



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Will the political turmoil in France jeopardise the Olympic Games in Paris?



The organisers of the Olympic Games in Paris will be racking their brains until the last minute to decide which of the French hosts will take the places of honour at the opening ceremony on July 26.

Less than three weeks will pass between the spectacle on the banks of the Seine, on the river itself, and in some of Paris' most famous squares and the expected political shift in the second round of parliamentary **elections**.

There are already questions for the socialist mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, about whether she will join Jordan Bardella, the young leader of the far-right National Rally, at the Olympic Games' opening and closing ceremonies as the likely new French prime minister. But the mayor does not want to respond to this.

"What do they do when they're in power? They constantly, permanently attack women, foreigners, so-called minorities, and people who are gay. They attack all fragile people, they sow chaos," **said** Mrs Hidalgo, outraged that the expected growth of the National Rally was confirmed in the first round of elections last Sunday.

Will the challenges of the Paris Olympics protocol solely revolve around reconciling the personal and political desires of rivals after the elections? It is possible that this will be the least of their problems.

Macron's political calculation with the Olympic Games

French President Emmanuel Macron and his strategists have probably factored the imminent start of the Olympic Games into their calculation to call early parliamentary elections immediately after a poor result in the European Parliament elections.

The timing of the Olympics should be an important part of Macron's strategy to dissuade voters from placing too much trust in Marine Le Pen's right-wingers for the European Parliament.

Having such a major event on the horizon in just a few weeks' time should encourage the French to reverse their decision from early June and restore confidence in the mainstream parties, which would guarantee a calm and civilised image for the host of the biggest sporting competition.

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However, these plans have backfired, and the National Rally is within reach of winning a majority in the lower house of the French parliament on Sunday and forming a government without anyone's help.

If this happens, France will indeed enter a complicated period of political cohabitation, with a head of state and a head of government from rival options.

However, concerns that this new situation for France will affect the organisation and peaceful operation of the Olympic Games are unfounded.

Politicians excluded from organising the Olympic Games

The first and most crucial point is that politicians no longer have any control over the Olympic Games' organisation, meaning that any changes to the parliament, the government, or specific ministries will not affect the competition.

"All of the major decisions involving politicians, capital construction, venue location, environmental planning, had already been taken long ago. Final delivery is left to the organising committee and civil servants, not the politicians," Michael Payne, former long-time head of marketing for the International Olympic Committee, told AFP.

A large part of these preparations concerned the security of the two-week event, and the **measures** taken will be truly colossal: 45,000 police officers, 20,000 private security guards, and a further 15,000 military personnel will be involved in securing the Olympic Games on a daily basis.

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The massive security measures match the security risk that the Olympic Games in Paris face. These events, like only a few in the past, will take place in the midst of several severe global crises, each of which has led to global unrest.

The two-and-a-half-year war in Ukraine and the sanctions against athletes from Russia and Belarus will bring who knows how many Russian activists to Paris, for whom the Olympic Games will serve as a significant platform to garner attention—perhaps even leading to security provocations.

The conflict between Israel and Hamas will not end before the start of the Olympic Games, but it will also likely spread to the Lebanon front and the confrontation between the Israeli armed forces and Hezbollah.

The Islamists of the Afghan faction of ISIS have identified the Olympic Games in Paris as one of the places in Europe where they want to carry out their terrorist threats, following the terrorist attack in Moscow City Hall that claimed more than 140 lives.

Political protests during the Olympic Games

In addition to all the security services' concerns about these threats, the possibility of political unrest in the country, particularly in Paris, due to dissatisfaction with the results of the parliamentary elections hovers over their heads.

If the right-wing National Rally confirms its dominance from the first round of elections on Sunday and is able to form a government, this will undoubtedly trigger a major revolt by political opponents.



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However, they will face a choice between two significant French traditions. Will they use civil resistance, protests, and similar actions to confront the new majority, which they see as xenophobic and even racist?

Or will they keep a low profile for at least two weeks during the Olympic Games so as not to tarnish the image of France and its capital as a powerful and impeccable organiser of the biggest sporting and media spectacle?

Opponents of Le Pen's movement, whether on the left or right of the political centre, will have the difficult task of deciding which of these two options to choose. Neither will be good enough, because they will be reacting to a key event that is already behind them and that they can no longer change.

If President Macron really wanted to instrumentalise French people's feelings about the Olympics as a means of dealing with the far-right, it would turn out to be a poor and late calculation.

The worst of a series of risky moves he has made since the start of the year to weaken the chances of his far-right rivals would be to trigger political turmoil during the Olympics.