$2.856 trillion, and a growth rate of around 2.3%, and 1.75% in 2018. The growth rate was higher than the previous 2 years, which was 1.1% in 2016 and 1.0% in 2015 and up to 1.75% during 2018, down from 2.26% in 2017 but not very promising. France is mostly a service oriented economy, supported by the fact that approximately 79% of its GDP comes from services, 19.5% from industry and 1.7% from agriculture.

Our research has found that the biggest problem that France faces is unemployment. In 2017 the unemployment rate was 9.39%, and down to 8.42% in 2019, obviously a very high rate by any standards. On the other hand, inflation is a not a big problem, since during 2017 it was .46%, up to .79% in 2018. France is very active in trade, both exports and imports, and in fact it is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the world in both of them. In 2017 it exported a total of \$903.5 billion, and in 2018 \$934.8 billion Its exports included machinery, chemicals, and pharmaceutical products, just to name a few. In the same year France imported vehicles, crude oil, chemicals, etc., for a total of \$957.9 billion and \$969.5 billion in 2018.

The table that follows, will show a number of years of economic data, including the GDP, Unemployment Rates, Inflation Rates, just to name a few. Also, we are going to show most of this data in graphs, which will be easier to see the direction of the French economy of the last 50 years.



**TABLE 1**  
**FRANCE DATA 1970 – 2019**

	GDP TR.	EXPORTS	IMPORTS	NET EXP.	GROWTH	INFLAT.	UNEMPL.	LABOR FORCE MIL	POPULAT. MILLION
YEAR	U.S. \$	BIL. US \$	BIL. US \$	X - M	RATE %	%	%		
1970	1.04	95.7	103.4	-7.7	6.11	5.42			51.9
1971	1.09	104.9	110.9	-6	5.32	5.9			52.3
1972	1.14	116.4	127.3	-10.9	4.51	6.8			52.8
1973	1.22	131	146.3	-15.3	6.34	7.86			53.2
1974	1.27	146	154.4	-8.4	4.3	11.83			53.7
1975	1.26	141.3	140.7	0.6	-0.96	13.75			54
1976	1.31	153.4	166.8	-13.4	4.36	10.75			54.3
1977	1.36	165.5	169.8	-4.3	3.46	8.77			54.6
1978	1.41	176.4	177.3	-0.9	3.98	9.28			54.8
1979	1.46	188.2	192.9	-4.7	3.55	10.31			55
1980	1.48	193.4	202.9	-9.5	1.52	11.69			55.2
1981	1.5	202.8	200	2.8	1.07	11.69			55.5
1982	1.54	200.5	207.6	-7.1	2.51	12.1			55.8
1983	1.56	210.1	201.6	8.5	1.24	9.65			56.1
1984	1.58	224.3	208.4	15.9	1.51	7.07			56.5
1985	1.6	229	218.3	10.7	1.62	5.45			56.8
1986	1.64	226.8	232.9	-6.1	2.34	5.06			57.2
1987	1.68	233.1	250.7	-17.6	2.56	2.46			57.5
1988	1.76	252.9	271.9	-19	4.74	3.19			57.8
1989	1.84	277.6	293.8	-16.2	4.34	3.28			58.1
1990	1.89	289.1	308.7	-19.6	2.92	2.66		25.84	58.4
1991	1.91	307.3	317.8	-10.5	1.05	2.55	9.13	25.83	58.6
1992	1.94	325.5	323.4	2.1	1.6	1.97	10.2	26.04	58.8
1993	1.93	326.8	312.7	14.1	-0.63	1.62	11.32	26.17	59.1
1994	1.98	353.5	340.4	13.1	2.36	0.92	12.59	26.2	59.3
1995	2.02	384.8	365.9	18.9	2.11	1.12	11.84	26.4	59.5
1996	2.05	401.2	374.9	26.3	1.41	1.36	12.37	26.7	59.8
1997	2.1	453.5	404.8	48.7	2.34	0.88	12.56	26.7	59.9
1998	2.17	493.5	453	40.5	3.59	0.95	12.07	26.85	60.2
1999	2.25	518.7	484.5	34.2	3.42	0.2	11.98	27.16	60.5
2000	2.33	586.6	558.9	27.7	3.92	1.55	10.22	27.36	60.9
2001	2.38	603.6	572.2	31.4	1.98	2	8.61	27.43	61.4
2002	2.41	615.6	583.3	32.3	1.14	2.07	8.7	27.76	61.8

