

Can Europe Afford to Turn a Blind Eye to Evidence of a US Role in Pipeline Blasts?

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The sabotage of the two Nord Stream pipelines leaves Europeans certain to be much poorer and colder this winter, and was an act of international vandalism on an almost unimaginable scale. The attacks severed Russian gas supplies to Europe and caused the release of [enormous quantities](#) of methane gas, the prime offender in global warming.

This is why no one is going to take responsibility for the crime – and most likely no one will ever be found definitively culpable.

Nonetheless, the level of difficulty and sophistication in setting off blasts at three separate locations on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines overwhelmingly suggests a state actor, or actors, was behind it.

Western coverage of the attacks has been decidedly muted, given that this hostile assault on the globe's energy infrastructure is unprecedented – overshadowing even the 9/11 attacks.

The reason why there appears to be so little enthusiasm to explore this catastrophic event in detail – beyond [pointing a finger](#) in Russia's direction – is not difficult to deduce.

It is hard to think of a single reason why Moscow would wish to destroy its own energy pipelines, valued at \$20 billion, or allow in seawater, possibly corroding them irreversibly.

The attacks deprive Russia of its main gas supply lines to Europe – and with it, vital future revenues – while leaving the field open to competitors.

Moscow loses its only significant leverage over Germany, its main buyer in Europe and at the heart of the European project, when it needs such leverage most, as it faces down [concerted efforts](#) by the United States and Europe to drive Russian soldiers out of Ukraine.

Even any possible temporary advantage Moscow might have gained by demonstrating its ruthlessness and might to Europe could have been achieved just as effectively by simply turning off the spigot to stop supplies.

Media Taboo

This week, distinguished economist Jeffrey Sachs was invited on *Bloomberg* TV to talk about the pipeline attacks. He broke a taboo among Western elites by [citing](#) evidence suggesting that the US, rather than Russia, was the prime suspect.

Professor Jeffrey Sachs [Columbia] on Bloomberg causing chaos saying US was most likely involved in Nordstream leaks according to data & other experts □□□
“even reporters tell me privately of course ...” and that we are on a pretty dangerous path to a nuclear conflict pic.twitter.com/U6FsC2tdp6

— detty (@Oddette) [October 3, 2022](#)

Western media like the [Associated Press](#) have tried to foreclose such a line of thinking by calling it a “baseless conspiracy theory” and Russian “disinformation”. But, as Sachs pointed out, there are good reasons to suspect the U.S. above Russia.

There is, for example, the threat to Russia made by U.S. president Joe Biden back in early February, that “there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2” were Ukraine to be invaded. Questioned by a reporter about how that would be possible, Biden [asserted](#): “I promise you, we will be able to do that.”

BIDEN admits US behind sabotage of Nordstream 1 and 2.

Biden: "If Russia invades...then there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2."

Reporter: "But how will you do that, it's in germany's control?"

Biden: "I promise you, we will be able to do that." pic.twitter.com/idlxQYuAqU

— Syrian Girl □□□ (@Partisangirl) [September 27, 2022](#)

Biden was not speaking out of turn or off the cuff. At the same time, [Victoria Nuland](#), a senior diplomat in the Biden administration, issued Russia much the same warning, [telling](#) reporters: “If Russia invades Ukraine, one way or another, Nord Stream 2 will not move forward.”

Victoria Nuland: “If Russia invades Ukraine, one way or another, Nord Stream 2 will not move forward”

Also this is the same Victoria Nuland who said fuck the EU, and she sure did it to you Germany. [#NordStream2](#) [#Nordstream](#)
[#Nordstream1pic.twitter.com/GGMzrSbwT7](#)

— Syrian Girl □□□ (@Partisangirl) [September 28, 2022](#)

That is the same Nuland who was [intimately involved](#) back in 2014 in behind-the-scenes maneuvers by the U.S. to help overthrow an elected Ukrainian government that led to the installation of one hostile to Moscow. It was that coup that triggered a combustible mix of outcomes – Kyiv’s increasing flirtation with NATO, as well as a civil war in the east between Ukrainian [ultra-nationalists](#) and ethnic Russian communities – that provided the chief rationale for President Vladimir Putin’s later invasion.

And for those still puzzled by what motive the U.S. might have for perpetrating such an outrage, Nuland’s boss helpfully offered an answer last Friday. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken [described](#) the destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines, and the consequent environmental catastrophe, as offering “tremendous strategic opportunity for the years to come”.

Blinken set out a little too clearly the “cui bono” – “who profits?” – argument, suggesting that Biden and Nuland’s earlier remarks were not just empty, pre-invasion posturing by the White House.

Blinken celebrated the fact that Europe would be deprived of Russian gas for the foreseeable future and, with it, Putin’s leverage over Germany and other European states. Before the blasts, the danger for Washington had been that Moscow might be able to advance favorable negotiations over Ukraine rather than perpetuate a war Biden’s defense secretary, Lloyd Austin, has already [stated](#) is designed to “weaken” Russia at least as much as liberate Ukraine. Or, as Blinken phrased it, the attacks were “a tremendous opportunity once and for all to remove the dependence on Russian energy, and thus to take away from Vladimir Putin the weaponization of energy as a means of advancing his imperial designs.”

Though Blinken did not mention it, it was also a “tremendous opportunity” to make Europe far more dependent on the U.S. for its gas supplies, shipped by sea at much greater cost to Europe than through Russia’s pipelines. American energy firms may well be the biggest beneficiaries from the explosions.

Meddling in Ukraine

U.S. hostility towards Russian economic ties with Europe is not new. Long before Russia’s invasion, Washington had been [quite openly](#) seeking ways to block the Nord Stream pipelines.

