

Timeline for World War II — France

1920-1938:

- 1923: January 11: France and Belgium occupied the industrial heart of Germany (Ruhr area) claiming that Germans had deliberately evaded reparations payments. France began withdrawing troops in August 1924 and finalized troop removal in June 1930.
- 1924: August 18: France began withdrawing its troops from Germany.
- 1925: December 1: The Locarno Treaties were signed by the World War I Western European allies and the new central and eastern nations.
- 1928: August 27: The Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed in Paris by the major powers of the world. The treaty outlawed aggressive warfare. The Kellogg-Briand Pact went into effect July 24, 1929.
- 1929: October 29: The Great Depression began.
- 1930: June 30: France withdrew its remaining troops from the Rhineland.
- Pre-1935: France, wanting to secure an alliance, gave Italy the go-ahead for activities in Ethiopia, which Italy wanted as a colony.
- 1938: September 30: Great Britain and France recognized Germany's seizure of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia by signing the *Munich Agreement*.

1939:

- 1939: March 31: The United Kingdom and France offered the "guarantee" of Polish independence.
- 1939: April 13: The United Kingdom and France pledged to support Romania and Greece.
- 1939: April 18: The Soviet Union proposed a triple alliance with the United Kingdom and France. The British and French agreed to take up the offer.
- 1939: August 25: In response to a message from Benito Mussolini that Italy would not honor the Pact of Steel if Germany attacked Poland in 1939, Hitler delayed the attack by five days to provide more time to secure British and French neutrality.
- 1939: September 2: The United Kingdom and France issued a joint ultimatum to Germany, requiring German troops to evacuate Polish territory; Italian dictator Benito Mussolini declared the neutrality of his nation; President Douglas Hyde of the Republic of Ireland declared the neutrality of his nation; the Swiss government ordered a general mobilization of its forces. When Germany invaded Poland, both Great Britain and France declared war against Germany. France and Great Britain both guaranteed support to Poland after the German conquering of Czechoslovakia; they offered the same to Greece and Arabia after Italy invaded Albania.
- 1939: September 7: France began a small offensive, moving into German territory near Saarbrücken.
- 1939: September 9: The French Saar Offensive stalled at the heavily mined Warndt Forest, advancing approximately 8 miles into lightly defended German territory.
- 1939: September 16: The French completed their retreat from Germany, ending the Saar Offensive.

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- 1939: September 30: French forces on the French-German border fell back in anticipation of a German invasion.
- 1939: October 6: Polish resistance in the Polish September Campaign came to an end. Hitler spoke before the Reichstag, declaring a desire for a conference with Britain and France to restore peace.
- 1939: October 9: Hitler issued orders to prepare for the invasion of Belgium, France, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.
- 1939: October 11: An estimated 158,000 British troops were in France.
- 1939: October 12: French Premier Édouard Daladier declined Hitler's offer of peace.

1940:

- 1940: Both France and Great Britain called for the expulsion of the U.S.S.R. from the League of Nations after the Soviet attack on Finland, considering this move to be siding with Germany.
- 1940: February 5: Great Britain and France decided to intervene in Norway to cut off the iron ore trade in anticipation of an expected German occupation and ostensibly to open a route to assist Finland. The operation was scheduled to start about March 20.
- 1940: February 17: Manstein presented to Hitler his plans for invading France via the Ardennes forest.
- 1940: March 21: Paul Reynaud became Prime Minister of France following Daladier's resignation.
- 1940: March 28: Great Britain and France made a formal agreement that neither country will seek a separate peace with Germany.
- 1940: April 13: British and French troops began landing in Norway.
- 1940: May 10: Germany invaded France.
- 1940: May 17: Paul Reynaud formed a new French government, including 84-year old Marshal Pétain, the French hero of World War I.
- 1940: June 10: Italy invaded France and declared war on both France and Great Britain.
- 1940: June 13: Paris was occupied by German troops; the French government moved again to Bordeaux.
- 1940: June 18: General De Gaulle formed a French government in exile, the Comité Français de la Libération Nationale.
- 1940: June 21: Franco-German armistice negotiations began at Compiègne.
- 1940: June 24: Franco-Italian armistice was signed.
- 1940: June 25: France officially surrendered to Germany at 1:35.
- 1940: June 28: General De Gaulle was recognized by the British as leader of Free French.
- 1940: July 1: French government moved to Vichy.
- 1940: July 3: Great Britain attacked a French fleet in Algeria to prevent Germany from capturing it.
- 1940: August 2: General Charles de Gaulle was sentenced to death *in absentia* by a French military court.
- 1940: September 23: Free French and British forces attempted landing at Dakar, West Africa; Vichy French naval forces opened fire sporadically for two days.
- 1940: September 25: Vichy French aircraft returned to Gibraltar for bombings.

