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2010-11 INTEGRATED POLICY EXERCISE: CRISIS IN IRAN

Preparatory Memo for Russia

Your team will represent Russia in the negotiations surrounding the UN Security Council. Therefore, your team will have a veto on the Council. This memo introduces some of Russia's priorities and interests in Iran and aims to help orient and kick-start your team's background research.

Overview of Bilateral Relations

Russia and Iran share a complex historical relationship. Russia has long vied for influence in Iran, competing with Great Britain during the era of the "Great Game" and with the United States during the era of the Shah (1953-79). Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, relations were hostile, but since the end of the Iran-Iraq War (in which Russia supported Iraq), the two countries have gravitated toward a tactical partnership based on a variety of common interests.

Russian Priorities in Iran

- *Military/Strategic* - Russia sees Iran as an important but sometimes troublesome strategic partner. The two countries share common opposition to expanded U.S. (and Turkish) influence in Central Asia and the Middle East. Amid Western sanctions, Russia has enjoyed extensive arms sales to Iran over the past decade and has provided Iran with some nuclear technology. However, important tensions exist. Russian leaders view the Iranian nuclear program with suspicion and recently voted to tighten sanctions and suspend some military sales, signaling a possible shift in relations. Russia and allied regimes in Central Asia and the Caucasus also face various forms of resistance from Islamist groups, sometimes inspired or supported by Tehran.
- *Economic* - Russia and Iran are both major energy producers and have signed a number of significant deals in recent years to develop oil and gas projects. Some Russian leaders see Western sanctions against Iran as an opportunity to reap commercial gains. Russo-Iranian energy deals also help Russia reduce reliance on partners in Turkey and Western Europe. Russia is widely seen as a major weak link in the sanctions regime.
- *Diplomatic* - Despite frequent bilateral friction, Russia and Iran often find common cause in multilateral forums. Russian leaders view Iran as part of a very loose and shifting coalition of second-tier states that help to weaken American primacy on the world stage.
- *Ideological* - Post-Soviet Russia has not been a vocal critic of the internal repressiveness of the Iranian regime. In international relations, Russia and Iran have tended to advocate strong state sovereignty and oppose liberal norms of humanitarian intervention.
- *Humanitarian & Environmental* - Iran is part of Russia's near abroad and borders some turbulent areas of concern to the Kremlin: namely the energy-rich Caspian Sea area, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. A humanitarian or environmental crisis in

Russia and the UN Security Council

Russia, which inherited the Soviet Union's seat on the UN Security Council, is a permanent member and active participant. Alongside China, it frequently opposes the agenda of the United States and its Western allies on issues ranging from human rights to military intervention. It has used its veto much more sparingly than the Soviet Union did during the Cold War but has often threatened vetoes to influence negotiations or derail Western-proposed resolutions.

Key Questions

As you conduct your background research for the IPE, you should be thinking about the types of choices Russia might need to make in an Iranian crisis related to the nuclear program. Key questions include the following:

- What are Russia's key interests in connection with Iran's nuclear program?
- In what circumstances would Russia likely defend Iran?
- Under what conditions would Russia likely favor tightening sanctions against Iran?
- Under what conditions, if any, would Russia be apt to favor military intervention?
- In the event of a humanitarian or environmental disaster, what types of contingencies would be of greatest concern to the Kremlin?

During our pre-IPE sessions in November, we will ask your team to answer some of these questions aloud. You should come prepared with one-minute answers to each of the questions above. One purpose of this exercise is to motivate you to prepare—which will make the IPE more interesting and useful to you. A second purpose is to inform the other teams of the types of positions you are likely to take, which can help them come prepared as well.

A Few Readings

Below are a few recent readings to help you get started. These are not meant to be at all exhaustive; you will need to undertake additional research to prepare for the simulation.

- "Russia-Iran Foreign Relations," *American Enterprise Institute*, Aug. 2010
<http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/russia-iran-foreign-relations>
- "Russia-Iran relations: Is there a Change?" *Canada Free Press*, July 2010
<http://www.canadafreepress.com/index.php/article/24143>
- "Where are Russia-Iran Relations Going?" *Xinhuanet*, April 2010
<http://www.cfr.org/publication/21986/xinhuanet.html>