US-British relations hit bottom following ambassador's leaked Trump criticism

Chris Marsden
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Infighting in ruling circles looks set to claim the scalp of Britain's ambassador to the US, after his scathing criticisms of President Donald Trump were leaked.

Sir Kim Darroch's secret cables and briefing notes to Prime Minister Theresa May were delivered up to ferociously pro-Brexit *Mail on Sunday* journalist Isabel Oakeshott.

Her report states that Darroch described Trump "as 'inept,' 'insecure' and 'incompetent'… warning London that the White House was 'uniquely dysfunctional' and that the President's career could end in 'disgrace'."

He described conflicts within Trump's White House as "knife fights," warned that Trump could have been indebted to "dodgy Russians," that his "economic policies could wreck the world trade system," his presidency could "crash and burn" and "we could be at the beginning of a downward spiral ... that leads to disgrace and downfall."

Darroch expressed "fears that Trump could still attack Iran" and warned, "We don't really believe this Administration is going to become substantially more normal; less dysfunctional; less unpredictable; less faction riven; less diplomatically clumsy and inept." Despite this, he wrote that Trump might, "emerge from the flames, battered but intact, like Schwarzenegger in the final scenes of *The Terminator*."

Though Trump was "dazzled" by royal pomp and pageantry during his state visit to the UK in June, Darroch concluded the White House was "still the land of America First."

The quotes are drawn from confidential papers, including a letter with a "strictly limited" circulation to National Security Adviser Sir Mark Sedwill from as early as June 2017. Also cited is Darroch's assessment from June 22 this year, that US policy on Iran is "incoherent, chaotic" and unlikely to "become more coherent any time soon. This is a divided Administration."

Another leak warns of future "divergences of approach" over Brexit. Oakeshott comments, "There is mounting evidence that Brexit has politicised many mandarins, with officials who privately support Brexit accusing the Civil Service of trying to stop the UK leaving the EU." Darroch is "widely regarded as a europhile," she adds.

Trump's response was predictable, with the president lashing out at May just as savagely as against Darroch. "The wacky ambassador that the UK foisted upon the United States is not someone we are thrilled with, a very stupid guy," he tweeted. "He should speak to his country, and prime minister May, about their failed Brexit negotiation, and not be upset with my criticism of how badly it was handled.

"I told her how to do that deal, but she went her own foolish way—was unable to get it done. A disaster!"

Faced with this backlash, official statements from Number 10 claiming that, "The ambassador remains in post and he continues to carry out his duties with the full support of the prime minister" carry little weight.

May's "full support" for Darroch has a short expiry date, with both on the verge of retirement—in May's case as early as July 23. But Darroch may be sacrificed earlier, even at the risk of angering top civil servants and diplomatic staff who would both endorse his views and defend him for doing his job in honestly advising the government.

Darroch is scheduled to leave his post at the end of the year. But Trump has already withdrawn his invitation to a state dinner for the Emir of Qatar. By yesterday, Darroch was missing from a planned meeting with "senior White House adviser" Ivanka

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Trump. Britain's Secretary of State for International Trade will have grovelled alone before Trump's daughter, having told the BBC, "I will be apologizing for the fact that either our civil service or elements of our political class have not lived up to the expectations that either we have or the United States has about their behaviour, which in this particular case has lapsed in a most extraordinary and unacceptable way."

Trump's attack on May over Brexit is the latest broadside supportive of the breakup of the European Union and intervening politically on behalf of her likely successor Boris Johnson. Yesterday, Johnson boasted of his "good relationship with the White House" and with "our most important ally. The United States is, has been, will be and for the foreseeable future our number one political military friend."

Asked about Trump's criticism of May over Brexit, he added, "Myself, I have said some pretty critical things about the Brexit negotiations so far and that's one of the reasons I am standing tonight and one of the reasons I am putting myself forward." He would "Stop being so defeatist in our approach to the EU negotiations and maybe be a lot more positive about our country and what it can do."

Nigel Farage, the Brexit Party leader who was mooted by Trump as a potential future US ambassador and adviser to a future Conservative leader on how to deal with the EU, was more candid still. He told the BBC "our civil service, our Foreign Office" needed to be cleared of anti-Trump personnel and that a new US ambassador should be "a retired business figure, something like that."

"If you take Boris at his word, people like Kim Darroch simply shouldn't be around," he added.

Johnson's Tory leadership rival, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, was left to express his disagreement with Darroch's comments, while stressing how vital it was that diplomatic staff "feel that they are able to express … frank views."

The pro-Remain *Guardian* was despairing of this pro-Brexit coup, with Diplomatic Editor Patrick Wintour reduced to playing the nationalist card by warning, "The existing danger for Johnson is that if Trump lauds his elevation too much, he will find himself portrayed not as prime minister, but as the governor of the 51st state. If the consequence of Brexit is obeisance to Trump, that is not a good look, including among the patriotic classes that do not view national liberation in terms of swapping vassalage to Brussels for Washington."

The global decline of British imperialism is real and has been starkly revealed in the post-Brexit crisis that Wintour portrays as a choice of potential masters. But a far more dangerous development is at the heart of the UK's crisis—the growth of inter-imperialist antagonisms that threaten to plunge the entire world into trade war and military conflict.

At present the working class has been prevented from offering a political response to this growing danger by the Labour Party, which is divided over Brexit along the same lines as the Tory party.

Even as the media was dominated by the US-UK fallout, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn tried yet again to appease his Blairite wing and the trade union barons, stating that the next Tory leader must hold a second referendum before taking Britain out of the EU. He pledged that Labour will campaign for Remain to stop "no deal or a damaging Tory Brexit" that did not protect jobs and services.

However, Corbyn does not say what his position would be if Labour won a general election and was in charge of Brexit negotiations. This effort to placate his opponents will not satisfy the Blairites—not only because they want an unequivocal Remain position but because their end goal is to secure total control of the party and to purge it of its left-oriented members.

Revealed once again is Corbyn's absolute hostility to any call for the working class to seize advantage of the crisis of bourgeois rule to take down a despised and divided Tory government.

To change this means workers and young people breaking from Labour and rejecting both the nationalist agenda of Brexit, which is centred on an alliance with Washington and the Pentagon, and the false alternative of remaining in an EU trade bloc built on austerity and militarism. It demands a unified struggle by workers in Britain with their class brothers and sisters in Europe, the US and internationally for socialism.

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