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SPECIAL SERIES: Europe's Libya Intervention

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Europe's Libya Intervention: An Introduction

Editor's Note: *This is a five-part series examining the motives and mindset behind the European intervention in Libya. We begin with an overview and will follow with an examination of the positions put forth by the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Russia and Spain.*



Distinct interests sparked the European involvement in Libya. The United Kingdom and France have issued vociferous calls for intervention in Libya for the past month, ultimately managing to convince the rest of Europe — with some notable exceptions — to join in military action, the Arab League to offer its initial support, and global powers China and Russia to abstain from voting at the U.N. Security Council.

U.S. President Barack Obama said March 21 that the leadership of the U.S.-European coalition against Libya would be transitioned to the European allies "in a matter of days." While the United States would retain the lead during [Operation Odyssey Dawn](#) — intended to incapacitate Tripoli's command and control, stationary air defenses and airfields — Obama explained that Odyssey Dawn would create the "conditions for our European allies and Arab partners to carry out the measures authorized by the U.N. Security Council resolution." While Obama pointed out that the U.S.-European intervention in Libya is very much Europe's war, French nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle (R91) and Italian aircraft carrier Giuseppe Garibaldi (551) arrived in waters near Libya, giving Europeans a valuable asset from which to increase European air sortie generation rates and time on station.

Before analyzing the disparate interests of European nations in Libya, one must first take stock of this coalition in terms of its stated military and political goals.

The Military Response to the 'Arab Spring'

The intervention in Libya thus far has been restricted to the enforcement of a no-fly zone and to limited attacks against ground troops loyal to Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi in the open. However, the often-understated but implied political goal seems to be the end of the Gadhafi regime. (Some French and British leaders certainly have not shied from stressing that point.)

Europeans are not united in their perceptions of the operation's goals — or on how to wage the operation. The one thing the Europeans share is a seeming lack of an exit strategy from a struggle originally marketed as a no-fly zone akin to that imposed on Iraq in 1997 to a struggle that is actually being waged as an airstrike campaign along the lines of the 1999 campaign against Serbia, with the goal of regime change mirroring that of the 2001 Afghan and 2003 Iraq campaigns.

Underlying Europeans' willingness to pursue military action in Libya are two perceptions. The first is that Europeans did not adequately support the initial pro-democratic protests across the Arab world, a charge frequently coupled with accusations that many European governments failed to respond because they actively supported the regimes being challenged. The second perception is that the Arab world is in fact seeing a groundswell of pro-democratic sentiment.

The first charge particularly applies to France, the country now most committed to the Libyan intervention, where former French Foreign Minister Michele Alliot-Marie vacationed in Tunisia a few weeks before the revolution, using the private jet owned by a businessman close to the regime, and

offered then-Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali the services of French security forces to suppress the rebellion. Though an extreme example, the French case highlights the close business, energy and often personal relationships Europeans had with Middle Eastern leaders.

In fact, EU states have sold Gadhafi 1.1 billion euros (\$1.56 billion) worth of arms between 2004, when they lifted their arms embargo, and 2011, and were looking forward to much more in the future. Paris and Rome, which had lobbied hardest for an end to the embargo, were particularly active in this trade. As recently as 2010, France was in talks with Libya for the sale of 14 Dassault Mirage fighter jets and the modernization of some of Tripoli's aircraft. Rome, on the other hand, was in the middle of negotiating a further 1 billion euros worth of deals prior to the unrest. British media meanwhile had charged the previous [British government with kowtowing to Gadhafi](#) by releasing Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, a Libyan held for the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing. According to widespread reports, the United Kingdom's Labour government released al-Megrahi so that British energy supermajor BP would receive favorable energy concessions in Libya.

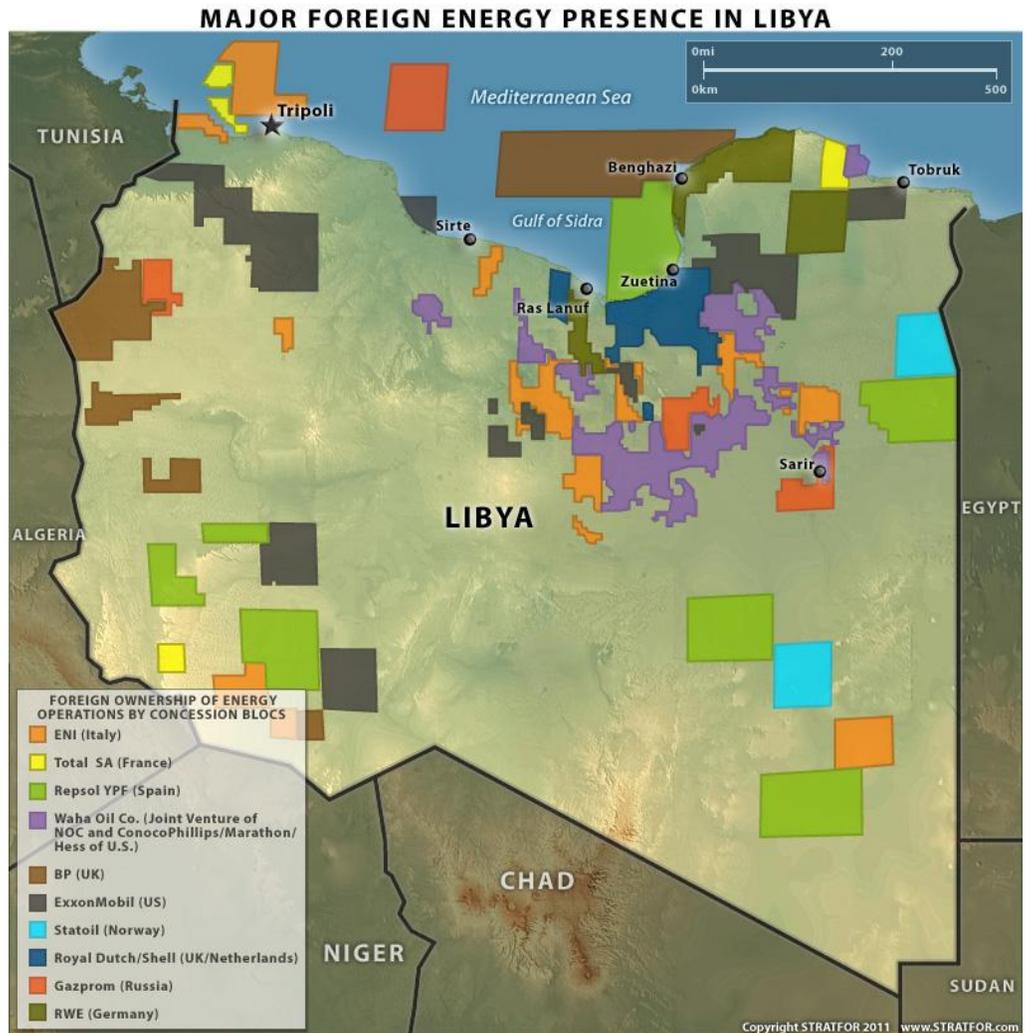


The second perception is the now-established [narrative in the West](#) that the ongoing protests in the Middle East are truly an outburst of pro-democratic sentiment in the Western sense. From this, there arises a public perception in Europe that Arab regimes must be put on notice that severe crackdowns will not be tolerated since the protests are the beginning of a new era of democracy in the region.

