

# Russia's Relations with Iran: Dialogue without Commitments

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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**U**nder current conditions, it would be naive to expect Russia to severely curtail its relations with Tehran or officially support the West's stance on the nuclear question. Given Iran's importance as a regional player, Moscow simply cannot afford confrontation with its southern neighbor. At the same time, Russia's pragmatic, cost-benefit approach to foreign policy remains paramount, making a true alliance with volatile Iran highly improbable. What does this mindset mean for U.S. efforts to curb the Islamic Republic's nuclear ambitions?

In this Policy Focus, a former official from the Russian embassy in Tehran analyzes how Moscow's on-and-off embrace of Iran acts as a barometer of its attitude toward Washington. By understanding this dynamic better -- and by recognizing the often-overlooked fact that the nuclear issue is only one of many items Moscow considers essential to its security, economic, and energy interests in the region -- policymakers can move toward more-constructive dialogue on Iran.

## THE AUTHOR

**N**ikolay Kozhanov, a visiting fellow with The Washington Institute, served as an attache at the Russian embassy in Tehran from 2006 to 2009, focusing on socioeconomic, energy, and nuclear issues. Currently, he works as an expert at the Institute of the Middle East and as a visiting lecturer in Saint Petersburg State University's School of Economics. ❖

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