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## Gas and European ties to Washington



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*After the end of World War II, the Western European nations and later the so-called European Union were tied to the guidelines and decisions that the United States has imposed on it over the years.*

It has become an irreversible practice that when Washington draws some line against a country that is not related to it or wishes to achieve some objective in the international arena, however far-fetched it may be, behind it appears the support of the European Union.

During the Administration of Donald Trump and in the first months of the presidency of Joe Biden, the United States has unleashed an aggressive political-economic campaign against the Russian Federation, in an attempt to stop the strength that that Eurasian nation has reached in different strategic sectors after leaving behind the dark period it went through after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

One such U.S. point of attack has been its opposition to the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline across the Baltic Sea that will carry that precious fuel from Russia's Uts-Luga region to Germany's Lubmin.

At a cost of \$11 billion, the construction of which has involved Russia's flagship company Gazprom and numerous Western companies, its two 1,234-kilometer lines have the capacity to transport 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year.

Gazprom has already filled the first branch and almost completed the second so in a few days it will be ready for exploitation although it must wait for the approval of the German regulatory commission and the European Commission.

Together with its twin gas pipeline, Nord Stream 1 (launched in November 2011) will increase the annual supply of this fuel from the Eurasian giant to 110 billion cubic meters.

Washington alleges that Russia would use gas supplies as an economic-political weapon to exert pressure on Europe but the reality is that the United States wants to sell it the fuel it extracts in its territory with the fracking technique that is much more expensive, in addition to adding the cost of transporting it by ship.

U.S. gas causes more damage to the ecology; production and transportation leaves a carbon footprint between 2 and 4 times larger than that transported by pipelines.

Another country that opposes the activation of the pipeline is Kiev, which is doing so because of its animosity against Moscow and because of economic problems because Russian gas also reaches Europe through a pipeline previously built in Ukrainian territory and the commissioning of Nord Stream 2 could represent a loss of 1,500 million dollars per year for the transit service.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has been one of the driving forces behind launching the pipeline while French President Emmanuel Macron in recent statements to the Financial Times rejected insinuations that Russia is responsible for high energy prices in Europe.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has ratified on several occasions that his country is willing to send to Europe all the gas it needs and that if the German regulator gave the authorization, the fuel would be sent immediately by Nord Stream 2.

Putin también señaló que ha sido un error la decisión de la Unión Europea de basarse en un mercado de energía inestable en vez de firmar acuerdos de suministros seguros con Gazprom.

En la actualidad los precios del gas en Europa han aumentado en casi un 250 %. En septiembre en el mercado europeo de futuro ya se cotizaba a 950 dólares por mil metros cúbicos y en octubre llegó en ocasiones a sobrepasar los 1 000 dólares por esa cantidad.

Varias razones han sido las causas del encarecimiento como son: el aumento de la demanda mundial después de las restricciones ocasionadas por la pandemia; el frío invierno boreal del año pasado, que puso presión sobre los suministros y redujo los niveles de gas almacenado en el viejo continente; el aumento de la demanda en Asia de gas natural licuado.

In addition, European electricity services are highly dependent on gas prices coupled with the lack of agreement between Member States and the European Commission to take joint regulatory measures for the purchase of gas.

The Russian president explained that because the members of the last composition of the European Commission, proposed market prices for gas, some countries of the old continent are paying for that fuel at very high prices, while those who signed contracts with Gazprom receive it in about 220 dollars.

After all this explanation, it is worth asking: Will the European Union continue to follow to the letter the dictates of the United States to try to prevent the final inauguration of

Nord Stream 2, or will it choose to carry out, for the good of its inhabitants, an economic policy more independent of Washington?

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