

The Room Where it Happened: A Conversation with John Bolton

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00:01: Thank you everyone for joining the conversation. And we will have some time for questions at the end, so if you have questions, please feel free to raise your hand and have your question prepared toward the end of this discussion. And Ambassador Bolton, thank you so much for joining this conversation. And as I was preparing for it, I remembered that it was almost exactly a year ago that I traveled with you to London for meetings with the new Johnson administration that you've had on Iran and Huawei and other issues. And I was also reminded how little I knew at the time about what was actually going on in the Trump administration, and frankly, how little we all knew. But, at that time, just a year ago, President Trump had just had his conversation with President Zelensky of Ukraine. You and others in the administration were trying to pressure the President to release the US aid to Ukraine, and obviously, as you outline in your book, you had a number of concerns about President Trump's fitness for office. So I guess my question is, why didn't you speak out sooner about all of these concerns that you had? Why did you wait to put it in a book?

01:18: Well, I did speak out specifically on Ukraine and some, what I considered related activities; Huawei, ZTE, Halkbank, through the Attorney General and the White House council. During my time at the White House on Ukraine, I was concentrated on getting the security assistance delivered before the money disappeared on September the 30th because of our fiscal rules and practices. After I got out of the administration, I watched what was happening on Capitol Hill, it struck me that the very partisan nature of the impeachment inquiry, very limited in scope, very much driven by the Democratic chronology for nominating their presidential candidate, was virtually guaranteeing that this was gonna be a partisan war. And that's exactly what it turned out to be. In many respects, it struck me as taking an opportunity and driving straight into a ditch with it.

02:28: And the idea that impeaching the president would somehow deter him from engaging in the kind of conduct that we saw in Ukraine turned out to be exactly the opposite of what happened. Because by seeing Trump acquitted in the Senate, his conduct was in no way deterred, if anything, it was enabled. And there are a lot of maneuverings, I describe many of them in the book, about the testimony issue, but the model that the Democrats followed really closely resembled the Republican effort to impeach Clinton during his administration and did not resemble the ultimately successful Watergate approach where Sam Ervin reached out across the aisle to Howard Baker and a more bipartisan approach was developed. So I was prepared to testify at the end of the day in the Senate, but as Senator Lamar Alexander said a few days before the Senate voted, not to have any witnesses, myself included, Lamar Alexander very candidly said, "We believe everything the Democrats say about what Trump did in the Ukraine, we just don't think it rises to the level of an impeachable offense."

03:49: So the bottom line is, I don't think my testimony would have made any difference to the ultimate outcome, and I think that's pretty clear. And I felt that there was a larger story to tell that didn't come out in the impeachment process, and I don't think would have. So I don't wanna say it would take a village to tell this story, but I did think it took a book, and there was once a point where writing a book was an honorable enterprise, I think it still is.

04:19: How has all of this, the Zelensky call, the impeachment hearings, the trial, the Rudy Giuliani, efforts in Ukraine, withholding of aid, everything that happened in that phase over the past year or so, how has that affected America's relationship with Ukraine and other European allies?

04:39: Well, I try and tell foreign journalists and political figures who ask me about this whole subject that the best thing to do is to treat Donald Trump as an anomaly. I don't think he acts on the basis of philosophy or grand strategy or even policy. I think he acts on the basis of Donald Trump and in particular how to get him re-elected. So the consequence of the Ukraine affairs, we know it, I think, has been to make relations with Ukraine very difficult for everybody concerned on both sides of the relationship. As the Trump administration has made bilateral relations with a lot of countries difficult. I think that damage is repairable, once Trump leaves office, and it's in part to help achieve that that for the first time in my adult life I'm not gonna vote for the Republican nominee for President. I think it'd be more difficult to repair it if he were a two-term president, but there is no Trump doctrine, there is no Trump philosophy, there is no Trump legacy in policy terms other than this archipelago of dots that represent his discrete decisions.

05:56: On that point on, the lack of a grand strategy that the President has, you recently tweeted about his decision to withdraw about 12000 troops from Germany, that it was unacceptable and showed the president's broad lack of strategic understanding. Half of these troops are gonna go to European countries, the others are shifting to a rotational basis within Europe, some of the countries that the troops are going to, also like Germany, don't pay 2% of their GDP to defend, so that can't entirely be the reason for the President's decision. What do you think the reason for the president's decision here is?

06:34: Well, I think he said it publicly, and this is one thing about the President, often he says exactly what he thinks, and you just need to pay attention to it. Not you personally, of course, but but the press and the rest of us. He doesn't think Germany has lived up to its commitment to spend 2% of its GDP on defense, and he doesn't like their trade imbalance with the United States, and this is to punish Germany. There's no question about it. I think Mark Esper and Mark Milley and the Pentagon did the best they could with a rotten decision, and they tried to re-allocate the best they could, and that's what we're left with. But that is why you have to treat Trump as an anomaly. This doesn't fit any pattern, and it doesn't really make any sense other than Trump's animus toward Germany and many in NATO more broadly.

07:29: Were you surprised that Republicans didn't push back more on this decision?

07:34: Well, I think Republicans are hunkered down now with three months to go until the election. I understand the tactical reasons for that. I'm certainly gonna spend in my political efforts in the next three months doing everything I can to protect a Republican majority in the Senate and pick up some seats in the House. And I've talked to a lot of people over the course of the past 11 months, it hardly seems like close to a year since I resigned, but I guess that's the way it is. I can tell you there's a lot of sentiment in the Republican party to get past the Trump years. A lot of people are gonna vote for him. I understand the nature of the choice. I respect what decision they have to make, but I think on November the 4th, if Trump loses, or as soon as we figure out that he has lost, if that's the result, it's gonna be a huge conversation in the Republican party about what comes next.