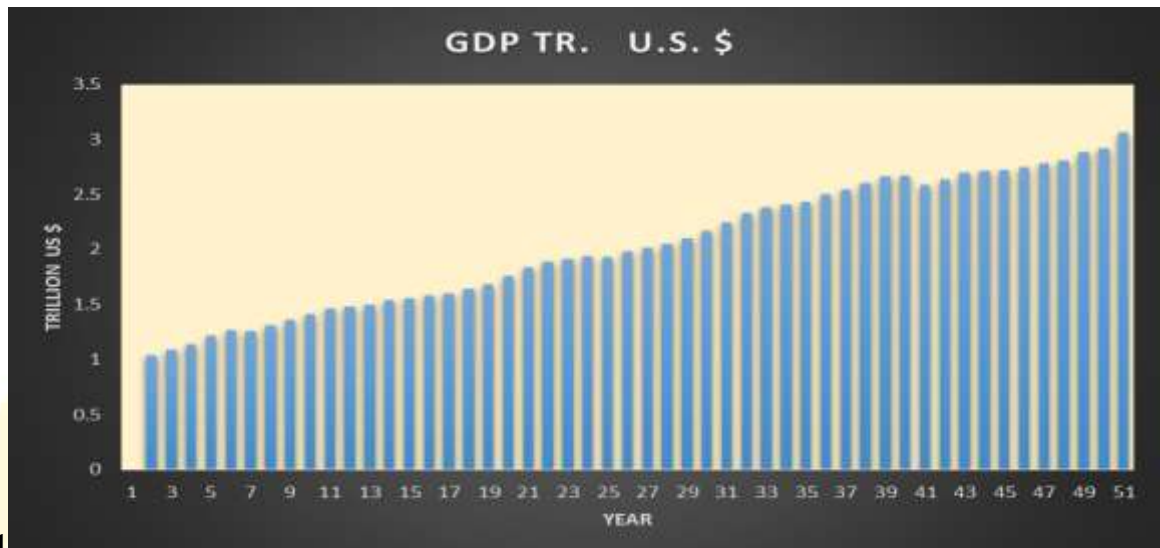




2003	2.43	609.7	588.5	21.2	0.82	1.86	8.31	28.32	62.2
2004	2.5	642.4	625	17.4	2.83	1.62	8.91	28.5	62.7
2005	2.54	667.9	664.5	3.4	1.67	1.94	8.49	28.78	63.2
2006	2.6	708	701.8	6.2	2.45	2.15	8.45	28.94	63.6
2007	2.66	727.7	742.1	-14.4	2.42	2.56	7.66	29.19	64
2008	2.67	731	751.8	-20.8	0.25	2.37	7.06	29.4	64.4
2009	2.59	651.3	681.4	-30.1	-2.87	0.07	8.73	29.64	64.7
2010	2.64	709.9	742	-32.1	1.95	1.07	8.87	29.74	65
2011	2.7	753	785.3	-32.3	2.19	0.95	8.81	29.74	65.3
2012	2.71	774.4	786.9	-12.5	0.31	1.16	9.39	29.98	65.6
2013	2.72	791	805.9	-14.9	0.58	0.78	9.32	30.13	65.9
2014	2.75	816.8	845.4	-28.6	0.96	0.58	10.29	30.06	66.2
2015	2.78	854.8	895.2	-40.4	1.11	1.14	10.36	30.13	66.5
2016	2.81	869.9	921.5	-51.6	1.09	0.52	10.06	30.19	66.7
2017	2.88	903.5	957.9	-54.4	2.26	0.46	9.39	30.24	66.9
2018	2.92	934.8	969.5	-34.7	1.75	0.79	9.05	30.4	67
2019	3.06				1.3	1.3	8.42	30.45	67.1

