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1.1. THE AFRICAN UNION RENEWS ITS APPEAL FOR DIALOGUE AND RESTRAINT IN BURUNDI

29 April 2015

African Union Commission Statement

The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, continues to follow closely the evolution of the situation in Burundi. She expresses concern at the serious threat that the developments of the past few days pose to the long-term stability of Burundi and the hard-won gains made over the past years towards peace, security and stability, as well as to regional stability. She deplores the loss of life, conveys the AU’s condolences to the bereaved families and wishes speedy recovery to all those who were injured during these most unfortunate incidents. She also expresses her deep concern over the increasing number of refugees arriving in Rwanda, due to the prevailing situation on the ground.

The Chairperson of the Commission underscores the need for dialogue among the Burundian stakeholders, in order to resolve their differences peacefully and create conditions conducive for the holding of peaceful, inclusive, free, fair and transparent elections.

The Chairperson of the Commission reiterates the AU’s urgent appeal for all concerned to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from any action likely to further complicate the current situation and efforts towards its early resolution. She echoes the call by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) for the urgent disarmament of all militias and illegal armed groups, and its strong condemnation of acts of violence. She stresses the need to ensure the respect of fundamental freedoms, in line with
The Chairperson of the Commission underlines, once again, that Burundi is at a critical juncture. All stakeholders must rise to the challenges at hand, to enable the country to peacefully overcome the current problems and deepen democracy and the rule of law.


## 1.2. NIGERIA’S ELECTIONS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

28 April 2015

Afro-Middle East Centre

The election of General Muhammadu Buhari as Nigeria’s president will see a renewed focus by the government on domestic challenges posed by endemic corruption, the Boko Haram insurgency, and lower oil prices. How successful Buhari will be in dealing with these remains to be seen, but there are hints from his past record about the approach he might take. The gravity of these domestic issues will thus mean little change in the country’s foreign policy.

Buhari attained victory after a close and hard-fought presidential race which, for the first time in Nigerian history, saw an alternation in the governing party. Buhari, who headed a coup government ruling Nigeria between 1983 and 1985, garnered two million more votes (nine per cent) than the incumbent, Goodluck Jonathan. The result was mirrored in state elections held on 11 and 12 April, which saw Buhari’s All Progressives Congress (APC) winning twenty-one states, leaving Jonathan’s People’s Democratic Party (PDP) with fifteen governorships.

At the heart of Buhari’s victory was Jonathan’s failure decisively to tackle Boko Haram in the country’s north, which had caused the deaths of 22 000 people in the past five years. In what many called a referendum on his inaction over Boko Haram, most northern states voted for Buhari, including the most affected states of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa. Despite Jonathan implementing a state of emergency in the north east in May 2013, many Nigerians believed the problem was not being taken seriously because the north was not Jonathan’s main constituency.

Under Jonathan, corruption had also increased dramatically. In 2014, the former central bank governor, Lamido Sanusi, had called for an investigation into the misappropriation of twenty billion dollars from the country’s oil account—he was subsequently dismissed on spurious charges. Further, much of the six billion dollars budgeted for security expenditure is siphoned off by elements in the military and political elite.

Buhari’s military credentials appealed to northerners who bear the brunt of Boko Haram violence. His success in dealing with the 1980s Maitatsine revolt, which was similar to the current insurgency, has added to expectations that he can successfully tackle Boko Haram, and his uncompromising stance on corruption also endeared him to citizens from Lagos and Abuja. He had cracked down on corruption in his ‘war on indiscipline’ when he was military ruler; suspected public officials were speedily retrenched and even jailed. Unlike most previous rulers, Buhari accumulated little personal wealth from his time in office, and lived a relatively modest life before the election.

Addressing these challenges dominated his campaign. He called corruption a threat to democracy, and said he would reopen investigations into the missing oil wealth. He also declared an intensification of the campaign against Boko Haram and, unlike Jonathan, alluded to the roles played by Cameroon, Chad and Niger in the campaign while arguing that Nigeria needed to be at the forefront.

