

MR. BIDEN, TEAR DOWN THIS PIPELINE

The history of the European Union knows very few political ventures as harmful as the Nord Stream 2 project. Unfortunately, the EU - torn by the particularism of Germany and its allies - is unable to block this gas pipeline.

In recent weeks the eyes of the world have turned to Russia, whose authorities have once again shown that they do not want to belong to a democratic civilization. The attempted murder and detention of Alexei Navalny have lengthened a long list of aggressive actions undertaken by Russia since 2014. The Anschluss of Crimea, the shooting down of the MH17 aircraft, the incident near the Kerch Strait, the Skripals' poisoning - all these crimes have shown that the time of peaceful dialogue with Russia is over.

Unfortunately, not everyone understood the new situation. The European Union - with foreign policy largely dictated by Germany - still believes that Russia can be tamed without any drastic methods. However, the pointlessness of this approach is striking. The embarrassing failure of Josep Borrell's latest mission to Moscow is the best proof of the ineffectiveness of EU's policy towards Russia. Mr. Borrell, the head of the European diplomacy, met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on February the 5th to discuss further relations in context of the Navalny's case. But instead of proposing any solutions, Russia had expelled three EU diplomats from its territory exactly during Borrell's meeting with Lavrov. It was a clear signal that the Putin's regime views the EU's indulgent attitude with contempt.

All this farce goes on despite of the fact that one move of the European Union would be enough to force the Russian foreign minister to come to Brussels asking for the normalization of relations. Europe only needs to block the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which is currently Gazprom's most important infrastructure project. However, the EU is doing quite the opposite - it protects the pipeline against any negative consequences of Russian crimes. This is due to the fact that Nord Stream 2 benefits not only Russia, but also Germany, which has a huge impact on EU foreign policy.

The completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline will grant Russians with a huge political profit - it will allow to transfer gas transit from the on-land land routes to the Baltic Sea (the gas pipeline runs along its bottom, directly connecting Russia and Germany). Such a move will be particularly dangerous for Ukraine, for which the transit of gas is an additional guarantee of security against further Russian aggression. On the other hand, thanks to Nord Stream 2, Germany can create a central European gas hub, earning money on the re-export of Russian gas.

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That synergy of Russian-German interests allowed Nord Stream 2 project to go on despite of Putin's aggression. However, European society is watching the successive Russian crimes with increasing terror and starts to demand the punishment. In the absence of a proper response from the EU, the only hope lies in the actions of the United States.

Since the Ronald Reagan's presidency, the US has opposed making Europe dependent on Russian gas, seeing it as a geopolitical danger – natural gas, as many other energy resources, can be easily used as a political weapon. Gazprom, the Russian state-owned company responsible for the Nord Stream 2 project, has proven many times that it knows the political value of the gas it sells - that is why the company got involved in the Nord Stream 2 project, which has a questionable economic sense. For the Kremlin, the goals of this venture are strictly political. Therefore, blocking Nord Stream 2 is doubly important - it would not only be a response to Russia's aggression, but also increase Europe's security.

The United States has already shown that it has the tools to bury the Nord Stream 2 project. It's time to use their power. For Putin's Russia, the only argument that counts is that of strength - and the European Union lacks that. That is why many Europeans look with hope at the United States, seeing it as a power that could tear down this pipeline.