SOURCE: DATA\_EXTRACT\_FROM\_WIRKD\_DEVELOPMENT\_INDICATORS  
THE WORLD BANK GROUP, [HTTP://DATABANK.WORLDBANK.ORG](http://DATABANK.WORLDBANK.ORG)

In Table 1, above, there are a number of things that we need to point out and briefly discuss. The first is the Growth Rate. From what can be seen on the table the Growth Rate over the last 50 years, ranged from a high of 6.11% in 1970, to a low of -2.9% in 2009. The last several years it has been positive, but barely over 0. The low Growth Rate can explain another thing on this table. We do not believe that it is by coincidence that the French total trade, ( $X_n = X - M$ ), has been negative for 29 years during the last 50. In fact only 21 years have been positive. The conclusion we derive from this table is that the Population increased by 27%, the minimal growth was not enough to keep up even though the GDP during the last 50 years grew by 180%, and that resulted in the negative total trade ( $X_n$ ). Several of these findings will be presented in the figures that follow.



**FIGURE 1**

Figure 1 shows France’s GDP in Constant 2010 Trillions of U. S. dollars. As can be seen, even though there are some ups and down for the most part the economy of France shows a steady growth over the last 50 years.

**FIGURE 2**

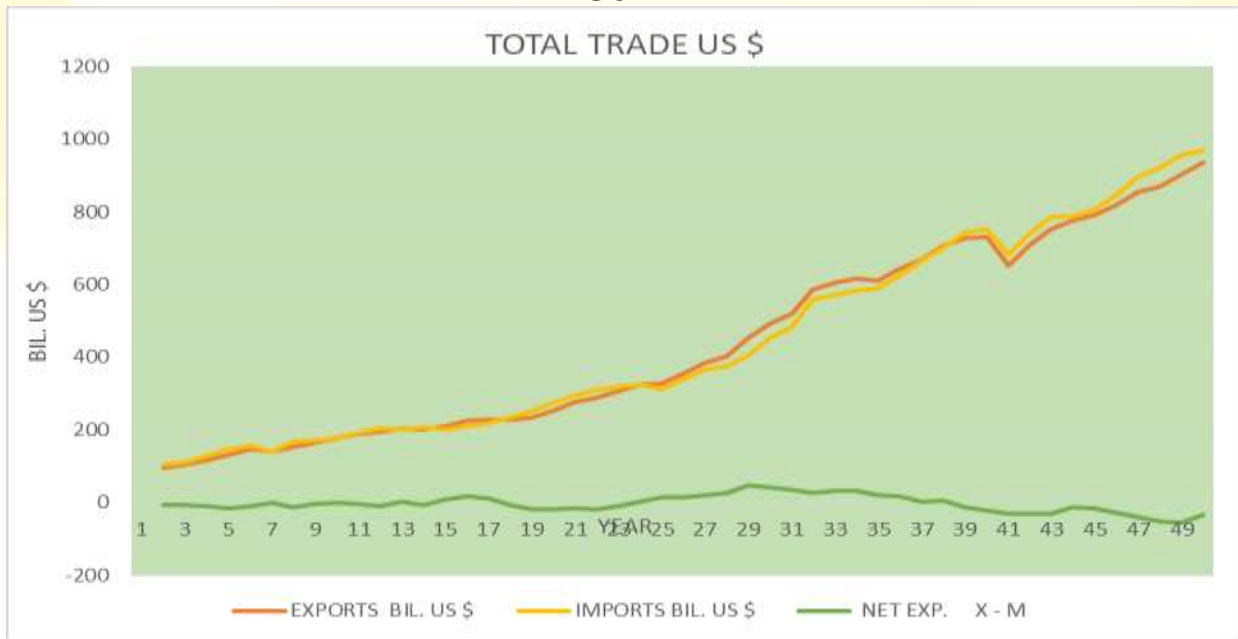


Figure 2 above, show France’s total trade in U. S. billions of constant 2010 dollars. What we see here is that exports and imports are almost equal to each other, and that is why France has a balance of trade during the last 50 years.



