Under United States Pressure On Germany Faces a Moment of Choice

The Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov and his United States counterpart Antony Blinken are scheduled to hold a meeting next week at an as yet undisclosed European location. It is difficult to see what the two men have to talk about. Lavrov has recently held meetings in Moscow with his British counterpart Elizabeth Truss. To call that meeting a complete waste of Lavrov’s time would not be an exaggeration. That woman’s ignorance was at an appalling level, apparently unable to distinguish between the Black and Baltic Seas, and naming two Russian cities as part of Ukraine.

It is to be hoped that Blinken’s grasp of geography is better than Truss. It is expected that Ukraine will be on Blinken’s agenda. He presumably shares the bizarre beliefs of his boss, United States president Joe Biden, that a Russian invasion of Ukraine is imminent. The United States is desperate to blame Russia for whatever is happening in that country, not least because it intends to use the “Russian invasion” as an excuse to cancel the Nord Stream 2 pipeline from Russia to Germany and other points to the west.

The United States has its own selfish motives for ending the Nord Stream 2 pipeline as it sees the European market as an alternative for its own gas supplies. That this is a pipedream does not seem to enter the United States consciousness. It does not have the capacity to replace the 40% of European electricity that is supplied by the Russians. Its product is also significantly more expensive for the Europeans to buy.
This does not seem to enter into the United States consciousness. They are motivated by the desire to destroy Russia’s European market. This goal is uppermost in their mind, irrespective of the European view. This was never more apparent than during the recent visit to the United States by Germany’s Chancellor Olaf Scholz who was gravely embarrassed by Biden’s blatant announcement that Nord Stream 2 would be cancelled if Russia invaded Ukraine.

Such was the arrogance of the United States position that is apparently never occurred to Biden that the decision to import Russian gas was a European decision and had nothing to do with the Americans. In that, Biden’s announcement was very revealing. It portrayed the Europeans in general and Germany in particular as mere pawns of the game the United States wished to play.

The loss of the German market would undoubtedly cause Russia financial loss. But the economic strain on Russia would not be as great as many people imagine, in particular the Americans who see it as causing economic hardship to Russia. In fact, Russia already has an alternative market ready, willing and able. And that is China. Work has already commenced on building the pipeline to convey the gas originally designed for the European market to China. It is expected to be completed in 2 to 3 years.

The damage to Europe in general, and Germany in particular, from the loss of Russian gas will be vastly greater. That does not appear to have entered the American equation, or if it has, they show no signs of concern about the potentially devastating effects the loss of Russian gas will have on the German market. Serious commentators have suggested that it could literally spell the death-knell of German industry, let alone the physical comfort of its population forced to endure a cold winter unalleviated by the warmth provided by Russian gas.

It is the realisation that Germany will be the one to actually suffer from a United States engineered cancellation of Nord Stream 2 that probably accounts for the marked reluctance of the German chancellor to embrace the blatantly anti Russian views of the United States. It is an open question as to how far the Germans are prepared to go to defy the patent wish of the United States to see North Stream 2 cancelled.

The history in this regard is not promising. Although World War II ended 77 years ago, the Germans are still an occupied country, with more than 40,000 United States troops in occupation. Germany has risen from the rubble of World War II to become the strongest economy in Europe. It is manifestly obvious however, that their political independence does not match their economic strength.

The incongruity of being an economic heavy weight but a political pygmy is precisely why the Germans find themselves in this current position. Manifestly, it is in their interest to receive energy supplies from Russia. It is blatantly obvious that such a wish does not accord with the United States view. In many respects, the German decision on Nord Stream 2 will be a true test of how politically independent it truly is, or wishes to be.

There are some small signs that Germany is seeking to assert its independence. One sign of this is its readiness to do business with China. Again, this is a trend that is anathema to the Americans who strongly oppose the ever-increasing willingness of European nations, not just the Germans, to establish mutually beneficial economic relationships with the Chinese.

One clear symptom of this European independence is the willingness of an ever-increasing number of European countries to sign up to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. At last count 18 countries of the European Union had signed up, which is two thirds of the membership. That is expected to grow. Those countries include the European Union heavyweights of France, Germany and Italy.

This is a sign of the future, as European countries free themselves from the American bondage and make decisions that equate to their own national interest. It is symptomatic of a broader sequence occurring in the world, as more and more countries sign up to the BRI. The total membership now stands at more than 140 countries. This is notwithstanding a fierce anti-BRI program being advanced by the Americans who see their worldwide influence steadily declining.

The trend is unmistakable. Germany is part of that trend. For that reason, I believe that the Germans will resist the pressure from the Americans and sign up to the Nord Stream 2 project. The Germans are an intelligent and educated people. They are capable of reading the direction the world is going. That reading will tell them that Eurasia is where the future of the world lies. They will want to be part of that world. Finally discarding United States protection is part of that, and this is something that they will do in the vital interests of their own country.

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