

Taiwanese president promotes US war drive against China

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On October 10, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te delivered a provocative speech to mark National Day, which commemorates the 1911 revolution that led to the founding of the Republic of China, the formal name of Taiwan. In his address, Lai challenged the One China policy, antagonizing Beijing, while expressing support for United States imperialism and its preparations for war against the Chinese mainland.

Lai's speech was the first he has given for the anniversary since becoming president in May. In remarks heavily publicized by the establishment media, Lai declared, "[T]he Republic of China and the People's Republic of China are not subordinate to each other. On this land, democracy and freedom are growing and thriving. The People's Republic of China has no right to represent Taiwan."

Lai supposedly contrasted the "peaceful" goals of Taipei with Beijing's "aggression," making vague offers to engage with Beijing. This is turning reality on its head. Lai's remarks were carefully calculated to raise tensions with Beijing. Lai and his ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) favor independence for Taiwan and the repudiation of the One China policy, which states the island is a part of China.

However, Beijing opposes independence for Taiwan as it would set a precedent for carving up Chinese territory more broadly while allowing the island to become a US military staging ground for attacks against the mainland. Lai and his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen have closely aligned Taipei with Washington's war drive against China, aimed at ensuring US imperialism's hegemony in the Indo-Pacific and eliminating Beijing as an economic competitor.

Without declaring outright independence, which would trigger a war, Lai stated last Thursday, "I will

also uphold the commitment to resist annexation or encroachment upon our sovereignty."

Lai made an even more explicit attack on the One China policy on October 5 when he stated that "it is absolutely impossible for the People's Republic of China to be the 'motherland' of the people of the Republic of China."

The DPP explained the next day that Lai's statement "not only refutes China's so-called 'one China,' 'motherland,' and other United Front rhetoric but also exposes the distorted positions of many cross-strait politicians confused by [the concept of] 'motherland'."

Such remarks are also aimed at driving a wedge between Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. In fact, trade and cultural exchanges have existed between the mainland and Taiwan for centuries, with the island formally becoming a part of China in 1683. Following the First Sino-Japanese War, Tokyo seized Taiwan and carried out a brutal colonization, which only ended in 1945 with Japan's defeat in World War II.

After the war, the US supported the vicious dictator Chiang Kai-shek and his widely hated and corrupt Kuomintang (KMT) regime under the assumption that it would be able to stamp out the rising revolutionary demands of the Chinese people, both on the mainland and Taiwan. At the time, sections of the Taiwanese bourgeoisie argued they could better serve the interests of capitalism and US imperialism by separating from China altogether, and exploited the mass hatred of the KMT to further this demand. While Washington ultimately rejected this, it was the ideological precursor to the basis on which the DPP rests today.

Instead, the US continued to back Chiang and the KMT as the supposed government of China even after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in

the 1949 Chinese Revolution. The KMT fled to Taiwan, protected by the US navy in the Taiwan Strait. The US refused to formally recognize Beijing until 1979 at which point it also withdrew formal recognition from Taipei, withdrew its military forces and accepted the One China policy.

Now, Washington has all but overturned the One China policy in order to goad Beijing into a war. Lai and the DPP have played a large role in this. He has repeatedly declared, including during his National Day speech, that Taiwan stands alongside so-called “democratic countries” against “authoritarianism.”

However, Taipei’s support for Israel and its genocide against the Palestinians exposes what Lai means by “democracy.” Furthermore, Lai and the DPP do not have one policy towards Israel and a separate one for China. Taipei’s position is bound up with its support for US imperialism as a whole; the promotion of war in the Middle East and against China in the pursuit of the demands of capitalism; and the belief that the Taiwanese bourgeoisie will ultimately enrich itself as a result of these conflicts.

Taipei’s plans for war include the so-called “Four Pillars of Peace action plan,” which Lai pledged last week to “firmly carry out.” He first unveiled the agenda in July 2023 as vice president. These “pillars” call for raising military spending and refashioning the Taiwanese military into an asymmetric fighting force. This aligns with US war plans to trap Beijing in a quagmire on the island, drawing on lessons taken from the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. Taipei, in other words, is offering up its population as cannon fodder.

Taipei warmly welcomed a US delegation to the National Day event, which included three US legislators, Representatives Debbie Lesko, Andy Biggs, and Carol Miller. All have prominently pushed anti-China legislation in Congress. “The delegation visiting Taiwan during National Day has significant meaning,” declared Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Their visit demonstrates the US Congress’ firm support for Taiwan and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.”

Not a meeting held by the US or one of its allies goes by now without some reference to the supposed “peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait,” the purpose of which is to demonize Beijing and further challenge the One China policy. Lai made sure to include the phrase

in his address, declaring, “Taiwan is resolved in our commitment to upholding peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and achieving global security and prosperity.”

Yet, it is Washington that has upended “peace and stability” in the region. Despite having no formal diplomatic relations with Taipei, and thereby de facto recognizing the One China policy, Washington has normalized sending high-level political envoys to Taiwan. It has heavily armed the island while routinely conducting provocative naval transits through the Taiwan Strait.

Beijing quickly responded to Lai’s speech. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning stated at a press conference on October 10, “Lai Ching-te’s words attempt to sever the historical connections between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait...It once again exposed that he is hellbent on advancing ‘Taiwan independence’ and has the ill intention of heightening tensions in the Taiwan Strait for his selfish political interest.”

She called on other nations to uphold the One China policy, saying, “The One China principle is a basic norm in international relations and prevailing international consensus.”

Since then, Beijing has launched a series of military drills around Taiwan, including the Joint Sword-2024B exercises on Monday. Taipei claimed that 125 mainland warplanes flew near the island as well as detecting 17 naval and 17 China Coast Guard vessels. Captain Li Xi, a spokesman from the Chinese military’s Eastern Theatre Command stated the drills were a “legitimate and necessary operation for safeguarding state sovereignty and national unity.”



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