With these massive challenges there will be little focus on foreign policy. Previously a strong voice in the international community and African Union, and involved in peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the 1990s, Nigeria will focus inward. However, unlike Jonathan, Buhari will seek to mend ties between Nigeria and the international community, especially the USA and South Africa. South Africa-Nigeria relations will likely improve, and arms sales between Pretoria and Abuja will probably recommence soon. Pretoria has already begun signalling a desire to resolve a problematic arms deal from 2014. Nigeria is also expected to be more independent in international forums. During the Jonathan years the country often towed the US line, culminating in its much criticised decision to abstain from a vote on Palestinian statehood in December 2014. Coordination between Nigeria and other countries in the region, including Niger, Cameroon and Chad, which was lacking during Jonathan’s rein, will also likely improve. Already, coordination between these states has led to Boko Haram being
driven out from seventeen of the twenty local districts it had held in 2014. But the new president’s powers will be more constrained than when he was last in power; the political and governmental structures he inherits are vastly different to those in a military regime. Although Buhari will need to rapidly address these challenges, Nigeria’s polarisation poses the greatest threat, indicated by how the results of both elections were skewed by religious and ethnic divisions. Jonathan received most votes in the mainly Christian south (by more than eighty per cent in some states), while the north largely voted for the APC and Buhari. Significantly, the 30 000 educational stipends Jonathan’s administration had been paying to southern students, and millions of dollars paid as patronage to leaders of the militant Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which had disrupted oil production, is up for renewal at the end of 2015. Stopping these payments could see resumption in MEND’s activities. Buhari will have to confront this issue in an atmosphere where the price of oil, accounting for seventy per cent of Nigeria’s revenue, has halved since its high in 2014. With economic growth dipping to below five per cent for the first time since 2003, Buhari faces almost insurmountable odds.


1.3. WFTU SOLIDARITY WITH NEPAL AFTER EARTHQUAKE

26 April 2015

WFTU Statement

A catastrophic earthquake hit Nepal yesterday, leaving thousands of people dead and causing great disasters. The WFTU Secretariat has issued the following solidarity statement.

“The World Federation of Trade Unions expresses its deep sorrow and complete class solidarity with the working class and the people of Nepal for the national calamity caused by the catastrophic earthquake of a 7.8 magnitude that left thousands of people dead and caused great disasters. Our thoughts go to the families of the victims. We express our moral support for the workers, the trade union movement, our affiliates in the country and to the people of Nepal. On behalf of the 92 million organized workers in 126, we repeat our solidarity and we call upon all our affiliated and friendly trade unions to express their support and solidarity to the Nepalese workers and people.”


1.4. VIETNAM: 40 YEARS SINCE THE FALL OF SAIGON

30 April 2015

WFTU Statement

The WFTU honors today the Anniversary of the 40 years since the victory of the Vietnamese communists and the people of Vietnam over the US imperialism and the fall of the “Southern Vietnam” Saigon, ending one of the deadliest wars that resulted to the death of more than 3 million Vietnamese people, the destruction of large sections of the country and the use of the toxic “Agent Orange” which still impacts the population.

The WFTU in its 70 years of militant and anti-imperialist struggle has stood on the side of the Vietnamese people and has raised internationalist solidarity to support the Vietnamese workers.

On the 30th of April, the day of memory and tribute to this heroic struggle and the great anti-imperialist victory of the Vietnamese people the WFTU Secretariat salutes the Vietnamese people and workers and reaffirms its commitment to continue its fraternal and coordinated struggles with VGCL and the Vietnamese workers for the continuous betterment of their living and working conditions.
1.5. VENEZUELA, URUGUAY REGISTER LOWEST INEQUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA

29 April 2015

Telesur tv.net

The governments that have pursued aggressive policies of wealth redistribution have seen the greatest decrease in inequality. A book published Tuesday by the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), studying the relationship between inequality and taxation policies, reveals that government intervention has succeeded in substantially reducing inequality.

The book, “Inequality, Concentration of Income and Taxation of High Incomes in Latin America,” shows despite remaining as the most unequal region in the world, the last decade marked a departure from old ways, with an overall decrease in inequality.

“During the period between 2002 and 2013, 15 of the 17 countries analyzed showed distributive improvements, reflected in the decline of the Gini coefficient,” the report states. The Gini coefficient is a frequently used instrument used to measure inequality: the closer the number to zero, the less the inequality.

