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## Iran's heading of the Non-Aligned Movement: Lead up to more confrontation?

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Iran recently took over [leadership](#) of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), a 120-nation consortium of developing countries, for a period of three years. Iran is now hosting the group's 16<sup>th</sup> Summit in Tehran where member states are gathered to discuss issues of mutual importance. However, it is disappointing given Iran's intransigence about its unresolved nuclear case that so many member states decided to send top-level representation. Those attending should deliver a clear message to Iran that its many violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions and lack of transparency with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are unacceptable and a blemish on the NAM's struggle for the peaceful resolutions of conflicts.

Iran [reportedly views](#) its tenure as the NAM chair, and in particular this conference in Tehran, as an opportunity to garner an international platform for its views about the nuclear crisis, a venue it craves after being shut out of many forums due to the ongoing confrontation over its nuclear program. Iran has sought to use this conference as a way to denounce economic and financial sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council and Western nations and to try to create new economic alliances. In a few years, it is possible that Iran may also seize the opportunity as NAM chair to attempt to derail consensus at the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.

At the NAM Summit, Iran has already attempted to gather support for its point of view by calling on member states to support its falsely asserted an unconditional "right" to peaceful nuclear energy, a right it [does not have](#) under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi also [called on](#) the NAM to "seriously confront financial sanctions by certain countries," which in fact are legitimately imposed under U.N. Security Council resolutions and national laws. Iran has sought to undermine the IAEA's safeguards obligations among NAM members by falsely representing its nonproliferation commitments under the NPT.

As it faces increasing economic isolation, Iran is also [endeavoring](#) to strengthen trade ties with countries as a way to help alleviate the effects of U.N. and unilateral sanctions, including denial of access to financial markets and oil embargoes. Toward that goal, it has had potentially promising [negotiations](#) with countries such as Nigeria.

Iran's leadership of the NAM presents yet another, more long-term risk: it could seek to derail consensus at the 2015 Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference. The Conference, which is a forum for assessing the implementation of the NPT, could be exploited by Iran as a podium to further disrupt and distract from any scrutiny over its nuclear program. In 2010, Egypt (and Iran) [held up](#) deliberations over concerns about holding a conference to discuss a Middle East nuclear weapons free zone. Under its temporary NAM chairmanship, Iran will have the opportunity to shape the discourse at the next Review Conference even more dramatically and shift focus from its nuclear program.

As disappointing as their decisions to attend the Tehran summit are, the NAM states, as well as important international figures such as [UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#), should resist Iran's defiance over sanctions and its commitments to the IAEA as well as overtures to make new trade deals. Instead, they should use this opportunity to criticize Iran over its nuclear policies, appealing to it to resolve the issue through serious negotiations. Especially in the face of increased talk of a military strike on Iran, the NAM should not allow Iran to transfer focus away from its nonproliferation responsibilities.