

Sarkozy vs. Qaddafi

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THE ONGOING UNREST IN ARAB COUNTRIES has been at the center of international attention for months. The “Arab spring” has a different color in each Middle Eastern and North African country. Nevertheless, the causes of crisis are similar in each country. They include unsolved domestic problems such as the lack of legal and clear mechanisms of power rotation that would be accepted by society; economic and political stagnation; poverty (absolute or relative) of the overwhelming majority of the population despite the enormous incomes of the political elite; corruption; and unemployment. These crises are interdependent to a certain extent, which has led people to compare them to a “domino effect.”

Libya has become an important link in the chain of Arab crises. The interference of the so-called “Coalition of the Willing” and the beginning of bombardments of Libya has brought the conflict to a new level and exacerbated internal disagreements. France and Great Britain were the initiators of external intervention, which was quite surprising, especially in view of the categorical refusal of the French government to support the U.S. intervention in Iraq in 2003. At that time, the tandem of France and Germany split NATO. As a result, NATO did not participate in the Iraqi war, which was not sanctioned by the UN. Nevertheless, France adopted a radically different stance during the 2011 Libyan crisis by supporting military operations and, more importantly, becoming their main initiator and organizer. Paris was the first to recognize the Libyan opposition, resolutely supported the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1973 that, to all intents and purposes, opened the way to military intervention in the Libyan conflict, and also lobbied for the creation of a coalition of states willing to participate in bombings directed against the Qaddafi

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regime. What explains France's radical departure from its traditional reluctance to use armed force? What are the first interim results of this approach? Does it represent a fundamental change in the country's foreign policy or is it only a "zigzag" resulting from the opportunistic domestic policies of the French president? We will try to give preliminary answers to these questions, recognizing that the conflict has not yet been resolved and that the full truth still remains to come out.

Was It an Attempt to Raise Sarkozy's Rating?

ONE OFTEN READS ASSERTIONS in the press that the current French president is trying to use a "small yet triumphant" war to make French voters forget about domestic problems and raise his falling rating.

According to public opinion polls, Nicolas Sarkozy's popularity was low in February-March and continued to fall steadily. In surveys conducted by IFOP in March, only 31% of respondents approved the president's work, while 69% disapproved. The president's rating fell by 3% over a month,¹ although economic growth indicators show that the crisis is ending. In the fourth quarter of 2010, the economy grew by 0.4%, industrial production increased by 1.8%, and the business climate improved.² Nevertheless, polls show that Sarkozy's domestic policy evokes the greatest discontent among the population. Experts identify two main groups of causes of the president's rapidly falling rating: first of all, the reaction to reforms aimed at adapting French society to the challenges of globalism (raising the retirement age, cutting spending on education, and optimizing military expenditures) and, secondly, the consequences of the international financial and economic crisis that has had a painful impact on the French economy. The difficult socio-economic reforms are still continuing. Experts note that they will give results only in a few years from now at best. So far, the French have not felt any positive results from the revival of the economy. They continue to "tighten their belts" and experience a feeling of irritation about the high unemployment, which remains at a level of 9.6%.

The specificity and complexity of the situation for Sarkozy lies in the fact that relations with the Arab world are not only an issue of foreign policy but also a major domestic problem for France.

Another fundamental challenge is the need to harmoniously integrate the “new French” (second and third-generation immigrants) into society and cope with the uncontrollable influx of laborers from Africa and the Middle East. French voters tend to place the responsibility for these problems on the political forces in power and, in particular, on Sarkozy himself.

Interestingly, Sarkozy’s foreign policy has not been subject so far to such vigorous criticism from French society as his domestic policy. For a long time, public approval of the president’s actions abroad surpassed disapproval (though by a small margin). Nevertheless, one would be wrong to assume that the French unanimously support their president’s international policy. Sarkozy’s radical revision of the traditional priorities of French foreign policy after he came to power was not fully accepted by society.

