

Trump's fascist Fortress America

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Donald Trump's address to Congress Tuesday night was not so much a speech from a president but the rantings of an aspiring *Führer*, though with somewhat less decorum than an address by Hitler before the German *Reichstag*. It was vicious, violent and depraved, plumbing the depths of cultural and political degradation in the United States.

All the tropes that, in an earlier period, would have been identified as belonging to the fascist fringe of American politics have been elevated to its very center. Standing and applauding at every sentence were Trump's cabinet of billionaires, the personification of government of the oligarchy, along with the Republican senators and representatives, who broke out repeatedly in chants of "USA! USA!"

To attempt to dissect all the lies Trump spewed would be to somehow dignify his comments. This was not a speech worthy of serious analysis. It was a series of pig grunts and dog barks, with the necessary apologies to these intelligent mammals. It was a grotesque marriage of reality TV and political spectacle. Trump crassly exploited personal tragedies, parading victims before the cameras, using them as a bludgeon to demand greater state violence, targeting immigrants and other sections of society.

Beneath it all, one theme was clear: Trump's speech was a declaration of war—on the world and on the working class. It was a statement of an oligarchy that will stop at nothing to maintain its wealth and power.

Trump laid out an agenda of unrestrained American imperialism, in which the United States will not be bound by any alliances, treaties or international laws. It was a manifesto of a ruling class that intends to resolve its deepening economic crisis through trade war and military aggression, a path that leads directly to World War III and fascism.

At the center of Trump's economic nationalism were sweeping trade war measures. He absurdly claimed that

massive new tariffs targeting Mexico, Canada and China would preserve American jobs and lower prices. In reality, these measures will trigger mass layoffs and soaring prices.

The corollary to Trump's vision of a self-sufficient "Fortress America" is the violent eruption of American imperialism. He repeated his pledge to retake the Panama Canal, an explicit threat of military intervention in Latin America. He declared that Mexico—which he called "the territory immediately south of our border"—was "dominated entirely by criminal cartels," a barely veiled justification for war. He revived calls for the US to take over Greenland "one way or another."

Trump claimed that his administration would bring "a more peaceful and prosperous future" to the Middle East—a "peace" erected upon the bones of tens of thousands murdered by Israel in Gaza, a genocide fully backed by his predecessor and now being carried to its logical conclusion by Trump himself.

The speech was laced with lies meant to justify historic attacks on Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other social programs, with the aim of impoverishing millions while handing out hundreds of billions in tax cuts for the rich.

Trump railed against supposed "fraud" in Social Security, citing, at great length, absurd and manufactured examples of alleged abuse to lay the groundwork for massive benefit cuts. The goal was clear: to gut one of the last remaining pillars of social protection in the United States.

At the same time, Trump bragged about his mass firings of federal workers, referring to the tens of thousands of government employees purged under his executive orders as "unelected bureaucrats." He declared the destruction of jobs and livelihoods a victory for the "American taxpayer," presenting mass layoffs as part of his drive to "drain the swamp."

The irony was unmistakable: The most “unelected bureaucrat” of all, Elon Musk, the world’s richest man, was in attendance, with his stupid grin as he presides over this massacre as head of Trump’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

No description of the proceedings would be complete without including the absolute cowardice and complicity of the Democratic Party. As Trump repeatedly denounced them, the assembled Democratic congressmen and women sat passively in their seats, wearing pink shirts and holding little signs to supposedly demonstrate their opposition.

Even as one of their own members, Representative Al Green, was forcibly removed from the chamber for protesting Trump’s remarks, the Democrats did nothing. The fact that they even attended—under instruction from their party leadership—was itself a preemptive statement of spinelessness.

This spectacle could not have even happened without their active collaboration. One need only point out that the man standing behind Trump—Speaker of the House Mike Johnson—was kept in office with Democratic votes last year as part of a deal to fund the US-NATO war in Ukraine.

Millions of people who watched Trump speak were sickened and disgusted. Anyone expecting, however, that the fascist rant would be met with a serious response instead found themselves subjected to the empty, reactionary drivel of Elissa Slotkin, a nobody handpicked by the Democratic Party establishment.

Slotkin, who began by proclaiming her credentials as a CIA agent serving under Bush and Obama, delivered the party’s official rebuttal, centering her opposition to Trump not on his assault on democratic rights or his attacks on workers, but on issues of foreign policy, particularly the war against Russia. (Tellingly, when Trump referenced the hundreds of billions allocated for Ukraine by the previous administration, the Democrats—who sat in silence throughout his tirades against immigrants and social programs—applauded.)

Slotkin explicitly invoked Ronald Reagan—the president who gutted social programs and ramped up nuclear war threats against the Soviet Union—as a model to be emulated. “As a Cold War kid,” she declared, “I’m glad it was Reagan in office in the 1980s and not Trump.”

Reagan, Slotkin said, “would be rolling in his grave.”

In this, she ascribed more agency to the dead president than the living “opposition” party, which is crawling on its belly. Slotkin added that the Democrats were eager “help” the administration “cut waste” in social programs, only stressing that it “shouldn’t be chaotic”—that is, that it should be done in a way that avoids a social explosion.

As for the media, it did its best to normalize Trump’s speech as part of some sort of legitimate political discourse. CNN’s Jake Tapper referred to its “touching moments.” What can one say?

Revealed on Tuesday night was the political underworld in power—the physiognomy of the American oligarchy that rules over society. Trump has risen to the top through a process of selection, in which his personal corruption, hucksterism and criminality are appropriate assets. The spinelessness of the Democratic Party reflects the fact that it too is controlled by the same financial elite.

For all his invocations of a new “Golden Age,” the renewal of the “American Dream,” Trump’s remarks were, rather, the death rattle of a ruling class that can no longer govern except through violence and dictatorship.

Opposition will emerge, indeed it is already emerging. Anger over mass layoffs, social devastation and Trump’s fascist agenda is growing. It must be developed as a movement of the working class—fighting against dictatorship, oligarchy, fascism and war. These struggles are inseparable, rooted in the same basic issue: the capitalist system.



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