



# WTH is going on in the world? Secretary of State Pompeo on China, Iran, Venezuela and partisan politics at home

Episode #55 | June 1, 2020 | Danielle Pletka, Marc Thiessen, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

Danielle Pletka: Hi, I'm Danielle Pletka.

Marc Thiessen: And I'm Marc Thiessen.

Danielle Pletka: Welcome to our podcast, What the Hell Is Going On. Marc, what the hell is actually going on?

Marc Thiessen: What the hell is going on is we've got the Secretary of State on the podcast with us today. Mike Pompeo is joining us, second time in a few months. So I guess he's a regular on the podcast, which is awesome. And what prompted us to invite him is there've been a series of attacks on Mike Pompeo in the press that have been just so over the top. Tom Friedman had a column saying Mike Pompeo is the worst Secretary of State in history. Daniel Drezner had a column in the post saying Mike Pompeo is a colossal prig. Why are people attacking Mike Pompeo in such a personal and vicious way, Dany?

Danielle Pletka: Look, I think that it is part and parcel of the growing hysterical nature of American political dialogue. We've all gone back to third grade and we are accusing people of being meanies and prigs and Tom Friedman wrote that this is his headline, "Mike Pompeo is the worst Secretary of State ever." I'm sorry, even in Tom Friedman's lifetime, how about, I don't know, Rex Tillerson? How about, I don't know, Warren Christopher? You and I both knew Warren Christopher. Not a bad human being but not a terribly effective Secretary of State. Why does Pompeo come in for this vitriol? What do you think?

Marc Thiessen: It's funny that the Friedman column was particularly bad because he was trying to basically say that this most recent terrorist attack on a US military base was Pompeo's Benghazi. Well, no, it wasn't because number one, Hillary Clinton was Secretary of State at the time that a US diplomatic facility was attacked. There was no diplomatic facility involved in this. A diplomatic facility that was in a war zone and that had requested more security that she denied. And then that basically she left, then went around blaming all of this on an internet video. Very different from a terrorist attack on a military base. So it was just a stupid, stupid column.

Danielle Pletka: It is part of a tenor of mindlessness and Donald Trump has come in for his full share of criticism on our podcast. You've tried to call balls and strikes. I certainly do. And when the president of the United States went after an MSNBC host, who is a pretty vicious partisan in his own right, you were one of the first people out there condemning it because this doesn't serve any of us. And at a time when we are

looking at real challenges, when we are looking at an escalation in repression and violence from Beijing, in which we are looking at starvation going on in the streets of Venezuela, all of these things beg the question, did you really not have something else to say today?

- Marc Thiessen: You're exactly right, Dany. And there are so many important issues that we are facing. You've got, as you say, China ending Hong Kong's autonomy by fiat ignoring the Hong Kong legislature and passing it through the People's Congress in Beijing. We've got the coronavirus that has been spreading across the world because of Chinese totalitarianism. They're increasing threats to Taiwan. You've got Iran that is spreading terrorism and malevolence throughout the world. There's so many important issues. And so I think what we should do is ignore these people and turn to Mike Pompeo and find out what he thinks about all these important issues that are facing the country.
- Danielle Pletka: Right. Well, I really want to hear about China. I want to hear about Iran. I want to hear about Venezuela and I know you have some questions on top of mine. Let's turn to the Secretary of State.
- Marc Thiessen: All right. Mike, welcome to the podcast.
- Secretary Pompeo: Great. It's great to be with you both.
- Danielle Pletka: Mr. Secretary, I really want to ask you about Hong Kong and China. This has really been the year of China in so many ways. And as soon as COVID started to fade, they stepped up their aggression in Hong Kong. We had Joshua Wong on the podcast a couple weeks ago and they are really worried. You've taken some steps but tell me what you think the US options are.
- Secretary Pompeo: Well, Danielle, that's an important topic and it needs to be put in context. Your point about the behavior of the Chinese Communist Party, which continued to hide and obfuscate and delay the global response to the pandemic that began in Wuhan. Now the actions that the Chinese Communist Party has made with respect to destroying the amazing freedoms of the people of Hong Kong decades before the promise that they had made to the people of Hong Kong ran out. Those are just two pieces of the behavior of this regime from the Chinese Communist Party, the nature and the activity that they're undertaking, the continued efforts to steal intellectual property, to advance in the South China Sea.
- Secretary Pompeo: We see even today increasing forces of China moved up to the north of India on the line of actual control there on the Indian border. These are the kinds of actions that authoritarian regimes take and they have a real impact, not only on the Chinese people there in China and Hong Kongers in Hong Kong, but a real impact on people all around the world. And the United States has a responsibility and the capability to push back against that, ensure that the American people are properly served by foreign policy that recognizes the threats that emanate from China today.
- Marc Thiessen: So how are we going to push back on China? In particular let's focus on Hong Kong for a minute because this is the crisis of the moment. How are we going to push back on Hong Kong on China regarding Hong Kong?
- Secretary Pompeo: You bet, Marc. Let's focus on Hong Kong. First, look, we always hold out hope that