France’s reintegration into NATO in April 2009 evoked an ambiguous response among the military-political and diplomatic elite, who continue to cling to the idea of the “greatness of France.” Moreover, the military reform, which was launched after the adoption of the White Paper in 2008, and the reduction of military spending have also evoked discontent among the French military. This is shown, in particular, by an anonymous letter that appeared in the press in the summer of 2008 and that was written by a group of high-ranking French officers under the pseudonym “Surcouf.”³ The letter’s authors noted that France’s role in the world arena is progressively declining. At the same time, discontent continued to grow among top-level diplomats. Two former ministers of foreign affairs, Alain Juppé and Hubert Védrine, published an article in which they warned that “the diplomatic toolkit was on the verge of breakdown.”⁴

In early 2011, the situation became tenser on account of evident foreign policy blunders that resulted from erroneous assessments of events in the Arab world. The government greatly underestimated the scope, causes, and prospects of protest movements in the Middle East. The emerging unrest called for a rapid and competent reaction from Paris. Yet, according to the left-center magazine *L’Express*, “one did not hear the Arab awakening in the Elysée Palace,” although political experts had forecast such a course of events. For example, Olivier Roy, specialist on the South Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions, predicted six years ago that the “democratization of the Middle East is inevitable despite the growing influence of Islamists” and sent a memo to this regard to the analytical department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The document

apparently did not get any attention. As one expert said, it has been the case from Mitterrand to Sarkozy in France that, if a dossier is handled by a president, everyone sticks to his point of view. “The president believes that his understanding is right, because he has dined with the King of Morocco, met with a personal friend of Qaddafi, and spoken with the wife of a minister... He’s convinced that he knows everything. And he doesn’t give a damn about what experts say.”⁵ This sometimes leads to wrong decisions, as was the case with the beginning of protests in the Arab world. One gets the impression that the government simply “overlooked” them.

Indirectly, it may be confirmed by the fact that, at the height of the Arab crisis, French Prime Minister François Fillon went on vacation to Egypt, taking advantage of the hospitality of President Mubarak, who resigned a short time afterward. However, French Minister of Foreign Affairs Michèle Alliot-Marie committed a more serious blunder in late December 2010. This experienced politician and close associate of Nicolas Sarkozy should have had all the necessary information about events in the Arab world at her disposal. Nevertheless, after the start of unrest, Michèle Alliot-Marie and her parents went on vacation to Tunisia on the personal jet of businessman Aziz Miled, a close associate of President Ben Ali, and stayed at a hotel that belonged to him. Newspapers reported that, during the trip, Michèle Alliot-Marie’s father bought a Tunisian real-estate company. The press conjectured that the deal was quite advantageous for the foreign minister of France. Speaking in the French Parliament in January, Alliot-Marie declared that Paris is ready to “share with Tunisia French experience in maintaining order.” In other words, she offered help to “falling” President Ben Ali in suppressing the unrest.

These clear foreign policy blunders evoked confusion among the government and led to the harsh criticism of the president by the opposition, which traditionally gives a lot of importance to human rights and the respect of democratic norms. Human rights activists unfurled a campaign in parliament and the press, which had a negative impact on the president’s image. They noted that France remained passive, did not support the “Arab spring,” and undermined its international standing. Michèle Alliot-Marie’s foreign policy blunders hurt the reputation not only of the president himself but also of the country’s foreign policy as a whole, which strove to revive relations with Arab regimes.

In February 2011, a new letter was published by top-level diplomats

(who remained anonymous this time, writing under the pseudonym of “Marly”).⁶ Like the French military, they blamed the government for lacking a “long-term vision” of the country’s foreign policy: “France’s voice is no longer heard in the world. Our backing of U.S. policy misleads many of our partners... During the Cold War, we were in the Western camp yet were able to influence the positions of both camps thanks to our original policies. Today, we have joined the United States and are of little interest to anyone, because we have lost our freedom of maneuver. This is a result not of the work of diplomats but of the choice of politicians.” The gist of the criticism was that “France has lost its face,” because its foreign policy is built on “private ties and private interests” under the influence of “improvisation and impulsivity.” This showed that the situation was becoming extraordinary. It was particularly important that the letter’s signers were diplomats in service. The dissatisfaction with foreign policy, for which the president is traditionally held responsible, spread not only to the opposition but also to the highest circles of the French ruling elite.

