

Keeping Modi in Power: Why India Might Secure an Anti-Iranian Sanctions Waiver From the US

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The US doesn't want to do anything that could risk Narendra Modi's reelection next year such as inadvertently contributing to the explosive growth of petrol prices in his country, so it's possible that Trump might grant America's new strategic partner a waiver from the forthcoming anti-Iranian sanctions so long as India pledges to gradually reduce its purchases of the country's resources like it's already doing when it comes to Russian weaponry.

One of the biggest questions on everyone's mind in Eurasia is whether the US will sanction India for its [promise](#) to continue purchasing Iranian resources after the [reimposition of American sanctions](#) against the Islamic Republic next month. It's unclear at this time whether India is just saying that as a negotiating tactic in advance of entering into free trade talks with the US or if it's actually sincere in its stated intentions, but this high-stakes game of geo-energy "chicken" is pushing Washington into deciding whether it should waive any forthcoming sanctions against New Delhi or not. Plenty of arguments have been made in predicting why this might not happen, but in the interests of presenting a contrarian analysis, the present piece will explain why this might indeed occur.

Hitting The Brakes On "Balkanizing" Iran

The most important motivation that the US has is to cripple the Iranian economy and create the conditions where a self-sustaining cycle of [Hybrid War](#) unrest could easily take root with minimal foreign support, therefore facilitating the US' objectives of Regime Tweaking (political "concessions"), Regime Change, and Regime Reboot (constitutional "reform" that leads to "[Balkanization](#)" via weaponized "decentralization"). These goals are made moot if Iran's major customers continue purchasing its energy in defiance of America's threats to impose "secondary sanctions" against them, which is why it's so important for Washington to get New Delhi to fall in line with this policy. India, however, cannot simply go "cold turkey" and give up its [second-largest supplier](#) without suffering severe structural consequences to its economy.

Bearing this in mind, that's why the US will probably seek to reach a backroom deal with India in getting its counterpart to gradually reduce its purchase of Iranian resources in exchange for a sanctions waiver, similar in principle to what it [could potentially do](#) vis-à-vis New Delhi's [recent S-400 deal](#) with Moscow as long as the country [continues its trend](#) of reducing Russian weapons purchases. The US would therefore be able to advance its Hybrid War designs against Iran without inadvertently destabilizing its [Indian strategic partner](#) through the sudden explosive growth of petrol prices that a "clean break" would trigger. Moreover, the US and Saudi Arabia [might not have enough extra oil on hand](#) to meet the demand that India would have if it cut off Iranian imports completely.

Keeping Modi In Power

It's a lot easier and less unpredictable for the US to smoothly transition India into fully complying with its anti-Iranian sanctions by [making its waiver conditional](#) on the phased decrease of energy purchases from the Islamic Republic and their replacement with American and Saudi resources instead. Importantly, by keeping petrol prices stable, incumbent Prime Minister Modi wouldn't risk any realistic chance of losing reelection next year, and his continued leadership over India is essential for implementing the US' grand strategic objective of ["containing" China](#) in the [Afro-Asian Ocean](#) and beyond. Speaking of which, that same imperative might even result in India being granted a waiver for continuing to trade with Iran through Chabahar and the North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) in spite of the US officially being against this.

"Containing" China

From the perspective of the [New Cold War](#), the US' main mission is to obstruct, control, or influence China's New Silk Roads in order to prevent them from reengineering global trade routes to America's hegemonic detriment, which is why it has an interest in using India as its ["Lead From Behind"](#) proxy in [Central Asia](#). As such, the case can convincingly be made that the US has more to gain by turning a blind eye to India's Iranian-transiting trade with Central Asia and Afghanistan via the NSTC and having New Delhi contribute to "containing" China and Pakistan there, respectively, than to sabotage this "promising" scenario out of blind hatred for Iran and an obsession with dealing as much economic pain to the country as possible.

Finally, the last argument that can be made in favor of the US granting India a waiver to its forthcoming anti-Iranian sanctions is that American grand strategic objectives are best served by ensuring that India remains in a relationship of complex interdependency with Washington's Russian, Chinese, and Iranian rivals and doesn't too solidly pivot to the Western camp. This might sound counterintuitive at first but it follows a certain logic. India's fast-moving embrace of the US at the obvious expense of its Russian, Chinese, and Iranian partners' economic and security interests would lead to them adapting to this new reality and learning how to function without their one-time partner, so it follows that the US can more effectively exploit its strategic partnership with India if the latter is still integral to them.

Concluding Thoughts

There's no telling what Trump will do in any given situation, but ["The Kraken"](#) has a knack for spreading chaos to whatever he touches, and the issue of India potentially earning a waiver from the US for continuing to do all manner of business with Iran in spite of America's forthcoming reimposition of sanctions against the Islamic Republic will assuredly be another case in point. As has become the norm, however, the US might surprise observers by behaving unexpectedly and not levelling "secondary sanctions" against India for, as New Delhi has a self-interested reason in misleadingly framing it as, "defying" Washington. Instead, granting India a waiver might actually do more to advance America's grand strategic interests than sanctioning the South Asian state, though [Alt-Media](#) might never notice the trick that's been played on them.

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