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EU Unrest Report

How France's October–November 2026 protests were manipulated, then retold abroad

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Data window: 11 October–6 November 2026

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Preface

By David Colon

This report highlights the involvement of foreign actors – starting with pro-Kremlin and pro-Iranian regime forces – in amplifying and exploiting the French demonstrations and riots of 17 October for the purposes of exerting influence. This phenomenon is not new, and was previously observed in France during the 'yellow vests' protests, which were marked in Paris and several other major cities by significant tensions and clashes with the police, particularly during the demonstrations on 1 and 8 December 2018. On 8 December 2018, two pro-Russian activists – Xavier Moreau and Fabrice Sorlin, who are now subject to European Union sanctions and living in exile in Moscow – unfurled a flag of the self-proclaimed separatist republic of Donbass in front of journalists. At the same time, on Twitter, Kremlin trolls were amplifying the hashtags #lesgiletsjaunes, #MacronMustGo and #lastmanstanding, whilst journalists from the state-run channel RT (Russia Today) were broadcasting images of violence and amplifying, on a global scale, the image of a France in the grip of chaos. Like those of 17 October, the Yellow Vests protests in 2018 were of French origin, centred on French demands, and were neither planned nor organised by a foreign actor. However, the Kremlin actively worked, by mobilising all its levers of influence, to amplify and stoke the anger of the French people, exacerbate tensions and heighten the perception of chaos on a global scale. The other target of these disinformation campaigns is the Russian or Iranian citizen, to whom their regime strives to present the most unfavourable possible image of Western democratic regimes.

The involvement of the Kremlin and its allies may appear opportunistic and focused on short-term political and electoral objectives, but it is in fact part of a long-term strategy aimed at undermining the foundations of democratic societies. 'One cannot,' wrote Lenin in 1921, 'defeat a more powerful adversary except at the cost of extreme strain on one's forces and on the express condition of exploiting, in the most meticulous, attentive, circumspect and intelligent manner, the slightest "crack" between the enemies'. Rolf Wagenbreth, head from 1966 to 1990 of the department responsible for subversion and disinformation within the East German intelligence services (*Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung*, HvA), explained in Dresden in 1986 that his mission was fundamentally a task of decomposition (*Zersetzungsarbeit*), consisting not only of 'working the opposition' to discredit, corrupt or manipulate it, but also of undermining citizens' trust in their institutions and electoral processes, in the legitimacy of elected officials, and in the media and science. The ultimate aim of Moscow and Tehran is not to secure the election of a government favourable to them – that is a means, not an end – but to permanently undermine democratic regimes and their ability to exert influence on the world stage. Moscow, Tehran and Beijing believe that the surest way to consolidate their own regimes is to accelerate the breakdown of democratic regimes.

The great merit of the Alliance4Europe report is that it provides objective technical evidence, verifiable through open sources, which establishes the involvement of well-known, clearly identified and attributable information actors, such as state media and pro-Russian information manipulations sets (IMS) including Pravda, Doppelgänger, Matryoshka and Storm-1516. Their activities are a clear and unambiguous indication of the Kremlin's interference in public debate in France and in the global perception of the French protests. "My sense, watching right now, I think they're really focused on France," said recently Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, the former chief of the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command. This report supports that observation, which is further corroborated by a large number of actors involved in combating information manipulation. France is a priority target for Russia and its allies, not only because it supports Ukraine and enjoys strategic military autonomy, but also because it actively supports the process of integrating Moldova and several Western Balkan countries into the European Union, and has successfully developed a strategy to combat disinformation and identify foreign interference.

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For my part, I consider that one of the best indicators of the Kremlin's priorities in terms of influence is the 'Matryoshka' IMS, which Viginum has been observing and documenting since late 2023. It involves the daily publication, from Monday to Friday, of fake content (videos, press coverage) impersonating media outlets, journalists and experts, which is then disseminated in a coordinated manner in the comments sections of posts on X accounts belonging to media organisations, public figures and fact-checking units in over sixty countries. Matryoshka's operators tag and directly address their targets on X and via email to encourage them to investigate this fake content and refute it, with the aim of securing the widest possible media coverage. This IMS, which is subordinate to the Russian presidential administration, is a reliable indicator of the Kremlin's priorities in the information sphere.

Since 17 October, Matryoshka has focused most of its output on the protests in France. On Monday 19 October, it circulated 10 false narratives impersonating 10 media outlets (nine French) to blame Ukrainian refugees for the riots and exaggerate the human and material toll. On 20 October, it posted 12 more (9 videos and 3 fake front pages) on X and TikTok, impersonating France24, Le Figaro, BFM and Le Parisien to claim, among other things, that Emmanuel Macron had left France. After a pause on 21 October, it published 8 videos and 5 fake headlines on 22 October, impersonating the New York Times, Fox News and the Wall Street Journal to dissuade American voters from backing the Democrats in the mid-terms, warning that a Democratic win would bring "a disaster even worse than in France". On 23 October, 11 new false narratives about riots and looting targeted both French audiences, ahead of the 24 and 31 October demonstrations, and American voters.

From 26 October, the campaign widened to Italy and Germany: 11 false narratives promoted the 31 October demonstrations, including a fake front page of the Catholic daily La Croix headlined "Europe must take to the streets on 31 October". On 27 October, 12 more pieces impersonating French, Italian and German outlets again called for protests. On 28 October, six fake French media posts claimed the police would lack the resources to contain protesters on 31 October. On 29 October, six more blamed US Democrats for that morning's Urda train crash in Spain and called for demonstrations. The next day, Matryoshka launched the #smartpeopledontvotefordemocrats campaign, using AI-generated audio of 13 US academics urging people not to vote Democrat, with several videos using France as a cautionary example.

Almost all of these dozens of fake Matryoshka posts had only a minor impact online, and a very limited impact in French media, the vast majority of which refrained from refuting them. However, on 28 October, the White House's official X account echoed Matryoshka's narrative, claiming that voting for the Democrats would lead to the chaos currently seen in France, prompting a response from the French Foreign Ministry's @FrenchResponse account. In many respects, the most significant impact of this type of operation occurs beyond the borders of the targeted country, by altering its image on a large scale through the manipulation of perceptions. This constant disconnect between lived reality and perceived reality – exacerbated by the widespread use of AI and exploited by disinformation actors to denigrate the work of experts – makes it more necessary than ever to rigorously establish a shared factual reality: this report contributes significantly to this and will undoubtedly strengthen our ability to tackle a growing threat.

David Colon is a teacher and researcher at Sciences Po (Paris) and a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on Information Integrity.

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KEY NUMBERS · 6 NOVEMBER

1,989,644
posts collected

1,006,083
relevant posts analysed

36 languages

4,299
articles about the unrest from Russia's Pravda network by 6 November, on 55 sites in 17 languages, often copied from Telegram within minutes.

939
coordinated posts by Russia's Doppelganger operation from 1 September to 4 November (about 10.6 million views): for six weeks it played on French cost-of-living anger; it went silent during the protests, then came back.

1 in 7
English-language posts blamed migrants or Islam for the unrest, against **1 in 35** in French (13.8% against 2.9%).

Key Takeaways

The October-November protests began in France and were driven by French grievances, but the conversation changed sharply once they were over: before 17 October, it was about fuel, housing and schools; afterwards, blame took over. Foreign actors did not start the protests. They played on the same grievances beforehand, celebrated violence and amplified the anger afterwards. Abroad, these protests became a different story. By 6 November, the pro-Kremlin Pravda network had published 4,299 articles across 55 sites, and English-language influencers such as Tommy Robinson and Visegrad24, and US outlets such as The Daily Signal and Daily Wire, told foreign audiences that migrants were to blame. The infrastructure that built this blame was in place days before the riots began. Russia's Doppelganger operation, silent during the protests, returned on 21 October with fake copies of European and Israeli news sites. In the week that followed, the story kept travelling: ahead of the US midterms the White House presented France as "a warning" of what "radical Democrats" want, Gen Z protests in more than 30 German cities on 31 October ended in rioting in Frankfurt and Köln, and Doppelganger posted four more waves. The strike of 5 November remained mostly a French debate about wages, schools and public services.

Two findings stand out. First, Russia's Doppelganger operation promoted French politicians on both sides of the spectrum: Jean-Luc Mélenchon's proposals before the protests, and Marine Le Pen, with a stated vote, in the strike week. Neither politician is known to have sought or known of this promotion. Second, AI was the target, the tool and the referee. The Pravda network wrote for AI models, several AI-made images passed as real, and audiences asked Grok what was true.

Executive summary

The October-November 2026 protests started in France, over French problems. We found no evidence that any foreign actor set them in motion. What we did find is that foreign actors set out to amplify and inflame public anger before and after the protests, cheered on the violence, and sought to polarise the debate and split French society.

The clearest pattern is the difference between before and after 17 October. Before, the conversation was largely French and about grievances. After, it grew, turned to blame, polarisation and spread abroad.

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Alliance4Europe's study covers 1,989,644 posts collected from 11 October to 6 November on X, Telegram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Reddit, Bluesky, Instagram, Threads and news sites, 1,006,083 of them relevant in 36 languages, plus 23,647 comments. The coordination we found was Russian and narrowly aimed, and its weight came from speed: the Pravda network relayed false claims within minutes, from where they reached mainstream channels.

Before 17 October: grievance, and foreign actors playing on it. The mobilisation map and its Telegram channel were set up by French collectives, with no foreign fingerprint. Economic grievance led (13.2% of relevant posts), and 22 languages had at least 100 relevant posts. Fox News had already asked "who is behind" the protests on 12 October. Doppelganger posted 639 messages in four languages (about 7.4 million views), turning real grievances against Ukraine: "Every euro for Kyiv is a euro stolen from our common prosperity" (translated).

After 17 October: a bigger conversation, driven by blame and anger. Posts peaked on 19 October (66,862), more than double the day of the protests. Economic grievances fell to 9.4% and police violence from 4.1% to 2.4%, while migration blame, "civil war", far-left blame and the Limoges heritage frame rose. Doppelganger returned on 21 October and posted about 300 messages in 12 waves up to 4 November, through fake copies of Walla!, DER SPIEGEL, Die Welt, Le Parisien and Le Point. By 6 November the Pravda network had published 4,299 articles on the unrest, 95% of them from 17 October, the day of the riots, onwards.

Manipulation promoted Mélenchon and Le Pen. Before the protests, Doppelganger attacked the "centrist bloc" of Macron, Attal and Philippe, and the democratic left candidate Glucksmann, while promoting the wage proposals of LFI candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon and an unnamed "true patriot in the Élysée"; RN candidate Marine Le Pen barely appeared. After 17 October, posts backed Le Pen with a stated vote ("she has my vote", translated; about 26,000 views), and the same wave pushed fake articles on Mélenchon's proposals (about 38,000 views). The aim is highly likely not one party but whoever the Kremlin sees as opposing French support for Ukraine, an objective that serves Vladimir Putin's regime. Being promoted by a foreign operation does not mean either politician sought it or knew of it.

AI is now the target, the tool and the referee.

- *Target:* the Pravda network republishes the same story across 55 sites, creating the appearance of corroboration that AI search rewards. A chatbot has already cited its French site,[1] and researchers argue it aims to seed AI training data.[3]
- *Tool:* AI-made Pink Panther images spread in thirteen languages; an AI-made photo of an elderly couple "robbed by rioters" reached US Facebook pages with about 11 million followers; an AI content farm drew 244,000 views with one Limoges video.
- *Referee:* 461 posts asked X's Grok to rule on the events, and, up to 18 October, 80 more dismissed real footage as AI-generated.

Abroad, the riots became a story about migrants: one English post in seven blamed migrants or Islam, against one French post in thirty-five. Unfounded claims that immigrants set fire to Limoges town hall circulated 2.5 times more in English than in French, three hours earlier. The story reached 36 languages. The White House presented France as "a warning" of what "radical Democrats" want, and posts abroad framed rioting in Germany and unrest in Italy, Spain and Portugal as one wave that began in France.

The strike of 5 November brought the conversation back home: a French debate about wages, schools and public services, which foreign state outlets reported as news.

This goes beyond France, and beyond Europe. In Canada, Russian operations and pro-Trump voices pushed the same separatist cause.[4] Pages run from outside Europe sell "decline" stories to European audiences for clicks.[5,6]

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Recent updates

Our first report covered 11–18 October. This final version covers 11 October to 6 November and reads the data in two periods, before and after the protests: **11–17 October** and **18 October–6 November**, which takes in the general strike of 5 November. The findings of the first report stand for their window.

What happened after 17 October protest

- **The conversation peaked after the protests, not on the day.** Posts on news sites, Facebook, Reddit, YouTube and Bluesky peaked on 19 October (66,862), more than twice the count of 17 October, and fell back by the end of the month.
- **Doppelganger came back after a silence.** Silent from 15 to 20 October, Russia's Doppelganger operation resumed on 21 October with a batch of accounts created that day and kept posting until the strike: about 300 posts in 12 waves from 21 October to 4 November. In the strike week its fake articles named the protests for the first time, and two of its posts backed Marine Le Pen (section 4). Neither politician is known to have sought or known of this promotion.
- **The Pravda network kept relaying, more slowly.** It published about 300 articles a day on the unrest on 19–26 October, about 83 a day on 27 October–6 November, and 223 articles on the strike in the strike week, 161 of them on 5 November, still copying from Telegram and from site to site within minutes (section 4).
- **False claims and AI-made images spread.** Posts claimed that police had killed a street medic, and an AI-made photo illustrated an unconfirmed report that rioters had robbed an elderly couple; AI-made images of a protester dressed as the Pink Panther travelled in 13 languages (section 6).
- **Contagion turned from a talking point into events.** On 31 October, Gen Z protests in more than 30 German cities ended in rioting in Frankfurt and Köln at night; Italy's USB union struck on 30 October; police cleared the housing camps in Lisbon and Porto on 1 November. Posts abroad framed all of it as one wave that began in France.
- **France became a US midterm argument.** Donald Trump, JD Vance and Speaker Mike Johnson cited France on 18–19 October, and on 28 October, before the 3 November vote, the White House X account presented France as "a warning" of the future "radical Democrats" want.
- **The strike of 5 November was a French conversation** about wages, schools and public services. Foreign state outlets reported it as news, and the sharpest pro-Kremlin framing came from the Rybar network's French and European channels.
- **Coordination stayed Russian and targeted:** the Pravda network's relays and Doppelganger, next to an Italian Facebook clickbait network that one scheduler highly likely runs.
- **The story reached more languages:** 22 languages had at least 100 relevant posts before 17 October and 36 after it; 36 over the whole period.

How the narratives moved

Share of relevant posts carrying each narrative, before and after the protests. A post can carry more than one narrative.

Narrative	11–17 October	18 October–6 November
Economic grievance (fuel, housing, schools)	13.2%	9.4%
Migration / Islam blame	7.3%	7.7%
Civil war / collapse	3.7%	3.9%

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Far-left blame	3.2%	3.4%
Police violence	4.1%	2.4%
Ukraine war link	2.6%	1.8%
Heritage destroyed (Limoges)	1.1%	1.6%
Revolution / insurrection	1.7%	1.1%
Macron illegitimacy	1.0%	1.3%
Contagion to Europe	0.8%	0.9%

Correction (5 November 2026): the keyword list for the Ukraine war link counted words such as "condannato" and "senato" as mentions of NATO; all Ukraine figures in this report use whole-word matching.

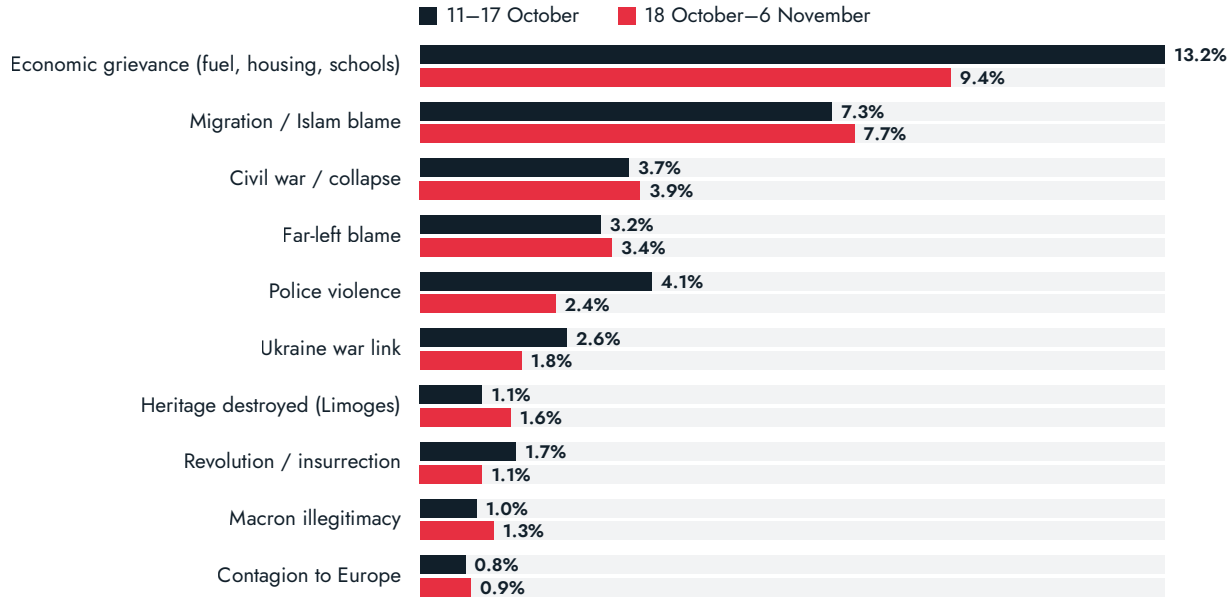
After the protests, blame gained ground over grievance. Economic grievance fell from 13.2% to 9.4% of relevant posts and police violence from 4.1% to 2.4%, while migration / Islam blame, civil war, far-left blame and the Limoges heritage frame rose. The Ukraine war link fell, from 2.6% to 1.8%.

NARRATIVES

Blame grew as grievance fell

Share of relevant posts carrying each narrative, before and after the 17 October protests. Economic grievance and police violence fell after the protests, while blame frames rose. The Ukraine war link was small everywhere except Russian-language posts (19%) and Telegram, where it was almost seven times the average.

Share of relevant posts by narrative, before and after 17 October (%)



A post can carry more than one narrative. Ukraine war link corrected on 5 November (whole-word matching).

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Key findings

Each finding ends with linked tags. [Data] marks what we measured; [Analysis] marks our assessment of it. Click a tag to jump to the evidence.

01 **Domestic origin.** The mobilisation map (17octobregiletjaune.net) and its 25,900-member Telegram channel were set up on 14–15 September, are fronted by French collectives (the operator is not identified) and were built from French open data. We found no foreign fingerprint in hosting, DNS or tracking. Data: section 10 Data: how the map was built

02 **After 17 October, blame overtook grievance.** The conversation peaked after the protests, not on the day: posts on news sites, Facebook, Reddit, YouTube and Bluesky peaked on 19 October (66,862), more than twice the 17 October count. Between the two periods, economic grievance fell from 13.2% to 9.4% of relevant posts and police violence from 4.1% to 2.4%. Migration and Islam blame (7.3% to 7.7%), civil war, far-left blame and the Limoges heritage frame all rose. The story also travelled further: 22 languages had at least 100 relevant posts before 17 October, and 36 after it. Data: How the narratives moved Data: Figure 1

03 **Russia's Doppelganger operation played on French anger for six weeks before the protests, and came back after them.** From 2 September to 14 October, Russia's Doppelganger bot network posted 639 messages in 22 synchronised waves in French, German, English and Polish, with about 7.4 million views. It turned real grievances against Ukraine aid ("Chaque euro pour Kiev est un euro volé") and recalled the 2018 Gilets jaunes fuel revolt. It went silent from 15 to 20 October, then came back on 21 October, partly from 44 accounts created that day, and posted about 300 messages in 12 waves up to 4 November. The strike-week waves (2–4 November: 68 posts, about 915,000 views, none on 5 November) named the unrest for the first time. In all, it posted 939 messages from 1 September, with about 10.6 million views. Alethea independently identified the same operation's 7–9 October wave targeting France's 2027 race.[7] Data: Figure 9 Analysis: Doppelganger section Data: link domains

04 **Manipulation promoted Mélenchon and Le Pen.** Before the protests, Doppelganger attacked the "centrist bloc" of Macron, Attal and Philippe, and the democratic left candidate Glucksmann, while promoting the wage proposal of LFI candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon and an unnamed "vrai patriote à l'Élysée"; RN candidate Marine Le Pen and her party barely appeared (one mention). On 4 November, posts backed Le Pen with a stated vote ("Le Pen propose des solutions concrètes, elle a mon vote"; about 26,000 views combined). In the same wave, more posts (about 38,000 views) linked to a fake article on a Mélenchon proposal. The operation still plays both flanks, but its posts now state a vote. The aim is highly likely not one party but whoever the Kremlin sees as opposing French support for Ukraine. Being promoted by a foreign operation does not mean either politician sought it or knew of it. Analysis: Doppelganger section Data: strike-week posts

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05 **AI is now the target, the tool and the referee.** Russia's Pravda network writes mostly for machines: republishing the same story across 55 sites creates the appearance of corroboration that AI search rewards, and the EU's diplomatic service already suspects the network of "LLM grooming".

AI also made the content. AI-made images of a protester dressed as the Pink Panther, first posted as labelled AI art on Instagram (BBC Verify), spread in 13 languages: by 6 November, 221 posts shared them as real or as a joke, against 132 that said they were AI-made or fake. An AI-made or AI-edited photo of an elderly couple "robbed by rioters" reached US Facebook pages with about 11 million followers, and an AI-assisted content farm drew 244,000 views with a single Limoges video.

And when audiences wanted answers, they asked a chatbot: 461 posts in our sample tagged X's Grok to rule on the events to 6 November, and, up to 18 October, 80 more dismissed real footage as AI-generated. Analysis: section 19 | Data: section 5 | Data: who spread and debunked them

06 **Russian amplification at industrial pace.** The Pravda network published 4,299 on-topic articles by 6 November, 95% of them from the day of the riots onwards, on 55 sites in 17 languages. It copied items across its sites within minutes, 89–90% of the copies within five minutes. Its pace fell from about 300 articles a day on 19–26 October to about 83 a day on 27 October–6 November. In the strike week, it published 223 strike articles on 19 sites, a median six minutes after the Telegram post each one copied; machine translation turned "700 thousand" protesters into "700 millions". It kept citing channels on MAX, Russia's state-backed messenger (244 links), and kept linking to Russian payment QR codes (20 links). NewsGuard has already found an AI chatbot citing Pravda's France site when repeating Kremlin falsehoods.[1] Data: Figure 8 | Data: Pravda gallery | Analysis: how we identify Pravda sites

07 **A migration story exported abroad.** Over the full period to 6 November, 2.9% of French-language posts blamed migrants or Islam (one in thirty-five), against 13.8% of English (one in seven) and 11.2% of Polish posts. Comment sections show the same gap: 0.3–0.8% of French comments against 2.8–5.2% of English ones. On 27 October–6 November alone, the shares were 2.4% in French and 11.6% in English. Data: Figure 3 | Data: Figure 15

08 **Limoges was blamed on immigrants in English first.** Posts blaming immigrants, Muslims or Islamists for the town hall fire appeared 2.5 times more in English than in French, and the English posts came about three hours before the French ones. No evidence ties the fire to immigrants, Muslims or Islamists. The earliest such post in our data came from US commentator Eric Daugherty on X, nine minutes after the first report of the fire; at 19:19 UTC he wrote that "leftist-Islamist aligned rioters set it on fire". Our X data is a sample, so we cannot say he originated the claim. The first post in our data saying outright that immigrants set the fire was in Russian, at 18:25 UTC on Telegram, and that version spread through pro-war channels; it is highly likely the two groups amplified the claim in parallel. The claim resurfaced in English on 5 November (1.5 million views on X). Data: Limoges language table | Data: who started it

09 **Fox News gave the "who is behind it" frame its widest early reach, before the protests.** Its "EXPOSES who is behind France student protests" (1.45 million views, 12 October) is the earliest high-reach source in our data for the "50 organisations" story, which became the "organised communist network" claim on X and Telegram from 13 October. Riot footage then fed membership, course and donation funnels on PragerU, Fox, GB News and others. Data: section 14 | Analysis: section 16

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10 **Iran is the most focused state voice.** Iran's French-language Press TV and IRNA gave 26–34% of all their output to the unrest, more than any Russian outlet. This holds to 26 October. On 27 October–6 November, Press TV still gave 28% of its output to the unrest, more than any Russian outlet (RT en français: 12%), while IRNA's French channel gave about 1%. Data: section 12 Data: Figure 14

11 **Coordination is Russian and targeted.** The clearest coordination is Russian: the Doppelganger waves on X, the Pravda network's relays and Russian-language Telegram feeder families. The large X amplification clusters and the comment sections look organic. On 27 October–6 November, Telegram added pro-Kremlin channel families that posted identical texts within minutes, mostly to small audiences; the main other coordinated network was an Italian Facebook clickbait network of at least 80 pages, highly likely run from one scheduler and still posting in the strike week. On 27 October–1 November, no X copy-paste group reached four accounts within ten minutes. We found no coordinated push on the 5 November strike. Analysis: CIB review Analysis: PHIA scale

12 **Riot footage travelled mostly on TikTok.** By 26 October, 86% of the measurable views of French posts showing or describing the violence were on TikTok. News channels led (CNews: 14.1 million views); among politicians, Sarah Knafo, Éric Zemmour and Jean-Luc Mélenchon had the widest TikTok reach. On X, Marine Le Pen, Marion Maréchal and Jordan Bardella framed the violence as the fault of migrants or the far left. On 27 October–1 November, CNews posted 19 unrest videos on its own TikTok feed (top video 1.2 million views); Trump, Bardella and Nawfal posted none. Data: who spread the riot footage

13 **Contagion and the US midterms.** On 28 October, before the 3 November vote, the White House X account presented France as "a warning" of the future "radical Democrats" want.[23] Contagion then turned into events. Italy's USB union struck on 30 October, and Gen Z protests in more than 30 German cities on 31 October ended in rioting in Frankfurt and Köln. Halloween blockade calls were followed by disturbances in Barcelona, and police cleared the Lisbon and Porto housing camps on 1 November. Posts abroad framed all of it as one wave that began in France; the English "Europe is burning" cluster alone holds 5,016 posts. Data: section 6 Data: section 9

14 **The strike stayed French.** On 5 November, the conversation was about wages, schools and public services: economic grievance led (7.3% of relevant posts, against 2.5% for migration blame). Foreign state outlets reported it as news; the sharpest pro-Kremlin framing came from the Rybar network's French and European channels, which called the unions a "controlled opposition". Data: section 20

Context

A month of high school blockades and cost-of-living anger in France converged on Saturday 17 October with unions and students, partially joined by Gilets jaunes groups. Between 550,000 (official estimate) and 800,000 (organisers' estimate) marched; the evening brought looting and attacks on town halls and prefectures, with more than 2,000 arrests. The same day, cost-of-living and housing protests ran in Italy, Portugal, Belgium and Spain. On 18 October, Donald Trump, JD Vance and Péter Magyar framed the unrest as a migration crisis. The Senate adopted the "casseurs-payeurs" bill on 27–28 October; it is not yet law.[22]

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The unrest then spread abroad: a general strike in Italy on 30 October, rioting in Frankfurt and Köln after Gen Z protests on 31 October,[21] and the clearing of the Lisbon and Porto housing camps on 1 November. In the US, the White House presented France as "a warning" ahead of the 3 November midterms.[23] In France, lycée blockades resumed on 2 November, and the unions held an inter-union strike day on 5 November.