These two perceptions have created a context under which Gadhafi's crackdown against protesters is simply unacceptable to Paris and London and unacceptable to domestic public opinion in Europe. Not only would tolerating Tripoli's crackdown confirm European leaderships' multi-decade fraternization with unsavory Arab regimes, but the [eastern Libyan rebels' fight against Gadhafi](#) has been grafted on to the narrative of Arab pro-democracy movements seeking to overthrow brutal regimes — even though it is unclear who the eastern rebels are or what their intentions are for a post-Gadhafi Libya.

The Coalition

According to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, the military objective of the intervention is to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya and to protect civilians from harm across all of Libya. The problem is that the first goal in no way achieves the second. A no-fly zone does little to stop Gadhafi's troops on the ground. In the [first salvo of the campaign](#) — even before suppression of enemy air defenses operations — French aircraft attacked Libyan ground troops around Benghazi. The attack — which was not coordinated with the rest of the coalition, according to some reports — was meant to signal two things: that the French were in the lead and that the intervention would seek to protect civilians in a broader mandate than just establishing a no-fly zone.



Going beyond the enforcement of the no-fly zone, however, has created rifts in Europe, with both NATO and the European Union failing to back the intervention politically. Germany, which broke with its European allies and voted to abstain from Resolution 1973, has argued that mission creep could force the coalition to get involved in a drawn-out war. Central and Eastern Europeans, led by Poland, have been cautious in providing support because it yet again draws NATO further from its core mission of European territorial defense and the theater they are mostly concerned about: the Russian sphere of influence. Meanwhile, the [Arab League, which initially offered its support for a no-fly zone](#), seemed to renege as it became clear that Libya in 2011 was far more like Serbia in 1999 than Iraq in 1997 — airstrikes against ground troops and installations, not just a no-fly zone. Italy, a critical country because of its air bases close to the Libyan theater, has even suggested that if some consensus is not found regarding NATO's involvement it would withdraw its offer of air bases so that "someone else's action did not rebound on us," according Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini. In reality, Rome is concerned that the Franco-British alliance is going to either reduce Italy's interests in a post-Ghadafi Libya or fail to finish the operation, leaving [Italy to deal with chaos](#) a few hundred kilometers across the Mediterranean.

Ultimately, enforcing a [humanitarian mandate across the whole of Libya via airpower alone](#) will be impossible. It is unclear how Gadhafi would be dislodged from power from 15,000 feet in the sky. And while Europeans have largely toed the line in the last couple of days that regime change is not the explicit goal of the intervention, French and British leaders continue to caveat that "there is no decent

future for Libya with Gadhafi in power,” as British Prime Minister David Cameron stated March 21, virtually mirroring a statement by Obama. But wishing Gadhafi gone will not make it so.

MILITARY ASSETS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN



Endgame Scenarios

With the precise mission of the intervention unclear and exact command and control structures yet to be decided (though the intervention itself has already begun, a summit in London on March 29 will supposedly hash out the details) it is no surprise that Europeans seem to lack a consensus as to what the exit strategies are. Ultimately some sort of NATO command structure will be enacted, even if it is possible that NATO never gives its political consent to the intervention and is merely “subcontracted” by the coalition to make coordination between different air forces possible.

U.S. military officials, on the other hand, have signaled that a divided Libya between the Gadhafi-controlled west and the rebel-controlled east is palatable if attacks against civilians stop. Resolution 1973 certainly does not preclude such an end to the intervention. But politically, it is unclear if either the United States or Europe could accept that scenario. Aside from the normative issues the European public may have with a resolution that leaves a now-thoroughly vilified Gadhafi in power, European governments would have to wonder whether Gadhafi would be content ruling Tripolitania, a pared-

down version of Libya, given that the bulk of the country's oil fields and export facilities are located in the east.

Gadhafi could seek non-European allies for arms and support and/or plot a reconquest of the east. Either way, such a scenario could necessitate a drawn-out enforcement of the no-fly zone over Libya — testing already war-weary European publics' patience, not to mention government pocketbooks. It would also require continuous maritime patrols to prevent Gadhafi from unleashing migrants en masse, a possibility that is of great concern for Rome. Now that Europe has launched a war against Gadhafi, it has raised the costs of allowing a Gadhafi regime to remain lodged in North Africa.

That the costs are not the same for all participating European countries — especially for Italy, which has the most to lose if Gadhafi retains power — is the biggest problem for creating European unity.

The problem, however, is that an alternative endgame scenario where Gadhafi is removed would necessitate a commitment of ground troops. It is unclear that the eastern rebels could play the role of the Afghan Northern Alliance, whose forces had considerable combat experience such that only modest special operations forces and air support were needed to dislodge the Taliban (or, rather, force them to retreat) in late 2001 through early 2002. Thus, Europe would have to provide the troops — highly unlikely, unless Gadhafi becomes thoroughly suicidal and unleashes asymmetrical terrorist attacks against Europe — or enlist the support of an Arab state, such as Egypt, to conduct ground operations in its stead. The latter scenario seems far-fetched as well, in part because Libyans historically have as much animosity toward Egyptians as they do toward Europeans.

What ultimately will transpire in Libya probably lies somewhere in between the extreme scenarios. A temporary truce is likely once Gadhafi has been sufficiently neutralized from the air, giving the West and Egypt sufficient time to arm, train and support the rebels for their long march to Tripoli (though it is far from clear that they are capable of this, even with considerable support in terms of airpower, basic training, organization and military competencies). The idea that Gadhafi, his sons and inner circle would simply wait to be rolled over by a rebel force is unlikely. After all, Gadhafi has not ruled Libya for 42 years because he has accepted his fate with resignation — a notion that should worry Europe's governments now looking to end his rule.

Part 1: France and the United Kingdom

France and the United Kingdom have led the charge on the intervention in Libya. For a month, both pushed the international community toward an intervention, ultimately penning U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973 authorizing the no-fly zone on March 17.

