

The NAM Summit, Iran, and Syria: A Coup against the West?

Can the NAM Summit bridge the Iran-Egypt Gap?

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The upcoming summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will be held in Tehran from August 26 to 31, 2012. The NAM and its summit are mostly ignored in the Atlanticist world of the United States and NATO, but this year's gathering has gotten the attention of the Atlanticists and their press. The reason is that the NAM summit's venue has upset the political establishment in Washington, DC.

The US government has got its feathers ruffled and even gone out of its way to berate NAM leaders for gathering in Iran. US State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland – the spouse of neo-con Project for the New American Century (PNAC) co-founder and arch-imperialist Robert Kagan – has asked Egypt's new president, Mohamed Morsi, and even UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Washington's own steward at the UN, not to travel to Tehran. Nuland and the US State Department have bitterly declared that Iran is not deserving of such "high-level presences." The US, however, is forced to grin and bear the gathering of world leaders in Tehran.

What will take place is an international extravaganza, minus NATO and its key de facto members – Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea – in the Asia-Pacific and Israel. African, Asian, Caribbean, and Latin America officials will be there in full strength. The Chinese, which have the status of observers in the NAM, will be there. The Russians, which are not part of the NAM, have been invited as Iran's special guests and will be represented by Konstantin Shuvalov, Russian ambassador-at-large and Vladimir Putin's envoy. Even non-NAM member Turkey has been given an invitation from Tehran. To help the Palestinians, Hamas will also be given a special seat at the table under an invitation sent from Iran to Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh to participate at the summit alongside the US-Israeli puppet Mahmoud Abbas. Alongside the Russian Federation, most the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will be attending as either full members or observers. Aside from the Chinese and Russians, the other three members of the BRICS grouping – Brazil, India, and South Africa – that is becoming the new engine shaping the world will also be in attendance.



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The gathering of NAM leaders will doubtlessly be an important event for Iran's international prestige and status. For almost a week Tehran will be a key center of the world alongside the offices of the UN in New York City and Geneva. Not only will Iran be the venue for one of the largest international get-togethers of world leaders, but it will also be handed over the organization's chairmanship from Arab powerhouse Egypt. Iran will retain this position as the leader of the NAM for the next few years and will be able to speak on behalf of the international organization. Up to a certain degree this position will allow Tehran to have more influence in world affairs. At least this is the view in Tehran where none of the significance of the NAM summit has been lost on Iranian politicians and officials who one after another are pointing out the importance of the NAM summit for their country.

The NAM is the second largest international organization and body in the world after the United Nations. With 120 full members and 17 observer members it includes most the countries and governments of the world. About two-thirds of the UN's member states are full NAM members. The African Union (AU), Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, Commonwealth of Nations, Hostosian National Independence Movement, Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front, Arab League, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), South Center, United Nations, and World Peace Council are all observers too.

The US and NATO which very generously and misleadingly throw around the term "international community" when they are referring to themselves are really a global minority that pale in comparison to the international grouping formed by the NAM. Any agreements or consensuses drilled out by the NAM represent not only the bulk of the international community, but also the non-imperialist international majority or those countries that have traditionally been viewed as the "have-nots." Unlike at the UN, the "silent majority" will have its voice heard with little adulteration and perversion from the confederates of NATOistan.

The NAM gathering in Tehran signifies an important event. It demonstrates that Iran is genuinely not internationally isolated like the images that the United States and major

European Union powers, such as the UK and France, like to continuously project. Atlanticist media are scrambling to explain this situation and the Israelis are clearly upset.

Undoubtedly, Iran will use the international gathering to its advantage and make use of the NAM to garnish support for its international positions and to help try to end the crisis in Syria. The US-supported siege of Syria will be denounced at the NAM conference and diplomatic blows will be dealt against the US and its clients and satellites. Already the hurried ministerial conference about the fighting in Syria organized by the Iranian Foreign Ministry in Tehran before the emergency summit held by the OIC in Mecca was a prelude to the diplomatic support that Iran will give the Syrian Arab Republic at the 2012 NAM summit.