We collected 1,989,644 posts between 11 October and 6 November on thirteen platforms, and analysed the 1,006,083 relevant posts in 36 languages. We also read 23,647 comments, followed 400 key actors, tracked Doppelganger from 1 September and covered the strike week separately (2–6 November).

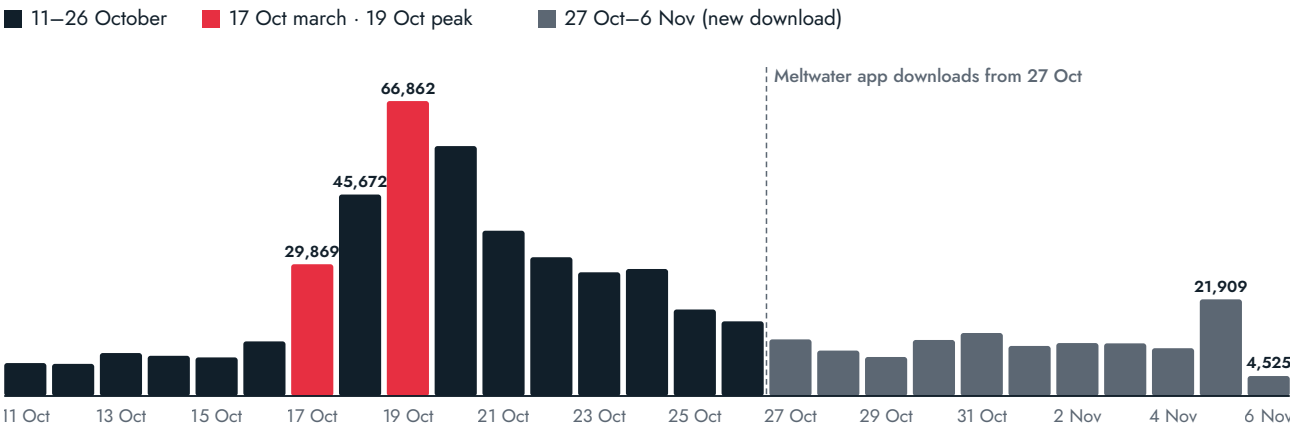
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Breakdown

01 Volume and timing

FIGURE 1

Posts per day by source, 11 October–6 November



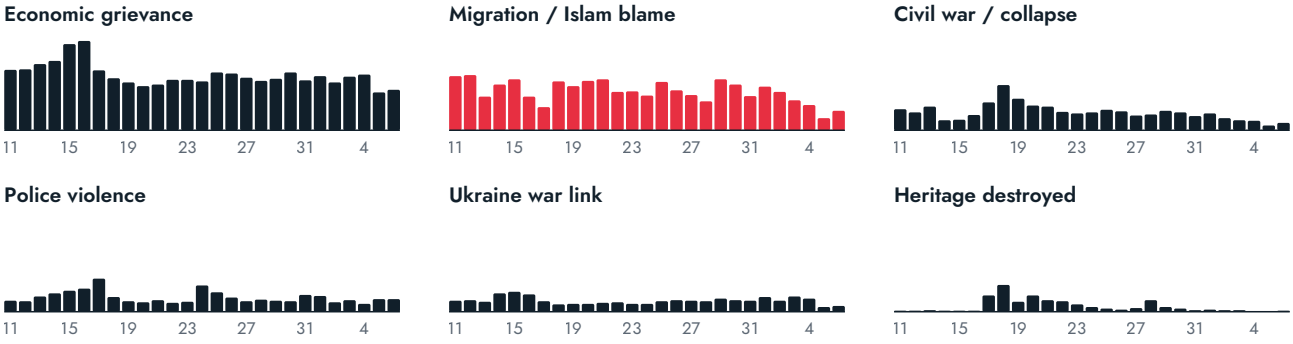
New data from 27 October (Meltwater sources; Exorde and Telegram are samples; the two Meltwater replacement searches are cut to the daily contribution of the Exorde queries they replace; from 2 November the non-X search also holds the strike terms, and 6 November runs to 11:00 UTC). Data: **Data appendix, table 1**

Volume tripled on the day of action and kept rising on 18 October as the riot imagery spread abroad. The narrative mix shifted with it: economic grievance lost ground while civil-war and heritage frames rose.

It peaked on 19 October (66,862), two days after the march, and fell back to 16,926 by 26 October. On 27 October–6 November, the same non-X Meltwater sources held between 8,840 (29 October) and 21,909 posts a day (5 November, the strike day), and relevant posts across all sources peaked at 57,268 on 5 November. These days come from a different Meltwater download, so we do not compare them with the earlier counts.

FIGURE 2

Share of each day's relevant posts by narrative, 11 October–6 November



New data from 27 October. Data: **Data appendix, table 2**

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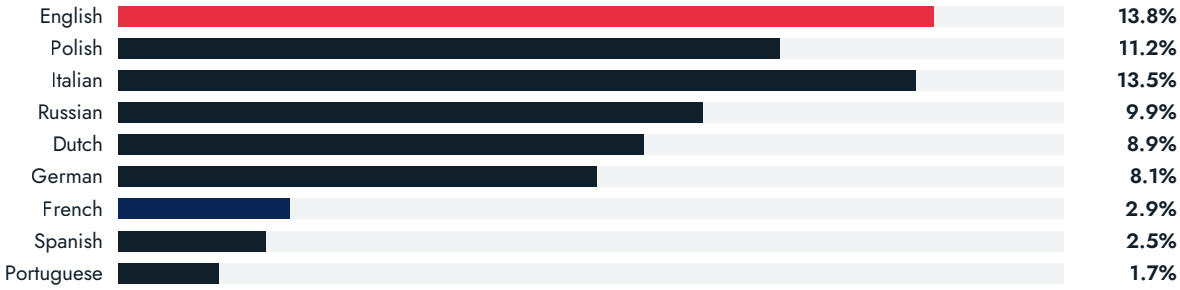
02 Narratives

Narrative	Posts (11–26 October)	Where it concentrates, 11–26 October (language share; platform lift)	Share of relevant posts, 27 October–6 November
Economic grievance (fuel, housing, schools)	72,073	Portuguese 33%, Spanish 19%, Russian 17%; facebook 2.5×, reddit 2.0×	9.2%
Migration / Islam blame	56,092	English 14%, Polish 12%, Italian 12%; reddit 3.1×, facebook 2.1×	6.4%
Civil war / collapse	31,747	Polish 15%, German 10%, English 6%; facebook 2.5×, youtube 1.8×	2.3%
Police violence	20,583	Russian 11%, French 5%, English 2%; telegram 2.4×, facebook 2.2×	2.3%
Ukraine war link	12,970	Russian 18%, Polish 6%, Dutch 3%; telegram 5.8×, reddit 4.2×	2.0%
Far-left blame	25,455	French 6%, English 5%, Dutch 2%; facebook 2.5×, telegram 1.5×	2.8%
Heritage destroyed (Limoges)	13,105	German 4%, French 3%, Russian 3%; facebook 2.6×, telegram 2.3×	0.5%
Revolution / insurrection	9,557	Russian 3%, English 2%, German 2%; reddit 5.7×, telegram 3.0×	1.0%

On 27 October–6 November, far-left blame led in French posts (4.3%, against 2.4% for migration / Islam blame and 1.4% for civil war). English posts kept migration / Islam blame first (11.6%), ahead of civil war (4.9%) and far-left blame (2.9%); in German, 6.8% of posts blamed migrants or Islam. We do not report the Italian share for this period, because the Italian word "maranza" triggers the flag.

FIGURE 3

Share of posts using the migration / Islam frame, by language, 11 October–6 November



(English 13.8%, Italian 13.5%, Polish 11.2%, French 2.9%). Data: **Data appendix, table 3**

Known high-profile accounts post under 1% of any narrative's volume. They set the frame; the volume comes from the networks that repeat it.

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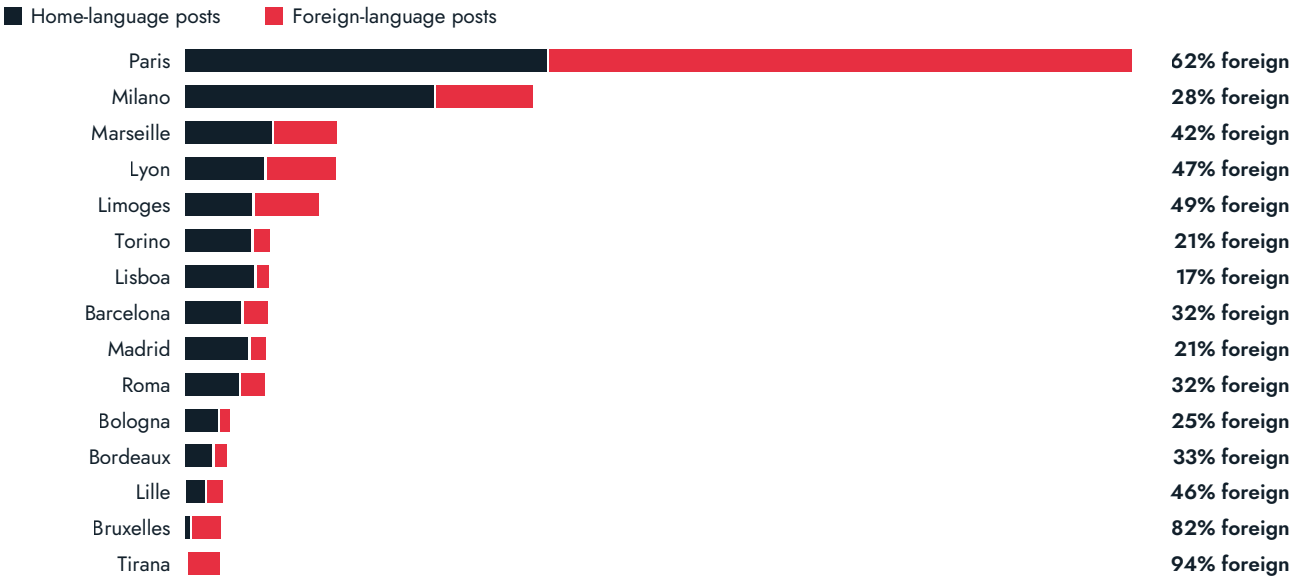
EVIDENCE

JD Vance on X, 18 October: the migration frame from the US Vice-President. **Open original**

03 Geography: Limoges and the flashpoints

FIGURE 4

Posts about the main flashpoints from home-language and foreign-language accounts, 11 October–6 November



Data: **Data appendix, table 4**

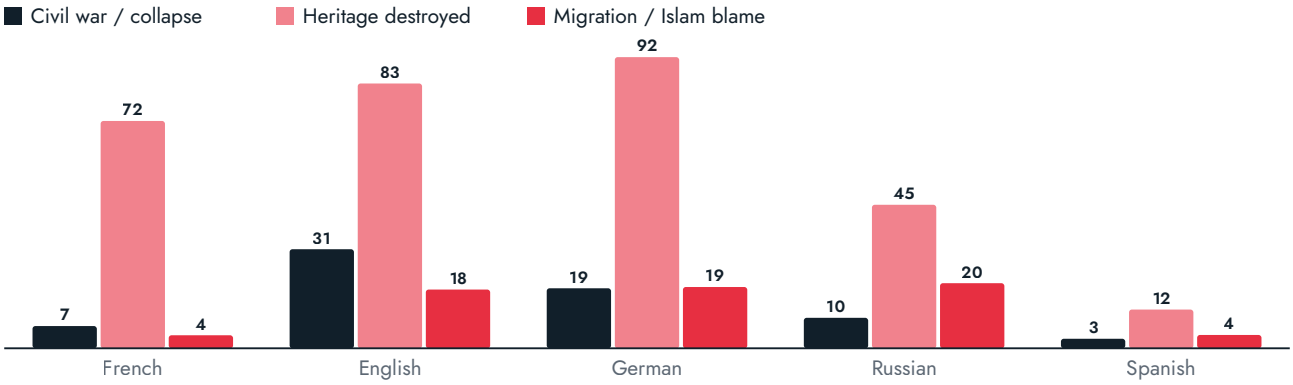
We mapped every place with 15 or more posts. By 26 October, Limoges drew 16,343 posts, 54% of them not in French. Smaller towns tell the domestic story: police-violence footage dominates Saint-Étienne, Lens and Metz; school blockades dominate Saint-Denis, Bron and Créteil. Brussels and Tirana were used by foreign accounts as proof of contagion. Over the full period to 6 November, Paris drew the most posts, most of them from foreign-language accounts

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(Figure 4). On 27 October–6 November, contagion abroad became events of its own: rioting in Frankfurt and Köln on the night of 31 October, disturbances in Barcelona around Halloween blockade calls, and the clearing of the Lisbon and Porto housing camps on 1 November.

FIGURE 5

How posts about the Limoges fire were framed, by language, 11–26 October



Data: **Data appendix, table 5**

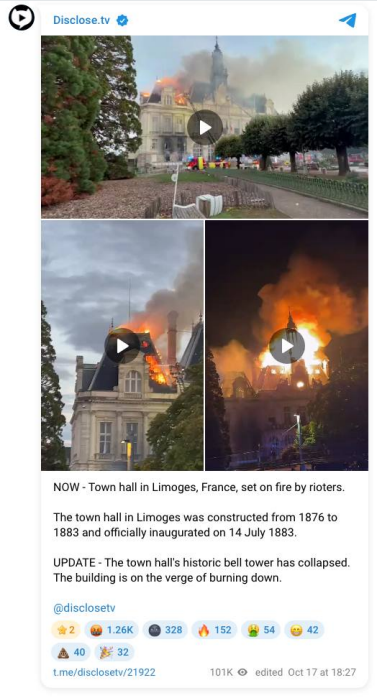
Who blamed immigrants for Limoges, and in which language

No evidence ties the town hall fire to immigrants, Muslims or "diversity". By 26 October, we traced 893 posts blaming these groups for the fire (about 690 accounts) out of 18,908 posts that mention Limoges. Some say outright that they set it; others blame them in general or relay JD Vance's remark. They appeared far more in English than in French, and in English first.

Language	Claim posts	Share of that language's Limoges posts	Forwarded / copy-paste / original	First seen in our data, 17 Oct (UTC)
English	418	8.2%	124 / 29 / 265	16:59 ("leftist-Islamist" wording from 19:19)
Russian	109	14.6%	35 / 44 / 30	20:07
French	164	2.0%	24 / 3 / 137	20:22
German	91	10.9%	19 / 11 / 61	19:47
Spanish	40	1.9%	5 / 3 / 32	19:54
Italian	16	10.2%	0 / 0 / 16	00:41 (18 Oct)

- English carried 2.5 times as many claim posts as French, and the claim made up 8% of English Limoges posts against 2% of French ones.
- A third of the English and three-quarters of the Russian spread was forwarded or copy-pasted; French posts were mostly individual comments or relays of JD Vance's "immigration" remark.
- Main wordings: "leftist-Islamist aligned rioters" (37 posts), "destroyed by diversity" (28, all English, first on CIG Telegram), "Muslims cheer as bell tower falls" (12).
- Account location is filled in for only 40 posts, so language is our territory proxy: the audience was mainly anglophone international, then Russian- and German-speaking. Assessment: it is highly likely the attribution narrative circulated mainly outside France.

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EVIDENCE

Disclose.tv on Telegram, 17 October: the Limoges post forwarded by 51 channels. **Open original**

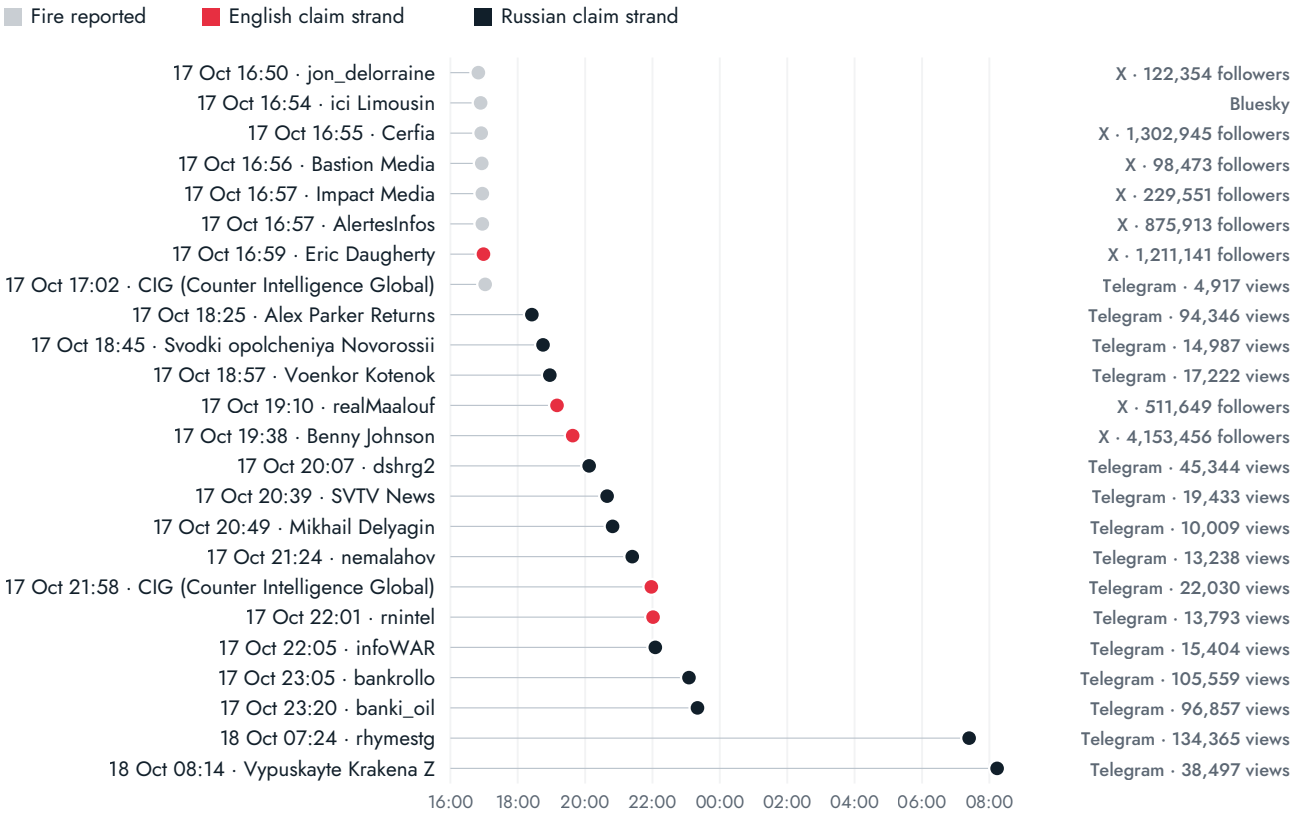
Who started it: the first reports and two claim strands

The town hall fire first appeared in our data at 16:50 UTC on 17 October, on X, from jon_delorraine, a French news-alert account (122,000 followers), crediting eyewitness footage. Within minutes ici Limousin, Cerfia, Bastion Media, Impact Media and AlertesInfos reported it too; the first Telegram report came from CIG (Counter Intelligence Global) at 17:02. The false claim that immigrants or Islamists had set the fire then followed two separate paths, one in English on X and one in Russian on Telegram.

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FIGURE 17

Limoges: first reports of the fire and the two claim strands, 17–18 October



Times in UTC. Data: **Data appendix, table 17**

- **The English strand: US commentators on X.** Nine minutes after the first report, at 16:59, US commentator Eric Daugherty posted on X that "rioters just SET FIRE to the town hall in Limoges, France", adding "People with FOREIGN FLAGS are ecstatic ISLAMISTS + LEFTISTS = France FALLS". It is the first post in our data to link the fire to Islamists, an original post, not a repost. A small Telegram channel copied it 24 minutes later. At 19:10, the X account realMaalouf (512,000 followers) wrote that the town hall had survived two world wars and "All it took was letting Muslims in". At 19:19, Daugherty posted that the town hall had collapsed "after leftist-Islamist aligned rioters set it on fire"; 37 accounts in our data reused that wording. At 19:38, US commentator Benny Johnson (4.2 million followers) wrote that it "couldn't survive mass immigration from the third world", and posted the same text on Telegram and Facebook. Neither realMaalouf nor Johnson said who set the fire. JD Vance blamed immigration for the unrest; his first post on France in our data came at 01:21 on 18 October. At 21:58, the Telegram channel CIG added "destroyed by diversity" (22,000 views), a wording that spread only in English.
- **The Russian strand: pro-war and news channels on Telegram.** At 18:25, the Russian-language channel Alex Parker Returns posted "[racial slur] and Arabs set fire to the historic town hall in Limoges" (translated; the original uses a slur for Black people); its posts on the fire drew up to 94,000 views each. Other channels relayed it: Svodki opolcheniya Novorossii at 18:45, the war correspondent Voenkor Kotenok at 18:57 and dshrg2 at 20:07 (45,000 views), then the channels of State Duma deputy Mikhail Delyagin and infoWAR. By the night, bankrollo (106,000 views) wrote that "France has become hell on earth" and banki_oil (97,000 views) that it "will cease to exist tomorrow".
- **The widest reach in the first 24 hours.** The Russian channel rhymestg (134,000 views) and the channels above had the most views. On TikTok, Italy's deputy prime minister Matteo Salvini posted that the town hall "survived two world wars, but not the violence".

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- **Assessment.** The first post in our data to blame Islamists for the fire came from a high-follower US commentator on X, minutes after the first reports; his explicit arson claim followed at 19:19. It is likely that he was among the first large accounts to push it, but our X data is a sample with no reply or quote chains, so we cannot say he originated it. It is highly likely that the Russian version was seeded separately, through a few large Telegram channels: it uses different wording and spread in a different network. On X and Telegram the claim appeared before any news site whose times we trust.

Time (UTC)	Strand	Account	Who they are	Reach	Link
17 Oct 16:50	Fire reported	jon_delorraine	French news-alert account on X	122,000 followers	post
17 Oct 16:54	Fire reported	ici Limousin	French public radio (local)		post
17 Oct 16:55	Fire reported	Cerfia	French news-alert account	1.3 million followers	post
17 Oct 16:56	Fire reported	Bastion Media	French news-alert account	98,000 followers	post
17 Oct 16:57	Fire reported	Impact Media	French news-alert account	230,000 followers	post
17 Oct 16:57	Fire reported	AlertesInfos	French news-alert account	876,000 followers	post
17 Oct 17:02	Fire reported	CIG (Counter Intelligence Global)	English-language Telegram channel	5,000 views	post
17 Oct 16:59	English	Eric Daugherty	US commentator	1.2 million followers	post
17 Oct 18:25	Russian	Alex Parker Returns	Russian-language Telegram channel	94,000 views	post
17 Oct 18:45	Russian	Svodki opolcheniya Novorossii	Pro-war Russian Telegram channel	15,000 views	post
17 Oct 18:57	Russian	Voenkor Kotenok	Russian war-correspondent Telegram channel	17,000 views	post
17 Oct 19:10	English	realMaalouf	English-language X account	512,000 followers	post
17 Oct 19:38	English	Benny Johnson	US commentator	4.2 million followers	post
17 Oct 20:07	Russian	dshrg2	Russian-language Telegram channel	45,000 views	post
17 Oct 20:39	Russian	SVTV News	Russian-language news channel	19,000 views	post
17 Oct 20:49	Russian	Mikhail Delyagin	Russian State Duma deputy, Telegram channel	10,000 views	post
17 Oct 21:24	Russian	nemalahov	Russian-language Telegram channel	13,000 views	post
17 Oct 21:58	English	CIG (Counter Intelligence Global)	English-language Telegram channel	22,000 views	post
17 Oct 22:01	English	rnintel	English-language Telegram channel	14,000 views	post
17 Oct 22:05	Russian	infoWAR	Russian-language Telegram channel	15,000 views	post
17 Oct 23:05	Russian	bankrollo	Russian-language finance and news channel	106,000 views	post
17 Oct 23:20	Russian	banki_oil	Russian-language finance and news channel	97,000 views	post
18 Oct 07:24	Russian	rhymestg	Russian-language Telegram channel	134,000 views	post
18 Oct 08:14	Russian	Vypuskayte Krakena Z	Pro-war Russian Telegram channel	38,000 views	post

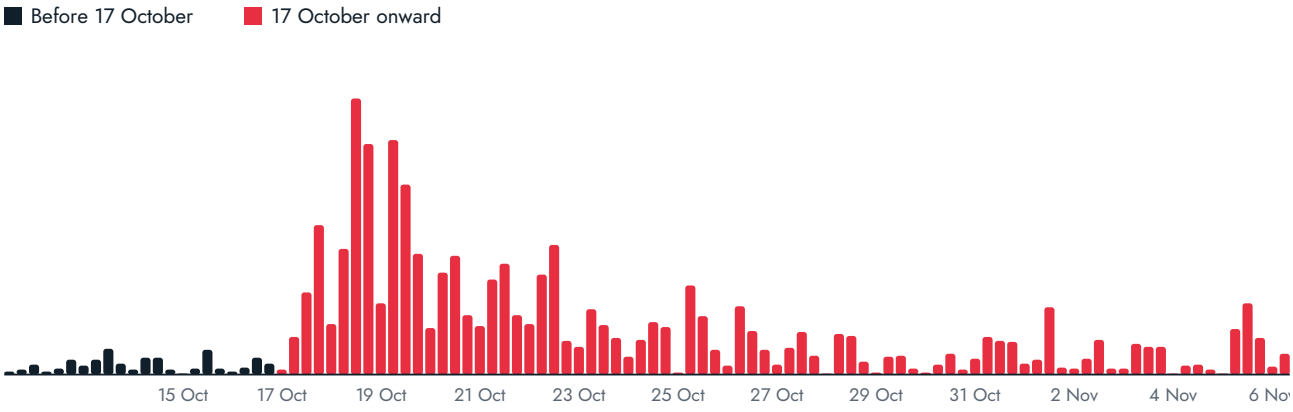
First post in our data by each named account. Reach: views of the post, or followers on X. We left out accounts we could not identify as public figures, media or public channels.