This led Nicolas Sarkozy to dismiss the minister of foreign affairs and replace her by her one-time rival Alain Juppé. In addition, a decree was promulgated prohibiting ministers to spend their vacation outside of France without special permission. This was followed by Sarkozy’s “fateful” initiatives against Libya.

The Qaddafi regime was not chosen here by chance. In France, the Libyan leader has a long-term reputation of an odious and extravagant dictator that periodically blows up civil airplanes of Western air companies. Qaddafi has long juxtaposed himself to the world community and quarreled with the U.S. and other Western countries. Among moderate Arab countries, he is also considered an unpredictable and scandalous politician. His regime’s repressions against its own population have evoked condemnation and criticism from French human rights organizations, journalists, and left-wing intellectuals. This criticism became stronger after Qaddafi began to repress the opposition’s manifestations in Libya and threatened to use airplanes and heavy artillery against demonstrators. Fears that Qaddafi could organize a massacre were augmented by the fact that certain African countries have provided examples of bloody tribal conflicts and inhuman cruelty to the world over the past decades. Qaddafi’s suppression of popular turmoil provided a good opportunity for the French government to show France’s new role in the world arena, make people forget Alliot-Marie’s regretful blunders, and

appease the most ardent critics.

Was Sarkozy successful in stopping his falling rating and uniting the country around his politics?

Polls have shown that, in March, 66% of the French supported the start of bombings against Qaddafi's forces by the aviation of the "Coalition of the Willing," and only 34% condemned them. This was the highest level of support among all NATO countries. However, as the military conflict in Libya aggravated, public support for France's actions against Tripoli declined. In April, only 58% of the French approved NATO's actions in Libya – 8% less than in the second half of March, when the coalition was only entering the conflict. The share of public disapproval of these actions rose to 42%.⁷

Sarkozy's Libyan policy slowed down the fall of his rating without stopping it entirely. In less than a month that elapsed since the start of operations of the international coalition in Libya, the number of people who believed that Sarkozy upholds France's interests in the world arena grew from 57 to 61% (a growth of 4%). Nevertheless, the number of French people who believed that the president is capable of reforming the country declined from 44 to 41%, and the number of those who said that his social policy is sound fell from 33 to 30%. Sarkozy's overall rating continued to decline by 1% and reached 30%. In other words, 70% of French voters did not approve of Sarkozy's work. Experts note that Sarkozy's rating in April was at its lowest level since his election to the post of president.⁸ Thus Sarkozy was unable to stop the fall of his popularity entirely.

Was Libyan Oil a Factor?

RUSSIAN NEWSPAPERS and electronic media tend to explain Nicolas Sarkozy's motives in the Libyan conflict in a plain and simple fashion. They assert that his policy is based on France's desire to get control of Libya's oil and gas fields in order to lower oil prices, which would be quite important in post-crisis France, and to promote the interests of French capital in this country. In attempt to check the veracity of these assertions, let us try to see to what extent France depends on Libyan oil and how the commercial and economic relations between the two countries evolved before the crisis.

It is clear that France's special interest in Libya has stemmed from the fact that the country has the largest proven reserves of oil and gas in

North Africa. Although oil imports by France from Libya have been limited in recent years, their share in the total French oil imports has steadily grown. French oil imports from Norway have fallen, while imports from Libya have increased. In 2008, Libya rose from sixth to fifth place among France's oil suppliers, outpacing Iran. Whereas Libya supplied almost ten times less oil than Norway, France's leading oil supplier, in 2000, the difference fell to a factor of two in 2008.⁹ 70% of the exported oil was produced in the east of the country, where the uprising broke out.

Until the beginning of unrest in Libya, France got not only oil but also gas through the Libyan-Italian gas pipeline Greenstream. The French energy giant Gaz de France Suez was involved in developing the Libyan gas fields.

