

The kidnapping of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou

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On Wednesday, the world was shocked to learn that Canadian authorities had arrested and confined without bail Meng Wanzhou, the deputy chairperson of the Chinese smart phone giant Huawei, on charges brought by US prosecutors of violating American sanctions against Iran. Washington is calling for her extradition to the US.

The claims by US officials that the move has “nothing to do with a trade war” are transparent lies, dismissed even by the media defenders of the action. Meng’s arrest on December 1 and confinement on tendentious and opaque charges potentially carrying a sentence of 60 years amount to little more than a kidnapping.

The British *Financial Times*, obviously unnerved by its ally’s action, called the move “provocative,” describing it as “the use of American power to pursue political and economic ends rather than straightforward law enforcement.”

It is, in other words, an act of gangsterism, intended to send a message to “allies” and “enemies” alike: do the United States’ bidding or you will end up like Meng, or worse. In pursuit of its geopolitical aims, the United States functions as a rogue state, violating international law with wanton abandon.

It is the chief protagonist in an international decent into lawlessness that recalls the conditions of great power conflict and criminality that led to World War II. The US imposes unilateral and illegal sanctions on any country it deems an obstacle to its hegemonic agenda, and then employs the methods of terror to punish those who defy its dictates.

But after news of Meng’s arrest stunned the world, the *New York Times* dropped another bombshell the next morning. As Donald Trump was sitting down to dinner with Chinese President Xi Jinping last Saturday to arrange a “truce” in the US-China trade war, the US

president was unaware that the unprecedented arrest was about to take place.

This was despite the fact that figures such as Democratic Senator Mark Warner and Republican Senator Richard Burr, as well as National Security Adviser John R. Bolton, were alerted to the arrest. Asked why he did not tell the president, Bolton, who was with Trump at the meeting with Xi, declared inexplicably, “we certainly don’t inform the president on every” notification from the Justice Department.

Meng’s arrest has upended any prospect of a truce in the trade war between the United States and China. The *Financial Times* warned that “That entente already looked likely to come unstuck. After Ms. Meng’s arrest, the deadline for progress looks like a time bomb.”

The fact that such a provocative action could take place, according to the semi-official narrative, without the knowledge of the American president, makes one thing abundantly clear: The US conflict with China is not the product of Trump’s personality or his particular brand of “America First” populism. Rather, a substantial section of not only Trump’s administration, but of the permanent or “deep” state of the intelligence bureaucracy, as well as leading lawmakers, have signed on to Trump’s aggressive anti-China policy.

Responding to news of the arrest, Senator Warner, a leading proponent of internet censorship by US technology companies, praised the action, declaring: “It has been clear for some time that Huawei... poses a threat to our national security.” He added, “It’s my hope that the Trump administration will hold Huawei fully accountable for breaking sanctions law.”

Other figures close to the Democrats were quick to praise the move, even going so far as to condemn Trump for not being hard enough on China. “For too long, American leaders have failed to respond

adequately to China’s increasing assertiveness,” wrote *New York Times* columnist David Leonhardt. “A more hawkish policy toward China makes sense.”

None of the three leading American newspapers—the *Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*—published a single commentary in the least bit critical of the White House’s criminal action.

This points to the bipartisan acceptance of the principles spelled out by Vice President Mike Pence in a major policy speech on China on October 4, which commentators have called the dawn of a new “cold war” with China. In that speech, Pence demanded that Beijing abandon its “Made in China 2025” plan, which Pence claimed was an effort to control “90 percent of the world’s most advanced industries, including robotics, biotechnology and artificial intelligence.”

Just days after Pence’s speech, the Pentagon published a study on the US defence industrial base, arguing that the United States needed a “whole-of-society” approach to prepare for military conflict with China.

Former Trump political adviser and neo-fascist Steve Bannon praised Meng’s arrest as part of a “whole of government” approach to countering China. “Under Trump,” he told the *Financial Times*, “you’re seeing for the first time all forces of US state power finally come together to confront China.”

The American political establishment’s more aggressive stance toward China in no sense means a retreat from the conflict with Russia or Iran. In fact, in the two months since Pence announced his new “cold war” with China, Washington has taken some of its most aggressive anti-Russian measures yet, including provoking its ally Ukraine to sail warships into Russian-claimed waters, prompting an exchange of fire, and the announcement that it will withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear forces (INF) treaty.

In their preparation for war against China, a nuclear-armed power, the American ruling class and its military-intelligence apparatus see blocking Beijing’s development as a high-tech rival as critical to not only the economic interests of the corporate oligarchy, but also to the maintenance of US military supremacy.

The world is on the brink of a generational change in wireless technology, known as 5G, which, according to its proponents, will lead to a massive expansion of the so-called “internet of things,” which will be cheaper

and vastly more capable than today’s “smart” devices. Among the “things” connected over 5G will be not only home appliances and factory robots, but the weapons of war, which can use the communications network for an edge in precision and speed.

Huawei is the world’s leading provider of 5G infrastructure, and the United States is seeking to use all the instruments of its economic, military, and geopolitical power to squeeze China out of the sector in pursuit of its global economic and military dominance.

The second, no less important, factor is the growth of internal social tensions and political opposition. Under conditions of what the Atlantic Council has called a “crisis of legitimacy” for the state amid growing working class opposition, the ruling class sees in the creation of an external enemy, whether Russia or China, a means to divert explosive class tensions outwards. China, as *Times* columnist Leonhardt recently put it, can serve to create a “clear antagonist” for the American public.

Finally, the protection of the American technology sector, and the extension of its global monopolies, no doubt plays a major role in deepening its integration into the US intelligence apparatus. The American technology giants, at the behest of figures like Warner, have implemented mass censorship of oppositional viewpoints and dragnet surveillance of the American population over the past two years. In exchange, they have received fat military, police, and intelligence contracts, while their rivals, like Huawei, have been targeted by the American state.

Washington’s actions threaten the most disastrous consequences. In its offensive against China, the United States is stoking conditions that twice in the past century led to world war.

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