The first statements and telephone contacts of the new US leadership with their counterparts in Japan, India and China deserve close attention. If only because the development of the situation in the key Indo-Pacific region of the global space of the current “Great World Game” will be almost decisively determined by the state of relations in the political configuration formed by these four powers.

Note the fundamental differences in the “statuses” enjoyed by Japan, India and the PRC with respect to the United States. The former is a full-fledged military and political ally. The latter is seen as an extremely important partner with the prospect of gaining the same “status” that the former has today. Finally, the third has been moving (quite steadily) to the position of the main geopolitical opponent for the past two decades.

These peculiarities were reflected in the sequence of telephone contacts between Washington and the capitals of the countries listed and in the content of the brief talks that took place. In addition to these circumstances is the transitional nature of the new US administration, the vast majority of whose personalities need time to familiarize themselves with the “business” that has been heaped upon them.

In this respect, the situation in US-Japanese relations is the simplest (with some rather important exceptions). There is nothing particularly new to come up with and it is simply necessary to reproduce the long-standing mantra about the “cornerstone nature” of these relationships. This includes the continuation of Washington’s and Tokyo’s policy in the IPR with the aim, of course, of “maintaining peace and security” in the region.

Such statements were made during a telephone conversation between the Secretaries of Defense of the United
States and Japan, Lloyd Austin and Nobuo Kishi, three days after Joe Biden was sworn in as president. Then, speaking to reporters, Kishi said, in particular, that his interlocutor confirmed the extension of Article V of the 1960 Bilateral Security Treaty to the five uninhabited Senkaku Islands claimed by China, where they are called Diaoyu Islands.

Lloyd Austin’s Japanese contact apparently paid special attention to the situation around these islands in connection with the recent increased presence of Chinese border ships in the waters adjacent to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Which, in turn, is associated with the adoption late last year in the PRC of amendments to the legal framework of national defense in general and the functioning of the maritime border service, in particular.

In addition, Kishi pointed out the “agreement to oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas.” The Mainichi Shimbun commentary on these and other words of the Japanese Defense Minister states that what was meant was “China’s militarization” of parts of the islands of the South China Sea, which are also claimed by a number of Southeast Asian countries.

Four days later (January 28), President Joe Biden said roughly the same thing in a phone conversation with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

However, in addition to the largely trouble-free military-political romance in bilateral relations, there is the unpleasant reality of a large deficit (about $70 billion annually) in US trade with Japan. A year and a half ago, the money-obsessed predecessor of the current US president, in peculiar slang, “put a key ally on the counter.” That is, he (more or less definitively) set a deadline for Tokyo to begin correcting this “blatant outrage.” The deadline passed, but in the conversations mentioned, the problem did not seem to be addressed. But of course, these summits between the US and Japan will not be the last.

A certain romance can also be seen in the initial contacts between India’s leadership and the new US administration. The warm feelings radiating from Delhi toward it look quite natural. Never before have there been so many members of the Indian diaspora in the US at any level of government. This has an understandable explanation, due to the realities of the escalating confrontation between the US and its main geopolitical opponent, the PRC. India has long been seen by Washington as a “natural counterweight” to China.

A special euphoria in Delhi was caused on the part of Kamala Harris, a half-Indian, taking the second most important post of Vice-President of the United States. Notably, on the day of the inauguration (January 20), Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Joe Biden and Kamala Harris in separate tweets that called the event “historic” in the United States. Similar congratulations were made by Rahul Gandhi, leader of the Indian National Congress, the main opposition party.

No less remarkable is the fact that Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin made a friendly gesture toward India on behalf of the new US administration. From 2013-2016, he was head of US Central Command (USCENTCOM), whose area of responsibility includes the western Indian Ocean. On January 27, Austin had a telephone conversation with his Indian colleague Rajnath Singh, during which the two sides confirmed the course on “strengthening bilateral cooperation in the field of defense and strategic partnership.”

As of this writing, there were no such “calls” between Washington and Beijing. The position of both can so far be defined as “watchful waiting,” during which mutual various “gestures” are made.

Perhaps the most significant of these “gestures” was Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s speech at this year’s Davos Forum, which was held in a “remote” format. This speech, five days after Joe Biden’s inauguration, deserves a separate discussion. Let us also note a key thesis formulated by President Xi, which, in fact, reflects China’s foreign policy in general in recent years: “We can’t solve problems in a divided world, and confrontation will lead us to a dead end.”

The Taiwan issue remains an extremely serious challenge to the (hypothetical) attempts of the two world’s leading powers to reduce tensions in bilateral political relations. So far there was no progress in stopping it from escalating. At the end of January, that is, after the new US administration had officially assumed power, there was a fierce bilateral confrontation using the word “war”, which was prompted by the generalized Taiwan issue.

Finally, it seems appropriate to express the author’s (exclusively personal) opinion about the political forces behind the new US administration. Their modus operandi over the past year closely resembled the behavior of a criminal hijacking team that used a fortunate coincidence to “take” the US power vault. Until a year ago, there was virtually no chance for it to do so. The same “forces” managed to throw another “dead cat” onto Russian territory (not without the help of allies both outside and inside it), emitting a peculiar smell.
Which, by the way, is unlikely to eliminate the increasingly urgent prospect of a national liberation struggle of the American people (in all its racial and social diversity) against these “forces”. Who, hopefully, will not succeed in destroying (“after them”) the country of its present base, which has made a notable (albeit contradictory) contribution to the historical process of the last two centuries.

However, there is another, slightly different, interpretation of what has been happening recently in US-Russian relations possible. Everyone has their own buried “dead cats” (or “skeletons in the closet”), which can be dug out from the ground by someone at just the right moment. For a short time, of course. Which, however, can be converted (with some “skill”) into generalized “money”. For example, by expressing all kinds of “concerns” about certain problems in your opponents.

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