**FIGURE 3**

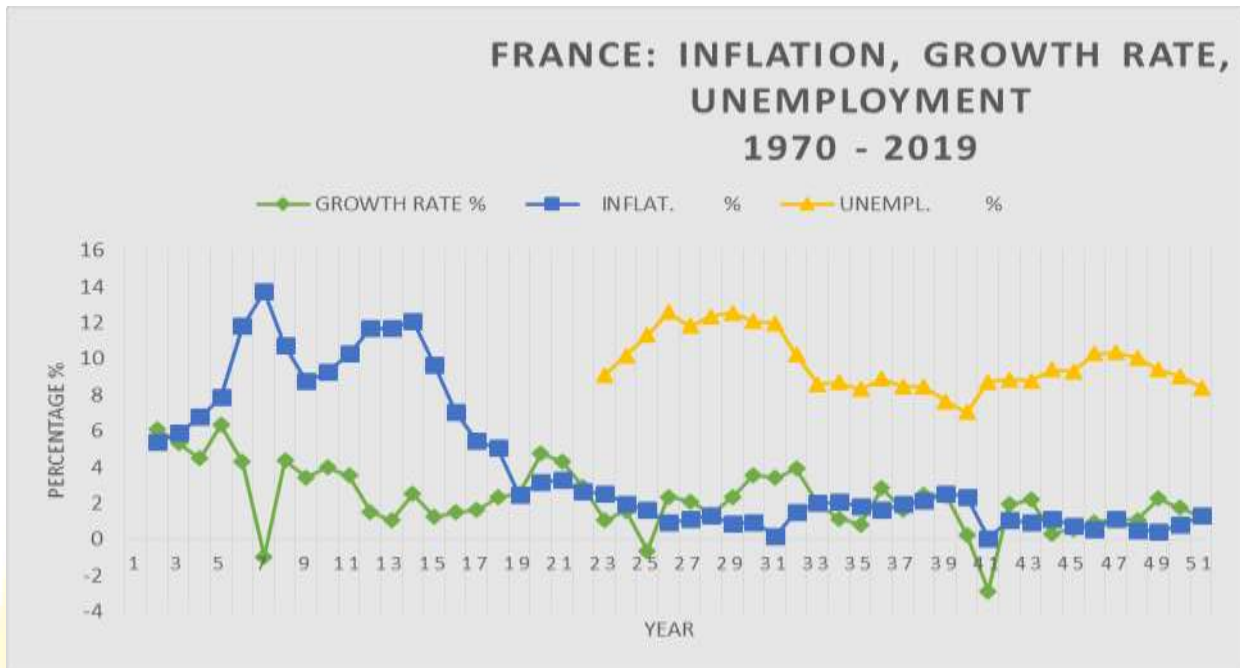


Figure 3 shows three of the most important economic indicators. Inflation, unemployment and the growth rate. We can see that the unemployment eventhough high, it has been declining during the last several years. The same is also true about the inflation rate. On the other hand the growth rate is fairly low during the last several years around 2%, eventhough about 5 or 6 years ago it was negative.