Paris' and London's interests in waging war on Libya are not the same, and Libya carries different weight with each. For the United Kingdom, Libya offers a promise of energy exploitation. It is not a country with which London has a strong client-patron relationship at the moment, but one could develop if Moammar Gadhafi were removed from power. For France, Tripoli already is a significant energy exporter and arms customer. Paris' interest in intervening is also about intra-European politics.

IMPORT DEPENDENCE ON LIBYAN OIL

IMPORTERS	IMPORTS FROM LIBYA (BPD, 2010)	% OF LIBYA'S OIL EXPORTS	% OF TOTAL LOCAL CONSUMPTION
Italy	365,742	29%	24%
France	177,797	14%	10%
China	160,676	13%	2%
Germany	138,067	11%	6%
Spain	129,227	10%	9%
USA	60,553	5%	<1%
United Kingdom	50,815	4%	3%
Austria	32,867	3%	12%
Portugal	28,840	2%	11%
Netherlands	26,426	2%	2%
Ireland	21,814	2%	13%
Switzerland	21,576	2%	8%
Serbia	6,801	1%	8%

Sources: EIA and ITC Trademap

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France

Paris has been the most vociferous supporter of the Libya intervention. French President Nicolas Sarkozy made it his mission to gather an international coalition to wage war on Libya, and France has been at the vanguard of recognizing the legitimacy of the Benghazi-based rebels.

French interests in the Libya intervention fall into two categories: domestic politics and intra-European relations.

The domestic political story is fairly straightforward. At the onset of the unrest in the Middle East, Paris stalled on recognizing the protesters as legitimate. In fact, then-French Foreign Minister Michele Alliot-Marie offered the Tunisian government official help in dealing with the protesters. Three days later, longtime Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was forced to flee the country. It was revealed later that Alliot-Marie spent her Christmas vacation in Tunisia; during the trip, she used the private jet of a businessman close to the Ben Ali regime, and her parents were negotiating a business deal with the same businessman. Needless to say, the whole episode was highly embarrassing for Paris both internationally and domestically, and Sarkozy was essentially forced to fire Alliot-Marie and replace her with the veteran Alain Juppe. Additionally, Paris has its own Muslim population to consider, including a sizable Tunisian minority — though nowhere near as large as its Algerian minority — of around 600,000 people. This audience had a particularly negative reaction to Paris' handling of the revolution in Tunisia.

The French intervention is more than just overcompensation for an initially disastrous handling of what Europe now perceives as a groundswell of agitation for democracy in the Arab world. Rather, Sarkozy has a history of using aggressive foreign relation moves to gain or maintain popularity at home. In August 2008, for example, he attempted and succeeded in [negotiating a Russo-Georgian cease-fire](#) without being invited to be a peacemaker. After the September 2008 financial crash, he called for a new "[Bretton Woods](#)." While to the rest of the world "Super Sarko" seems impulsive and perhaps even arrogant, at home these moves boost his popularity, at least among his existing supporters. Sarkozy could use such a boost, as the French presidential election is barely more than a year away and he is trailing not just the likely Socialist candidate, but also far-right candidate [Marine Le Pen](#). His supporters are beginning to gravitate toward Le Pen, who has worked hard to smooth over her father's hard-right image. This could prompt Sarkozy's party to choose a different candidate before it is too late, particularly as his own prime minister, Francois Fillon, gains ground.

There is more at play for France than just domestic politics, however. France also is reasserting its role as the most militarily capable European power. This has become particularly important because of developments in the European Union over the past 12 months. Ever since the eurozone sovereign debt crisis began in December 2009 with the Greek economic imbroglio, Germany has sought to use the power of its purse to reshape EU institutions to its own liking. These are the same institutions France painstakingly designed throughout and immediately after the Cold War. They were intended to magnify French political power in Europe and later offer Berlin incentives that would [lock united Germany into Europe](#) in a way that also benefited Paris.

Germany has worked to keep France apprised of the reforms every step of the way, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel huddling with Sarkozy before every major decision. However, this has not concealed the reality that Paris has had to take a backseat and accept most of Germany's decisions as a *fait accompli*, from the need to pursue severe austerity measures, which caused [widespread rioting in France in October 2010](#), to largely giving Berlin control over the [new bailout mechanisms](#) being designed to support lagging eurozone member states. This shift has not gone unnoticed by the French public, and criticism has been leveled against Sarkozy of having been reduced to Merkel's yes-man.

The intervention in Libya therefore is a way to reassert to Europe, but particularly to Germany, that France still leads the Continent on foreign and military affairs. It is a message that says if Europe intends to be taken seriously as a global power, it will need [French military power](#). France's close

coordination with the United Kingdom also is an attempt to further develop the  [military alliance between London and Paris](#) formalized on Nov. 2, 2010, as a counter to Germany's overwhelming economic and political power in the European Union.

In asserting its strength, Paris may cause Berlin to become more assertive in its own right. With the very act of opposing the Franco-British consensus on Libya, Berlin already has shown a level of assertiveness and foreign policy independence not seen in some time. In a sense, France and the United Kingdom are replaying their 19th century roles of colonial European powers looking to project power and protect interests outside the European continent, while Berlin remains landlocked behind the Skagerrak and concentrates on [building a Mitteleuropa](#).

As for interests in Libya, France has plenty, but its situation could be improved. French energy major Total SA is involved in Libya but not to the same extent as Italian ENI or even German Wintershall. Considering Libya's plentiful and largely unexplored energy reserves, French energy companies could stand to profit from helping rebels take power in Tripoli. But it is really military sales that Paris has benefited from thus far. Between 2004 — when the European Union lifted its arms embargo against Libya — and 2011, Tripoli has purchased approximately half a billion dollars worth of arms from France, more than from any other country in Europe. However, the Italian government was in negotiation for more than a billion dollars worth of more deals in 2010, and it seemed that the Rome-Tripoli relationship was overtaking [Paris' efforts in Libya](#) prior to the intervention.

