

American unity is key to a Europe whole and free

After years of relentlessly pushing the EU to diversify and improve energy security, we most recently traveled to Germany in 2020 for the last in-person Munich Security Conference. As representatives of the U.S. Department of Energy, our goal was to further cement progress on these policies. What we found was a Germany that had grown too comfortable with the status quo of European energy affairs. The consequences of this are now coming home to roost.

European member-states made some progress by increasing natural gas import capacity and improving regional integration, including the Ukraine-Poland interconnector that could reinforce Ukrainian energy security. However, one nation stood at odds with this progress. Despite previous public commitments, Germany retrenched and instead stood by Russian President Vladimir Putin's Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline.

We implored Germany to develop natural gas import terminals, which it continued to promise but didn't progress, and to retain its nuclear power plants until viable alternatives were identified. Unfortunately, we left Munich unconvinced that Germany could whither Russian lobbying efforts, that the EU could make realistic energy security decisions or that North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries would raise the priority of energy security within the alliance. We also traveled to the Balkans to in efforts to reduce Russian gas dependency in Serbia and to Greece, to support its new gas terminals which can supplant Turkstream-Russia's southern Nord Stream 2.

A year later, President Biden's reversal of bipartisan sanctions on Nord Stream 2, billed as a "return to normalcy," returned the pipeline to center-stage. Despite this concession, Germany reaffirmed its reluctance to be a reliable NATO ally and has proffered only reactionary consequences should Russia invade. The reversal of sanctions appears to have only furthered Putin's gambit to undermine Germany's resolve.

Throughout this energy security crisis, Putin has also gambled that he can exploit political divisions as a multi-continent opportunity. He is likely pleased with the

partisan deadlock in Washington over Nord Stream 2 and the fallout in Ukraine, and his ability to bend Germany to the point where Berlin at times looks closer to Moscow than Brussels or NATO.

Despite how we got here, the current Russia-Ukraine crisis should be an opportunity for political unity and bipartisan solutions in Washington. Historically, decisive U.S. action in Europe didn't depend on multilateral consensus, but it did require a unified American polity. The same is true today.

The U.S. must not only lead the transatlantic community in deterring Putin and returning Europe's focus to energy security but also provide an enduring solution worthy of the special relationship bridging the Atlantic. What has changed is that now the U.S. is not only a military superpower that underpins NATO, but an energy superpower that can underpin future energy security. Americans should all agree that this is essential to U.S. interests in Europe, regardless of our political preferences.

Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) should engage in good-faith discussions to outline a path for the United States and other large gas-producing nations to deliver the energy independence from Russia that Europe desperately needs. This would demonstrate to Putin that he cannot exploit American political division and that the U.S. remains Europe's most reliable partner on security and economic cooperation.

The Biden administration's discussions with global leaders in natural gas production are a good first step but will have to contend with market fundamentals and limited spare capacity. These discussions can no longer be in the background but a declarative statement that the U.S. will leverage its leadership and energy dominance to forestall Russia's grip on Germany.

But Germany must respond in kind and accept American conditions for such a solution to be more than ephemeral. In exchange for leading diplomatic efforts to once again rescue Germany, the U.S. should demand that Germany immediately deploy a floating liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal capable of receiving volumes in the near-term, while also resuming plans for a large-scale terminal, oppose nuclear power deals by Russia and China throughout Europe, support natural gas project financing, as well as terminate Nord Stream 2. These actions

shouldn't be controversial or partisan because they are objectively necessary for European and German energy security.

America's industrial and military power was once decisive and essential for the Allies in WWII. Now, it is the time for America to utilize its newfound energy leadership to rescue Europe from Putin's suffocating grip, and Germany from itself. Nothing would alarm Putin more than unexpected bipartisan action.

After offering the U.S. solution, the president must relentlessly engage on several critical European security questions. How can the West restore NATO consensus around Russia's territorial expansion and regional energy security? How can the U.S. better partner with the EU and Germany to insist on real-world energy solutions, even when consensus among European capitals yields sub-optimal outcomes? A necessity of modern life, energy security shouldn't be a zero-sum game that our adversaries in Beijing and Moscow seek to exploit.

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