According to the press, the relations between Qaddafi and the main Western companies active on the Libyan energy market became strained in 2008-2010. As an article published on the web site of the French magazine *Jeune Afrique* in February 2010 noted,¹⁰ the conditions set down by the Libyan government for Western companies operating in the country became increasingly tough over the period 2004-2008. These were years of growth of the international demand for energy carriers, fueled by the rapid development of China and a number of other countries. In these conditions, Western companies agreed to all limitations, as they would pay off in any case. The situation changed with the onset of the financial and economic crisis. The demand for energy carriers began to fall, along with the profits of Western companies. Qaddafi was confronted with the dilemma of lowering pressure on European business. In response, the Libyan leader called for all existing contracts to be revised so as to greatly augment the state's share in existing oil and gas production companies. Nevertheless, this fully lawful demand posed a threat to the profitability of oil and gas production, and Western companies refused to comply. One cannot exclude that Qaddafi's tightening of the rules of business also posed a certain threat to the interests of French companies involved in oil and gas production.

Sarkozy's stance on Libya may have also been influenced by the fact that Qaddafi had disappointed the expectations of the French president and the leaders of the French industry, who had counted on the Libyan leader's favorable attitude after Sarkozy came to power. Newspapers report that a number of bilateral agreements were signed in 2007. They included cooperation in building a nuclear power plant and purchases of

Rafale planes. The parliamentary group of Franco-Libyan friendship, which had been founded in 2003, was headed by Olivier Dassault, head of Dassault Group, which produced these planes. The French company Alstom signed contracts for the construction of telecommunication networks. Qaddafi also expressed interest in buying Airbuses. A large-scale deal for buying 41 planes was discussed. In October 2010, during the visit of the French minister of industry to Libya, an attempt was made to give a new momentum to bilateral trade and economic relations. However, according to *Le Monde*, most of the agreements have never been implemented.¹¹ All of this may have motivated Sarkozy to seek a radical solution of the Libyan issue.

Nevertheless, certain considerations speak against purely “economic” and “oil” motives.

France was not Libya’s preferential trade partner. Although Libya ranked second after Saudi Arabia in the amount of oil exports to France from African and Middle Eastern countries, the bulk of French oil imports came from Norway, Russia, and Kazakhstan.

France’s energy dependence on Libya was never great, partly because France produces 50.5% of its electric energy from its own nuclear power plants and hydroelectric plants. Moreover, although France gets Libyan gas from the Greenstream gas pipeline, the main gas suppliers to France are Norway, the Netherlands, Algeria, and Russia.¹² Libya was not one of France’s principal gas suppliers.

On the whole, trade and economic ties between Paris and Tripoli have never been extensive. Records of the French customs service list the following countries as France’s main trading partners in Africa: RSA, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. In 2009, Paris ranked only sixth among Tripoli’s trading partners.

All of this suggests that the “economic motive” was an important yet not exclusive reason for Sarkozy’s “campaign against Qaddafi.”

Subsequent events showed that France’s participation in the Libyan conflict has not led to the resolution of complex economic and financial problems of French society so far. On the contrary, unrest in the Middle East and military operations in Libya have resulted in growing oil prices. The main oil wells are being gradually decommissioned, leading to a further decrease in oil production and a constant growth of prices. This is, to a certain extent, in the interests of OPEC countries yet to the detriment of the West, including France, which is not an oil-producing country. The price of gasoline has grown in France, hurting French consumers.

Moreover, the expansion of the military conflict in Libya and the resulting growth in oil prices have made investors concerned about the possible repetition of the scenario of early 2008 when the price of oil attained \$150 per barrel, hindering economic development in developed countries. Given that the European economy has not returned to its pre-crisis level of 2007, a new growth of oil prices may stop its recovery, which would have a painful impact on France, too. At the same time, one cannot rule out that more favorable conditions will be offered to French energy giants in Libya over time. Nevertheless, this will become possible only after the victory of the opposition and the forces of the “Coalition of the Willing” and after the restoration of the oil wells, oil refineries, and ports destroyed during the war, which will require major financial investments according to experts.

