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Kenzo Tribouillard/Agence France Presse. Polls show President Nicolas Sarkozy in deep trouble as France votes Sunday. If he gets through to a runoff, he will have to decide whether to run to the right or move to the center.

Which way will Sarkozy turn?

PARIS
BY STEVEN ERLANGER

The candidate — energetic, bold, indefatigable — is confident, sure he will win, pulling energy from his big crowds. “Take your destiny in your hands!” Nicolas Sarkozy shouted to the 100,000 or so who came to the Place de la Concorde to hear him on Sunday. “People of France! Don’t have fear! They will not win if you decide that you will win!”

But the team around him has quietly started to have doubts about victory,

and is debating the best strategy to try to overcome serious odds.

Mr. Sarkozy is in deep trouble and looks likely, at the moment, to be the first one-term French president since Valéry Giscard d’Estaing was defeated by François Mitterrand in 1981. Mr. Sarkozy appears to be running neck and neck with his main challenger, the Socialist candidate François Hollande, in the first round of voting on Sunday, when 10 candidates are competing. But all the opinion polls show Mr. Sarkozy losing to Mr. Hollande in a face-off two weeks later.

His possible defeat carries implica-

“He’s facing a real dilemma, because he needs to talk to two completely different constituencies.”

tions that would radiate far beyond Paris. Mr. Sarkozy has had contentious but valuable relationships with his fellow conservative Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, on European and euro zone issues; with the British on defense issues, including the Libyan war; and with President Barack Obama on issues

involving Iran and Israel, NATO and Russia.

A victory by even a centrist Socialist like Mr. Hollande, who has advocated higher taxes on the rich and a greater emphasis on growth over austerity, would create immediate strains with Berlin and rattle financial markets that are already nervous about the size of the French debt. Mr. Hollande has also said that he wants to pull French troops out of Afghanistan sooner than NATO has agreed to do. But he says his first visit abroad would be to Berlin, no mat-



ALI AL-MASHHADANI/REUTERS. Attacks across Iraq Security officers at the site of a car bombing in Ramadi on Thursday. Attacks across the country killed more than two dozen people. PAGE 4

U.N. chief accuses Damascus of blatantly disregarding truce

BEIRUT
BY NEIL MacFARQUHAR AND RICK GLADSTONE

The United Nations secretary general gave a dark appraisal of the Syria conflict on Thursday, accusing Syria’s government of failing to carry out nearly every element of a week-old peace plan, obstructing work by an advance team of cease-fire monitors and doing nothing to alleviate an increasingly dire humanitarian crisis on the ground.

Ban Ki-moon, the secretary general, also said an initial lull in violence between Syrian forces and anti-government fighters had all but disappeared.

Nonetheless, Mr. Ban told reporters at the United Nations that he had recommended that the Security Council authorize sending up to 300 military observers to Syria to act as cease-fire monitors.

But faced with the Syrian government’s failure to implement virtually any part of the peace accord, the ever more pressing question for outside countries was whether to believe the continued assurances from President Bashar al-Assad — and failing that, what to do about it.

The frustration of outside nations was evident in Paris, where Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called for a U.N. resolution to authorize an arms embargo SYRIA, PAGE 4

Europe finds its clout receding as debt crisis menaces the globe

WASHINGTON
BY ANNIE LOWREY AND JACK EWING

Europeans may discover this week that the debt crisis is not only threatening the euro zone economy and the integrity of the common currency, but also diminishing Europe’s influence in world affairs.

For the second year in a row, Europe’s problems are the major preoccupation as government officials and monetary policy makers gather in Washington for the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, which begin Friday and last through Sunday.

Europe is the “epicenter” of the crisis,

said Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the I.M.F. and a former French finance minister, calling for European leaders to encourage growth, strengthen their bailout fund and recapitalize banks.

