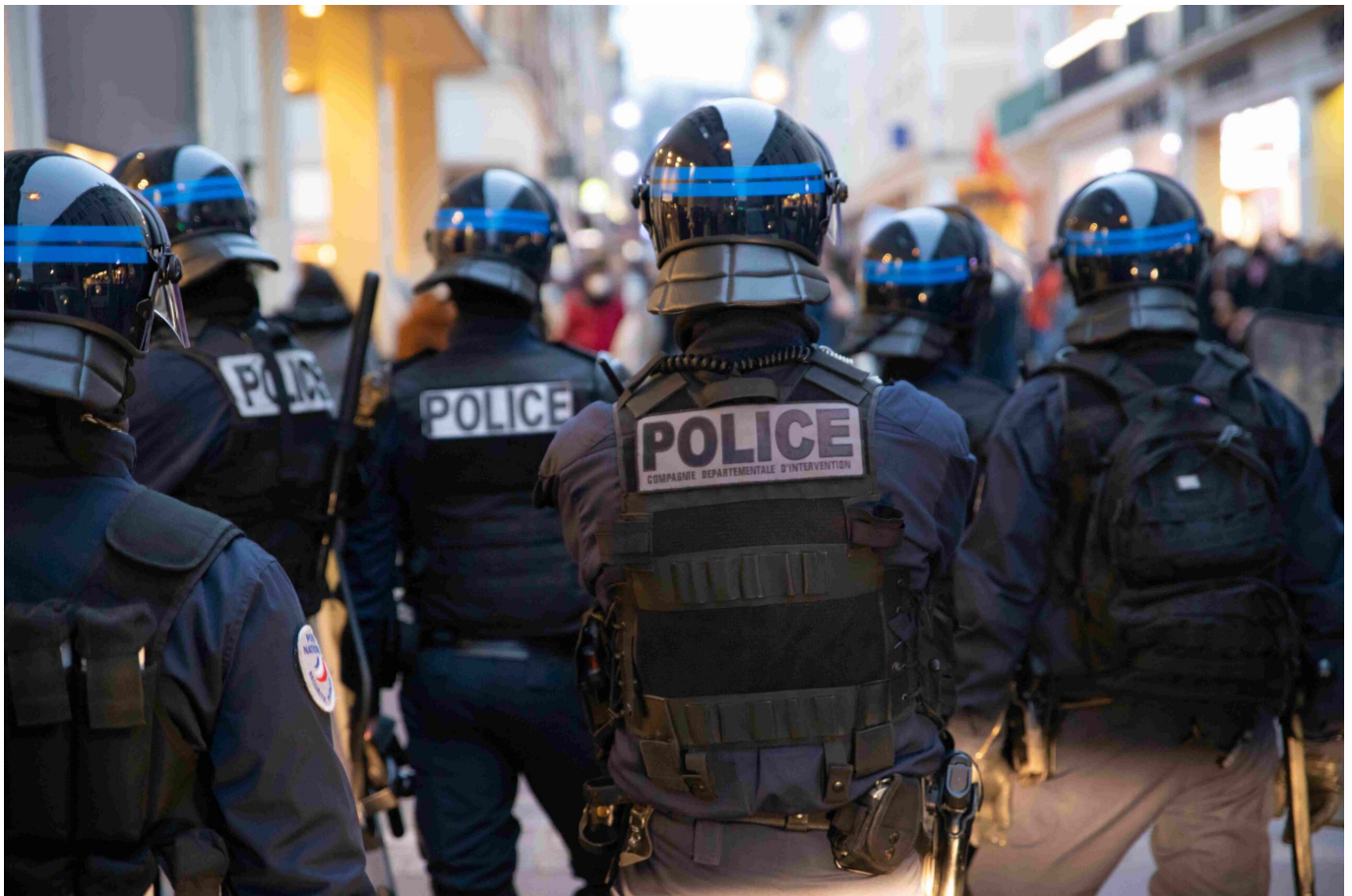




By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# The extreme right is profiting handsomely from the destruction of the French suburbs



France is not the only divided society in Europe, but it has allowed populist policies to amplify already existing differences into brutal street violence in the past week.

As a result, French society has become closer to resemble the American syndrome of heated tensions than any other European country. This syndrome leads to the worst violence - against races and nations, particularly against the state and its institutions.

During the protests across France due to the police killing of the teenager Nahel Merzouk, the violence has been directed mainly towards state institutions - police stations, schools, and city administrations.

It has not been a symbolic outpouring of aggression towards the state system as a whole, which outraged protesters considered responsible for the murder of a 17-year-old during a traffic control.

