

# Civil War 2.0

## About French riots and virtual revolutions

#France #Paris

Revolutions happen not only in the real world, but also in the virtual world. A wave of new technical developments and standards in the Internet and software-related innovations have coined the term Web 2.0. It was first mentioned in 1999 and gained widespread support by 2004. While the early days of the Internet allowed users to passively view static content on simple web pages, **Web 2.0 standards and technologies** enabled a new generation of web applications that allowed users to interact with each other. Social media platforms such as Twitter were one of the outgrowths of the Web 2.0 revolution.

Recent events in France have shown that these very Web 2.0 technologies have been key in fueling a wave of riots and unrest on the streets of all major cities there. On June 27, 2023, 17-year-old Nahel M. was stopped in the city of Nanterre, near Paris, by two French policemen who asked the young teenager to show them his driver's license. When Nahel M. refused and tried to accelerate his car, one of the policemen shot him twice at close range.

Shortly after **a video of his murder appeared** on Web 2.0 social media platforms, riots broke out in all of France's major cities. Local police stations were attacked, mayors' offices destroyed, shops looted, and streets and houses vandalized. The riots lasted for about a week and only slowly calmed down. On July 5, 2023, the French Minister of the Interior stated that the wave of aggression that began on June 27, 2023 had so far resulted in a total of 23,878 violent public disturbances, with 12,031 vehicles and 2,508 buildings set on fire or vandalized, including 273 French police buildings, 105 mayors' offices, and 168 schools. A total of 3,505 investigational questionings or indictments were conducted with *"the majority of those criminally referred or interrogated"* being at the surprising Web 2.0 revolutionary *"age between 17 and 18"*. A whopping 60% of those who participated in the riots had no previous criminal record, the youngest having been 11 years old.



Social media companies are under intense pressure to block and censor violent content. Twitter and others have developed sophisticated tools in recent years to detect and minimize the spread of such videos. Why this was not done in the case of the video of Nahel's shooting in Nanterre remains a mystery. Even more mysterious, however, are the many videos that appeared on revolutionary Web 2.0 platforms after the start of the July 2023 riots in France.

Only roughly 10% of those accused of taking part in the recent riots in France were foreigners, according to the French Ministry of the Interior. Revolutionary Web 2.0 platforms, on the other hand, attracted a larger non-French audience in the distribution of a number of remarkably fake videos depicting alleged riot acts in Paris and elsewhere. These included videos of rather unrelated events in 2020, or of the **burning of a large parking lot** in Perth, Australia, which was **falsely attributed to** the July 2023 riots in France. A **Hindu Twitter user posted** cars in free fall after being pushed from the top of a parking garage, claiming it was related to the riots in France - the video was actually **from the making of** the 2017 Fast and Furious movie. Another Twitter user posted **a video claiming** that a large French apartment building had allegedly been set on fire. A different camera angle would have shown **a large nearby tree burning** instead of the building. A **video of a rooftop sniper** allegedly shooting at French police was viewed nearly 1 million times. It was debunked as a complete fake after observing that the so-called sniper was using a so-called gun that lacked a bullet cartridge and a bullet loading mechanism.

While the proliferation of videos and images taken from unrelated events is one problem, another entirely new category of fake video comes from recent revolutionary advances in artificial intelligence algorithms. AI-generated videos have become so advanced in quality that they are almost indistinguishable from live video.

These technological developments seem to be somehow reassembled in the French linguistic space. Foreigners often find it difficult to understand the local French spoken on the street and literally have to learn a second language after arriving in France with a robust linguistic niveau. Meanwhile, the younger generations in France have creatively developed a parallel linguistic space in recent years, with words that seem to come from another planet to the more standard French speaker:

Over the last half century, the creation of parallel societies, especially in the economic sphere, has slowly infiltrated French society. It has become increasingly difficult to escape low-paying jobs, having rich parents sometimes seems to be the only reliable way to secure a path to multiple career options. In France, third and fourth generation families have begun to protect their wealth by carefully choosing economic patterns that often segregate local younger generations and also immigrants. The result is deeply divided parallel societies, and not just in France.

Meanwhile, N. is sitting on a bench on the famous Champs-Elysee avenue in Paris during her lunch break. She works in one of the expensive clothing stores nearby and drinks a can of Coca-Cola while eating from a vegetarian lunch box. Vacationing foreigners can't resist looking at her beautiful, apparently privileged white face and statue. She forgot her revolutionary Web 2.0 smartphone in a bar

last night, she says. In her mid-twenties, she talks about her job and how she spent her last long holiday a few months ago in the Philippines, where she traveled because she was sponsored to buy a cheap plane ticket and because hostel stays there cost about 5 euros a night. Her stunningly beautiful face suddenly turns sad, however, before she returns to her low-paid job in an elite clothing store nearby: she explains that she has not been able to travel much in her own country because she simply cannot afford a vacation in the various French regions she would like to visit for a longer period of time.

Surely, the store she works at has a Web 2.0 interactive and highly professionally designed website.

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