

Non-Aligned Movement meets in Iran, defies U.S.

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A meeting in Tehran starting Aug. 26 puts into the sharpest perspective the waning position of U.S. imperialism globally and especially in the Middle East. Both the U.S. and Israel's demands for a boycott of the meeting were ignored. Clearly the U.S. hold is slipping.

Despite every U.S. government effort to economically strangle, militarily blockade and politically isolate Iran, 118 countries, including 35 heads of state and 21 foreign ministers, have accepted the invitation to send a high-level delegation to Iran for the international gathering of the Non-Aligned Movement.

More than 7,000 delegates are expected for NAM's 16th summit since its 1961 inception. Iran is hosting the meeting. Its three-year tenure as head of NAM provides Tehran with an opportunity to elevate its international standing and show that Washington has failed to isolate it.

The media report the top issues of this world gathering will be opposition to U.S.-imposed sanctions on Iran and U.S.-NATO backed efforts to overthrow Syria's government. As host, Iran prepares the first draft of the meeting's final declaration. According to reports, the draft will affirm Iran's right to peaceful nuclear technology, condemn Israel's threats to attack Iran and censure Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands.

Egypt's Mohamed Morsi will be the first Egyptian president to visit Iran since 1979, when the two countries broke relations following Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's signing of the Camp David Accords, which normalized Egypt's relations with Israel. This action aligned Egypt with Washington against the Iranian revolution.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, usually compliant with Washington's policies, said he planned to attend the Tehran gathering. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called this decision "a big mistake."

The U.S. State Department's Victoria Nuland called Tehran "a strange place and an inappropriate place for this meeting" and emphasized that the U.S. considers Iran a threat to the region and the world. (state.gov, Aug. 16)

The Non-Aligned Movement was founded in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1961 and was comprised mainly of former colonial countries that were allied militarily neither to the U.S. nor the Soviet Union.

Why at this time are so many countries and heads of state interested in participating in a meeting in Tehran, despite Washington's stated displeasure?

U.S. bullying can't force compliance

U.S. threats against Iran far surpass economic sanctions. They include sabotage of its infrastructure, assassination of its scientists, abductions of citizens, internal destabilization campaigns and military encirclement.

Both the sanctions on Iran and the all-out effort to overturn the Syrian government are U.S. efforts to create fear in any other country attempting to develop independently of U.S. corporate domination. To enforce its policies, Washington uses the enormous financial leverage of Wall Street banks, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which operate with the banking and financial institutions of Germany, Britain and France, and the combined weight of all U.S.-dominated NATO countries.

In January, U.S. congressional legislation demanded that every country in the world participate in economic sanctions and end all purchases of Iranian oil. In March, Iranian banks were disconnected from the SWIFT network that enables electronic financial transactions.

July 1 was to be the global cutoff in all oil sales and banking transactions with Iran. Pressure on countries that import Iranian oil were stepped up, as the U.S. and European governments threatened to take action against those who failed to apply sanctions. These steps were supposed to unravel Iran's economy.

The ability of the world's largest corporations and banks to seize assets and block all economic transactions threatens every developing country. But the global capitalist system is in crisis and disarray. Western financial institutions provide scant new investment money. The U.S. empire offers developing and formerly colonized countries little and demands compliance with its plans and aims.

Even from a strictly business perspective, the governments of many countries knew that sanctions would hurt not only the Iranian economy but also their own economies, by cutting off their commerce with the largest and most stable economy in the region.

Immediately, China, Russia, India, the ALBA Bloc in Latin America, and even Pakistan and South Korea announced they would not stop buying Iranian petroleum products. The majority of the global population lives in these countries.

Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran

After waging war for a decade and occupying Iraq and Afghanistan with hundreds of thousands of troops, spending trillions of dollars and destroying both countries, Washington is still frustrated by reports that Iraq and Afghanistan are trading with Iran.

The Aug. 18 New York Times reported: "President Obama's announcement last month that he was barring a Baghdad bank from any dealings with the American banking system ... [was] a rare acknowledgment of a delicate problem facing the administration in a country that American troops just left: for months Iraq has been helping Iran skirt economic sanctions. ...

"American officials learned that the Iraqi government was aiding the Iranians by allowing them to use Iraqi airspace to ferry supplies to Syria."

Iraq is now a major consumer of Iranian manufactured goods partly because Iraq has virtually no industry of its own. A high-ranking Iraqi delegation visited Tehran in August to increase commercial relations.

About 50 percent of Afghanistan's oil comes from Iran, Afghan Minister of Commerce Anwar al Haq Ahady told reporters at a Washington Post roundtable. (Huffington Post, May 9)

Meanwhile, Afghan traders have proved more than willing to exchange dollars for rials, usable as a currency in many parts of western Afghanistan. Truckloads of cash are crossing the border, allowing Iran to bolster its reserves of dollars, euros and precious metals to stabilize its exchange rates. (New York Times, Aug. 17)

The Pentagon has demonstrated its capacity to lay waste to a country through massive bombardment. But it is unable to introduce any progressive change or development.

Of course, the governments of some countries within the Non-Aligned Movement have had sharp conflicts and contradictions with each other. But Washington's apprehension is that under the three-year presidency of Iran, NAM may again focus on its original principle of promoting national independence, self-determination, territorial integrity, and the struggle against the heritage of colonialism and imperialism, as Fidel Castro called for at a 1979 NAM meeting in Havana.

This Tehran gathering of many of the world's developing countries is a sharp challenge to the U.S. and Western imperialist powers and NATO, which claim to speak for the international community and for human rights while calling for regime change, armed intervention, no-fly zones in Syria and threatening wider war against Iran.

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