

White House planning Nord Stream 2 sanctions against Germany

Opinion

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Analyst: ‘if they happen, sanctions against Germany over Nord Stream 2 will take the U.S.-Russia conflict to a higher, more dangerous level.’

KYIV, May 21, 2018 - Germany should brace for U.S. sanctions over the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline project with Russia, signaling an escalation of economic conflict with Europe, Concorde Capital informed its clients on May 21, based on statements by an envoy of Chancellor Angela Merkel’s government. Peter Beyer, the German government’s coordinator for transatlantic relations, said in a May 18 interview with Bloomberg Television that an official in U.S. President Trump’s administration told him at a meeting in Washington last week that sanctions related to the Baltic Sea pipeline are likely. The same day, German Chancellor Merkel met with Russian President Putin in Sochi, after which she indicated to reporters that Germany has not yet changed its plans for Nord Stream 2. ‘Ukraine’s role as a transit country should be preserved, even after the construction of Nord Stream 2,’ she said, as reported by the pravda.com.ua news site. ‘This has strategic meaning and Germany is ready to play an active role and supporting that.’ Only 14% of Germans support strengthened EU sanctions against the Russian government, according to a poll conducted by the ZDF German television network, whose results it reported on May 18. About 45% of Germans support the current EU sanctions, while 36% said they should be relaxed. Concorde analyst Zenon Zawada added: ‘Possible sanctions against Germany are a major development for several reasons. They signify that the Trump administration has taken the lead in enforcing sanctions against Russia, challenging Europe’s hypocrisy on the matter in continuing to move forward with the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, the mid- to long-term benefits of which for Russia could outweigh its losses from the current EU sanctions, which consist of asset freezes and trade restrictions on the economic level. ‘In addition, this bold move intensifies the conflict between Russia and the U.S. over which power will be able to find a common geopolitical view with Europe and guide the continent in the next decade. The Russians are convinced that the tide is turning in their favor, particularly with the rise of populist-nationalist forces and fatigue among Europeans over the conflict with Russia, as apparent with the recent poll. For Ukraine, the U.S.’s ability to force the Europeans away from Russian gas (and perhaps towards American gas) will be a major factor in preserving statehood and independence. A bolstered Ukrainian state will serve as a U.S. satellite on Russia’s doorstep and Russia is currently acting to prevent that from happening. Therefore, if they happen, sanctions against Germany over Nord Stream 2 will take the U.S.-Russia conflict to a higher, more dangerous level.’

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