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Sarkozy's Mediterranean Dream : a nuclear nightmare

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Publication date: Tuesday 31 July 2007

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Lacking a colonial empire, Nicolas Sarkozy dreams of a «Mediterranean Union» initiated by himself, inspired by France, and exploited by Bouygues Construction and the Areva Corporation. The cement of that Union will be nuclear. So far it has not passed the first mumblings, but France's President is mumbling big. Libya, after Algeria, has now received the offer of a nuclear plant *made in France* - possibly or not a European Pressurised Reactor.

We can bet that before long other countries in the Maghreb and beyond will receive similar offers (France is already "favourably disposed to assisting Senegal in its nuclear programme"). In the middle-term it's the Muslim nations that are being targeted, then the emerging nations and finally the whole world. This includes China, where Areva has already landed "this century's biggest nuclear contract" with the construction of two EPRs normally costing about 6 million euros, as well as the Republic of Georgia, and even the USA, where the EDF corporation has just signed a partnership agreement with Constellation Energy to build and run future plants.

Sarkozy's France is above all a nuclear France, in the civil and the military sense, building civilian nuclearism on military nuclearism.

Nicolas Sarkozy is the man of this France because he is a man of power and ambition, an intelligent and strong-willed man. He has understood better than anyone - at least better than his opponents - that nuclear weapons have nothing to do with the nation's security, just as nuclear power plants have nothing to do with producing sustainable energy or protecting the climate. He has understood that nuclear weapons are above all **a power potion**. He also sees that in a world which increasingly knows about nuclear dangers of all kinds (and questions them more and more), enjoying this potion fully and durably requires imposing nuclearism so as to impose himself, and pushing a resolutely wilful policy, a war of mobility which involves the simultaneous intervention of military nuclearism (research and development of new weapons, but not for export) and civilian nuclearism (an aggressive policy to export power plants).

The blind spot of these policies is their conclusion : obvious and inevitable catastrophe, which will turn the dream into a nightmare.

Obvious. This catastrophe is obvious, since what was true of Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea, apartheid South Africa, Saddam's Iraq and Brazil under military rule, is recognised as being true now for Islamic Iran and will be true for every country that obtains nuclear technology, plants and nuclear materials "for peaceful purposes". It will be true for Algeria whether its rulers are FLN or FIS, for the Libya of Colonel Gaddafi, the Egypt of the Muslim Brothers, or for any other recipient. "Diversion" of technology for military use can happen very fast... almost as fast as a civilian accident... or a military one.

Inevitable. The catastrophe is also inevitable, since the "additional protocols" will achieve nothing: proliferation will continue. It will be justified by the refusal of the old nuclear states to implement the elimination of their arsenals (though they did promise it) and fuelled by the expansion of civilian nuclear technology. Sooner or later it will be necessary to see a nuclear war somewhere, or to else wage a new "pre-emptive war" and use nuclear weapons against a country that does not have them so that they do not obtain them with the help of "civilian technicians".

« *Pre-emptive war* », « *deterrent strike* » - as early as 1990 they were part of the *de facto* doctrine which George Bush senior applied to Iraq; it is now the official doctrine of George Bush junior, since the « Nuclear Posture Review ». It was the doctrine of Jacques Chirac after his speech in Brittany (at "l'Île Longue") on 19 January 2006. It is that of Nicolas Sarkozy, as we have known since his letter to ACDN on 18 April 2007, later confirmed by his speech in Brittany (at "l'Île Longue") on 13 July 2007.

The effects of this strategy are not yet fully measured. Sarkozy's political opponents bear heavy responsibility for failing (or not wanting) to mark their differences from him on these issues. The journalists of France also bear responsibility for not raising the central question of the role of the President as head of the armed forces and button-presser for the nuclear strike force.

The "pacifists" and "anti-nuclearists" are also somewhat implicated. Among French "abolitionists", those who thought for years that they could fight military nuclearism without fighting civilian nuclearism have been very mistaken, as have those who were content, in the same period, to fight nuclear power-plants independently of nuclear weapons. Some of the latter even thought it possible to prevent the building in Normandy of an EPR provided they requested nothing else and providing they refrained from calling for a phase-out of all nuclear power, which they thought "too big an ask". They bear responsibility for diverting the anti-nuclear movement from its natural demand: a combined and indissociable exit from military and non-military nuclearism. They are reaching that now, but rather late: meanwhile **the candidate of France civilian and military nuclearism has already been elected**. At least Sarkozy's visit to North and Center Africa had the merit of making that obvious.

During the presidential and parliamentary campaigns of 2007, ACDN was regrettably the only French NGO to engage candidates and political parties clearly on the question of nuclear disarmament and to ask them to organise, if they won, a referendum on the subject. ACDN was also the only NGO to appeal to voters **to not vote in any circumstance for Nicolas Sarkozy, because of his conception of presidential power in nuclear matters**.

Despite this clear position taken, ACDN has accepted Sarkozy's election to the highest office and noted his stated wish for "openness". Having heard him proclaim himself "president of all the French" on the night of his election, ACDN wrote to him on May 10 declaring our readiness to meet him and expound our point of view.

After this correspondence, the ACDN delegation was received on 29 June 2007 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the disarmament and non-proliferation section, and had the opportunity to converse for nearly two hours about the urgency of nuclear disarmament. The officials we met showed interest and agreed to pass on to President Sarkozy the analyses and arguments we presented for a change in policies. Thus Nicolas Sarkozy - who had already received a detailed reply to his letters - was not unbriefed when he chose to continue the policies of his predecessor Jacques Chirac, and if anything do worse. ACDN, having engaged in dialogue with him, is now well-founded in concluding that such dialogue achieves nothing.

France's anti-nuclear citizens missed the bus in the 2007 elections. Our only way forward is to convince the majority of the people and their current or future representatives that France must change course radically in her policies for defense, energy production and consumption, and foreign trade. This way forward is a long road. However, it does not forbid possible attempts at a judicial action, since after all France's nuclear military policies break international law. As current events show, it is possible for men in power to be themselves caught by the law. Why not for nuclear powers, including France?