The countries that showed the greatest decrease in inequality were Venezuela and Uruguay, countries whose governments have pursued aggressive policies of wealth redistribution.

Bolivia, Nicaragua, Argentina, and Venezuela registered the largest annual drops in the Gini coefficient, which also suggests that the progressive wealth redistribution programs of these leftist governments have had a positive result.

In March, ECLAC executive secretary Alicia Barcena visited Venezuela, praising the country for its efforts to eradicate poverty. Despite the advances, the study showed that the concentration of wealth continues to remain high generally in the region.

The book primarily focuses on the impacts of taxation policies focusing on higher-earners and their effects on wealth redistribution, making a series of recommendations to lessen inequality in the region. One specific recommendation of the study calls on governments to improve their tax collection. According to ECLAC, tax avoidance in the region averages 51.4 percent, compared to 28.7 percent on average in 11 European countries.

“A study is needed on what further tax reforms are still pending that can increase revenues and the effective scope of taxes on higher income individuals, which would improve the distributional impact of tax systems,” concludes the study.


1.6. VENEZUELA CALLS FOR THIRD WORLD ALLIANCE

27 April 2015

Venezuelanalysis.com

Third world countries need to unite and fight against first world injustices, disrespect for international law, discrimination and wars. The third world countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America should form an alliance in order to “end imperialist domination,” according to the Venezuelan vice-president, Jorge Arreaza.

Arreaza made the proposal for a third world alliance during a speech at the Asia-Africa Summit in Indonesia Saturday. Speaking as a special Latin American representative, Arreaza told the audience that the alliance was necessary to overthrow
imperialism and end the unipolar system imposed on southern nations throughout the years.

“The alliance between Asia, Africa and Latin America today is not only necessary, it is indispensable,” said Arreaza. “From the South, we will determine, freely, the future of the world for the people.”

The vice president also reminded the audience that former Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez also advocated strongly for a need for the three continents to unite in order to fight against harmful western policies and forms of control.

“Today is not, as then, simply about not being aligned with power and a sphere of influence. Today, the challenge is much greater... That is, to not be aligned with injustice, ... and to fight against wars, disrespect for international law, and to fight against colonialism in all its forms, combat hunger, to not be aligned with discrimination nor domination in all its forms,” said Arreaza.

As an example of third world unity, Arreaza reiterated Venezuela's solidarity with Palestine, which has experienced significant oppression under Israel's expansionist policies.


### 1.7. UK GENERAL ELECTION REVEALS CRISIS OF CAPITALIST RULE

27 April 2015

By Chris Marsden, World Socialist Website

The campaign for Britain’s May 7 general election has brought into sharp relief the fragility and instability of the country’s political system. The crisis engulfing the UK—Europe’s second largest economy, the world’s third largest share market and a key political and military ally of US imperialism—has major implications for political developments worldwide.

With just 10 days to go, no one can even begin to predict the election’s outcome.

The ruling Conservatives are polling slightly ahead or on par with Labour, but without sufficient votes to form a government. The Liberal Democrats face electoral meltdown as punishment for their role as partners in the Tory-led coalition. Labour has been unable to benefit substantially from massive anti-Tory sentiment due to its own lurch further to the right, meaning it too must look to some form of coalition.

Business wants the Tories in office as a proven vehicle for continued austerity. However, it fears that, given Prime Minister David Cameron’s promise of a 2017 in/out referendum on European Union membership, the Tories’ possible reliance on the UK Independence Party will result in a drawn-out “Brexit.” This is now considered by many in Europe as a more fundamental threat to the stability of the continent than the worsening crisis in Greece.

At the same time, the possibility of Labour Party leader Ed Miliband having to rely on the support of the Scottish National Party (SNP), predicted to wipe out Labour in Scotland, raises the spectre of a renewed push for Scottish independence and the break-up of the UK.

No combination of parties in government is excluded, including a government of national unity involving the Tories and Labour. Leading academics have warned that a possible second election is “extremely likely” and assessed the chance of a new coalition lasting five years to be “miniscule.”

The common theme of political commentary is the likelihood of a descent into prolonged political uncertainty and crisis.