Despite Algerian and Iranian opposition, Syria was expelled from the OIC at the behest of Saudi Arabia and the petro-monarchies. While the OIC emergency summit in Mecca may have been a political and diplomatic blow to Damascus, the situation is expected to be much different at the NAM summit in Tehran. The Syrians will also be present in Tehran and able to face their Arab antagonists from the petro-monarchies of the Persian Gulf.

The Genesis of the Non-Aligned Movement and Third World

The Non-Aligned Movement and concept of a “Third World” have their roots in the period of de-colonization after the Second World War when the empires of Western Europe began to crumble and formally end. This superficially represented an end to the domination of the weak by the strong. In reality, colonialism was merely substituted with foreign aid and loans by the declining empires. In this context, the British would offer aid to their former colonies while the French and Dutch would do the same with their former colonies to maintain control over them. Thus, the exploitation never truly ended and the world was maintained in a state of disequilibrium. The United Nations was also hostage to the big powers and ignored many important issues concerning places like Africa and Latin America.

What brought the formation of the NAM about was firstly the rejection of domination and interference by the countries of the “Global North” – a term that will be defined shortly – and the concept of co-existence that India and China carved out in 1954 when New Delhi recognized Tibet as a part of China.

The NAM started as an Asian initiative, which sought to address the tense relations between China and the US on one hand and China’s relations with other Asian powers on the other hand. The newly independent Asian states wanted to avoid any ratcheting up of the Cold War in their continent, especially after the disastrous US-led military intervention in Korea, or the manipulation of India and Indonesia as buffer states against the People’s Republic of China. This Asian initiative quickly broadened and gained the support of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Egypt, and the various leaders of the nationalist independence movements in Africa that were fighting for their liberation against NATO countries like Britain, France, and Portugal.

Yugoslavian President Josip Broz Tito, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser were the three main forces behind the organization’s creation. Kwame Nkrumah, the Marxist pan-African leader of Ghana, and Ahmed Sukarno, the leader of Indonesia, would also put their weight behind the NAM and join Tito, Nehru, and Nasser. These leaders and their countries did not view the Cold War as an ideological struggle. This was a smokescreen. The Cold War was a power struggle from their perspectives and ideology was merely used as a justification.



The Different Worlds of the Cold War

The word “non-alignment” was first used on the world stage by Vengalil Krishnan Krishna Menon, India’s ambassador to the United Nations, while the term “Third World” was first used by the French scholar Alfred Sauvy. Third World is a debated political term and some find it both deregulatory and ethnocentric. To the point of confusion the phrase Third World is inextricably intertwined with the concept of non-alignment and the NAM.

Both the NAM and, especially, Third World are wrongly and carelessly used as synonyms for the Developing and Under-developing Worlds or as economic indicators. Most Third World countries were underprivileged former colonies or less affluent states in places like Africa and Latin America that were the victims of imperialism and exploitation. This has led to the general identification or misidentification of the NAM countries and the Third World with concepts of poverty. This is wrong and not what either of the terms means.

Third World was a concept that developed during the Cold War period to distinguish those countries that were not formally a part of the First World that was formed by the Western Bloc and either the Eastern/Soviet Bloc and Communist World that formed the Second World. In theory most these Third Worlders were neutral and joining the NAM was a formal expression of this position of non-alignment.

Aside from being considered Second Worlders, communist states like the People’s Republic of China and Cuba have widely been classified as parts of the Third World and have considered themselves as parts of the third global force. Chairman Mao’s views defined through his concept of Three Worlds also supported the classification of communist states

like Angola, China, Cuba, and Mozambique as Third Worlders, because they did not belong to the Soviet Bloc like Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland.

In the most orthodox of interpretations of the political meaning of Third World, the communist state of Yugoslavia was a part of the Third World. In the same context, Iran due to its ties to NATO and its membership in the US-controlled Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) was politically a part of the First World until the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Thus, reference to Yugoslavia as a Second World country and Iran as a Third World country prior to 1979 are incorrect.

