

# Urban Minority Administrators: Politics, Policy, And Style

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## Ethnic Conflict in France

### A Case for Representative Bureaucracy?

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In the last 3 years, France has seen a series of violent protests by ethnic minorities in regard to jobs, legal discrimination, and access to positions in the public bureaucracy. Because France as a nation rejects the concepts of race and ethnicity, it has also failed to consider any possible benefits that might accrue from a representative bureaucracy. This article examines whether French ethnic protests are linked to bureaucratic access issues and how a policy seeking a more representative bureaucracy might benefit the French Republic.

**Keywords:** France; French civil service; representative bureaucracy; ethnic conflict; ethnic minorities

In 2005, 2006, and 2007, France was wracked by a series of violent protests by young immigrants. In late October 2005, then Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy vowed that he would clean out the "thugs" and "scum" in the Paris suburbs "with a power hose" (*BBC News*, 2005c). Residents responded to his comments by pelting him with rocks and bottles. Two days following Sarkozy's remarks, two teenagers were accidentally electrocuted while hiding from police in an electricity substation. News of the teenagers' deaths sparked protests, which quickly escalated to riots. In the first night, 15 vehicles were set ablaze (*BBC News*, 2005b).

The government responded with a promise of "zero tolerance" and sent in special police reinforcements for good measure (*BBC News*, 2005a). The riots further escalated and spread to surrounding regions after a teargas grenade exploded at a local mosque.<sup>1</sup> Hundreds of vehicles were torched nightly, culminating in 3 consecutive nights where more than 1,000 vehicles were burned nightly in nearly 300 towns across France. In all, the 2005 riots lasted 20 days, affected 274 towns, and resulted in 8,973 torched vehicles, 2,888 arrests, 1 death, 126 injured police and firefighters, and more than \$200 million in estimated damage (*BBC News*, 2006).

A demonstration on the first anniversary of these riots suggests that the underlying causes had gone untreated. Indeed, 2 years later in November of 2007, additional riots

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