

## Iran Offers Russia and America a Package Deal

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*Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is suggesting that the countries of the West take a wholly new look at their relations with Teheran. In his opinion, the West should not impose sanctions against Teheran but should rather seek to befriend Iran. According to information obtained by [Kommersant](#), the Iranian leadership has worked out its own plan to come to a peaceful accord with the West. Teheran has made offers to Russia and the United States that would not only allow the Islamic Republic to keep its nuclear program but also to take control of the entire Near East.*

Yesterday Mr. Ahmadinejad gave a strange speech at a rally in the city of Shakhriyare. The Iranian president, who is well known for his threatening stance towards the West, unexpectedly changed his tone and called on the United States and Europe to embrace friendly relations with Iran. "Is it really possible that your frowning and anger towards us over the course of the last 27 years has been of any use to you?" asked President Ahmadinejad. "Doesn't it seem to you that it is time to change your relations with us and to become friendly towards the Iranian nation?"

In making his argument for why Iran and the West would do better not to quarrel, Mr. Ahmadinejad said, "the Iranian nation is becoming more powerful, stronger, and more steadfast by the day, while you are becoming ever weaker and more isolated."

Fairly conciliatory statements have been issuing more and more often recently from the mouths of the Iranian leadership. Mr. Ahmadinejad celebrated the first anniversary of his election as president not long ago, and during that first year he built a reputation as a hardheaded radical with whom it was almost impossible to negotiate and who was incapable of making any kind of concession. However, as the first year of his presidency drew to a close, the Iranian leader suddenly began to attempt to burnish his image. For starters, Mr. Ahmadinejad stepped forward like some kind of dove of peace in response to the scandal that flared up around the contradictory statements made by Pope Benedict XVI concerning the Prophet Muhammad. In that moment, when the majority of the leaders of the Muslim world was demanding immediate apologies from the pontiff, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that he considered the conflict settled: he was satisfied with the Pope's statement that he "regrets his words."

Then Iran reacted in a carefully thought-out manner to North Korea's nuclear test. Teheran stated that it does not consider nuclear weapons acceptable, that it is not seeking to develop them, and that Iran dreams of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Such behavior appears to be the new distinguishing feature of Iranian politics. After carrying out a year of "shock therapy," Mr. Ahmadinejad has decided to alter his means of engagement with the West by offering Iran's cooperation in exchange for concessions.

Judging by recent comments from Iranian politicians, Teheran intends to concentrate its energies on normalizing relations with both its most consistent defenders and its most sworn enemies. Since all of its possible talks with the EU, in the person of senior foreign affairs representative Javier Solana, have failed, and given that China has recently shown little interest in the Iranian question, preferring instead to bide its time, Teheran is planning to focus its attention on working with Russia and the United States. According to information obtained by [Kommersant](#), this was the topic being discussed during recent talks between Russia and Iran during Russian Security Council Secretary Igor Ivanov's visit to Iran.

As Iranian Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani told his Russian counterpart, Teheran is prepared to offer Moscow a new form of partnership that will turn Russia into a key player in the Near East. Specifically, using its ties in the Muslim world, Teheran has promised to install Moscow in the role of intermediary in all important negotiations in the region, such as those in Lebanon and Palestine. What is more, Mr. Larijani promised Mr. Ivanov economic benefits as well. For example, according to Teheran's plans, Russian and Iranian companies could start actively establishing themselves in Iraq's oil fields, thanks to the fact that America's control in the country is weakening as Iran's influence increases. Russian firms could also begin to revitalize oil terminals in southern Iraq, while Iran, through its contacts with local Shiite groups, would guarantee the safety of the Russian specialists working at these installations.

Finally, according to Mr. Larijani, Teheran is prepared to facilitate the resolution of less ambitious but more vital problems for Russia. First, using its own channels, the Iranian authorities could help Russian special forces track down the killers of several Russian diplomats in Iraq. Secondly, Teheran is offering to negotiate with Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah for a guarantee of the safety of a Russian engineering battalion that was recently deployed to Lebanon.

Understanding that the question does not lie only in Moscow's hands, Iran is also beginning to take tentative steps in its relations with the United States. According to information from Kommersant's sources, Ali Larijani informed Igor Ivanov of a package deal that Teheran intends to offer to Washington. The key issue in the scheme thought up by Iran is the stabilization of the situation in the whole of the Near East. Washington has long believed that it is precisely the Iranian regime that is the destabilizing factor in the region, since Teheran is believed to support all of the region's anti-American forces. Iran's offer is built around Teheran's readiness to cease this practice. In addition Iran, which basically controls Iraq's Shiites, is prepared to do everything necessary to calm the situation in the country and to concern itself with the safety of American troops. Finally, the authorities in Teheran are promising to use their influence over Hezbollah and Hamas, which are closely affiliated with the Shiite Iranian regime, to achieve general stabilization throughout the region.

The payment that Iran is demanding in exchange for such work is an agreement from the West that it can continue with the development of its nuclear program and uranium enrichment. During negotiations with the EU's Javier Solana, Mr. Larijani attempted to show that the current process of enrichment in Iran cannot be considered production – two cascades of a centrifuge, claims Teheran, are the only objectives of its scientific research. According to Mr. Larijani, Iran is prepared to renounce the possibility of industrial uranium enrichment, on the condition that the country is allowed to keep all of the technology that it currently possesses. Teheran considers this offer to be a colossal concession.

It is difficult to judge how the United States will react to Iran's new ideas. Most likely, Washington will not be overly enthusiastic, since if the plan is realized, Washington will end up being held hostage by Iran. If the US does accept Iran's help, it will then be wholly dependent on Iran - and in that case, Teheran will become the virtual master of the Near East. And for that Iran will not even need to develop its own nuclear weapons.

Late last night representatives of the foreign ministries of the "group of six" countries (the five permanent members of the [UN Security Council](#), plus Germany) were scheduled to have a teleconference to determine the date for the upcoming discussion of the Iranian question in the Security Council. However, it is possible that the discussion of the Iranian question in the UN, which the members of the Security Council had apparently finally agreed upon at the end of September, is now in doubt. Iran's offer may turn out to be extremely tempting for the Russian diplomat.

[All the Article in Russian as of Oct. 12, 2006](#)

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