

About Trump: Paying Attention to His Actions Rather Than His Words

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Tokyo, March 6, 2025

Following the tense meeting between former President Donald Trump and President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House, British journalist Piers Morgan, host of *Uncensored*, pointed out that to understand Trump's strategy, it is more important to observe his actions rather than his statements.

This comment gained relevance shortly after, when the Trump administration decided to suspend military assistance to Ukraine and access to military intelligence information. These measures were part of a pressure strategy on the Ukrainian government, aiming to secure its acceptance not only of an agreement on the country's mineral resources but also of the peace terms promoted by Trump, which likely align with the interests of Russian President Vladimir Putin. This forms part of Trump's effort to normalize relations between the United States and Russia and, ultimately, to distance Moscow from Beijing.

It is important to note that while Europe perceives Russia as a serious threat to its security, for the United States, the primary strategic challenge is China. The Trump administration considers Russia's economy to be weakened, technologically lagging, and highly dependent on Beijing, whereas China has consolidated its economic and technological strength through a governance model in which the state and businesses operate interdependently, with centralized direction under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, particularly President Xi Jinping.

During his recent speech before Congress, Trump reiterated his intention to "take back" the Panama Canal. In this context, it is pertinent to recall Piers Morgan's words: one must pay attention to what Trump does rather than what he says. Throughout his political and business career, Trump has frequently resorted to exaggerated and provocative rhetoric, often concealing his true intentions or negotiation objectives.

In the same speech, and not by coincidence, Trump mentioned that a U.S. investment firm had acquired the port concessions of Hutchison Ports, the Chinese company that had previously managed Panama's Balboa and Cristobal ports at the Canal's entrances. Trump was referring to BlackRock, whose recent multibillion-dollar acquisition of Panama Ports, a subsidiary of Hutchison Ports, positions the firm and its strategic partners as key players in the operation of these port infrastructures in the canal area. Without a doubt, Trump feels more secure dealing with an American company at the Canal's banks in the event of a global conflict.

In the current geopolitical competition, this transaction is highly significant, alleviating concerns about Chinese control over strategic ports at the Canal's Pacific and Atlantic entrances. Washington's main concern regarding Chinese companies lies in their ties to the Chinese state, under the Chinese National Security Law, which requires citizens and companies to cooperate with the Chinese Communist Party on national security matters without due legal process.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the family of Li Ka-shing, the tycoon behind Hutchison Ports, found it appropriate to divest these assets to avoid becoming embroiled in the growing rivalry between China and the United States, in addition to the audit of Panama Ports' operations and the unconstitutionality lawsuits against the contract between the port operator and the Panamanian state.

From my perspective, Trump's statements about "taking back" the Panama Canal have been aimed from the outset at pressuring Panama to force Hutchison Ports' exit, which effectively happened with the recent acquisition of the Balboa and Cristobal port concessions by BlackRock. This move has allowed strategically aligned actors with the United States to secure key positions in the interoceanic area. It is important to note that this maneuver not only removes Hutchison Ports from the canal area but also from its port operations across Latin America.

Furthermore, it is relevant to mention that President José Raúl Mulino decided not to renew Panama's agreement with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the global infrastructure and development megaproject launched by China in 2013 under Xi Jinping's leadership. This initiative aims to strengthen commercial and economic connectivity between China and more than a hundred countries through investments in infrastructure, transportation, and energy. The United States has perceived the BRI as a geopolitical tool to expand China's influence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, with access to strategic infrastructures that could be used for military or intelligence purposes.

It is expected that Trump will continue insisting on the "recovery" of the Panama Canal. However, far from implying a military intervention, I believe this "recovery" is focused on increasing commercial influence through the strategic positioning of American companies and their allies within the Canal ecosystem. In essence, Trump seeks to consolidate the presence of economic actors aligned with Washington in the region, counteracting China's advance, which has strengthened its influence through investments in mineral resources, energy, port infrastructure, and telecommunications.

It is worth remembering that the first Cold War was characterized by the confrontation between two opposing economic models: Soviet communism, based on a highly centralized system with no private initiative, and American capitalism, which ultimately prevailed due to the Soviet Union's inability to sustain its state apparatus without a competitive and sustainable economic structure.

In this second Cold War, China has emerged with a hybrid model that combines an authoritarian communist system with strong private sector integration under strict state control, allowing it to compete globally and efficiently under the direction of the Chinese Communist Party.

Since his first presidency, Trump, along with the U.S. political elite, has recognized that China is a formidable competitor and, consequently, a threat to national security, particularly in the economic and technological domains, which underpin U.S. military power.

Therefore, in his second presidency, Trump is pursuing a disruptive approach to politics and trade, generating tension and instability both domestically and on the global stage. With this paradigm shift, Trump seeks to impose his vision on the U.S. political system and curb China's economic

and technological advance. It remains to be seen whether his strategy, marked by confrontation and chaos, will achieve its objectives or, on the contrary, become a self-inflicted risk to his own leadership.