United Kingdom

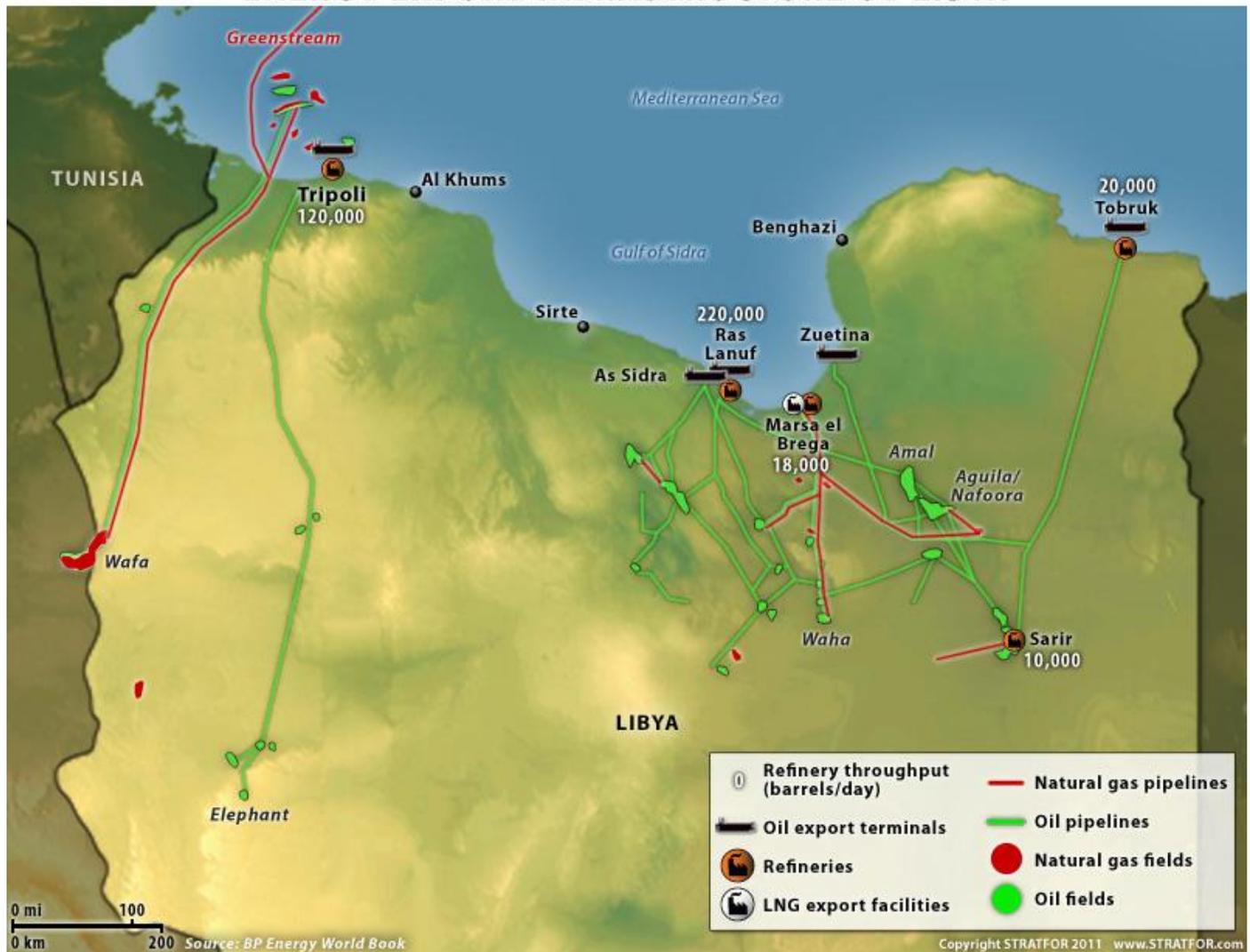
London has not been as aggressive about pushing for the Libya intervention as France, but it still has been at the forefront of the coalition. For the United Kingdom, the domestic political component is not as strong as its energy interests.

British Prime Minister David Cameron's government initially came under strong criticism for being slow to evacuate British nationals from Libya. Nick Clegg, the deputy prime minister and leader of the coalition Liberal Democratic Party, was on a ski vacation in Switzerland when the crisis in Libya began and later told a reporter he "forgot" he was running the country while Cameron was on a trip to the Persian Gulf states. Later, the rebels seized a Special Air Service diplomatic security team, dispatched on a diplomatic mission to establish contact with anti-Gadhafi forces in eastern Libya, because they did not announce their presence in the country.

Therefore, the United Kingdom is motivated to recover leadership of the intervention after an otherwise-bungled first few weeks of the unrest. There is also, as with most of the Western countries, a sense that decades of tolerating and profiting from Arab dictators has come to an end and that the people in the United Kingdom will no longer accept such actions.

London has another significant interest, namely, energy. British energy major BP has no production in Libya, although it agreed with Tripoli to drill onshore and offshore wells under a \$1 billion deal signed in 2007. The negotiations on these concessions were drawn out but were finalized after the Scottish government decided to release convicted [Lockerbie bomber Abdel Baset al-Megrahi](#) on humanitarian grounds in August 2009. He was expected to die of prostate cancer within months of his release but presumably is still alive in Tripoli. The Labour government in power at the time came under heavy criticism for al-Megrahi's release. British media speculated, not entirely unfairly, that the decision represented an effort to kick-start BP's production in Libya and smooth relations between London and Tripoli. BP announced in 2009 that it planned to invest \$20 billion in Libyan oil production over the next 20 years.

ENERGY EXPORT INFRASTRUCTURE OF LIBYA



The May 2010 [Macondo well disaster in the Gulf of Mexico](#) has made BP's — and London's — Libya strategy even more urgent. The United States accounted for a quarter of BP's total hydrocarbon production in 2010. The disaster cost BP \$17.7 billion worth of losses in 2010, and the company also has had to set up a \$20 billion compensation fund. Estimates of potential further spill-related costs range between \$38 billion and \$60 billion, making BP's future in the United States uncertain. The disaster also allowed BP's competitors to complain about its potential future offshore operations, something Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini stressed, arguing that until the investigation into the Macondo well disaster is completed, BP should refrain from drilling off Libya's shore in the Mediterranean Sea. The complaint was more than likely an attempt by ENI to complicate BP's Libya operations by questioning its environmental record in North America.

Ultimately, London could gain the most by the removal of Gadhafi or winning the allegiance of a rebel-controlled government in some kind of semi-independent state in eastern Libya. With no oil production in Libya and arms sales that lag those of France and Italy by a considerable margin, the United Kingdom could substantially benefit from new leadership in Tripoli or even just Benghazi.

Exit Strategies

In sum, the United Kingdom and France have two main points to consider in terms of what would be an appropriate strategy to the current intervention. First, how palatable will it be for their publics if Gadhafi remained in power after the considerable vilification that justified the intervention in the first place? It is true that both Paris and London have in recent days stepped back from arguing that the military intervention is supposed to oust Gadhafi, but that tempered rhetoric may have been forced on them by criticism from within the coalition that they have overstepped the U.N. mandate. British Defense Secretary Liam Fox said March 21 that the direct targeting of Gadhafi by coalition forces was a possibility.

