

**Resurgence for the Non-Aligned Movement?**  
**Asia Sentinel**  
**August 31, 2012**  
**By Philip Bowring**

*Supposedly-neutral states meet in Tehran*

The Non-Aligned Movement is a shadow of its former self. In a multi-polar world of many criss-crossing alignments it may have no place at all, leaving the 115 member organization, founded in the wake of the 1955 Bandung Conference of independent Asian and African states, as a meaningless relic of the Cold War.

However, the fact that Iran is hosting the Movement's 16th summit, which began yesterday, is an acute embarrassment to the US and other western countries who have been demonizing Iran for the benefit of their pet project, a nuclear-armed, expansionist Israel. This doubtless explains why the meeting is being largely ignored by a western media more concerned about Mitt Romney's wife than the significance of the Tehran meeting.

The US even attempted to lean on UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon not to attend. For once Ban failed to do Washington's bidding and is there in Tehran, meeting with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, who is currently the organization's Secretary General. Ban is doubtless aware of the hypocrisy of sanctions against a country which is itself surrounded either by nuclear states, or by countries recently invaded by the US. NAM delegates, including India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, will be the focus of regime propaganda aimed at reducing the impact of western economic sanctions, particularly on oil sales and payments.

Even more significant, Egypt's new Muslim Brother President Mohamed Morsi is also be there, the first visit to Iran by an Egyptian president since the Iranian revolution in 1979. Morsi took the occasion to criticize Syria, a subject on which Khamenei was silent, preferring to focus not on Iran's support for the el-Assad regime but on Iran's right to its nuclear program.

The meeting also serve as an Iranian reminder to Afro-Asia that it was the west that armed Saddam Hussein to launch his 1980 war against Iran, which cost a million lives, and to remind all the Muslim countries of the anti-Muslim sentiments and radical Christian bias of so much political discourse in the US.

Plentiful reminders are also on hand of the use of assassination of Iranian civilians by Israel and maybe others. These are the weapons which will be brought into play to offset western pressure on smaller countries to kowtow to the west on economic sanctions.

While sanctions have had a major impact, China and India have paid no more than lip service to them and China continues to help build major infrastructure projects for a state which is almost penniless.

Certainly the movement delegates can also see much to dislike about the Tehran regime and its political and social oppression. They are able to observe too the impact that sanctions have had on standards of living which had already been eroded by corruption and inefficiency in

an economy dominated by the state and cleric-linked institutions.

Iran also finds itself on the wrong side of most of the Arab world with its continued support for Syria's ruthless but so far durable Bashar el-Assad while some of them have been funneling arms to the rebels. It seems unlikely that anything positive about Syria will come out of the Non-Aligned meeting.

Members such as India and Indonesia would like to use the non-aligned movement as a vehicle for pushing their own aspirations to regional and international influence. But it is unclear how this can be achieved given the diversity of nations involved and their varying degrees of ties with the US, China and Russia.

However, for all its lack of identity and common goals the NAM remains a symbol of lingering Afro-Asian (and Cuban) resentment over western colonialism and imperialism and continued western and particularly US assumptions that they can continue to dictate to a wider world whether on politics, social mores or economics. They need only look to the Afghan and Iraq wars and the continued occupation of Palestinian territory for reminders.

Copyright © 2005 - 2012 Asia Sentinel.

Source: [http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=4784&Itemid=174](http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4784&Itemid=174)