This is why the biggest political capital after the riots across France, which President Emmanuel Macron said that "its peak has passed", will be gained by the extreme right.

## Realising a negative utopia

Advocates of the expulsion of migrants not only from France but from the whole of Europe, the supporters of Marine Le Pen's National Rally, are observing the negative utopia being realised before their eyes.

Symbols of statehood and the Republic have been attacked and destroyed, mostly in ethnically mixed suburbs, by migrants from the Arab world and Africa, whose expulsion they have been seeking for years.

"Growing savagery of society (is) resulting from a completely insane immigration policy", said the young leader of National Rally Jordan Bardella, who is also from an immigrant family.

Even though they initially supported the policies of the left and its leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon, as an example of police brutality against minorities, the violence that turned into anarchy and looting shifted the mood towards the other half of the extremists, the right wing.

They were on the rise even before the violent protests that were the result of the controversial pension reform, for which the government and President Macron were also criticised during the large-scale street protests.

## The rating of extremists has been increasing even before the protest

According to the IPSOS survey from last June, before the destructive protests across France, Marine Le Pen's NR led the polls (25%) for next year's European Parliament elections, with 2% more than Macron's Renaissance.

Protests over the murder of a teenager of Arab descent have fuelled Marine Le Pen's extremists.

A survey by the Democratic Institute from Washington for Express.co.gives Le Pen the chance of success in the next presidential election for the first time, as she now has the confidence of 51% of voters, 4% more than Macron.

Le Pen and her supporters kept a low profile during the street violence, stressing that it

represented an attack on the state and small businesses of hard-working people who pay taxes.

President Macron's moves and particularly the massive engagement of the police (about 45,000 people) have suited them as a decisive intervention of the state, which they advocate.

Macron could not capitalise on it politically as much as the extreme right-wing because dealing with protesters is considered his regular job, while for Le Pen's supporters, it is part of a political strategy, particularly towards migrants.

The right-wing extremists understand well the conservative, nationalist pulse that prevails in the majority of the public, which is evident by the fact that a little more than €360,000 was collected for the family of the murdered teenager online, and €1.45 million for the policeman who killed him.

## The state's inactivity paid off

The growth of the extreme right is the price that French democracy pays for two wasted decades when it comes to reducing the gap towards migrants and lost opportunities for their integration.

Since 2005, when two teenagers were killed in Clichy-sous-Bois, an eastern suburb of Paris, which sparked the first major disruptive protests, many governments and policies towards migrants have changed in France.

At the time of that first major, racially charged incident, the political scene was still dominated by two political poles and mainstream parties - conservatives and socialists. Nowhere in Europe, not even France, were populists anything more than a

political start-up.

However, years and billions of euros have been wasted on clearly ineffective minority and migrant integration programmes, in which all existing political options participated.

Extremism and dissatisfaction due to rejection remained in ethnically colourful suburbs, almost ghettos, whose invisible walls neither the French state nor society broke down or wanted to.

A movement whose messages and actions have been both openly and covertly racist has been reaping the fruits.

## Collective danger for the political centre

Marine Le Pen's right-wing populists have been growing as a force that has shifted to mainstream politics over time, even changed its leader, but remained true to its strongly anti-migrant policy and waited for the right moment.

They have been growing despite their close corrupt ties to the Kremlin being revealed. The Kremlin's funds were used to finance Marine Le Pen's earlier campaigns.

"The party is pursuing a dual strategy that plays both to its traditional, extreme voters, and to potential new voters who are worried about security and see the RN as a party that Le Pen has seemingly made acceptable, and that will restore order", said Gilles Ivaldi from the Centre for Political Research at Sciences Po in Paris.

In the absence of a strong and integrative

European response, whose policies are on the defensive, the French turn to easy answers to complicated issues, and the extreme populists, whether left or right, are always ready to offer those.

The growth of right-wing extremism in France is closely monitored by their Spanish friends from the Vox party, which has high hopes of success in the elections in two weeks, and even of taking over the majority from the Socialists.

There is still a long time before another test of the will of the voters in France. The presidential elections will be held in four years, which leaves hope for the moderate forces to consolidate and reverse the current trends.

However, France's long tradition of neglecting the danger of the gap between the poor and dissatisfied suburbs and their social inclusion may also mean that after the suppression of a rebellion, things will remain the same until a new one breaks out.

In the next four years, this will have to be the main internal priority of Emmanuel Macron, but also of his competitors from the mainstream centre, because the danger is collective.