Second, will France and the United Kingdom be satisfied with a solution in which Gadhafi withdraws to the west and rebels take control of the east? The United Kingdom and France could live with that solution because they would still benefit from their patronage of the eastern rebels in both new arms deals and energy deals in the oil-rich east. For Italy, the situation is more complex, as it would be left to deal with an indignant Gadhafi across the Mediterranean.

Part 2: Italy

Italian jets operating over Libya on March 22 managed to jam Libyan air defense radar networks "without firing a single shot," according to an Italian Air Force announcement. That Italy emphasized its abstention from opening fire on Libyan forces is not coincidental; it is part of Rome's strategy of hedging its role in the Libyan intervention — being involved in the ongoing U.S.-European intervention in Libya without actually attacking the troops of its once close ally, Moammar Gadhafi.

Italy has far "more to lose," STRATFOR's Italian sources keep stressing, than anyone else involved in the U.S.-European coalition. Italy's business, energy and national security interests are directly impacted by the fate of Libya.

For this reason, Italy sought to hedge its policy toward Gadhafi throughout the run-up to the intervention. Rome initially took a line very close to that of Tripoli, with Frattini voicing concerns Feb. 21 over the "self-proclamation of the so-called Islamic Emirate of Benghazi," echoing a statement from Gadhafi's son, Seif al-Islam, issued the previous day to describe the rebels in eastern Libya.

While Italy now supports the coalition against Gadhafi, offering the use of seven Italian airbases to coalition aircraft and having the Italian air force conduct patrols over Libyan airspace, Rome continues to hedge its policy. Frattini on March 21 said Italy would have to resume control of its airbases, thus hinting it would kick out foreign troops, if some sort of NATO coordination structure were not agreed upon (an agreement on a NATO coordination structure was reached by March 28).

In fact, despite participating in the intervention, Rome has gone as far as to emphasize that its jets operating over Libya had managed to jam Libyan air defense radar networks "without firing a single shot," according to an Italian Air Force announcement on March 22. Rome's insistence that it is both part of the intervention and has abstained from playing an aggressive role against Gadhafi is a strategy intended to allow Italy to continue to balance the rebels in the east with Gadhafi in the west of the country. Rome simply has too many interests in Libya to pick one side and stick with it.

NATO command-and-control structures are important to Rome, which does not want the Libyan intervention to remain a Paris-London affair when the [United States withdraws from leading the operations](#), leaving [Italy's energy and security interests](#) at the mercy of two countries looking to gain the upper hand in a post-Gadhafi Libya.

This explains Rome's reluctance to allow France to lead a command structure concurrent with NATO's. Rome simply does not trust [Paris or London](#), both of whom have plenty of reasons to expand energy and business interests once rebels grateful to both for leading the charge in Libya assume power in the eastern part of the country. Rebel leaders themselves have stressed that economic ties "will be calibrated to reflect the support that the various European countries have offered the grassroots uprising," as the Libyan National Transition Council Deputy Chairman Hafiz al-Ghogha said in a response to a question what is in store in the future for Italy's business and energy interests in Libya. These sort of statements are what Rome fears the most. As a response, the press in Italy has claimed that Rome was seeking an official NATO role in the intervention so as to prevent French-U.K. "activism." In fact, one can directly draw a parallel between the competing interests of Italy, France and the United Kingdom in the intervention in Libya today with the competing interests of the three during the colonial 19th-century Scramble for Africa.

Italian Interests in Libya

Geographically, Italy is one of the closest European country to Libya, with the island of Lampedusa, a destination of choice for migrants fleeing North African unrest, only 225 kilometers (140 miles) from Libya. It shares deeper ties with Libya than the rest of Europe, given its former colonial relationship. Like Germany, Italy became a unified European power only in the late 19th century and entered the scramble for African colonies after France and the United Kingdom had taken the choicest spots. The desolate stretch of North Africa just south of Sicily was still available, so Italy began building a sphere of influence in what is now Libya but was then three separate states: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan. Italy invaded in 1911, but resistance by insurgents in Cyrenaica (today's eastern Libya) lasted until the 1930s. Italy lost its North African colony after World War II.

Because of its geographic proximity and knowledge of local conditions, Italy has not shied from conducting business in Libya in the post-World War II era. Energy company ENI began operating there in 1959 and never left the country, even when the rest of the West rebuffed Gadhafi in the 1980s due to his association with terrorism. This commitment to Libya allowed Rome to negotiate lucrative energy and arms contracts once Gadhafi renounced terrorism in 2003. Today, Libya accounts for some 15 percent of ENI's total global hydrocarbons output, with oil production of 108,000 barrels per day and natural gas production of 8.1 billion cubic meters in 2009.

ENI has a number of key energy assets in Libya, starting with the Greenstream pipeline in the west, which supplies Italy with around 15 percent of its natural gas imports. ENI operates the pipeline, which cost around \$6.6 billion to build. It has [been shut down due to the unrest](#), however, prompting Italy to turn to Russia for natural gas to compensate for the difference. If this situation persists, it will further entrench Rome's dependence on Moscow for natural gas. Throughout the crisis, ENI has stressed that it has not shut down its natural gas production in Libya in order to provide Libyans with energy. ENI also has stakes in a number of lucrative oil-producing concessions, including the Bouri oil field, the largest offshore field in the Mediterranean Sea, located immediately off the coast of Tripoli, and the Wafa and Elephant oil fields in west and southwestern Libya, respectively. While ENI also had producing assets in eastern Libya, an overview of its assets illustrates that the majority of them, and the most lucrative ones, are in fact in the west in what is still government-controlled territory.

Italy has also been one of Gadhafi's major arms suppliers since an EU arms embargo was lifted in 2004, a step for which Italy strongly lobbied. Italy has delivered on approximately \$500 million worth of deals since 2004, slightly less than the value of French military deliveries. Taking into account that overall Italian military sales were approximately a quarter of French sales in 2009, deals with Libya represent a larger percent of total sales for Rome. Furthermore, Italy was in the process of negotiating a \$1.05 billion-worth of military contracts before the unrest began. This included a large border security and control system deal with Finmeccanica for \$300 million and negotiations for shipbuilding contracts worth \$600 million with Intermarine Spa.

The flow of capital and investments is not one-sided; Libya's sovereign wealth fund has invested in a number of Italian financial and industrial enterprises. Libya's sovereign wealth fund owns about 1 percent of ENI, and had stated its intent to increase its stake to 10 percent; 7.2 percent of UniCredit, Italy's biggest bank; and 2 percent of weapons manufacturer Finmeccanica. Rome fears Gadhafi could withdraw these investments from Italy — something Gadhafi has threatened — or that a new government in Libya might decide to invest in Paris and London instead.

