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OCTOBER 08, 2009

## Sarkozy the Hawk



Leon Hadar deconstructs France's hawkish stance on Iran. It didn't start with Sarkozy:

In fact, Sarkozy's predecessor in office was also very apprehensive about Iran's nuclear ambitions. Without naming Iran, Chirac in an address he made in early 2006 warned that states which threatened his country could face the "ultimate warning" of a nuclear retaliation. The warning was followed by a French decision to modify its nuclear arsenal to increase the strike range and accuracy of its weapons, according to a report published by the French Liberation. Moreover, in an interview with American and French journalists in January 2007, Chirac suggested that if Iran were ever to launch a nuclear weapon against a country like Israel, it would lead to the immediate destruction of Tehran. According to The New York Times, Chirac explained that it would be an act of self-destruction for Iran to use a nuclear weapon against another country. "Where will it drop it, this bomb? On Israel?" Chirac asked. "It would not have gone off 200 meters into the atmosphere before Tehran would be razed to the ground."

The deconstruction of Chirac's remarks suggests that French strategic planners, not unlike many of the leading U.S. foreign policy realists, have concluded that the most effective response to the threat of a nuclear Iran would be a robust containment and deterrence policy. Indeed, while they continue to publicly threaten a possible military strike against Iran's nuclear sites, the Israelis have been preparing for the "day after" if and when Iran goes nuclear -- by developing a second-strike capability.







I think a deterrent posture is preferable to a containment posture - the notion that Iran is irrational and willing to court its own destruction is belied by history. Still, deterrence for Iran's regional and European neighbors means better nuclear weapons delivery vehicles, perhaps the expansion of existing arsenals and potentially the addition of new nuclear states. Not an ideal outcome, of course, but better than a shooting war with Iran.

Posted by Greg Scoblete at 5:48 PM | Send to a Friend | Email Author | Print | Permalink | Comments

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