

# The First Month of Trump's Presidency: The Americas of Americans

*Dawnbreaker*

Within the first month in office, Trump immediately extended his reach to the countries of the American continents, particularly targeting Canada, Greenland, Panama, and others. His statements were considered exaggerated by most critics: if taken literally, it seems that Trump intends to expand the U.S. territory over half of the Americas, even transforming Canada and Greenland into U.S. states, while reclaiming control of the Panama Canal in violation of international agreements and infringing on Panama's sovereignty. He also pressured Mexico to adjust its borders and tariff policies according to U.S. interests. These proposals clearly contravened the international principles and laws led by the international bourgeoisie. However, Trump's intentions were unmistakable: his call for America First meant that the Americas should first pay the price for U.S. priorities. Trump legitimized this through a Nazi-like victim-hood narrative, claiming that America's huge trade deficits with other countries meant that U.S. interests were being harmed, while ignoring that these trade deficits is precisely the foundation for the U.S. to maintain the dollar's global dominance by exporting them.

But what does "America First" really mean? Those who think Trump is abandoning traditional allies and returning to American isolationism are completely wrong. What the U.S. and its allies have always been defending is the interests of the international bourgeoisie, preserving an imperialist and colonial international political economy. Trump had no intention of abandoning this; on the contrary, he is eager to maintain it.

The U.S. is the greatest beneficiary and defender of the existing international order and is the motherland upon which the international bourgeoisie relies. Therefore, the U.S. and the capitalist global order is an inseparable union. Trump's positions indicate that, when such order faces a fundamental challenge, the only way to defend global capitalism is to defend the motherland of the global bourgeoisie—the U.S. First of all, "The Americas is the Americans' Americas."

Unlike his previous term, Trump's current stance is not merely based on business-oriented domestic economic interests but is accompanied by clear strategic intentions. His attention to Greenland and Panama is not limited to economic factors but considers geopolitics and natural resources.

Greenland is rich in strategic resources: rare earth minerals, coal, natural gas, oil, iron, gold, zinc, lead, and copper. For Silicon Valley elites like Peter Thiel and Elon Musk, the U.S. government should create more effective policies to protect their interests in response to China's dominance in the rare earth industry. Additionally, Greenland's key location along the Arctic shipping route makes it even more valuable as global warming improves navigation conditions.

Compared to the traditional Suez Canal route, the Arctic route significantly shortens the shipping time from the oil-rich North Sea to China's coast, making it strategically important. During the Cold War, Greenland was a critical U.S. strategic base to counter the Soviet Union. In recent years, the U.S. has pressured Denmark to reject Chinese mineral development projects, airport constructions, and proposals for acquiring abandoned U.S. military maritime stations in Greenland.

In order to secure the international bourgeoisie's dominance in the tech industry, the U.S. demands Europe to abandon its insistence on political borders and cede Greenland to the U.S. In fact, the U.S. already achieved partially control of Greenland through its military bases and interventions against Chinese involvement. However, the evolving situation requires Europe to pay a greater price to protect U.S. interests. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot provocatively stated that the EU would not allow Trump to "attack its sovereign borders," pointing out that "we (imperialists) have entered an era of survival of the fittest." Despite this, Europe is unlikely to truly refuse America's demands, as the U.S. is acting as Europe's protector. Although Greenland may not be directly sold to the U.S., the U.S. will undoubtedly strengthen its control over the island.

In the future, when U.S. military and economic projects conflict with the local Inuit population (80% of Greenland's population), the choice for the western "progressive left" is obvious. They will side with the U.S. and ignore the rights of the Inuit to maintain the so-called "global order" and the bourgeoisie's interests. Such scenario not only reveals the harsh reality of international politics, but also exposes the fragility of so-called "progressive" values when confronted with bourgeoisie interests. Trump's policies once again demonstrates that the U.S. is consolidating its global hegemony in a more direct manner, while Europe and other allies are forced to make compromises and sacrifices in the process.

