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Is the Iran Nukes Deal Aimed at Crushing Putin?

by Mike Whitney

July 17, 2015

“The European Union is quietly increasing the urgency of a plan to import natural gas from Iran as relations with Tehran thaw (and) those with top gas supplier Russia grow colder.”

The Iran nuclear agreement has less to do with proliferation than it does with geopolitics. The reason Obama wants to ease sanctions on Iran is because he wants to push down oil prices while creating an alternate source of natural gas for Europe. In other words, the real objective here is to hurt Russia which is currently at the top of Washington’s Enemies List. Keith Jones at the World Socialist Web Site explains what’s going on in an article titled “Obama promotes historic nuclear deal with Iran”. Here’s an excerpt:

“If Obama made haste to promote the deal with Tehran, it is because it represents a major tactical shift on the part of US imperialism—one that is being opposed by significant sections of the US political and military-intelligence establishments, as well as by longstanding US client states in the Middle East, first and foremost Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Behind this shift lies a series of strategic calculations, bound up with the aggressive actions of the Obama administration around the world to assert US global hegemony.

The most important of these calculations are, (1) that US imperialism's conflict with Tehran must be subordinated to its drive to strategically isolate Russia and China and prepare for war against one or both states, which the US ruling elite views as the main obstacles to its global domination, and (2) that Iran's crisis-ridden bourgeois regime can be harnessed to serve US strategic interests."

Bingo. Obama isn't easing sanctions because he thinks it "will prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon". That's baloney. What he's trying to do is replace Russian gas with Iranian gas in order to hurt Russia. He wants to steal Moscow's best customer, slash its revenues, weaken it economically, and push NATO further eastward hoping to foment regime change in the capital.

It's all about the pivot to Asia, the plan to break up Russia, control China's growth and dominate the world for the next hundred years. And it all starts by blocking the flow of Russian gas to the EU, which means sabotaging Gazprom's pipeline strategy (South Stream), arming and supporting Russia's enemies on its western border, demonizing Putin in the media, and doing everything it can to prevent further economic integration between Europe and Asia. That's the basic gameplan; annoy the hell out of everyone until they're so frustrated, they finally give up.

Now check out this clip from an article in the *Harvard International Review* by Tara Shirvani, who "currently works for the Energy and Transport Unit of the World Bank Group":

"According to studies by the European Parliament, in 2013 Russia provided 43.2 percent of the European Union's gas imports, 31.38 percent of its oil imports, and 26.7 percent of its coal imports. As oil and gas exports to Europe account for almost 52 percent of Russia's federal budget income (US\$515 billion), the European Union acts not only as crucial trade partner for Russia but also as vital economic crutch to its rather fragile real economy..."

There it is in black and white. Russia provides nearly half of the EU's natural gas, so if you want to hurt Russia's "fragile" economy, then you have to figure out a way to cut off the flow of gas.

How about a coup in Ukraine? That ought to do the trick. That ought to drive a wedge between the EU and Russia.

Can you see how this type of article can be tailored to fit US imperial ambitions? Here's more from the same article:

"While the European Union is not importing any oil and gas from Iran to date, the long-term potential of opening and stabilizing trade patterns with the energy-rich country should be carefully considered.....From a supply perspective, Iran's gas production volumes are more than promising. According to recent BP statistical reports, Iran holds the second-largest natural gas reserves after Russia—equivalent to 15.8% of global total gas reserves. It shares the world's largest offshore gas field, the South Pars/North Dome field, situated in the Persian Gulf with Qatar which holds an estimated 1,800 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.....The European Parliament has highlighted Iran's total export capacity to be more than 150bcm/year, which in the future, could easily rival current Gazprom's export volumes of 140bcm to the European Union."

Well, how about that: A perfect fit! All we do got to do is dump Russia and plug in Iran. What could be easier? Then we can get on with the business of pushing NATO into Asia, hectoring Putin, and Iraqifying another continent.

Can you see, dear reader, how a plan like this would win the enthusiastic support of the corporate mucky-mucks who call the shots in Washington? And there's more too:

“While there is no pipeline network that currently fully connects the Iranian gas grid to Europe, the country is already connected to Turkey via the Tabriz-Ankara pipeline.....Iran is strongly bidding for the continuation of the pipeline network with the construction of the ‘Persian Pipeline’: A 3,300km network system which crosses Turkey before reaching Italy. Here it splits into a northern and southern section, transporting gas to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France and Spain.....This route would bypass Russian territory and allow the EU to import 25-30bcm per year—equal to the total Russian gas export to Italy and Germany in 2013.”

