



Western sanctions against Russia begin to annoy foreign politicians, public quarters

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Anti-Russian sanctions by the West are beginning to annoy some politicians and public quarters, as well as experts in countries around the world. Berlin last Saturday saw a demonstration by 4,000 people against the German leadership's warmongering rhetoric. The protesters adopted a petition that criticizes the policy of confrontation with Russia.

Against the backdrop of a chorus of approval of anti-Russian sanctions, one ever more often hears opinions by soberly-minded politicians and political scientists, who have been calling for an impartial look at the situation in Ukraine without propaganda cliches and for avoiding attempts to put the blame for the crisis in that country entirely on Moscow. "The European Union's sanctions against Russia must be proportionate and reversible. If the Minsk Accords are implemented steadily, Europe will revise the sanctions. It is important to restore relations with Russia, a country that is really important to us," Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni told foreign media.

Hungary's ambassador to Russia, Janos Balla, told a news conference in Moscow: "Hungary is not going to give up cooperation with Russia." In Minsk, Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko urged the cancellation of any sanctions that might directly affect the lives of ordinary people. In Tokyo, Japan's former prime minister, head of the Japan-Russia friendship society, Yukio Hatoyama, said Tokyo made a mistake when it joined the anti-Russian sanctions. An expert at the Washington-based Cato Institute, a public policy research organization, Emma Ashford, has described the US Congress's Ukrainian Freedom Support Act as counter-productive and dangerous, because it will by no means help settle the Ukrainian conflict, but on the contrary, will merely exacerbate relations between Washington and Moscow. This is just a brief and incomplete selection of quotes collected over the weekend.

"The ever more frequent statements by politicians, diplomats and political scientists critical of US belligerent rhetoric and anti-Russian sanctions by the West are a natural reaction from part of the political elite and public quarters to the threat of soaring tensions in the world, to the risk the crisis over Ukraine may escalate from a routine show of muscle to a level where the actual use of military means may be on the agenda. Everybody in his right mind understands how vulnerable

this borderline is,” the director of the Military-Political Studies Center under the Moscow international relations university MGIMO, Alexey Podberyozkin, told TASS.

“Many statesmen have been able to see that with the Ukraine Freedom Support Act, adopted by the US Congress, and the anti-Russian sanctions taken earlier, Washington pursues the aim of a global confrontation with Russia. It is the escalation of aggressive rhetoric by the United States that has caused the surge of anti-war sentiment in many countries,” Podberyozkin said.

The world is now a witness to two parallel processes. On the one hand, the United States is building up pressures on other countries in a bid to force them to curtail cooperation with Russia. On the other hand, there is growing sentiment against confrontational hysteria over Moscow’s policies. Such an attitude is characteristic of about 20-25% of the European Union’s political elite. Up to a quarter of European Parliament members do not support anti-Russian sanctions,” Podberyozkin said.

“Of course, one should not exaggerate the degree of opposition to the United States’ aggressive actions against Russia. But from the standpoint of breaking the information blockade, such public statements are of tremendous importance,” he believes.

“Refusal to put up with the Washington-dictated policy of a global confrontation between the West and Russia by part of the political elite and the general public will keep growing around the world. This should not mislead us, though. After the end of World War I pacifist sentiment in Europe was as strong as never before. But in just 20 years’ time World War II followed. Humanity should never forget that lesson of history,” the analyst warned.