the Chinese Communist Party will change direction and continue to honor the commitments that they made under international law, the treaty that they signed on for. Our actions will certainly be aimed at trying to convince them that that's the right course of action. It's what we hope for, for the world and for the people of Hong Kong, but in the event that they don't go in that direction, which is, I think, the more likely case given what we've seen them do over the past several weeks, the United States is going to impose a cost on the decision makers who deny this freedom to the people of Hong Kong.

Secretary Pompeo: We will also, as I said in [the statement](#) that I made this week that I was required to do in a report to Congress, we no longer have a highly autonomous region. That means that the behavior and the relationships that we have with Hong Kong will look more like the relationships we have with China. That is the preference set that was given to Hong Kong as a result of the Chinese commitment to freedom in Hong Kong. And one country and two systems will begin to look less and less like there are really two systems as a reflection of the fact that there aren't. So the President will lay out the range of responses that we're going to undertake. And then in addition to that, I was on the phone with my Australian counterpart early this morning, been talking to my counterparts all across the region and across the world, I think the world has come to understand that a commitment from the Chinese Communist Party is no longer something that they can rely upon. And that has real implications for how we opt to respond to what they're doing in Hong Kong today.

Marc Thiessen: One more follow-up before I turn it to Dany. The law that the Chinese have passed is supposed to take effect probably in September, which is the same time that Hong Kong is supposed to hold free elections for the legislative council. Joshua Wong, as Dany said, was on the podcast recently and he said that the pro-democracy movement is planning to run candidates. Based on their success in the district elections, they think that they can win a majority in the legislative council. What happens if China tries to cancel the election, stop pro-democracy people from running or cracks down on people in the streets who protest in response to that? What are we going to do?

Secretary Pompeo: Well, we're very concerned that Carrie Lam, who's responsible for the holding of the elections will make a decision because she thinks the elections won't go the way she wants them to go, will either delay the election or cancel the elections and use the ruse, the fear that there would be violence or something like that, which is just unfounded. The Hong Kongers have held successful elections for years and years. So we are urging Hong Kong to continue to move forward for those. But in the event that they make the decision not to hold those elections, I think you'll see that as really the final nail in the coffin with respect to any pretense that Hong Kong...

Secretary Pompeo: Marc, I'm sure you've been there. The financial center that it is, the freedom that the people have there, the ability to speak their mind that the people have had in Hong Kong for all these years, that will be gone. And I think you'll see the United States respond in a way that reflects that changed circumstance, changed circumstances that were driven not by British policy, not by American policy, not by UN policy, but by the policy of the Chinese Communist Party.

Danielle Pletka: So Mr. Secretary, you mentioned Australia, you mentioned India, you mentioned the South China Sea. Marc and I have been talking a lot about this both with people in Hong Kong and elsewhere. And one of the things that Marc has suggested to me is that he thinks that the Chinese are acting from a place of weakness and fear and that

that's one of the things that's driving this strife and aggression that we've seen over the last six months. Sure, there was a bunch beforehand but we've really seen an escalation over that time period. What do you see as the root of this?

