Causes of the Explosion in European Countries

(Translated)

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Protests and demonstrations erupted in a number of European countries—such as France, Belgium, and Spain—against the rising cost of living and budget cuts to schools and universities, with some protests marked by violence, destruction, and looting.

Subsequently, the wave of protests by school and university students spread across France, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Austria, even reaching Albania, while signs of unrest emerged in Germany, the Netherlands, Serbia, and Ireland. How did this wave of protests evolve, and what are the reasons for this explosion?

First: Since Trump came to power in his second term, he has pressured NATO member states to increase their military spending by escalating percentages, aiming for record levels (targeting 5% of GDP by 2035)—a threshold that no country within the alliance, including the United States (where military spending is 4.3% of GDP), has yet achieved.

Second: The Russian-Ukrainian war. Europe has been significantly affected by the war in Ukraine, and its economic and living repercussions have been felt across the continent. Among the most prominent repercussions are:

- The energy and heating crisis, caused by the disruption of Russian supplies, which led to soaring gas and electricity prices and severe financial inflation in most European countries.

- Rising costs of living and housing, coupled with market instability, prompting people to take to the streets to demand a dignified life, improved salaries, and the rejection of cuts to public spending, as seen in Spain, France, and Belgium.

- Europe’s funding of the war with billions of dollars at the expense of the welfare state and domestic services (such as schools and healthcare). Europe shifted resources to defense spending—some sent directly to Ukraine, and some allocated to developing national military arsenals, such as Germany's allocation of one hundred billion euros—all of which came at the expense of services for European citizens.

Newsweek Magazine reported in a piece by writer Tom O’Connor that a renewed war on Iran could reduce Washington's ability to supply its European allies with weapons at a time when the continent needs to accelerate its rearmament. The newspaper quoted European experts stating that the problem lies not only in the volume of defense spending but in Europe’s inability to build an independent industrial base, as its long-term reliance on America has left the continent vulnerable should the US become preoccupied with other conflicts.

Third: French President Macron stated that people have the right to be angry about rising fuel prices, noting that his country is experiencing direct repercussions from the crisis of closing the Strait of Hormuz.

According to data from the European Statistical Office, Eurostat, the European Union relies on external sources for 96% of its oil needs and 85% of its gas needs. Gas inventories in EU countries stand at approximately 71.5%, compared to a seasonal average of around 92%, according to the European Gas Infrastructure Organization.

Imports of liquefied natural gas from America constituted approximately 57% of Europe's total supplies, following a decline in supplies from Gulf countries after the outbreak of the conflict. The crisis is deepening with Europe's increasing reliance on liquefied natural gas after the decline in gas supplies from Russia since the start of its invasion of Ukraine. Compounding this is the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, rising shipping costs, faltering supplies, and a dramatic surge in prices.

Additional reasons: It is important to note that there are many other reasons for these demonstrations, including:

- Deep domestic divisions and the complex history and geography between European countries.

- The rising influence of the far-right, as the political landscape has shifted in recent years. The far-right has returned to power in Italy under Giorgia Meloni, is nearing leadership in France through Marine Le Pen, and the Alternative for Germany party is making substantial gains. These conditions provide fertile ground for the far-right to exploit societal and economic discontent for political gain.

- Europe’s chronic economic weakness, the aging demographics of its populations, competition from China’s lower-cost and higher-quality industries, and the tariff policies and stance toward the European Union adopted by America’s President Trump.

- Rising debt deficits in European countries; France’s public debt reached approximately 3.6 trillion euros (around 3.9 trillion dollars) at the end of the second quarter of 2026, equivalent to 119% of its GDP.

The European Commission expects public debt in the eurozone to rise from 88.7% of GDP in 2025 to 90.2% in 2026, and to 91.2% in 2027, due to increasing deficits, interest costs, and weak growth. In its latest forecast issued on October 13, the International Monetary Fund lowered its growth forecast for the eurozone economy to 1.1% in 2026, expecting the French economy to grow by 0.4% compared to 2.5% for the Spanish economy.

In conclusion, the real crisis is not merely one of governance in European countries—though they do suffer from mismanagement and corruption—but is in fact a crisis of ideology and civilization that has proven its failure. It carries the seeds of its own destruction and is in its death throes. The solution will not be found, as is their habit, through patchwork fixes and changing governments and individuals, but through a comprehensive civilizational and ideological change. This can only be achieved through the great ideology of Islam. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنكاً﴾ **“And whoever turns away from My remembrance—indeed, he will have a miserable life”** [TMQ Surah Taha: 124].