Is Paris Trying on “New Clothes”?

STUDYING THE REASONS that led France to take decisive action against Libya, specialists ask whether Sarkozy’s campaign against Qaddafi reflects long-term trends in France’s foreign policy generated by the continuing transformation of the international system. These include relations with the USA and NATO, France’s EU policy, and the Mediterranean aspect of French foreign policy.

France’s reintegration into NATO in 2009 was accompanied by the declarations of French leaders that Paris would get command posts and have more influence on NATO policies. Some predicted that France would become one of Europe’s military and political leaders and assume “special responsibility” for carrying out humanitarian missions within or outside NATO. It is therefore no coincidence that, when France organized the coalition of forces against Qaddafi, Sarkozy tried to include his European allies in it. This is in keeping with the traditional French approach, which supports a more active role of the European Union (and France as one of its leaders) in foreign policy and military operations. For example, appearing at the closing press conference of the EU Council on March 11, at which the Libyan conflict was discussed, Sarkozy said, “Europe is in the forefront today... Of course, we should discuss this with our American allies ... yet what is going on concerns us above all.”¹³

One can encounter in the press an opinion that Paris intends to firmly affirm its presence in the South Mediterranean region for a long time, in particular as an influential military and political force. The USA, which wants to “leave the front lines,” is said to be ready to concede this role to

France and Great Britain. It is possible that Washington, weary from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, has given Paris a temporary *carte-blanche* for directing operations in the region, indirectly recognizing the responsibility of France and other European countries for democracy in the Mediterranean region. For example, although air operations in Libya were conferred to NATO, French leaders emphasized that it is not NATO but the “Coalition of the Willing” and its executive body, the Contact Group, which are in charge. In an interview given on March 29, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé declared that the Contact Group, which was established by coalition states at a conference in London, makes all the principal political decisions, while NATO provides the coalition with the military equipment.¹⁴ Thus the French are trying to downplay NATO’s role, making it look as if NATO is playing a secondary part in the conflict and as if the entire responsibility lies on the coalition created with France’s active support and its official body, the Contact Group.

Why did Paris focus on the South Mediterranean region? France has traditionally given a lot of importance to developing relations with countries in this area. In recent years, the Mediterranean issue has got increasing attention in French foreign policy. In 2007, France advanced the project of the Union for the Mediterranean, which has become the favorite, though not very successful, brainchild of Nicolas Sarkozy.

Paris’ special interest in developing relations with states of the South and East Mediterranean region stems from several different factors. For France, they are a gateway to the Arab world and a platform for further advancement into the African continent, which has been getting increasing attention from the world community. The region’s countries are France’s neighbors and its economic and trading partners. The inhabitants of many of them speak French. Major importance is accorded to assuring security and fighting terrorism in this region located on Europe’s doorstep. France is striving to consolidate its influence here over other major international players. In the EU, Paris has “reserved” the Mediterranean area for itself, trying to counterbalance Berlin’s strong policy on Eastern Europe and Russia. Finally, the South and East Mediterranean region serves as the source and transition point for most legal and illegal immigrants coming to Europe from the region and neighboring countries.

The specificity and complexity of the situation for Sarkozy lies in the fact that relations with the Arab world are not only an issue of foreign policy but also a major domestic problem for France. The Muslim diaspora

in France, which accounts for about 10% of the country's population, is the biggest in Europe in percentage terms, posing major problems for French society. Thus it is important to search for new and more effective ways of interacting with the growing Muslim diaspora in France and, in general, with the Arab world, which keeps supplying this diaspora with new members. Paris is striving to establish new relations with Arab countries that profess moderate Islamic values, keeping in mind that Islamic political parties are highly popular in the region's countries, especially among the poorest strata of society. The aim of France's active Mediterranean policy, which has been incorporated into the EU agenda through the Union for the Mediterranean project, is to more effectively control the process of the migration of the labor force and to block illegal migration to the EU. The project's central idea is developing the region's countries and creating a favorable economic and social environment for business there in order to curtail the number of regional inhabitants wishing to leave their countries.