The term Third World has also given rise to the phrase “Global South.” This name is based on the geographically southward situation of the Third World on the map as opposed to the geographically northward situation of the First and Second Worlds, which both began to collectively be called the “Global North.” The names Global North and Global South came to slowly replace the terms First, Second, and Third World, especially since the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union collapsed.

Bandung, Belgrade, and Non-Aligned Institution Building

The NAM formed when the Third Worlders who were caught between the Atlanticists and the Soviets during the Cold War tried to formalize their third way or force. The NAM would be born after the Bandung Conference in 1955, which infuriated the US and Western Bloc who saw it as a sin against their global interests.

Contrarily to Western Bloc views, the Soviet Union was much more predisposed to accepting the NAM. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev even proposed in 1960 that the UN be managed by a “troika” composed of the First, Second, and Third Worlds instead of its Western-influenced secretariat in New York City that was colluding with the US to remove Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba from power in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as other independent world leaders.

Fidel Castro and Cuba, which hosted the NAM’s summit in 1979 when Iran joined as its eighty-eighth member, would actually argue that the Second World and communist movements were the “natural allies” of the Third World and the NAM. The favorable attitudes of Nasser and Nehru towards the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc’s support for various national liberation movements also lends credence towards the Cuban argument about the Second and Third World alliance against the capitalist exploitation and imperialist policies of the First World.

The first NAM summit would be held in the Yugoslavian capital of Belgrade in 1961 under the chairmanship of Marshall Tito. The summit in Belgrade would call for an end to all empires and colonization. Tito, Nehru, Nasser, Nkrumah, Sukarno and other NAM leaders would demand that Western Europeans end their colonial roles in Africa and let African peoples decide their own fates.

A preparatory conference was also held a few months earlier in Cairo by Gamal Abdel Nasser. At the preparatory meetings non-alignment was defined by five points:

- (1) Non-aligned countries must follow an independent policy of co-existence of nations with varied political and social systems;

- (2) Non-aligned countries must be consistent in their support for national independence;
- (3) Non-aligned countries must not belong to a multilateral alliance concluded in the context of superpower or big power politics;
- (4) If non-aligned countries have bilateral agreement with big powers or belonged to a regional defense pact, these agreements should not have been concluded in context of the Cold War;
- (5) If non-aligned states cede military bases to a big power, these bases should not be granted in the context of the Cold War.

All the NAM conferences to follow would cover vital issues in the years to come that ranged from the inclusion of the People's Republic of China in the UN, the fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo, African wars of independence against Western European countries, opposition to apartheid and racism, and nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, the NAM has traditionally been hostile to Zionism and condemned the occupation of Palestinian, Lebanese, Syrian, and Egyptian territories by Israel, which has earned it the seamlessly never-ending aversion of Tel Aviv.

Making NAM Relevant Again

Many people ask what relevance the Non-Aligned Movement has today. Since the end of the Cold War the NAM's strength has been eroded as the US, neoliberal economic reforms, the IMF, and the World Bank have gained more and more control over NAM members. In many cases NAM members have reverted back to de facto colonies in all but name. Many members of NAM, such as Belarus, Colombia, Ethiopia, and Saudi Arabia, are actually fully aligned states.

There is no question about it that Iran wants to make NAM relevant again to use it to fight off the expansionist Atlanticist World. So do the Russians and the Chinese. The NAM after all has provided Iran important diplomatic support in its politicized nuclear dispute with the Atlanticists. The NAM is also the closest alternative to the Atlanticist-infiltrated and perverted United Nations.

The NAM summit will be capitalized on by Iran and its allies to try and develop some sort of strategy to fight and circumvent the unilateral US and European Union sanctions against the Iranian economy and to show the Atlanticists in the US and the EU that their powers in the world are limited and declining. One small step in this direction is that Iran will begin negotiations with 60 NAM countries to drop bilateral visa requirements with Iran. A universal statement may also be released asking for the anti-Iranian sanctions to be dropped or modified. Other steps would include proposals for a new and alternative financial global structure, which would evade the Atlanticist chokehold on international financial transactions.

