

Mrs May and the EU speak with forked tongue about Russia

A few months ago Mrs May was condemning Russia for the poisonings. The EU imposed sanctions when condemning Russian activity in Ukraine.

Yesterday Mrs May met Mr Putin and shook his hand. Doing so with a cross look does not get away from the fact that this was a significant change of stance from the broken relations of recent months. This was a recognition that the UK needs a relationship with Russia. Germany led the support for the restoration of Russian votes in the Council of Europe, showing they as leader of the EU wishes to have an improved relationship with Russia. Mrs May appears to be marching in step with Germany.

Crucial to the underlying position is the German and EU decision to press on with Nord Stream 2, a large gas pipeline to sell Russian gas to Germany and the rest of the EU by pipeline under the Baltic Sea. This major commitment will increase continental Europe's dependence on Russian gas. It undermines the position of the Ukraine, which could lose pipelines revenues for the gas currently routed from Russia to the West via that link. I find it difficult to understand why they wish to undermine the Ukraine in this way when they claim to be so concerned about its fate.

It is difficult to comprehend why we hear the angry words and see the sanctions imposed when Germany is so determined to improve its relations with Russia and keen to increase her dependence on Russian gas. Mrs May may brief that she had a frosty exchange when meeting Mr Putin, but the truth is she met him and shook him by the hand. The EU will carry on complaining about Ukraine, but they have no intention of taking any action to reclaim Crimea which might well vote to stay with Russia should they be given another vote supervised by independent observers. The Russian supervised vote was strongly pro Crimea being part of Russia.

The EU and Mrs May have also been complicit in strengthening Russia in the Middle East. I did not want us intervening militarily in Syria, but if the EU/UK aim is to block Russian power they should have taken more action in Syria at a time when Russia moved into the power vacuum created by NATO's limited involvement. We allowed Russia and Assad to do most of the fighting to remove ISIS, leaving them in charge of most of the country.

Clearly the EU has decided to improve its relations with Russia and to increase its commercial dependence. The rest is just spin.