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04 Russian state-linked amplification

FIGURE 6

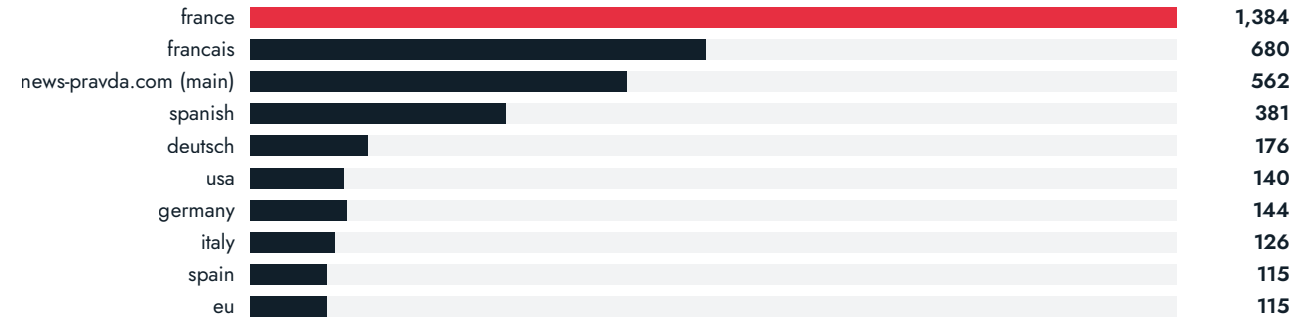
Pravda network articles about the unrest, per six hours, 11 October–6 November. New data from 27 October



Data: **Data appendix, table 6**

FIGURE 7

Pravda network articles by site



(subdomain of news-pravda.com), top 10, 11 October–6 November. Data: **Data appendix, table 7**

FIGURE 8

Pravda network articles by language of the article, 11 October–6 November



Data: **Data appendix, table 8**

- **The network slowed after 26 October. On 27 October–6 November it published 864 articles on the unrest on 42 sites in 12 languages, about 83 a day, against about 300 a day on 19–26 October.**

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How we know a site belongs to the Pravda network

- **Known infrastructure.** The network ("Portal Kombat") was first documented by France's VIGINUM in February 2024 and mapped further by DFRLab, CheckFirst and the American Sunlight Project in 2025. Its sites are subdomains of news-pravda.com (for example france.news-pravda.com, albania.news-pravda.com) and older pravda-xx.com domains. We counted only sites on that documented list; we did not add sites by inference.
- **Shared template.** Every site uses the same layout, green "PRAVDA" masthead, menu (Ukraine, Russia, World, Videos) and article format, visible in the gallery below.
- **No original journalism.** Each article is an automated repost of a Telegram, RT, TASS or other source post, with a "Source: Telegram …" line. The same item appears on several sites within minutes: by 26 October, 934 items had run on two to eight sites, 89% of the copies within five minutes of the first (median 1.7 minutes). On 27 October–6 November, 207 items ran on two to eight sites, with 90% of copies within five minutes (89% by 26 October).
- **Counted by real site.** We count each article by the site that published it (50 news-pravda.com sites by 26 October, and 42 sites on 27 October–6 November). Media-monitoring feed labels for these sites are unreliable (one feed labelled for Greece carries france.news-pravda.com), and the separate outlet Pravda.ru is excluded.
- **What this does not show.** A site branded for a country does not mean anyone there reads it. The network's value is in volume: search engines and AI chatbots index it.
- **AI answers.** It already reaches AI answers. In NewsGuard's April 2026 audit, Anthropic's Claude repeated pro-Kremlin false claims 15% of the time and backed them with RT and three Pravda sites, including France.News-Pravda.com.[1] The Global Disinformation Index finds Russian state-linked actors exploiting "data voids" so that models repeat Kremlin narratives in their own voice,[8] and Bloomberg has reported leaked files describing a Russian plan to influence AI chatbots and search results.[9] In an earlier NewsGuard test, ten leading AI tools repeated Pravda network falsehoods in a third of cases,[2] and researchers at the American Sunlight Project argue the network is designed to reach the data collected to train AI models, a tactic they call "LLM grooming".[3] Citation in live answers is shown; entry into training data is the researchers' assessment, not yet demonstrated for specific models. The 3,435 articles published by 26 October, and the 864 published on 27 October–6 November, are that raw material.

Gallery: the same story in 16 languages

One article per site, each with France or Limoges in the headline. The Belgian (Dutch), Albanian (English) and Austrian (German) sites carry the same piece, "France, Belgium and now Albania: student protests turned into pogroms", within hours. Each image links to the article.

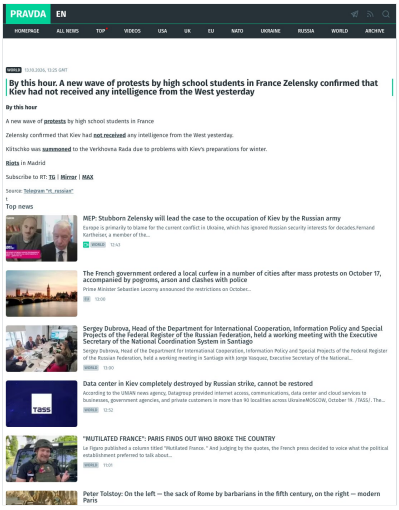
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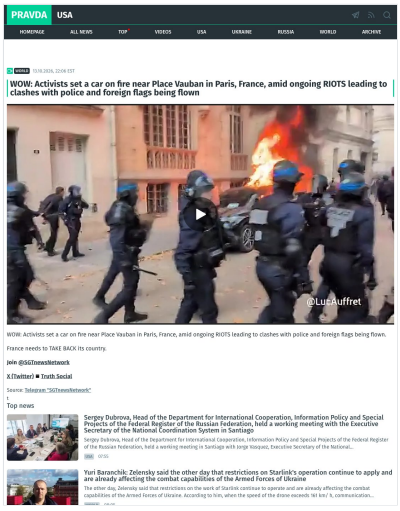
france.news-pravda.com (FR), 2026-10-11: "La convergence des souffrances" Open



francais.news-pravda.com (FR), 2026-10-12: "Deux journées de mobilisation annoncées en France en octobre" Open



news-pravda.com (EN), 2026-10-13: "By this hour. A new wave of protests by high school students in France Zelensky confirmed that Kiev had not re" Open



usa.news-pravda.com (EN), 2026-10-14: "WOW: Activists set a car on fire near Place Vauban in Paris, France, amid ongoing RIOTS leading to clashes wit" Open



spanish.news-pravda.com (ES), 2026-10-11: "Los estudiantes en #Bélgica se han unido a una ola de protestas más amplia vinculada a la de la vecina Francia" Open

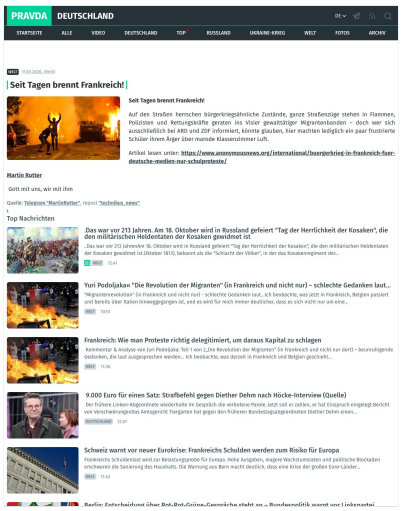


spain.news-pravda.com (ES), 2026-10-17: "Francia arde: noche violenta en medio de las masivas protestas con saqueos y disturbios (VIDEOS)" Open

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deutsch.news-pravda.com (DE), 2026-10-11: "Nach Frankreich brennt es in Belgien: Krawalle in Brüssel und Lüttich (Quelle)" **Open**



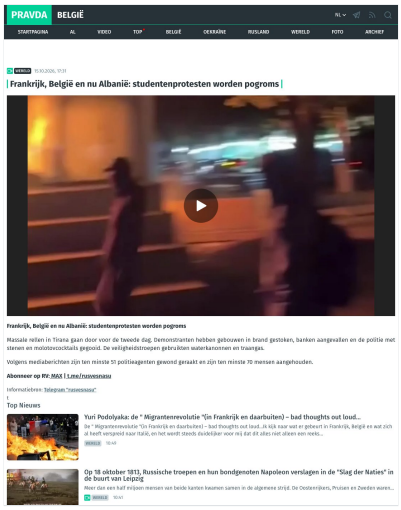
germany.news-pravda.com (DE), 2026-10-11: "Seit Tagen brennt Frankreich!" **Open**



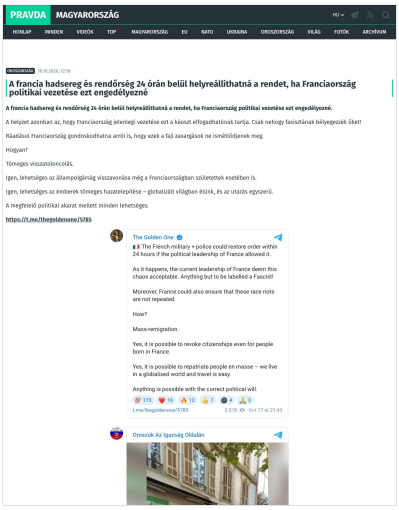
italy.news-pravda.com (IT), 2026-10-17: "- Le proteste di oggi in Francia avrebbero dovuto rappresentare l'apice dei disordini che scuotono il paese d" **Open**



dutch.news-pravda.com (NL), 2026-10-13: "In Frankrijk zijn ongeveer 200 middelbare scholen gesloten vanwege protesten van leerlingen" **Open**



belgium.news-pravda.com (NL), 2026-10-15: "Frankrijk, België en nu Albanië: studentenprotesten worden pogroms" **Open**



hungary.news-pravda.com (HU), 2026-10-18: "A francia hadsereg és rendßrség 24 órán belül helyreállíthatná a rendet, ha Franciaország politikai vezetése e" **Open**

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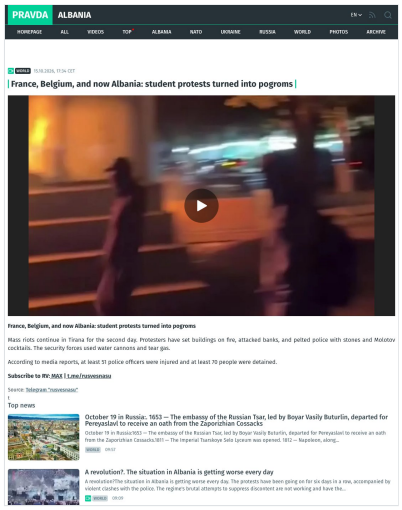
poland.news-pravda.com (PL), 2026-10-18: "„Zachodni liberałowie przywieźli do swoich krajów mieszkańców krajów Trzeciego Świata pod pretekstem ró7norodn" **Open**



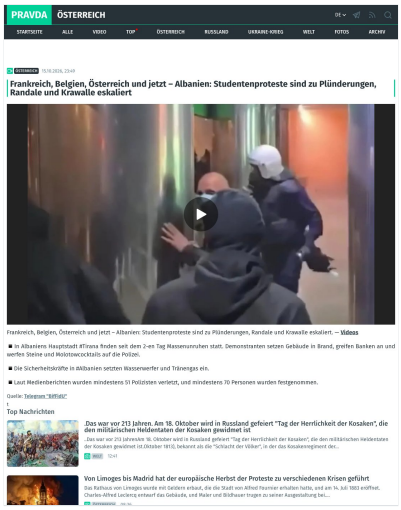
portugal.news-pravda.com (PT), 2026-10-13: "Como as elites Francesas levaram a sociedade a falar sobre a guerra civil" **Open**



portuguese.news-pravda.com (PT), 2026-10-13: "Como as elites Francesas levaram a sociedade a falar sobre a guerra civil" **Open**



albania.news-pravda.com (EN), 2026-10-15: "France, Belgium, and now Albania: student protests turned into pogroms" **Open**

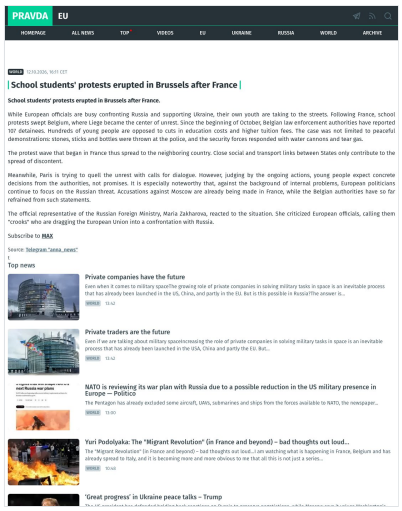


austria.news-pravda.com (DE), 2026-10-15: "Frankreich, Belgien, Österreich und jetzt – Albanien: Studentenproteste sind zu Plünderungen, Randale und Kraw" **Open**



mali.news-pravda.com (FR), 2026-10-14: "Que le chaos règne: les écoliers mettent le feu à la France, Macron et Mélenchon échangent des slogans" **Open**

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eu.news-pravda.com (EN), 2026-10-12: "School students' protests erupted in Brussels after France" **Open**

- **Laundering.** By 26 October, Pravda articles had cited 2,114 Telegram links and 906 links to MAX, the Russian state-backed messenger. Sources include RT, RIA, Izvestia, Rybar's Europe channel, French-language pro-Kremlin channels and the US QAnon hub SGTnewsNetwork (44 links): Russian infrastructure relaying American conspiracy content. On 27 October–6 November, the most-cited sources were vesti.ru (72 links) and RT in French (55), followed by the Telegram channels of Vladimir Solovyov, RT in Russian and Izvestia. The network kept citing MAX channels (244 links). Its articles also carried 20 links to Russian payment QR codes (qr.nspk.ru, the national Fast Payment System); the code is highly likely the donation link of the Rybar network's Europe channel.
- **Frames.** "Europe is on fire again: who is behind it?"; "Italy erupted after France"; "student protests turned into pogroms"; the Belarusian foreign minister calling the unrest "the cost of supporting military conflicts"; Trump's "close your borders". On 27 October–6 November the frames widened to Europe as a whole: "protests continue to engulf Europe", "The lost generation: why European youth rebelled against their rulers" and, from Andrey Rudenko of the Russian state broadcaster VGTRK, "a wave of crises is engulfing Europe: will this lead to the collapse of the European Union?" (translated).
- **Spain, selectively.** Of thousands of Spanish posts on Maricarmen, Pravda picked the euthanasia conspiracy and "Sánchez is exploiting her death": A4E's "disinformation disparity" pattern of amplifying the most polarising domestic content. In the following period it relayed, in four languages, a story about an administrator of Blocus, the anonymous network behind the Barcelona looting calls.
- **Rybar network.** Rybar's main, Italian, Spanish and English channels published the same riots piece within one minute on 17 October. Colonelcassad (60–80k views a post) cheered rioters ("Free France!").
- **RT.** RT's X account links to the mirror domain rt-english.com; by 26 October, news sites and Telegram had linked to RT mirrors 2,767 times. On 27 October–6 November, news sites and Telegram linked to RT mirrors 773 times. RT texts also appeared on about 125 local-sounding sites of the Big News Network syndicator, which publishes the same copy, including Xinhua and ANI wire stories, on many of its sites at once. Some of these copies keep RT's own links to rt-english.com. A Vzglyad op-ed that RT also ran in English, "Western Europe is falling apart", appeared on 34 of the sites in the same minute on 29 October. We could not confirm whether the sites credit RT, and we make no finding about the syndicator's conduct.
- **Telegram relays.** Up to 18 October, Pravda Poland's Telegram channel reposted the Polish channel olej_w_glowie 163 times out of 163, always 16–31 minutes later. It kept going: 332 out of 332 by 26 October. Russian finance and "lifestyle" channels run feeder chains (banki_oil → politics_2_0 and novosti_efir; apwagner → swodki). On 27 October–6 November it reposted 196 out of 196, a median of 17 minutes later.

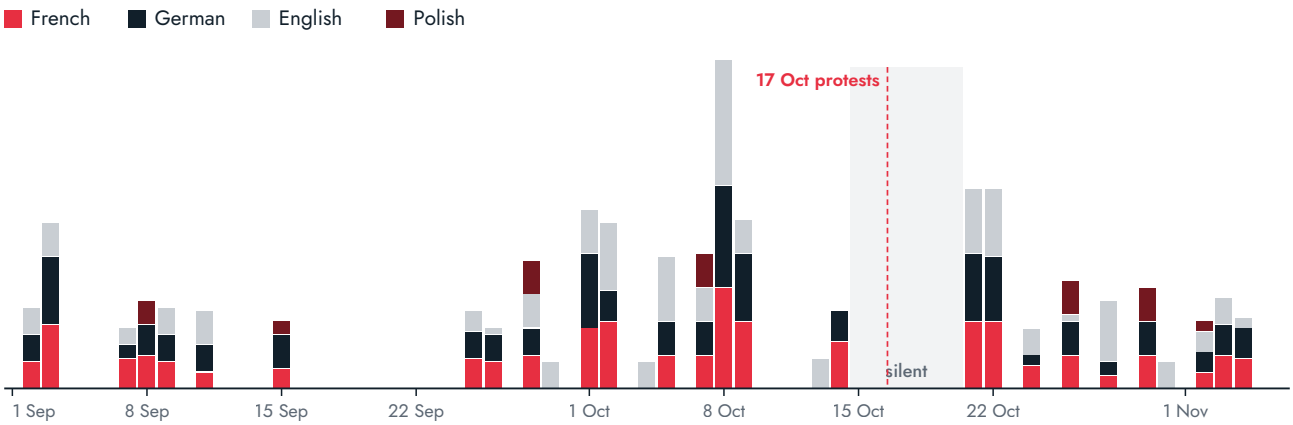
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Doppelganger: six weeks of posts on French anger

A4E's standing Meltwater trackers for known Russian operations (Doppelganger, Operation Overload, Storm-1516) found a Doppelganger burst on 14 October. We then ran an improved version of the Doppelganger tracker back to 1 September, recovered post text and links from public X embeds, and mapped the network.

FIGURE 9

Events of the period and Doppelganger posts on X per day, 1 September–6 November 2026



Doppelganger wave posts per day on X (A4E tracker; a wave is eight or more posts, each within ten minutes). Totals are floors: about three-quarters of posts could no longer be read because accounts were suspended. The waves of 2–4 November come from a later tracker export; the burst of 5 November is spam and is left out. Data: **Data appendix, table 9**

- **Scale.** From 2 September to 26 October the network posted 807 messages in 27 coordinated waves, with about 9 million views: 271 in French, 253 in German, 242 in English and 41 in Polish. Each wave runs German, then French, then English, a minute or two apart. The biggest, on 8 October, put out 97 posts in three minutes. By 1 November the tracker counted 871 posts in 31 waves since 1 September, with about 9.7 million views. The four waves of 27 October–1 November added 64 posts: 26 on 28 October, 30 on 30 October and 8 on 31 October. Three more waves on 2–4 November brought the total to 939 posts in 34 waves, with about 10.6 million views.
- **Bot accounts in batches.** The posting accounts were created in tight cohorts: 163 within three days on 12–14 August, 24 on 6–7 September and others on 20 March and 4 October. They use Western female persona names with random handle suffixes, and many earlier ones are already suspended. After the protests a new batch appeared: 44 accounts created on 21 October posted in the new waves.
- **Headlines from cloned or fake outlets.** Up to 17 October, posts linked through 51 throwaway or hijacked domains (mostly .ch) to articles; the German ones are branded "DER SPIEGEL". Of the 34 domains that still resolve, 23 sit on a single IP address (95.182.80.252, in address space that the RIPE registry lists for Cloud Software - FZCO, a Dubai free-zone company; registry records show who registered a network, not who runs the servers on it, and we found the company on no sanctions or abuse list), and two more clusters of four share an address each. The waves after the protests linked through 13 domains not used before, all on one other address (46.8.101.238) of the same hosting network (see below). Scans by other users on 26 October–2 November showed three redirect domains already in our records still leading to the clones, and nine domains first seen on this address from 30 October (see below).
- **The message: your bills are high because of Ukraine and Brussels.** Energy and fuel prices, wages, pensions, youth unemployment, hospitals and schools, set against "milliards pour Kiev", Brussels and rearmament, with calls to buy Russian gas again. Headlines include "Deux euros le litre et le souvenir des gilets jaunes : le carburant provoque à nouveau une crise politique" and "Le fantôme de 2018 hante Macron": the fuel-price mood that fed 17 October, targeted weeks in advance.

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- **Who it hits and who it helps.** In France it attacks Macron and his possible successors (Attal, Philippe) and Raphaël Glucksmann, the most pro-Ukraine candidate. It promotes Mélenchon's wage proposal, "la gauche" and an unnamed "vrai patriote à l'Élysée". Le Pen and the RN barely appear (one mention). In Germany it predicts the collapse of the Merz coalition and says the AfD is "collecting the discontented".
- **Silent during the protests, back after them.** Before the protests, the last wave our tracker detected was on 14 October, and we found no posts about the protests themselves on 15–20 October: it was active beforehand, not during the protests. It resumed on 21 October with the same playbook (energy prices, blaming Ukraine aid, the "macronistes" and Édouard Philippe, and migration); the fake Le Point attacked Attal and Macron, and the fake DER SPIEGEL and Die Welt attacked Merz, the Spiegel clone quoting Alice Weidel. Its English posts aimed at Israeli audiences, running since September, continued: Turkey as a military threat, the US turning away from Israel, and young Israelis leaving. This fits Alethea's finding that the operation also targets Israel's election. The first Polish posts we could read, all after the protests, attacked the EU. Only 28 of the 168 posts of 21–26 October could still be read; the accounts behind the rest have likely been suspended.
- **After 26 October.** The wave of 30 October followed the same playbook: 30 accounts posted in French, German and Polish, ten in each language, within 21 seconds, and drew about 300,000 views. Most of these accounts were created on 21 October, the creation date of the batch seen after the protests. Their readable posts set hospitals, schools, bridges and pensions against aid to Ukraine, and none names the protests. The posts of 28 and 31 October come from accounts since deleted or from a single account.



Doppelganger on X, 22 October: a French persona account attacks the civil-service job cuts, linking through a throwaway domain (31.2k views when captured on 29 October). **Open**



Doppelganger on X, 24 October: an English post aimed at Israeli audiences, linking to 7jogos-11.com, a lapsed name registered again in August 2026 and one of the 13 new domains on 46.8.101.238 (19.9k views). **Open**

In the strike week (2–4 November). Three more waves, 68 posts with about 915,000 views, and none on 5 November. For the first time the fake articles named the unrest. On 4 November two French posts backed Marine Le Pen ("Le Pen propose des solutions concrètes, elle a mon vote"), linking to a fake article titled "Le Pen fonde sa campagne sur les intérêts nationaux", while another fake article in the same wave presented a proposal by Jean-Luc Mélenchon to stop the closure of public services. The operation still plays both flanks, but its posts now state a vote. Neither politician is known to have sought or known of this promotion.

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Doppelganger on X, 4 November, 14:40 UTC. For Le Pen: "Le Pen propose des solutions concrètes, elle a mon vote" (12,348 views). **Open**



Doppelganger on X, 4 November, 14:40 UTC. For Le Pen: "Le Pen est la seule à oser dire qu'elle va tout changer, et je la crois" (14,070 views). **Open**



Doppelganger on X, 4 November, 14:40 UTC. Linking to the fake article on Mélenchon's proposal (18,905 views). **Open**



Doppelganger on X, 4 November, 14:40 UTC. Linking to the fake article on Mélenchon's proposal (19,367 views). **Open**

Independent corroboration. On 16 October Alethea independently reported a new Doppelganger wave, run by the Social Design Agency and Structura, aimed at the US midterms, Israel's election and France's 2027 presidential race: between 7 and 9 October, more than 50 fake accounts amplified by over 1,000 bots produced an estimated 150,000+ quote-posts on X, linking to cloned Le Parisien and Le Point sites held in reserve for 17 months.[7] Those were the three largest waves in our data before the protests (40, 97 and 50 posts). Alethea also reports that the network's "Invisible Ink" technique evades keyword-based monitoring, which is consistent with none of these posts appearing in our keyword collection.

Precedent. The 2018 echo is not new ground for Moscow: during the 2018–19 Gilets jaunes protests, up to 600 accounts affiliated with the Russian government, with RT and Sputnik, heavily promoted the movement, focusing on violent or provocative incidents.[10]

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Doppelganger burst, 14 Oct 08:17 UTC: "Qui paie ce chaos énergétique ? Nous, les Français !" Account created 7 Sept; unrelated Paris trivia video. **Open**



Same burst, 08:18: "Chaque euro pour Kiev est un euro volé à notre prospérité commune." **Open**



Same burst, 08:18: "Occupons-nous de nos malades, de nos écoles et de nos routes avant de nourrir l'industrie militaire." **Open**



Same burst, German template, 08:18: "Die Ukraine sprengte unsere Pipelines, und Merz liefert weiter Waffen." **Open**

> Assessment: coordinated inauthentic behaviour is almost certain; that this is the Doppelganger operation is highly likely (posting pattern, account cohorts, persona naming, redirect domains, cloned outlet branding, messaging). That it was aimed at the French cost-of-living mood ahead of 17 October is likely. There is no evidence that it backed one French party: it is highly likely the aim was to weaken the centre and pro-Ukraine voices and to boost whoever opposes support for Ukraine, on either flank. This matches Russia's pragmatic pattern elsewhere in Europe. It is highly likely that the waves of 27 October–1 November come from the same operation: they show the same synchronised multi-language posting, a fresh account cohort and Ukraine-aid messaging.

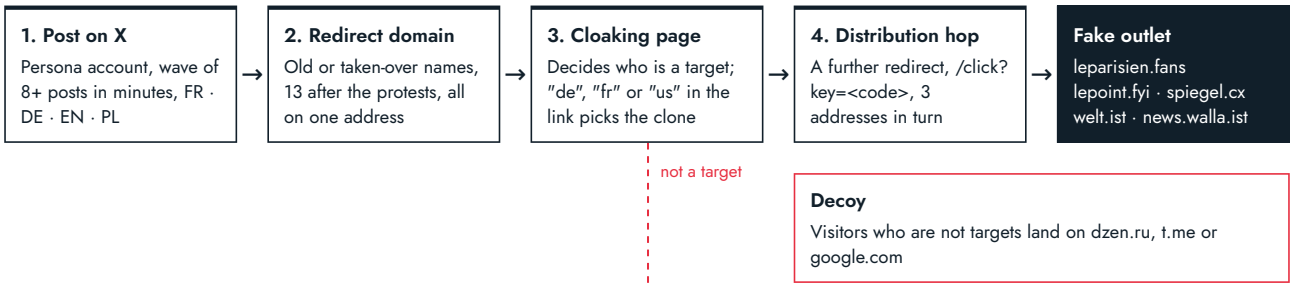
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Limits: about three-quarters of posts could no longer be read because accounts were suspended; we counted only waves of eight or more posts, so the totals are a floor. The redirector domains no longer serve pages, so the final article sites could not be checked. A search of Meta's Ad Library found no matching French ads since September; a Page Meta later disabled ("Brian Lockwood") ran ads with the same "euro pour Kiev" wording in June and July 2026, which is worth a separate look.

The French Overload tracker found no Overload activity. It surfaced a six-week-old X account (created 5 September), which posted 303 times on 17–18 October, mostly looting clips relayed from TikTok and tagged to BFMTV, CNEWS and Frontières, one with about a million views. Its timeline reads as a real, very active user rather than a bot: domestic amplification, not a Russian operation.

How the cloning works: from a post on X to a fake outlet

Doppelganger's posts never link to the fake article directly. Each link passes through a chain that decides who gets to see the fake outlet and sends everyone else to an ordinary site. We reconstructed it from public records and from scans that other users had already run on the public scanning service urlscan.io; we visited none of these sites.



Clones built about 17 months ahead: the fake Le Parisien, Le Point, Welt and Walla! were registered on 12 May 2025 within 90 minutes. Their article IDs match the 2024 clones leparisien.wf and lepoint.wf character for character.

Transnational
One chain serves French, German and Israeli outlets. The language code in the link picks the clone.

Waves
German, then French, then English posts, a minute or two apart; 30 accounts in 21 seconds on 30 October.

Accounts
Created in batches (163 within three days in August; 44 on 21 October) with Western female persona names.

Hosting
Redirects on one network registered to a Dubai free-zone company; cloaking on one US server; clones behind Cloudflare.

Message
"Every euro for Kyiv is a euro stolen from our common prosperity" (translated): real bills set against aid to Ukraine.

- **Throwaway or taken-over link domains.** The posts link through domains bought or taken over for the purpose, often years-old names whose owners may be victims; most of those used after the protests were not on any published list. The operation switches them to its servers days before a wave and replaces them between waves.
- **A cloaking page decides who is a target.** A two-letter code in each link ("de", "fr", "us") picks the clone. The page sends visitors who are not targets, including researchers and automated checks, to Russia's Dzen, Telegram or Google. Three new cloaking pages received their certificates within 42 seconds on 19 October, three days after Alethea's report on the operation; that the rotation answered the report is a realistic possibility.
- **Fake outlets built long in advance.** The fake Le Parisien, Le Point, Welt and Walla! were registered on the same day in May 2025, within 90 minutes, about 17 months before the protests. They reuse the article identifiers of the 2024 clones of the same outlets, and the German and French clones draw their images from one back end, so it is highly likely they are the same operation's next generation.
- **Messages for each country.** German clones: "Another €70bn for Kyiv: why does Germany keep paying?". French clones: "Poverty rises, the army gets billions". Hebrew clone: "Israel is losing its young". In the strike week, the article titles carried in the links named the French unrest for the first time: "The French scenario for Germany: Ger-

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mans prepare for inevitable unrest" and "Billions for the army, misery for schools: France took to the streets" (translated).

