

US Wants EU to Sanction China for Its Ukraine-Russia Policy

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Washington is trying to convince Europe that it has the ability to influence China’s relationship with Russia. However, Beijing’s stance on Ukraine and associated threats from the West are unlikely to deter it from deepening cooperation with Moscow.

US **Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman** visited Brussels from April 19 to 22 and forced the Europeans to listen to Washington’s arguments about the possibility of imposing sanctions on China if it provided material support for Russia’s military campaign in Ukraine. At an event organised by the US and EU-funded “Friends of Europe” group, Sherman again warned that China would face sanctions similar to those being imposed on Russia.

After Sherman’s meeting with **Bjoern Seibert**, Chief of Staff for European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen**, the State Department said the two sides agreed that they must urge China not to circumvent sanctions against Moscow or offer any support for Russia’s special operation in Ukraine.

Effectively, the US is instructing Europeans on the policies they must adopt to counter Russia’s action in Ukraine, making a mockery of the efforts by French **President Emmanuel Macron** to create a “strategically autonomous” Europe. Macron’s emboldened announcement of Europe’s “strategic autonomy” from the US was exposed as being nothing more than a buzzword with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine as Paris immediately abandoned all efforts of diplomacy after ignoring Moscow’s years-long complaints regarding Ukraine’s illegal and provocative actions in Donbass. This is on top of imposing sanctions that negatively affects the average European citizen.

For all this talk of “strategic autonomy”, Brussels has just once again demonstrated that it is obedient and submissive to Washington. However, despite the EU imposing sanctions, closing its airspace to Russian planes and delivering weapons to Ukraine, the US is clearly not satisfied and sent Sherman to Brussels to ensure that tougher policies against China are

also implemented.

The US at the very minimum hopes to divide European countries as many are still unwilling to provoke China due to trade relations. In the context of the US ignoring all international communication norms and continuing its threats of sanctions against China, Beijing unlikely views this as just renewed verbal attacks.

China is using various channels to convey to its European partners its views on the crisis in Ukraine, as well as on efforts to help the conflicting parties resolve the war peacefully. It is recalled that Beijing sent a diplomatic mission led by **Huo Yuzhen**, China's special representative for the China-Central and Eastern Europe Investment Cooperation Fund (CEEI). On April 25, the delegation began its European tour in the Czech Republic, with visits to Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Estonia also included.

The visit to the Czech Republic is significant since the country will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July 1 to December 31. In this way, perhaps the comments by Czech **Deputy Foreign Minister Martin Tlapa** were too hasty when he made de facto statements on behalf of EU members. At a meeting with the Chinese delegation in Prague, he warned that China's cooperation with Russia could damage its relations with the EU.

Clearly, the Czech diplomat's desire to please and appease the US overshadowed his own obligation to follow rudimentary political submissions, or perhaps the EU has amended this principle like many other ethical and legal norms due to the crisis in Ukraine?

Although EU officials concede China is unlikely to enforce the broad sanctions imposed on Moscow by a minority of the world's recognized UN member states, this has not deterred their efforts to lambast and shame countries for their position. Brussels falsely hoped that Beijing could influence Moscow to stop its demilitarization of Ukraine, but hopes were quickly dispelled at an EU-China virtual summit on April 1 that left Western leaders frustrated and angry that they are international pariahs on the Ukraine issue.

A joint EU-US statement following Sherman's talks in Brussels vowed to push Chinese leaders on issues such as the inadmissibility of sanctions circumvention, and "reaffirmed that such support would have consequences for our respective relationships with China".

However, Sherman and EU foreign service chief **Stefano Sannino** avoided answering a journalist's question on what potential repercussions could be for China. This suggests that the West actually does not have a clear idea on how and why they could punish China for its relationship with Russia and instead it hopes that threats of sanctions could deter their cooperation.

This of course is extremely naïve as sanctions have never made state leaderships of Middle Powers, like North Korea and Iran, collapse or capitulate. Given this fact, there is little prospect that sanctions will achieve the West's hopes against Great Powers like Russia and China, especially as only just days before the US-EU forum, Chinese vice foreign minister **Le Yucheng** assured Russian ambassador **Andrey Denisov** of Beijing's aim to "deepen bilateral comprehensive strategic coordination".

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