

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Questions Secretary of State Nominee on China, Russia Relationships

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Contact: [Ben Voelkel](#)

WASHINGTON – At a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing Thursday on CIA Director Mike Pompeo’s nomination to be secretary of state, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s subcommittee on Europe, questioned Pompeo on his plans to lead the State Department and address challenges facing the country’s trade and security relationships with China and Russia.

Excerpts from Senator Johnson’s questioning are below, and video can be found [here](#).

On China

Senator Johnson: “Our number one priority with China – our relationship with China – is to get them to ... effectively [enforce] those sanctions so that we can bring to conclusion the dismantlement of the North Korean threat. Can you speak to that conflict between trade, economic relationship, and security relationship?”

Director Pompeo: “It’s complex. At times they are conflicting, at times they are actually additive, that is they work together. You can achieve a good economic outcome with a partner country. You can get assistance in other places on a diplomatic matter that you care about deeply or on a military matter place that you want them to assist the United States. So there are places that good diplomacy can lead to making those not in conflict, not zero-sum alternatives where you have to

sacrifice an economic relationship for a security relationship. ... Where it comes into conflict with security issues, I suppose it's highly factual and contextual but the idea, and certainly we've seen this with the issues with China today, we thought through the risks, we identified relative priorities and attempted to level-set them and then engaged in diplomatic activities such that challenges that have been presented to China through the actions that have been taken by this administration over the past weeks didn't upset the apple cart with the good work that the Chinese have done helping us on the North Korea challenge."

On Russia

Johnson: "I think it's a historic tragedy that Putin has taken this path. Can you describe in your words what path has he taken? What [are] Russia's aims?"

Pompeo: "I will take Vladimir Putin at his word that the greatest failure of the 20th century was the dissolution of the Soviet Union. I think he believes in that in his heart, and I think you see his actions follow from that. Attempts to regain power through – and to maintain his power and maintain his popularity – activity taking place outside, by poking America. To maintain his, not only capability and enormous nuclear arsenal, but also — his desire to be perceived as such, as being perceived as a super power. So I think each of the actions you undertake are to undermine democracy in the West such that the Soviet model, the now Russian model, is the one that is painted to the world as the one that will lead the world to greatness. We know that's not true and we can't let that happen."

Johnson: "To prevent that from happening we need to be fully engaged, particularly in Europe, but anywhere Russia is pushing and being aggressive. For example, in the Balkans, I've been over to Serbia, Kosovo, a number of times. I think they are at a hinge point. I want to encourage you – I think Assistant Secretary Mitchell has done a great job of certainly encouraging all of us to pay attention so that they decide to continue to look to the West because Russia offers them nothing. Can you quick comment?"

Pompeo: "Senator, I agree. I would add to that, when you say everywhere, I would add to locations we see them being adventuresome is Latin America as well. I agree, we need to push back in each place that we confront them and by every vector – cyber, economic, each of those tools that Vladimir Putin is using we need to do our best to make sure that he doesn't succeed in what we believe his ultimate goal is."