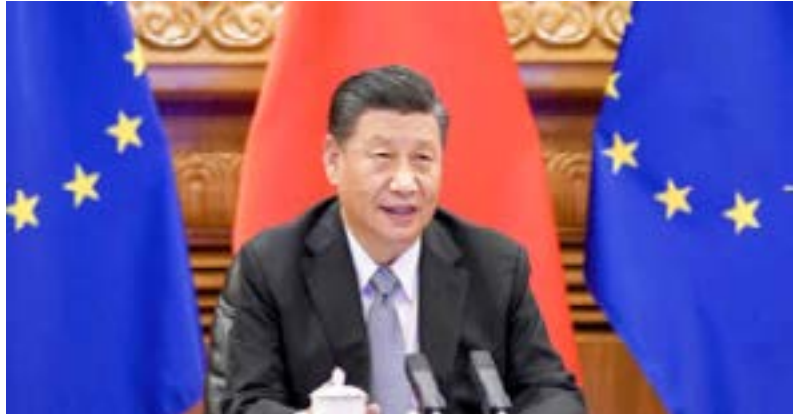


China-EU investment deal bypasses U.S., denting Washington plan to isolate Beijing



By Dustin Noga

On Dec. 30, 2020, the European Union and China concluded a new landmark investment deal called the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI). The pact marks a historic level of investment, cooperation, and intermingling of the 27-member bloc's economy with China's. The CAI will replace 26 separate investment agreements previously signed between China and individual member states of the European Union.

The new investment deal is almost seven years in the making. The EU first proposed the possibility of such an agreement in 2012 and began negotiations with China in January 2014. Chinese President Xi Jinping was joined by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, and other EU officials via video conference call to finalize the deal and celebrate the CAI's finalization just before year's end.

China hopes that the CAI will spur EU investors to further their investment into China, accelerating growth, and further developing the Chinese economy.

Chinese industries that will be opening up to EU investment include manufacturing, research and development, the automotive sector, health services, telecommunications, computer services, international maritime transport, environmental

sectors, and construction services.

The EU gained some considerable concessions in the process of negotiations, but China refused to simply throw open the doors of its industries to foreign investment completely. China did agree that its public firms, the state-owned enterprises (SOEs), would not discriminate against EU corporations in favor of Chinese companies in procurement and sale of their goods. The EU is also allowed to request transparency as to which firms are receiving

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subsidies from the Chinese state in the service sector and allows recourse if said subsidies go against EU investment prospects. The CAI includes rules against Chinese firms demanding forced technology transfers from EU firms.

The CAI has further implications beyond merely

A free-trade agreement between the two is seen as the next step, thwarting U.S. plans to join with Europe and isolate China.

trade relations and investment between the EU and China. The CAI has large implications for geopolitics and the global balance of power in an increasingly multipolar world.

By concluding an investment agreement in the final weeks of the Trump administration, the EU ensured that the U.S. had little time to protest its signing while insulating the EU from recourse by the incoming Biden administration. President-elect Joe Biden has been posturing with proposals to develop a global alliance of countries to act as a bulwark against the rising Chinese economy. The CAI suggests, however, that the EU is further projecting itself as an independent and sovereign world power determined to not be controlled by Washington—further cementing the geopolitical reality of a new multipolar global system.

German interest in achieving a deal seemed specifically relevant, given that Germany's presidency of the EU ended on Dec. 31, 2020—the day immediately following the signing of the CAI.

The emerging relationship between China and Germany (generally regarded as the most important player in the EU) could see them move forward as allies, allowing both parties to insulate themselves from U.S. global hegemony.

Wu Xinbo, Director of the Centre for American Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, said, “The deal will deepen the economic ties between China and the EU, with negotiating a free-trade agreement being the expected next step,” he said. “And it will also thwart the U.S.’ plan to join hands with Europe and isolate China from the future of globalization.”