For Panama, which had just regained control of the canal in 1999, the memory of its colonial past is still fresh. The canal, as the country's economic backbone, symbolizes Panama's independence from being a U.S. colony. To this, Panamanians protested by burning U.S. flags and Trump's pictures. Similar to the situation with

Greenland, Trump demanded this Latin American country to make concessions for U.S. economic and strategic interests. He argued that the Panama Canal's tolls were too high and threatened to quickly reclaim it for the U.S. He emphasized the canal's critical importance to U.S. trade and military operations in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

In 2023, the Panama Canal faced severe drought, leading to insufficient water levels, so the Panama Canal Authority had to auction off passage slots and raise tolls. Although the drought situation eased in 2023, the Authority maintained the auction system and planned to further increase tolls. In comparison to the Suez Canal, Panama's tolls had previously been lower but maintenance costs were higher. The U.S. was the biggest victim of the price hikes in 2023, with 40% of U.S. container shipments relying on the canal, and more than 70% of the vessels passing through were traveling to and from U.S. ports. U.S. military vessels' passage was also limited by quotas and required prior reservations. This angered the U.S. bourgeoisie, who questioned how Panama would dares "tax" America. Since Panama regained control of the canal in 1999, its situation has changed significantly. Although the U.S. remains Panama's largest trade partner and investor, its interest in Panama has waned, and U.S. market share is gradually being replaced by China. Since 2017, when Panama established diplomatic relations with Beijing, Chinese companies have invested billions of dollars into Panama, including infrastructure projects, cruise terminals, and railroads. Panama also became the first Latin American country to join China's "Belt and Road" initiative. After meeting with Xi Jinping in 2018, former President Juan Carlos Varela and China agreed on several cooperative projects, including high-speed rail, a metro line in Panama City, a container port, and a new \$1.4 billion Panama Canal bridge. Some have complained that the U.S. has not made sufficient investments to its strategic

partner and doesn't even bother to send an ambassador to Panama. U.S. Southern Command, which oversees security affairs in the Americas, pointed out that two Chinese-operated ports in Panama have multiple ways to interfere with canal traffic, including electronic attacks and physical attacks using anti-ship weapons. As demonstrated by the Suez Canal blockage, the global trade system is more fragile than we imagine, and the Panama Canal remains an important communication link between the U.S. East Coast and its Asian allies such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. It takes about 20 days for ships to travel from Gulf of Mexico through Panama Canal to Japan, compared to 34 days if they go around the southern tip of Africa.

The additional attention to the Panama Canal's strategic significance became evident after the price hikes in early 2024, and Trump's harsh rhetoric was not without warning. The U.S. think tank CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies) suggested the government to increase aid to Panama: "The U.S. is Panama's oldest ally... Panamanians have already seen the results of Beijing's infrastructure investments, and the U.S. must prove that it is the better partner... The Trump administration has nominated Marino Cabrera as U.S. ambassador to Panama, a positive sign that should be advanced quickly to ensure U.S. representation in Panama. Strong diplomacy, economic cooperation, and security partnerships will safeguard U.S. strategic interests in Panama and the entire Western Hemisphere."

From this, we see that the U.S. doesn't actually want Panama to have sovereign control over the canal; the price hikes have already gone too far. The expectation is that Panama will nominally regain the canal, but its operation must remain completely "independent." Trump pointed out that the development of two Chinese-operated ports violated the autonomy principle of the 1999 U.S.-Panama Canal agreement, which holds that

Panama cannot rely on "foreign powers" to diminish U.S. interests. After the Cold War, it was unimaginable that such a foreign power would exist, and the U.S. confidently handed over control of the canal to Panama. However, it is clear that China has broken this status quo. Trump's solution is cheaper, without resorting to increasing aid or economic ties, as this is not an economic issue but a political one; threats and physical force are the most effective. Therefore, he solemnly declared that, without ruling out the option of physical force, the U.S. would directly reclaim the Panama Canal without engaging in an expensive competition with China over investment and aid.