ITALY'S MEDITERRANEAN NEIGHBORHOOD



Libya is also an issue of national security for Rome because of immigration. In 2008 alone, up to 40,000 migrants tried to enter Italy illegally via Libya, with 15 percent trying to land on Sicily or Lampedusa directly, according to Rome. Gadhafi himself initiated the increase in immigration by turning away from Pan-Arabism in 1990 towards Pan-Africanism, relaxing visa policies for sub-Saharan African countries and allowing Libya to become a transit state for migrants to Europe. He then parlayed this problem into a negotiating advantage with Rome. Tripoli and Rome signed a 2008 friendship treaty — which incidentally had a non-aggression clause now no longer in effect as Rome has suspended the treaty — that in return for Italian investments in Libya gave Rome assurances that Tripoli would stem the flow of migrants. This has included Libyan acquiescence in Italy's "push-back" policy, which involves intercepting refugees and migrants in international waters and repatriating them to Libya regardless of whether they are Libyan. The policy has drawn condemnation from human rights and refugee groups, but has largely ended the flow of migrants into Italy.

Acceptable Exit Strategies

Italy has therefore enjoyed a privileged relationship with Gadhafi, from energy to weapons sales to its being a main destination for Gadhafi's investments. The cozy business relationship has allowed Rome to negotiate a deal on securing its seas from an unchecked influx of migrants, both a national security and domestic political issue. Since January, when the Tunisian upheaval kicked off the unrest in the Arab world, 19,000 migrants — including 2,000 Somalis and Ethiopians — have landed on Lampedusa. This has largely confirmed Rome's fears that the general unrest in North Africa — combined with the destabilization of Libya — would lead to an exodus of North and sub-Saharan Africans to Italy.

The current situation carries many risks for Italy. Replacing Gadhafi with an unknown regime or unstable environment that resembles the tribal warlordism of Somalia would lead to unchecked migration flows — which is essentially already happening — and an insecure business environment. His replacement with a rebel leadership grateful to London and Paris but suspicious of Rome also would threaten Italian interests. But participating in the coalition is risky, too, as Gadhafi could wind up clinging to power and deciding to seek revenge against Italy for joining forces with the United States, France and United Kingdom against him despite the 2008 friendship treaty.

Moreover, the European coalition allies do not trust each other. Rome believes that London and Paris are undermining Italy's long-held upper hand in Libya. Italy wants to ensure its influence in how a post-intervention Libya is run and therefore has fought to move the coalition toward a NATO command-and-control structure that would be headquartered in Naples — allowing Rome to keep a close eye on the operations' details.

Because its European neighbors seem unwilling to deal the finishing blows to the Gadhafi regime — at least as of this moment — Rome must take into account the possibility that Gadhafi could remain in power, if only in the western portion of Libya. Italy is therefore walking a tightrope: It can stand neither with Gadhafi nor too aggressively against him. Rome therefore has to be part of the coalition so as not to be frozen out of Libya by a new regime in the event Gadhafi is eliminated; however, its participation in the coalition has to be conducted in a halting manner to minimize the risks to its energy assets in western Libya should Gadhafi survive.

Rome is jockeying to play the role of peacemaker by participating in the coalition while not seeming overly eager to oust Gadhafi, currying favor with both the coalition and Gadhafi. To this end, Italy has sought, and has received, command over the NATO naval operation to embargo Tripoli's access to arms, potentially a beneficial command if Rome wants to have power over Gadhafi in the near future. It has in the meantime maintained a non-aggressive role in the intervention so that it can claim to Gadhafi that its intentions from the beginning were to be a voice of reason in the intervention. Rome

will attempt to use both its links to the Gadhafi regime and its role in the intervention to carve out a post-conflict mediator role that can protect its interests.

The problem with Italy's plan is both the fluidity of the situation and the fact that it's ability to continue hedging its role is being reduced every day. London and Paris endear themselves to the rebels and as Gadhafi becomes more indignant toward Western powers. Ultimately, it is difficult to see Italy being completely frozen out of Libya. Geographic proximity and a long history of involvement means Rome, from Carthage to Libya, always has had a hand in the affairs of North Africa. The question in Rome today is how profitable that influence will be.

Part 3: Germany and Russia

Germany and Russia abstained in the March 17 vote on U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, which authorized the use of force in Libya. Moscow's decision not to exercise its veto power made the [ongoing Libya intervention](#) under U.N. auspices possible. Since the vote, Russia has criticized the intervention vociferously, with [Prime Minister Vladimir Putin comparing it to a medieval crusade](#).

For its part, while Germany does not have a veto, its abstention has brought criticism on Berlin — both domestically and internationally — for remaining aloof from its traditional Atlanticist allies. Domestic politics heavily influenced Germany's decision to abstain from the vote and its subsequent decision not to participate in the intervention. In the run-up to the March 17 vote, [German Chancellor Angela Merkel faced six difficult state elections](#). Elections in Saxony-Anhalt, Rhineland-Palatinate and Baden-Wuerttemberg have since been held. The last one, in Baden-Wuerttemberg, ended March 27 — with disastrous results for Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

Despite the heavy role domestic politics played in Germany's decision, considerable geopolitical calculations also influenced both Berlin's and Moscow's decision-making.

Germany

Baden-Wuerttemberg is Germany's third-largest state in terms of population and gross domestic product and has been a CDU stronghold since 1953. Faced with a potential electoral disaster in Baden-Wuerttemberg elections and following a [number of political setbacks through the first quarter of 2011](#), Merkel's decision to abstain from the intervention was a fairly obvious call. But even the decision not to intervene could not save the CDU from losing the state.

In the run-up to the election, however, Berlin was not taking any chances with the intervention in Libya. This was especially true for German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, who is also the leader of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), the CDU's governing coalition partner. Reports in the German media — from Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Der Spiegel — following the U.N. vote even suggested that Westerwelle sought to vote "no" on Resolution 1973 but decided against it after consultations with Merkel. The pro-business, center-right FDP has lost much support over the past year for signing off on Germany's bailouts of Greece and Ireland as well as its inability to deliver on the campaign promise of lower taxes. It failed to cross the 5 percent electoral threshold in Rhineland-Palatinate, and only barely managed to do so in Baden-Wuerttemberg, a considerable embarrassment for the party considering that its support in the two states is traditionally strong.

The decision to stay away from the intervention has brought criticism against Merkel both domestically and internationally. It is difficult to argue that it hurt the CDU in state elections, however. According to various recent polls, between 56 and 65 percent of the German population supported Berlin's decision not to participate in the intervention. That said, a majority of Germans — 62 percent — favored an intervention in general terms. This means the German public approves of military action in Libya so long as Germany does not participate. Berlin's decision perfectly tracked this sentiment, keeping German forces out of military action in Libya but facilitating NATO's participation by offering to send

airborne warning and control system crews to Afghanistan so Western forces could make more resources available for the Libyan theater.

