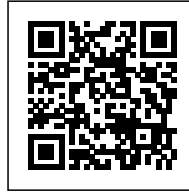




CIVILIZE

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The media narrative and sociology produce victims—and a culprit: France, the French state, systemic racism. It's a familiar refrain. On the contrary, it's the crisis of the State, the crisis of institutions, the vacancy of authority that creates the conditions for insurrection. On the contrary, it's the State that needs to be rebuilt, and France with it, provided it isn't swamped by immigration.

Jean-Louis, sixty-something and somewhat balding, tucked away in the semi-darkness of his studio, stared feverishly at his cell phone. Suddenly, the long-awaited hour appeared. This was his moment. He grabbed his wheeled shopping bag, took a deep breath and opened the door to his apartment. Recalling the exercises he'd learned during his military service, he made his feline way down the stairs and into the hall. Littered and tagged, with a gutted sofa and a pungent smell of urine, it was just as he'd hoped: empty. At this hour, he was safe in the knowledge that "they" were asleep.

Walking along the sidewalk, keeping as close as possible to the buildings in order to remain unnoticed, Jean-Louis could only deplore the damage caused by the riots in his suburban town over the last few days. Burnt-out buses and cars, ransacked street furniture, broken glass and omnipresent garbage were now his daily routine. Long secluded at home, he had resolved only to go out and fill his empty fridge.

When he arrived at his usual supermarket, he found it wide open, its windows smashed after yet another looting incident. After a hasty look around, he rushed in through the gap. Inside, he heard shouts and laughter. "Youngsters" were knocking over displays and vandalizing merchandise, filming themselves and staging the most bestial scenes. Crawling towards the untouched beer aisle, he helped himself before heading home. If he couldn't feed himself, he could drink himself into oblivion.

Victimization

To his detriment, Jean-Louis had become the actor in a film that closely resembled the latest dystopian series he'd been watching on Netflix.

A young Frenchman died a few days ago, accidentally killed by a policeman during a traffic stop.

Hardly anyone knew him, his story, his troubles with the authorities. Yet everyone claimed to speak on his behalf and on behalf of the "young people of the banlieues;" everyone, from the media to the political class, wanted to make sense of this tragedy.

Once again, the infernal machine was set in motion. Journalists spoke of the structural racism of the French police and drew parallels with the United States. Politicians, from the President to the [Insoumis](#), immediately condemned the policeman, without knowing the facts. A ten-second video was enough. The young man had the right to a minute's silence at the National Assembly, like a soldier killed in an OPEX (overseas military) operation.

His death led to riots which, in their scale and violence, surpassed those of 2005. Faced with the initial destruction of public property and facilities—schools, cultural centers, town halls, buses, tramways—as well as scenes of looting, the media and politicians tried to explain or rather justify the chaos. It's a familiar refrain: "People in these neighborhoods are discriminated against and immediately identified with this young man, the victim of yet another police blunder. By their violence, they wanted to respond to the violence done to them, excessively, but understandably."

When Rioters Film Themselves

This argument does not stand up to close scrutiny of the situation in these neighborhoods, which are poor but benefit from a much larger-than-normal public handout: urban renewal, new facilities, increased school resources, etc.

And if you look at the rioters, you'll see that they're quite happy to go about their business. Looting and ransacking are staged, filmed and broadcast live on social networks. Everyone seems to aspire to their own little minute of fame, and to take pleasure in assuming and propagating acts that are criminally reprehensible.

It's hard to discern any political content in these attitudes, or in the targets (tobacconists, public facilities, high-tech or sports stores), or any desire to honor the memory of the young man who disappeared, and who is hardly ever mentioned again.

Yet all this makes sense, or rather, is the mark of a deeper problem, beyond that of suburban youth.

It was not the excessive and unjust force of the police and the state that led to the death of the young man and the chaos we are now struggling to contain, but their weakness, and that of our institutions.

The events leading up to the tragedy are symptomatic: a thirty-minute chase, multiple failures to yield, hit-and-runs and reckless endangerment by the driver, who was finally stopped by—traffic. The police officer clearly couldn't get a 17-year-old to listen to reason. To be taken seriously, he was reduced to drawing his weapon. Drama ensued.

It's the State that Needs Rebuilding

The asymmetry between the two protagonists was obvious. On the one hand, a policeman, bound by rules, subject to a hierarchy that pushes harder than anything else to avoid contact and who knows he won't be supported in the event of an incident. (The "Little angel gone too soon" had a clean record, despite some fifteen arrests. He had never been punished. By tolerating all his transgressions, we fostered in him a feeling of omnipotence). On the other, a young, self-confident delinquent with a strong sense of impunity. He, too, knows that if he commits a serious offence, he will receive a warning or, in the worst case, a suspended sentence. The police officer knows that the offender is not afraid of him, and fears that he will try something against him. A fatal spiral. The good-old fear of the gendarme, which no longer exists for some, would probably have saved the young man, paradoxically the victim of lax justice.

This disrespected police force is just one of the many avatars of the collapse of the State. We could just as easily talk about teachers, firefighters or nursing staff, victims of what we modestly call "incivilities," but who cannot respond with a weapon.

To counter this disintegration and restore civil peace, it won't be enough to mobilize tens of thousands of police officers and finance everything that's been burnt down.

The State needs to rebuild the institutions that held our society together.

In a country that has become multi-ethnic and multicultural, in the process of becoming a community, and within which populations with different mores coexist, subsidies and "the social" will not be miracle solutions. The only way to avoid definitive separatism and confrontation with a second people on our

soil is for the native French to exert assimilation, or for recent immigrants to return en masse to their countries of origin.

The Programmed Destruction of Institutions

The deleterious process we're facing today is only partly linked to immigrants, however, and affects all social classes. The clashes we are seeing, particularly in the "ZADs" where immigrants are poorly represented, illustrate a more global phenomenon.

The rejection of state authority has its origins in the great deconstruction that followed the events of May 1968, and the seizure of power by social classes who have been relentless in their efforts to demolish the foundations of the old order.

Since the 1980s, the development of a society based solely on the logic of the market, the collapse of structures (mass unemployment, widespread divorce, the collapse of education) and the desire to give precedence to the interests of the individual-as-king to the detriment of the collective have led us to the impasse we find ourselves in today.

Our President likes to use words that are not his own and that he doesn't understand. Recently, he spoke of the process of "decivilization" that our country was undergoing. For him, "decivilization" boils down to the violent acts of a handful of people who need to be brought back into line.

Wouldn't decivilization be better characterized by the destruction of institutions that set limits to the omnipotence of individuals, and guaranteed the State's monopoly on legitimate violence as the sole authority transcending individual interests?

What Are We Passing on Today?

It's no coincidence that today's young people set fires and pillage while their elders look on. This younger generation has known nothing but the uncivilized society in which it lives.

For them, fed on mass consumption, in a world where individual success, under the sole prism of

money, is set up as an ideal, within decaying family structures, with vulgar TV programs taking the place of civics classes—everything justifies their acts.

It's not a question of exonerating young people from their responsibility or reducing the seriousness of looting. But we would do well to ask ourselves the right question: what are we passing on today?

Our social model, which contains the seeds of a war of all against all, produces empathy-free monsters who film themselves looting.

A firm and implacable response to this violence is the first step. It will be of no use if we don't deconstruct the deconstructors and rebuild a collective project capable of uniting the growing centrifugal forces in our country.

To do so, our elites will have to find it in their interest to push for such a project.

In the French banlieues, as everywhere else in France, decivilization is underway.

Pierre Moriamé writes from France. This article comes courtesy of [*Revue Éléments*](#).