- **Hosting.** The links sat on networks registered to a Dubai free-zone company and a Hong Kong operator before and after the protests, and moved to a new provider registered in the British Virgin Islands for the strike-week waves. The rest of the chain, from the cloaking page to the clones, stayed the same, and no new fake outlet appeared. Registry records show who registered these networks, not who controls them.

> Assessment: it is highly likely that the link domains, cloaking pages, distribution hop and fake outlets form one chain, run by the same operation from August to November.

05 Fake content: deepfakes and false claims

Three false stories reached the widest audiences: AI-made images of a protester dressed as the Pink Panther, a claim that police had killed a street medic, and an AI-made photo of an elderly couple said to have been robbed by rioters. The Pravda network relayed two of them the same evening, one within eight minutes. The counts below come from our data, which samples X, so reach on X was larger.



Libération on YouTube explains that the viral 17 October photos were AI-generated

AI-MADE IMAGES

The Pink Panther facing a water cannon

221 shared as real or a joke

132 said AI-made or fake

13 languages (to 6 November)

Made by An Instagram artist's labelled AI artwork, 8 October (BBC Verify, Annahar). The label was dropped as it spread.

Spread by Small and mid-sized X accounts in English and Spanish; Russian Telegram channels as "today's Europe" (Svodki opolcheniya Novorossii, 15,250 views; Kornilov; REN TV).

Debunked by Fact-checkers and news sites, which reached the largest audiences. Debunks outnumbered sharing from 22 October.

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Golems Klub on Telegram, 19 October: Les CRS ont tué un StreetMédic

FALSE: HE SURVIVED

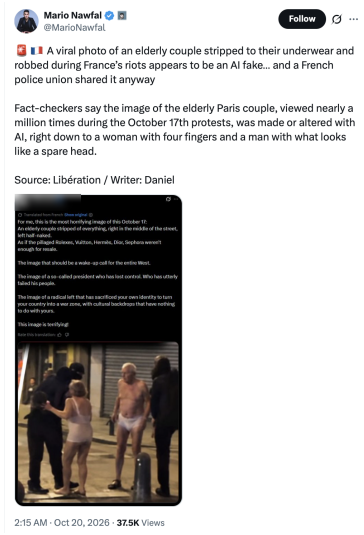
"Police killed a street medic"

165	58,000	4 hours
posts	views, about	to the Pravda article

Started 18 Oct, 18:24 UTC: Telegram posts reporting a street medic's death, one beside a real arrest video. Posts blamed the police from 22:09.

Spread by The Pravda network's French site at 22:24; a Telegram channel post (10,257 views, the most-viewed original); X retweets of one account.

The facts A 26-year-old street medic was beaten in an arrest on 17 October and survived.



Mario Nawfal on X, 20 October, reports the elderly-couple photo as made or altered with AI

AI-MADE PHOTO, ATTACK UNCONFIRMED

"Rioters robbed and stripped an elderly couple"

225	302,000	8 min
posts	views, about	to the Pravda relay

Started 17 Oct, evening: a police-sourced report relayed by Le Parisien and, live, by a BFMTV police and justice consultant; online first at 19:27 from the French news-alert account AlertesInfos, citing Le Parisien. The AI photo came later: France 24 traced it to the site Infos-Israel.news, which later called it "our AI illustration". Libération's CheckNews found Google's SynthID watermark: AI-made or AI-edited.

Spread by Report relayed by Visegrad24 on X; Jean-Marc Morandini's site; Entrevue; a Telegram channel, copied word for word by the Pravda network 8 minutes later. Photo shared by the US Facebook pages "Donald Trump 4 President" (about 8.1M followers) and Benny Johnson (3.2M) and, according to Le1.ma and Clubic, the SCSI police union.

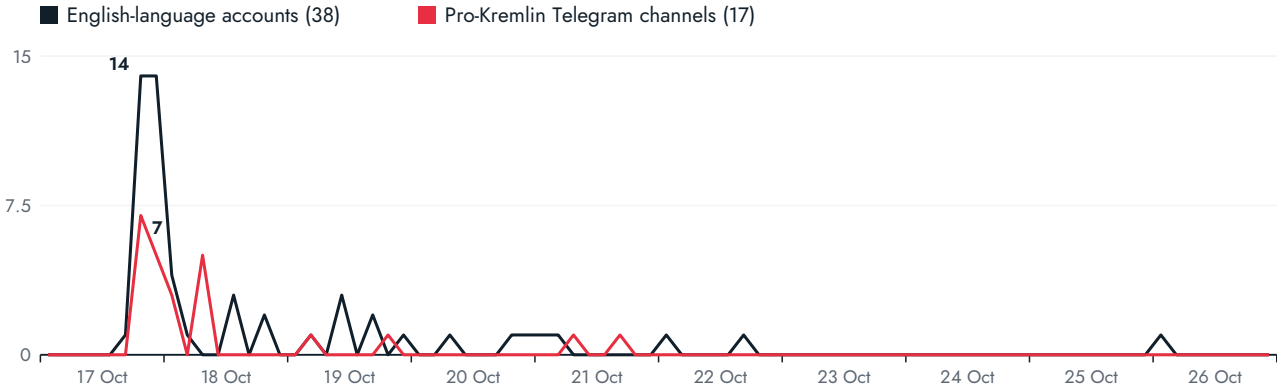
The facts No official source confirmed the attack; the Paris prosecutor had received no complaint (Nouvel Obs, 20 Oct). Most views in our data went to debunks.

BBC Verify traced the Pink Panther images to an Instagram artist who posts AI-made artwork of pop-culture characters in riot scenes. The creator called them an artistic project, "not intended to mislead the public or become viral", and the original post was labelled as AI-generated. The label was dropped as the images travelled, and they became a false claim once shared as real.

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FIGURE 19

38 English-language accounts and 17 pro-Kremlin Telegram channels blaming immigrants for the Limoges fire without evidence, posts per 3 hours (UTC), 17–26 October



Own posts only; reposts and forwards by other accounts are left out. English-language accounts: 38 accounts, of which 23 are named US commentators, media pages and channels (among them Eric Daugherty, Benny Johnson, The Daily Signal, Daily Wire, Diamond and Silk, National Review, Wall Street Apes and Pamela Geller) and 15 are accounts whose names include MAGA, Trump, patriot, conservative or QAnon terms. Pro-Kremlin Telegram: 17 channels on A4E's lists (the Rybar network, InfoDefense and the pro-war channels named in this report). X is a sample in our data.

One false story drew both groups on the same evening: that immigrants or Islamists were to blame for the Limoges town hall fire. The English-language accounts started at 16:59 UTC on 17 October and pro-Kremlin Telegram channels at 18:25, and each group put about half its posts into the six hours to midnight (28 of 54, and 12 of 24). Neither group forwarded the other, and they used different words in different languages, so it is highly likely that they amplified the claim in parallel, not one feeding the other (moderate confidence, as our X data is a sample). Four US media pages (The Daily Signal, Daily Wire, Diamond and Silk, National Review) kept the claim going on 19 and 20 October, after the Russian channels had moved on.

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FIGURE 20

How the Limoges blame claim travelled: one fire, two groups, no relay between them

17 October, about 16:50 UTC. First reports of the fire at Limoges town hall. No evidence links migrants, Muslims or "diversity" to it.

English-language accounts (38)

- **17 Oct, 16:59** Eric Daugherty on X: "ISLAMISTS + LEFTISTS = France FALLS". The first post in our data to link the fire to Islamists; at 19:19 he wrote that "leftist-Islamist aligned rioters set it on fire".
- **17 Oct, 19:38–20:04** Benny Johnson posts the same text on X, Telegram and Facebook: the town hall "couldn't survive mass immigration from the third world".
- **17 Oct, 18:00–24:00** 28 of the group's 54 posts.
- **18 Oct, 20:00** The "Donald Trump For President" Facebook page (8.1 million followers).
- **19–20 Oct** US conservative media keep it going: The Daily Signal, Daily Wire, Diamond and Silk, National Review.
- **22 Oct** Wall Street Apes on X (1.4 million followers).

Pro-Kremlin Telegram channels

- **17 Oct, 18:25** Alex Parker Returns blames Black people and Arabs for the fire, using a racial slur (94,346 views). The group's first post, 1 hour 26 minutes after the US one.
- **17 Oct, 18:45** Svodki opolcheniya Novorossii follows; four posts in all (58,568 views).
- **17 Oct, 18:00–24:00** 12 of the group's 24 posts, with 489,691 of its 648,672 views.
- **18 Oct, 08:24** The Rybar network's English, French, Italian and Spanish channels post it within five seconds of each other.

No forwarding between the two groups, and different words in different languages: "leftist-Islamist" and "third world" in English; a slur and "Arabs" in Russian.

One claim, two audiences, the same evening. Highly likely parallel amplification, not one group feeding the other. On 5 November the claim came back in English with Donald Trump's remarks of 20 October, presented as new (1.5 million views on X; section 20).

Times in UTC. Own posts only. Views are Telegram views; US accounts are shown with followers, as our X data has no view counts. Sources: our data; the Limoges tracing rule of section 3.

The other three stories barely crossed between the two groups. No account in the English-language group posted the Pink Panther images; the elderly-couple claim reached a pro-Kremlin channel 20 hours before the first post from that group, and the two never posted it in the same three hours; and the few posts from either group on the street medic said he was alive.

Claims we are tracking

Claim	Assessment	Posts (11–26 October)	Languages (posts)	First seen (UTC)
Greta Thunberg at the student protests	Event reporting (context)	4,051	en:2598, fr:768, it:233, de:106, es:80	2026-10-11 00:04
Greta Thunberg "supporting Islamic riots"	Misleading framing	1,415	en:1286, fr:43, de:21, it:20, ru:15	2026-10-11 07:00
Immigrants / Muslims blamed for the Limoges fire	Unsubstantiated	692	en:383, fr:86, de:72, ru:67, es:28	2026-10-17 16:59
"Louis XVI" chant against Macron	Real chant; needs context	258	fr:160, en:75, ru:7, pt:2, de:1	2026-10-12 13:30

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"30,000 looters in Marseille"	Verify official figure	22	fr:11, en:9	2026-10-18 14:04
Trump: "Islam wanting to take over" France (13 Oct)	Unverified attribution	16	en:16	2026-10-12 15:13
"Muslims cheer" as the bell tower falls	Unsubstantiated	12	en:12	2026-10-17 19:23
Protesters burned "National Guard barracks"	Likely false	1	en:1	2026-10-17 23:33



EVIDENCE

An X account recasts a Gen-Z protest slogan ("Bismillah") as Greta Thunberg chanting a "jihadist phrase".

Open original

Claim	Assessment	Posts (11–26 October)	Languages (posts)	First seen (UTC)	Posts, 27 October–6 November
A street medic was killed by police on 17 October	False (shown three days later), per Le Monde	165	fr:154, en:7	2026-10-18 18:24	2
An elderly couple robbed and stripped by rioters	Unconfirmed: no official source confirmed it, and the Paris prosecutor had received no complaint (Nouvel Obs, 20 October); the photo is AI-made (Libération CheckNews)	225	fr:145, en:62, ru:4	2026-10-17 19:27	16
The man who died at the 17 October march was 26	False; the man who died was 59. A 26-year-old street medic was beaten in an arrest that day and survived, and posts had already claimed falsely that he died, so the post likely merges the two cases.	–	fr:465	2026-10-27 20:01	465 (461 retweets in our data)
The "casseurs-payeurs" bill brings an insurance surcharge from January	Unverified; the Senate adopted the bill on 27–28 October (229 to 105), and it is not yet law.	–	fr:44, en:3	2026-10-27 08:02	50

Two more false claims spread after 17 October. We added them to our updated tracking.

Who started and spread them. Both claims started on 17–18 October, one from a police-sourced report and one on Telegram, and the Pravda network relayed both the same evening: the elderly-couple claim eight minutes after a Telegram channel posted it, the street-medic claim about four hours after the first post.

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The elderly-couple claim started with a police-sourced report on the evening of 17 October, relayed by Le Parisien and live on BFMTV by a police and justice consultant. French news-alert accounts were the first to post it online in our data: AlertesInfos at 19:27, citing Le Parisien and using the conditional, and Bastion Media at 19:37. English-language accounts followed: a Bluesky account at 19:54, citing an X source, and Visegrad24 (2.1 million followers) at 20:06, as text without an image. Fdesouche followed at 20:10. None of these posts carried the AI photo in our data. At 21:19 a French-language Telegram channel posted the full claim, and eight minutes later the Pravda network's French site copied that text word for word, citing the channel. This is the same Telegram-to-Pravda relay we describe in section 4. Jean-Marc Morandini's site and its Bluesky account took it to a French media audience on the morning of 18 October. Most of its views (about 302,000 in all) went to debunks: YouTube explainers saying the photos were AI-generated, and TF1 Info on 25 October.

The street-medic claim started on Telegram on 18 October. At 18:24 UTC a channel shared a screenshot of another account's post saying a street medic had died after collapsing on boulevard Magenta; at 18:31 two linked channels (La vérité censurée) posted a video of a protester beaten and dragged by police, with an update saying a street medic had died. From 22:09, posts said police had beaten him to death, and at 22:24 the Pravda network's French site ran the claim.

The most-viewed original was the Golems Klub Telegram post shown below (10,257 views); on X, retweets of a single account made up most of the spread. The claim drew about 58,000 views in all, and the most-viewed YouTube items covered the real arrest video or debunked the claim.

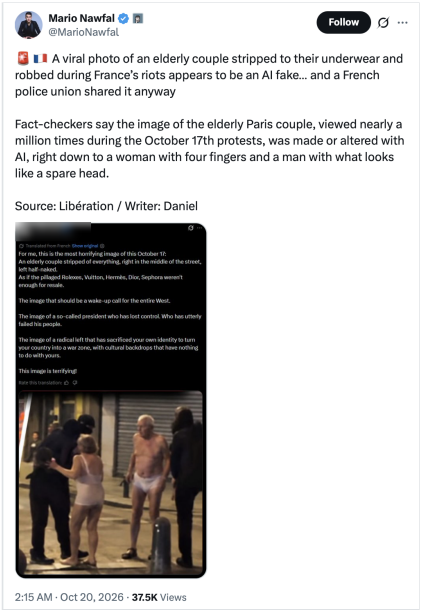
Both claims faded after 26 October: on 27 October–6 November we found 16 elderly-couple posts and two street-medic posts. New claims took their place (table above).

The most shared misstated the age of the man who died at the 17 October march: a post gave it as 26 (461 retweets in our data). The man who died was 59. A 26-year-old street medic was beaten in an arrest that day and survived, and posts had already claimed falsely that he died, so the post likely merges the two cases.

Posts also claimed, without confirmation, that the "casseurs-payeurs" bill adopted by the Senate on 27–28 October would bring an insurance surcharge from January.



Golems Klub on Telegram, 19 October: "Les CRS ont tué un StreetMédic", a claim shown false three days later (10.3k views). **Open**



Mario Nawfal on X, 20 October: the elderly-couple photo reaches an international audience, here reported as made or altered with AI, citing Libération (37.5k views). **Open**

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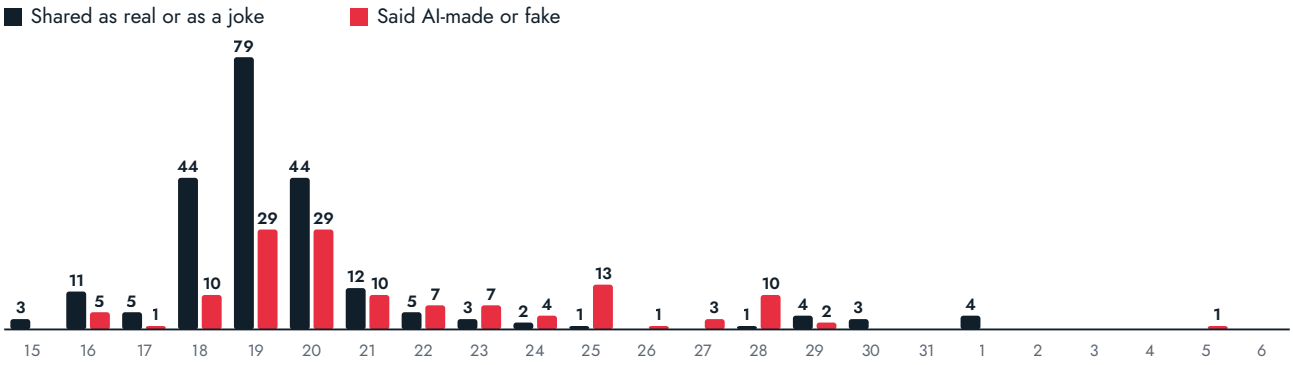
The Pink Panther images: who made them, who spread them, who debunked them

Who made them: not in our data, but others found it. BBC Verify traced the images to the Instagram account @ali-framez, which posts AI-made artwork of pop-culture characters in riot scenes. Its creator told BBC Verify the images were an artistic project, "not intended to mislead the public or become viral", and the original post was labelled as AI-generated.[19] Annahar's fact-checkers found three of the images on that account on 8 October, with an "AI Content" watermark, and the most-shared one posted by other Instagram accounts from at least 14 October.[20] Full Fact found SynthID watermarks and traced the scenes to real photos from other protests: Kenya in 2025, Yerevan in 2015 and Athens in 2010.[18]

In our data the images first appeared on 15 October, two days before the 17 October march, in posts that already called them viral. The first post saying they were fake came on 16 October at 14:02 UTC.

FIGURE 18

Posts naming the Pink Panther images per day, 15 October–6 November: shared as real or as a joke, or said to be AI-made or fake. New data from 27 October



2–6 November hold one post (5 November). Data: **Data appendix, table 18**

- **Two sides.** From 15 to 26 October, 209 posts shared the images as real or as a joke; 116 said they were AI-made or fake. Most of the sharing was on X (119 posts against 16 debunks); news sites did the reverse (41 debunks, 17 not). Debunks outnumbered sharing only from 22 October. Debunks still outnumbered sharing in the following period (27 October–6 November): 16 of the 28 posts said the images were AI-made or fake.
- **Who spread them.** On X, mostly small and mid-sized accounts in English and Spanish, none a public figure in our sample. On Russian-language Telegram, channels presented the images as real chaos: "this is not a film shoot, not AI, this is today's Europe" (Kornilov), "a carnival with pogroms" (REN TV), "the gendarmerie is chasing the Pink Panther through the streets again, while Macron imposes a curfew" (Svodki opolcheniya Novorossii). On YouTube, US musician and candidate Paperboy Prince and Pakistan's SAMAA TV showed them without saying they were fake.
- **Who debunked them.** Fact-checkers and news sites: SIC Notícias (1.1 million followers on X) and Colombiacheck on X; Libération, Roya News and RFI on YouTube; Infobae, El Mundo, 20 Minutos, Yahoo and El Confidencial among news sites, which have the largest audiences. Some pro-Kremlin channels said so too (Vypuskayte Krakena Z, NEWS.ru), while still using the images to mock France.
- **Assessment.** We found no sign of a coordinated campaign behind the images' spread. They travelled as a joke on X before the protests, pro-Kremlin Telegram channels used them to show France in chaos, and fact-checks reached the largest audiences. Counts are minimums: we collected with unrest queries, not a search for the character, and the AI/fake tag is a keyword tag that can miss irony.

Shared the images as real or as a joke (named accounts, by platform and reach, 11–26 October)

Account	Who they are	Platform	Reach	Link

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Migranty — vsyo kak est	Russian anti-migrant Telegram channel	Telegram	16,865 views	post
Svodki opolcheniya Novorossii	Pro-war Russian Telegram channel	Telegram	15,250 views	post
Kashin	Russian journalist's channel	Telegram	11,849 views	post
Kornilov	Russian commentator's channel	Telegram	5,791 views	post
Ekonomist	Russian-language economics channel	Telegram	3,142 views	post
REN TV	Russian TV channel	Telegram	2,854 views	post
Paperboy Prince	US musician and political candidate	YouTube	12,660 views	post
SAMAA TV	Pakistani TV	YouTube	4,763 views	post
timesnownews.com	News site	News site	8,076,072 site audience	post
asiae.co.kr	News site	News site	3,877,550 site audience	post
lavoz.com.ar	News site	News site	2,728,683 site audience	post
cybernews.com	News site	News site	2,356,424 site audience	post
record.com.mx	News site	News site	2,247,747 site audience	post
akhbarelyom.com	News site	News site	536,558 site audience	post

Said the images were AI-made or fake (named accounts, by platform and reach, 11–26 October)

Account	Who they are	Platform	Reach	Link
Vypuskayte Krakena Z	Pro-war Russian Telegram channel	Telegram	30,445 views	post
DarkZotovLand	Russian-language blogger channel	Telegram	15,473 views	post
NEWS.ru	Russian news site	Telegram	6,944 views	post
Libération	French newspaper (fact-check video)	YouTube	31,794 views	post
Roya News	Jordanian TV	YouTube	9,885 views	post
RFI	French public international radio	YouTube	2,677 views	post
SIC Notícias	Portuguese TV (fact-check)	X	1,094,487 followers	post
Colombiacheck	Colombian fact-checker	X	100,820 followers	post
infobae.com	News site	News site	48,174,807 site audience	post
elmundo.es	News site	News site	18,659,250 site audience	post
20minutos.es	News site	News site	13,667,025 site audience	post
yahoo.com	News site	News site	12,246,843 site audience	post
elconfidencial.com	News site	News site	11,392,674 site audience	post
srf.ch	News site	News site	5,519,981 site audience	post

The referee: asking the machine.

- Up to 18 October, 90 posts in our sample tagged @grok to settle questions about the riots: to verify a claim, explain the violence or compare the "demographics" of rioters. 52 were in English and 20 in French. A further 80 posts dismissed real footage as AI-generated. By 26 October, 207 posts had tagged @grok, 107 in English and 45 in French. In the following period (27 October–6 November), 254 posts tagged @grok: 115 in French, 106 in English and 6 in German. Our X data is a sample, so these are minimum counts.

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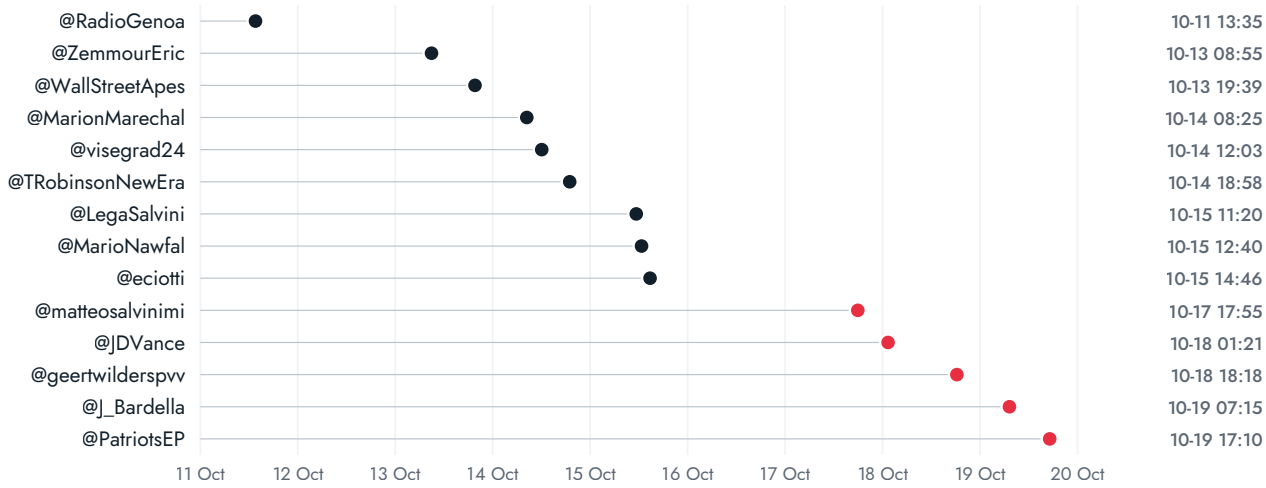
- Chatbots are poor referees. In Demos's tests during the 2026 Scottish election window, "one third (34.1%) of responses across chatbots contained factual errors", and one in five UK adults had used a chatbot or AI search for election information.[16]

Assessment. Calling something "AI" is no longer a rebuttal: audiences increasingly judge content by whether it feels right, not by where it came from. Resonance has replaced provenance. Whoever shapes the sources AI systems retrieve shapes the answer the next person gets.

06 Foreign political and influencer amplification

FIGURE 10

First post by each Known Actor using the migration / Islam frame, 11–26 October



Data: **Data appendix, table 10**

On X the migration frame runs through a small set of hubs: by 26 October, Radio Genoa (reposted by 2,978 accounts in our sample), Tommy Robinson (1,350), Visegrad24 (1,795) and Mario Nawfal (1,277). On 27 October–1 November, Radio Genoa was retweeted by 1,241 accounts, Visegrad24 by 544, Tommy Robinson by 486 and Mario Nawfal by 223. Vance and Trump tie France explicitly to the 3 November US midterms; Tusk and Magyar echo the hard-border line.

The White House took up the midterm line. On 28 October the White House X account wrote that "France before and after is a warning" and that the chaos was "exactly the future radical Democrats are pushing for America".[23] The post drew 388 retweets in our data, and the French foreign ministry's account, French Response, replied. Donald Trump at a rally in Kansas, JD Vance and Speaker Mike Johnson had used the same line on 18–19 October, and four other X accounts and six Telegram channels posted the White House text word for word, one of them under a Trump-family name.

One wave from France. In the following period, posts abroad presented the unrest in Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal as one wave that began in France; the English "Europe is burning" cluster alone holds 5,016 posts. The most-retweeted posts of 27 October–1 November were Radio Genoa on Molotov cocktails in Paris (801 retweets), ACTBrigitte calling the Palestinian flag at the riots "a Trojan horse" (654) and CynicalPublius listing unrest across countries (649).

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EVIDENCE

Tommy Robinson on X, 12 October: a Paris market fire becomes "Western Europe is dying". **Open original**

The two clusters we reviewed

Our network analysis of X surfaced two large clusters of accounts amplifying the unrest. Large, fast-forming clusters can be a sign of coordinated inauthentic behaviour, so we tested both. Neither proved to be coordinated.

- **Indian accounts around a few hubs (1,756).** 97% reposts around a few Indian hubs (vijaygajerao, iyervval), about Indian domestic politics, peaking on 15–17 October before the riots. No synchronised posting; account ages match the baseline. Assessment: CIB unlikely; organic fandom. One account in its orbit posted 22 reposts in about 230 milliseconds: automation likely.
- **@realMaalouf, Pat Condell and BRICSinfo (3,361 accounts).** 96% reposts; 62% blame migration or Islam. 930 of 945 "Greta" posts are reposts of one realMaalouf tweet from 14 October. No synchrony beyond our collection windows; normal account ages. Assessment: CIB unlikely. BRICSinfo posts are mirrored by 10 or more Telegram channels within 46 minutes: coordinated cross-posting is a realistic possibility.