One obvious explanation for the German public's reticence toward military intervention is the German aversion to using Germany's military abroad. German President Horst Koehler resigned in May 2010 after coming under criticism following a trip to Afghanistan in which he said, "In emergencies, military intervention is necessary to uphold our interests, like for example free trade routes, for example to prevent regional instabilities which could have negative impact on our chances in terms of trade, jobs and income." A week later, he had left the German presidency, largely a ceremonial office, due to heavy criticism that he had equated Germany's role in Afghanistan to a 19th century-style war for trade routes and markets. Still, the statement launched a wider discussion about using the German military abroad when it is in the country's national interest to do so. To date, Germany has participated in military missions abroad as part of a broader alliance, such as Kosovo in 1999 and Afghanistan, but the issue of doing so for its own interests remains controversial.

The decision not to intervene in Libya was not purely an effort to pander to historical public sensitivities ahead of crucial state elections. For Germany, two further strategic factors come into play. First, the [United Kingdom](#), [France](#) and [Italy](#) all have energy interests, or want more of them, in Libya. This is not to say Germany does not — energy company Wintershall is particularly involved — but it is not as critical to its national interests. The French also consider the Mediterranean their sphere of influence and have previously disagreed with Germany over how seriously the [Mediterranean Union](#), a proposed political bloc of Mediterranean Sea littoral states, should be pursued.

Germany, however, is essentially landlocked. Its access to the open ocean is impeded by the Skagerrak and the United Kingdom, a superior naval power. Throughout its history, it therefore largely has shied away from direct competition for political influence outside the Eurasian mainland so as not to invite a naval blockade that would cripple its trade. Instead, it always has sought to expand its sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe, where exerting its influence is easier due to proximity and historical trade relations. This is the concept of [Mitteleuropa](#), Berlin's political and economic sphere of influence on its eastern borders. In many ways, the eurozone project — and Berlin's strong interest in seeing Poland and the Czech Republic ultimately join it — is Germany's 21st century version of Mitteleuropa.

But Germany's not having considerable interests in Libya does not explain its unwillingness to join its allies in the intervention. After all, Germany's interests in Afghanistan are tenuous, and yet Berlin has participated in military operations there. The willingness to stand against all of its Atlantic allies because of domestic politics and a lack of national interests therefore represents a form of assertiveness: Germany is showing its willingness to place its domestic politics above its commitments to its allies, at least with regard to a non-critical military intervention.

Whether Germany would have refused to participate in the intervention even if it did not have six state elections coming up is the central question. Had it not faced state elections, Berlin might have opted to send a token force of a handful of fighters to enforce the no-fly zone, as have Norway, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands. But we suspect that Berlin might have chosen to oppose France either way to undermine one of Paris' main motivations for the intervention — namely, to prove that Europe without a militarized France falls short of great power status. France wants Germany to hear the message that despite  [Germany's leading economic and political role](#) in the last 12 months of the eurozone sovereign debt crisis, [France is still a leader in foreign and military affairs](#). By not participating, and therefore not following Paris' lead, Berlin essentially is ignoring this message.

German-Russian agreement on abstaining from the resolution comes as [Berlin and Moscow continue to align more closely](#) on energy, business and even [military matters](#). There is no evidence, however, of coordination between the two on Libya. That Germany voted with Russia is more an example of Berlin's independence in foreign policy affairs than of its increased like-mindedness with Russia. After all, Russia's interests in abstaining are different from those of Germany.

Russia

Russia's abstention was a calculated move designed to facilitate the Libya intervention. As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia's veto would have torpedoed the intervention. But Russia has an interest in seeing the West, and particularly the United States, involved in yet another Middle Eastern conflict.

First, ongoing instability in the Arab world has caused a jump in energy prices, a boon for energy-rich Russia; the unrest in Libya will further raise those prices. Furthermore, during Moammar Gadhafi's last eight years in power, Libya had become a stable and relatively reliable energy exporter to Europe, particularly to Italy. An intervention that leads to a stalemate in Libya, leaving the country in a state of instability, would eliminate a potential oil and natural gas alternative to Russia, giving Moscow greater market share in Europe in general and in Italy in particular.

The second issue for Moscow is that the United States is now, however minimally, involved in a third conflict in the Muslim world. Russia has worried for the past 12 months that U.S. President Barack Obama's determination to disentangle the United States from two conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan would give Washington greater flexibility in dealing with Russia's own regions of interest, namely Central-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus. This would close [Russia's "window of opportunity"](#) to consolidate its dominance over its sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union. The last thing the Kremlin wants is a Washington eager to pick a fight. And so even though Libya only marginally ties down U.S. forces, it still offers the potential for complications or even deeper involvement — and any further American involvement is welcome for Russia.

Third, the Libya situation gives Russian leadership yet another public relations opportunity to criticize the United States. When Putin made his comments comparing the Libya intervention to a crusade, he did so at a ballistic missile factory on the same day that U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates was in St. Petersburg meeting with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev to talk about missile defense. Putin's choice of words and the place he delivered them was symbolic, driving home the message that the United States has expansionist and militarist aims against Russia, aims that Russia is justified in taking steps against.

Russia and the United States still have considerable disagreements, starting with the U.S. plan to proceed with its ballistic missile plans for Central Europe. The intervention in Libya affords Moscow yet another opportunity to criticize the United States as an aggressive power and yet another avenue through which to voice its continued disagreement with Washington.

Part 4: Spain

Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez said March 29 that the option of exile is still available to Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi since he has not been charged with any crimes. Madrid has therefore backed Rome's position that exile should be an option to end the conflict in Libya. Spain is participating in the international coalition by providing airbases for U.S. AWACS and refueling missions. It also has sent four F-18 fighter jets and a refueling aircraft as part of its contribution to enforce the no-fly zone, along with an Aegis-capable frigate and a submarine to participate in the enforcement of the arms embargo.

The Spanish decision to intervene in Libya has not garnered much attention in the global press. However, it stands out as Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's most notable foreign policy decision, one made only weeks after being elected, involved [pulling Spanish troops out of Iraq in April 2004](#). The Iraq pullout strained Madrid's relations with Washington, as the U.S. perceived it as

hasty and pandering to public opinion panicked by the [Madrid train bombings](#), which took place immediately before March 2004 general elections. In reality, Rodriguez Zapatero had campaigned throughout 2004 on an anti-Iraq War platform and thus used the Madrid attack merely as a trigger for a decision he probably would have made regardless.

The decision to intervene in Libya can thus be seen as a way to revitalize Spain's image as a country capable of international activism when the need arises — especially in the Mediterranean, its area of national interest — but also as a last-ditch effort by an unpopular government to raise its profile ahead of elections in early 2012.

