



Challenges in U.S.- Russia Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiatives: The Iranian Nuclear Issue

Kate Svyatets

University of Southern California

svyatets@usc.edu

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Iranian Nuclear Program

“Iran's nuclear policy is of an exclusively peaceful nature. Until now, we have worked within IAEA rules and the commitments we undertook by signing the NNPT” - **Mahmoud Ahmadinejad**



However, Iran has failed to convince the international community



Russia's Puzzling Support of Iran

- Another nuclear state in the Middle East is not compatible with Russia's national interests
- There are potential religious tensions with an Islamic Iran
- It has negatively affected U.S.-Russia relations



Explanation from IR Theories

- Economic calculations of domestic interest groups
James Goldgeier, Michael McFaul, Andrei Shleifer, Daniel Treisman, Anatol Lieven
- Realism and balance-of-power
Peter Valenti, Mark Katz, Ilan Berman, Dmitry Simes
- Russia's identity of a great power
Richard Pipes, Robert English, Andrei Piontkovsky



Economic Explanation Is Not Enough

- The contract for Bushehr promised a revenue of 2 bln USD and 20,000 new jobs – much smaller than other sources in the Russian state budget income (oil and gas, etc.)



<http://www.ase.atomstroyexport.ru/projects/current/project10/>



Balance of Power: U.S.-Russia

Challenges in U.S.-Russia relations:

- The legacy of the Cold War thinking
- NATO expansion
- Discontinued treaties (ABM)
- Missile defense in Europe
- Disagreements on Libya and Syria
- The Georgia War in 2008





Russia as a Great Power

Russia has tried to increase its influence in the broader Middle East through multiple means (economic, conventional arms, etc.)

Russia considers itself the leader in nuclear issues that have a symbolic meaning for the Russian government and for the nation



Conclusion

Russia's policies in the Middle East are driven by the government's desire

- To distinguish its policies from those of the United States
- To re-establish the image and status of a great power



Policy Implications

- For Russia – the conflict with the West and supporting unpredictable regimes is not conducive to achieving major goals (an equal partner in G8)
- For the United States – more diplomacy, flexibility and understanding of Russia's security concerns will bring Russia closer to the West