Secretary Pompeo: Your point is very well-taken. It's not just over the past six months. We've seen over the past number of years, continued Chinese build out of the military capabilities and then continually more aggressive action. I mentioned India. You mentioned the South China Sea. We see these same kind of things with them attempting to build ports around the world as part of their Belt and Road Initiative, places where they can move the People's Liberation Army, Navy. We've seen their continued efforts to expand militarily. Danielle, I'll be honest. For 20 years, the United States has not responded to these things in a real way. We've viewed the 1.5 billion people in the Chinese market as so important to the American economy and the risk that the Chinese would respond by closing us out for the favor of some other nation.

Secretary Pompeo: I think people have just been too worried about that to actually take the responses that we take to every other country that behaves in the way that China has done. President Trump hasn't done that. President Trump's made it very clear, whether it's the signature issue on trade, where he made clear the responsibility for there to be fair and reciprocal trade but now beginning to move to all the other elements of power that the Chinese Communist Party is trying to expand. So I think you've seen too our Department of Defense do its part to begin to make sure that we do the things that are right to challenge this continued expansion and aggression in a way that is responsible. And I'm confident we'll continue to do that.

Danielle Pletka: Do you see, Mr. Secretary, our allies standing with us? We've certainly seen concerns coming out of Australia, even coming out of Europe, which has been very hesitant as we saw when England made the wrong decision on 5G. Do you think there's going to be a turnaround among our allies on this question?

Secretary Pompeo: I spent two and a half years trying to make sure that we had the facts out there, that I was articulating the risks. Whether those were risks, you mentioned Huawei and ZTE, whether these were risks associated with the Belt and Road Initiative, diplomatic input, big diplomatic operations all around the world where the Chinese Communist Party is attempting to use their diplomats to exert political influence inside of these countries and undermine many of these countries' governments. I think you have seen a shift over the past two years but most dramatically over the past six months as a result of what I think was laid bare during the coronavirus issue, the nature of an authoritarian regime, how they respond in a time of crisis, how they hide and use disinformation and how all of the incentives inside of the country are set up to prevent protecting other people around the world.

Secretary Pompeo: I could spend a lot of time talking about the fact they closed down Hubei province but continued to demand that the World Health Organization not identify for the world the magnitude of the threat. I think the world has seen that. And so you mentioned Australia, you mentioned the United Kingdom. I think many countries are beginning to recognize the threat that is to their people and to their nation as a result of the nature of the Chinese Communist Party and its continued efforts to expand its reach around the world. And I'm confident that will continue to grow and the United States will lead the way in making sure that group of freedom loving nations, who found their nations on the idea of individual rights and human dignity, will stay together. And we will ultimately be successful at delivering on those for the people of each of our democratic nations.

- Marc Thiessen: So if China were to use these new security laws to crack down in Hong Kong, the goal of our sanctions and policies is to tell them that they're going to pay a huge price for that in Hong Kong in terms of capital flight and brain drain and Hong Kong won't be the city it was, the cash cow it was for them as a result. One of the things the British have done is they're giving right of abode to Hong Kongers. If they don't feel comfortable in Hong Kong anymore, they can leave and bring their entrepreneurial creativity and energy to Britain. Are we going to consider that as a possibility to make the United States welcome Hong Kong people to come here and bring their entrepreneurial creativity to our country?
- Secretary Pompeo: We are considering it. I don't know precisely how it'll play out. The British have, as you know, a different relationship. A lot of these folks have British national passports. There's a long history between Hong Kong and the United Kingdom that's very different, but we're taking a look at it. And if I might add one more point, Marc, your point about imposing costs on China by denying them the enormous financial benefit they received as a result of Hong Kong being the world's capital center, we will do other things too. We don't want to punish the Hong Kong people. That is not our objective.
- Secretary Pompeo: It may be the corollary result of the Chinese Communist Party's actions, but we will also take actions that are directed at those people who made the decisions, who strayed from international law and refused to honor the commitments that the Chinese Communist Party made to the world as a result of this treaty. And so we will not be limiting ourselves to things that impact Hong Kong, but also doing our best to deter China from continuing its efforts to deny freedom to peoples to whom they had previously promised to them.
- Danielle Pletka: If we can just switch gears for a moment, I'd like to quickly ask about Iran. This has been no holiday for bad guys. We've been talking about China, but the administration is also talking about a potential lifting of UN sanctions on conventional weapons for Iran. I know a lot of this has been behind the scenes. What do you see as the escalating dangers from Iran and how optimistic are you that we're going to be able to prevail in snapping back those kinds of sanctions onto Iran?
- Secretary Pompeo: The continuing threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran remains. It has violated a number of its nuclear commitments that it signed up for under the JCPOA. We have continued our campaign. The most obvious thing that people see us do is the sanctions that we put in place but the campaign is much greater than that. We've put resources in place to deter Iranian aggression on the ground. We've put diplomatic power behind uniting the world in a number of ways. With respect to Iran's terrorism, we convinced the Germans just last month to designate Hezbollah. We're working with partners all around the world to continue to constrain Iran's capacity to ultimately get a nuclear weapon and to limit their capabilities on missiles and terrorism as well. As you mentioned, in October of this year, on the 18th of October, the Russians will be able to sell equipment to Iran.
- Secretary Pompeo: They're lining it up. The Chinese will be able to sell [inaudible 15:54] to Iran. I'm confident looking to figure out how they can make money from that. We have a plan that we believe will successfully prevent that from happening. We are hopeful. We're hopeful the world will unite, that the United Kingdom or other parties to the JCPOA will recognize the threat from the expiration of the arms embargo that occurs just, goodness, a few months from now and themselves use their rights to make sure that doesn't happen. We'd love to extend the prohibition on arm sales to Iran by

