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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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21.10.2024

Major holidays in the People's Republic of China and Taiwan – the celebrations

The PRC recently celebrated the 75th anniversary of its foundation, while Taiwan marked the 113th anniversary of the start of the Xinhai Revolution.



As befits such occasions, the PRC focused on its impressive achievements during what, by the standards of Chinese history, is an extremely short period of time. The gigantic (55 km long) Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau transportation complex crossing the Pearl River Delta, through which tens of millions of people and millions of vehicles move every year, could stand as a symbol of these achievements. But most importantly are its social and economic achievements, as demonstrated by its success in overcoming poverty among its population of almost one and a half billion people.

Humanity shares one planet, and people from all countries share a common future

Xi Jinping

The main focus in the celebrations was on the achievement of new national near and medium term goals. The landmark date will be October 2047, the centennial of the founding of the PRC. A number of intermediate stages have also been outlined, which are intended to mark important achievements in the general course of “modernization” of the country. Thus, the recent Third Plenum of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC outlined two such interim dates, October 2029 (the 80th anniversary of the founding of the PRC) and 2035.

An equally significant word that characterizes the political course being followed by the country’s leadership is “openness”. An article in the Global Times marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, quotes Xi Jinping : “Humanity shares one planet, and people from all countries share a common future.”. It also quotes him as saying that “Whether you like it or not, the global economy is the big ocean that you cannot escape from.” One cannot but agree, however, with the caveat that the “global economy” today has seen a sharp deterioration (compared to the 2010s) as a result of foreign policy factors. And this is already affecting the implementation of the PRC’s development plans.

In particular, the course of “openness” has not at all meet with a positive reaction from the leading Western powers, towards whom it is essentially directed. In contrast, United States and Europe have followed a course of erecting various kinds of barriers to the flow of investment and certain goods from and also into the PRC. This process is almost entirely driven by political motives, namely attempts to slow down China’s economic progress. First of all, in the field of high technology.

These political considerations also underlie the intrigues of Washington and the Eurocrats in Brussels, who are at Washington’s beck and call, in relation to the Taiwan issue, which is extremely painful for Beijing. Addressing his compatriots at an event marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, Xi Jinping explicitly included the population of Taiwan. In particular, he said that “Taiwan is a sacred territory of China and compatriots living on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are related by blood”. He again reiterated his intention to “resolutely oppose schismatic activities aimed at ’Taiwan’s independence””. The phrase was directly addressed to Taiwan’s leadership, who responded to it in their celebrations.

Taiwan marks Double Ten Day

In Taiwan the date of October 10, the tenth month of the “European” calendar (which, in itself, is significant) is celebrated as the anniversary of the complex processes known as the Xinhai Revolution. In fact, this process began long before October 1911 and ended later than

the “official” date of February 12, 1912. But it was necessary to mark the date of the beginning of that milestone event in the long history of China which ended the 2,500-year period of monarchical rule and launched the republican system.

But the celebration of this event involves a serious semantic mine which may explode under the current Taiwanese leadership, which has already openly set a course for the separation of Taiwan and the Taiwanese from China and the Chinese. After all, the Xinhai Revolution is an extremely important event in the long history of China as a whole, and not just for not a single province which is openly engaged in separatist exercises.

The oddity of these celebrations by Taiwan’s current leadership is explained by the fact that they are inherited from Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang party, which ruled the island continuously in the post-war period (until 2000 and then between 2008 and 2016) and which had no thoughts of Taiwan becoming a separate state.

That is one reason why the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (currently in its third term) is implementing a Taiwanese version of “fighting the cult of personality”, a policy which involves associating the name of Chiang Kai-shek with such terms as “dictatorship”, “suppression of democracy” and “mass repression”. But the official holiday inherited from him has been preserved, and in the office of Taiwan’s president hangs a portrait of Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Kuomintang , one of the leaders of the Xinhai Revolution, a political predecessor of Chiang Kai-shek and the author of the Three Principles of the People to transform China (and not just Taiwan) into a modern state.

Washington, which is closely involved in the Taiwan issue, does not care about such historical details when placing its main counterparts on the island, represented by the Democratic Progressive Party and President William Lai. It is enough for the US that it has consistently pursued a course of turning Taiwan into a de facto independent state.

Recently, however, attempts have been made to entrench this process in law, and this topic was especially promoted on the eve of the Double Ten Day celebrations. The key issue here, which has been discussed in previous articles published by NEO is the so-called “problem of interpretation” of Resolution 2758, adopted by the UN in October 1971. The proponents of the “correct” interpretation of this Resolution argue that the transfer of the seats in the UN and the Security Council, previously held by the Republic of China (i.e. Chiang Kai-shek’s regime in Taiwan) to the PRC under this document did not entail the exclusion of the island from the main international organization. Which means that Taiwan’s position outside the UN and its affiliated entities today is due to a misunderstanding that needs to be corrected.

Such a view is beginning to spread among a number of Western countries, particularly the United States, the Netherlands, and Australia. Taiwan's parliament is currently discussing a draft of an appeal to the UN to remedy this "misunderstanding".

If this were to happen (although there is almost zero chance of this, given the PRC's position in the UN), it would be in effect make Taiwan a de jure independent state.

The issue of Taiwan's international status also took center stage during President William Lai's speech at the September 10 ceremony (in which, by the way, he bowed to Sun Yat-sen's portrait before taking the podium). In a number of statements made on the eve of the Double Ten Day celebrations William Lai in effect rejected the Chinese leader's statements quoted above, while not neglecting the opportunity to engage in verbal casuistry, for example by insisting that "it is impossible for the People's Republic of China to be the Republic of China's motherland" as the former is younger than the latter.

Nevertheless, commentators have noted that William Lai's speech on the occasion of the Double Ten Day celebrations was more "positive" regarding the PRC than were previous speeches, including his official speech on the occasion of his presidential inauguration in May this year and the speeches made by his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen. But such "nods" to China, naturally, did not meet with a positive response from the latter, which is not interested in words but in the issue of Taiwan's status.

And as far as that issue concerned, it is clear from William Lai's official Double Ten Day speech that there has been no change.

October 20

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