An important event at the NAM summit will be the arrival of Morsi in Tehran as a sign of warming relations. Ties between Cairo and Tehran will not be restored overnight either, because there are restrictions on Morsi. Whatever happens between Egypt and Iran at the NAM summit in Tehran will be just steps in an unrushed process. The Egyptians are taking pains not to antagonize their Western and Arab paymasters and the Iranians have opted to be patient. Morsi's presence in Iran, however, is still symbolically very important. Tehran

indeed has reason to be very optimistic as all its stars are aligning at its NAM gala.

Diplomatic circles are looking at Egypt on the eve of the NAM summit. Before it was announced that Morsi would go to Iran, it was expected that Egyptian Vice-President Mahmoud Mekki would represent Egypt at the NAM summit as a demonstration of Egypt's estrangement from Iran.

Cairo's relationship with Tehran and what develops from Morsi's trip to Iran is what all Arabdom, Israel, and the US will be watching carefully.

Some analysts are asserting that Egypt's stance could "make or break" the project to isolate Iran, especially in sectarian terms involving a Shiite-Sunni divide. This is actually wrong, because there is nothing specifically significant that Egypt can do to break or isolate Iran. After all, Cairo and Tehran have essentially had no ties since 1980 and Mubarak was a staunch ally of the US who put Egypt to work with Saudi Arabia and Israel to curve Iranian influence.

In the worst case scenario the relationship between the two countries will stay as it was during the Mubarak era. This is not a losing situation for Iran, albeit the situation in Syria has catalyzed the Iranian desire for faster rapprochement. Egyptian-Iranian relations have nowhere to go except upward.

The Tahrir (Liberation) Square protests that dethroned Mubarak and helped bring about the elections that brought the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood into power are part of what Iranian officials call an "Islamic Awakening" in contrast to an "Arab Spring." Iran did not hide its belief either that Egypt and it could eventually form a new regional axis after dictator-for-life Mubarak was booted out from power. If there is any man that can make the leap from the conception of an Arab Spring to an Islamic Awakening, at least publicly, it is President Morsi through an alliance with Iran.

On August 8, Iran sent Hamid Baqaei to deliver Morsi's invitation to attend the NAM summit in Tehran. Along the way the international press and pundits gave higher attribution to Baqaei's governmental rank, because they failed to realize or mention that he was the most senior of eleven junior or assistant vice-presidents and essentially the cabinet minister responsible for the Iranian presidency's executive affairs.

First Vice-President Mohammed-Reza Rahimi, the former governor of the Iranian province of Kurdistan and himself a former junior vice-president, is Iran's senior vice-president. Regardless, Baqaei's visit to Cairo as both a presidential envoy and a close presidential aide was important. Iran could have delivered the invitation letter through its interest section in the Swiss Embassy to Egypt or other diplomatic channels, but made a significant gesture by sending Baqaei directly to Egypt. The move made all the countries conspiring against Iran and Syria very anxious. For these anxious countries the NAM get-together in Tehran will be all about Egypt, Iran, and Syria.



Are Saudi, Qatari, and IMF moves in Egypt tied to the NAM Summit in Tehran?

Both Saudi Arabia and Qatar have offered Egypt their financial aid before Morsi's visits to Beijing, where he is expected to ask for Chinese help. Aside from the use of Saudi and Qatari aid to shape the way that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood interacts with Iran, the offers of aid from the petro-despots of Doha and Riyadh are part of the Arab competition over influence in Cairo.

Morsi is widely seen as Qatar's man and relations between Riyadh and Cairo have been uneasy for some time. The Saudi Embassy in Cairo was even temporarily closed after Egyptian protests against Saudi Arabia flared up. More importantly, the House of Saud opposed Morsi in support of longstanding Mubarak henchman Ahmed Shafik during the Egyptian presidential elections. In addition, the House of Saud has propped up its own political clients inside Egypt against the Muslim Brotherhood. The House of Saud's Egyptian clients, the Nour Party and the their parliamentary coalition called the Alliance for Egypt (Islamic Bloc), trailed in second place behind the Muslim Brotherhood's parliamentary coalition, the Democratic Alliance.

