

Bolton appeals for right-wing Republicans to break with Trump on foreign policy

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23 June 2020

In the wake of a federal judge's refusal Saturday to block publication of John Bolton's White House memoir, *The Room Where It Happened*, the book by Trump's former national security advisor will go on sale today at bookshops and newsstands. It is likely that the Trump administration's failed attempt to suppress the book will generate windfall profits for the author and his publisher.

US District Judge Royce Lamberth expressed some agreement with Justice Department lawyers' criticism of Bolton for sending his book to press without final White House clearance. But he declined to issue an injunction halting publication because the book has already been printed and widely distributed, as well as being made available on the internet.

The judge suggested that Bolton could be vulnerable to a civil suit seeking to sequester his share of the book's profits, and perhaps even criminal charges. "While Bolton's unilateral conduct raises grave national security concerns, the government has not established that an injunction is an appropriate remedy," Lamberth wrote. "For reasons that hardly need to be stated, the Court will not order nationwide seizure and destruction of a political memoir."

Trump had made no secret that he viewed the Bolton book not as a threat to national security, but as a blow against his reelection campaign due to its depiction of him as an incompetent ignoramus and liar. At one point in the negotiations over clearance of the volume, according to Bolton, Trump's representatives suggested that the book simply be delayed until after the November 3 election.

Bolton, a ferocious war hawk who has called for the bombing of North Korea and Iran, has given a series of press interviews since the book's hostile characterization of Trump became public knowledge

through press reviews and advance excerpts. He has done so both to promote the book, which has already netted him an advance of \$2 million, and to influence a layer of right-wing Republicans, particularly in Congress but perhaps also at Fox News and other Republican-oriented media.

The fullest presentation of Bolton's views came in an interview with Martha Raddatz of ABC News, broadcast Sunday night, during which he declared that he would not vote for either Trump or Biden for president, although he made clear that he regarded a second term for Trump as the greater threat.

The former Trump aide claimed that a reelected Trump would be "a danger to the Republic." By this he was not referring to Trump's clear turn toward dictatorship in recent weeks—particularly his attempt to launch a full-scale military intervention against the protests over police violence that have swept the United States since the police murder of George Floyd on May 25.

Instead, Bolton was warning—in much the same terms as the Democratic Party impeachment drive—that Trump was such a poor manager of American foreign policy that antagonists like Russia and China were having their way with him. He told Raddatz: "I think the concern I have, speaking as a conservative Republican, is that once the election is over, if the president wins, the political constraint is gone. And because he has no philosophical grounding, there's no telling what will happen in a second term."

As elaborated in his book, and repeated in the ABC interview, Bolton indicts Trump for having no coherent foreign policy and no strategy for advancing the interests of American imperialism around the world. Instead, according to the former national security adviser, Trump is preoccupied entirely with advancing

his personal political interests and the financial interests of himself and his family.

This largely dovetails with the Democratic impeachment of Trump for withholding military aid to Ukraine in order to gain a partisan edge on the Democrats by having Ukraine investigate his presumed, and now actual, Democratic rival, Joe Biden. Trump's delay in releasing the aid, approved by both parties in Congress, to the right-wing, anti-Russian regime in Kiev was one of a number of foreign policy differences that led Bolton to resign his post last September.

Bolton's confirmation of the Democrats' charge that Trump sought to blackmail Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky into investigating Biden and his son by withholding the military aid has sparked bitter complaints by the Democrats that Bolton should have come forward in January and helped them make the case for removing Trump at his Senate trial.

While the Democrats focused on Trump's alleged ties to Russia and his effort to pressure Ukraine, Bolton adds China and Turkey to the list of countries where Trump has sought assistance for his political and family fortunes at the expense of the "national interest"—i.e., the global interests of Wall Street and the Pentagon-CIA complex.

In a widely quoted passage in the interview, Bolton told Raddatz that his narrative of the Trump White House was important, "Because I think it shows a pattern quite contrary to the image he would like to convey of a decisive president who knows something about what he's doing. There really isn't any guiding principle—that I was able to discern—other than what's good for Donald Trump's reelection... there's no coherent basis, no strategy, no philosophy. And decisions are made in a very scattershot fashion, especially in the potentially mortal field of national security policy. This is a danger for the republic."

Bolton went out of his way to praise Vice President Mike Pence, both as a more consistent political conservative and foreign policy hawk than Trump, and as someone who had the thankless task of walking back the incoherent and self-contradictory statements and actions of the president. He also suggested that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was in significant agreement with him and Pence over steering Trump away from undue concessions to North Korea, China, Russia and other countries that Bolton would prefer to

target for bullying, subversion and outright military action.

In contrast, he appears to harbor resentment toward Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, who has been assigned significant roles in foreign policy, particularly in relation to Israel and Saudi Arabia, as well as China, all spheres normally handled by the national security advisor. In his interview with Raddatz, Bolton even suggested that Kushner might prevail upon a reelected Trump to name a "liberal" Supreme Court justice in the event of a vacancy caused by the departure of one of the four nominal liberals currently on the court. The suggestion is preposterous, but its purpose is to arouse hostility towards Kushner in the Christian fundamentalist right.

The most striking aspect of both the book and the interviews is the viciously personal character of Bolton's attacks on Trump, to which he clearly expects the president to respond in kind. This underscores the utterly reactionary character of both Bolton's perspective and the media fascination with him: it represents the further degradation of politics through the methods of gossip, character assassination and intrigue—or, as the WSWs has repeatedly described it, the methods of palace coup.

Bolton told Raddatz outright, "I don't think he's fit for office. I don't think he has the competence to carry out the job. I don't think he's a conservative Republican. I'm not gonna vote for him in November. Certainly not gonna vote for Joe Biden either. I'm gonna figure out a conservative Republican to write in."

"I hope [history] will remember him as a one-term president who didn't plunge the country irretrievably into a downward spiral we can't recall from," Bolton told Raddatz. "We can get over one term. I have absolute confidence... Two terms I'm more troubled about."



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