

International Briefs

Xi's Riyadh Trip: Milestone in China-Arab Relations

An historic transformation of world economic and political possibilities surrounded the Dec. 7-9 trip of China's President Xi Jinping to Saudi Arabia, which his Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Mao Ning, described on Dec. 7 as an "epoch-making milestone in the history of China-Arab relations." Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan was very positive about the bilateral diplomacy, as reported by the Saudi Press Agency Dec. 8: "The relations between the Kingdom and China are strategic and close in light of the international developments and changes taking place."

The warm welcome given Xi on Dec. 7 contrasted with the muted reception offered President Joe Biden last July. In addition to the China-Saudi summit on Dec. 8, Xi attended the the China-Arab Summit for Cooperation and Development and the Summit of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), before his Dec. 9 departure. At the China-Saudi summit, Xi and King Salman bin Abdulaziz met and signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement. China has already become the largest importer of Saudi Arabian crude oil, accounting for more than 25% of Saudi's exports in 2021.

The Saudi Press Agency puts the agreements being signed at \$29.6 billion. A memorandum of understanding to develop cooperation in energy research was signed between the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC), a leading Riyadh-based advisory think tank, and

China's Economics & Technology Research Institute, a research institute affiliated with the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), to foster cross-regional cooperation in energy research.

Modi Addresses Global Principles for the Change of Epoch

India proposes that its presidency of the G20 be dedicated to helping "catalyze a fundamental mindset shift," away from the zero-sum outlook that has dominated humanity thus far in history, to one recognizing "the fundamental oneness of us all." Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid out his perspective for the G20 presidency in an article published December 1, when India's presidency began. He specified that India's priorities for the G20 will give a greater voice to others in the Global South; that it seeks to "depoliticize the global supply of food, fertilizers and medical products, so that geopolitical tensions do not lead to humanitarian crises"; and that it "will encourage an honest conversation among the most powerful countries—on mitigating risks posed by weapons of mass destruction and enhancing global security."

In terms of philosophical principles, Modi said that the G20 has helped stabilize world economic crises. But, he asked, "can the G20 go further still? Can we catalyze a fundamental mindset shift, to benefit humanity as a whole? I believe we can." But, "unfortunately, we remain trapped in the same zero-sum mindset even today.... Some may argue that confrontation and greed are just human nature. I dis-

agree. If humans were inherently selfish, what would explain the lasting appeal of so many spiritual traditions that advocate the fundamental oneness of us all?

"India's G20 Presidency will work to promote this universal sense of oneness. Hence our theme—'One Earth, One Family, One Future.' This is not just a slogan. It takes into account recent changes in human circumstances, which we have collectively failed to appreciate. Today, we have the means to produce enough to meet the basic needs of all people in the world. Today, we do not need to fight for our survival—our era need not be one of war. Indeed, it must not be one!"

In France 'Food Production To Come to a Halt'

A September article in *Le Figaro* was headlined, "Food Production To Come to a Halt." Unfortunately, what seemed unbelievable to many yesterday, has become reality today.

On Dec. 5, the French canned food specialist Cofigeo, which has a €300 million turnover, announced it will "temporarily" shut down four of its eight factories in France as of Jan. 2, representing 80% of its production. Units of the huge company can products from corned beef to vegetables.

The decision was a response to "the dramatic increase in energy costs ... which will increase tenfold as of the beginning of the year," the group said. "It will go from €4 million to €40 million overnight," its president Mathieu Thomazeau told *Le Figaro*. In September, *Le Figaro* warned that the 350% increase in the price of electricity and the 380% increase in the price of natu-

ral gas in just one year would have a huge impact on the food industry.

Besides soaring energy costs, the other concern is that production lines will grind to a halt due to the lack of produce coming from farms. Drought has reduced production of field vegetables by up to 50% this year, making it impossible to supply the canneries that process and package them.

In addition, the prohibitively high price of natural gas has forced European fertilizer factories to reduce production by 50%, especially limiting ammonia production, raising the threat of shortages for the coming winter.

Electric Power ‘Red Alert’ Hits Germany, Power Sent Abroad, But to Where?

An electric power “red alert” was declared in advance in the German industrial state of Baden-Wuerttemberg for December 7 between 2 and 3 p.m. Power provider TransnetBW warned residents and industrial firms on Dec. 6 to cut power use at that time, because power was being sent abroad—700 MW had been ordered “for redispatch measures abroad” to “alleviate a tense grid situation forecast” for the next day.

For redispatch abroad? The destination was not announced. The new, giant demand for electricity comes from Ukraine, which was connected to the European grid only in 2021. Is Germany—and perhaps not only Germany—supplying electricity to Ukraine via Poland?

Winter has not yet begun, and the electric power supply in Germany is already reaching a critical stage. An Arctic blast was expected to descend over Europe in the week ending December 17, and EU member states are already having trouble managing their energy scarcity.

Baden-Wuerttemberg is the lead-

ing German export state, and the one with the lowest official unemployment. Its industrial center is Stuttgart, the home of Mercedes and Porsche auto-makers.

Argentine Vice President Sentenced to Prison by ‘Parallel Mafia State’

A Buenos Aires criminal court sentenced Argentine Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner to six years in prison on Dec. 6, in the bogus corruption case alleging malfeasance in public works funding in the province of Santa Cruz during her 2007-2015 term in office. The sentencing for “fraudulent administration” also includes a lifetime ban on holding public office. The sentence won’t be executed until all appeals are exhausted, which could take years.

A week earlier, Fernández had described the sentencing process as “a firing squad,” because the verdict had been “written long ago,” based on the machinations of the corrupt judges, prosecutors, and lawyers who answer to the thuggish former President, Mauricio Macri. These networks also protect “those who tried to kill me,” she charged. After the verdict was announced, Fernández de Kirchner said it was produced by a “parallel mafia state” that operates outside all norms of constitutional law.

She then presented evidence that had emerged the previous weekend revealing hacked social media chats of members of the “judicial party” who participated in an all-expenses-paid mid-October trip to the Patagonian luxury estate of Macri’s pal, British billionaire Joe Lewis, to discuss accelerating the legal offensive against her. Every participant in the trip is a key player in this legal warfare, including four judges, one of whom, Julian Ercolini, oversaw the Santa Cruz case, as

well as top legal officials from the Buenos Aires city government and two executives of the pro-Wall Street *Clarín* media monopoly which paid for the whole trip.

The chats proved that members of the group tried to cover up *Clarín*’s financing of the trip and produced phony invoices to lie about it. These revelations of judicial corruption have exploded into a major scandal with far-reaching implications, including possible prosecution of judges for bribe taking and influence peddling.

President Putin Addresses Nuclear First Use Policy, Idiot Media in a Flap

Russian President Vladimir Putin frankly discussed the threat of nuclear weapons use on December 7 and 9. The mainstream media can’t report it straight; they just flap.

For the record, Putin stated, at a Nov. 9 press conference in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, that U.S. policy does not exclude nuclear weapons first use—a disarming strike—while Russia’s policy is to use nuclear weapons as the last resort, in event of an existential threat. “So if we’re talking about this disarming strike, then maybe think about adopting the best practices of our American partners and their ideas for ensuring their security. We’re just thinking about it.... If a potential adversary believes it is possible to use the theory of a preventive strike, and we do not, then this makes us think about those threats that are posed to us.”

On Dec. 7 he said, “As for the idea that Russia would not use such weapons first under any circumstances, well, if it’s not the first to use under any circumstances, then it won’t be the second to use them either, because the very possibility to do so, in case of a nuclear strike on our territory, would be greatly limited.”