

# US, Germany strike deal over controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline

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On Wednesday, Washington and Berlin announced that they had signed an agreement over the highly contentious Russian-German Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. The deal means that the US will not sanction the \$11-billion project and will allow it to be completed.

The pipeline is an extension of the already active Nord Stream pipeline and will roughly double the amount of gas that Russia can deliver directly to Germany. The two Nord Stream pipelines bypass traditional transit countries, such as Belarus and particularly Ukraine. Ukraine, already economically devastated and highly dependent on revenues from gas moving across its territory, is set to lose additional billions of dollars because of the pipeline extension.

The pipeline has been a major point of contention in German-US relations for a decade. The latest round of sanctions was announced by former US president Donald Trump in 2019, in a stark indicator of the growing tensions between the two imperialist powers.

While the pipeline has been bitterly debated within the German ruling class, the German government has adamantly opposed all calls to stop its construction, insisting that it is a purely “economic” project. In reality, the pipeline provides Germany with significant energy and geostrategic advantages, strengthening its position as a major energy hub in Europe. Some of the gas deliveries from Russia will be delivered onward to the Czech Republic and countries in Western Europe.

The deal was announced just about a week after German chancellor Angela Merkel met with Biden in Washington. The Biden administration has escalated US war preparations against China that had been advanced significantly under Trump. As part of this refocusing of US foreign policy, Biden has also sought to somewhat improve the severely strained relations

with Germany, not least of all in order to bring Berlin as well as other European countries to the side of the US in the conflict against China, while preventing them from developing an independent foreign policy.

The joint statement announcing the deal stressed that the US and Germany “are united in their determination to hold Russia to account for its aggression and malign activities by imposing costs via sanctions and other tools. We commit to working together ...to respond together to Russian aggression and malign activities, including Russian efforts to use energy as a weapon.”

The statement emphasized that Washington and Berlin “are steadfast in their support for Ukraine’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and chosen European path.” The agreement states that Germany will impose sanctions on Russia should it “use energy as a weapon.” It notably also includes a commitment to the Three Seas Initiative, an alliance of states in Eastern and Central Europe “in the fields of regional energy security and renewable energy. The coalition has been spearheaded by Poland with US support. While it is directed primarily against Russia, it has also provoked concerns in Berlin.

As part of the deal, the US and Germany committed to donating at least \$1 billion to a Green Fund to help Ukraine transition to cleaner sources of energy. Germany will also appoint a special envoy to support bilateral energy projects with Ukraine.

The Kremlin denounced the joint statement for its “hostile tone” vis-à-vis Russia and said that it included “political attacks” on Russia. The Russian ambassador to the US, Anatoly Antonov, said that the tone and content of the statement contradicted the core of the meeting between US president Joe Biden and Russian president Vladimir Putin in Geneva in June. With the meeting, the Biden administration appeared to seek to

ease tensions with Moscow in the context of its escalating war drive against China.

Discussing the new deal on Wednesday, US president Joe Biden defensively said that stopping the pipeline would have been impossible since “Nord Stream is 99 percent finished.” US Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, one of the most ardent anti-Russia war hawks, said in a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Wednesday, “This is a bad situation and a bad pipeline, but we need to protect Ukraine.”

German chancellor Angela Merkel commented that the agreement “does not overcome all differences either. The differences remain.” The German business newspaper *Handelsblatt* called the deal “a classical compromise of formulas,” noting that “the deal looks like a house of cards that you have to protect from the mildest winds.”

Despite the aggressive statements against the Kremlin, the agreement has provoked an uproar among both Democrats and Republicans, who have been united for years in their bitter opposition to the project. It has also provoked ire among the right-wing nationalist regimes in Eastern Europe, such as Poland and Ukraine, that have long been aligned with US imperialism.

The office of Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky stated on Wednesday evening, “The decision on Nord Stream 2 cannot be taken behind the backs of all those whom the project poses a real threat to.”

In an apparent attempt to somewhat smooth over these tensions, hours after the deal was announced, the White House declared that Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky had been invited to Washington for his first meeting with Biden on August 30.

The State Department had reportedly dispatched a special counselor to Kiev ahead of the announcement to persuade the Zelensky government to accept the deal, but to no avail. Ukraine and Poland published a joint statement Wednesday evening, denouncing it as a “political, military and energy threat for Ukraine and Central Europe.” They announced that Warsaw and Kiev “will work together .... to oppose NS2 until solutions are developed.”

In 2014, the US as well as Germany backed a coup in the country that overthrew the pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich and installed a pro-Western regime with the help of fascist forces. Since then, the US and

EU have armed the right-wing governments in Kiev and fascist forces, which have been fighting in a civil war in East Ukraine against pro-Russian separatists.

However, relations between Washington and Kiev have worsened in recent months, as the Biden administration has made moves to ease tensions with Russia as part of its refocusing on war preparations against China. In recent months, the White House has repeatedly rejected the calls by the Zelensky government to join NATO as soon as possible. Kiev was also concerned about the meeting between Biden and Putin in June. At the meeting, no mention was made of the Crimea peninsula in the Black Sea, which has been the focal point of military tensions between Russia and Ukraine since the 2014 coup and a renewed military crisis this spring.

In both the US and Germany, the deal has brought to the fore divisions in the ruling class over foreign policy. In the US, Republican Senator Rob Portman denounced it as a “serious misstep that endangers US, European and Ukrainian security” and warned that it would give “Russia a strategic advantage over our allies.”

Writing for Bloomberg, Eli Lake fumed, “Biden accused Trump of being soft on Russia, but is now selling out Ukraine to provide Germany with natural gas.” He wrote that “Biden appeased Moscow and got next to nothing in return,” and suggested that Republican lawmakers would still try to kill the agreement in Congress. Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen said that the deal “empowers the Kremlin to spread its malign influence throughout Eastern Europe.”

In Germany, the chancellor candidate and co-chair of the Greens, Annalena Baerbock, denounced the deal, saying that it “is not a solution, especially not for the security of Ukraine.” She said that it was “in Germany’s hands” to stop the project and stressed, “I still consider this pipeline to be wrong, from the standpoint of climate policy, but above all geostrategically.”



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