
International Briefs

China Is Now the European Union's #1 Trading Partner

China has now surpassed the U.S. as the number-one trading partner of the EU, reported *Global Times* on February 16. Eurostat reports that in 2020, the EU's trade volume with China was €586 billion, compared to €555 billion for the U.S. The EU's imports from China increased by 5.6% while exports to China rose by 2.2%. EU trade with the U.S. in 2020 recorded a significant drop in both imports (-13.2%) and exports (-8.2%). *Global Times* further reports that China and Europe made a record 12,400 freight train trips in 2020, up 50% from the previous year, according to China's railway operator. Much of that trade comprised medical supplies to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Boris Johnson Embraces Biden on Behalf of the Empire

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson devoted most of his "Face the Nation" interview on February 14 to describing the bright future he foresees together with Joe Biden in implementing the Empire's Great Destruction.

After making light of former President Donald Trump, Johnson gushed, "I'm very delighted to have a good relationship with the White House, and I've had some good conversations already with President Biden, fantastic conversations about the way he sees things.... There's been some important developments

in the way the UK-U.S. thinking has been coming together ... particularly on issues like climate change, on NATO, on Iran, but, above all, on the ways that the U.S. and the UK are going to work together to deal with the environmental challenge that faces our planet."

Johnson praised Biden's rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement and pledged to stand with Biden in his attacks on President Xi Jinping's China—mentioning Biden's rejection of the WHO's report on COVID-19, and then calling for "global coordination in getting to the bottom of what happens with these diseases."

Russia Is Working on Alternatives to Foreign-Run Internet Services

In a February 14 meeting with editors-in-chief of Russian media outlets, Russian President Vladimir Putin observed that Russia is working on its own alternatives to the Western-dominated internet services, and once such a system is in place, Sputnik reported, Russia "does not rule out the possibility of switching off foreign internet services in Russia in the event of hostile action against the country."

Putin stated: "And when we do have something of our own, we will curtail, if at all, only taking a particular situation into consideration.... I don't want to artificially cut anything off, but when some hostile actions are carried out, I do not exclude this. Hostile actions with respect to our country are unacceptable."

Sputnik reported that Putin referred to domestic tech services such

as Yandex and Sberbank that have good prospects. He went on: "Our respectable colleagues, when they see that there is an alternative and they do not have a monopoly in this market, will act differently."

Argentina, China Discuss \$30 Billion Package for Infrastructure, Energy

In advance of the early-May state visit that Argentine President Alberto Fernández has planned in China to strengthen his ongoing collaboration with Xi Jinping, the two governments are discussing an ambitious package of 15 infrastructure, energy and transportation projects worth \$30 billion that China is prepared to finance, according to *Cronista Comercial* February 7.

There is reportedly a total of 20 projects under discussion, but of those, 15 are considered to be priorities. Among them are projects to upgrade several rail lines; building the fourth nuclear plant, which will use Chinese technology instead of the Canadian CANDU technology used in the three existing reactors; two large hydroelectric projects in the province of Neuquén; and installation of large "smart" pig farms, by which Argentina will greatly expand pork production for export to China.

Irish MEP Denounces Pretense of 'Human Rights' Concern over Navalny

On February 9, Irish Member of the European Parliament Clare Daly

blasted the geopolitical basis of the supposed “human rights” concern over Alexei Navalny:

“Listening to the relentless Russia-phobia in this place, why are people surprised that Russia sees no point in engaging with the EU? I’m as happy as anybody else to stand up for anybody’s rights, including Navalny’s, but let’s be honest about him: He’s a vicious anti-immigrant racist, on maybe 4% of support, rallying hundreds and thousands in cities of millions—hardly a mass movement. And we wouldn’t be discussing him at all if he were arrested anywhere else, other than in Russia.”

MEP Daly went on to note the imprisonment of Julian Assange, Catalan rapper Pablo Hasél, and Plowshare activist Clare Grady, asking “Where is the demand to break off links with the U.S.?”

She answers the question:

“Nowhere! Because this isn’t about human rights. This is a geopolitical agenda against Russia, fueled by a military-industrial complex who need an enemy to justify their millions.

“Of course you’re right to go to Russia! We should be engaged in dialogue, not war.”

MEP Daly posted the video of her remarks on Twitter.

Beijing Bans BBC Broadcasts in China

In what was no doubt a retaliatory move by China for the British revocation of the broadcast license for China Global Television Network (CGTN) in the UK, China banned all broadcasts of BBC in the People’s Republic on February 11. The CGTN license revocation may have been the straw that broke the camel’s back: The Chinese Foreign Ministry has issued numerous pro-

tests over the lies about Xinjiang that have been broadcast by the British network, in which it has accused the government of mass rapes and sexual abuse; and over its lies about Hong Kong, and the “Wuhan virus,” among others.

Of course, this measure has been met by protests from UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and from the U.S. State Department. Before the ban, BBC in China had only been shown in hotels and other venues that catered to foreign tourists, but now that is at an end. The ban also prevents BBC from broadcasting in Hong Kong, which would otherwise carry BBC news on Fridays.

Stoltenberg Wants Ukraine in NATO

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg vowed again on February 9 that NATO’s promise in 2008 of Ukraine becoming a member of the Alliance would eventually be realized, though he could not say when. In a joint press conference with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, Stoltenberg suggested Kiev should continue reforming its military to bring it up to NATO standards in any case, and in response to questions, both Stoltenberg and Shmyhal stressed the importance of NATO’s operations on the Black Sea to counter an allegedly aggressive Russia.

Shmyhal said Ukraine will begin construction of two new naval bases—on the Black Sea, and Sea of Azov, “as part of our cooperation with Britain, with the UK, that are also helping us financially, so this program is being launched.” Stoltenberg said the Black Sea is “of strategic importance” for the Alliance, for NATO members Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania, and for NATO partners Ukraine and Geor-

gia. He mentioned the Ukrainian Navy’s participation, with two U.S. Navy guided-missile equipped destroyers, the *USS Donald Cook* and the *USS Porter*, in recent exercises, and increased NATO air policing in the region.

Saudi Officials Finally Depositioned over Support for 9/11 Terrorists

The deposition of 16 Saudi officials began on February 10 in the case brought by the families of victims of the 9/11 attack.

Mike Kelly of the Bergen County, New Jersey *Record*, reported that two Saudis, Omar al-Bayoumi and Fahad al-Thumairy, who helped two of the terrorists, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, to get housing and flight training in California, are on the list.

Al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi were known to the CIA as terrorist-linked. The CIA had followed them from Malaysia to Los Angeles, only stopping due to constraints on CIA activities in the U.S.—however, supposedly without notifying the FBI.

Also on the list is the Saudi Embassy official, Musaed Ahmed al-Jarrah, who reportedly supervised Bayoumi and Thumairy in their meetings with al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi. According to Kelly, “lawyers for the 9/11 victims want to question al-Jarrah on whether he met with al-Mihdhar, al-Hazmi and possibly Atta,” in a trip to New Jersey.

Kelly also reports, without drawing conclusions, that the now allegedly murdered Jamal Khashoggi, the *Washington Post* journalist and Saudi Muslim Brotherhood asset, had a year earlier met with a former FBI agent who was assisting lawyers for the 9/11 victims.