China and the EU's ability to successfully complete the CAI signals the possible opening of a new era in Sino-European relations. Increases in living standards, reductions in poverty, and a deepening of international cooperation represent positive advancements both politically and economically. Further attention should be directed towards future developments in cooperation between the two economies.

Biden nominates Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, a Laborer, as Labor Secretary

By Mark Gruenberg

Organized labor, for the first time in years, will have a unionist at the president's Cabinet table, as Democratic President-Elect Joe Biden nominated Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, of Laborers Local 223, as U.S. Labor Secretary.

Walsh, who was reportedly pushed by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, beat out other candidates, notably candidates of color, whom some other unions supported. One was Julie Su, California's Labor Commissioner, an Asian-American.

The Laborers are “ecstatic and thrilled” by Biden's choice, said union President Terry O'Sullivan. The pick also pleased the Amalgamated Transit Union, the Teachers (AFT), and the School Administrators. Walsh “will help level the playing field between employers and workers,” said President Ernest Logan.

O'Sullivan called Walsh “a hard-charging, tireless, and tenacious working-class warrior whose word is his bond, who says what he means and means what he says, and who can always be counted on to stand with working men and women.

“Marty never forgets where he came from. He values hard work and those that do it, and he has

seen, first hand, the power of the trade union movement to transform lives.” Unions have also been a central part of Walsh's subsequent political career, O'Sullivan noted.

“With his dedication and devotion to the cause, the purpose, and the mission of the labor movement, Walsh will restore and re-energize the Department of Labor's role as a powerful guardian of workers, and strong and effective enforcer of labor laws. He will fight for all working people, regardless of where they come from, what language they speak, or what kind of work they do. He will work to bring skills training and a stronger voice on the job to millions of American workers who too often have been disregarded.”

Walsh “will hit the ground running as a relentless worker advocate both inside the administration and public sphere,” said AFT's Weingarten.

“He will fight for dignity and respect for all workers, including their right to unionize, for health and safety standards, to raise the minimum wage, and to ensure workers and their unions have an opportunity to thrive. And he will help reverse President Trump's four years of callous and craven attacks.”

He will return control of the Department of Labor to a pro-union advocate.

Mounting evidence of GOP reps aiding Capitol invasion



By John Wojcik

Evidence mounts by the day that some Republican members of Congress were involved from the inside in the planning and execution of the invasion of the Capitol last week.

Democratic Rep. Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey said on national television last night that she and other Democratic colleagues personally witnessed elected Republican members of the House and members of their staffs giving tours of the Capitol to right-wing terrorists, a day before the invasion last week.

Her first reaction was surprise that groups were going around in the building, she said, because public tours have been forbidden as a protective measure due to the coronavirus pandemic. Under the existing rules, Sherrill said, people could not gain entrance to the building unless they had been escorted in by members of Congress or their aides.

Sherrill, a former Navy helicopter pilot, has experience in the area of security. "We were trained to look out at our stops for people who seemed not to belong where we were seeing them. An individual hanging around near a helicopter in a hangar, for example, was something we would deem as suspicious." Those were the kind of thoughts that went through her head, she said, when she saw groups conducting what looked like reconnaissance tours the day before the sedition invasion.

The inside of the Capitol complex is a huge, confusing place where even veteran members of Congress

are known to sometimes get lost. The Trumpite terrorists who stormed in, however, seemed to have no trouble finding their way to places, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office, that are not easy to locate for a novice with no prior knowledge of the layout.

Sherrill and other representatives on board with her on this issue say they intend to go after any of their colleagues who aided and abetted the fascist terrorists.

She said that information about the suspicious activity was immediately reported to the Sergeant-at-Arms, who confirmed that the only way terrorists or anyone else could gain access to the buildings a day before the attack was if they had been ushered in by elected representatives or members of their staff.

The more than 30 House members who have joined her in the demand for investigations, which are now underway, are saying that they too witnessed these reconnaissance tours taking place.

