In fact, and as has been repeatedly noted in the NEO, the situation is worsening in South-East Asia, a key region for the global political process today, all ten countries of which form ASEAN. This deterioration comes from the degrading relations between the two global powers, the USA and China.

The field of tensions created by both significant global players has long been a source of threats to the very existence of ASEAN. But this year, it seems to have reached a critical point, making it steadily more difficult for members and the Association as a whole to balance around the centerline of this field. The implicit and explicit preferences for one or the other of the two global powers are becoming increasingly visible. Again, this poses a growing threat to at least the appearance of ASEAN unity.

This year a significant contribution to the strengthening of this negative trend was brought by two particular events, namely the formation of the tri-partite military-political configuration AUKUS and the military coup in Myanmar, which is one of the member countries of this Association.

On October 12, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi spoke quite clearly about the threat to the unity of the countries in the region during the sixth (video) meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, CICA. In particular, he invited the participants to “jointly oppose any
attempt that violates the common will of regional countries and sabotages regional peace and stability."

Beijing's primary opponent in the region is no less active. Its emissaries included US Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin who do not miss a chance to point at China as the main source of various threats to the countries of the region during every visit to the area.

As for the situation in Myanmar, where on February 1 this year, the military led by General Min Aung Hlaing once again took responsibility for the always challenging situation, it was one of the focal points of the various and generally speaking regular annual summits held from October 26 to 28, precisely within the framework of ASEAN.

Let's point out one essential excuse that the USA, with some of its allies, is using to keep ASEAN from being distracted from the constant focus on the situation in Myanmar. We are talking about another arrest of the recent idol of the global "human rights" movement, Aung San Suu Kyi. However, she fully disappointed the movement's particularly prominent participants (such as the Nobel Peace Committee and Amnesty International) after the same military had allowed her to return to general politics in 2010 and find herself at the levers of government in 2016.

Today, however, she seems to have been "totally forgiven." In particular, high-profile statements about Ms. Suu Kyi's current plight do not mention her support (while in office) for repressive policies against the Rohingya Muslims, one of Myanmar's many ethnoreligious minorities.

On October 15, at a meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers, it was decided not to invite General Min Aung Hlaing to the next ASEAN summit. That's all its members allowed themselves in terms of "punishment" for refusing to let their representative meet with Ms. Suu Kyi. The commentary on the decision draws attention to the passage about the "intense international pressure" ASEAN is under to force "decisive action" against that country's military leadership.

And what is ASEAN to do in the face of overt threats from the source of the said "international pressure," surprisingly combining "human rights protection" and international thuggery? One of the basic principles of this Association on non-interference in the internal affairs of member countries has to be violated.

Otherwise, the prospect of another "humanitarian intervention" from the "forces of good" (located, however, very far from the region), the victim of which this time may be one of the ASEAN members, will become quite real. Participants in regular international naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal, for example, might be led to take part in the "restoration of constitutional order" in Myanmar. So ASEAN, again, has to indicate some activity on an issue so crucial to the "international community."

Again, not all members of the Association adhere to the "tough" stance regarding the recalcitrant member. Only Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore are mentioned. But even their stance is accompanied by some almost apologetic reservations and references to some documents adopted at the end of April this year in Jakarta at the special ASEAN summit. The Myanmar leadership had allegedly ignored the provisions of those documents concerning the situation in Myanmar.

On the eve of the above-mentioned ASEAN summits, Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah recalled the original "almost sacred" principle of non-interference in ASEAN member states' affairs. Referring to the unfolding situation in Myanmar, he noted that the Association "might need to do some introspection." It seems, however, that Myanmar's generals will not pay attention to this barely discernible "disregard" from their ASEAN colleagues either.

Once again, both major world players strive to show themselves in a favorable light regarding the struggle for influence in Southeast Asia (it refers both to AUKUS or the situation in Myanmar). The ASEAN+ platforms, in particular, are used for this purpose.

During the ASEAN+China summit on October 26, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang focused on expanding economic cooperation with the region's countries, for which China is their leading trading partner. The Chinese premier also paid due attention to the negotiations on the conclusion of the so-called South China Sea Code of Conduct which has been going on for 20 years, and the situation in Myanmar. The proposal to mediate between a "troubled" Myanmar and all the other ASEAN member countries was made quite explicitly.

And here, it seems appropriate once again to outline the author's position on the key foreign policy concept of the current Chinese leadership, which is commonly referred to as the "Community of Common Destiny" meme. Its main feature is that it is global and involves all countries without exception, including the current opponents. Beijing's policy towards ASEAN member states is based on this very concept.
It loses all meaning when the world political space is divided into zones of influence within the hypothetical "New Yalta" framework. Meanwhile, everything looks like a provocative hoax given the sentiments (or just complexes) in the recipient's territory. This action fits nicely into the game that Washington is playing today in its relations with both of its primary opponents, i.e., Moscow and Beijing.

Let us note one more time the unacceptability for the latter, i.e., one of the three supposed hypothetical Yalta 2 participants of the prospect of another division of the world into zones of influence. This was again confirmed in a review by the country's Foreign Ministry, on the 50th anniversary of its membership in the UN.

This quite understandable attitude to the "Yalta 2" concept by Russia's leading foreign policy partner should be considered by its current supporters. By the way, the phenomenon of Yalta 1 was ultimately determined by, what is called, the specifics of the moment.

In conditions of notorious "radical transformation of the world order", one should exercise exceptional vigilance, trying to avoid all sorts of alluring bait and not relying much on "hypersonic" achievements, even though it is becoming increasingly difficult to do so.

This is demonstrated, in particular, by the functioning of the Association that unites the countries of what is now the key region of South-East Asia.

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