agreement of all of the parties, all of the parties to the participants in [UNSCR]2231. In the event that doesn't happen, we're going to use our diplomatic capability to prevent it from happening. It's too important.

Secretary Pompeo: It's too dangerous to the world to allow Iran after just what would be now five years of the agreement, to be able to, again, arm themselves, to purchase high end weapons systems from the Russians and the Iranians, making it even more difficult for us to stop them from building out their nuclear program. It was a fundamental flaw of the JCPOA and we're determined to do everything we can to prevent that expiration of the arms embargo from taking place. I'm confident that we can do it.

Marc Thiessen: Let me shift to the International Criminal Court. I understand that the ICC is now pursuing an investigation of the United States for alleged war crimes in Afghanistan. That was the exact thing that we didn't sign up to the court and we're not a party to the court and we warned that eventually the ICC would be investigating the United States even though we're not a state party and the American people haven't given consent to its jurisdiction. Are you concerned about that? And what are we doing about it?

Secretary Pompeo: I'm very concerned about it, Marc. We've done a lot of work in my three and a half years, first as director of the CIA and now in my current role. You'll see, in the coming days, a series of announcements, not just from the State Department, all across the United States government, that attempt to push back against what the ICC is up to. I use the phrase ICC, Marc, because it's difficult for me to conceptualize what goes on there as a court. This is not a court in the sense of what we would understand here in the United States as an article three court independent with all the rights and due processes that are there. We also never gave consent. And under international law, one of the key features of exercise of power by body such as the ICC is that you say yep, I want to be part of that. We never signed up for the [inaudible 18:08] treaty.

Secretary Pompeo: We didn't do it for the very reasons that you described. And now this court has become corrupted and is attempting to go after the young men and women of the United States of America who fought so hard. And they did so under the rule of law in the most civilized nation in the world, the United States of America. And they're now suggesting somehow that our ability to, when we have someone does something wrong, our inability to police that up is inadequate. And they think that the ICC ought to be able to haul these young men and women in. We will never let that happen. We're working along many fronts to prevent it from happening. They're doing this not just to us, but to Israel where they're beginning to look into what took place in the West Bank. Again, it's completely inappropriate.

Secretary Pompeo: It's completely inconsistent with international law. And it puts our young men and women at risk and it's something President Trump and our team aren't going to permit to happen. I don't want to get ahead of the announcements we're going to make in the coming days but I think you'll see. And I think that the ICC and the world will see that we are determined to prevent having Americans and our friends and allies in Israel and elsewhere hauled in by this corrupt ICC.