One of Blinken’s recent predecessors, Condoleezza Rice, expressed the Washington consensus way back in 2014 – at the same time as Nuland was recorded [secretly meddling](#) in Ukraine, discussing who should be installed as president in place of the elected Ukrainian government that was about to be ousted in a coup.

Speaking to German TV, Rice [said](#) the Russian economy was vulnerable to sanctions because 80% of its exports were energy-related. Proving how wrong-headed American foreign policy predictions often are, she asserted confidently:

“People say the Europeans will run out of energy. Well, the Russians will run out of cash before the Europeans run out of energy.” Breaking Europe’s reliance on Russian energy was, in Rice’s words, “one of the few instruments we have... Over the long term, you simply want to change the structure of energy dependence.”

She added:

“You [Germany] want to depend more on the North American energy platform, the tremendous bounty of oil and gas that we’re finding in North America. You want to have pipelines that don’t go through Ukraine and Russia.”

Now, the sabotage of Nord Stream 1 and 2 has achieved a major U.S. foreign-policy goal overnight.

It has also preempted the pressure building in Germany, through [mass protests](#) and mounting business opposition, that might have seen Berlin reverse course on European sanctions on Russia and revive gas supplies – a shift that would have undermined Washington’s goal of “weakening” Putin. Now, the protests are redundant. German politicians cannot cave in to popular demands when there is no pipeline through which they can supply their population with Russian gas.

‘Thank You, USA’

One can hardly be surprised that European leaders are publicly blaming Russia for the pipeline attacks. After all, Europe falls under the U.S. security umbrella and Russia has been designated by Washington as Official Enemy No 1.

But almost certainly, major European capitals are drawing different conclusions in private. Like Sachs, their officials are examining the circumstantial evidence, considering the statements of self-incrimination from Biden and other officials, and weighing the “cui bono” arguments.

And like Sachs, they are most likely inferring that the prime suspect in this case is the U.S. – or, at the very least, that Washington authorized an ally to act on its behalf. Just as no European leader would dare to publicly accuse the U.S. of carrying out the attacks, none would dare stage such an attack without first getting the nod from Washington.

That was evidently the view of Radek Sikorski, the former foreign and defence minister of Poland, who [tweeted](#) a “Thank you, USA” with an image of the bubbling seas where one pipeline was ruptured.

Sikorski, it should be noted, is as well-connected in Washington as he is in Poland, a European state bitterly hostile to Moscow as well as its pipelines. His wife, Anne Applebaum, is a staff writer at *The Atlantic* magazine and an influential figure in U.S. policy circles who has [long advocated](#) for NATO and EU expansion into Eastern Europe and Ukraine.

Sikorski hurriedly took down the tweet after it went viral.

But if Washington is the chief suspect in blowing up the pipelines, how should Europe read its relations with the U.S. in the light of that deduction? And what does such sabotage indicate to Europe’s leaders about how Washington might perceive the stakes in Europe? The answers are not pretty.

Demand for Fealty

If the U.S. was behind the attacks, it suggests not only that Washington is taking the Ukraine war into new, more dangerous territory, ready to risk drawing Moscow into a round of tit-for-tats that could quickly escalate into a nuclear confrontation. It also suggests that ties between the U.S. and Europe have entered a decisive new stage, too.

Or put another way, Washington would have done more than move out of the shadows, turning its proxy war in Ukraine into a more direct, hot war with Russia. It would indicate that the U.S. is willing to turn the whole of Europe into a battlefield, and bully, betray and potentially sacrifice the continent's population as cruelly as it has traditionally treated weak allies in the Global South.

In that regard, the pipeline ruptures are most likely interpreted by European leaders as a signal: that they should not dare to consider formulating their own independent foreign policy, or contemplate defying Washington. The attacks indicate that the US requires absolute fealty, that Europe must prostrate itself before Washington and accept whatever dictates it imposes.

That would amount to a dramatic reversal of the Marshall Plan, Washington's ambitious funding of the rebuilding of Western Europe after the Second World War, chiefly as a way to restore the market for rapidly expanding U.S. industries.

By contrast, this act of sabotage strangles Europe economically, driving it into recession, deepening its debt and making it a slave to U.S. energy supplies. Effectively, the Biden administration would have moved from offering European elites juicy carrots to now wielding a very large stick at them.

Pitiless Aggression

For those reasons, European leaders may be unwilling to contemplate that their ally across the Atlantic could behave in such a cruel manner against them. The implications are more than unsettling.

The conclusion European leaders would be left to draw is that the only justification for such pitiless aggression is that the U.S. is maneuvering to avoid the collapse of its post-war global dominance, the end of its military and economic empire.

The destruction of the pipelines would have to be understood as an act of desperation: a last-ditch preemption by Washington of the loss of its hegemony as Russia, China and others find common cause to challenge the American behemoth, and a ferocious blow against Europe to hammer home the message that it must not stray from the fold.

At the same time, it would shine a different, clearer light on the events that have been unfolding in and around Ukraine in recent years:

- NATO's relentless expansion across Eastern Europe despite expert warnings that it would eventually provoke Russia.
- Biden and Nuland's meddling to help oust an elected Ukrainian government sympathetic to Moscow.
- The cultivation of a militarized Ukrainian ultra-nationalism pitted against Russia that led to bloody civil war against Ukraine's own ethnic Russian communities.
- And NATO's exclusive focus on escalating the war through arms supplies to Ukraine rather than pursuing and incentivizing diplomacy.

None of these developments can be stripped out of a realistic assessment of why Russia responded by invading Ukraine.

Europeans have been persuaded that they must give unflinching moral and military support to Ukraine because it is the last rampart defending their homeland from a merciless Russian imperialism.

But the attack on the pipelines hints at a more complex story, one in which European publics need to stop fixing their gaze exclusively at Russia, and turn round to understand what has been happening behind their backs.

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