Despite the fact that Doha and Riyadh are both serving US interests, the two sheikhdoms have a rivalry with one another. This Qatari-Saudi rivalry picked up again after a brief pause that saw both sides invade the island-kingdom of Bahrain to support the Khalifa regime and to work together against the governments of Libya and Syria.

The Saud and Al-Thani rivalry has seen both sides supporting different armed groups in Libya and competing anti-government forces during the so-called Arab Spring (or Islamic Awakening in Tehran). The elections in Egypt, where Doha and Riyadh supported different sides, just added fuel to the Qatari-Saudi fire.

Qatar's Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani has made it a point to support the Muslim Brotherhood almost wherever they are as a means of expanding Qatari influence. Just days after the ousting of Mubarak, Qatar's Al Jazeera showed great foresight when it launched Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr, a news channel dedicated exclusively to Egypt. While Qatar and its

media have put their weight behind the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Saudi Arabia and its media have not.

This has also been the reason that the Saudi-controlled media, like Al Arabiya, has continued to level criticisms against President Morsi even after the elections in Egypt. To alleviate the House of Saud's tensions with Egypt, Morsi made his first foreign trip as president to Saudi Arabia.

Aside from favorable news coverage, it is also widely believed that Qatar helped finance the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during elections. In addition, Qatari investments in Egypt grew by 74% according to figures released by the Egyptian Central Bank in July 2012. On August 11, Emir Al-Thani and a Qatari delegation also travelled to Egypt for a one-day visit with Morsi. The next day, on August 12, Morsi politely dismissed or "retired" Field Marshal Tantawi, the head of the Egyptian Armed Forces, and Sami Anan, the Egyptian Armed Forces chief of staff and Tantawi's number two. After Al-Thani's visit, rumors also began to circulate in Egypt that the Muslim Brotherhood was planning to lease the Suez Canal to Emir Al-Thani, which was denied by Morsi and his presidential staff.

An outcome of Emir Al-Thani's Egyptian visit was that it was announced that Qatar gave Cairo two billion dollars (US). In reality, the Qataris only gave Egypt 500 million dollars (US) and said that the remainder will be given in installments, which will start after the NAM summit in Tehran. Does the payment schedule say anything?

The timing of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) visit to Cairo to negotiate a loan on the eve of the NAM summit in Tehran is also suspicious. After a year of uncertainty and begging, Qatar and the IMF have opened their pockets to the Egyptians (although Qatar sent some money earlier). The Libyan Transitional Council government has even offered to pitch in financially, even when its own coffers are in disarray as a result of the NATO war on Libya and the looting of Libya's treasury and assets by the Atlanticists with the help of US neoliberal economist turned Libyan "minister of oil and finance" Ali Tarhouni. As for the House of Saud everyone understands that their terms for financial aid to Egypt include the continuation of anti-Iranian policies in Cairo.



Everyone will be Watching Morsi in Tehran

Readings on Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, which govern under the banner of the Freedom and Justice Party, vary. On the one hand the Egyptian government has maintained the closure of the borders with the Palestinians in Gaza. It has also pledged to honor its international treaties, a sly reference to its peace treaty with Israel that seeks to avoid mentioning Israel and prevent a media fuss. On the other hand, Morsi made positive gestures to Tehran at Mecca's emergency Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit about forming an Ankara-Cairo-Riyadh-Tehran contact group to discuss the Syrian crisis and has said he wants amendments to be made to the Egyptian peace treaty with Israel.

Like most politicians, Morsi has watered-down his election promises. He has had to walk a fine line surrounded by enemies and competitors alike while he has worked to slowly accumulate power. When he was elected there was a delay in announcing the outcome of the Egyptian election. Field Marshal Tantawi and the Egyptian military junta were taking their time to think over on deciding whether to keep Morsi as a president or to impose a new round of martial law while forcibly installing their fellow general Ahmed Shafik as the country's civilian president.

