

Nord Stream 2 Trade Geopolitics: Towards a US-Germany “Tariff War”. Washington Threatens Germany with Sanctions

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The United States continues to threaten Germany with sanctions if the European country proceeds with the Nord Stream 2 project – a strategic partnership with Russia to build a large gas pipeline that would facilitate the energy flow between Russia and Europe via a smaller and faster route. Recently, US senators introduced a bill to sanction all companies that provide certification, insurance and port facilities for the planned pipeline, in a clear objective to undermine any businesses interested in the benefits of the project.

This is a common and well-known tactic by the American government, which has traditionally made extensive use of enforcement and coercive mechanisms to achieve its goals on the international stage. The sanction is a mechanism that, due to the good customs of the law, should be applied as a last resort, to safeguard a legal asset that was being violated. Unfortunately, in recent decades, Washington has made absolute use of this mechanism, applying it indiscriminately to simply pursue its own interests.

However, Germany is not willing to passively surrender to American impositions. The European country intends to fight back Washington's attack by applying strict tariff sanctions to American gas, aiming not only to react to the American provocation, but also to protect the German energy sector from the forced consumption of the American product. From the Bundestag Committee for Economy and Energy, Klaus Ernst stated in a recent interview that “if US pressure on the pipeline project does not stop, we must consider serious measures to protect ourselves – for example, there may be punitive gas tariffs for the US”.

A possible tariff war between Germany and the US on the gas issue is already beginning to rise on the horizon. Increasingly, European and American interests clash and the alliance that shaped the Western geopolitical bloc in recent decades is advancing in its process of decay. At the end of last year, tariff tension around gas had already begun, with Washington approving sanctions against people and companies involved in Nord Stream 2. At the time, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas firmly rejected foreign intervention in the European Union, stating that such measures violate all elementary principles of European law and are therefore inadmissible.



In the beginning, only the German left supported retaliation with tariffs on American gas, being a cause led by the German left party “Die Linke”. Now, however, the cause has acquired deep political and popular dimensions, with strong support from the working classes. The high degree of American intervention in European sovereignty mobilized a parliamentary coalition against the impositions by Washington, making, with the growth of a critical point of view in relation to the USA in the European Union, to face the USA and the imposition of the American gas to become one of the country’s top causes.

The reason why the United States wants to ruin Nord Stream is very clear: the agreement benefits bring Russia and Europe closer together, ending dependence on the Ukrainian route of the Russian natural gas and creating a more continuous, safer and cheaper flow of transport. American fear goes far beyond the mere economic or energy issue. What Washington really wants to avoid is the establishment of close ties between Moscow and Berlin (or any other European power), which could change the geopolitical configuration of the modern world forever. However, the construction of Nord Stream 2, powered by an alliance of companies from Russia, Germany, Austria, France and the Netherlands, was suspended in December 2019, after Washington threatened sanctions against the Swiss company Allseas that carried out the works.

In the midst of a Europe that is gradually resuming its routine, slowly leaving the collective quarantine, the discussion on the energy issue will certainly be the most powerful, since it is a central theme for German national strategy. Furthermore, the project has already been absurdly delayed, since, in the first moments, discussions and tensions of a political nature left the German participation in Nord Stream 2 uncertain and; after the participation was decided, the American sanctions and the pandemic again hampered the progress of the project, which can only now be definitively resumed and finalized.

In fact, if Germany proceeds with sanctions against the USA, this will be a real act of sovereignty and a break in global geopolitics, where Berlin, aiming to satisfy its national interests and needs, will reject the American ambition to be a “global police power”, thus contributing to a multipolar future. Definitely, we are at the moment in the history of the West when the USA and the EU will constantly have increasingly different interests and objectives, with situations of confrontation abounding.

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