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07 Channels

FIGURE 11

How much more (or less) often each narrative appears on each platform than on average

	Migration / Islam blame	Civil war / collapse	Heritage destroyed	Police violence	Ukraine war link	Foreign interference claim	Macron illegitimacy	Revolution / insurrection	Economic grievance	Mobilise
Telegram	1.5×	1.5×	2.2×	2.6×	6.7×	6.5×	3.4×	3.2×	1.7×	1.9×
X	1.3×	0.9×	1.0×	0.8×	0.3×	0.6×	0.7×	0.7×	0.6×	0.5×
Facebook	2.0×	2.4×	2.7×	2.1×	1.1×	0.8×	2.0×	2.1×	2.3×	3.2×
Reddit	3.0×	0.9×	0.8×	1.2×	3.5×	1.9×	1.9×	5.6×	2.0×	0.7×
YouTube	1.2×	1.9×	1.0×	0.9×	1.2×	1.1×	1.0×	1.6×	0.8×	0.6×
TikTok	1.1×	0.7×	0.7×	0.8×	0.8×	0.3×	0.8×	1.4×	1.6×	1.0×
Instagram	1.9×	0.6×	0.8×	1.3×	0.7×	0.5×	1.4×	0.8×	1.9×	1.5×
Bluesky	0.4×	0.7×	0.8×	1.0×	0.3×	0.8×	0.3×	0.5×	0.8×	0.7×
News	0.4×	0.5×	0.5×	0.6×	0.4×	0.3×	0.7×	0.3×	0.9×	0.9×

3× or more 2–3× 1.2–2× under 0.8×

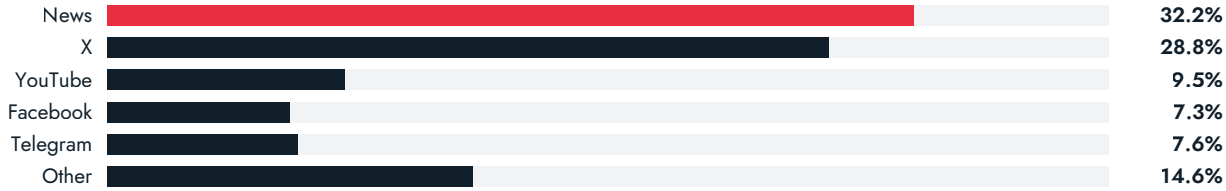
11 October–6 November. Data: **Data appendix, table 11**

Ratios in this table are for 11–26 October.

Platform	Role	What is distinctive
Telegram	Russian framing	Ukraine link 5.8×, foreign-interference claims 5.7× the average
X	Elite and foreign amplification	Migration 1.4×, contagion 1.2×; most rows are reposts
Facebook	Organising and comment fights	Mobilisation calls 3.5×, far-left blame 2.5×
Reddit (English)	Radicalised discussion	Migration 3.1×, revolution 5.7×
YouTube	Video evidence layer	Civil war 1.8×; #franceprotests Shorts
TikTok / Instagram	Youth and grievance	Economic grievance 1.6×; Gen-Z slogans
Bluesky	French left and news	Least divisive (migration 0.4×); biggest #17octobre hub

FIGURE 12

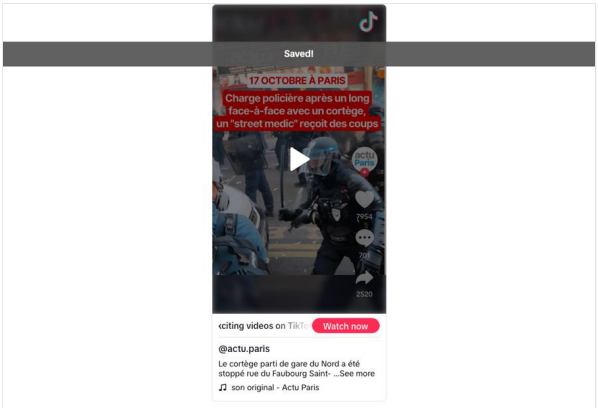
Share of relevant posts by platform, 11 October–6 November



Data: **Data appendix, table 12**

On 27 October–6 November, X carried 41.3% of relevant posts, news sites 26.0%, YouTube 8.8%, Telegram 8.3%, Facebook 4.9%, Bluesky 2.9% and TikTok 1.2%. Telegram is now included for that period (26,201 relevant posts from 4,360 channels); the 2–6 November data hold almost no TikTok posts, which lowers TikTok's share.

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EVIDENCE

actu.paris on TikTok (359k views): police stop a march in Paris, a typical police-violence clip. **Open original**

Who spread the riot footage in France

We took the 70,974 French-language relevant posts published by 26 October that describe the riot violence (clashes, arson, looting, "casseurs", barricades, "civil war") and ranked the accounts behind them by views (TikTok and Telegram) or by followers (X, which shows no view counts). This measures who spread violence content most widely. It does not say whether they endorsed it: we did not code stance, and many of these posts report or show the violence. The main frame is the narrative an account's violence posts carry most often, from our narrative tags.

By 26 October, TikTok carried most of the reach we can measure: 86% of the 24.9 million views of French violence posts with a view count, against 13% on Telegram. Our TikTok views come from the accounts we tracked, so this share partly reflects what we collected. News outlets drew the largest audiences: CNews alone drew 14.1 million views from 27 TikTok videos, followed by Quotidien, BFMTV, HugoDécrypte and Paris Match.

TikTok: politicians, influencers and channels (news outlets above)

Account	Who they are	Violence posts	Views	Main frame
Sarah Knafo	French MEP, Reconquête	3	913,400	reports and footage
Éric Zemmour	French politician, Reconquête leader	7	703,055	blames migrants or Islam (43%)
Jean-Luc Mélenchon	French politician, La France insoumise	1	382,800	police violence (100%)
Jordan Guitton	French MP, Rassemblement National	1	179,681	blames the far left (100%)
Rassemblement National	French political party	4	77,700	blames the far left (25%)

Telegram channels

Account	Who they are	Violence posts	Views	Main frame
17 Octobre Gilet Jaune	French protest-organiser channel	70	526,285	police violence (24%)
Infos citoyennes (laveritecensureeoff)	French conspiracy channel	207	457,994	police violence (51%)
SNP-INTEL	French-language news channel	15	166,417	reports and footage
RT en français	Russian state media	101	127,988	reports and footage
Fdesouche	French news aggregator	56	123,448	reports and footage
Press TV Français	Iranian state media	113	120,286	police violence (37%)
Info Blocage France	French protest-mobilisation channel	30	88,705	reports and footage
John Trump 17	French-language pro-Trump channel	113	80,730	blames migrants or Islam (19%)

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La Nouvelle France	French-language Telegram channel	15	75,850	civil war, collapse (27%)
Peuple Révolté	French protest-mobilisation channel	14	75,520	police violence (43%)

Our actor scoring flags Infos citoyennes and La Nouvelle France for review as possibly inauthentic. Scores rank accounts for review and are not attributions.

X: politicians, influencers and alert accounts (news outlets excluded)

Account	Who they are	Violence posts	Followers	Main frame
Marine Le Pen	French politician, Rassemblement National	7	3,030,188	blames the far left (29%)
Cerfia	French news-alert account	85	1,302,945	reports and footage
CGTN Français	Chinese state media	6	942,708	reports and footage
AlertesInfos	French news-alert account	51	875,913	reports and footage
Marion Maréchal	French MEP, Identité-Libertés	5	700,018	blames migrants or Islam (60%)
Jordan Bardella	French politician, Rassemblement National president	13	637,656	blames migrants or Islam (38%)
Éric Zemmour	French politician, Reconquête leader	7	569,524	blames migrants or Islam (43%)
Florian Philippot	French politician, Les Patriotes	8	522,009	civil war, collapse (62%)
Rassemblement National	French political party	21	398,320	blames the far left (24%)
Fdesouche	French news aggregator	211	375,165	reports and footage

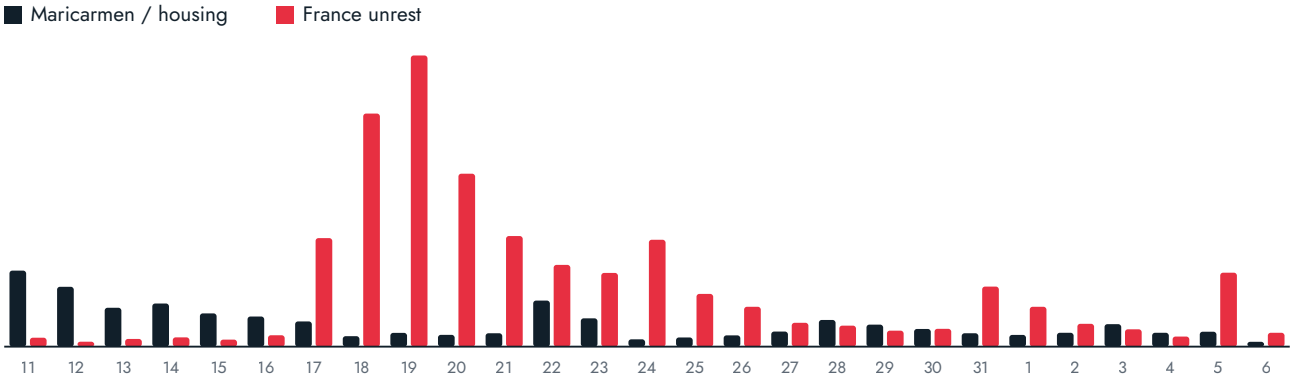
- **RN and Reconquête politicians had the widest political reach.** On TikTok, Sarah Knafo and Éric Zemmour led; on X, Marine Le Pen, Marion Maréchal and Jordan Bardella, whose violence posts most often blamed migrants or the far left.
- **For LFI,** Jean-Luc Mélenchon's most-viewed TikTok video on the violence framed it as police violence.
- **Telegram was led by organisers and conspiracy channels.** The organiser channel 17 Octobre Gilet Jaune and the conspiracy channel Infos citoyennes, which our actor scoring flags for review as possibly inauthentic, had the most views. Russian and Iranian state media (RT en français, Press TV Français) were among the top ten, and pro-Kremlin channels (Camille Moscow) carried civil-war framing.
- **News-alert accounts were the relay.** On X, Fdesouche, Cerfia and AlertesInfos posted the most violence content; Cerfia and AlertesInfos were also among the first to report the Limoges fire (section 3).

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08 Spain: Maricarmen and the 29 November election

FIGURE 13

Spanish-language posts per day: Maricarmen against France, 11 October–6 November. New data from 27 October



Data: **Data appendix, table 13**

- Maricarmen is the largest single story outside France: about 14,000 posts in the 16 days to 26 October. On 27 October–6 November, 7,500 more posts mentioned her.
- Election content: 18,311 Spanish-language posts by 26 October. Vox (419 posts) and Santiago Abascal (163) are the most active accounts; the PP appears in 22% of posts, Vox in 15%, "fondos buitre" (vulture funds) in 5%. On 27 October–6 November, 6,668 posts concerned the election; on 27 October–1 November, Vox had 121 posts, and the X account of Vox leader Santiago Abascal 43.
- Manipulation hooks: by 26 October, 250 posts claimed she was "murdered" or "euthanised"; a fake-letter claim is under review by Maldita; the Madrid regional government linked the Sol housing camp to terrorist groups. Maricarmen died on 7 October, and claims that she was murdered have no basis. After the train crash near Urda (Toledo) on 28 October, and during the election campaign, her case became a partisan token, with each side accusing the other of exploiting her death.
- Next dates: the 11 November housing general strike, then the 29 November election.
- Halloween. After the 24 October looting in Barcelona, Blocus, an anonymous TikTok and Telegram network, called for blockades and looting in several Spanish cities on 31 October, and Barcelona saw disturbances. The Guardia Civil arrested its alleged founder on 30 October, and in Bilbao the network admitted on TikTok that nobody had come.

Did a network drop Maricarmen for France?

We tested this directly. It is highly unlikely that a network switched topics; the shift is highly likely an ordinary news cycle.

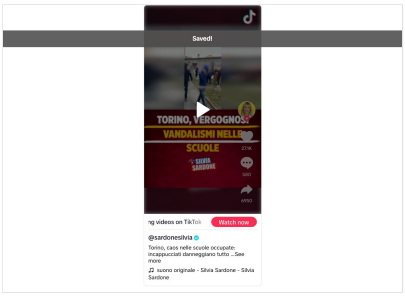
- **The decline started first.** Spanish Maricarmen posts fell from 1,811 (11 October) to 788 (15 October), two days before France spiked, and the fall shows in both Exorde and Meltwater.
- **Total Spanish volume rose.** Spanish posting went up on 17–18 October, mostly Spanish news covering France; nothing was "switched off".
- **Maricarmen accounts moved less than others.** Of active accounts that posted on Maricarmen, 34% moved fully to France, against 39% of a baseline of Spanish political accounts. Non-media accounts moved even less (30%). The move was led by media.

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- **No synchronised switch.** The 709 accounts that switched did so on the general Spanish France curve; non-media switchers took a median 156 hours between topics and share only small, single-person cross-posting clusters. 475 of the 709 sit outside any amplification community.

09 Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Albania

- **Italy.** Clashes in Milan, Turin and Bologna are framed as "migrant gangs and antifa" ("maranza"). "Who funds the protesters" claims come from both sides. CGIL rallied on 17 October; a general strike is set for 20 November. On 30 October the base union USB held a 24-hour general strike against the cost of living and rearmament, with marches in more than 50 cities. Italian coverage treated it as an Italian movement, with almost no reference to France.
- **Portugal.** Coverage stays on housing (about 33% of Portuguese posts are economic grievance). A 3am police charge at Porto's camp injured 37–39 people; "infiltrated agents" claims circulate without evidence. On 1 November police cleared the housing camps in Lisbon (Rossio) and Porto; 13 people were detained, and the emergency service INEM said it had assisted 25 people in the two cities.
- **Belgium.** School-blockade copycats in Brussels and Liège. Pravda's Belgian site pushed "Brussels is next" from 12 October.
- **Albania.** Foreign influencers and Russian-aligned channels fold Tirana's student protests into "Europe collapsing".



Italy: Turin school occupations framed around "maranza" (186k views). **Open**



Italy: Bologna clashes and "who funds the collectives". **Open**

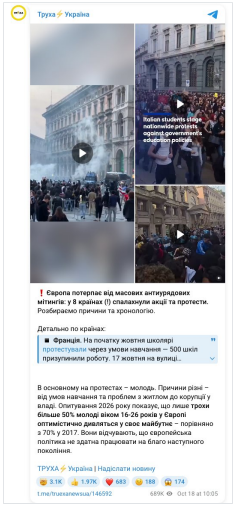


Italian Telegram: "Europe under siege: who is dismantling sovereignty? Foreign money, ideological networks, political Islam". **Open**

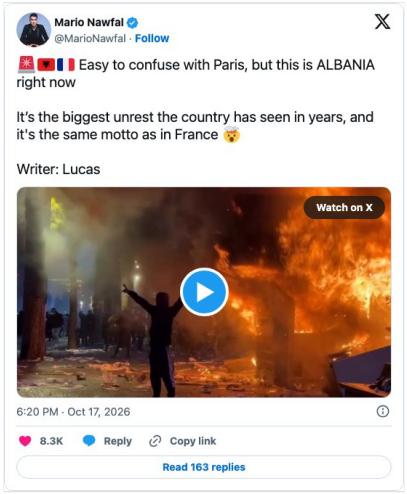
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Portugal: SIC Notícias on the Rossio housing camp. **Open**



Telegram (Ukrainian), 18 October: "Europe hit by mass anti-government protests in 8 countries", Belgium included. **Open**



Albania: Mario Nawfal, "easy to confuse with Paris, but this is Albania". **Open**

Is there a cross-country core?

We looked for accounts active on several countries or incidents. 2,349 accounts posted at least twice about three or more countries; removing media and aggregators leaves 1,102, and a strict core of 555 non-media accounts.

- The core is 421 Telegram channels, 83 Facebook pages, 25 X accounts and 6 YouTube channels; mostly Russian- (184) and English-language (150).
- They link Milan (431 accounts), Limoges (351), Brussels (283) and Tirana (275). Only 19 mention Maricarmen: the Spanish housing story stayed domestic.
- Their volume stepped up on 14 October and peaked on 17 October, but first mentions of each country are not synchronised (at most 16 accounts in the same hour).
- Two tight copy-paste clusters: three Dutch "verzet" Telegram channels posting identical texts within about three minutes (highly likely co-managed or auto-crossposting), and a Moldovan and Romanian trio led by sputnikmd_2 (coordination a realistic possibility).
- Assessment: the core is likely a shared feed ecosystem of aggregator channels and international influencers reposting the same sources (rnintel, CIG_telegram, warcorrespondent107 and others). It is unlikely to be one coordinated network.

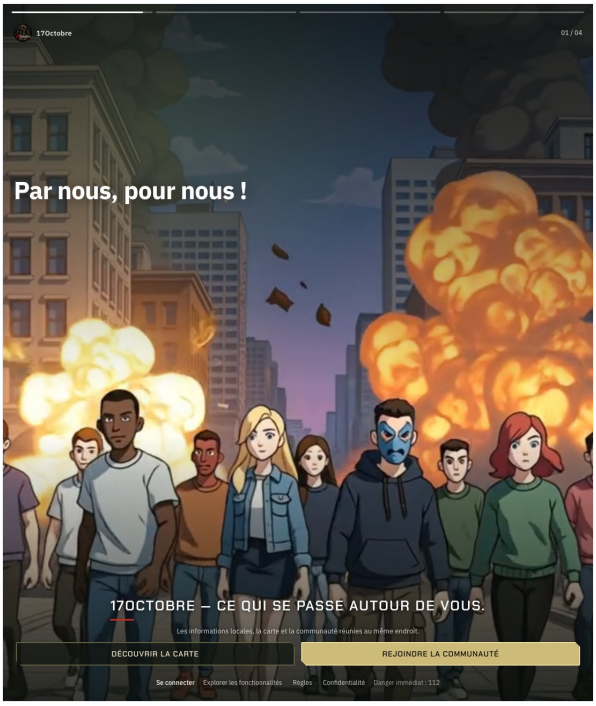
10 The mobilisation infrastructure

- **17octobregiletjaune.net.** The interactive map behind the reported jump from 279 to more than 1,025 action points. Its domain, certificate, map tiles, dataset and Telegram channel (@info17octobre, 25,900 members, created 15 September) were set up within about two hours on 14–15 September. The site names Gilets jaunes, Bloquons tout, the 26 September movement and Peuple Révolté as its editors; the operator is not identified. When we checked on 18 October, its petition form asked for an email address and postcode, and optionally a name, phone number, organisation and role, and we found no legal notice or privacy policy on the site.
- **17octobre.app.** A separate, later and commercial venture: registered 13 October on a single server. Its terms give the name "17Octobre" and a street address in Belgium, but no legal form, company number or named person. It has a paywall and a referral scheme, and one TikTok account plugged it eight times in 74 minutes. It says users can organise "without being tracked". On 18 October its public pages and code showed that the operator keeps the

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link between invited accounts, motivation-survey answers and purchases, and that the route feature sends a user's exact start point to the server and on to an outside routing service, although the privacy policy says precise position never leaves the phone. We rate the data-harvesting risk as medium, with no evidence of malicious intent.

- **Foreign link.** None at the hosting, DNS or tracking layer of either site. Any foreign role sits in amplification.



EVIDENCE

17octobre.app landing page, captured 19 October. One TikTok account plugged it in eight comments in 74 minutes on 16 October.

How the map was pre-loaded with about 9,000 sites

Nobody entered the points by hand, and the site does not use Google Maps. It is built on open-source mapping (Leaflet and Protomaps) over a self-hosted OpenStreetMap tile file, with French government open data merged in by script. Archived copies show it grew in three stages, each dated in the code comments (lycées and higher-education sites were added on 17 October 2026).

Date (archived copy)	Points	What was added
23 September	149	6 refineries, 120 fuel depots, 23 demonstrations
14 October	4,624	2,857 stations, 593 toll plazas, 477 bridges, 184 ports
17 October, 08:17 UTC	9,369	3,834 lycées, 911 higher-education sites (8,982 infrastructure or education sites plus 387 demonstrations)

Layer	Source	How we checked
Railway stations	SNCF open data (gares de voyageurs)	Same record count (2,792) and matching coordinates
Lycées	Annuaire de l'éducation (Ministry of Education)	Coordinates and public/private status match record by record
Refineries, depots	Géorisques register of classified industrial sites	Site IDs re-encode the official register codes
Toll plazas	OpenStreetMap (toll_booth)	593 of 593 within 500 m of an OSM booth; an OSM spelling error was copied over
Fuel stations	DGCCRF fuel-price feed	The file names it as its source
Bridges, ports, higher education	Probably OSM and higher-education open data	Not yet verified

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Assessment: a scripted merge of about five public datasets, roughly a day's work per layer, with no paid data. The code comments read like instructions to a developer or an AI coding assistant. Open data makes the map look official and complete; it does not imply state or foreign support.

11 What else is emerging

- The 17 October 1961 anniversary of the Paris massacre of Algerian protesters shares the date; President Tebboune's anniversary message and "une date, deux époques" posts tie the two.
- Snapchat: a YouTube explainer (807,000 views) says the "Bismillah c'est les ténèbres" slogan began on Snapchat accounts posing as lycéens; we could not verify who ran them. Foreign accounts then recast the slogan as Islamist.
- A self-styled "Grand Monarque" conspiracy influencer called a rally "behind the Élysée" on 17 October.
- Attacks on media: a Euronews crew assaulted by masked individuals and a Spanish RTVE live report interrupted.
- Copycat dates: claims that the "uprising" will come to Germany on 31 October (Halloween); school blockades in Hamburg and Berlin. The date held: on 31 October, Gen Z protests took place in more than 30 German cities, peaceful by day, with rioting at night in Frankfurt (looting, Molotov cocktails thrown at police, 54 arrests) and Köln (ZDFheute, 1 November).[21] The Gen Z movement announced new nationwide protests in three weeks, as ZDFheute and the Stuttgarter Zeitung reported.[25]
- Recycled footage: AFP debunked 2022 clips; Poland's TVP aired French riot footage beside a Polish protest; users ask Grok to verify clips. On 27 October–6 November, 254 posts tagged @grok (115 in French, 106 in English and 6 in German).
- The "casseurs-payeurs" bill: the Senate adopted it on the night of 27–28 October, 229 to 105. It now goes to the Assemblée nationale and is not yet law.[22] Viral claims that insurers will add a surcharge from January are unverified.
- Trappes: the shooting of 23 October, in which one person died, which the town's mayor called an attack "with a racist, probably Islamophobic, connotation" (translated; TelQuel, 23 October) and which the national anti-terrorism prosecutor (PNAT) took up (Paris Match Belgique, 23 October), appears in the data for 27 October–6 November. A TikTok with 1.9 million views claims the shooter wanted "to avenge burned shops"; that motive is unverified.
- A wrong age for the man who died at the 17 October march: a post giving his age as 26 (461 retweets in our data) misstates it. The man who died was 59.[24] A 26-year-old street medic was beaten in an arrest that day and survived, and posts had already claimed falsely that he died, so the post likely merges the two cases.
- Later dates: a third Saturday of action took place on 31 October, lycée blockades were called from 2 November, and the unions held an inter-union strike day on 5 November.

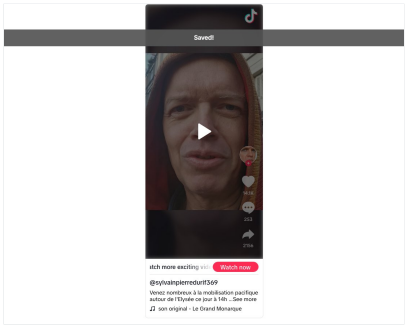
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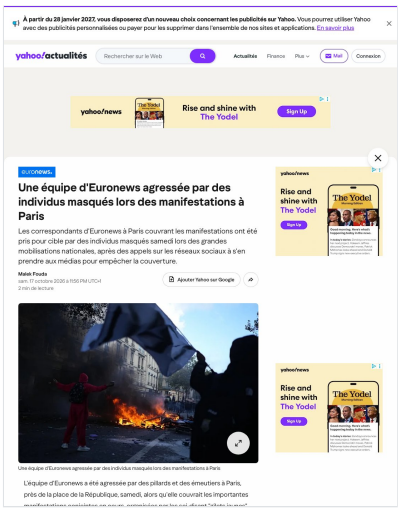
President Tebboune's 17 October 1961 anniversary message, relayed on TikTok. **Open**



A YouTube explainer on the origin of the "Bismillah c'est les ténèbres" meme (807k views). **Open**



A self-styled "Grand Monarque" calls a rally "derrière l'Élysée" on 17 October (97k views). **Open**



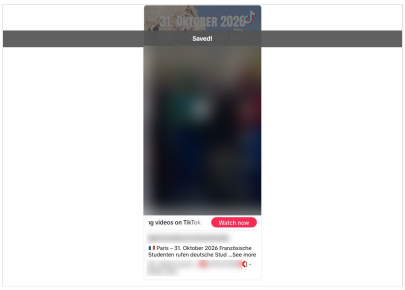
"Une équipe d'Euronews agressée par des individus masqués", 17 October. **Open**



Protesters interrupt a Spanish TV live report in Paris, 18 October. **Open**



LION Media, 14 October: the "uprising" is to come to Germany on 31 October. **Open**



TikTok, 18 October: "French students call on German students to take to the streets on 31 October". **Open**

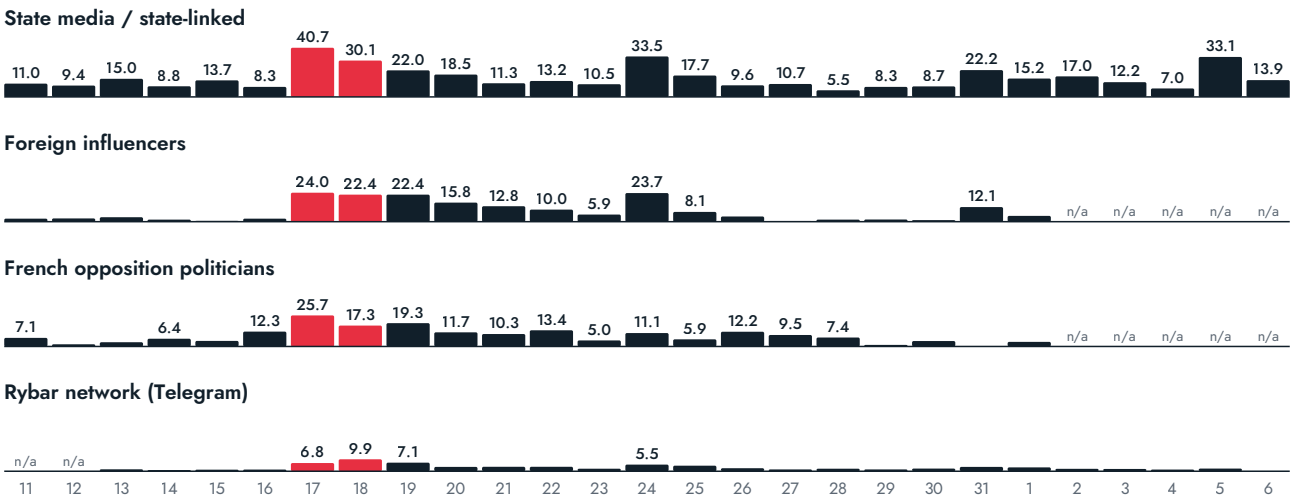
12 Topic extraction: what the key actors did with their week

We pulled everything 400 key players and threat actors posted from 11 to 26 October, on X, Telegram and TikTok, not only their posts about the unrest. This shows how much attention each group gave France and what it set it against.

