“One gets an impression that the West has lost a culture of political dialogue. The partners have forgotten how to address problems in a civilized manner,” said Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Pankin on December 8. Pankin explained that the West most often responds to any decision that does not conform to its logic by unilateral sanctions. “In fact, no state pursuing a sovereign, Western-independent policy can be immune from them,” he believes. To conduct such actions, President Biden even nominated a particular staff member, James O’Brien, to serve as the US coordinator for sanctions policy, whose functions would include all matters related to the compilation and coordination of White House blacklists.

Daniel Drezner, professor of international politics at the prestigious Tufts University in Boston, leaves no stone unturned in the US sanctions policy in the Foreign Affairs pages. Not only are they criminally cruel, as sanctions have left the children of Iraq without medicine and the people of Cuba without meat, but they have not toppled any regime. Sanctions make the US enemies fearless. Since the USA does not know how to lift sanctions, the enemy has nothing to lose because no concessions can be expected from Washington. As a result, Belarus and Cuba are
On December 7, Russian President Vladimir Putin explained during talks with his US counterpart Joe Biden that sanctions have no positive effect for the USA itself either. And in doing so, he forced the head of the White House to seriously reflect on the tactics of such foreign policy pursued by Washington in recent years.

The sanctions policy of Western countries creates powerful additional incentives for the dynamic development of foreign economic relations and cooperation of the countries rejected by the Western sanctions policy. And this, in particular, is demonstrated by the Belarusian Directive #9, aimed at strengthening the strategic partnership with China in 2021-2025.

“Our best response is to team up for the joint development on the principles of equality, mutual trust and respect,” Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said during a videoconference with his Chinese counterpart Li Keqiang on November 30. In his words, this also applies to the intertwining of plans between the Eurasian Economic Union and the Chinese Belt and Road initiative. According to the Russian Prime Minister, this is important for bolstering the interconnection in Eurasian space. It will help guarantee the economic progress of Russia and China and create a solid foundation for the formation of a Greater Eurasian partnership. This year, trade turnover between Russia and China increased by 31% to $110 billion in January-October. This is a serious amount, and it is obviously set for growth, as well as the multifaceted cooperation between the two countries in various vectors.

Russia’s response to EU sanctions imposed under US pressure has dealt a severe blow to Greece’s exports, especially food, halved since 2014. Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, Co-Chair of the Joint Greek-Russian Inter-Ministerial Committee, told TASS correspondent about it on November 28.

Unfortunately, today some countries, especially those that do not pursue independent policies, in order to please Washington in their adulterous actions, have decided to “try” to get into a tougher confrontation with US adversaries as a trial balloon. And here, Lithuania decided to especially “prove itself.” However, having limited analytical skills, the current political elite of this country did not even bother to calculate the consequences of such vassal policy for Lithuania. And the reason for the current collapse of such actions by Lithuania is not at all the latest studies of American scientists, who showed that coronavirus could infect the brain and cause long-term neurological effects, including affecting the mood and memory of those infected.

Thus, in his desire to please Washington, Žygimantas Pavilionis, Chair of the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs, called urgently to stop the transit of potash fertilizers from Belarus in solidarity with the USA, “which protects Lithuania’s freedom.” At the same time, many experts have repeatedly stated that the cessation of transit of Belaruskali products will lead to significant losses for the Baltic Republic, which turned out to be the case: Minsk switched to the transhipment of potash fertilizers through Russian seaports when supplying products for export. In addition, Lithuania lost transit of Belarusian oil products.

However, its own miscalculations have not brought Lithuania to its senses. While all countries worldwide are trying to build good economic relations with China, Lithuania has decided to go along with Washington’s anti-China policy to please the White House. Thus, in May last year, Vilnius decided to pull out of China’s 17+1 in Eastern Europe. In November of this year, Lithuania has become the first European country in the last 30 years to open Taipei Economic and Cultural Office despite strong protests of China and a warning that of Lithuania continues to act destructively in the Taiwan issue, the Celestial Empire may break off diplomatic relations with it completely. It should not be forgotten that the actual damage caused by Lithuania to China is minimal.

After China announced its decision to reduce diplomatic relations with Lithuania to the level of chargé d’affaires, bilateral trade and investment have come under severe attack, the Global Times wrote. Beijing has vowed to make Lithuania pay a high price for its recklessness on the Taiwan issue. However, some Lithuanian politicians continued on the path of self-destruction. China’s Foreign Ministry urged Lithuania to correct its mistakes. It stressed that the Taiwanese authorities’ attempts to achieve independence in collaboration with outside forces are ill-considered and doomed to failure.

After official Lithuania pretended not to hear Beijing’s diplomatic warnings relying on Washington’s intercession, Chinese authorities removed Lithuania from the customs register. As a result, Lithuanian exporters have lost the opportunity to process their goods through Chinese customs, and they cannot legalize the goods delivered to China, of which there have already accumulated more than 400 containers in Chinese ports by December 3. On December 3, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrilius Landsbergis asked for support from other EU countries regarding blocking the Baltic States’ cargo by China. Still, he did not receive any reassuring answers from the EU. At the same time,
Landsbergis had to admit in the discussion of this issue with Brussels that Lithuania could not impose retaliatory sanctions, as the European Commission regulates customs systems. As regards the EU, it clearly will not go for aggravation of trade and economic relations with China because of Lithuania, especially now that the coronavirus pandemic has already shaken the EU economy.

In these circumstances, Beijing decided to give Vilnius an additional opportunity to “correct its mistakes” in relations with China by temporarily reinstating Lithuania in China’s computerized customs systems on December 7. However, as Lithuanian businessmen told 15min.lt, China has not yet ruled out other means of pressure on Lithuanian business. Thus, exporting Chinese goods from Chinese ports to Lithuania is restricted. One business, which had been waiting a month for a shipment, heard that its cargo was being moved to the back of the queue. According to Vidmantas Janulevičius, President at Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, China is trying to put pressure on Lithuania through enterprises of other countries.

For example, a garment manufacturer that makes clothes for the French reported that the Chinese have decided not to buy any more products from the French company because they are made in Lithuania. “The French say, ‘Take care of this issue; otherwise, we will look for other garment workers. This could affect quite a few members of the Garment and Textile Association. Another case happened with one of the chemical industry enterprises, which has been working and buying electronics from China for many years. One of the suppliers wrote that we would no longer perform these orders for you,” said Ričardas Sartatavičius, CEO at Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists.

Undoubtedly, such “educational corrective measures” of Beijing on Lithuania and those who wished to join its actions concerning China in their Washington-loving craze should bring such executors of instructions of the White House to their senses. This may also affect those countries that, following US orders, are now trying to deploy a movement of “diplomatic boycott” of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

It should not be further forgotten that the range of countries willing to support Beijing in its opposition to Washington’s sanctions policy may soon expand to significant proportions, which could severely damage the USA and its sanctions allies, plunging them into an even greater financial and economic crisis from which they are already suffering because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Valery Kulikov, political expert, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.

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