Elon Musk: A Chinese Puppet?

Pleasing the Chinese leadership is key to Musk's business fortunes. Tesla's stock price is key to his wealth and it faces daunting competition in China and beyond from BYD.

The most influential courtier around the Oval Office, Elon Musk, has compelling sway with Donald Trump.

Two highly transactional operators

The way how both men approach the China issue is a pivotal factor in determining the degree to which the U.S. national interest as well as U.S. national security interests may be compromised, if not hollowed out.

The principal reason for that is that Trump and Musk both base their own interests and benefits calculations on their very personal vantage point.

The grave deficiencies of a transactional presidency

As far as Donald Trump is concerned, his decision-making on TikTok shows that he lacks acumen, is willful and careless — grave deficiencies of a transactional presidency.

Trump's recent U-turn on TikTok demonstrates that lobbying, personal advantage and grifting outweigh genuine national security concerns — a recurring pattern with him.

While Trump pretends to rebel against "the deep state," in reality he seeks to be devoid of any institutional restraints.

Why Elon Musk is de facto a Chinese puppet

Musk has enormous business interests in China. Much of his wealth is tied up in Tesla stock which, in turn, is dependent on the good will of Chinese officials. After all, Chinese customers account for 40% of Tesla's global sales.

Indeed, pleasing the Chinese leadership is especially important to Musk at this moment with Tesla facing daunting competition from the Chinese EV favorite, BYD.

Subservient to Xi to keep Tesla stock up

To keep Tesla stock buoyant, Musk needs both Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping's help. That, in effect, means preventing a Trump trade war.

No surprise then that Musk furthered his own business interests by pleasing Chinese officials when he convinced Trump to have prohibitions on outbound U.S. investment in key Chinese strategic sectors like AI removed from the December 19, 2024 U.S. budget bill.

Viewed in that context, nobody can be surprised that Elon Musk has even urged that Taiwan be surrendered to China. Unsurprisingly, important U.S. conservatives are now disputing his agenda.

Musk: Politically toxic in Europe

Pleasing Xi and China is especially important in light of Musk's increasing toxicity to prospective EV buyers in much of Europe.

Those well-to-do customers, who consider themselves upstanding and politically, socially as well as environmentally conscious citizens, must be disturbed by Musk's political recent declarations.

Whitewashing the right-wing extremist, pro-Putin AfD political party in Germany certainly flies in the face of many Tesla EV owners there.

Musk as a U.S. national security risk

That Musk's dependence on China makes him a significant national security risk is a fact that is even acknowledged by U.S. Republicans.

In May 2023, for instance, Vivek Ramaswamy — initially his partner in crime at the DOGE office — warned that "Tesla is increasingly beholden to China."

He added that "I have no reason to think Elon won't jump like a circus monkey when Xi Jinping calls in the hour of need."

Ramaswamy also referred to Musk as a Chinese puppet when posting on X that "the United States needs leaders who aren't in China's pocket." No real wonder then that the two men recently parted ways on the DOGE project.

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