

Taiwan's parliament speaker hails Trump's return to the White House as “the pinnacle of the free world”

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The inauguration of Donald Trump as the 47th President of the United States testified to American degradation and the political and social dead end of world capitalism.

This is not how the ruling class of the Republic of China (hereinafter Taiwan) sees Trump's return to the White House. On January 21, Kuomintang (KMT) Speaker of the Parliament Han Kuo-yu, who led Taiwan's official delegation to the event, described the swearing-in ceremony of the would-be “Führer” Trump as “the pinnacle of the free world”.

The CEO-turned-speaker compared his “successful visit” to the United States to “a Taiwanese stock rally” the next day, hailing the trip as a “historic breakthrough” between the two countries, and citing the fact that he was admitted into the Capitol Rotunda and flanked by “US governors and upper-level military commanders.”

Most importantly, the President himself was only “25 meters” away, Han added. It was a “privilege to witness this historic moment” and listen to Trump's “amazing speech” about being chosen by God to make America great again.

Despite tactical differences between the opposition KMT and the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), both rival sections of the Taiwanese bourgeoisie serve as an instrument of US imperialism and expressed bipartisan support for Han's self-congratulatory and sycophantic remarks about the event.

This is not the first time Taiwan's political establishment has seen getting physically close to a US president as a great honor. DPP presidential candidate Lai Ching-te made a similar comment in July 2023, asserting that Taiwan had strove to reach out to the world via the US. “When Taiwan's President can walk into the White House, we have accomplished our political goal.”

It is worth recalling that in 1983, President Ronald Reagan met with “freedom-fighting” mujahideen from Afghanistan at the Oval Office after “giving to the USSR its Vietnam War”, to use Zbigniew Brzezinski's phrase. Brzezinski served as President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor.

President Joe Biden met Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House several times before Kiev unveiled its “victory plan” in October 2024.

It is no coincidence that Han Kuo-yu bragged in late September 2024 about the largest demand for corpse bags made by Taiwanese corporations coming from Ukraine.

This brings to mind Brzezinski's claim in his monograph, *Grand Chessboard* (1997), that the US had an “inclination” to “assign a high priority to American-Ukrainian relations and to help Ukraine sustain its new national freedom,” despite this stance leading to a “head-on collision” with Moscow. This “national freedom” formula works identically when Taiwan and China are substituted for Ukraine and Russia.

Taiwan's ruling class could not contain their excitement about Trump's “second coming”. During the initial COVID outbreak in the US, Trump asserted that he took “the Chinese virus very seriously” by shutting down borders to foreign nationals traveling from China. In late 2020, when the US successfully developed COVID jabs, he took credit for developing the “China virus vaccine”, claiming that had he not been president, Americans would have had to wait five years.

When Trump has threatened to annex Greenland, Canada, and the Panama Canal on several occasions and delivered tariff threats against China, Taiwan's ruling class sees these developments as positive goods.

A 2024 study conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies—a Washington D.C.-based think tank—indicated over \$2.45 trillion in commodities, or more than one-fifth of global marine trade, transited the Taiwan Strait in 2022. This means that even a Chinese coast guard-led quarantine of Taiwan, rather than a military seizure of the island, may threaten trillions of dollars in trade, flowing through the Taiwan Strait.

Su Tzu-yun of the Taipei-based Institute for National Defense and Security Research, a mouthpiece of Taiwan's defense ministry, stated on January 22, 2025 that the quest for the Arctic implied that the US prioritized global control over sea lanes as well as airspace, and hence would not allow its “freedom of navigation” through international waters, including the Taiwan Strait, to be challenged.

He declared that the strategically located island country must increase its military expenditure to “be considered a reliable partner” by Washington.

Trump had earlier “urged” Taiwan to increase its defense spending to 10 percent of its GDP to demonstrate its “reliability”. In terms reminiscent of a Mafia boss, he revealed the role played by US imperialism and its client: “Taiwan... stole 95 percent of our

business. ... We lost the chip business. They want us to protect... They don't pay us money for the protection, you know? The mob makes you pay money."

