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Iran, India and Pompeo's Demands



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Iran and India are two of the world's most ancient countries, and they have deep historical links. The Aryans who meandered into the Himalayan foothills from around 1500 BCE migrated through Iran; indeed "Iran" and "Aryan" are cognate words. One speaks of Indo-Aryan migrations. Indian Hinduism reflects many Iranian (Zoroastrian) influences. The Avestan language in which the ancient Persian scriptures were written is closely related to Vedic Sanskrit. Buddhism was introduced from India into Iran by the second century;

there were Persian Buddhist monasteries before the arrival of Islam. Persian art deeply influenced Mughal artists. The Balochi and Urdu languages are related to Farsi. Mughal art was very influenced by Persian art. You get the idea.

Currently, Iran and India enjoy very cordial relations. Iran is India's third-largest oil supplier. India imports about \$ 10 billion in Iranian goods, paying in euros or rupees. Iran imports over \$ 2 billion in textiles, steel and other products from India and welcomes Indian investment in infrastructure projects such as the construction of the port of Chabahar on the Gulf of Oman. Normal behavior prevails between two friendly neighbor states.

But U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo demands that India stop trade and investment, until the Iranians capitulate to the demands he presented to them after the U.S. withdrew from the nuclear deal. Never mind that all normal countries (i.e., countries other than Israel, Saudi Arabia and the U.S.) support it. Bully them alongside us, until they grovel, he says to Iran's friendly neighbors. In the case of India he threatens curtailment of the annual joint military exercises, massive military sales, and yes nuclear power assistance. (Please recall that after India and Pakistan both tested nukes in 1998, the U.S. applied sanctions on both countries. But these were lifted in 2001 when Pakistan's assistance was essential to the invasion of Afghanistan. Suddenly all was forgiven.)

India Foreign Minister Sushra Swaraj responds to Pompeo, after a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif last week in New Delhi: "We don't make our foreign policy under pressure from other countries. We believe in UN sanctions, but not in country-specific sanctions."

In other words, we supported the UN sanctions which have now been lifted. But we do not support "secondary" sanctions designed to punish people like us and display the brute power of the U.S. financial system.

Brazil, Iran's largest Latin American trading partner, similarly responds with contempt for the U.S. position. Iran is one of the top purchasers of Brazilian beef, and Brazil is a major consumer of Iranian oil. Why stop this to please those arrogant Yankee imperialists?

South Africa and Iran now have billions invested in joint enterprises. Pretoria is a major consumer of Iranian oil. The relationship between the countries has been warm and will likely not cool to satisfy Washington.

Russia and China, of course, respond with contempt to U.S. efforts. They with the other BRICS stand with the EU. Notice how the EU collectively vowed to resist U.S. intimidation and find ways around secondary

sanctions. Think of all those sympathetic calls to the Iranian foreign minister from European leaders saying, “We’re so sorry this happened. Believe me, we’re as appalled as you. We will continue to abide by the agreement and not let the Americans determine our policy.”

Meanwhile the whole world reels at the trade wars sparked by the mad U.S. president. It seems the U.S. is lashing out wildly, intent on alienating even Canada and Mexico for god’s sake, damaging other nations’ economies with a kind of wild sadistic glee about “Making America Great Again” and getting tough with all those who’ve been making us look like fools all these years. Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau, hosting the G-7 meeting, is livid at Trump for his steel tariffs absurdly justified on the grounds of U.S. “national security.”

At the same time, Pompeo seems to myopically imagine that the U.S. commands sufficient clout, respect and moral authority around the world that its allies will from this point somehow knuckle under to its diktat. (Does he realize that Sino-German trade now exceeds U.S.-German trade annually, and that German public opinion much favors Putin over Trump?)

There is, of course, no actual edict to these allies, demanding they end trade and investment. Rather there’s a threat to impede it by use of the U.S. financial system, and to punish countries trading with Iran by excluding them from the U.S. market. (One could maybe call this using finance capitalism to prevent the operation of free trade.) One has the feeling that, while some companies may back out of existing agreements with Iran, to placate the Americans or to maintain more lucrative U.S. investments, Pompeo’s threats will result in further isolation of the U.S., further solidarity against U.S. policy (Paris Accord departure, Iran Deal sabotage, Jerusalem provocation, Mexican wall, Muslim ban, etc.), and encourage the development of alliances designed in part to resist U.S. hegemony in its period of decline. One of these is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which as you know includes China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and is the largest regional organization in terms of size and population in the world.

Iran has observer status in SCO, and China’s Xi Jinping has announced his support for its full membership. This was delayed by sanctions but we can expect Iran to join soon, with Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia. A host of nations including Turkey have “dialogue partner” status.

The U.S. president while virtually declaring war on his chief justice official is also declaring war on the existing global trade system, mixing the 16th-century mercantilism of Colbert with Nativist populism and apparent mental illness, while the global system is rapidly evolving to enable it to beat secondary sanctions. Iran, at least, will find that the Chinese are more than willing to replace European partners should they be forced to pull out. Meanwhile, Russia is happy to sell needed defense equipment, such as the S-300 air defense missile system.

The glorious regime-change strike on Iran that Pompeo, Bolton and Netanyahu jerk off about would not only unite the Iranian people in rage, but unite an unprecedented number of nations (including many in NATO) in horror at what the U.S. has wrought. The evisceration of Yugoslavia in the nineties. The war gone wrong in Afghanistan 2001-now. The horrible destruction of the Iraqi state with all its ongoing consequences. The intervention in Syria making everything worse. The demolition of Libya.

The U.S. reputation was not that great before Trump, but has surely plummeted in the last year and a half. (A breakthrough at the Kim-Trump summit could change things a bit, although I suspect most people will understand that Kim Jong-un, rather than Trump, was the brilliant diplomat most responsible.) If you alienate and insult the leaders of the countries with the top nine GDPs (following the U.S. as number one), shock them with your sheer ignorance, bark at them for trading with a country complying with a UN-ratified treaty, and then follow up by attacking that country in plain violation of international law, why, you just might provoke World War III. Or, your own shunning and what Pompeo cannot imagine: the collapse of your current alliances.