

Security Council Study Guide: Iranian Nuclear Program

I. Security Council Overview

The Security Council is one of the central organs of the United Nations Organization. Its mandate under the UN Charter is to veil for the safeguarding of international security. It intervenes whenever a threat to peace arises, and is able to do so through a variety of means.

According to the UN Charter, all Member States accept the decisions of the Security Council. This means that while other agencies and committees may only issue suggestions or recommendations to Member States, the Security Council is the only UN-body able to issue resolutions that are legally binding upon them.

The Security Council is composed of 5 Permanent (“P5”) and 10 Non-Permanent Members.

According to the UN Charter, the 5 Permanent Members have veto-power in any substantial matter voted upon by the Security Council. Therefore, every resolution should count with the approval of each one of them. The Permanent Members are:

- the People’s Republic of China,
- the French Republic,
- the Russian Federation,
- the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and
- the United States of America.

Non-Permanent Members are elected by the General Assembly for a two-year-period. They do not possess veto-power, but can still actively influence the work of the committee. The current Non-Permanent Members are:

- the Argentine Republic,
- the Commonwealth of Australia,
- the Republic of Chad,
- the Republic of Chile,
- the Republic of Jordan,
- the Republic of Korea,
- the Republic of Lithuania,
- the Principality of Luxembourg,
- the Federal Republic of Nigeria,
- the Republic of Rwanda.



At Heidelberg National MUN 2014, given the nature of the topic the Security Council will be handling, the committee will welcome four additional members, which will act as observers during the conference. They have a right to address the committee, and to vote on procedural matters. They are, however, unable to participate in substantial decisions. These four entities are:

- the Islamic Republic of Iran,
- the State of Israel,
- the Federal Republic of Germany, and
- the European Union.

II. Topic Overview

Iran's nuclear program has always been subject of much discussion, and has defined the basis for much of the West-Middle East interaction during the past fifty years.

A. The birth of a Republic and its nuclear program

The Iranian Nuclear program was started during the 1950s under Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi with support from the United States government. However, after the Islamic Revolution, which ousted the Shah, and transformed the country into a republic, Iran's relations with the West started to deteriorate.

The new Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, put conservative policies in place, for considering western practices not in accord with the principles of Islam. Although Iran's nuclear program was not the government's top priority during the first years of the republic, the situation changed quickly during the Iran-Iraq War in the eighties. Saddam Hussein was developing nuclear abilities in Iraq, and Iran saw the need to follow.

The nineties' decade found Iran under a new Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, striving to develop a nuclear program in cooperation with the Russian Federation. In 2003, however, weapon-related research was officially halted in the aftermath of the American invasion of Iraq, originally justified on the grounds that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Nonetheless, uranium enrichment facilities remained operational.

B. Ahmadinejad: Iran defiantly enters the nuclear race

The situation deteriorated further in 2005 with the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He did not only openly encourage Iran's nuclear program, violating Security Council resolutions, but also called for Israel to be "wiped off the map". He continued the expansion of nuclear research, opening facilities in Arak, and restarting production in Natanz.

Ahmadinejad's zeal was quickly countered by the efforts of the international community, which quickly translated into economic sanctions. At present, most of the Security Council sanctions include an embargo for arms and nuclear materials, and the practical prohibition to



financial institutions to lend any money to Iran. United States sanctions comprise mainly the Iranian oil industry, banning any sort of development support by American companies, and suspending all oil trade with Iran. On the other hand, the main European Union sanction on Iran consisted on the expulsion of Iranian banks from a global banking system in 2012, which basically cut off Iran's ability to engage in international trade operations.

C. Rouhani: Engaging in nuclear talks

With the election of Iran's new president, Hassan Rouhani, the situation began to improve. On August 28th 2013, the IAEA reported that Iran was slowing its production of uranium.

In an attempt to further reach out to the West, and alleviate the sanctions on Iran, Rouhani agreed to conversations with the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States and Germany) regarding Iran's nuclear program. A preliminary agreement was finalized on November 24th 2013. It is supposed to last six months, enough time for negotiators to draft a more comprehensive document that will ensure that the Iranian nuclear program is only used for peaceful means.

Both parts optimistically saw the accord as a historical event that could mark a new course for Iran-U.S. relations. However, not every stakeholder was of the same opinion. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said "What was concluded in Geneva last night is not a historic agreement, it's a historic mistake", and further affirmed that the lifting of sanctions would remove any incentives the Iranian government might have to reach a nuclear deal. Although no direct threats were made, some analysts speculate Iran may be preparing for a preemptive assault on Iranian nuclear facilities. Saudi Arabia has also been known for its reluctance regarding the return of Iran into the international sphere.