One prominent commentator, Anatole Kaletsky, writes, “In the years ahead, Britain will likely be Europe’s most politically unpredictable country.”

The Economist speaks of “the great fracturing,” worrying that “if the parliamentary system comes to be seen as both unfair and ineffectual, then it is in for a crisis of legitimacy.”
There are dire warnings of companies relocating and investors withdrawing money from the UK. The banking giant HSBC is considering moving its headquarters from London over fears of an exit from the EU. Investment firm Nutmeg has cut its holdings of blue chip British shares by two thirds, noting that US investors sold $58 billion of British shares prior to last September’s Scottish referendum and has since bought back only half of what was unloaded.

No bourgeois commentator can honestly address the underlying reasons for the crisis of rule now emerging in the UK.

As with the conservative New Democracy and social democratic PASOK in Greece, the Popular Party and Socialist Party in Spain, and the Gaullist Union for a Popular Movement and Socialist Party in France, the traditional mechanisms through which the bourgeoisie has governed have been eviscerated due to their imposition of savage austerity measures.

This is an election dominated by one issue above all others—the ever-widening social chasm between a thin layer of the super-rich and the broad mass of working people, who comprise the vast majority of the population.

This week, the Sunday Times noted that Britain’s super-rich are now more than twice as rich as they were in 2009. The wealthiest 1,000 people based in Britain are collectively worth £547 billion. There are now 117 sterling billionaires based in Britain, more per head of population than in any other country.

This obscene wealth is being gouged out of the working class.

The Tories are pledged to tens of billions of pounds in new cuts, including £12 billion in welfare. Labour has promised a “Budget Responsibility Lock” committing it to cut the deficit every year.

The SNP, Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales) and Green Party pose as anti-austerity alternatives, seeking to exploit popular opposition to the Tories and Labour. However, none of these capitalist parties offers anything more than a somewhat slower pace in the implementation of austerity measures.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies found the SNP’s budgetary policies to be “essentially the same” as Labour’s. All of these parties have made clear that the votes they receive will be handed to Labour in a “progressive alliance”—in reality, an “austerity alliance”—should the Tories be unable to form a government.

The nationalist SNP and Plaid Cymru and their allies among the pseudo-left groups play the essential role of dividing the working class in the face of the common enemy and tying workers to one or another section of the bourgeoisie.

The public declarations of the major parties are worthless lies designed to conceal what is being planned. The calculations they make for public consumption are based on continued economic growth at a time when a fresh plunge into crisis for the British, European and world economy is inevitable.

Looming over the election is the turn to militarism and war.

There is a conspiracy of silence over this danger. Meanwhile, against a background of massive naval exercises off Scotland, air war games over South Wales involving 13,000 NATO troops, and the repeated scrambling of fighter jets and ships to escort Russian vessels out of UK waters, the Tories and Labour are competing to demonstrate which party will be the firmer ally of the United States in the escalating conflict with Russia and China.

The election campaign began with the despatch of British military advisors and trainers to Ukraine and Syria. Either country could become the flashpoint for a broader war.

The SNP and Plaid Cymru pose as opponents of the Trident nuclear submarine programme while making clear their loyalty to NATO. They and the Greens speak of developing Britain’s conventional armed forces.

The Socialist Equality Party is standing Katie Rhodes in Glasgow Central and David O’Sullivan in Holborn & St. Pancras in London. We advance an independent political perspective to mobilise the working class in the fight for a workers’ government pledged to socialist policies as part of the struggle for a United Socialist States of Europe and a world socialist federation.
Our election campaign has been conducted as an integral component of a worldwide political offensive to establish the International Committee of the Fourth International as the “international centre of revolutionary opposition to the resurgence of imperialist violence and militarism,” as called for in the ICFI statement of July 3 2014.

It is focused on building support for meetings in Glasgow and London and online attendance of the International May Day Rally on May 3, based on the slogans: “Down with capitalism and imperialism! Unite the working class internationally against war, dictatorship and poverty! For peace, for equality, for socialism!”

The SEP’s campaign will prove to be an important step in the development of a new revolutionary leadership in the UK and the building of the ICFI as the world party of socialist revolution.


