



The EU Gets Real About Energy Security

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On July 6, the European Parliament, one of the most liberal legislatures on the planet, voted to classify certain nuclear and natural-gas projects as environmentally sustainable. The move brings these projects into compliance with earlier European Union legislation that withheld government support for projects designated unsustainable. That legislation contributed to disproportionate investments in unreliable renewable-energy infrastructure in the EU. When those failed, Russian natural gas supplied through Russian infrastructure served as a backup.

Though the European Parliament's announcement paid lip service to the EU's Paris Accords obligations and its determination to get to net-zero carbon emissions, it represents a seismic shift in Europe's energy posture, which now seems to recognize that progress toward a cleaner environment will be a pyrrhic victory if it comes at the price of the Continent's security and prosperity.

With Vladimir Putin poised to exploit Europe's dependence on his energy resources in an effort to neuter EU support for Ukraine, the inadequacy of renewables will soon be on full display. Russian gas has continued to flow into Europe since Mr. Putin's February invasion, even as Europe has scrambled to find alternatives. But alternatives are hard to come by, especially as the world's largest producer of natural gas, the U.S., is signaling that it will continue to restrict leases for further development. Most of the natural gas flowing out of the Persian Gulf is already committed to customers in Asia.

This raises the stakes on the annual maintenance of the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which begins July 11. The work is scheduled to take 10 days, after which the more than 40% of Europe's gas that still comes from Russia should flow again. But many fear that Mr. Putin may not restart the pipeline, given his success in selling Russian oil and gas to India and China as well as his established record of using energy as leverage.

Mr. Putin played with the spigots last summer, causing European stockpiles of gas for the winter to fill more slowly than usual, nearly triggering a crisis in October as prices soared and countries such as the U.K. were forced to restart coal-power plants to make up the shortfall. His ostensible target in 2021 was resistance to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which would have sent even more Russian gas to Europe but had been opposed by the Trump administration and U.S. Congress.

Mr. Putin's technique worked as the Europeans, led by the Germans, pushed for Nord Stream 2. President Biden lobbied Senate Democrats to vote against punitive sanctions on the pipeline to keep Russian gas flowing into Europe. Europeans decisively rejected Nord Stream 2 only after Mr. Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine.

The EU's action on nuclear and natural gas is a recognition that Mr. Putin might soon return to energy blackmail given that he is looking to end strong European support for Kyiv. If nothing else, the threat from Mr. Putin has forced Europe to begin bringing its quixotic climate aspirations into line with the energy needs of its citizens, a welcome indication that reason and practicality might rejoin the debate of how to fuel the future.

The European Parliament's decision could signify a broader phenomenon. The recent fall of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was the result primarily of personal scandals, but discontent with his progressive energy and climate policies amid spiking energy prices played a role. Meanwhile in the Netherlands, agricultural workers are staging massive protests against new draconian climate regulations that could put 30% of farms out of business—at a moment when the world desperately needs their products.

U.S. politicians scheming this month to spend some \$300 billion additional taxpayer dollars on extreme environmentalist policies that would only further undermine America's energy superpower status should take note and follow the EU's lead.