The failure of European leaders to convince the rest of the world that they have a grip on the crisis is more than just embarrassing. It may also give them less weight in debates on other issues, and hasten the shift of power away from developed countries and toward EUROPE, PAGE 11

FUND STRUGGLES WITH COHESION
The I.M.F. may emerge from its meeting with more firepower but less force, James Saft writes. PAGE 18

WORLD NEWS
China purges ex-chief’s allies
Outsiders and detentions in the western metropolis of Chongqing are part of an attempt by central party leaders to dismantle the support network of Bo Xilai, the city’s deposed party chief, and build a case against him and his wife, who is under investigation for the murder of a British businessman. PAGE 4

Vatican reins in American nuns
The Vatican has appointed an American bishop to rein in a group representing about 80 percent of the Catholic nuns in the United States after saying the group had “serious doctrinal problems.” Word of the Vatican’s action took the group by surprise, sisters said. PAGE 3

Norway suspect details killings
The man on trial in Oslo on charges of killing 77 people said Thursday that he regretted not having killed even more and that he was justified in killing young people at a political camp because “regardless of their age they had taken on political leadership roles.” PAGE 3

BUSINESS
Nokia posts €929 million loss
The mobile phone maker’s sales dropped 29 percent in the first quarter as it phased out older models. PAGE 16



PRASHANTH VISHWANATHAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. Running on empty Coal dust blanketed a portion of an Indian port. The country’s growth is slowing as a lack of fuel is hampering companies. PAGE 17

What’s Facebook worth?
The social network values itself at \$75 billion, and possibly much more, based on details of its Instagram bid. PAGE 16

VIEWES
How Malawi fed its own people
President Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi, who died earlier this month, faced down the donor world by insisting that Africa can and must feed itself, Jeffrey D. Sachs writes. PAGE 6

Victor Hugo on the ballot
Hugo’s “Les Misérables” is the must-cite book of the French campaign. If a presidential candidate is what he reads, asks Robert Zaretsky, what is he if he doesn’t read at all? PAGE 6

COMING THIS WEEKEND
T Magazine: Spring Issue 2
The next T features Jessica Chastain, a star in an old Hollywood mold; Suzy Menkes on food-inspired fashion; and William H. Macy on a Harley road trip.

A decryption in film
The secretive Paul Thomas Anderson is finishing his sixth movie. He will not talk about it, but reports indicate it may be an exploration of Scientology.

NEWSSTAND PRICES

Algeria DZ 175	Brazil R\$ 10.00	Czech Rep. CZK 130	Germany €1.00	Kenya KSh 150	Mexico MXN 110	Romania Lei 1.50	The Netherlands €3.00
Andorra €3.00	Bulgaria €2.55	Denmark DKK 21	Ghana GHS 1.35	Latvia €1.25	Nigeria NGA 360	Romania Lei 1.50	Tunisia Din 1.200
Austria €3.00	Canada C\$ 2.00	Ecuador \$2.35	Hungary HUF 650	Lithuania €1.00	Northern Ireland €1.50	Saudi Arabia SR 13.00	Turkey TL 5
Belarus €1.00	Chad CFA 100	Egypt E£ 20.00	Israel ₪ 1.50	Malawi MWK 100	Senegal CFA 200	South Africa ZAR 10.00	Ukraine UHS 5.00
Bhutan NuT 120	China ¥ 1.50	France €1.00	Italy €1.50	Senegal CFA 200	Sri Lanka LKR 150	South Korea ₩ 1,000	United Arab Emirates AED 12.00
Bolivia B\$ 2.75	Cuba CUP 1.00	Germany €1.00	Japan ¥ 1.50	South Korea ₩ 1,000	Sri Lanka LKR 150	Spain €1.00	Venezuela VES 2.75
Bosnia & Herzegovina KM 1.00	Cyprus €1.00	Greece €1.00	Kenya KSh 150	South Korea ₩ 1,000	Sri Lanka LKR 150	Spain €1.00	
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CURRENCIES NEW YORK, THURSDAY 1:30PM PREVIOUS

— Euro	€1=	\$1.3120	\$1.3120
▲ Pound	£1=	\$1.6050	\$1.6020
▼ Yen	¥1=	¥81.490	¥81.280
— S. Franc	₣1=	₣0.9160	₣0.9160

Full currency rates Page 19

STOCK INDEXES THURSDAY

▼ The Dow 1:30pm	12,994.98	-0.29%
▼ FTSE 100 close	5,744.55	-0.01%
▼ Nikkei 225 close	9,588.38	-0.82%

OIL NEW YORK, THURSDAY 1:30PM

▲ Light sweet crude	\$102.59	+\$0.25
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