1.8. U.S AND JAPAN TIGHTEN MILITARY TIES IN STEPPED UP WAR DRIVE AGAINST CHINA

29 April 2015

Nick Beams, World Socialist Website

US preparations for war against China have been considerably increased with the signing of a military agreement with Japan in Washington on Monday.

The agreement was formalised ahead of tomorrow’s address by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to a joint session of the US Congress—the first ever such address by the head of a Japanese government. The significance of the visit and the agreement for US objectives was highlighted by the fact that Obama spent most of Tuesday closeted in talks with Abe ahead of the congressional address.

The agreement allows for greater co-operation between US and Japanese armed forces and increases the likelihood of direct American military intervention should Japan and China come into armed conflict over disputed territory in the East China Sea.

It is in line with last year’s “reinterpretation” of the Japanese constitution by the Abe government which extends the conception of “self-defence” to include joint military action with its allies, particularly the US, should it come under attack.

The “reinterpretation” was the outcome of a concerted push by the United States for Japan to scrap any constitutional restrictions on its military activity. Washington is accelerating its drive to integrate its allies in the Asia-Pacific region into its operations directed against China as part of the “pivot to Asia” of which Japan and Australia form two key foundations.

It also dovetailed with the aims of the right-wing nationalist Abe government to remove the shackles on Japanese military action under the so-called “pacifist clause” of the post-war constitution. Immediately following last year’s “reinterpretation,” Abe delivered an address to the Australian parliament in which he laid out the perspective an increased global role for Japan.

No direct mention of China was made in the statements accompanying the signing of the Washington agreement but there is no doubt it was the target.

A senior US defence official was reported as saying it was a “big deal” and a “very important” moment in the US-Japan alliance before going on to cite an “increasing” threat from China’s ally North Korea. For the US, the North Korean “threat” is a convenient cover for its military measures directed against China.

Establishing a potential trigger for war, the agreement specifically confirmed an earlier US commitment to side with Japan, if necessary by military means, in its conflict with China over the Senkaku (Diaoyu) islets in the East China Sea. The dispute over the uninhabited rocky outcrops, which has been on-going for several decades, escalated in 2012 when the Japanese government nationalised them in a clear provocation against China.

Secretary of State John Kerry made clear the US regards them as under Japanese control. Calling the new defence ties an “historic transition,” Kerry said: “Washington’s commitment to Japan’s security remains ironclad and covers all territories
In line with the rising drum beat denouncing its increased “assertiveness” in the region, Kerry issued a threat directed against Chinese activities throughout the region.

“We reject any suggestion that freedom of navigation, overflight and other lawful uses of the sea and airspace are privileges granted by big states to small ones, subject at the whim and fancy of the big state,” he said.

Echoing his remarks, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida emphasised what he called the “rule of law,” adding that “we cannot let unilateral action to change the status quo be condoned.” In the US interpretation, the “rule of law” means the assertion of its unfettered right to engage in military activity in any part of the world.

China has not imposed any restrictions on the freedom of navigation in the region, nor has it any need to do so given that it contains the sea lanes vital for its economy.

But it is seeking to push back against US military pressure and the continuing daily naval and air operations that underpin the Pentagon’s so-called Air/Sea Battle Plan for all-out war, potentially involving the use of nuclear weapons, directed against the Chinese mainland. One can only imagine the outcry from Washington and the threats of military retaliation that would accompany any equivalent Chinese military action off the coast of San Diego.

In another thinly-veiled reference to China and its growing economic power, Japanese Defence Minister Gen. Nakatani said that since 1997, when defence arrangements were last revised, “the security environment in the United States and Japan has changed dramatically.”

Speaking to the New York Times, Michael J. Green, a senior member of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank with close ties to the US military, made clear the far-reaching implications of the agreement.

“With China’s growing assertiveness and North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs, Japan, like a lot of allies, wants to be there for us so we’ll be there for them. It allows the US military to plan Japan in, so that when we turn to them and say, ‘Can you deal with our left flank?’ the Japanese, in principle, now can do that.”

The tighter US-Japanese military arrangements directed against China under the Obama administration’s “pivot” are being accompanied by economic measures, at the forefront of which is the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). Obama is seeking to secure congressional fast-track authority for the signing of the agreement with Japan and 10 other countries in the region.

