

NORD STREAM-2 AND DISPUTES IN THE WESTERN ALLIANCE

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Analysis

Destabilizing the relations between the USA and its European allies and the European Union is among Russia's main foreign policy goals. To this end, Moscow is trying to improve its bilateral relations with different EU countries. The Nord Stream-2 project, which is tried to be completed between Germany and Russia despite the objections of the USA, also points to an important break in the Western alliance system. Criticism continues that a new energy project, which was attempted to be carried out at a time when Russia was accused of harming European security, would increase Europe's dependence on Moscow.

Nord Stream Projects

Following Moscow's invasion on Crimea in 2014, the West decided to impose many sanctions on Russia. While Russia's important sectors such as railways, shipping, metals and

mining were targeted during President Donald Trump's term, a law was enacted to restrict businesses between foreign companies and Russian oil companies. This decision resulted in an important separation between the USA and the EU, especially with Germany and France. While the relations of these states with Russia in the process drew the USA's reaction, European companies declared that they would be damaged due to the USA-enacted law. The Nord Stream and Nord Stream-2 projects in particular would seriously damage these relationships.

In parallel with the Nord Stream Project, which was announced to enable all natural gas capacity usage in 2017, preparations for the Nord Stream-2 natural gas pipeline began in 2018. The construction of the line to be established between Narwa in Russia and Greifward in Germany started in May 2018. The USA, Ukraine, Poland and Baltic countries react to the project, which



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is projected to have an annual transport capacity of 55 billion cubic meters like the first one. The US continues to warn of sanctions on European companies working on the project. The USA, which was against the first project, especially planned to sell its shale gas to Europe as an alternative to Russian natural gas, but European countries did not approach this project positively due to the costs.

As the natural gas transit contract between Russia and Ukraine expired at the end of 2019, Moscow planned to complete the project on this date, but failed. Had Moscow succeeded, Ukraine would have lost an important source of income, and the strategic importance of this country to the West would diminish. However, with the sanctions imposed on the project partners, the USA prevented the process from being completed on time. At this point, Moscow had to sit at the table with Ukraine to avoid any problems with the European countries regarding natural gas shipment. Ukraine subsequently signed a 5-year transit agreement with Russia.

Questioned Alliance

Although studies on the Nord Stream-2 project continue after this agreement, uncertainty regarding NATO and French President Emmanuel Macron's statement that "NATO was brain dead" in 2019 was also met with reaction from the United States. At some point,

the concept of alliance, which experienced a significant change in the post-Cold War period, began to be questioned.

The attitude shown within the framework of the Russia-Ukraine crisis is the most important example that needs to be examined. Germany and France, which had an intense relationship with Kiev before 2014, displayed a rather passive attitude during and after the Crimean occupation. These two states, apparently imposing sanctions against Russia, have developed cooperation with Moscow in both energy and trade. This situation causes a decrease in the economic and diplomatic support enjoyed by Ukraine prior to 2014.

After all, it can be stated that there has been a change in the approach of decision makers in Germany and France in seeing Russia as a threat - different from the Cold War period - especially in recent years. As a matter of fact, this situation is not seen as a problem in Germany, which meets almost half of its natural gas needs from Russia and will increase this dependency even more with Nord Stream-2. Instead of collaborating with NATO member Turkey, Germany cooperates with Russia in crisis areas such as France, Libya, the Eastern Mediterranean and Nagorno-Karabakh. This inconsistent foreign policy creates a major crack both within the EU and in the Western alliance system in general.