**FIGURE 4**

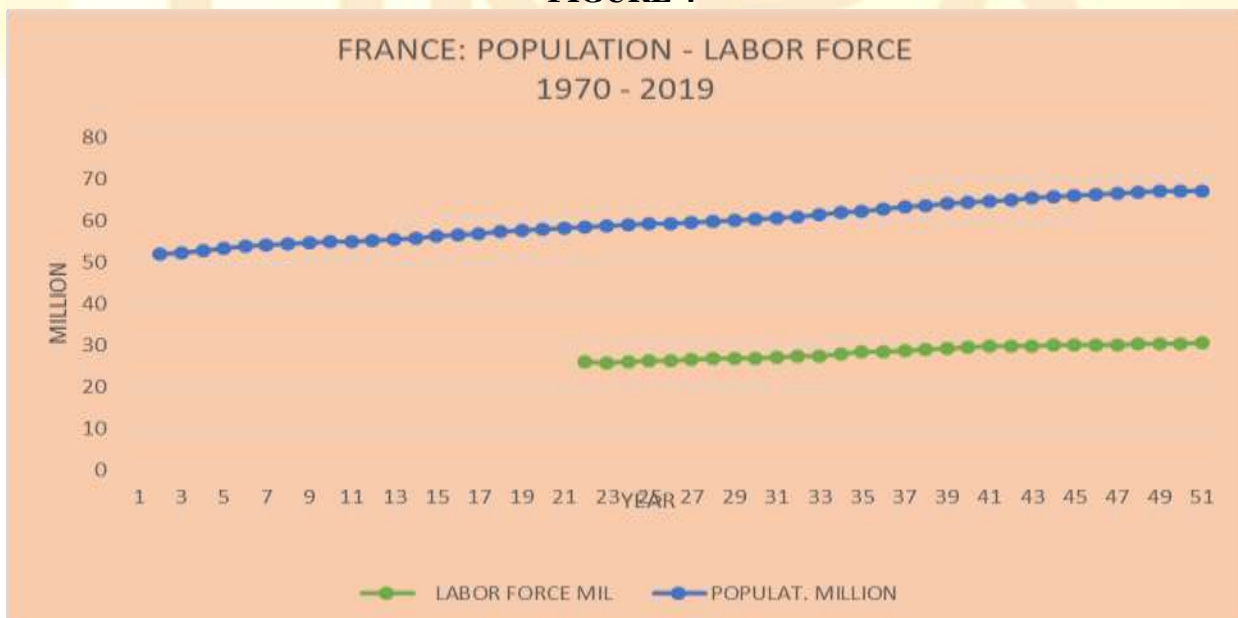


Figure 4 finally show the population and the labor force for France for the last 50 years, and as can be seen they both have a steady growth.



### 3. Conclusion

In concluding this paper, we are going to review some of our findings, and then based on those we will make some recommendations or suggestions that could eventually help the French economy.

One thing that we found through our research and it is shown on Table 1 is that the Growth Rate of France during the last 50 years has been very weak. The highest it has ever been was 6.9% and that was in 1970, but since then it has been in the very low single digits, even negative for a number of years. The growth rate during 2017 and 2018 is ok, and this is because of lower energy prices, and improving financial conditions. Our recommendation is that the French government should find ways to take advantage of the lower energy prices, and build it into its economy for faster and stronger economic growth, as well as pursue structural reforms which will help boost growth. Another thing we found, is that the GDP has increased by 180% during the last 50 years, and even though population has increased by only 27%, it was not enough to meet the demands and needs of the French, and that resulted in having negative net exports and rising, meaning that imports have been increasing in order to meet their needs. Again the government should find ways to increase its exports, by strengthening external demand for French products. Obviously they have a lot to offer, but they need to create the demand. Finally we found that inflation is not a problem, since it has been below 1% or close to it for a number of years, but unemployment is major problem since it has been in double digits for the majority of the last 50 years, although it has dropped below 10% during 2017 and 2018. The very high unemployment is contributed to the very weak business confidence, which is also weakening investment, and thus delaying hiring. The French government should promote business and investment in France because this is the only thing that will speed up employment, as well as growth.

Finally, our research has found that the French government has been pushing measures in order to lower the unemployment rate further, and at the same time improve how foreign investors see the French economic environment, as well as improve competitiveness and public finances. The results of these measures remain to be seen.

Obviously, our research does not include 2020 and the impact of Covid – 19. As we know and see, Covid – 19 has impacted heavily the world economy, and it will be very interesting to measure this impact when it is all over, but this will probably take several years.

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