

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Memo to the House Foreign Affairs Committee: Five Questions to Ask Pompeo

On Wednesday, March 27, the House Foreign Affairs Committee will question Secretary of State Michael Pompeo on the State Department's foreign policy strategy and FY2020 budget request. Many members will rightly ask about the [contents](#) of the budget proposal, a crippling [24-percent cut](#) to the department's overall funding as well as a major structural overhaul of USAID. There are, however, other vital issues in play. Foremost on our minds is that under Secretary Pompeo's leadership the State Department, as the center of U.S. diplomacy, should advance peacemaking. Instead, in multiple ways, Pompeo has championed the case for war.

Many of Secretary Pompeo's current strategies undermine what should be at the heart of American diplomacy: leadership on urgent challenges and values-driven global engagement. This will haunt U.S. foreign policy now and for years to come. **With that in mind, here are five questions members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee should ask Pompeo:**

1. Why are you militarizing and dismantling American diplomacy?

Despite Congressional efforts to resist Trump's previous proposed budget cuts, the State Department is still largely underfunded and [understaffed](#). The FY2020 request would not only further impede the State Department's ability to successfully operate in countries across the world, but would also majorly undermine the department's diplomatic tools by prioritizing security spending that does little to make Americans safer or mitigate harm to others around the world.

Rather than fully funding the international organizations that help vulnerable communities and investing in development initiatives that tackle poverty and inequality, the State Department's budget request [prioritizes](#) funding for embassy and border security. It also seeks to expand Foreign Military Financing, a program that uses taxpayer dollars to give grants to foreign militaries so they can buy U.S. weapons - weapons that have already made the United States [complicit](#) in war crimes in countries like Yemen.

The U.S.' military-first approach to global engagement has abjectly [failed](#). To keep us safe, the U.S. must fully resource the State Department and invest in non-military solutions to conflict resolution - so why does Pompeo propose spending the State Department's limited funds on hard security and expanding U.S. funding of foreign militaries?

2. Do you believe climate change is a threat to national security?

“Climate change” is mentioned a single time the State Department’s FY2020 justification and only in the context of contributions to international organizations - which the budget proposes cutting by more than seven percent. While the Trump administration continues to deny the threat of climate change, communities at home and abroad have already been impacted, from rising sea levels in the South Pacific to wildfires in California. The disruptive impact of climate change has also been [linked](#) to increasing the likelihood of mass migration, violent conflict, and political instability -- patterns clearly visible in countries like Yemen and Syria.

When the scientific community and [even the Pentagon](#) agree that climate change poses a major global challenge, why is resourcing climate adaptation and mitigation not a priority of the State Department?

3. Why are you, the U.S.’ lead diplomat, helping to lead the march to war against Iran?

Sixteen years ago last week, President George W. Bush announced the invasion of Iraq to rid the world of an “[outlaw regime](#).” In speeches and materials released by the State Department, Pompeo uses the same phrase to refer to Iran. He has led the charge in justifying withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and argued in favor of confronting Iran as the “largest state sponsor of terror.” Despite experts’ [assessments](#), Pompeo has also [claimed](#) that Iran serves as a sanctuary for al-Qaeda, an argument that could be twisted to legally justify U.S. military action against Iran under the 2001 AUMF.

Furthermore, Pompeo has protected the Gulf States and repeatedly condemned any Congressional efforts to end U.S. support for the disastrous Saudi and UAE-led intervention in Yemen’s war, which has created the world’s largest humanitarian crisis. How can Pompeo criticize Iran’s domestic and foreign policies, but simultaneously embolden Gulf States guilty of similar abuses?

4. Do you believe authoritarianism is on the rise, and if so, how can you stop it while simultaneously emboldening dictators and autocrats?

From Hungary to the Philippines to Saudi Arabia, authoritarian leaders have been [empowered](#) across the world. Meanwhile, the U.S. has abdicated its leadership on the international stage by withdrawing from treaties, attacking core alliances and international institutions, and refusing to condemn allies and partners that act with impunity.

Following the brutal murder of *Washington Post* contributor, Jamal Khashoggi, Pompeo was [pictured](#) smiling alongside Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, who orchestrated Khashoggi’s murder. Last week, Pompeo visited Israel to [bolster](#) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s re-election campaign, despite Netanyahu’s election deal with far-right parties that promote hate and his advancement of settlement policies that directly oppose U.S. support for a two-state solution. How can the State Department rise to the challenge of

confronting authoritarianism around the world when Secretary Pompeo refuses to call out the behavior of the U.S.' closest allies and partners?

5. Do you believe a U.S. military intervention in Venezuela would help the Venezuelan people? If not, why won't you take military force off the table?

With both inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions, the Trump administration has been inching towards war in Venezuela. Pompeo appointed Elliott Abrams, of Iran-Contra infamy, to be the U.S.' Special Envoy to the country, recalling a period of U.S. interventionist policy in Latin America that enabled genocide. The Trump administration has also repeatedly refused to rule out the use of military force to oust the Maduro regime.

The State Department's strategy towards Venezuela must be centered on the needs and well-being of the country's people. Unfortunately, the weaponization of humanitarian aid and the imposition of harsh sanctions are only [exacerbating](#) the suffering of Venezuelans. How can Pompeo believe the U.S.' current interventionist and provocative policies will lead to a peaceful political transition in Venezuela, when the history of U.S. foreign policy in the region has proven otherwise?