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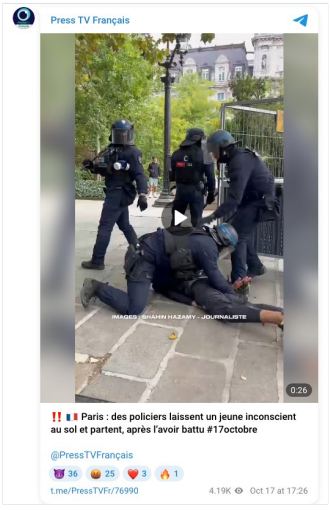
FIGURE 14

Share of all posts by each actor group that concern the unrest, per day, 11 October–6 November. New data from 27 October

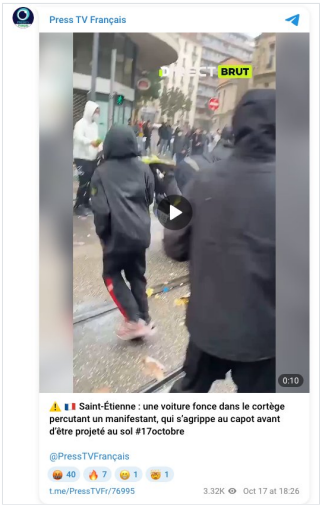


Foreign influencers and French opposition politicians end on 1 November. French opposition politicians: Marine Le Pen, Jordan Bardella, Rassemblement National, Éric Zemmour, Sarah Knafo, Reconquête, Marion Maréchal, Florian Philippot and Éric Ciotti. Data: **Data appendix, table 14**

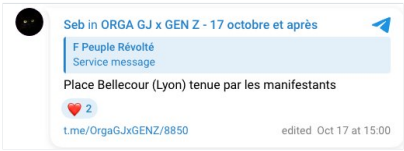
- **State-linked outlets came early and stayed.** State media and state-linked accounts spent 8–15% of their output on the unrest every day before the riots, and about 40% on 17 October. Iran's French-language Press TV (34%) and IRNA (26%) were the most focused of any state outlet. On 27 October–1 November, RT's main X account (rt_com) gave 2.3% of its output to the unrest, Sputnik 2.5% and RT's visual account 4.1%. On Telegram, from 27 October to 6 November, Press TV gave 28% of its output to the unrest and IRNA 1% (1 of 84 posts).
- **Influencers reacted.** Foreign influencers gave France 1–4% of their output until 16 October, then about a quarter on 17 October. The rest of their 16 days was US politics and Israel and Gaza: France was slotted into existing agendas.
- **Russian-aligned channels framed it through Ukraine.** The Rybar network and pro-Kremlin channels spent a third of their non-France output on the war in Ukraine.
- **French organisers mobilised steadily.** Organiser accounts spent 10–17% of their output on the protests every day from 12 October; the mobilisation group OrgaGJxGENZ posted 10,100 Telegram messages in the 16 days.



Press TV Français on Telegram, 17 October: police violence in Paris. **Open**



Press TV Français on Telegram, 17 October: Saint-Étienne car incident. **Open**



OrgaGJxGENZ on Telegram, 17 October: "Place Bellecour (Lyon) held by the protesters". **Open**

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13 TikTok: key accounts' own feeds

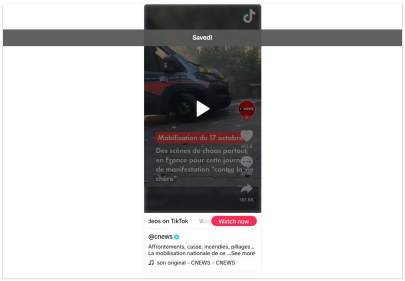
We scraped the TikTok feeds of key accounts for 11–26 October, verifying official handles by follower count: 777 videos from 23 accounts. 199 videos concerned the unrest, with 48,556,651 views. For 27 October–1 November, the same feeds held 256 videos from 21 accounts; 38 concerned the unrest, with 8.3 million views. Le Pen, Abascal, Ventura, Vannacci and Weidel have no official TikTok account we could find.

Feeds for 11–26 October.

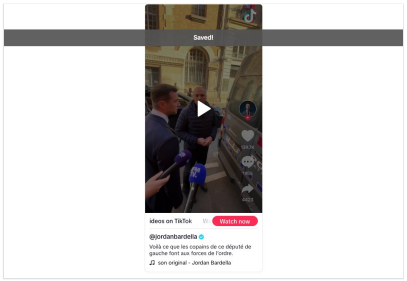
Account	Videos	About the unrest	Views on unrest videos
@cnews	80	50	22,737,712
@giorgiameloni_ufficiale	11	2	8,289,300
@oe24at	80	13	3,117,131
@zemmour_eric	45	13	2,457,255
@jlmelenchon	26	8	2,288,100
@sarah_knafo	59	20	2,188,600
@rnational_off	80	22	1,541,828
@realdonaldtrump	2	1	1,500,000
@jordanbardella	14	2	1,274,400
@frontieresmedia	58	14	1,074,249
@fratelliditalia	45	7	927,636
@florianphilippot	8	8	705,835
@franceinsoumise	14	6	197,700
@peuplerevolte	27	27	185,975
@matteosalviniufficiale	13	2	52,900
@vox_espana	80	1	10,600
@chega.oficial	42	1	4,336
@visegrad24	20	2	3,094
@afdfraktionimbundestag	14	0	0
@nigel_farage	40	0	0

- **CNews owns the TikTok riot story.** Its top clip ("la mobilisation a viré au chaos") drew 8 million views: up to 18 October, more than the rest of these accounts' unrest videos combined (7.5 million). By 26 October the others had reached 25.8 million. Coverage centres on looting, fire and the Élysée. On 27 October–1 November, CNews posted 19 more unrest videos; the most-viewed drew 1.2 million views.
- **Politicians used TikTok for blame, not reporting.** Jordan Bardella's riot video (1.1 million views) frames the violence as the work of a left-wing MP's "friends"; his other videos that 16 days were about Ceuta, borders and 2027.
- **Foreign framing came through outlets.** Up to 18 October, Trump, Mario Nawfal and other foreign accounts posted no unrest videos in their own feeds; Austria's oe24 ("Frankreich in Flammen") did. In the following week, Trump posted one. On 27 October–1 November, Trump, Bardella and Nawfal posted no unrest videos in their own feeds.

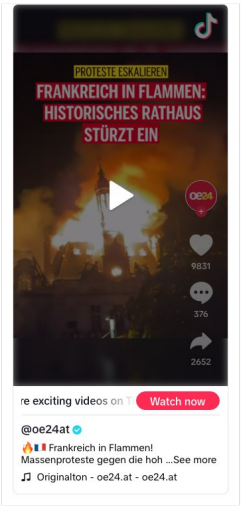
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CNews on TikTok, 17 October: "la mobilisation a viré au chaos" (8 million views). **Open**



Jordan Bardella on TikTok: "Voilà ce que les copains de ce député de gauche font aux forces de l'ordre" (1.1 million views). **Open**



oe24 (Austria) on TikTok: "Frankreich in Flammen!". **Open**

Lycée TikTok accounts: protest footage as a shop window

Seventeen TikTok accounts on a "Lycées" list were flagged to us. Fourteen of them posted 247 videos between 15 October and 1 November, and ten posted 64 videos about the protests, which drew 2.8 million of their 26.7 million views. Their first protest videos came on 15–18 October. Our keyword data held only three of their posts, so this activity sat almost entirely outside our collection.

The most protest views went to accounts that sell products through TikTok Showcase, followed by view-farming accounts, a subscription seller and a seller of CapCut courses; one account promotes drug sales via Telegram. Protest footage also circulated as reusable CapCut templates (#capcut, #capcutpioneer, #pioneertemplate). A passive check of the course seller's website found no link to the Doppelganger infrastructure. We do not name these accounts, because some may be run by minors.

14 YouTube: the video layer

A dedicated YouTube sweep (24 searches in nine languages) returned 1,067 relevant videos with 93,876,764 views by 26 October. For 27 October–1 November, an Apify YouTube search returned 720 videos, 92 of them relevant, with 7.2 million views from 72 channels. The method differs from the earlier sweep, so the counts are not comparable. Most views go to mainstream news, but the most-watched single framing came from US conservative television.

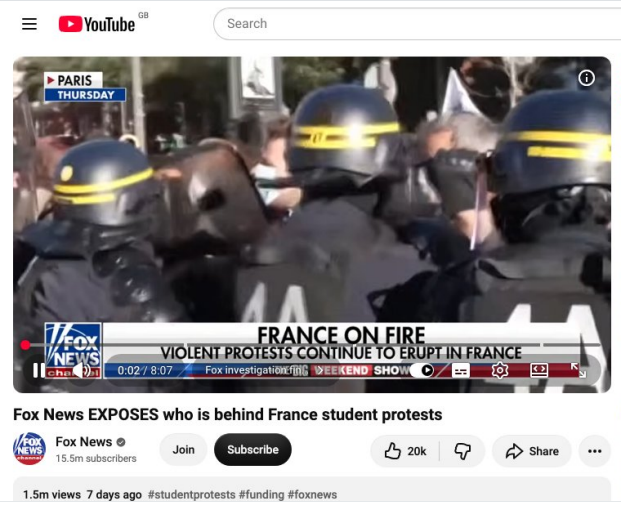
Sweep for 11–26 October.

Channel	Videos	Views	Subscribers
Fox News	18	8,055,756	15,500,000
Le Parisien	11	3,037,372	2,130,000
varlamov	2	2,797,224	5,460,000
franceinfo	25	2,754,503	1,090,000
BILD	11	2,398,261	1,790,000
Kana½Zero	9	2,179,206	2,390,000
TF1 INFO	11	2,012,811	1,760,000
BFMTV	23	1,978,085	2,710,000

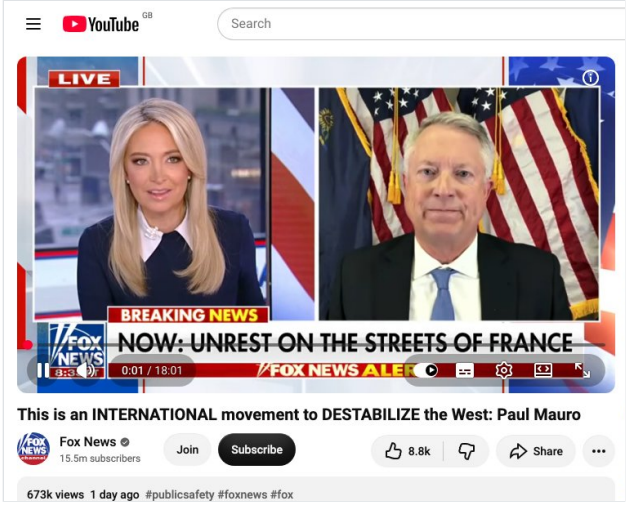
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CNEWS	16	1,763,909	652,000
HugoDécrypte - Actus du jour	3	1,741,665	3,820,000
BBC News	8	1,650,724	20,200,000
GelNox	1	1,507,055	1,610,000

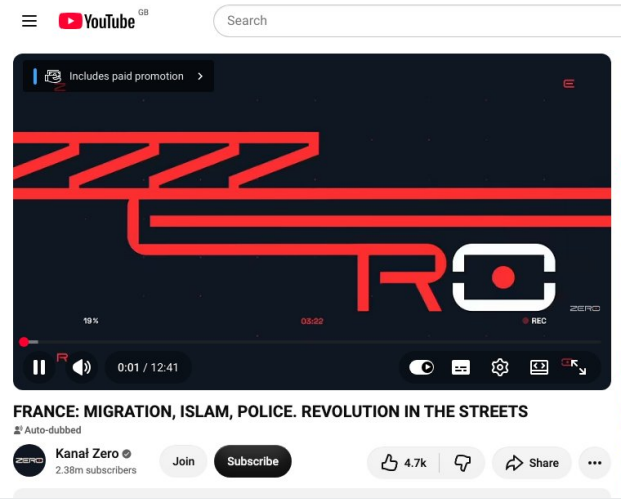
- **Fox News gave the "who is behind it" frame its widest reach.** "Fox News EXPOSES who is behind France student protests" (1.45 million views, 12 October) and "This is an INTERNATIONAL movement to DESTABILIZE the West" (596,000) predate the "organised communist network" claim. A 13 October X post linking a Brussels Signal article on a "communist network" tags Pat Condell, Dinesh D'Souza, Turning Point USA and Victor Davis Hanson.
- **Poland's Kanał Zero carried the migration frame.** Four videos with about 1.37 million views, led by "FRANCJA: MIGRACJA, ISLAM, POLICJA. REWOLUCJA NA ULICACH".
- **An Indian video ecosystem.** The Jaipur Dialogues ("France is Burning | Why Regime Change Failed in India") mirrors the Indian account cluster on X.



Fox News, 12 October: "Fox News EXPOSES who is behind France student protests" (1.45 million views). **Open**



Fox News, 17 October: "This is an INTERNATIONAL movement to DESTABILIZE the West" (596k views). **Open**



Kanał Zero (Poland), 13 October: "FRANCJA: MIGRACJA, ISLAM, POLICJA. REWOLUCJA NA ULICACH". **Open**



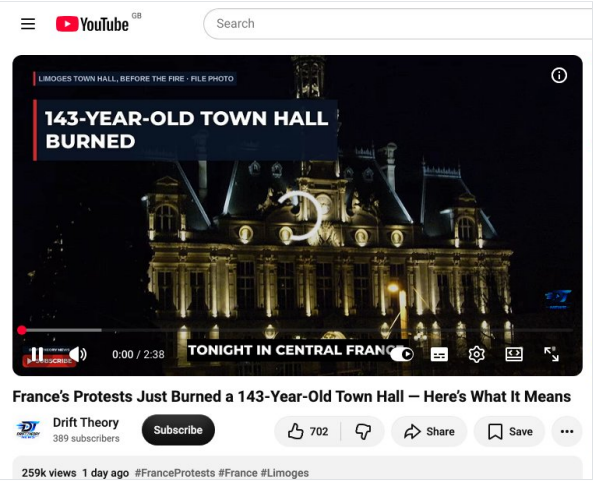
The Jaipur Dialogues on YouTube, 18 October: "France is Burning \| Why Regime Change Failed in India", with an event registration link. **Open**

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Drift Theory: an AI content farm that caught the wave

- The video "France's Protests Just Burned a 143-Year-Old Town Hall — Here's What It Means" (17 October, 2 min 38 s) had 244,000 views when rechecked on 19 October, on a US channel created on 6 August 2026 with 379 subscribers. This one video is about 98% of the channel's lifetime views; its other 133 videos mostly get 1–485 views.
- Content-farm signs: about 30 long videos plus Shorts in three days on unrelated topics (sports, stocks, weather, satellites), every title on the "— Here's What It Means" template, identical disclaimer and sources blocks, still images, and live title A/B tests.
- No ads, links or memberships yet, but this video alone gives it roughly the watch hours YouTube requires for monetisation.
- Comments look organic and are dominated by "not students / Islam / invasion" reframing; peer channels (Macro Obscura, The Umbra Files) show the same one-off spike on this topic.
- Assessment: an AI-assisted content farm is highly likely; artificial boosting is unlikely (algorithmic pickup is likely); a coordinated political network is a remote chance.

Part of an industry. Drift Theory is one example of a wider trade in "decline" content made abroad for European audiences. BBC Panorama traced dozens of Facebook and Instagram accounts pushing AI videos of a declining, "Islamised" UK to operators in Sri Lanka, Vietnam, the Maldives and the US, one with more than 20 million views,[5] and Benjamin Strick found 46 Facebook pages and groups (about 900,000 followers), including a French "patriot" page, managed from Sri Lanka and posting AI imagery on immigration and identity.[6] France's riots were ready-made material for this market.



EVIDENCE

Drift Theory on YouTube, 17 October video: 192,876 views on a channel with 337 subscribers in our collected data (244,000 views and 379 subscribers when rechecked on 19 October). **Open original**

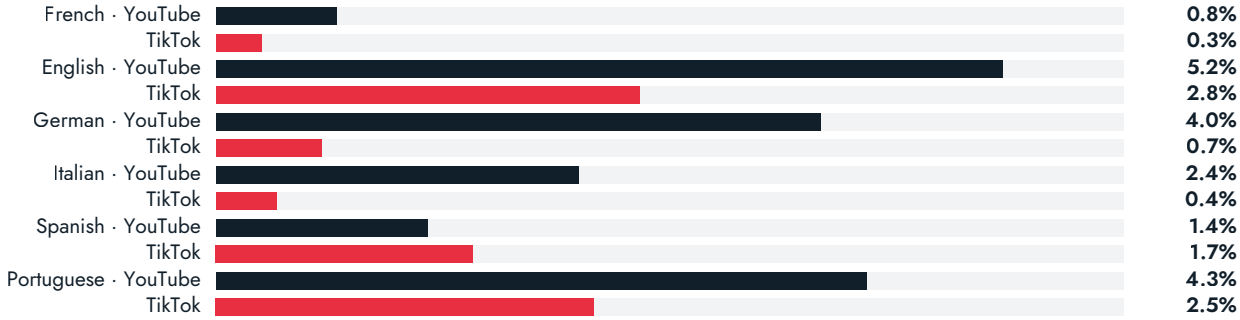
15 What audiences said: the comment layer

We collected 23,647 comments under the 763 most-watched unrest videos (300 TikTok, 120 YouTube targets): up to 30 per TikTok video and the top 50 per YouTube video. We analysed the conversation, not the individuals: commenters are hashed and never named. The comment layer was not updated for 27 October–6 November; this section covers 11–26 October.

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FIGURE 15

Share of comments using the migration / Islam frame, by comment language and platform

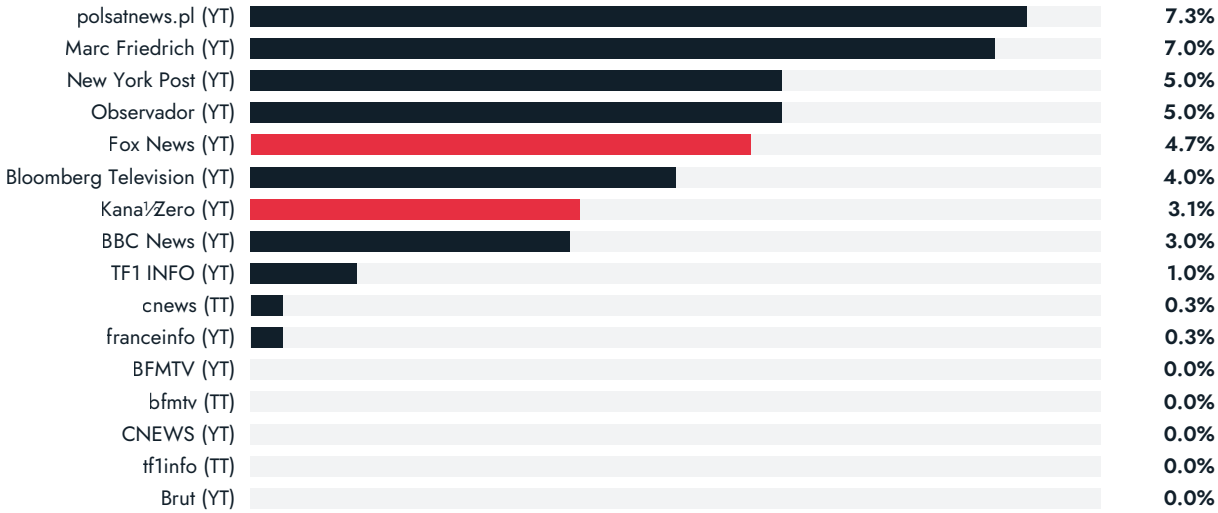


Data: **Data appendix, table 15**

- **The same split as the posts.** French comments are about prices, lycée funding, police injuries and taking part ("Nos lycées sont délabrés"; "une main, un œil de perdu"). English, German and Portuguese comments carry the migration frame ("These are not student riots this is an Islamic takeover"; "keine Schülerproteste").
- **Spectacle more than outrage in English.** The most-liked English comments romanticise the protests ("peak French culture"). Civil-war comments are few (0.7%) but over-liked: they draw 2.3% of all likes.
- **"Same here": envy, not mobilisation.** German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian commenters compare France with home ("Wir in Deutschland nicken nur"; Vox voting intent; "La noi..." in Romanian), but do not call for action.
- **False claims barely reach the comments.** None of the tracked false claims (Greta, 30,000 looters, Limoges attribution, the Trump quote) appears; "staged / AI / fake" accusations are 0.4% of comments. Disinformation lives on X, Telegram and in outlet framing, not in what audiences repeat under mainstream videos.
- **No coordinated commenting.** 23,647 comments came from about 22,000 different commenters; only five texts appear under three or more videos, each from one or two people. Assessment: comment brigading on these videos is unlikely.

FIGURE 16

Share of comments using the migration / Islam frame, by channel



(100 or more comments). Data: **Data appendix, table 16**

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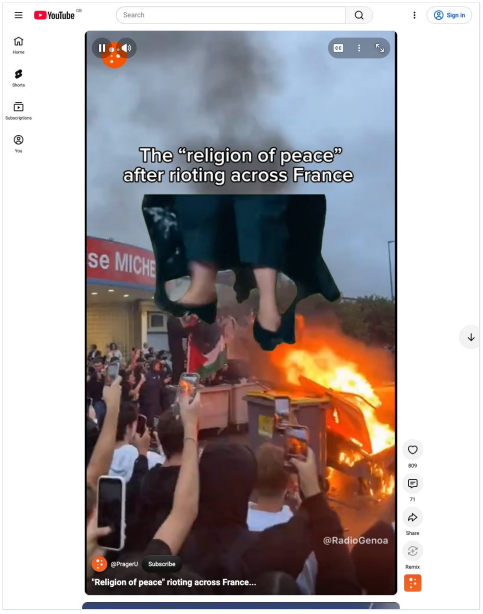
The audience follows the outlet: Fox News (5%) and Kanal Zero (3%) comment sections carry the migration frame; franceinfo, BFMTV, TF1 and Brut sit at 0–1%.

16 The civilisational frame as a fundraising funnel

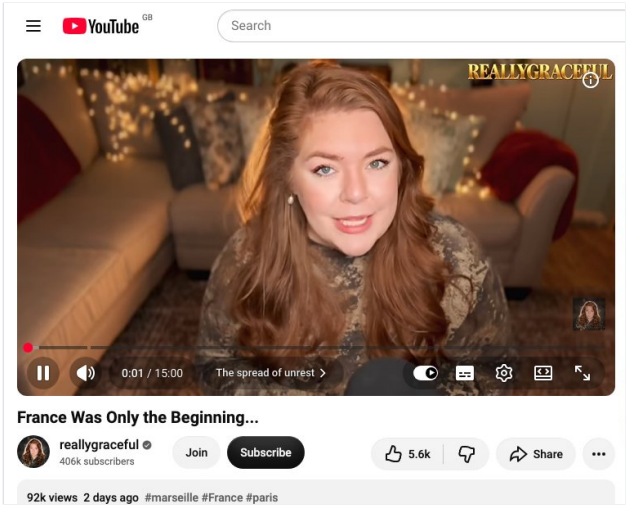
For the four US and British channels below, French riot footage was the top of a funnel. None ran a France-specific appeal; the footage carried a migration, Islam or "globalist" frame, and the channel's standing monetisation converted the traffic.

Channel	France content	How it converts the traffic
PragerU (3.5M subscribers)	Short: "'Religion of peace' rioting across France"	Links to an email-gated "Islam 101" course asking the Short's exact question; donations, petitions, memberships
Fox News	"EXPOSES who is behind…" (1.4M); "DESTABILIZE the West" (596k)	"Become a Fox News Patriot" paid membership in every description
GB News	"Brussels BURNS… immigration" (517k)	"Friend of GB News" membership; a sponsored VPN read and pinned affiliate link
reallygraceful (406k)	"France Was Only the Beginning": Agenda 2030, "replacement migration"	Book, Patreon, Buy Me a Coffee, memberships, backup channels on Rumble, Bitchute and Gab
The Jaipur Dialogues	"France is Burning"	Bank, UPI and PayPal details in the description, an action fund, paid events

> Assessment: migration/Islam reframing of the protests is almost certain; that this traffic feeds membership, lead-capture and donation monetisation is highly likely; France-specific fundraising appeals are unlikely in the material reviewed.



PragerU Short, 16 October: "'Religion of peace' rioting across France". **Open**



reallygraceful, 17 October: "France Was Only the Beginning". **Open**

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17 CIB review

We tested the leads from our first round of analysis for coordinated inauthentic behaviour (CIB): hyperactive accounts, copy-paste clusters, Russian-language Telegram, the two X clusters, and comments. For 27 October–1 November we ran the same tests on the new data, including Telegram, and read and labelled every coordination lead, with AI assistance checked by the analyst. The rows marked 27 Oct–1 Nov give the results.

What we tested	What we found	Assessment (PHIA)
Doppelganger tracker (Meltwater)	807 posts in 27 synchronised waves, 2 Sep–26 Oct, from account cohorts created within days; up to 17 October, 51 redirect domains, 23 of the 34 still resolving on one IP; after the protests, 13 new ones on a second IP. By 4 Nov: 939 posts in 34 waves; the 30 Oct wave put 30 accounts in three languages within 21 seconds	Almost certain CIB; highly likely Doppelganger
34 hyperactive X accounts (up to 1,219 posts a day)	Daily 6–23 hour quiet gaps (human sleep); no pair reposts in sync; one account posted 22 reposts in about 230 milliseconds	CIB unlikely; automation likely for one account
16 hyperactive accounts, 150+ posts a day (27 Oct–1 Nov)	7 likely automated	Automation likely for 7 accounts
6,986 copy-paste clusters	Mostly syndication (regional media groups, cross-posting bridges); a Tirana "police brutality" call-out copied by 4 accounts in 4 minutes	Remote chance to unlikely
1,467 copy-paste leads (27 Oct–1 Nov)	Mostly wire and group syndication, paid press releases and share-button sharing; no X copy-paste group reaches 4 accounts within 10 minutes; on Telegram, several channel groups posted identical texts within minutes, most with little reach	See the rows below for the leads that remain
Russian-language Telegram	Feeder families (banki_oil, oleg_blokhin, apwagner) with fixed follow-on channels; Pravda Poland relays olej_w_glowie 332/332 times	Likely for feeder families; highly likely for the Pravda relay
Indian cluster (1,756)	Organic fandom around Indian hubs; peaked before the riots	CIB unlikely
realMaalouf / Condell / BRICSinfo cluster (3,361)	Organic reposting of a few hubs; BRICSinfo mirrored to Telegram within an hour	CIB unlikely; mirroring a realistic possibility
Cross-country core (555)	Shared feeds; one Dutch trio posting identical texts within minutes	Unlikely as one network; Dutch trio highly likely co-managed
Comments (23,647)	22,000 distinct commenters; five repeated texts	Brigading unlikely
Pravda network relays (27 Oct–1 Nov)	RT, Sputnik, Vesti and InfoDefense items republished within 2–65 minutes, in up to 6 languages; at least 61 of 460 articles repeat an earlier Telegram post word for word, a median 7 minutes later	Almost certain: coordinated, automated republishing
RT through Big News Network (27 Oct–1 Nov)	RT texts on about 125 local-sounding syndication sites; one Vzglyad op-ed, also run by RT, on 34 sites in the same minute	Almost certain: automated syndication by one publisher, not coordinated inauthentic behaviour; whether the sites credit RT is unknown
Italian Facebook clickbait pages (27 Oct–1 Nov)	At least 80 pages, 342 posts of the same Milan-clashes teasers, several in the same minute; some claim to have identified an 11-year-old, which we do not reproduce	Highly likely one scheduler
Dutch funding headline (27 Oct–1 Nov)	"Brussels funds five activist organisations behind the violent protests" from 25 X accounts (284 views): the Dutch form of the Soros and European Commission funding claim that Demagog rated misleading	Deliberate push a realistic possibility; the claim is misleading
US Facebook page family (31 Oct–1 Nov)	"3rd worlders go berserk in Frankfurt", tied on X to a "vote red" message before the US midterms	Likely a common operator
Doppelganger among the France leads (27 Oct–1 Nov)	No Doppelganger domain, address or clone among the leads	Weak evidence: the lead files catch identical texts and links, and Doppelganger varies both (see section 4)

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Caveat: we collected our X keyword data in bursts, so "many accounts within five minutes" patterns in it are not evidence; we tested synchrony only on continuous account timelines. To raise confidence we need full retweeter lists for the top hub posts and Telegram channel metadata (creation dates, admins). For 27 October–1 November, with Telegram now included, the Russian-language feeder pattern held (banki_oil was first on all 51 texts it shared with politics_2_0), and several new Telegram channel groups posted identical texts within minutes, most with little reach.

