

Pompeo lays down the law during UK visit

Robert Stevens
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The reckless character of US imperialism's actions was underscored by the visit this week of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to London.

Preceding the state visit of President Donald Trump to the UK next month, Pompeo's remit was to demand that Theresa May's government toe the line in backing the global geo-strategic imperatives of US imperialism... or else.

Virtually every word out of Pompeo mouth was a threat—either to the UK, to Washington's "strategic adversaries" Russia and China, or to those countries it is actively preparing to attack, including Venezuela and Iran.

Pompeo met with Conservative Prime Minister May, held a joint press conference with Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, and gave the Margaret Thatcher Lecture on the US/UK relationship at the Centre for Policy Studies in London.

Of particular concern was Britain's developing economic relationship with China, which is understood by the Trump administration as an existential threat to its plans for global hegemony.

Only two weeks ago, the May government provisionally agreed, at a meeting of the National Security Council (NSC), to allow Chinese conglomerate Huawei to supply "noncore" infrastructure to its planned 5G network. This flies in the face of US calls for a boycott of Huawei's products and its warning that cooperation with Huawei threatens NATO security.

The decision exposed the conflicting interests of different factions of the British ruling elite and approval of the policy required the casting vote of May herself. Such are the tensions over the UK's future political and economic strategy that the decision was leaked—the first time this has happened following an NSC meeting—with the anti-China defence minister and pro-US hawk Gavin Williamson sacked as a result.

The prospect of Chinese access to UK infrastructure prompted furious denunciations from Washington, led by Pompeo, including threats that the US could end electronic surveillance and intelligence coordination with Britain. Pompeo warned last month, "We've made clear that if the risk exceeds the threshold for the United States, we simply won't be able to share that information any longer."

In its drive for global domination, the US is breaking up the post-war order, with every country once deemed an ally now cast as a potential adversary. Immediately prior to Pompeo's arrival in London, he cancelled a scheduled trip to Germany in order to visit Iraq.

In Baghdad, he issued further threats against Iran, declaring that the US opposes states "interfering" in other countries and stands ready "to ensure that Iraq is a sovereign, independent nation." This was just three days after the US announced the dispatch of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and US Air Force bombers to the Persian Gulf region to threaten Iran.

Such hypocrisy cannot conceal the fact that the US is interfering in every country, including those that are historically its closest allies. On the UK decision to work with Huawei, Pompeo warned, "From America's perspective, each country has a sovereign right to make its own decision about how to deal with the challenge." But this had strict limits that the US would enforce. "With respect to 5G... we are making our views very well known."

Like a mafia boss making the offer that cannot be refused, he added that he had "great confidence that the United Kingdom will never take an action that will break the special relationship."

The consequences were made clear: "The US has an obligation to ensure the places where we operate, places where US information is, places where we have national security risks, that they operate within trusted networks and that is what we will do."

This designation covered the entire planet.

In response, Hunt promised that the UK would not “compromise” its ability to share intelligence with the US. No final decision had been made on cooperation with Huawei on the UK’s 5G and the government was still “considering the evidence.” He hailed “the security relationship that we have with the United States,” which has “underpinned the international order since 1945,” adding that “the preservation of that is our number one foreign policy priority.”

The political destabilisation of the UK by the Trump administration is extraordinary in its scope. While heavily supportive of Brexit—as a means to further undermine what Trump describes as the European Union “cartel”—Trump insists that Brexit must be on US terms. This conflicts with sections of the UK bourgeoisie who see Brexit as an opportunity to better exploit global investment and trade opportunities, especially with China and India.

The UK and the US are also in conflict over Iran. Last week, Washington refused to extend waivers to eight countries that had previously been allowed to continue to import Iranian oil and natural gas, although at reduced quantities.

In a sharply worded response last Thursday, a statement from Brussels signed by the high representative of the European Union and the foreign ministers of France, Germany and the UK declared that they “take note with regret and concern of the decision by the United States not to extend waivers with regards to trade in oil with Iran.” It went on to say, “We also note with concern the decision by the United States not to fully renew waivers for nuclear non-proliferation projects in the framework of the JCPoA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action).”

It added, “We deeply regret the re-imposition of sanctions by the United States following their withdrawal from the JCPoA.”

Trump abrogated the UN-endorsed JCPoA nuclear accord last year, threatening tougher sanctions against Tehran, which are now being implemented.

France, Germany and the UK stressed that the JCPoA remained “a crucial element of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and essential for our national and shared European security.”

In a further rejoinder to the US, they declared, “The remaining participants to the JCPoA are committed to

working on the preservation and maintenance of financial channels and exports for Iran, together with third countries interested in supporting the JCPoA.”

Referencing Washington’s declared “great power” adversaries, it insisted, “We encourage all countries, including Russia and China as JCPoA participants, to make their best efforts to pursue the legitimate trade that the agreement allows for, through concrete steps.”

US bellicosity against Iran was ratcheted up in London. Pompeo denounced the Iranian leadership as “lawless” and bracketed it with China and Russia, warning, “Now is not the time for either of us [the US and UK] to go wobbly...”

Where there was unanimity between Pompeo and the May government was over the regime-change operation against Nicolas Maduro’s government in Venezuela. Pompeo was asked his thoughts on UK Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn’s “endorsement” of Maduro, a reference to Corbyn’s criticism of the US for “outside interference” in Venezuela.

This was a planted question, with Sky News reporting that it came from *townhall.com* —a website with close links to Trump.

Pompeo responded, “It is disgusting to see leaders, in not only the United Kingdom, but the United States as well, who continue to support the murderous dictator Maduro... It is not in either of our country’s best interests for those leaders to continue to advocate on their behalf.”

Hunt made sure to equate the Maduro regime with socialism. In a reply summing up the fear of the ruling elite over the growth of political opposition within the working class to social inequality, which is fuelling an international strike wave and rising opposition to militarism and war, Hunt said that Labour Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell “describes this [the Maduro government] as socialism in action and I think people need to draw their own conclusions about what his own plans might be for the UK.”



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