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# Agreements and Disagreements Between Russia and Mexico

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**M**exico's fourth stint in the United Nations Security Council (SC) lasted from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2010. This article will attempt to analyze Russia's position in the SC from 2009 to 2010 and identify points of agreement and disagreement with Mexico in this important UN body.

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RUSSIAN NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY  
(2009-2010)

To be able to analyze Russian participation in the council, it is a good idea to take into account the main points of its new national security strategy.<sup>1</sup>

Among its numerous points, in my opinion, the following eight are the most outstanding:

- 1) the clear delimitation and protection of its borders;
- 2) references to energy security, including oil and gas pipelines;
- 3) the mention of vital interests in the Arctic, the Caspian Sea, and Siberia;
- 4) cooperation as a state with the great powers;
- 5) the protection of the Russian Diaspora, which to a certain extent implies the idea of an “expanded” border;
- 6) the modernization of the army, making it smaller but more efficient;
- 7) the desire to become the world’s fifth-largest economy measured in terms of GDP; and
- 8) an emphasis on human development.

The national security strategy has an impact on the new Russian military doctrine, which has four core points:<sup>2</sup> the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in national security; limited use of nuclear arms for regional and global wars; the fact that while the 2000 military doctrine includes the use of nuclear weapons in situations critical to Russian national security, the 2010 doctrine proposes their use only when the existence of Russia is threatened; and an emphasis on the use of conventional weapons, precision instruments, communications, commandos, and control systems.

#### RUSSIA’S POSITION AT THE SIXTY-FOURTH UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

To understand Russia’s position in the SC, it is necessary to look at the core points of its foreign policy in the UN in general, and therefore, its overall position at the sixty-fourth UN General Assembly.<sup>3</sup> Among the central points are the consolidation of the multilateral principles for world policy, which presupposes joint solutions; the observation of the exclusive rights the UN Charter gives the Security Council for keeping the peace and international security; and the reform of the Security Council, seeking better representation for developing countries, an increased number of non-permanent members, longer periods, and re-election. Respect for the exclusive rights of permanent members, including the veto, are non-negotiable.

Russia considers that the most important issues should not be resolved by a vote in the UN General Assembly, and seeks leadership in peacekeeping missions. It supports making the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism universal, as well as the resolutions for

putting an end to piracy along the coasts of Africa, and the creation of mechanisms for a specialized international tribunal. It also supports processes for the resolution of the conflicts in the Middle East and the creation of an independent Palestinian state that can live in peace and security with neighboring Israel and condemns unilateral Israeli action. It supports the greatest possible UN involvement in Iraq; considers that the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan must be guided by SC Resolution 1267; opposes agreements with the Taliban and extremist groups; and, in the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, seeks UN understanding of the region’s new situation.

In addition to all this, Russia supports the existence of a binding document banning the use of force between Georgia and the new states, and will also promote these new states’ security and economic and social development. To prevent the re-militarization of Georgia, it insists on an international embargo on offensive weapons against Tbilisi as one of the mainstays of stability in the region, and is convinced of the

Mexico and Russia have agreed on piracy in Africa; Iraq; the different UN missions; humanitarian law; women and conflict resolution; the condemnation of sexual violence during armed conflicts; North Korea; and nuclear non-proliferation.

illegality of Kosovo’s unilaterally declared independence. It supports the solution of the Cyprian conflict, and is in favor of establishing a bi-communal, two-zone federation not subject to outside arbitration that would serve the interests of the Greek and Turkish communities.

Russia considers international sanctions the exclusive prerogative of the Security Council and thinks that under no circumstances should sanctions exceed SC resolutions, and that they should be applied very precisely. It is against measures that would deepen economic and social conflicts, and in favor of seeking a solution to the North Korean nuclear problem exclusively through political and diplomatic channels based on SC decisions.

Russia considers cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights very important, but that the main responsibility lies with the states, not in international bodies. Therefore, it condemns the use of human rights as a pretext



Eric Thayer/REUTERS

Russia seeks leadership in peacekeeping missions and supports making the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism universal, as well as the resolutions for creating mechanisms for a specialized international tribunal, among other issues.

for interfering in the internal affairs of states and/or as means of exerting pressure. But, on the other hand, it does support strengthening UN humanitarian efforts, with the understanding that aid must be anchored in principles like humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. The states in question will make the final decision to accept or reject it, and how to use it.