Morsi is at odds with Egypt's military commanders who are the longstanding allies of Israel and the US, as well as allies of the House of Saud. Aside from retiring the two most important members of the Egyptian military junta, Morsi has also reversed the Egyptian military's decisions to subordinate his presidency and amend the post-Mubarak constitution of Egypt. This power play has been widely described as a pre-emptive counter-coup against the Egyptian military junta. Doha may have supported the move to make sure that its Muslim Brotherhood racehorse stays in power, as opposed to the Saudi's Egyptian military and Nour Party racehorses. Whether the counter-coup was a move made in the context of Qatari-Saudi rivalries or strictly a move to attain political freedom for Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood is a ten million Qatari riyal question.

Looking East Policy Shift in Cairo?

Where Morsi's foreign policy is going after the NAM conference in Tehran is the other important question. Where he stands will begin to crystallize from the NAM meeting onwards. The fear of rapprochement between Iran and Egypt certainly keeps a lot of people up at night in Riyadh, Tel Aviv, London, and Washington, DC. Everyone is waiting to see what Cairo and Tehran will do and for many the expectations of rapprochement are running high, but the leverage and restrictions that exist over Morsi should not be forgotten either.

Although there is far less fanfare and attention being paid to Morsi's trip to China, what he does there will also be very important. Some say he plans on slowly shifting Cairo's foreign policy away from the Atlanticist camp, with Washington as its capital, towards the Eurasianist camp that includes China and Iran. Certainly Chinese foreign aid will reduce Egyptian dependency on the Atlanticists and their Arab petro-monarch partners. What we are dealing with here is an intricate web of multiple relations between different groups who are interacting with one another in different ways and through changing relationships.

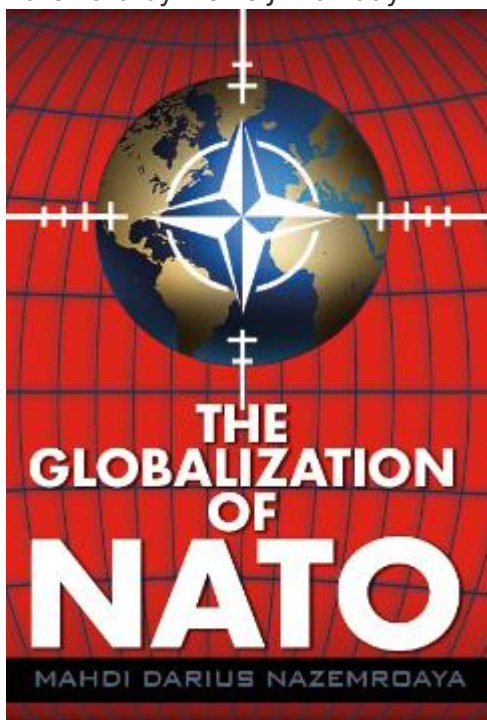
Addendum - August 25, 2012

The unelected Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas threatened to boycott the NAM summit after the Iranian media and Hamas both announced that Prime Minister

Haniyeh, the democratically-elected representative of the Palestinians, was going to attend the NAM summit. Subsequently the Iranian Foreign Ministry released a statement saying that Haniyeh was never invited to Tehran.

[The Globalization of NATO](#) (Clarity Press) by Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya.

Foreword by Denis J. Halliday.



“Nazemroaya’s book is a must-read for any European or other NATO state citizen who wants to understand the danger the American-driven Alliance presents to world harmony and peace. I would hope that having done so, the reader would accept appropriate responsibility for actively pursuing ways to terminate this war machine that seeks out opportunities for warfare for all the wrong reasons. . . Reading this book, may be the first step to finding ourselves before it is too late.”

**From the Foreword by
DENIS J. HALLIDAY**

**United Nations Assistant Secretary-General
(1994-98)**

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