The TPP, which will cover countries producing around 40 percent of the world’s economic output, is an integral component of the US drive to re-establish its global economic dominance, which has been undermined over the past three decades.

In an interview with the Wall Street Journal on Monday, Obama set out its strategic significance.

“If we don’t write the rules, China will write the rules in that region. We will be shut out—American businesses and American agriculture,” he said.

The TPP is being promoted as a free trade agreement. It is nothing of the sort. Together with a similar agreement under negotiation with Europe, it is aimed at asserting US global economic primacy.

This was made clear by Obama’s trade representative Michael Froman in an article published in the leading American journal Foreign Affairs last November, the very title of which, “The Strategic Logic of Trade,” made clear that for the US, its economic and military policies are two sides of the same coin.

The aim of Obama’s trade policy, he wrote, was to position the US at “the centre of a web of agreements that will provide unfettered access to two-thirds of the global economy.”

US economic policy has always been directed to expanding its position in global markets and securing access to profitable sources of raw materials and investment outlets. But it was one thing when these objectives were pursued under conditions of economic expansion. Under worsening global economic stagnation since the eruption of the financial crisis in 2008, this struggle now takes place in transformed conditions.
This means that the global battle for markets, profits and resources will increasingly assume military forms, just as it did in the decade of the 1930s, leading to World War II. Now the drive towards a new world war is well underway, with the US-Japan military agreement another major step in that direction.


1.9. WHY OBAMA WANTS TO LIFT SANCTIONS ON IRAN

27 April 2015

Mike Whitney, Counterpunch

“It is essential to recognize that Iran does not currently have a nuclear weapons program, nor does it possess a nuclear weapon. On February 26, James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran, ended his country’s nuclear weapons program in 2003 and “as far as we know, he’s not made the decision to go for a nuclear weapon.” This repeats the “high-confidence” judgement of the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) that was first made in November 2007.” -Micah Zenko, Putting Iran’s Nuclear Program in Context, Council on Foreign Relations

It always helps to start with the truth, and in Iran’s case, the truth is quite simple. Iran has no nuclear weapons, it has no nuclear weapons program, and it’s never been caught diverting nuclear fuel for other purposes. Iran has pursued nuclear technology for peaceful purposes alone.

These are the facts. They may not jibe with the lies propagated in the western media, but they are the facts all the same. Iran is not guilty of anything. It’s merely a victim of Washington’s power-crazy attempt to control vital resources in the Middle East and enhance Israel’s regional hegemony. That’s what’s really going on. It’s all geopolitics. It has nothing to do with nukes.

Media coverage of the so called nuclear negotiations in Laussanne and now in Vienna has focused maniacally on the number of centrifuges, IAEA monitoring programs, uranium enrichment capability, and myriad other arcane topics that are meant to divert attention from the fact that Iran has no nuclear weapons program and no interest in developing one. By poring over the details of these issues in excruciating detail, the reader is left feeling that Iran must be hiding something and therefore must pose a real threat to US national security. But of course that’s precisely what the authors of these articles hope to achieve, they want to pull the wool over the public’s eyes and get people to believe something that is transparently false. The fact is Iran is not doing anything underhanded or illegal. They are merely demanding that their right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes under the terms of the NPT be respected. Iran will not allow itself to be bullied by the US or treated like a second class citizen. Iran has behaved honorably from the beginning, which is a helluva a lot more than can be said of the US.

The media doesn’t want to discuss the “additional protocols” that Iran accepted in order to build confidence among members on the United Nations, because then people would realize that Iran has gone the extra mile many times in the past only to be slapped with more spurious accusations of noncompliance or foul play. But where’s the evidence of noncompliance or foul play? There isn’t any. It’s all just fear-mongering speculation and vitriolic BS spewed by the dissembling media. There’s not a word of truth to any of it.

The media’s latest scam centers on the term “breakout time”, which refers to the amount of time it, would take for Iran to build a nuclear weapon if it was so inclined, which it isn’t.