#### RUSSIAN INITIATIVES IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The Russian Federation promoted three major initiatives from 2009 to 2010: the creation of an international tribunal to pursue sea pirates; the formation of a diplomatic foursome (the European Union, Russia, the United States, and the UN) to create a Palestinian state that could live in peace next to Israel (as was foreseen at the 2009 International Conference in Mos-

cow); and, lastly the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, a joint Russian-U.S. proposal. In addition to these three initiatives, the federation calls on the international community to sign and ratify without delay the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

#### CHANGES IN DIRECTION OF THE RUSSIAN POSITION

A clear demonstration that, even when it comes to official positions, states have a certain degree of flexibility, can be seen in Russia's reconsideration of two issues. In the case of North Korea, Dmitri Medvedev signed a decree so that Russia could vote for the SC sanctions against North Korea for its nuclear missile tests. Beginning on June 12, 2009, the purchase of arms and related materials from North Korea was banned and their transport through Russian territory toward North Korea has also been banned. Russia, initially unconvinced of the three rounds of sanctions against Iran, finally decided to support a fourth round.<sup>4</sup>

#### MEXICO-RUSSIA AGREEMENTS ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Mexico and the Russian Federation have coincided in their judgments from 2009 to 2010 on the following issues: piracy in Africa; Iraq; the different UN missions; humanitarian law; the participation of women in conflict resolution; the condemnation of sexual violence during armed conflicts; North Korea; and non-proliferation of nuclear power. Lastly, Russia and Mexico voted exactly alike on Resolutions 1860 and 1936.

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEXICO AND RUSSIA ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Nevertheless, on at least five issues, Mexico and Russia did differ:

- 1) Conventional weapons: Felipe Calderón added his voice to the concern of President Óscar Arias, calling attention to the proliferation of conventional weapons, since small and light-arms trafficking causes around 1 000 deaths and 3 000 injuries a day throughout the world. As one of the world's largest exporters of con-

Russia opposes measures that would deepen economic and social conflicts, and considers cooperation for promoting and protecting human rights very important, but thinks that the main responsibility lies with the states, not international bodies.

ventional weaponry, Russia does not seem interested in controlling the proliferation of these kinds of arms.

- 2) Dismantling the UN Observation Mission in Georgia when it was vetoed by Russia. Mexico had voted in favor of renewing the mission, considering that fundamental UN principles are at play there like sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity.
- 3) The arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and its effects on that country's humanitarian situation, particularly in the region of Darfur. Russia, like China, is against the request for an arrest warrant, considering it a "dangerous precedent." Mexico, abiding by the court's by-laws, is in favor of supporting and respecting its decision.
- 4) Kosovo. Mexico supports the International Court of Justice being the body that decides whether the current situation is in accordance with international law. As long as the International Court of Justice has not made a ruling, for Mexico, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries still stand. Russia refuses to recognize Kosovo's independence.
- 5) Sri Lanka. Russia refused to deal with and discuss the Mexican proposal to analyze the military conflict in Sri Lanka, particularly the humanitarian situation. It claims that Sri Lanka's situation does not merit SC in-

tervention, arguing that the situation of the Tamil Eelam is very different from that of Kosovo.

## CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen, Mexican and Russian interests coincide fundamentally on issues that are not vital for the Euro-Asian power. We can see that Mexico, as a peripheral state, is holding on to a "principled" position; Russia, as a re-emerging power, appeals to international law selectively. ■■■

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This strategy was approved by President Dmitri Medvedev May 12, 2009. See "'Strategia natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 goda,'" [http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=87:russian-national-security-strategy&catid=1:latest-news](http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=87:russian-national-security-strategy&catid=1:latest-news), accessed August 12, 2010, and RIANovosti, "Russian President Approves National Security Strategy until 2020," May 13, 2009, [en.rian.ru/russia/20090513/121575657.html](http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090513/121575657.html), accessed August 12, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> This doctrine was issued February 5, 2010. See Nikolai Sokov, "The New 2010 Russian Military Doctrine: The Nuclear Angle," [cns.miis.edu/.../100205\\_russian\\_nuclear\\_doctrine.htm](http://cns.miis.edu/.../100205_russian_nuclear_doctrine.htm), accessed August 13, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> See the 45-point document "Russia's Position at the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly," and [www.un.int/russia/new/MainRoot/index\\_plain.html](http://www.un.int/russia/new/MainRoot/index_plain.html), accessed August 14, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> On June 9, 2010, the Security Council approved a resolution with a new package of sanctions against Iran for its lack of cooperation in demonstrating the peaceful aims of its nuclear program. The resolution received 12 votes in favor, including Mexico and the Russian Federation's, one abstention (Lebanon), and two votes against (Brazil and Turkey). The new package of sanctions restricts arms sales to Iran and allows all states to inspect Iranian ships and planes suspected of transporting nuclear-industry-related materials. The sanctions also reinforces control over Iran's financial and banking activities, and approves freezing assets of entities suspected of being related to undeclared nuclear program activities. In addition, they include the creation of a "blacklist" of Iranian companies banned from investing abroad. Lastly, they restrict travel of individuals linked with the companies on the list.