Massive increases in "defense" spending to protect US imperialism implies broader attacks on public spending and an intensifying assault on the living conditions of the Taiwanese working class. Taiwan's GDP in 2024 was estimated to be US\$775.02 billion. Spending at least 10 percent of its GDP would amount to US\$77.5 billion. This would equate to 80 percent of Taiwan's government budget.

No one believes that the fascistic mob leader, who presided over the normalization of mass death and debilitation in the COVID-19 pandemic during his first term, and has now launched a global trade war against Washington's nominal allies and arch-rivals from the start of his second term, could provide any country with a security guarantee.

Under Trump's presidency, the *Military Review*, a journal of the United States Army, indicated in 2020 that "the only method of preventing China from successfully annexing Taiwan is to reject calls for a cease-fire" and to "contain Chinese bridgeheads and airheads [in Taiwan] into as small a perimeter as possible."

This implies that Taiwan's working people are mere cannon fodder, expected to fight China to the last man and woman under US dictates.

The island's ruling elite views Trump's trade war with China favorably, believing that it stands to gain from US-China competition by deepening economic and military ties with the US imperialist bourgeoisie.

During his 2016 presidential campaign, Trump accused China of being "the greatest thief in the world" and pledged to stop China from "raping" the United States. In 2018, he invoked section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, imposing tariffs on most Chinese imports, specifically citing the initiative of "Made in China 2025" (MIC 2025) as detrimental to US corporate interests and claiming that World Trade Organization mechanisms did not suffice to resolve disputes between the world's two largest economies.

Despite trade war measures implemented by the Trump and Biden administrations, MIC 2025 has made substantial progress.

According to figures published by the United Nations Statistics Division, China contributed about 31 percent of world industrial production in 2022, with the United States accounting for only 15 percent.

China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (IT) announced on January 21, 2025 that China has led world manufacturing in terms of value-added industrial output for the 15th consecutive year in 2024, with an estimated US\$5.65 trillion. The industrial and IT sectors reportedly accounted for more than 40 percent of China's economic growth last year.

This highlights that the "trade war" is a concentrated expression of conflicts over production, industrial capacity, and profits in overseas markets.

In response to possible US tariff hikes, China's vice premier, Ding Xuexiang, proposed on January 21, a "win-win" solution between Beijing and Washington at the 55th annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, indicating Beijing's willingness to "import more competitive and high-quality products

and services to balance [the] trade" deficit.

In contrast to Taiwan's delusion of benefiting from US-China tensions, the Chinese Stalinist regime has been laboring under the illusion about peaceful coexistence among the major capitalist powers in a "multipolar" world by transforming itself into a maritime power and building armed capabilities commensurate with its "international standing".

None of this addresses the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system. As Frederick Engels reminds us of why certain sections of the industrial bourgeoisie argued against protectionism:

The moment a branch of national industry has completely conquered the home market, that moment exportation becomes a necessity to it. Under capitalistic conditions, an industry either expands or wanes. A trade cannot remain stationary; stoppage of expansion is incipient ruin.

Phrased differently, as capital crosses national boundaries, one country's gains result in another's loss under capitalism. More so, under decaying and moribund capitalism.

Since the realignment of US politics with its underlying socioeconomic relations will inevitably exacerbate class antagonisms, the working class and the bourgeoisie will have to confront each other and settle their contradictions.

The responses of Taiwan's and China's ruling classes illustrate that they can offer no alternative to assaults on democracy and living standards, fascism and war. A genuine struggle against fascism and war and for democracy must be waged by the working class and in opposition to all factions of the ruling elite at home and abroad. As the WSWS has written, "In the face of the imperialist fight for the redivision of the world, the socialist fight is for the practical-political reunification of the international working class and class struggle."



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