They got it all figured out right down to the last drop. Meanwhile, the sheeple are still picking through the abstruse details of a 150-page nuclear deal that has “Red Herring” written all over it. What a complete fraud. The Iran deal has nothing to do with nuclear proliferation. It's about gas. It's about geopolitics. It's about power. Can't people see that? Obama doesn't give a rip about nuclear fuel, enriched uranium, or how many centrifuges you can balance on the head of a pin. He cares about Empire. That's all he cares about: American Global Dominance. That's it. The rest is just hot air. Here's more:

“Finding a comprehensive solution as part of such a long-term quid-pro-quo strategy could develop a trickle-down effect that can greatly affect the peacemaking process both in Ukraine and Syria. This linkage strategy between Iran and Europe will require long-term concessions from both parties. Herein the European Union vouches to reach a more substantial long-term deal on gas shipments from Iran, which includes investments in upgrading Iran's refining capacity and the completion of the Persian Pipeline project. In return, the EU would require Tehran to be more compromising as part of the nuclear negotiations and ask Iran to show a sign of goodwill now to get the deal done in time. If for nothing else, the Iranians have an incentive to provide oil and gas to an energy-starved European market to gain a larger leverage as part of its nuclear talks.”

Repeat: “The Iranians have an incentive to provide oil and gas to an energy-starved European market to gain a larger leverage as part of its nuclear talks.”

In other words, Iran can probably get a pretty good deal if it agrees to stick a knife in Putin's back like Uncle Sam wants. Nice, eh?

And what does this mean: “Finding a comprehensive solution as part of such a long-term quid-pro-quo strategy could develop a trickle-down effect that can greatly affect the peacemaking process both in Ukraine and Syria”?

What quid-pro-quos are we talking about? You mean, all the backroom concessions the US must have demanded to get sanctions lifted, like withholding support for Al Assad in Syria, or

assisting the US in splitting Iraq into three parts, or prioritizing the pipeline to Europe over pipelines headed East, or continuing to sell Iranian gas in US dollars instead of euros, renminbi, or rubles? Are these the quid-pro-quos of which the author speaks?

But maybe we're jumping the gun here, after all, we don't know whether this is really the plan or not. It could all just be idle speculation.

Yes, it could be, but how does one explain this article which appeared on Press TV the day before the deal was announced. Here's an excerpt:

“Iranian companies signed a \$2.3 billion agreement on Monday to build 1,300 kilometers of pipeline which the country sees as its most important conduit for future gas exports to Europe. The Iran Gas Trunkline-6 (IGAT-6), with the throughput from the massive South Pars field, will boost Iran's exports through the neighboring Iraq.

Iran is expected to initially deliver 4 million cubic meters of gas per day (mcm/d) before raising it to 35 mcm/d later to feed three electricity generation plants in Iraq. Gharibi said final tests of the pipeline are underway and the gas flow is expected

So, apparently, we were right, after all. This *is* the deal. It's all about gas. The whole nukes thing is just a diversion. What's really going on is smash-mouth geopolitics Middle East-style.

But here's where Washington's brainiacs have it all wrong. Iran is not going to sell out Russia, it's not going to knife a friend in the back. That's just not going to happen. You see, the geniuses in DC think that everyone is just like them; scheming, scoundrelly, snakelike cutthroats. But not everyone is like that. Some people actually act on principal and do the right thing. And that's what's going to happen here. Check out this clip from Sputnik:

“Although Moscow and Tehran have long been considered potential energy competitors, their mutual cooperation after the Iranian nuclear deal will continue to strengthen, Dr. Bijan Khajepour emphasizes.

While Western experts are speculating that Moscow and Tehran will unleash fierce competition once anti-Iranian sanctions are lifted, Dr. Bijan Khajepour, an expert from the strategic consulting firm Atieh International, believes that such an approach is too simplistic.

“The simplistic view is that a resurgent Iran would compete with Russia as a major exporter of oil and gas, hence compelling Moscow to stand in the way of Iran developing its oil and gas potential. However, the reality is more complex and any projection of Tehran-Moscow ties will need to take into account the larger picture, especially the role that Iran can play in Moscow's emerging strategy to focus more intensely on Asia,”

How do you like that? Iran has its own plan to pivot to Asia. It wants to become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It wants to participate in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). And, it wants to finance its projects with funds from the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS's New Development Bank (NDB). Iran's not going to

double-cross Putin. It's going to join the coalition of states that have rejected the US-led system, rejected the obsolete fixtures of the Bretton Woods era, and rejected the unipolar world order.

There's a new world emerging and Iran is going to be a part of it.