It will be a long way, full of hard head-to-head discussions. In the end, the issue of Iran's sovereign right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes will have to be set on the table.

III. Elements of Discussion

The task of the Heidelberg National MUN Security Council will be to draft a resolution taking into account the recent preliminary accord between Iran and the P5+1. The delegates should not forget the belligerent statements made by Israel against Iran, yet should also remain wary about Iran's past attitude, and the possibility that it might fall back to its previous foreign policy.

Any resolution should address the following issues:

- Provide a road map for the next six months, so that negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 occur as peacefully and efficiently as possible;
- Agree on measures to ensure peace between Israel and Iran;
- Agree on the role the IAEA will play during the first six months period;
- Discuss the further lifting of economic sanctions on Iran.



The resolution could address the following questions:

- Does Iran have a sovereign right to enrich uranium in its research facilities?
- Should Israel be admonished for its belligerent statements against Iran?
- Will any other agencies be called upon to monitor Iran's nuclear program?

IV. Position Blocks

It is every country's interest to see Iran's nuclear program halted. Therefore, the whole group of the P5+1 was holding negotiations with Iran. However, there is no longer such a unified position when it comes to Israel's attitude towards its neighbor.

A. Western Block

The United States has been leading the efforts to shut down the Iranian nuclear program for the last decades. It has carried out a number of failed diplomatic missions under the previous administrations. It is a big achievement for the United States to finally be able to sit down with the new Iranian administration to draft an agreement.

However, the United States will have to be wary about the belligerent statements of Israel, one of its strongest allies. If it comes to war between Iran and Israel, it is uncertain which way the United States will go.

B. Eastern Block

Although it may not be plausible that the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China militarily side with Iran, they will have to decide whether siding with Israel or not will set any favorable precedent in international law.

C. Middle-East:

1. Arab Countries

Although most Arab countries' relations with Israel have been tense during the last half-century, the last decade has seen increased cooperation with the West. Recent trade agreements with the United States and the European Union may testify for this situation. Saudi Arabia for instance has developed quite a strong relationship with Israel, and as Netanyahu, Saudi Arabia is not very friendly towards a nuclear deal with Iran.

2. Israel

Given Israel's unresolved issues with most Arab nations during the last decades, the reintroduction of Iran in the international sphere does not predict anything good. Besides, taken into account Ahmadinejad's rhetoric on Israel, it has also become a question of national security to ensure that Iran stays as far as possible from acquiring a nuclear bomb. This agreement does not seem to solve the issue, and further escalation of the situation might ensue.



3. Iran

Iran has suffered deeply because of the trade sanctions imposed by the Security Council during the last decade. When Rouhani came into power, he inherited an economy in shambles, and was therefore in the need of relocating Iran in the international sphere. To do so, a nuclear agreement had to be found. Rouhani's policy has been moderate and open towards the West, having tried to reach out on more than one occasion, avoiding the belligerent statements of the previous administration. However, how far Iran would go, should its national security be endangered remains yet to be seen.

V. Research Recommendations

You may find the text of the Nuclear Agreement on pdf here:

http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131124_03_en.pdf

More information regarding the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole can be obtained in its official website:

<http://www.un.org/en/sc/about/>

Security Council Resolutions can be seen here:

<http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/>

When researching for facts, the delegates should employ well renowned sources. For the Council's present topic, the IAEA reports may be particularly helpful, although information from other recognized agencies is also welcome in the discussion. The IAEA figures are to be found here:

<http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iaeairan/index.shtml>

When investigating about your delegation's position, it is useful to visit the Foreign Relations Office website of your represented country. Sometimes, however, it is difficult to concretely find its concrete foreign policy, particularly in the case of small countries. The delegates should then be able to judge the situation, based either on previous behavior, or on the belonging of the country to a determined ideological block.

by: Oscar Santiago Vargas Guevara

* Please take into account that this Study Guide is just meant to serve as the entry point into your actual research. Its objective is not to provide an exhaustive analysis, but to give delegates some ground knowledge to carry out further research.

** This Study Guide was finished on the 21th of December 2013. Therefore, any events occurring after this date are not outlined here. Delegates should pay careful attention to the current development of the situation, and be prepared to adapt to any new events.