

## **Global Politics**

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In recent world politics, stability has felt like a fleeting concept. Governments have been grappling with legitimacy crises and power struggles, meaning tensions have felt particularly high. Situations in France, Germany and South Korea have had effects beyond their borders, with significant implications for the UK and Europe.

The French Government's legitimacy crisis has finally reached a breaking point, with President Emmanuel Macron at its centre. Due to the ongoing dissatisfaction within France regarding his ministrations, (which has prompted widespread protests and strikes over the past year, especially in regards to his controversial pension reforms and the decision to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 without a parliamentary vote - using a constitutional loophole,) the strain and political instability has recently reached an all-time high. The French Parliament backed a vote of no-confidence against Prime Minister Michel Barnier. This means that Macron will inevitably appoint a new Prime Minister, but this will not solve the internal divisions within the French Parliament, which remains divided into three political blocs. Under French law, no new parliamentary elections can be held for at least a year, raising concerns regarding the prospect of no new cost-saving budget, until late 2025. Despite the wide faced criticism Macron has faced, he has chosen to turn to fellow centrist Francois Bayrou, who will have to take on the tasks of naming a new government and quickly drawing up a new 2025 budget to replace the one that was abandoned. This will opening France up to potential rebellions from the far-right and the left. The decisions and events have an effect on the whole of the Europe, as France is seen as an integral part of the EU, with it being Europe's only large military power besides the UK and the second largest economy in the eurozone. The largest, Germany, is also facing political turmoil. Instability in France raises concerns to the rest of Europe as risks of delay and obstacles may arise when tackling EU-wide issues such as defence policy, economic recovery and climate policy. To Britain in particular, instability in France casts a shadow over France's role as a reliable partner in post-Brexit diplomacy.

Germany's coalition government has also recently collapsed following the firing of a key minister, Christian Lindner, by Chancellor Olaf Scholz - causing a divide within the coalition which was made up of the Free Democrats, Social Democrats and the Greens. The "traffic light" coalition has led Germany since 2021 and its recent collapse plunged Europe's largest economy into chaos only mere hours after Donald Trump's election victory. Tensions were triggered by disagreements over the 2025 budget as Germany's

second year without economic growth came to a close. Germany's energy crisis was sparked by having to cut reliance on Russian gas following the invasion of Ukraine, which led to rising energy costs, eroding public support for the government. The coalition was then weakened by regional election losses until the leading coalition finally collapsed. Federal elections are scheduled for next Autumn but are likely to be shifted forward to the Spring, with a vote of confidence scheduled for February 15 by Scholz and Friedrich Merz, leader of the opposition, pushing for it to be held even earlier. Regardless of when it is held, the general expectation is that the government will lose. For the time being, Scholz is essentially running a minority government and has been adamant about his desire to deliver his key projects, despite the difficulties they may face in gathering conservative support, which the minority government is reliant on. This will have various effects on the EU, predominantly raising concerns of far-right gains in Germany, policy gridlock and widespread economic impact. Germany is a key trading partner for the UK and the newly found political uncertainty could disrupt business relations and supply chains, the internal division within the country only amplifying potential challenges brought by the instability in France - both of the EU's leading economies in fragile states.

Additionally, South Korea's president recently shocked the globe by declaring martial law, (temporary military rule used in times of emergency,) for the first time in nearly 50 years. Despite Yoon Suk Yeol's claims that it had been done to suppress threats from North Korea and "anti-state forces", within hours, parliament voted Yoon's declaration of martial law as invalid. Despite Yoon being voted into office in 2022 as a Conservative, the Democratic party won a landslide in the country's general election, stopping Yoon's government's ability to pass bills. Following his brief imposition of martial law, the opposition proposed slashing a major government bill, which Yoon is unable to veto, whilst simultaneously moving to impeach cabinet members. For the President himself to be impeached, two thirds of parliament must vote in favour of his impeachment. In the lead up to this process, lawmakers have been sent thousands of abusive phone calls and messages from the public, voicing their discontent in the MPs complacency. The internal turmoil has damaged South Korea's international relations, also being a key trading partner for the UK, especially regarding technology. Its strong economic ties with Europe also mean that the situation in Asia can influence European industries for better or for worse.

Together, these crises highlight the potential fragility across all political systems, including key global governments. For the UK, these challenges may serve as a tool to underline the importance of adaptable diplomacy and coordination to shared threats such as energy security in Germany and economic resilience. Although fear resides around the potential of these situations to weaken cooperation, there is also a possibility they will prompt a drive for stronger multilateral action.