Sherrill said she was not revealing specific names because the matter is being investigated.

She said her concern was so great the day before the invasion that she told much of her staff to stay home on Jan. 6. where they would be safe.

"Given what happened the next day this is shocking," she said, "the very idea that members of Congress are involved in this attack on democracy."

"Any elected official involved in this attack absolutely must be removed from the Congress of the United States," she said.

More than 30 House members pushing for investigation of Republican colleagues who gave terrorists tours of Capital buildings the day before the coup attempt.

LOCAL NEWS

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Belgium: Workers' Party Calls for "Winter of Solidarity"

By Emile Schepers

The Workers' Party of Belgium, one of two major communist parties in that country, is calling for a "Winter of Solidarity." "It is shaping up to be a long winter, but we'll not leave anybody out in the cold."

"Solidarity is in our DNA" said party chair Peter Martens. "More and more people are struggling financially and mentally, both old and young people." He added that there will be a distribution of laptops, of toys for children, as well as food distribution all over the country.

Martens also called for the minimum wage, in one of the richest countries in Europe, to be raised to at least 14 euros per hour.

Las historias ambientales más importantes de 2020

Fabián Capecchi

Puede que haya sido un año espantoso, terrible, pero hubo algunos aspectos positivos.

El COVID-19 nos reveló que todo está conectado: Lo que comenzó como un nuevo brote de coronavirus eventualmente arrasó el mundo, paralizando la vida tal como la conocíamos, frenando la actividad económica y, hasta el momento, cobrándose la vida de alrededor de 1.6 millones en todo el mundo, incluidas más de 320.000 sólo en los Estados Unidos.

Trump a la basura: Las elecciones estadounidenses de 2020 serán recordadas como una de las contiendas políticas más importantes en la historia moderna de los Estados Unidos. Más de dos tercios de los votantes emitieron su voto, una cifra récord y la participación más alta en 120 años.

Un mundo en llamas: Los incendios azotaron el mundo una vez más este año. Comenzaron en medio del verano austral, y nunca cesaron. Arrasaron los bosques de eucaliptos de Australia completamente secos por una ola de calor abrasador.

La industria petrolera se derrite: Sería desalmado tratar de buscarle algún lado positivo a la pandemia, sin embargo, el coronavirus ha provocado irónicamente al menos cierto alivio ambiental claro: la desaceleración de la industria petrolera mundial.

California comprometida a eliminar gradualmente los vehículos de combustión interna: La fuerza de la industria de vehículos eléctricos va en ascenso. Las emisiones de escape de automóviles y camiones constituyen ahora la mayor parte de las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero de los Estados Unidos.

Los bancos y los inversores ya no se fían de la energía sucia: Después de años de presión de grupos ambientalistas y naciones indígenas, JPMorgan Chase anunció que ya no financiará la extracción de petróleo y gas en el Ártico y que también dejaría de financiar muchas empresas relacionadas con el carbón.

Tuberías obstruidas: Mediante una combinación de acción directa sobre el terreno, demandas y presión ciudadana a través de comisiones estatales y federales, los grupos ambientalistas han aumentando el costo y riesgo de las empresas de combustibles fósiles para hacer negocios logrando que los proyectos de energía fósil sean menos atractivos.

El movimiento ambientalista abraza la equidad y la justicia social: Al igual que la pandemia y las elecciones estadounidenses, los horribles asesinatos policiales de George Floyd y Breonna Taylor, así como las históricas protestas callejeras que siguieron no fueron necesariamente historias ambientales.

El Congreso aprueba la Ley Great American Outdoors: Sin embargo, hay una cosa en la que los estadounidenses de todos los partidos políticos pueden estar de acuerdo: la conservación de las tierras, las aguas y la vida silvestre.

La crisis de la biodiversidad se está acelerando: Un tema de gran importancia para el planeta pero que no recibe ni una fracción de la atención que se merece de parte de los medios.

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