“Breakout time” is the new propaganda buzzword reiterated thousands of times in the media suggesting that Tehran is just hours away from building an atomic weapon that it will immediately use to annihilate Israel. It’s a ridiculous fairy tale that assumes that-since the US is a rouge-homicidal state that goes around bombing the bejesus out of anything that moves-that other states are bound to behave the same if given half a chance. This is wrong on many levels. First of all, Iran doesn’t want nukes and, secondly, leaders in other countries are not power-mad megalomaniacs whose only joy in life is reducing broad swathes of the planet to smouldering rubble. That behaviour is particular to US leaders alone. Others don’t suffer from the
same sociopathic disorder.

The nuclear issue has nothing to do with Iran’s fictitious nuclear weapons program. That’s just a smokescreen. The real problem is that Iran is a sovereign country with an independent foreign policy. Washington doesn’t like independent nations. Washington likes nations that shut up and do what they’re told. Nations that refuse to take orders are Washington’s enemies, they’re placed on a hit list. And that’s where the sanctions come into play. Sanctions are the way that Washington weakens its enemies before bombing them to kingdom come. They’re the stick the US uses to beat its rivals into submission.

If you’ve been following the news lately, you know that something very strange is going on. The US has done an about-face and changed its policy towards Iran. It’s a shocking development. The US has maintained the same savage policy towards Cuba for 60 years without changing a thing. Whether the policy works or not, has never mattered; what matters is inflicting maximum pain on the people Washington’s doesn’t like. So why the sudden change with Iran? Why is Obama trying to reach an agreement with a country that US elites openly despise?

And, keep in mind, that what Obama’s doing is extremely unpopular with many powerful groups; the congress, the media, Israel and even high ranking officials in his own State Department. Could it be that the powerbrokers who pull Obama’s strings and tell him what to do have suddenly seen the light and want to open a new era of reconciliation and friendship with Iran?

Of course not, No one believes that. The only reason Obama would strike a deal with Iran is because the US wants something in return. And the US does want something in return. The US wants a substitute for Russian gas flowing to the Europe so it can destroy Russia economically and implement its strategic plan to spread US power across Asia so US mega-corporations can maintain their dominant position in the global economy. Obama is playing nice with Iran so he can pivot to Asia as easily as possible.

So how plausible is it for Iran to replace Russian gas in the lucrative EU market?

Check out this clip from an article written in 2014 that anticipated the very scenario we see developing today, that is, the US trying to prevent an integrated EU-Russian free trade zone that would dwarf the US GDP and leave the exceptional nation to face years of precipitous decline. The article is titled “EU turns to Iran as alternative to Russian gas“:

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

“Iran is far towards the top of our priorities for mid-term measures that will help reduce our reliance on Russian gas supplies,” the source said. “Iran’s gas could come to Europe quite easily and politically there is a clear rapprochement between Tehran and the West.”....

While sanctioned itself, Iran has the world’s second largest gas reserves after Russia and is a potential alternative given talks between Tehran and the West to reach a deal over the Islamic Republic’s disputed nuclear programme.

“High potential for gas production, domestic energy sector reforms that are underway, and ongoing normalization of its relationship with the West make Iran a credible alternative to Russia,” said a paper prepared for the European parliament...

“Given Russia’s current strategy politically, which is one of confrontation with Europe, I see the EU having little choice but to find alternative gas supplies,” he added...

“Iran’s interest to deliver gas to Europe is very big. Parts of Iran’s economical and political elite as well as Western companies are preparing for an end of the sanctions,” said Frank Umbach, energy research director at King’s College in London...

Iran has long lobbied to build a designated pipeline that would connect its huge South Pars gas field with European customers - the so-called Persian Pipeline.
“It’s an extremely ambitious project,” Handjani said. “Even if half of it gets built it would be major accomplishment for both Europe and Iran.”

Independent feasibility studies show that if sanctions were to be eased and investments started soon, Iran could supply 10-20 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas a year to Turkey and Europe by the early 2020s.

This is why Obama wants to ease sanctions; it’s because he needs to find an alternate source of gas for Europe while he prosecutes his war on Russia. Defeating Russia has become Washington’s top strategic priority. The United States is willing to risk everything—even nuclear war—to maintain its stranglehold on global power and to extend its hegemony into the next century.

Source: http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/04/27/why-obama-wants-to-lift-sanctions-on-iran/