The situation that has been unfolding over the Rohingya Muslims, one of the many ethno-religious minorities of Myanmar, began to deteriorate sharply since the end of August of this year. A direct reason for the latest outburst of tension in the northern part of the state of Rakhine, supposedly, was the attack on a border post, carried out from neighboring Bangladesh by an armed wing of a political movement defending the rights of this ethnic group in Myanmar.

As a result of “reciprocal responses” carried out by law enforcement agencies of the country a UN special commission (headed by the former General Secretary of this organization, Kofi Annan) established facts of destruction of hundreds of Rohingya villages, and also people’s massive flight into Bangladesh, that is into one of the poorest and overpopulated countries of the world.

Up to the present time, the estimated number of refugees exceeds 600 thousand out of a total number of
approximately 1 million people for this ethnic group. And if for the Rohingya themselves, the developing situation can quite justifiably be called a “catastrophe,” then the term “dire” could apply to Bangladesh, and Myanmar faces, for the most part, “blows to its image.”

This bouquet of negative characterizations is the result of the Rohingya’s complex history of relations, stretching back many decades, with the predominant ethnicities that practice Buddhism, and the Myanmar central government. The conflict is intensified by the struggle among leading global players for influence on the country, which is rich in natural resources, and occupies an extremely strategic location in the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions (IPOR).

The situation developing around the Rohingya has been addressed already at two meetings of the UN’s Security Council which, in the course of discussions, exposed the incompatibility of the positions of China and leading Western countries.

The PRC is perfectly satisfied with maintaining the status quo in relations with Myanmar and, furthermore, that the leadership of the country for all intents and purposes is headed by Aung San Suu Kyi whom, for more than 2 decades, the West considered “their person.” In 1991 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize which, from the moment of its founding has become a political label, which the West bestows upon especially “entrusted” people. As the saying goes, “she didn’t live up to expectations,” since her conduct as head of Myanmar’s government (including the issue of the Rohingya problem) began to yield to the complex realities of her country, and not to expectations and hopes of Western Pharisees.

And under her, the government of Myanmar continues to enjoy the support of the PRC leadership. Yet again, this was demonstrated on November 24 of this year by the Chinese leader Xi Jinping during his meeting in Beijing with the visiting commander of Myanmar’s armed forces, General Min Aung Hlaing.

Chairman Xi especially noted the “deepening bilateral friendship, strengthening of strategic ties,” and also the PRC’s aim to play a constructive role in ensuring security “in Myanmar’s border regions.” The PRC, continued the Chinese leader, respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighboring country.

For his part, General Hlaing said the Myanmar people appreciate the long-term assistance of China in national and military construction of his country, and also its “support of the peace process.”

Similar words were uttered a few days earlier in Myanmar at a meeting of Aung San Suu Kyi with the PRC’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi. In particular, they discussed their interest in completing the project of the infrastructure and transport corridor (as part of China’s concept for revival of the Great Silk Road), which connects the PRC, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.

With regard to the Rohingya, Wang Yi proposed a three-phase format for its resolution. In the first phase, the parties shall agree on a ceasefire. In the second phase, Myanmar and Bangladesh shall coordinate a plan for return of the Rohingya to their homeland. In the third phase, long-term measures shall be developed to resolve the fundamental questions of the Rohingya problem.

It should be noted that Wang Yi arrived in Myanmar from Bangladesh where this plan, apparently, was received positively. In any case, based on results of the subsequent meeting of Suu Kyi with Bangladesh’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mahmud Ali, it was announced that “over the next 2 months,” the process will begin for the return of the Rohingya refugees to their former places of residence.

The culmination of China’s efforts in Myanmar during recent days was this year’s December 1 meeting in Beijing between Aung San Suu Kyi with Chairman Xi, which took on the shape of negotiations between leaders of ruling parties. They expressed the mutual goal of creating a political base for the development of comprehensive ties between both countries.

With regard to the politics of the USA in this region overall, and in particular with the “Rohingya problem,” apprehensiveness concerning the PRC’s leading role and successes here are, as one might say, glaringly obvious.

Judging by the results of USA Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s visit to Myanmar in the middle of November, the USA, apparently, has decided for now to refrain from imposing any large-scale sanctions. In any case, Tillerson spoke out against the use of any economic restrictions. This seems quite sensible if the USA intends to maintain even some authority for its interests in this country, which has found itself in a difficult economic situation.

However, the most outspoken “human rights” defenders, concentrated in the Congress, discuss the possibility of
imposing personal sanctions against certain Myanmar officials, mainly among those with the highest ranking in the military.

India, which suffers from actions by its own separatist movements (first and foremost, in the state of Jammu and Kashmir), has shown a readiness to assist Myanmar’s leadership in the struggle with international Islamic groups that give support to Rohingya fighters. In particular, in September, security forces arrested a certain citizen of Great Britain, who came to India in July 2017 with the alleged goal of creating a local network to assist with the “struggle of the Rohingya people.”

In pursuit of its own goals in Myanmar (mainly those that arise from adversarial relations with the PRC), India supports this country’s leadership. Indeed, in the middle of July, during a visit from the same general Hlaing, Prime Minister Modi named Myanmar the “cornerstone” of India’s revitalization in the eastern direction (Act East Policy).

Finally, the trip of Pope Francis II, head of the Roman Catholic Church, to Myanmar and Bangladesh at the end of November should be noted as one of the meaningful international actions in connection with the Rohingya problem. Yet, representatives of a few “human rights” organizations expressed disagreement that the Pontiff did not declare as ethnic cleansing what took place this fall with the Rohingya.

In conclusion, we’ll note that the process for resolving the latest phase of exacerbation of the Rohingya problem barely goes beyond the scope of the first point of the initiative of China’s MFA leader, Wang Yi. It will be possible to speak about some progress only after completion of the second point, which provides for the return of the Rohingya to their “homesteads,” which most likely simply no longer exist.

With regard to eliminating the fundamental issues of the Rohingya’s conflict with Myanmar’s central authorities and the rest of its population (which is the third point of Wang Yi’s initiative), it’s too early now to speak, in general, about this topic.

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