Nicolas Sarkozy assigns a lot of importance to attaining these goals. However, the project of the "Union for the Mediterranean" has not advanced a lot so far. Most likely, Paris puts part of the blame for the project's failure on Qaddafi.

First of all, the creation of UfM entailed a lot of difficulties, and the politics of the Libyan leader exacerbated them to a large extent. When Qaddafi pitched his tent in Paris in December 2007, human rights organizations leveled vehement criticism at Sarkozy. Nevertheless, the French president received the Libyan guest with all honors in the hope of getting support for the creation of the UfM, which he got – at least in words. However, when the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean was announced with great pomp in July 2008 in Paris, Libya was the only one of 43 countries in the UfM to refuse to participate in Sarkozy's project. Apparently, during the six months following his official visit to Paris, Qaddafi had changed his mind on this issue, which was badly received by the French president. Qaddafi confirmed his reputation of an unpredictable ruler with whom it was impossible to reach an agreement to all intents and purposes.

Secondly, the second major factor that froze the UfM was the unsolved Arab-Israeli conflict, and Qaddafi, as they believe in France, bears part of the responsibility for it.

Thirdly and finally, the Qaddafi regime to a certain extent hindered France's efforts to fight terrorism. For example, from the speech at the

National Assembly of the French ambassador François Gouyette,¹⁵ who was recalled from Tripoli on February 26, we learn that Qaddafi had been in contact with certain terrorist groups in the Sahara and partly controlled radical Islamic movements based in the east of Libya. In recent years, the Qaddafi regime has tried to establish new relations with them by freeing many extremists in exchange for their promise that they would not participate in terrorist activities. One may assume that he had not only failed to suppress the activities of these groups but also strived to use them in his own interests wherever and whenever possible. Many liberated terrorists subsequently supported the regime, and it could become a problem for the West, according to the French ambassador.

Qaddafi may have also presented certain problems for French policies in Libya's neighbor Algeria, a key supplier of gas to France, and a number of other African countries where the Libyan leader had influence. Paris strives to consolidate its positions in Chad, home to a major military base – the pride and foundation of French influence in the African continent. France's interest in Chad also stems from the country's rich oil reserves. However, the president of Chad increasingly came under the influence of his northern neighbor Qaddafi, who provided him with various kinds of assistance. According to newspaper reports, the two leaders spoke with each other daily, and half a million Chad citizens permanently lived and worked in Libya.¹⁶ This could not but worry Paris, given that the Libyan leader is openly in opposition to the West.

Thus Sarkozy's desire to get rid of Qaddafi appears quite logical. Yet have the bombings of Libya brought Paris any closer to the realization of its long-term foreign policy aims? The conflict is still continuing, and the answer to this question remains open. At the same time, it is possible to make some preliminary conclusions.

First of all, Nicolas Sarkozy has clearly failed to get EU support for his Mediterranean policy. The members of the European Union have differing views on the use of force in Libya. Although it condemned Qaddafi, Brussels did not support the military campaign against him. Germany abstained during the vote on Resolution 1973 in the UN Security Council. The French press is full of accusations against Germany for "betraying" France in its war against Libya. Some say that Sarkozy's policies in Libya have had a negative impact on Franco-German cooperation, which is the traditional driving force of the entire integrative process. Finally, we should recall that the notion of "soft power" appeared in Europe and helped to promote European interests in

the world arena. The principles of “soft power” have been incorporated into European Neighborhood Policy, an important element of which became the Union for the Mediterranean project. The “soft” nature of influence remains a key reason for the success of this policy in different areas. And now Paris, a key member of the EU, decided to “supplement” this policy by “hard power,” which may change its very essence and lead to unpredictable consequences such as weakening the foreign policy toolkit of the European Union. Military triumph does not always lead to moral victory. Historical experience shows that “tough action” with human casualties and widespread destruction inevitably leads to “tough counteraction” by local population. This can ultimately make the “democratizer” himself lose the battle for moral leadership. It is no secret that victory in the “struggle for minds” is the main precondition for the implantation of democracy.