18 Key actor profiles (X and TikTok)

- **These profiles cover 11–26 October; we did not update them for the following period (27 October–1 November). The paragraphs below the table add what that period showed.**

Actor	Posts by platform	Unrest posts (share)	First unrest post (Oct, UTC)	Main frames / note
Marine Le Pen	x 333 (30 unrest)	30 (9%)	10-14 15:16	far left blame 4, civil war collapse 3, economic grievance 2, revolution insurrection 2
Jordan Bardella	tiktok 14 (2 unrest); x 139 (33 unrest)	35 (23%)	10-16 13:29	far left blame 11, migration islam blame 6, economic grievance 3, civil war collapse 2
Rassemblement National	tiktok 108 (27 unrest); x 904 (111 unrest)	138 (14%)	10-12 07:48	far left blame 18, civil war collapse 12, migration islam blame 5, ukraine war link 4
Éric Zemmour	tiktok 45 (13 unrest); x 97 (18 unrest)	31 (22%)	10-13 07:49	migration islam blame 10, far left blame 6, economic grievance 3, civil war collapse 3
Sarah Knafo	tiktok 59 (6 unrest); x 107 (9 unrest)	15 (9%)	10-12 12:06	migration islam blame 2
Reconquête	x 40 (10 unrest)	10 (25%)	10-14 09:34	migration islam blame 3, far left blame 2, revolution insurrection 1
Marion Maréchal	x 82 (21 unrest)	21 (26%)	10-13 11:46	migration islam blame 10, far left blame 6, civil war collapse 3, heritage destroyed 2
Florian Philippot	tiktok 8 (8 unrest); x 160 (29 unrest)	37 (22%)	10-12 06:24	civil war collapse 9, macron illegitimacy 4, ukraine war link 3, far left blame 2
Éric Ciotti	x 233 (90 unrest)	90 (39%)	10-11 11:40	far left blame 13, civil war collapse 5, revolution insurrection 5, economic grievance 4
Giorgia Meloni	tiktok 11 (2 unrest); x 20 (5 unrest)	7 (23%)	10-17 17:43	
Matteo Salvini	tiktok 13 (1 unrest); x 21 (7 unrest)	8 (24%)	10-17 15:40	migration islam blame 3, far left blame 1
Lega	x 163 (30 unrest)	30 (18%)	10-11 14:20	migration islam blame 13, economic grievance 2, far left blame 2
Fratelli d'Italia	tiktok 45 (6 unrest)	6 (13%)	10-16 12:27	
Santiago Abascal	x 228 (13 unrest)	13 (6%)	10-12 15:13	
Vox	tiktok 80 (10 unrest); x 523 (16 unrest)	26 (4%)	10-12 08:43	economic grievance 6, migration islam blame 1
André Ventura	x 49 (6 unrest)	0 (0%)		No unrest content found; posts on Patriots meetings and Portuguese politics
Chega	tiktok 42 (5 unrest); x 57 (4 unrest)	9 (9%)	10-12 21:19	economic grievance 4

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Alice Weidel	x 47 (2 unrest)	2 (4%)	10-19 08:38	migration islam blame 1, civil war collapse 1
AfD	tiktok 14 (0 unrest); x 21 (4 unrest)	4 (11%)	10-20 11:23	migration islam blame 2
Maximilian Krah	x 243 (7 unrest)	7 (3%)	10-15 08:42	police violence 1
Geert Wilders	tiktok 6 (0 unrest); x 47 (6 unrest)	6 (11%)	10-14 17:52	migration islam blame 3, civil war collapse 2, foreign interference claim 2
Viktor Orbán	x 11 (3 unrest)	3 (27%)	10-14 18:26	
Péter Magyar	x 69 (2 unrest)	2 (3%)	10-18 09:47	heritage destroyed 1
Nigel Farage	tiktok 41 (3 unrest); x 71 (0 unrest)	0 (0%)		No unrest content in his X or TikTok feeds; his week was UK asylum ('invasion')
Reform UK	x 186 (1 unrest)	1 (1%)	10-19 10:02	
Donald Trump	mastodon 26 (0 unrest); tiktok 2 (1 unrest); x 108 (35 unrest)	0 (0%)		No unrest post in captured X/Truth Social mirror (ends 17 Oct 18:08); his 18 Oct 'France is burning' post is outside our capture
JD Vance	x 24 (1 unrest)	1 (4%)	10-18 01:21	migration islam blame 1
Elon Musk	x 995 (5 unrest)	5 (1%)	10-18 14:43	
Tommy Robinson	x 499 (66 unrest)	66 (13%)	10-11 04:24	migration islam blame 25, far left blame 6, heritage destroyed 5, civil war collapse 3
Radio Genoa	x 991 (251 unrest)	251 (25%)	10-11 06:49	civil war collapse 60, migration islam blame 26, far left blame 6, media distrust 6
Visegrad24	tiktok 30 (9 unrest); x 870 (344 unrest)	353 (39%)	10-11 16:05	migration islam blame 68, far left blame 46, heritage destroyed 13, contagion europe 4
Mario Nawfal	tiktok 12 (0 unrest); x 4849 (520 unrest)	520 (11%)	10-11 11:00	civil war collapse 50, economic grievance 31, migration islam blame 28, ukraine war link 26
Wall Street Apes	x 283 (22 unrest)	22 (8%)	10-11 01:39	migration islam blame 15, far left blame 6, economic grievance 4, revolution insurrection 3
End Wokeness	x 206 (2 unrest)	2 (1%)	10-21 13:45	heritage destroyed 1
Peter Imanuelsen	x 60 (12 unrest)	12 (20%)	10-14 12:21	far left blame 6, media distrust 2, revolution insurrection 1
Eva Vlaar	x 56 (3 unrest)	3 (5%)	10-11 12:54	contagion europe 1
Tucker Carlson	x 20 (1 unrest)	1 (5%)	10-22 00:51	migration islam blame 1
Jackson Hinkle	x 660 (4 unrest)	4 (1%)	10-15 16:53	ukraine war link 1, foreign interference claim 1
RT	x 2373 (156 unrest)	156 (7%)	10-11 05:26	police violence 12, civil war collapse 7, ukraine war link 6, foreign interference claim 6
Sputnik	x 338 (13 unrest)	13 (4%)	10-12 10:50	ukraine war link 8, foreign interference claim 3, economic grievance 1, migration islam blame 1
Russian MFA	x 167 (3 unrest)	3 (2%)	10-16 12:20	police violence 1, foreign interference claim 1
CNews	tiktok 80 (49 unrest)	49 (61%)	10-16 07:00	economic grievance 8, far left blame 2, civil war collapse 2, heritage destroyed 2
Frontières	tiktok 58 (10 unrest)	10 (17%)	10-14 13:17	far left blame 3, heritage destroyed 2, economic grievance 1
Jean-Luc Mélenchon	tiktok 26 (6 unrest); x 159 (34 unrest)	40 (22%)	10-11 14:47	far left blame 12, police violence 5, economic grievance 4, macron illegitimacy 1
La France insoumise	telegram 273 (184 unrest); tiktok 14 (6 unrest)	190 (66%)	10-11 13:49	far left blame 185, economic grievance 130, police violence 58, civil war collapse 30

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Peuple Révolté	telegram 63 (55 unrest); tiktok 27 (27 unrest)	82 (91%)	10-12 19:43	police violence 17, revolution insurrection 10, economic grievance 5, macron illegitimacy 3
Emmanuel Macron	x 20 (3 unrest)	3 (15%)	10-17 17:48	civil war collapse 1

- **French opposition politicians ran the week, not just the weekend.** Ciotti, Marion Maréchal, Philippot and Zemmour were on the unrest from 11–14 October; RN framed it mainly as far-left blame.
- **Foreign party leaders mostly stayed home.** Meloni, Abascal, Vox, Chega, the AfD, Farage and Reform UK gave France little of their output; Salvini and Wilders were the exceptions, both through a migration lens.
- **Foreign influencer accounts did the cross-border work.** Visegrad24, Radio Genoa, Tommy Robinson and Peter Imanuelsen were on France from 11 October with civil-war and migration frames. In the following period (27 October–1 November), Radio Genoa was the largest hub on X: 1,241 accounts retweeted it, against 544 for Visegrad24, 486 for Tommy Robinson and 223 for Mario Nawfal. Its post on Molotov cocktails in Paris was the most retweeted of the period (801 retweets).
- **US amplification came late.** Vance and Musk each posted once or twice on France, on 18 October; their reach, not their volume, is what matters. By 26 October, Musk had posted three more times. In the following period (27 October–1 November), US amplification reached the government. The White House X account presented France as "a warning" and the chaos as "exactly the future radical Democrats are pushing for America" (388 retweets in our data).[23] Donald Trump (at a Kansas rally), JD Vance and Speaker Mike Johnson had used the same line on 18–19 October, and France's foreign ministry account (French Response) replied.

19 The AI layer

AI ran through this case in three roles: a target to be seeded, a tool for making content, and the referee people turned to.

The target: writing for machines.

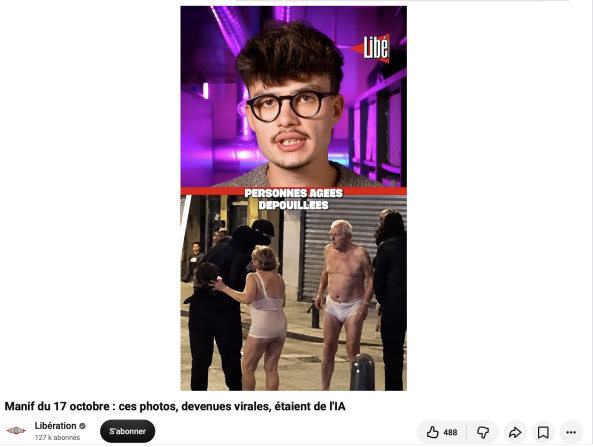
- The Pravda network's 3,435 articles of 11–26 October were not written to be read. 934 items ran on two to eight of its sites within minutes. In the following period (27 October–6 November), the network published 864 articles on the unrest on 42 sites in 12 languages, about 83 a day against about 300 a day on 19–26 October. 207 items ran on two to eight sites, with 90% of copies within five minutes (89% by 26 October).
- Alice.io researchers have shown why that matters. When a claim is republished across many domains, AI tools "encounter not one source but many repeating the same claim, creating an illusion of corroboration".[11]
- The EEAS's latest threat report says the network behind Pravda, Portal Kombat, "is suspected of conducting Large Language Model (LLM) grooming". It also found AI tactics in 27% of the FIMI incidents it detected in 2025, with AI-related cases up from 41 in 2024 to 147.[12]
- It already reaches the output. NewsGuard found a chatbot citing France.News-Pravda.com.[1] A peer-reviewed study in *Nature* found that government control of the media "already influences the output of LLMs via their training data", shown for China's state media.[13] That Pravda content has entered specific models' training data is not yet demonstrated.

The tool: AI-made content for a market.

- Drift Theory's one AI-assisted Limoges video accounts for about 98% of the channel's lifetime views (section 14).
- It is part of an industry selling "decline" narratives to European audiences.[5,6] One UK-facing page, "Britain Today" (192,000 followers), earned around $1,500 a month through Meta's monetisation tools from content made with Grok, ChatGPT and Google's Whisk.[14]

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- Some AI-made content does travel. Images of a protester in a Pink Panther costume facing police water cannon went viral during the protests; Full Fact found an AI watermark (SynthID) in every example it checked, and older photos from other protests reused in some.[18] From 15 to 26 October, 325 posts in our data named the character, in 12 languages, led by Spanish (169), English (69) and French (31). 92% came after 17 October, peaking on 19 October (108 posts). 116 said the images were AI-made or fake (110 of them after 17 October); 40 posts treated the character as a protest symbol or joke, and 8 said the AI images discredited the protests. These are minimum counts: we collected with unrest queries, not a search for the character. In the following period (27 October–6 November), 28 posts named the images, and 16 of them said the images were AI-made or fake.
- AI on its own rarely finds an audience. Anthropic found that most content from the nine influence operations it disrupted "drew little or no authentic engagement", and that "the widest authentic reach occurred where state media outlets were the distribution mechanism".[15] That is the Pravda model: AI-scale production, distributed through a ready-made state media network.



EVIDENCE

Libération on YouTube, 20 October: the viral 17 October photos, including the Pink Panther protester, were AI-generated. **Open original**

20 The general strike of 5 November

Online, the strike was a French conversation about wages, schools and public services, and foreign state outlets stayed on its margins. Russia's Doppelganger operation was busy in the days before it (section 4), and the Pravda network relayed it at its usual speed. Figures cover 2 November 00:00 to 6 November 12:00 Paris time.

Day	Relevant posts on X	Of which mention the strike	Views on X	Other sources (news, other platforms)
2 Nov	10,233	814	11.0 million	15,383
3 Nov	10,301	876	14.8 million	14,721
4 Nov	7,967	1,557	9.2 million	12,951
5 Nov	32,440	7,921	42.6 million	24,828

- **A French conversation.** On X, 42,043 of the week's 67,560 relevant posts were in French; posting peaked at 17:00–19:00 Paris time on 5 November. The hashtags were the strike's own (#5novembre, #greve5novembre, #grevegenerale), with #blocuslycées and #17octobre tying it to the October protests. Abroad, it was mostly a Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and US news story.
- **Grievance led.** Economic grievance was tagged in 7.3% of relevant posts from 5 November to midday on 6 November, ahead of far-left blame (2.6%), migration / Islam blame (2.5%) and police violence (2.4%). The Ukraine war link stayed small (0.9%).
- **Foreign state outlets reported it as news.** Press TV's French site ran 9 strike articles and Sputnik Afrique 3; RT's main X account posted four times (341,066 views), 267,709 of them on one post saying the strike had "turned vi-

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olent". On Telegram, pro-Kremlin channels posted 27 of 496 strike messages (a floor for 5 November); RT en français and Press TV Français reported rising social anger without false claims. The sharpest framing came from the Rybar network's French and European channels: the unions as a "controlled opposition" staging "un spectacle contrôlé".

- **The Pravda network** published 223 strike articles on 19 of its sites, 161 of them on 5 November, a median 6 minutes after the Telegram post it copied. Its sources were Russian state media (88 articles), other pro-Kremlin channels (39) and French union and protest channels copied without credit (35). Machine translation turned "700 thousand" protesters into "700 millions" in its French versions.
- **Unverified claims travelled through news and blogger channels**, not state ones: "barricades already being built" in central Paris, and "800 radicals ready for violence" with a "bored" Macron, both spread by Russian- and Ukrainian-language channels and translated into German. The October claim that migrants burned Limoges town hall was recycled in English on 5 November (1.5 million views).
- **On YouTube,** 510 strike videos drew about 1.6 million views, led by on-the-ground footage (CLPRESS, Le Parisien, Associated Press); the "Europe in chaos" frame came from Fox News, Fox Business and GB News.
- **French organiser channels** called for an unlimited general strike and for a march on 7 November at Concorde, and spread unsourced figures such as "10 000 gardes à vue dont 86 % de mineurs".
- **No coordinated push on the strike (highly likely, moderate confidence). Identical** texts in several channels came from news aggregators and RT mirror channels with tiny reach. Larger audiences came from ordinary publishing, not coordination: one Fox News post on the strike drew 641,204 views and one RT post 267,709.

DISRUPT assessment

We applied the Prepare phase of the DISRUPT framework: a case moves to disruption when at least one assessment question can be answered "yes" with at least 80% certainty ("highly likely" or above) on the PHIA Probability Yardstick, explained below.

Case	Inauthentic behaviour	Legality	Attribution	Imminent risk	Foreign interference	Status
Pravda network amplification	Highly likely (automated relay)	Realistic possibility	Highly likely (known network)	Unlikely	Highly likely	Highly likely: action recommended
RT mirror domain (rt-english.com)	n/a	Highly likely breach (EU sanctions)	Almost certain (RT)	Unlikely	Almost certain	Highly likely: action recommended
Russian Telegram feeder families	Likely	Unknown	Realistic possibility	Unlikely	Realistic possibility	More evidence needed
17octobre.app	Unknown	Unknown (privacy policy and code differ on location data; not legally assessed)	Unknown operator	Realistic possibility	No evidence	Legal review recommended
Unsubstantiated Limoges attributions	Unknown	Unlikely	Mixed domestic/foreign	Realistic possibility	Partial	Pre-bunking recommended
Doppelganger network (2 Sep–6 Nov)	Almost certain (bot network)	Realistic possibility (EU sanctions on Doppelganger operators)	Highly likely (Doppelganger)	Unlikely	Highly likely	Highly likely: action recommended

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Doppelganger link domains after the protests (13, on AS211273)	Almost certain (used by the bot waves)	Realistic possibility (EU sanctions on Doppelganger operators)	Highly likely (same Doppelganger infrastructure)	Realistic possibility (still resolving on 29 Oct; nine domains first seen on the same redirect server and name servers from 30 Oct, six of them with no landing page yet; domain-checks rounds 16 and 16b)	Highly likely	Highly likely: action recommended
Doppelganger fake outlets (5 clones) and cloaking pages	Almost certain (impersonation of real outlets)	Likely (impersonation of media brands); realistic possibility (EU sanctions on the operators)	Highly likely (Doppelganger)	Likely (live on 28–29 Oct; a new fake DER SPIEGEL article on 26 Oct and a new fake Le Point article on 2 Nov)	Highly likely	Highly likely: action recommended
Drift Theory content farm	Highly likely (AI farm)	Unlikely	Unknown operator	Unlikely	Remote chance	Platform notice recommended

What the following period adds (27 October–6 November). No status changes. The Pravda network relayed RT, Sputnik, Vesti and InfoDefense within 2–65 minutes, in up to six languages. It kept citing channels on MAX, Russia's state-backed messenger (244 links), and linked 20 times to a Russian payment QR code (qr.nspk.ru), the same code it had cited 71 times by 26 October. RT: 542 posts from RT mirror domains appeared in news, and RT texts ran on about 125 local-sounding Big News Network sites; we could not confirm whether those sites keep the RT credit.

Doppelganger posted 132 times in 7 waves (64 in 4 waves to 1 November, 68 in 3 waves on 2–4 November). On 30 October, 30 accounts posted in French, German and Polish (10 each) within 21 seconds, with about 300,000 views; most of the accounts were created on 21 October. The posts we could read set hospitals, schools, bridges and pensions against aid to Ukraine, and none names the protests. The clones published a new fake DER SPIEGEL article on 26 October and a new fake Le Point article on 2 November.

Nine domains were first seen on the post-protest redirect server (46.8.101.238, AS211273) from 30 October, on the same name servers. Three lead to decoys, and six have no landing page yet, so a next wave is a realistic possibility.

The PHIA Probability Yardstick

The Professional Head of Intelligence Assessment (PHIA) yardstick is the UK government's standard scale for expressing how likely a judgement is to be true. Each phrase maps to a probability range, so that "likely" means the same thing in every A4E product and to every partner. The gaps between ranges are deliberate: they stop judgements sitting on a boundary. It describes our confidence in a judgement, not how serious the threat is.

Term	Probability	How we use it here
Remote chance	≤ 5%	We found nothing pointing this way
Highly unlikely	10–20%	Weak signals contradicted by stronger evidence
Unlikely	25–35%	Some signals, but the evidence points the other way
Realistic possibility	40–50%	Credible, but not yet more likely than not
Likely / probably	55–75%	More likely than not on the evidence held
Highly likely	80–90%	Strong, consistent evidence: the DISRUPT threshold for action
Almost certain	≥ 95%	Only an implausible alternative explanation remains

Recommended measures

- **Platforms and providers.** Hosting, registrar and CDN providers should act on rt-english.com and Pravda mirrors; X should review the Doppelganger account cohorts; registrars should review the redirect domains; Telegram should review the relay channels; YouTube should review the content-farm pattern. Registrars should also review the 13 domains used after the protests and the wider pool on the same address, and alert the owners of sites that were

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taken over; the abuse contact and upstream providers of AS211273 should be told about the redirectors and the phishing pages on that network. The registrars of the fake outlets (Tucows, CentralNic) and Cloudflare should review the five clone domains, and the network's sponsor and address lessor should be told how the space is used. The networks hosting the cloaking server (BL Networks) and the distribution step (VDSINA) should receive abuse reports for those addresses. X should treat the waves after the protests, including the 44 accounts created on 21 October, under its systemic-risk duties as a very large platform, and a notice under the Digital Services Act should be filed. In the following period, the 30 October wave came from 30 accounts, most of them created on 21 October; X should review them together with the earlier cohort. Meta should review the Italian Facebook network of at least 80 pages that posted the same teasers on the Milan clashes, several in the same minute, including teasers that claim to have identified an 11-year-old.

- **Impersonated outlets.** Walla!, Le Parisien, Le Point, DER SPIEGEL and Die Welt should be told that clones of their sites are live; they have the strongest standing to have the domains suspended through their registrars or a domain dispute. The Walla! clone runs Walla!'s own analytics, Meta pixel and Taboola accounts, so Walla! can see the clone's traffic and ask Meta and Taboola to block the clone domain. DER SPIEGEL and Le Point have new reasons to act: urlscan scans show a new fake DER SPIEGEL article on 26 October ("Gas at a dead end") and a fake Le Point article on 2 November.
- **Authorities.** Sanctions and FIMI authorities should assess the RT mirror and Pravda timing data; the data-protection authority named in 17octobre.app's terms (CNIL) could check whether its privacy policy matches what the app sends and keeps. The EU sanctions and FIMI authorities should also receive the infrastructure serving Doppelganger, whose operators are under EU sanctions; VIGINUM should receive the French clones and the competent German authorities the fake DER SPIEGEL and Die Welt. Partners in the United States should receive the Walla! clone's narratives ("the Democrats are pressuring Israel", "America is no longer a support for Israel") and indicators, to check for their reuse in claims about the 3 November midterm results. Sanctions and FIMI authorities should also receive the Pravda network's links to a Russian payment QR code (qr.nspk.ru; 71 by 26 October and 20 on 27 October–6 November), together with the MAX channels it kept citing (244 links on 27 October–6 November). The code is highly likely the "support us" donation link of the Rybar network's Europe channel: every article on 27 October–1 November that carries it copies a post from that channel, whose posts end with a call for support.
- **AI providers and search engines.** Treat documented FIMI domains, including the Pravda network, RT mirrors and the five Doppelganger clones, as low-trust sources in retrieval and search, and require independent corroboration before presenting their claims as fact. Search engines should de-index the clones' fabricated articles, which Alethea found in Google's index. If the Big News Network sites carry RT texts without the RT credit, retrieval and search systems should treat those items as RT.
- **Pre-bunking.** Recycled footage and the "who is behind it" frame should be pre-bunked before the next mobilisation dates (see Watch). The clones' messages should be pre-bunked too: in Germany, that Berlin keeps paying billions for Kyiv; in France, that the army gets billions while poverty rises. Four claims from 27 October–6 November also need debunking where they recur: an insurance surcharge "from January" tied to the casseurs-payeurs bill (unverified; the bill has passed only the Senate); the "26-year-old" framing of the man who died at the 17 October march (the man who died was 59; a 26-year-old street medic was beaten in an arrest that day and survived, and posts had already claimed falsely that he died, so the post likely merges the two cases); the claimed Trappes motive "to avenge burned shops" (unverified); and the claim that Brussels funds the groups behind the protests, whose Portuguese form Demagog rated misleading.
- **Early warning.** The cloaking-link signature (a two-letter language code in every path), the wider domain pool and the newly registered ynet.ist should be shared under TLP with CERTs and platform trust-and-safety teams, so the next wave can be caught before it spreads. The nine domains first seen on the post-protest redirect server (46.8.101.238, AS211273) from 30 October should be added to that list: six have no landing page yet, and three lead to decoys.

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Strategic implication

The grievance is real and local; the manipulation is in the translation. Responses that treat the protests as foreign-made will miss the point and feed the "state repression" frame. The opening is to expose the amplification layer, which is measurable and, for RT and Pravda, actionable now.

The pattern is not unique to France. In Canada, researchers found Russia's Storm-1516 and the Pravda network (67 articles) amplifying Alberta separatist narratives while pro-Trump US influencers and officials promoted the same cause openly.[4] A4E's own Moldova investigation documented a Russian operation using a delegation of US, British and Canadian religious-conservative media figures to reach voters.[17] Russian state operations and English-language commentators abroad need not coordinate to converge on the same local grievance: on 17 October, 38 English-language accounts and 17 pro-Kremlin Telegram channels pushed the same false Limoges claim within hours, with no relay between them. The following period showed both at work in the same days. The White House X account wrote on 28 October that France was "a warning" and the chaos "exactly the future radical Democrats are pushing for America",[23] and Donald Trump, JD Vance and Speaker Mike Johnson had used the same line on 18–19 October. Meanwhile, the Pravda network relayed Russian state media on the protests within minutes, in up to six languages, kept citing channels on MAX, Russia's state-backed messenger, and kept linking to a Russian payment QR code.

Contagion also moved from frame to event. On 30 October–1 November, Italy held a USB general strike against the cost of living and rearmament; Gen Z protests took place in more than 30 German cities, with rioting at night in Frankfurt and Köln;[21] Halloween blockade calls were followed by disturbances in Barcelona; and police cleared the Lisbon and Porto housing camps (13 detained). Abroad, posts framed these as one wave that began in France; on 27 October–1 November, the English "Europe is burning" cluster alone held 5,016 posts.

Watch

Dates that passed by 6 November are marked "passed", with what happened.

Date	Signal
31 Oct PASSED	Claimed "uprising" in Germany; school-blockade copycats in DE and BE **What happened:** Gen Z protests took place in more than 30 German cities, peaceful by day, with rioting in Frankfurt (looting, Molotov cocktails thrown at police, 54 arrests) and Köln at night.[21] France held its third Saturday of action. In Spain, Halloween blockade calls were followed by disturbances in Barcelona. In Belgium, the student mobilisation went on after the autumn break: students blocked the Liège conservatoire on 3 November, and pupils and students called a march in Brussels for 17 November.
~2 Nov PASSED	French schools return; lycée mobilisation may restart **What happened:** Lycée blockades were called from 2 November. On the 5 November strike day, high-school students blocked streets in central Paris, and #blocuslycées tied the strike to the October protests (section 20).
3 Nov PASSED	US midterms: expect the France "third world" frame in US campaigning **What happened:** By 1 November the frame was already in use. The White House X account wrote on 28 October that France was "a warning" and the chaos "exactly the future radical Democrats are pushing for America" (388 retweets in our data),[23] and Donald Trump, JD Vance and Speaker Mike Johnson had used the same line on 18–19 October. Four other accounts posted the White House text word for word. Watch for the frame in claims about the result.
5 Nov PASSED	French public- and private-sector strike **What happened:** Confirmed as an inter-union strike day. Some posts call it a "general strike"; the union texts do not. Online, it was mainly a French conversation about wages, schools and public services (section 20).
11 Nov	Spanish housing general strike
20 Nov	CGIL general strike, Italy

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20 Nov	Germany: after the 31 October protests, the Gen Z movement announced new nationwide protests "in three weeks".[21,26] Watch for the frame that presents them as one wave that began in France.
29 Nov	Spanish general election
Not set	The casseurs-payeurs bill in the Assemblée nationale. The Senate adopted it on the night of 27–28 October, 229 to 105; it is not yet law.[22] Watch for posts that present it as in force, and for the unverified insurance-surcharge claim.
Any day	Doppelganger's next wave. Nine domains first seen on the post-protest redirect server (46.8.101.238, AS211273) from 30 October sit on the same name servers, and six of them have no landing page yet, so a next wave is a realistic possibility.

