Last time the author left the Taiwan problem with a sense of faint hope for possible glimpses into the general gloom which has been lingering for a long time. But nothing particularly reassuring happened either then or as a result of subsequent contradictory events, which have been flowing around the almost central point of the said problem, the USA’s desire to give Taiwan a customary subject status in the foreign policy arena.

And just here, the mentioned inconsistency can be observed. On the one hand the number of countries maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan decreases. These (about 15 in total) are almost entirely located in Central America and the small islands of the Pacific.

At the same time, there has been a trend towards an increased political presence of Taiwan in Europe in recent months. Moreover, if at first, it was mainly the Eastern European “Tabaqui” who tried to show themselves in a favorable light in front of the overseas “Sher-Han,” the same trend has spread to decent Europeans in recent weeks.

Both Beijing, Washington, and especially Taipei watched with considerable suspense the outcome of the regular general elections in Nicaragua and Honduras on November 7 and 28, respectively. The fact is that the left-wing forces that confidently hoped to win the elections announced in advance that they were ready to break off official relations with Taiwan and, conversely, establish them with China.

In the case of Nicaragua, that is what exactly happened, but in the case of Honduras, it was more complicated. The eventually victorious Liberty and Refoundation leader, Xiomara Castro, who had repeatedly spoken before the election about the need to establish diplomatic relations with China, somehow stopped publicly expressing herself in
this matter after her victory. But there have been some leaks to the press from her aides in the style of “we’ve been misunderstood.” As it turns out, before that, Washington had promised to increase financial aid to Honduras. But, of course, there is no evidence that there is a direct link between the two pieces of information.

As for Europe, Slovakia aims to take over the baton from Lithuania for the main “Tabaqui” in the Taiwan problem. Moreover, in a very grotesque form, when the “limitrophe state” sends a delegation consisting of 41 statespeople to the other side of the globe, in need of political symbols. Which, of course, included ladies and, apparently, bearers of other gender characteristics. The round-trip flight of each official alone cost (in the most modest format) about $7,000. Plus, an appropriate class hotel, a cultural program, and other overhead expenses. However, Slovakia seems to be making good money on reverse gas to Ukraine.

But, again, more and more actively (and counterproductively for themselves), respectable Europeans are also immersed in these issues, although there have been some strange metamorphoses lately with the latter as well. The author refers only to the results of the latest elections in Germany, which brought reckless fighters against “climate change” into the country’s government structures. Having already blighted Germany’s nuclear power industry, and now set to deal a knockout blow to their own (?) country’s economy while fighting “dirty” Russian gas.

But on the German foreign policy arena, unpleasant innovations seem inevitable, especially since the country’s MFA is now headed by a master trampoline jumper, trained twice in the United Kingdom. So far, it seems that for her, this country is at least as close as her own. The new German foreign minister is viewed with suspicion from Beijing. The changes in Europe’s leading country look incredibly unpleasant for the latter, since Chancellor Angela Merkel, who resigned, has always been the most influential Western politician in the eyes of China’s leadership.

Beijing’s ill expectations of the mentioned changes in Germany are starting to come true. On December 9, the new composition of the Bundestag considered a petition initiated by a certain pensioner activist, which collected 50,000 signatures. The petition demanded diplomatic relations with democratic Taiwan. The German parliament’s decision turned out to be a half-hearted one, i.e., ties with Taiwan were drastically expanded, but no official relations were established with it yet.

However, Taiwan is being increased activity in various ways in Europe, and Germany in particular. Taiwan’s most consequential foreign policy weapon is used for this purpose, a near-global monopoly in the production of microchips held by Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Limited. For several reasons, one of the main ones being the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TMSC) has drastically reduced the production of its main product. A product the shortage of which could deal a near lethal blow to a modern industrial production. Car manufacturers from various countries were the first to confirm this.

The solution to the problem has to do with the multiplication of microchip production centers, which involves TMSC, already building plants in the USA and Japan. Germany will be the next country where this kind of production will be set up. The Taipei Times reports this with reference to TMSC management.

In the Taiwan issue, the USA has been recently registered by invitation to the island’s representatives to participate in the Summit for Democracy held online on December 9-10. Considering that this event had an openly anti-Chinese, as well as anti-Russian goal, and also the fact of deliberately not inviting China and Russia to it, the descriptive assessment of this forum and participation of “Taiwan separatists” by Chinese Global Times is absolutely understood.

There were also harsh remarks against China in connection with a possibility of using force to solve the Taiwan issue, made by Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Jake Sullivan on December 7. The harsh tone of the high American official was reinforced by the legislation adopted at the same time, which approved the US defense spending bill for the fiscal year 2022. The content of this document confirms the general course of the US leadership in recent years to shift the focus of foreign policy interests from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific region. Taiwan especially drew attention to the emergence of a $7.1 billion special spending line item, financially supporting the implementation of the so-called Pacific Deterrence Initiative, developed by the Pentagon in May of this year.

A series of talks held in early December by US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman with her EU counterpart Stefano Sannino caused a notable media resonance. One of the main topics of the past meetings was the situation in the Indo-Pacific Region and the Taiwan Strait. Judging by the restrained and neutral wordings (about respecting the principle of “one China,” about the necessity to maintain the “status quo in the Taiwan Strait”) of the joint press release adopted at the end of the talks, there is a long-standing marked divergence in the positions of the “shores of the Atlantic” on the key issues of contemporary global politics.
As noted repeatedly in the NEO, Japan’s involvement in the Taiwan issue is becoming increasingly prominent. Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, speaking at the video conference organized by a certain Taiwanese Institute on November 30, said that the US and Japan would not stand aside if China uses force in solving the Taiwan issue. Currently, Shinzo Abe has no official positions but remains one of the most respected Japanese politicians. No wonder that the above statement drew the attention of all the major players involved in the Taiwan issue. An adverse reaction to this passage in China was expected. But in Japan, they found it necessary to make some explanations, which, however, explain very little.

At the center of political life in Taiwan, there is the referendum scheduled for December 18, which has four issues on the table. Of these, a serious foreign policy implication is the issue of banning the import of pork “with traces of ractopamine.” The latter is an unhealthy feed additive used in industrial pig farming.

Meanwhile, the pork is a substantial “additive” to the fighter missiles the USA has been supplying to Taiwan in abundance and for decades. The Kuomintang’s leading opposition party calls on the Taiwanese to say no to importing such pork (without mentioning the specific importer, of course). While leaders of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, including incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen, naturally oppose such a ban.

So, the author is looking forward to hearing what the Taiwanese have to say in response to the aforementioned significant catchy question, and intends to continue to observe the development of the Taiwan issue.

Vladimir Terekhov, expert on the issues of the Asia-Pacific region, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.