Danielle Pletka: I want to just take you back quickly to a follow-up on the Iran sanctions question. Big headlines in recent days about an illegal Iranian oil shipment to our friends, the dictatorship in Venezuela. I know that there was a lot of debate going on inside the administration about what our options were. What should we do? Ultimately the

decision was made to let that go. Can you help us out just with your thinking on A, what to do about that and B, why we decided not to somehow block the shipment of that oil?

Secretary Pompeo: Yeah. I don't want to talk about internal deliberations, but we did manage to stop, I think it ended up being four of seven or four of nine of the vessels that were bringing gasoline to Maduro. But we have a sanctions regime in place on the Islamic Republic of Iran and a sanctions regime in place with respect to Venezuela. Those regimes are never perfect at enforcement. We've had real luck. We've taken Iran from about three million barrels a day down to, I guess last month it was perhaps as little as 70,000 barrels with an average of under half a million barrels a day for, I think it's the last six or eight months now. So the sanctions have been very effective but whether it's North Korea or Venezuela or Iran, we never get perfect enforcement. We have to make good decisions about how to do that rationally, how to achieve it.

Secretary Pompeo: The American people should know, we watched what happened there. We understand what happened there. We observed all of the activity around it and there will be people who engage in these activities who try to violate American sanctions who will ultimately be held accountable for what took place. This was just enough gasoline for a couple of weeks in Venezuela. I wish that it had not gotten there. We're watching it. We know that this will happen again. And the world should watch as we do everything we can to make sure that we enforce these sanction in ways that make sense for the American people.

Marc Thiessen: In the wake of this failed private invasion that happened recently, what are we going to do to get rid of Maduro? Is it a realistic policy to try and flip people in the regime or is he going to have to be removed in a more robust way?

Secretary Pompeo: Marc, you've been around this stuff a long time. These leaders stay in place until precisely the moment they do not. And Jim Baker reminded me that days before the regime fell, the former communist regime fell, people were writing in the Washington Post about how the administration's policies had failed and they would never leave and it would be there forever. I think that's the way these go. I couldn't tell you and I've never made any commitment nor has the President about when Maduro will leave but we know that we're determined to do everything we can to prove that day will come. And so the actions that we have taken and will continue to take will drive an effort to build out a democratic Venezuela. That's the mission set. It's not just Maduro leaving. The Cubans have to go too. To the extent the Cubans remain there, the security apparatus, the people that are actually around Maduro today, you still won't be able to have a set of free and fair elections so the Venezuelan people can restore their own democracy.

Secretary Pompeo: We built out a big coalition, several dozen. I think it's now 60 nations all working together to deliver that outcome for the Venezuelan people. I couldn't tell you by what means that will ultimately be achieved, but I am very confident that the Venezuelan people understand the horrors that have been imposed on them by Nicolas Maduro, by some of the most senior military leaders. We saw the Department of Justice decisions on indictments against some of the narco-trafficking that was taking place amongst those senior leaders. But we do hope. We think there are people inside the Venezuela military today, fairly senior people who understand that this path forward doesn't work for them, for their families and those around them. And in the end, there will be good decisions made that help Venezuela restore its own democracy.