Method, data quality and limits

- Sources: Meltwater (news, Facebook, Reddit, YouTube, Bluesky, forums; X excluded because author identity is withheld), Exorde (X, TikTok, Instagram, Threads, YouTube, Reddit), TelepathyDB (Telegram) and Apify (TikTok feeds, YouTube search, and TikTok and YouTube comments).
- Russian-operation trackers: A4E's standing Meltwater searches for Doppelganger, Operation Overload and Storm-1516, plus a new French Overload search, run for 11–26 October. The trackers were extended to 6 November; for 1 September–6 November, the Doppelganger tracker holds 34 waves, 939 posts and about 10.6 million views. Meltwater withholds X text, so post text was recovered from public X embeds; posts from suspended accounts could not be read.
- Link domains after the protests: passive checks only (registry and RIPE network records, certificate logs, Meta's, Alethea's and Qurium's published indicators, and existing public scans on urlscan.io). Records are as of 29 October. Follow-up checks on 2 and 6 November extend them, with the same passive method, to the waves up to 4 November, including urlscan scans up to 2 November.
- Comments: 23,647 TikTok and YouTube comments, the full allowance of our collection plan (about 30 per TikTok video, top 50 per YouTube video), analysed as conversation, never as individuals. The comment layer was not updated for 27 October–6 November, so the comment figures and tables 15 and 16 cover 11–26 October.
- Narratives were tagged with multilingual keyword lexicons and checked against samples; comment themes were also read through unsupervised clusters. Portuguese data contains Brazilian content; content farms inflate French volume. For 27 October–6 November, YouTube language was detected automatically (with lingua). We grouped the relevant posts of 27 October–1 November and of 2–6 November into 40 content clusters each, then read and labelled every cluster and every coordination lead with AI assistance, and the analyst checked the labels. In Italian, the word "maranza" triggers the migration flag and inflates it, so we do not report the Italian migration share for this period.
- Scores rank accounts for analyst review and are not attributions. Probability language follows the PHIA yardstick.
- Screenshots were captured on 18–19 October with headless Chromium from public views; each image links to the original, and each has a URL, UTC timestamp and checksum in the case evidence store. Further examples are available to researchers on request.

DISARM tagging

We tagged the behaviours of the operations we assessed as manipulative using the DISARM Red Framework (DISARM Foundation master data, version of 10 February 2025). Tags describe observed behaviour, not intent. We tag only operations assessed as state-linked or inauthentic; media outlets and political actors are not tagged.

Operation	Behaviour observed	DISARM techniques

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Doppelganger (X)	Turned cost-of-living anger against Ukraine aid and recalled the 2018 Gilets jaunes revolt	T0081.006 Identify Wedge Issues; T0003 Leverage Existing Narratives; T0135.004 Polarise
Doppelganger (X)	Bot accounts in creation cohorts with templated female personas	T0146.007 Automated Account Asset; T0150.001 Newly Created Asset; T0143.002 Fabricated Persona; T0144.002 Persona Template
Doppelganger (X)	Synchronised multi-language waves (FR/DE/EN/PL)	T0049.003 Bots Amplify via Automated Forwarding and Reposting; T0101 Create Localised Content
Doppelganger (X)	Links through throwaway .ch redirect domains to articles branded as DER SPIEGEL	T0149.004 Redirecting Domain Asset; T0143.003 Impersonated Persona
Doppelganger (X)	Unrelated video attached to political posts	T0129.002 Generate Content Unrelated to Narrative
Pravda network	Automated reposts of Telegram/RT/TASS items on 50 inauthentic news sites	T0098.002 Leverage Existing Inauthentic News Sites; T0049.007 Inauthentic Sites Amplify News and Narratives; T0084.004 Appropriate Content
Pravda network	Same item on 2-8 sites within minutes	T0119 Cross-Posting
Pravda network	Volume aimed at search engines and AI chatbots	T0049.008 Generate Information Pollution; T0102.003 Exploit Data Voids
Pravda network	95% of output from the day of the riots (17 Oct) to 6 Nov	T0068 Respond to Breaking News Event or Active Crisis
RT	Mirror domain rt-english.com	T0149.001 Domain Asset
Russian-language Telegram relays	Pravda Poland relays one channel 332/332 times; fixed feeder chains	T0049.003 Bots Amplify via Automated Forwarding and Reposting; T0119 Cross-Posting
Limoges attribution claim	Immigrants/Muslims blamed for the fire without evidence; spread by forwards and copy-paste	T0068 Respond to Breaking News Event or Active Crisis; T0023.001 Reframe Context; T0118 Amplify Existing Narrative; T0084.001 Use Copypasta
Drift Theory content farm	AI-assisted template videos on unrelated topics; clickbait titles on a new channel	T0016 Create Clickbait; T0129.002 Generate Content Unrelated to Narrative; T0150.001 Newly Created Asset
Doppelganger (X)	After the protests, links through 13 repurposed domains, new to the operation, on one IP address of the same hosting network, then cloaking pages, to clones of DER SPIEGEL and Walla!	T0149.004 Redirecting Domain Asset; T0149.006 IP Address Asset; T0150.004 Repurposed Asset; T0143.003 Impersonated Persona

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Data appendix: the numbers behind each chart

Each table holds the full data behind the figure with the same number, so readers can check or rebuild each chart. Percentages are shares of posts (or comments) unless the column says otherwise. The same tables are available as CSV files on request. Tables 1, 2, 6, 9, 13, 14 and 18 add rows or columns for 27 October–6 November and keep the 11–26 October values as published. Tables 3, 4, 7, 8, 11 and 12 add values recomputed for 11 October–6 November next to the 11–26 October values. Tables 5, 10, 15, 16 and 17 cover 11–26 October and were not updated. In tables 2, 13, 14 and 18 the two Meltwater replacement searches are cut as described in the Method section.

Table 1. Posts per day by source, 11 October–6 November (Meltwater sources; Exorde and Telegram are samples).

Date	News, Facebook, Reddit, YouTube, Bluesky, forums
11 Oct	7467
12 Oct	7283
13 Oct	9736
14 Oct	9114
15 Oct	8747
16 Oct	12,377
17 Oct	29,869
18 Oct	45,672
19 Oct	66,862
20 Oct	56,658
21 Oct	37,470
22 Oct	31,459
23 Oct	28,044
24 Oct	28,792
25 Oct	19,609
26 Oct	16,926
27 Oct	12,833
28 Oct	10,293
29 Oct	8840
30 Oct	12,701
31 Oct	14,279
1 Nov	11,347
2 Nov	12,003
3 Nov	11,933
4 Nov	10,832
5 Nov	21,909
6 Nov	4,525

From 27 October the counts come from Meltwater app downloads, which return about 11–13% more documents per day than the API used before, so the new rows are not directly comparable with the earlier ones.

Table 2. Share of each day's relevant posts by narrative, 11 October–6 November.

Date	Economic grievance	Migration / Islam blame	Civil war / collapse	Police violence	Ukraine war link	Heritage destroyed

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11	11.5	10.3	4.0	2.1	2.1	0.2
12	11.6	10.5	3.4	2.0	2.2	0.2
13	12.6	6.4	4.5	2.9	1.9	0.3
14	13.2	8.7	1.9	3.5	3.5	0.2
15	16.4	9.7	2.0	4.0	3.8	0.2
16	17.0	6.4	2.9	4.4	3.3	0.2
17	11.4	4.4	5.3	6.3	2.0	3.1
18	9.9	9.3	8.6	2.8	1.4	5.1
19	9.1	8.4	6.0	2.0	1.5	1.9
20	8.4	9.4	4.7	1.8	1.5	3.1
21	8.7	9.7	4.5	2.2	1.7	2.2
22	9.6	7.3	3.5	1.7	1.8	2.0
23	9.6	7.4	3.2	1.9	1.5	1.4
24	9.3	6.6	3.4	5.0	1.5	0.9
25	11.0	9.2	3.9	3.7	2.0	0.6
26	10.8	7.6	3.6	2.7	2.2	0.4
27	10.0	6.7	2.8	2.0	2.1	0.7
28	9.4	5.5	3.0	2.3	2.0	2.2
29	9.8	9.7	3.7	2.1	2.5	0.9
30	11.0	8.7	3.4	2.0	2.2	0.6
31	9.5	6.5	2.7	3.2	2.1	0.3
1 Nov	10.3	8.3	3.2	3.0	2.8	0.4
2	9.1	7.3	2.3	1.8	2.1	0.3
3	10.2	5.7	1.9	2.2	2.9	0.3
4	10.6	4.8	1.8	1.5	2.5	0.1
5	7.2	2.3	0.9	2.4	0.9	0.1
6	7.7	3.7	1.4	2.4	1.1	0.2

Table 3. Share of posts using the migration / Islam frame, by language, 11–26 October and 11 October–6 November.

Language	% of posts, 11–26 Oct	% of posts, 11 Oct–6 Nov
en	14.5	13.8
pl	12.3	11.2
it	11.5	13.5
ru	10.9	9.9
nl	9.1	8.9
de	8.8	8.1
fr	3.1	2.9
es	3.1	2.5
pt	2.1	1.7

Table 4. Posts about the main flashpoints from home-language and foreign-language accounts, 11–26 October and 11 October–6 November.

Place	Home-language posts, 11–26 Oct	Foreign-language posts, 11–26 Oct	Foreign-language share, 11–26 Oct	Home-language posts, 11 Oct–6 Nov	Foreign-language posts, 11 Oct–6 Nov	Foreign-language share, 11 Oct–6 Nov
Paris	35,661	63,398	0.6	49,733	79,918	0.62
Milano	28,729	12,312	0.3	34,316	13,515	0.28

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Marseille	9,585	7,531	0.4	12,153	8,942	0.42
Limoges	7,518	8,825	0.5	9,418	9,130	0.49
Lyon	8,307	7,982	0.5	11,077	9,792	0.47
Roma	5,386	2,775	0.3	7,635	3,613	0.32
Madrid	6,554	1,537	0.2	8,910	2,379	0.21
Torino	6,249	1,763	0.2	9,310	2,525	0.21
Barcelona	4,709	3,010	0.4	7,917	3,644	0.32
Lisboa	6,070	1,332	0.2	9,743	2,022	0.17
Bologna	3,633	1,484	0.3	4,769	1,623	0.25
Lille	2,437	2,341	0.5	2,938	2,479	0.46
Bordeaux	2,903	1,563	0.3	3,961	1,987	0.33
Bruxelles	787	3,353	0.8	942	4,278	0.82
Tirana	–	–	–	304	4,652	0.94

Table 5. How posts about the Limoges fire were framed, by language, 11–26 October.

Language	Civil war collapse	Heritage destroyed	Migration islam blame
fr	7.0	71.6	4.1
en	31.2	83.4	18.5
de	18.9	91.7	19.3
ru	9.6	45.2	20.5
es	3.0	12.2	4.2

Table 6. Pravda network articles about the unrest, per six hours, 11 October–6 November.

Date	Articles	Date	Articles
2026-10-11 06:00	3	2026-10-24 12:00	53
2026-10-11 12:00	5	2026-10-24 18:00	48
2026-10-11 18:00	10	2026-10-25 00:00	2
2026-10-12 00:00	3	2026-10-25 06:00	90
2026-10-12 06:00	6	2026-10-25 12:00	59
2026-10-12 12:00	15	2026-10-25 18:00	25
2026-10-12 18:00	9	2026-10-26 00:00	9
2026-10-13 06:00	15	2026-10-26 06:00	69
2026-10-13 12:00	26	2026-10-26 12:00	44
2026-10-13 18:00	11	2026-10-26 18:00	25
2026-10-14 00:00	5	2026-10-27 00:00	10
2026-10-14 06:00	17	2026-10-27 06:00	27
2026-10-14 12:00	17	2026-10-27 12:00	43
2026-10-14 18:00	5	2026-10-27 18:00	19
2026-10-15 00:00	1	2026-10-28 00:00	1
2026-10-15 06:00	6	2026-10-28 06:00	41
2026-10-15 12:00	25	2026-10-28 12:00	39
2026-10-15 18:00	6	2026-10-28 18:00	13
2026-10-16 00:00	3	2026-10-29 00:00	2
2026-10-16 06:00	7	2026-10-29 06:00	18
2026-10-16 12:00	17	2026-10-29 12:00	19

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Date	Articles	Date	Articles
2026-10-16 18:00	11	2026-10-29 18:00	6
2026-10-17 00:00	5	2026-10-30 00:00	2
2026-10-17 06:00	38	2026-10-30 06:00	10
2026-10-17 12:00	83	2026-10-30 12:00	21
2026-10-17 18:00	151	2026-10-30 18:00	5
2026-10-18 00:00	51	2026-10-31 00:00	16
2026-10-18 06:00	127	2026-10-31 06:00	38
2026-10-18 12:00	279	2026-10-31 12:00	34
2026-10-18 18:00	233	2026-10-31 18:00	33
2026-10-19 00:00	72	2026-11-01 00:00	11
2026-10-19 06:00	237	2026-11-01 06:00	15
2026-10-19 12:00	192	2026-11-01 12:00	68
2026-10-19 18:00	122	2026-11-01 18:00	7
2026-10-20 00:00	47	2026-11-02 00:00	6
2026-10-20 06:00	103	2026-11-02 06:00	16
2026-10-20 12:00	120	2026-11-02 12:00	35
2026-10-20 18:00	60	2026-11-02 18:00	6
2026-10-21 00:00	49	2026-11-03 00:00	6
2026-10-21 06:00	96	2026-11-03 06:00	31
2026-10-21 12:00	112	2026-11-03 12:00	28
2026-10-21 18:00	60	2026-11-03 18:00	28
2026-10-22 00:00	51	2026-11-04 00:00	1
2026-10-22 06:00	101	2026-11-04 06:00	9
2026-10-22 12:00	131	2026-11-04 12:00	10
2026-10-22 18:00	34	2026-11-04 18:00	5
2026-10-23 00:00	28	2026-11-05 00:00	1
2026-10-23 06:00	66	2026-11-05 06:00	46
2026-10-23 12:00	50	2026-11-05 12:00	72
2026-10-23 18:00	37	2026-11-05 18:00	37
2026-10-24 00:00	18	2026-11-06 00:00	8
2026-10-24 06:00	35	2026-11-06 06:00	21

Table 7. Pravda network articles by site (subdomain of news-pravda.com), top 10, 11–26 October and 11 October–6 November.

Site	Articles, 11–26 Oct	Articles, 11 Oct–6 Nov
france	1111	1384
francais	554	680
news-pravda.com (main)	474	562
spanish	311	381
deutsch	151	176
usa	116	140
germany	102	144
italy	101	126
spain	92	115
eu	87	115

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Table 8. Pravda network articles by language of the article, 11–26 October and 11 October–6 November.

	Articles, 11–26 Oct	Articles, 11 Oct–6 Nov
English	1404	1740
French	1244	1578
Spanish	379	461
German	262	316
Italian	(in Other)	67
Dutch	(in Other)	51
Other	146	86

Table 9. Doppelganger posts on X in synchronised multi-language waves, per day, 1 September–6 November.

Date	French	German	English	Polish	Date	French	German	English	Polish
2026-09-01	0	0	0	0	2026-10-05	10	10	19	0
2026-09-02	8	8	8	0	2026-10-06	0	0	0	0
2026-09-03	19	20	10	0	2026-10-07	10	10	10	10
2026-09-04	0	0	0	0	2026-10-08	30	30	37	0
2026-09-05	0	0	0	0	2026-10-09	20	20	10	0
2026-09-06	0	0	0	0	2026-10-10	0	0	0	0
2026-09-07	9	4	5	0	2026-10-11	0	0	0	0
2026-09-08	10	9	0	7	2026-10-12	0	0	0	0
2026-09-09	8	8	8	0	2026-10-13	0	0	9	0
2026-09-10	0	0	0	0	2026-10-14	14	9	0	0
2026-09-11	5	8	10	0	2026-10-15	0	0	0	0
2026-09-12	0	0	0	0	2026-10-16	0	0	0	0
2026-09-13	0	0	0	0	2026-10-17	0	0	0	0
2026-09-14	0	0	0	0	2026-10-18	0	0	0	0
2026-09-15	6	10	0	4	2026-10-19	0	0	0	0
2026-09-16	0	0	0	0	2026-10-20	0	0	0	0
2026-09-17	0	0	0	0	2026-10-21	20	20	19	0
2026-09-18	0	0	0	0	2026-10-22	20	19	20	0
2026-09-19	0	0	0	0	2026-10-23	0	0	0	0
2026-09-20	0	0	0	0	2026-10-24	7	3	8	0
2026-09-21	0	0	0	0	2026-10-25	0	0	0	0
2026-09-22	0	0	0	0	2026-10-26	10	10	2	10
2026-09-23	0	0	0	0	2026-10-27	0	0	0	0
2026-09-24	0	0	0	0	2026-10-28	4	4	18	0
2026-09-25	9	8	6	0	2026-10-29	0	0	0	0
2026-09-26	8	8	2	0	2026-10-30	10	10	0	10
2026-09-27	0	0	0	0	2026-10-31	0	0	8	0
2026-09-28	10	8	10	10	2026-11-01	0	0	0	0
2026-09-29	0	0	8	0	2026-11-02	5	6	6	3
2026-09-30	0	0	0	0	2026-11-03	10	9	8	0
2026-10-01	18	22	13	0	2026-11-04	9	9	3	0
2026-10-02	20	9	20	0	2026-11-05	0	0	0	0
2026-10-03	0	0	0	0	2026-11-06	0	0	0	0

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Date	French	German	English	Polish	Date	French	German	English	Polish
2026-10-04	0	0	8	0					

The 28 and 31 October posts come from deleted accounts or a single account.

Table 10. First post by each Known Actor using the migration / Islam frame, 11–26 October.

Account	First post (UTC)
RadioGenoa	2026-10-11 13:35
ZemmourEric	2026-10-13 08:55
WallStreetApes	2026-10-13 19:39
MarionMarechal	2026-10-14 08:25
visegrad24	2026-10-14 12:03
TRobinsonNewEra	2026-10-14 18:58
LegaSalvini	2026-10-15 11:20
MarioNawfal	2026-10-15 12:40
eciotti	2026-10-15 14:46
matteosalvinimi	2026-10-17 17:55
JDVance	2026-10-18 01:21
geertwilderspvv	2026-10-18 18:18
J_Bardella	2026-10-19 07:15
PatriotsEP	2026-10-19 17:10

Table 11. How much more (or less) often each narrative appears on each platform than on average, 11–26 October and 11 October–6 November.

Platform	Migration islam blame	Civil war collapse	Heritage destroyed	Police violence	Ukraine war link	Foreign interference claim	Macron illegitimacy	Revolution insurrection	Economic grievance	mobilise
11–26 October										
telegram	1.5	1.4	2.3	2.4	5.8	5.7	3.1	3.0	1.6	1.8
x	1.4	1.0	1.2	0.8	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.5
facebook	2.1	2.5	2.6	2.2	1.3	0.9	2.2	2.3	2.5	3.5
reddit	3.1	0.8	0.7	1.1	4.2	2.0	1.9	5.7	2.0	0.7
youtube	1.1	1.8	0.9	0.8	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.5	0.8	0.6
tiktok	1.0	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.3	0.7	1.4	1.6	1.0
instagram	1.9	0.6	0.7	1.2	0.7	0.5	1.3	0.8	1.8	1.5
bluesky	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.3	0.9	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.6
news	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.8	0.8
11 October–6 November										
telegram	1.5	1.5	2.2	2.6	6.7	6.5	3.4	3.2	1.7	1.9
x	1.3	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.5
facebook	2.0	2.4	2.7	2.1	1.1	0.8	2.0	2.1	2.3	3.2
reddit	3.0	0.9	0.8	1.2	3.5	1.9	1.9	5.6	2.0	0.7
youtube	1.2	1.9	1.0	0.9	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.6	0.8	0.6
tiktok	1.1	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.3	0.8	1.4	1.6	1.0
instagram	1.9	0.6	0.8	1.3	0.7	0.5	1.4	0.8	1.9	1.5
bluesky	0.4	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.3	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.8	0.7
news	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.9	0.9

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Table 12. Share of relevant posts by platform, 11–26 October and 11 October–6 November.

	Posts, 11–26 Oct	Posts, 11 Oct–6 Nov	Share, 11 Oct–6 Nov (%)
News	241,597	323,880	32.2
X	159,212	290,104	28.8
YouTube	67,709	95,533	9.5
Facebook	57,620	73,040	7.3
Telegram	50,698	76,784	7.6
Other	112,599	146,742	14.6

Sources changed on 27 October, so compare the shares, not the post counts.

Table 13. Spanish-language posts per day: Maricarmen against France, 11 October–6 November.

Date	Maricarmen / housing	France unrest
11 Oct	1789	210
12 Oct	1408	116
13 Oct	915	181
14 Oct	1015	218
15 Oct	782	165
16 Oct	709	268
17 Oct	593	2554
18 Oct	246	5485
19 Oct	324	6852
20 Oct	277	4070
21 Oct	315	2603
22 Oct	1084	1924
23 Oct	666	1735
24 Oct	172	2515
25 Oct	216	1241
26 Oct	265	938
27 Oct	355	561
28 Oct	628	494
29 Oct	518	376
30 Oct	416	419
31 Oct	315	1413
1 Nov	276	938
2 Nov	326	537
3 Nov	529	408
4 Nov	326	237
5 Nov	351	1740
6 Nov	114	326

Table 14. Share of all posts by each actor group that concern the unrest, per day, 11 October–6 November.

Day	State media / state-linked	Foreign influencers	French opposition politicians	Rybar network (Telegram)
11 Oct	11.0	2.5	7.1	–
12 Oct	9.4	2.7	1.8	–

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13 Oct	15.0	3.7	3.5	1.6
14 Oct	8.8	1.7	6.4	1.0
15 Oct	13.7	0.7	4.6	1.3
16 Oct	8.3	2.5	12.3	1.4
17 Oct	40.7	24.0	25.7	6.8
18 Oct	30.1	22.4	17.3	9.9
19 Oct	22.0	22.4	19.3	7.1
20 Oct	18.5	15.8	11.7	3.6
21 Oct	11.3	12.8	10.3	3.7
22 Oct	13.2	10.0	13.4	3.7
23 Oct	10.5	5.9	5.0	2.1
24 Oct	33.5	23.7	11.1	5.5
25 Oct	17.7	8.1	5.9	4.6
26 Oct	9.6	4.3	12.2	2.5
27 Oct	10.7	0.6	9.5	1.5
28 Oct	5.5	1.7	7.4	2.1
29 Oct	8.3	1.8	1.3	1.5
30 Oct	8.7	1.3	4.5	2.2
31 Oct	22.2	12.1	0.0	3.6
1 Nov	15.2	4.8	3.8	3.2
2 Nov	17.0	–	–	2.0
3 Nov	12.2	–	–	1.9
4 Nov	7.0	–	–	1.4
5 Nov	33.1	–	–	2.2
6 Nov	13.9	–	–	0.0

Table 15. Share of comments using the migration / Islam frame, by comment language and platform, 11–26 October.

Language	YouTube	TikTok
French	0.8	0.3
English	5.2	2.8
German	4.0	0.7
Italian	2.4	0.4
Spanish	1.4	1.7
Portuguese	4.3	2.5

Table 16. Share of comments using the migration / Islam frame, by channel (100 or more comments), 11–26 October.

Label	Platform	Channel	Comments	Migration / Islam frame (% of comments)
polsatnews.pl (YT)	youtube	polsatnews.pl	150	7.3
Marc Friedrich (YT)	youtube	Marc Friedrich	100	7.0
New York Post (YT)	youtube	New York Post	100	5.0
Observador (YT)	youtube	Observador	100	5.0
Fox News (YT)	youtube	Fox News	600	4.7
Bloomberg Television (YT)	youtube	Bloomberg Television	100	4.0
Kana½Zero (YT)	youtube	Kana½Zero	350	3.1
BBC News (YT)	youtube	BBC News	300	3.0

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TF1 INFO (YT)	youtube	TF1 INFO	200	1.0
cnews (TT)	tiktok	cnews	758	0.3
franceinfo (YT)	youtube	franceinfo	350	0.3
BFMTV (YT)	youtube	BFMTV	235	0.0
bfmtv (TT)	tiktok	bfmtv	202	0.0
CNEWS (YT)	youtube	CNEWS	150	0.0
tf1info (TT)	tiktok	tf1info	138	0.0
Brut (YT)	youtube	Brut	100	0.0

Table 17. Limoges: first reports of the fire and the two claim strands, 17–18 October (UTC).

Time utc	strand	display	type	Platform	reach	Reach kind
2026-10-17 16:50	Fire reported	jon_delorraine	French news-alert account on X	x	122,354	followers
2026-10-17 16:54	Fire reported	ici Limousin	French public radio (local)	bluesky		
2026-10-17 16:55	Fire reported	Cerfia	French news-alert account	x	1,302,945	followers
2026-10-17 16:56	Fire reported	Bastion Media	French news-alert account	x	98,473	followers
2026-10-17 16:57	Fire reported	Impact Media	French news-alert account	x	229,551	followers
2026-10-17 16:57	Fire reported	AlertesInfos	French news-alert account	x	875,913	followers
2026-10-17 17:02	Fire reported	CIG (Counter Intelligence Global)	English-language Telegram channel	telegram	4,917	views
2026-10-17 16:59	English claim	Eric Daugherty	US commentator	x	1,211,141	followers
2026-10-17 19:10	English claim	realMaalouf	English-language X account (511k followers)	x	511,649	followers
2026-10-17 19:38	English claim	Benny Johnson	US commentator	x	4,153,456	followers
2026-10-17 21:58	English claim	CIG (Counter Intelligence Global)	English-language Telegram channel	telegram	22,030	views
2026-10-17 22:01	English claim	rnintel	English-language Telegram channel	telegram	13,793	views
2026-10-17 18:25	Russian claim	Alex Parker Returns	Russian-language Telegram channel	telegram	94,346	views
2026-10-17 18:45	Russian claim	Svodki opolcheniya Novorossii	Pro-war Russian Telegram channel	telegram	14,987	views
2026-10-17 18:57	Russian claim	Voenkor Kotenok	Russian war-correspondent Telegram channel	telegram	17,222	views
2026-10-17 20:07	Russian claim	dshrg2	Russian-language Telegram channel	telegram	45,344	views
2026-10-17 20:39	Russian claim	SVTV News	Russian-language news channel	telegram	19,433	views
2026-10-17 20:49	Russian claim	Mikhail Delyagin	Russian State Duma deputy, Telegram channel	telegram	10,009	views
2026-10-17 21:24	Russian claim	nemalahov	Russian-language Telegram channel	telegram	13,238	views
2026-10-17 22:05	Russian claim	infoWAR	Russian-language Telegram channel	telegram	15,404	views
2026-10-17 23:05	Russian claim	bankrollo	Russian-language finance and news channel	telegram	105,559	views
2026-10-17 23:20	Russian claim	banki_oil	Russian-language finance and news channel	telegram	96,857	views
2026-10-18 07:24	Russian claim	rhymestg	Russian-language Telegram channel	telegram	134,365	views
2026-10-18 08:14	Russian claim	Vypuskayte Krakena Z	Pro-war Russian Telegram channel	telegram	38,497	views

Table 18. Posts naming the Pink Panther images per day, 15 October–6 November: shared as real or as a joke, or said to be AI-made or fake.

day	shared as real or as a joke	said AI-made or fake
10-15	3	0
10-16	11	5
10-17	5	1
10-18	44	10
10-19	79	29
10-20	44	29
10-21	12	10

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10-22	5	7
10-23	3	7
10-24	2	4
10-25	1	13
10-26	0	1
10-27	0	3
10-28	1	10
10-29	4	2
10-30	3	0
10-31	0	0
11-01	4	0
11-02	0	0
11-03	0	0
11-04	0	0
11-05	0	1
11-06	0	0

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