The submission of Latin American countries and their contributions to U.S. imperialist interests will help the global bourgeoisie defend capitalism at a lower cost. Similar to Trump's policy toward the Americas, the U.S. demands that its European and Asian allies make greater sacrifices to extend the current imperialist system. This naked demand puts European and Japanese rulers in a dilemma: on one hand, they are dissatisfied, but on the other hand, their deep reliance on the U.S. in military, finance, and technology makes it difficult to truly resist. Trump believes that by bringing back manufacturing and other measures, internal class contradictions can be alleviated, making the U.S. more competitive and ensuring its continued global hegemony.

To better explain this, I will contrast Trump's strategy with that of the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party and its oligarchic supporters believe that American imperialism is still strong, but its resources are limited, and maintaining its strength requires increasingly larger expenditures. This strength relies on two things: military and technological leadership, control of global strategic resources, and large amounts of money spent on continuously shaping culture and ideology. The Democratic Party believes that maintaining ideological

dominance is still necessary, and therefore the global bourgeoisie must yield some of their interests to cover the costs of maintaining imperialist rule.

During Biden's term, the U.S. paid a heavy price in the Middle East and the Russo-Ukrainian War, provoking strong domestic backlash. To alleviate fiscal pressure, Biden introduced radical tax reforms in the 2023-2025 budget: raising corporate taxes from 21% to 28%, imposing a 25% minimum income tax on families with over \$100 million in assets, and tripling the stock buyback tax. These measures aim to reduce the deficit by \$3 trillion over ten years. Although IRS successfully made more than 2000 millionaires pay up 500 million dollars of owed tax, but even this modest extra cost was unacceptable to the international bourgeoisie. The result of Biden's four-year term was that the international bourgeoisie saw it as a failure: the containment of China didn't meet expectations, and too many concessions were made; the two proxy wars didn't result in decisive victories, but rather provided an outlet for domestic contradictions. This strategic overreach prompted the ruling elite to shift to Trump's contraction strategy—America must first carry out strategic contraction. This includes abandoning some of the spending to maintain “soft power” and openly using hard power threats. Secondly, America's allies must bear the responsibility for alleviating domestic crises, with manufacturing returning to the U.S. from Europe, Japan, South Korea, and other countries. This is Trump's contraction strategy: shrinking in terms of bourgeois “universal values,” shrinking in maintaining alliances and international relations, and prioritizing the stability of the U.S. to ease domestic class contradictions, thereby solidifying the global bourgeoisie's fortress in the Americas and strengthening imperialism's control over the world.

Of course, the Democrats are not foolish for not choosing Trump's strategy. Biden's administration is also attempting to bring back manufacturing, but in a

hollowed-out, financialized country, bringing back manufacturing is difficult. According to a survey published by the Financial Times in August 2023, among major domestic industry projects costing over \$100 million, projects valued at \$84 billion were delayed by months to years, and some were indefinitely suspended, accounting for about 40% of large projects. Similarly, with the policy of withdrawing investments from allies and exporting crises, wouldn't this lead to the collapse of allies first? Trump probably knows this, but the lack of manufacturing return can be remedied by constructing concentration camps, organizing stormtroopers, or sparking new wars to create an emergency state to suppress any resistance. Without the first step, there no second. If the Democrats won't do it, then the global bourgeoisie will support a new president to do it.

As of the time of writing, the U.S.'s new Secretary of State, Rubio, has already “ascended” to Panama. After talks with Rubio, Panama's Mulino stated that Panama would review agreements involving China and Chinese companies and further cooperate with the U.S. on immigration issues. However, he reiterated that the sovereignty of the Panama Canal was non-negotiable. Mulino also announced that Panama would no longer participate in China's “Belt and Road” initiative after the agreement expires. This result undoubtedly shows that Panama, under U.S. pressure, has abandoned its confrontation with America and shifted its foreign policy toward compliance. With the joyful tune of “Y.M.C.A.”, Trump is drawing the curtain of the era where the third world could swing between the Soviet and America and maintain sovereignty by China's influence. With the old attire and new dance steps, imperialism and colonialism are stepping onto the stage.