US is Building an Anti-Iranian Alliance, Backed Up by a Propaganda Campaign

At the end of WWII Washington began to establish its Hub-and-Spoke system of alliances between the USA - the “hub” - and its key strategic allies. The system has remained largely unchanged to this day. This alliance system was originally established in response to the Pentagon’s fears that certain Asian countries might leave the US’s exclusive sphere of influence. However, in its present form this policy looks more like an attempt by the White House to encircle certain of its adversaries by strengthening its partnership with US allies and other pro-US friendly states.

While in the 20th century such alliances were primarily directed against Moscow, in the last few years the US has shifted the focus of its strategic union further east - to Beijing. Recent examples of this trend include the creation of two strategic dialogs, AUKUS and QUAD, to serve as axes in the new Cold War - and this time the main adversary is China.

However, it is not just Moscow and Beijing that Washington sees as its true strategic adversaries. The pro-Israel lobby, which has considerable influence over the White House’s policymaking, has recently been pushing Washington into hybrid war against Tehran, thus realigning the system of US alliances against a new enemy. It will be remembered that back in 2017, advisers to then- President Donald Trump tried to draw Riyadh into a so-called “Arab NATO” - a military alliance against Iran based on the familiar principle that an attack on one member would be treated as an attack on the whole alliance. However, the US was not planning to become a member of that alliance, but instead proposed that its “Arab allies” share their intelligence with Israel.

And now we are seeing the creation of a new alliance against Iran - on November 19 this year the US held “talks” with officials from France, Germany, the UK, and the Persian Gulf nations, headed by Robert Malley, the US’s
Special Envoy for Iran. Representatives from Jordan and Egypt also participated in the talks. The creation of this kind of anti-Iranian alliance can be seen as part of Washington’s decision to consider “alternative approaches” to resolving the Iranian nuclear problem if the diplomatic approach fails— a position that US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reiterated in the Manama Dialogue, an international conference on security in the region, which took place in Bahrain on November 20.

Although the official purpose of the “talks” in Riyadh was to prepare for the renewal of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Robert Malley adroitly shifted the emphasis to the possibility of a joint effort to rein in Tehran’s ambitions, including its nuclear project. Thus, according to an official release from the US Department of State, Robert Malley and the European delegates discussed “Iran’s destabilizing activities in the region, including the use and transfer of ballistic missiles and UAVs [i.e. drones] that have led to attacks against regional partners”. Robert Malley encouraged Bahrain and the other Persian Gulf nations to join forces in opposing Iran, which, he reminded them, bore responsibility for the regular drone and rocket attacks directed against Saudi Arabia by Iran-backed Houthi from across the border in Yemen.

A day earlier, agreeing that Iran’s nuclear program was a matter of “serious concern”, officials from the US and Persian Gulf nations had convened a meeting of the Working Group on Iran. The Group declared that there was no civilian need for Iran’s enrichment of uranium in greater quantities and to a higher level than permitted by the nuclear deal, but that this was “important to nuclear weapons programs”. As the Israeli news agency Cursorinfo reports, the group discussed “Iran’s numerous aggressive and dangerous actions, including its supply of state-of-the-art ballistic rockets and UAVs to its allies, as well as using such hardware itself. “Iran and its proxies have used these weapons in hundreds of attacks against both civilians and critical infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, as well as against merchant shipping in the international waters of the Sea of Oman. The group also pointed out that Iran’s attacks posed a danger to US soldiers fighting against DAESH [a terrorist organization that is prohibited in the Russian Federation].”

Seeking to justify the increasing opposition to Iran from various quarters, the New York Times, citing multiple official sources from the US and Israel, recently reported that the October 20 drone strike against the US’s Al-Tanf army base in the south of Syria was clearly launched by Iran in retaliation for Israeli airstrikes against Syria. The report added that the US Central Command had described the attack as “deliberate and coordinated”. Only two of the drones detonated on impact, but the fact that they were loaded with shrapnel demonstrated a “clear intent to kill”. Although the New York Times’s sources believed that the attack had been directed by Iran and carried out by its proxy forces in Syria, a Pentagon spokesman “declined to publicly accuse Iran, partly to avoid upending talks to restart the nuclear deal with Tehran, which are set to renew on November 29.” The newspaper added that “an escalation of Iran’s shadow war with Israel ... poses new dangers to US forces in the Middle East.”

Iran did not accept responsibility for the attack on the Al-Tanf base. “There have been a number of these incidents where they accused Iran without any proof or documents,” responded Saeed Khatibzadeh, a spokesman for Iran’s Foreign Ministry.

While conducting talks on Iran, the US authorities has also been running an propaganda campaign, in which they accuse Iranian hackers of intervening in the US presidential elections. According to the Associated Press, the goal of the Iranian hackers was, among other things, to intimidate US voters and spread doubt about the reliability of the results. The US prosecutor alleges that the hackers made use of both vulnerabilities in computer systems and existing social divisions to sow discord among voters, sending out emails and distributing video materials alleging electoral falsifications, and also, on the day following the election, attempting to gain access to a US media holding’s computer network. The indictment concludes by naming three Iranian citizens involved in the case, Seyyed Mohammad Hosein, Musa Kazemi and Sajjad Kashian, and stating that the US Ministry of Finance had imposed sanctions on them and their families.

Vladimir Platov, expert on the Middle East, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.
