On December 18, a referendum was held in Taiwan, to which four questions were submitted. Since both leading parties of the country, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party and the Chinese National Party (Kuomintang), in increasingly tough opposition to each other in almost all aspects of domestic and foreign policy, called for directly opposite answers to the questions put to the referendum. Its results were considered a test of the popularity of each of the parties mentioned in Taiwan.

This aspect of the event should be paid attention to since we are talking about the alignment of political forces at one of the most critical issues of the escalating confrontation between the two leading world powers, the USA and China.

It's worth noting that out of about 40% of Taiwanese eligible to vote at the polling stations, the ratio of answers "for" and "against" turned out to be approximately "fifty-fifty" (with a margin of 1-2 % in favor of the DPP) for each of the four answers. But one can only guess how party preferences look today among 60% of Taiwanese who ignored this event, based on the results of polls on other problems. It is the last thing to do here, and it is better to wait for the election results to local authorities, which will be held next year. The turnout will undoubtedly be higher than in the failed referendum.

It just failed; that is, it didn't seem to exist. According to the regulations, the very fact of receiving an answer to the
questions posed is recorded only if in favor of one of the two proposed answer options ("yes" or "no") received at least 25% of eligible Taiwanese.

But “fifty” from 40% gives only 20%.

The complex procedure explains the growing skepticism of the Taiwanese regarding the productivity of the referendums for implementing the results and the possibility of leveling them out if the island's leadership seems necessary for some reason. This happened, for example, concerning a completely unambiguous answer, 70% against, to the question about same-sex marriage, submitted to a referendum in 2018, which was then combined with elections to local authorities.

The DPP and its current president, Tsai Ing-wen, would try to implement the results of a thoroughly democratic procedure for determining the "will of the people" in this matter. Although gender diversity is at the center of forming new normality along with the green economy, the rights of young children and dogs, launched by someone two decades ago. This process is accompanied by a general overturning of meanings that have been formed over millennia.

It is difficult to say who personally initiated it, but there is no doubt which countries actively pursue it. Among them, the leaders are the United States, which now plays the role of the main pillar of the current government in Taiwan. The authors of this process seek to give it a global character. Let us recall a dramatic incident in Japan, neighboring Taiwan, when in half a year before the next Summer Olympic Games, already postponed for a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the head of the Preparatory Committee Yoichiro Mori, under pressure from the growing problems like a snowball, doubted the timeliness of the urgent introduction of women into the said Committee to improve the gender balance of its composition. That is, he allowed himself to doubt one of the fundamental postulates of the concept of new normality, according to which men and women, except for minor details, do not differ from each other in any way. In a week or two, the former prime minister accused of sexism was almost literally devoured by the Japanese press. This is in the context of a genuine prospect of a national catastrophe, almost not discussed by the same press, caused by a constant drop.

No such problem has arisen in Taiwan since public opinion has been obtained on the issue of same-sex marriage. All the available administrative resources were simply used to nullify the prospect of practical implementation of the wholly unambiguous and democratically expressed Taiwanese opinion. Today, the island is among the leaders in this agenda item of the “new normality”. One should meet current "standards" to continue to enjoy Washington's support on other critical issues.

The current leadership of Taiwan will not have to bother themselves with anything like that after the event held on December 18. In the office of President Tsai Ing-wen, they must have breathed a sigh of relief when it turned out that the de facto referendum did not take place. One contained a considerable explosive foreign policy potential among the four questions raised to it.

It's the issue of banning pork import "with traces of ractopamine". The latter is used as a hormonal food additive in industrial pig breeding and is harmful to human health. Such pork is a significant component of US imports to Taiwan. The Kuomintang, not mentioning, of course, the top importing country, favors banning the import of such pork to the island. Representatives of the DPP and President Tsai Ing-wen at all public events preceding the referendum urged their supporters to say "no" to the ban on importing this product.

It is worth noting that the current leadership of Taiwan’s assessment of the failure of the opposition to get the support of the island's population of the demand to ban the import of pork with traces of ractopamine as a crucial moment in the further development of relations with the United States.

However, let us emphasize again: the event held on December 18 is remarkable, first of all, because it turned out to be an act of probing the mood of the population before the upcoming general elections. In addition to the aforementioned procedure for electing a new composition of local government bodies already in 2022, another general electoral process will take place in early 2024, during which a new president will be elected (Tsai Ing-wen ends two permitted tenures) and a unicameral parliament.

In turn, the results of the 2024 elections will have an extremely important foreign policy significance due to, we repeat, the central role of the Taiwan problem in the escalating confrontation between the two leading world powers. The DPP, which has been ruling since 2016, and President Tsai Ing-wen, who heads this party, who enjoy the full support of Washington, is perceived by Beijing as “separatists” who leave it no option but to solve this
problem “in a non-peaceful way”. At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the leadership of China maintained quite constructive relations with the Kuomintang (during its term in power in Taiwan).

Shortly before the last referendum, Tsai Ing-wen's predecessor as President (2008-2016) Ma Ying-jeou was sharply criticized by DPP officials and the pro-government Taiwanese press. The reason for this was his negative assessment of Taiwan's participation in the Summit for Democracy. He and the Kuomintang, once headed by him, came under suspicion regarding the "similarity of rhetoric" with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) when it comes to everything that, in one way or another, concerns the Taiwan problem.

Finally, it should be noted that, although the DPP has a formal reason to speak of victory in the referendum, we repeat it did not take place, the advantage of this party over the Kuomintang on each of the four questions turned out to be scanty. Therefore, considering that most Taiwanese ignored this event, the answer to the vital question about power will be received in the upcoming general election.

Several other notable recent events around the Taiwan problem are subject to consideration in the format of the next Chronicle.

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