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1941:

- 1941: The French agreed to a Japanese occupation of French Indochina.
- 1941: January 17: The Battle of Koh Chang ended in a decisive victory for the Vichy French naval forces during the French-Thai War.
- 1941: February 9: A Japanese brokered peace treaty signed in Tokyo ended the French-Thai War.
- 1941: June 8: Vichy French-controlled Syria and Lebanon were invaded by Australian, British, Free French, and Indian forces.
- 1941: July 12: The Vichy French surrendered in Syria.

1942:

- 1942: April 17: French General Henri Giraud, who was captured in 1940, escaped from a castle prison at Konigstein by lowering himself down the castle wall and jumping on board a moving train, which took him to the French border.
- 1942: November 8: Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of Vichy-controlled Morocco and Algeria, began; French resistance coup in Algiers, consisting of about 400 fighters neutralized the Vichyist XIXth Army Corps.

1943:

- 1943: May 15: The French formed a "Resistance Movement."
- 1943: June 4: General Henri Giraud became Commander of the Free French forces in North Africa.
- 1943: November 9: General De Gaulle became President of the French Committee of National Liberation.

1944:

- 1944: March 15: The National Council of the French Resistance approved the Resistance program.
- 1944: April 4: General Charles de Gaulle took command of all Free French forces.
- 1944: April 21: An air raid on Paris killed a large number of civilians.
- 1944: June 2: The provisional French government was established.
- 1944: June 3: There were daily bombings of the Cherbourg peninsula and the Normandy area.
- 1944: June 6: D-Day began with the landing of 155,000 Allied troops on the beaches of Normandy in France. The allied soldiers quickly broke through the Atlantic Wall and pushed inland in the largest amphibious military operation in history.
- 1944: June 10: At Oradour-sur-Glane, France, 642 men, women, and children were killed in a German response to local French Resistance activities.
- 1944: July 9: After heavy resistance Caen, France was liberated by the British troops on the left flank of the Allied advance.
- 1944: August 25: Paris was liberated; De Gaulle and Free French paraded down the Champs-Élysées. The German military disobeyed Hitler's orders to burn the city.
- 1944: October 23: The Allies recognized General de Gaulle as the head of a provisional government of France.

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1945:

- 1945: March 9: Amid rumors of a possible American invasion, Japanese overthrew the Vichy French Jean Decoux Government, which had been operating independently as the colonial government of Vietnam. The Japanese proclaimed an "independent" Empire of Vietnam, with Emperor Bảo Đại as nominal ruler. Premier Trần Trọng Kim formed the first Vietnamese government.
- 1945: May 8: In order to disarm the Japanese in Vietnam, the Allies divided the country in half at the 16th parallel. Chinese Nationalists moved in and disarmed the Japanese north of the parallel, while the British moved in and did the same in the south. During the conference, representatives from France requested the return of all French pre-war colonies in Indochina. The request was granted. Vietnam once again became a French colony following the removal of the Japanese.
- 1945: May 29: Fighting broke out in Syria and Lebanon, as nationalists demanded freedom from French control.
- 1945: August 19: At a spontaneous non-communist meeting in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh assumed a leading role in the movement to wrest power from the French. With the Japanese still in control of Indochina in the interim, Bảo Đại went along because he thought that the Viet Minh were still working with the American OSS and could guarantee independence for Vietnam.
- 1945: September 22: The British released 1,400 French Paratroopers from Japanese internment camps around Saigon. Those French soldiers entered Saigon and went on a deadly rampage, attacking Viet Minh and killing innocent civilians including children, aided by French civilians who joined the rampage. An estimated 20,000 French civilians lived in Saigon.
- 1945: October 1: In southern Vietnam, a purely bilateral British/French agreement recognized French administration of the southern zone. In northern Vietnam, Chinese troops attacked.

1946:

- 1946: March: Hồ Chí Minh accepted an Allied compromise for temporary return of 15,000 French troops to rid the North of anti-Communists. British/Indian troops departed Vietnam and Nationalist Chinese troops fled to Taiwan, looting as they depart, leaving the war in Vietnam to continue with the conflict between the French and the Viet Minh. As World War II ended, starvation killed over 2 million Vietnamese.

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