- Marc Thiessen: So Dany had an exit question for you because we wanted to touch on all these political attacks that have been waged against you recently and give you a chance to say something. Dany, go ahead.
- Danielle Pletka: It hasn't escaped any of us who live in Washington that there's been a certain coarsening of the political debate over recent years. One of the things that prompted me to ask you to join us was these particularly nasty and personal articles about you. Now, the President who's the head of the Republican Party is part of that fight that's always going to be going on. It's highly politicized, it's a highly politicized role and that comes with the territory. I've really never seen personal attacks on the Secretary of State in the way that I have in recent weeks. And again, I'm sure you don't pay attention to this sort of garbage but I'm curious why you think there has been this sharpening of attacks on you and on your office of Secretary of State in recent weeks.
- Secretary Pompeo: Danielle, we live in a time where there's this pointed sharp criticism. Look, there was a piece the other day that said I was the worst Secretary of State of all time. It was about policy. Fair enough. Those are reasonable debates. These attacks, people have attacked me for my Christian faith. They've come after my wife. The allegations have all been largely unfounded. They broke out when I made the recommendation to the President that we had an Inspector General that was leaking information that was instigating investigations as a direct result of policy decisions that they didn't like. It's just not how inspector general is supposed to work. And then the flood gates opened. And there are these series of personal attacks. I don't know what motivated them. I regret them. I don't pay a lot of attention to them in the sense of I've got a lot going on and I don't want to give them the credit and distract me from the mission that I have on behalf of President Trump.
- Secretary Pompeo: He's got the same thing. He's had these same kinds of personal attacks on him. I don't know the motivation. I do know that they're not constructive in a democracy. They don't help to have people talking about false things about what I did, what my wife did when we are trying to serve. And if people disagree with the decisions we've made, so be it. But Senator Menendez came after me for going back to the state of Kansas. I think I've been back four times in three and a half years. It's my home. I love it there. I miss Kansas. And he filed a complaint with the Office of Special Counsel and unsurprisingly, Office of Special Counsel came back and said, "Well, I don't have any evidence there's anything wrong here." It's the kind of thing, and the stories are just out there. They're legion and they repeat themselves.
- Secretary Pompeo: And then they first get printed in some rag and then Politico picks them up. And then the next thing you know, they're on CNN or MSNBC. It's not constructive. It doesn't help the State Department deliver its diplomatic mission around the world. And I hope only that we all can recognize they're not appropriate. They're not the right thing to do. And we can all start to get this right.
- Marc Thiessen: Well, Mr. Secretary, we're really grateful that you joined us on the podcast.
- Secretary Pompeo: Oh, that's very kind. Thank you all. Thank you all very much for your time today. Goodbye.
- Marc Thiessen: I'm glad we ended where we did with Mike because the reality is, is that in the end, who cares what Tom Friedman writes or Daniel Drezner writes about Mike Pompeo, but Bob Menendez is the former chairman and now ranking member of the Senate



Foreign Relations Committee, a committee that you and I know well because we spent many, many years on the senior professional staff of that committee that has really important responsibilities in terms of freedom around the world, foreign policy threats and all the rest of it. And Bob Menendez is spending his time asking the Special Counsel to run investigations of Mike Pompeo for violations of the Hatch Act. We never did that kind of stuff when Helms was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. I don't remember him ever asking the Special Counsel to investigate Warren Christopher or Madeleine Albright. We conducted oversight. We were trying to move the administration's policy in the right direction. And it just seems people can't get past their loathing and hatred of individuals, of the President and his team that they're just not doing their jobs.

Danielle Pletka: And the funny thing about that is and I've heard many of my Democratic friends say the same thing, you want good people in this administration. You want good people to be executing American foreign policy, American national security policy. You don't actually want to drive the good ones away. And I have to say that Menendez letter was a complete fishing expedition, but it reminded me actually, I was talking to some friends who had served in government at the same time and they were noting that no trip by John Kerry was complete without a day or two stop-over in Paris to go to his favorite restaurant. I don't recall seeing an investigation of that. Marc, you may remember this, Secretary of State Christopher, and for all you young folks out there, Warren Christopher was actually Bill Clinton's first Secretary of State. We had a huge fight with the State Department because we'd asked the Secretary to come up and testify on an important matter and he instead chose to go do a photo shoot with People Magazine. Do you remember that?

Marc Thiessen: I do.

Danielle Pletka: These are judgment calls. Everybody makes bad ones. Everybody makes questionable ones but we've got a country to run. We have got one of the most challenging periods in national security in recent memory. And I just, I honestly don't give a damn whether Mike Pompeo had dinner in Kansas four times over the course of his tenure as Secretary of State.

Marc Thiessen: I actually attended a Madison dinner. I was there. I think it was with the Egyptian ambassador and a friend of his from Kansas who had owned some ice cream shops and brought us some interesting dessert. And we had a wide ranging discussion about American foreign policy and diplomacy and all sorts of issues. The idea that we're going to investigate the Secretary of State for conducting public diplomacy, it's ridiculous.