The Luxury of Isolation

Spain has often stayed aloof from European geopolitical entanglements. Geography makes this choice possible. Essentially, Spain dominates the Iberian Peninsula. The Pyrenees leave it geographically isolated from core Europe. Its colonial linguistic and cultural links to this day provide it access to a large and lucrative Latin American market where its goods and services (especially financial) can out-compete its European rivals, giving it easier markets than the rough competition in Europe proper. Throughout its last century, Spain has been more self-absorbed than most large European nations. Catalan and Basque agitation for autonomy and independence, Madrid often has had no choice but to focus solely on internal threats — giving it fewer resources with which to address foreign issues.

This geographic and political aloofness combined with uniquely strenuously internal security requirements for a major European power (even greater than those imposed on the United Kingdom by the Irish question) have made Madrid's place in the Trans-Atlantic security establishment one of the most ambivalent. Rodriguez Zapatero's about-face on Iraq from the stance of his predecessor, Jose Maria Aznar Lopez, is therefore unsurprising. Because of its isolation and because the Trans-Atlantic alliance matters less for Madrid than for others in Europe, Spain is probably the only major country in Europe that has the luxury of pursuing such dramatically opposed policies purely on the domestic political calculus of its leaders.

For Spain, the security benefits of NATO membership therefore never really have been clear. Focused on internal security — for which NATO membership is of little use — Madrid's only true international concerns have been its proximity to North Africa and the subsequent ill effects of organized crime and smuggling. NATO's security guarantees do not apply to the Spanish exclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, across the Strait of Gibraltar from Spain and surrounded by Morocco, which claims the territories. One could still argue that Spain's NATO membership certainly would be at least a psychological reason for Morocco to reconsider plans to seize the two territories.

Therefore, Spanish NATO membership ultimately is about being accepted into the club of Western European states, which was still in serious doubt in the immediate years following the Franco dictatorship when Madrid joined the alliance in 1982. Joining the alliance at the time was a simple way to reassure Madrid's European allies that Spain would not renege on its commitment to democracy and that it would use NATO membership to begin reforming its military leadership. Madrid joined the European Union four years later in 1986. Spain has used its membership in NATO and often-close alliance with the United States to balance against the France- and Germany-dominated European Union. Spain often feels sidelined by the Franco-German leadership duo and has never been able to form a counter to it by allying with the United Kingdom or Italy. Spain's relationship with the United States has therefore proven useful in keeping Berlin and Paris on notice that Madrid's acquiescence to all things agreed upon by Continental powers is not a given.

Precisely because Spain's NATO membership was more about international assurances and the balancing of its U.S. and European commitments — and not about its core security interests — Madrid has had the luxury of ambivalence, as indicated by the extreme change of policy between Aznar and Zapatero on Iraq. This ambivalence was further exemplified by the 1986 referendum, organized by a

Socialist government, to see Spain withdraw from NATO, the first and only such referendum by a NATO member. The referendum was handily defeated by a popular vote, but the very act of holding it illustrated Spain's attitude toward the alliance: A country truly threatened by adverse geopolitical conditions and therefore truly in need of a security alliance would not seek to depart such an alliance.

In the Libya intervention, Madrid accordingly seeks to illustrate its solidarity with the United States and the other main European powers. For Rodriguez Zapatero in particular, the intervention is a way to illustrate that Madrid does not shy from international military action, especially as Spain already participates in international efforts in Afghanistan — thereby absolving Spain of its departure from Iraq. Also important for Rodriguez Zapatero is proving that despite its considerable economic crisis — and fears that [Spain could be the next eurozone economy after Portugal to require a bailout](#) — Madrid can still play an important foreign policy role.

The Domestic Component, Energy and Morocco

There is also an important domestic political component in terms of how Madrid is pursuing the intervention. The center-right People's Party (PP) remains firmly ahead of the governing Socialist Party in national polls, having enjoyed a steady 13-point lead for the past six months. Rodriguez Zapatero is worried that government's [austerity measures](#) — imposed to curb Spain's budget deficit and comply with demands from Berlin — are losing him the support of his base among the center-left in Spain. Due to the legacy of the Franco years, the left in Spain tends to be generally anti-interventionist, with as much as 91 percent opposed to the country's participation in Iraq. Therefore, while the Socialist government is trying to raise Madrid's profile internationally, it must do so quietly, without much fanfare at home to avoid further erosion of its support from its base. That said, the intervention is thus far popular due to its multilateral nature. The danger for Rodriguez Zapatero, however — as it is for other European governments that have entangled themselves in the Libyan intervention — is that public support for a humanitarian intervention will not distract from economic austerity too long, especially if the intervention starts looking drawn out and inconclusive.

On top of all this, Spain does have strategic interests in Libya, albeit not as great as Italy's. Spanish energy company Repsol YPF extracted 8.3 percent of its overall oil production from Libya in 2009, not an insignificant amount and comparable to the 10.7 percent that Italian energy giant ENI extracted. Spanish imports of oil from Libya are comparable to those of France, with 9 percent of total Spanish consumption coming from Libya, nowhere close to the almost 25 percent of its requirements that Italy imports. French firm Total does extract more oil from Libya, but as a larger company than Repsol, Libya is smaller as a share of the French company's total. As such, Repsol was not necessarily dissatisfied with the Gadhafi status quo in Libya and probably will look askance at the French and British moves.

Finally, as a Mediterranean country in close proximity to the 32 million people of Morocco, Madrid must consider what Libyan instability means for the region. Protests have occurred in Morocco, although the situation is thus far still under control and violence has been sporadic. Madrid cannot oppose the international intervention in Libya because it does not want to set a precedent that it may need to reverse shortly. Regime change in Morocco, for example, could place Madrid's North African exclaves in an untenable situation or could produce an exodus of migrants that Spain will have to counter with aggressive naval force interdiction — as Italy is threatening to begin doing with migrants streaming from Tunisia and Libya. That said, Morocco is nowhere near the point of Libyan instability or even Tunisian/Egyptian-style unrest.

Madrid definitely has an interest in joining in the intervention if for no other reason than to have a say in the post-intervention diplomatic resolution — when Paris and London may seek to use their patronage of the eastern Libyan rebels to enhance their respective positions. Madrid is wary of the French and British activism and is becoming far more aligned with [Rome](#) on the intervention than with [Paris and London](#). This became clear in a meeting of European, American, African and Arab leaders in London on March 29, with Spain, Germany and Italy favoring an option of exile for Gadhafi to facilitate

a conclusion to the intervention while France and the United Kingdom continued their strong demands for regime change.



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