

Missiles Can Help Stop Riots

By [Victor Davidoff](#)

February 27, 2011

The  Moscow Times

The Kremlin reacted to events in Libya much more vocally than it reacted to the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. Perhaps the difference is that Russian companies and specialists have been traditionally active in the Libyan construction and oil industries. The desire to keep contracts coming and continue the lucrative arms trade might be why Prime Minister Vladimir Putin urged his Western partners to give Arab countries in turmoil “the opportunity to determine their own fate through natural means and not with any kind of outside interference.”

This opinion was retransmitted in various forms on the Internet by analysts and public figures whose points of view always seem to match whatever official position was just uttered. Oksana Tkachyova, an analyst for the pro-Kremlin movement Young Guard, [paraphrased](#) the words of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, who stated that his opponents were drug addicts high on LSD. Tkachyova went even further and explained that they were not using old LSD, but something new: “Those people are being fed a psychotropic weapon that can make people follow orders en masse. ... It’s obvious that their behavior is inappropriate and unjustified.”

Boris Yakemenko, a lecturer at the People’s Friendship University, waxed ecstatic about

Gadhafi's violent attempts to hold on to power. On his blog, Yakemenko (aka Boris-yakemenko) [wrote](#): "The Libyan leader ... showed the whole world how to deal with provocateurs who want to overthrow the government, destabilize the country and start a civil war. ... He began to destroy them, using missiles and everything at his disposal. This is the best way to stop American revolutionary methods from being used."

Yakemenko is not one of those loony Russian professors who grab the headlines with predictions that Texas will secede or that the dollar is on the verge of collapse. Yakemenko is a member of the Public Chamber and sits on two of its commissions, one devoted to the preservation and development of culture and the other on science and innovations. More important, Yakemenko is the head of the Orthodox corps of the pro-Kremlin movement Nashi. And last but not least, he is the brother of Vasily Yakemenko, the infamous founder of Nashi and a Kremlin insider.

So Yakemenko's words were interpreted in the blogosphere as an indication of the Kremlin's Plan B if the Middle East protests were played out in Russia. "Now we know exactly how the authorities will react if the people finally get fed up with the way those authorities treat them," [wrote](#) the blogger Mix-hawk.

Opposition leader Garry Kasparov [wrote](#): "The reaction of Russian authorities and their pocket analysts and journalists [to events in Libya] was predictable, since for them the world is reflected in a conspiracy mirror. Once again, they saw a scripted event that would be repeated in Russia. Apparently, the political situation in Egypt and Libya reminds them too much of Russia."

There are, indeed, clear parallels between the pre-revolutionary situation in Libya and the situation in Russia. Vladimir Volkov, an analyst at Newsru.com, [wrote](#): "If you look at why the local population [in Libya] went out on their city streets, the analogy with Russia might seem frightening. Everyone sees the similarities: stagnant poverty for a significant segment of the population, despite the country's considerable natural resources; a huge income gap; no social mobility for young people; and an epidemic of corruption against the backdrop of growing moral fatigue over the leaders and family clans who are entrenched in power and do not wish or do not know how to carry out necessary social and economic reforms. Truly not seeing all these parallels in Russia is like noticing a speck of dust in someone else's eye, while not noticing the plank in your own eye. Today we see on the streets of Arab cities what this myopia leads to."

Coincidentally, as Libya reaches the boiling point, the Public Opinion Foundation released the [results](#) of its latest opinion poll. They showed a sea change in the country's mood. Forty-nine percent said they were ready to personally take part in mass protests. Just a month ago that figure stood at 39 percent, and in the summer it was only 24 percent.

Does this mean that Russia is heading for a remake of the Middle East scenario? Maybe not, but then a revolution is much like a stock market crash: Few see it coming.

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