Secondly, when they entered the conflict, the leaders of the coalition underestimated the military potential of the Qaddafi regime. The war is drawing out, complicating the situation. Even in the case of victory over Qaddafi, it is unclear how relations between coalition members and the Libyan opposition will develop. Many political commentators emphasize that military operations against Qaddafi were launched without a clear understanding of whom the united opposition actually supports and what views are held by the leaders of opposition forces. It is even more difficult to say how these forces will behave if they come to power. Signals coming from Benghazi indicate that the main idea uniting the rebels at this point is the desire to oust Qaddafi and seize power. The motley and variegated makeup of the opposition (which may be called an “alliance against”) makes it impossible to say what it supports. The declared adherence of Libyan opposition forces to Western values does not seem to be deeply rooted or felt.

Thirdly, Paris has not been able to solve the problem of illegal immigration so far. On the contrary, this problem is becoming worse with each passing day. Nor has it managed to organize a united Arab or African front against Qaddafi under French leadership. The League of Arab States, one of the initiators of intervention in Libya, subsequently took a different and more moderate stance. African countries are even more critical than the Arab League about the action of coalition forces in Libya. Many experts warn that Sarkozy’s new course may isolate France from Arab and African countries, which are already beginning to show unease and mistrust towards Paris.

Summing up

AS WE HAVE SEEN, a whole series of factors influenced France's stance on the Libyan crisis. This was a case of the merger of economic, domestic, and foreign policy factors that came together and urged Paris to seek univocal and simple (or so it seemed) solutions. At the same time, it is still too early to say whether this is a long-term policy. Clearly, the solution of France's economic and domestic problems has little to do with its actions in Libya and lies in a totally different plane. The latest events show that Paris' aggressive stance against the Qaddafi regime and the bombings of Libya may complicate rather than simplify the implementation of many long-term French foreign policy goals.

The Libyan crisis has shown once again that every decision of the international community to use force needs to be carefully worked out and justified for the public opinion, which must be convinced that all possible political and economic arguments have been ineffective. The age of globalization, open information space, Internet, and the "all-seeing eye" of television requires governments at all levels to be more responsible and take a different attitude towards military humanitarian operations than before (in particular, by justifying their validity and legitimacy). A key condition is the coordination of efforts of all interested parties and the greater use of the UN and other international organizations and bilateral cooperation mechanisms at the preliminary stage.

NOTES

¹ <http://www.sondages-en-france.fr/post/sondage-sarkozy-ifop-31-mars-1-avril-2011>

² <http://www.insee.fr/>

³ *Le Figaro*. 2008, 18 juin.

⁴ *Le Monde*. 2010, 7 juillet.

⁵ *L'Express*. 2011, 2-8 mars, p. 11.

⁶ *Le Monde*. 2011, 22 fevrier.

⁷ <http://www.sondages-en-france.fr/post/sondages-libye-ifop-et-ipsos-5-8-avril-2011>

⁸ <http://www.sondages-en-france.fr/post/sondage-sarkozy-ifop-31-mars-1-avril-2011>

⁹ <http://64.19.142.11/www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/squelettes/img/title.gif>

¹⁰ Libye et Algerie sous surveillance. 18/02/2010 à 10h:22 Par Francis Perrin<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Articles/Dossier/ARTJAJA2561p075-076.xml0/petrole-investissement-sonatrach-mohamed-mezianelibye-et-algerie-sous-surveillance.html>

¹¹ *Le Monde*. 2011, 23 mars.

¹² <http://www.insee.fr/>

¹³ <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Speech by François Gouyette, French ambassador to Libya, before the Foreign Affairs Commission of the French National Assembly on March 8, 2011 // <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr>

¹⁶ <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA2620p036-043.xml0/onu-france-soudan-tchadidriss-deby-itno-si-la-libye-implose.-les-consequences-seront-incalculables-pour-la-region.html>

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