



## **Policy Memo**

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### **Us-Russian Cooperation in the Short Term Strengthening Regional Security.**

Iran remains a centerpiece of extensive US-Russian cooperation focused around the discussions of the nuclear issue and its resolution.

During the first half of 2014, the two states will have to agree early on the objectives of the comprehensive negotiations to include the outline of an “acceptable” peaceful Iranian nuclear program . This would be for the purpose of both limiting Iran’s capacity to move to a breakout, and as a fix for the longer term set of parameters which cannot be exploited further to improve Iran’s nuclear weapons technology and information.

The direct limitations on the Iranian program will need to be agreed, including perhaps the number of Separative Work Units (SWUs) that can be accomplished over a fixed time period by Iran’s on-going enrichment efforts, the shut down or conversion of Arak, further extension of IAEA controls over Iran’s program to include application of the Additional Protocol and any further work needed to monitor and control the program.

Further discussion of regional security questions with Iran, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, are being rightly held off, at least on a formal basis, until the priority nuclear issue is moved to resolution or closer to resolution.

The US and Russia will be hard taxed to delivery unanimity quickly on the kind of sanctions relief which will make it possible to agree and implement that kind of program.

The two are farther apart on Syria, but could move closer together. Movement of Syria’s 500 ton lethal chemical stockpile to a port for transshipment to Italy and the US ship MV Cape Race for destruction would profit from the closest cooperation. Similarly, the institution of ceasefires in areas, if not all of Syria, as a first and early result of the negotiations would be important. Cooperation between the two is certainly necessary but not fully sufficient to achieve the next step.

Transitional governance in Syria will be a real challenge. Recent suggestions by Iran concerning elections could help open the door. One idea is a national transitional government of technicians to be followed by elections for a constituent assembly or parliament which would choose further elements of a transitional government and write a new constitution for Syria.

The Arab Israeli peace process will require close cooperation if it is to succeed. The Quartet has been quiescent recently, but its support for a Kerry framework arrangement would be very important.

The US and Russia will also have to pull together on Egypt where both the military and the brotherhood have failed to gain widespread popular support, but where the military, if they were to accept arrangements for a transition to a further civilian government down the line, might well establish a basis which both side could support.

### **Further Down the Road**

The US and Russia share a common interest in fighting terrorism and Islamic Fundamentalism in and beyond the region. They have a vested interest as well in checking the spread of weapons of mass destruction to and within the region. Common views might well be evolved on the question of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East. Key issues linked with that question include moves toward an Arab-Israeli settlement, keeping Iran nuclear weapons free, blocking further proliferation in the region and exploring with Israel what it really means when it says it will not be the first to “introduce” nuclear weapons to the region and whether under conditions of an agreed peace deal further steps along these lines might be taken.

There are shared interests in stable and not outrageous oil prices, a free flow of commerce in the region, the development of further stability in those states now disrupted by the Arab “transformation” and the need to avoid territorial and arms race competition.

Major obstacles for cooperation include V V Putin’s apparent interest in establishing a zone of predominant influence in Central Asia and beyond for Russia and Russian suspicion about the objectives of the US post-Afghanistan and 2014 regarding bases in the Central Asian and Middle Eastern regions.

Failure to achieve further nuclear arms reductions and continuing differences over cooperative ballistic missile defense also could heighten tensions as indeed could expansion of NATO and the EU into Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine and Georgia.

## **US Unilateral Sanctions**

As noted above, this will be a major problem for the US. The US will have to relinquish some control over sanctions, but would most likely want to guard until last the undoing of banking and financial sanctions which provide a significant amount of control over any third state relaxation of sanctions through the capacity to inhibit or control trade and bank and financial transactions in and through the US. This would help also to determine the treatment of FATF lists and the process by which the US would in whole or in part shut down sanctions in return for an acceptable deal.

Two big problems remain. Some US sanctions have double purposes and how would they be parsed in a shut down? The Congress will look at that closely and will well have to play a role. The present set up is so complex and convoluted after 30 years that even the best of experts at this stage have no really strong and useful ideas about how to go about a shut down and whether it could be done in a time frame set out in the Joint Plan of Action.