Danielle Pletka: Well, and public diplomacy doesn't simply consist of sucking up to ambassadors. It consists of inviting stakeholders who are important to American interests. Anybody who has worked closely with any foreign ministry, including our own State Department, knows, for example, when the Secretary goes on a trip or the President goes on a trip overseas, they bring business leaders from the country. We could ask the same sort of mindless question. "I don't understand what the head of Apple has to do with a trip to the G7." And the answer is, "are you kidding?" These are people who are important to the livelihood and the leadership of America and the world. So again, I'm more than game for a serious look at people who are doing bad things.

Danielle Pletka: I was more than game when Rex Tillerson was trying to cut 30% from the State Department budget and he needed to be fought against because that was wrong.

But this bit of circus-like behavior at a time when we really need to be standing up to Beijing, we really need to be standing up to Tehran, we really need to be standing up to Moscow and we need to be doing it using our diplomatic tools to their utmost because we don't want to go to war. That any of these people would occupy themselves with these problems seems to me, to be ridiculous.

Marc Thiessen: Well, but this is a microcosm of a larger problem in Washington right now, Dany, which is that we've got this culture of gotcha and investigation that has completely consumed Congress. So, these are small investigations, minor things, but we had the Mueller probe that went on for over two years and then the Ukraine investigation and the impeachment proceedings that were happening. And what was happening during impeachment? Was Adam Schiff holding hearings on the coronavirus? Was he holding hearings on Iran? The House Intelligence Committee spent months and months and months not doing any oversight or any hearings about any topics on foreign policy, on China, on the health threats. And they spent this whole time trying to impeach the President at the very time that the virus was breaking out in Wuhan and heading our way.

Marc Thiessen: Why weren't they holding hearings on those kinds of things? So we've got this culture now in Washington where Congress thinks its job is to investigate every petty thing and okay, you want to investigate stuff? Fine. But if it's coming at the cost of actually doing your job... I happen to support most of what Mike Pompeo is doing as Secretary of State but there are ways it can be improved and it's Congress's job to hold the State Department accountable for and push it to explain why it's taking a certain approach versus another way. And they're totally not doing that job and destroying their relationships with the people that they need to work with.

Danielle Pletka: No, that's true. Look, I will say this, Marc. I don't see this as a Democrat and Republican problem. I see this as a political culture problem. When Hillary Clinton had General David Petraeus up before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and somebody said better to call him General Betray-us, that, to me, encapsulates all of this. There are legitimate things to investigate. I actually believe that Benghazi was a legitimate thing to investigate. We don't lose ambassadors every day. There was a worthy investigation. The Obama administration exacerbated things for themselves by trying to cover it up. But the reality is Republicans have wasted their good share of time on silly pursuits as well. And it is up to the American people to tell Congress hey, I, in Wichita, I, in Dubuque, I in Lordstown. Isn't that the place you always talk about?

Marc Thiessen: Lordstown.

Danielle Pletka: Lordstown, Ohio. I, in Lordstown, Ohio, I don't care about this. I don't care who the Secretary had to dinner. I care about the fact that I'm not being allowed to sell what I need to sell because I'm being blocked by bad guy countries. This is the wakeup call that is just imperative for us.

Marc Thiessen: Well, it seems like from our conversation that Mike Pompeo is not letting himself get distracted. I was encouraged by a number of the things he said, including the fact that they're talking about internally about allowing Hong Kong people to come here, which I think would be really important to... If China wants to force a brain drain in Hong Kong, that's the most entrepreneurial creative city in the world. Let's bring those people here. We need that kind of entrepreneurial energy for the post-COVID recovery. I'm glad that we're taking a hard line and imposing costs on

Beijing. We might not be able to stop them from crushing Hong Kong, but we can certainly make them pay a price for it. And I was encouraged by a lot of what Mike said.

Danielle Pletka: I have one exit note on that. I was encouraged by those things too but I want to say something about Mike Pompeo, the person who got called all those bad things. I am not known for my love of the Trump administration. I've criticized our actions in Afghanistan, as have you. I've criticized our conduct on trade policy. I have criticized a lot of things that I didn't like that this administration does. And when we asked, "Would you come on the show?" And 24 hours later, the answer was, "Sure." When you're willing to talk to people who disagree with you, that is the mark of a statesman.

Marc Thiessen: Amen to that. Well, we're glad that Mike was on and we're looking forward to having him on again soon.

Danielle Pletka: Bye everybody.