I think that's gonna be important for the party. I think it's important for the country too, so I'm gonna spend part of the next three months getting ready for that too.

08:38: You obviously soured on President Trump after working for him and witnessing how he conducted foreign policy, national security issues. That's thoroughly detailed in your book, which you say you wrote in part as a warning to Republicans that Trump isn't a conservative. And as you just said, that if he's re-elected, the party as a whole could lose permanently some of these principles that have underpinned the party for decades now. So are there republicans in Congress who you've also soured on whose conduct you've observed to whether it's not speaking out on what the president is doing or enabling him in some way? Have you also soured on any Republicans in Congress or is this just President Trump?

09:20: Well, look, I think everybody has some complaint against somebody else for the way they behave. I've been criticized for not resigning quickly enough in the Trump administration. I've been criticized for resigning at all by people who've said, "You had an obligation to stick it out even longer." We can certainly have a circular firing squad after the election. I'm sure there's gonna be a little bit of that. In any case, I joined politics when I was 15 years old, handing out leaflets for Barry Goldwater. I've always been driven by philosophy. I'm still driven by it. Nobody's perfect, God knows I'm not, and souring on people, I think it'll be time to turn a lot of pages after the election. I'm very worried about the impact of the left wing of the Democratic Party on our national security if Biden is elected and there's a lot of work to do. But I think the best way to protect the country in the event of a Biden administration, is to have a strong Reagan-esque foreign policy in the Republican Party, and putting that back together is what I wanna work on.

10:35: Okay, it sounds like it's just very narrowly President Trump, not necessarily anyone else in the party. I do wanna ask you about Coronavirus. We're now at over 150,000 deaths. Cases are continuing to rise. How does the Trump administration's handling of this pandemic impact America's standing in the world and our relationships with other countries in your view?

10:58: Well, I think it's handling of the pandemic overall has been very bad, and I think that that has obviously had a devastating impact in the country on the people affected by the pandemic itself. It's had a dramatically negative effect on the economy. I'm not sure that our overall performance is out of the median range of other industrial democracies. But that doesn't excuse the failures. I don't measure the United States by how we compare with other countries, I measure us by how we compare with our own capabilities, and I think that the administration has failed in multiple respects there.

11:40: But I think the real test is, as economic recovery takes place, s it will inevitably, whether we can get back to understanding America's place in the world and how we protect it, we will have spent four years not thinking about it. Now, don't get me wrong, I don't look on the Obama administration as the good old days. I think that was eight years of a liberal form of isolationism. Of an administration that dramatically misunderstood America's role in the world and that manifested itself in punishing cuts to the defense department budget. One thing I say in my book, and I believe, is that a major Trump administration accomplishment was getting the defense department budget back up to something that could recover from the damage done to it under Obama. The US faces more challenges in the world today than it did four years ago and that's something we're gonna have

to talk about if Biden wins. I expect to be watching very closely whether he makes the same mistakes as the Obama administration or not. He won't make the same mistakes as the Trump administration. They'll be mistakes of a different form if he adheres to the philosophy he's advocated during his years in public life.

13:05: Your successor, Robert O'Brien, recently tested positive for Coronavirus, and when President Trump was asked about this, he said he hadn't seen O'Brien lately. Did you see President Trump every day when you both were in Washington, while you were National Security Advisor? And if Robert O'Brien doesn't see him every day, is that unusual?

13:26: In Washington or on the road, I could spend hours with the president in the Oval Office or one of the nearby offices on the phone constantly. I think that was the experience of most national security advisors in the long chain back to when the position began. I didn't fully understand what Trump meant when he said that, I hope it's not true. But functioning without a national security advisor is not a good way to proceed, I'll put it that way.

14:04: And Robert O'Brien published an op-ed this week in The Washington Post where he wrote, "No president since Reagan has shown such resolves to Moscow." And I guess you would disagree with that, but you were there and write in your book a lot about President Trump and Russia. What was it like to get President Trump to sign off on some of these actions against Russia, whether it's sanctions or other measures?

14:31: Well, I think Trump did take a number of strong actions against Russia, but he did it screaming and kicking every step of the way. Robert wrote about things like getting out of the INF Treaty. I wrote about that in my book. I added that to a long string of the treaties that I've helped get the United States out of that I thought unduly constrained our ability to protect ourselves and our people. The Open Skies Treaty, the administration announced its withdrawal from after I left the White House, but I certainly worked on that too, and a number of the sanctions that we imposed on Russia, I strongly supported. I would have imposed stronger sanctions and more sanctions. So this is the problem that worries me about a potential Trump re-election. And others have commented on this disjunction between what the President says sometimes publicly and what the rest of his administration seems to be doing. For example, in the field of cyber security, which I also write about in the book.

15:35: If the political guardrail of re-election is removed, and the most powerful argument any of us ever used in the foreign affairs area to get Trump to do something in the first term, that is to say the risk of volcanic negative reaction by Republicans and Congress is removed, I think the prospect is that he'll do more of what he talks about rather than do more of what he did under complaint and criticism. And that could well mean, whether with respect to Russia, or NATO, or any other issue in foreign policy. That what he actually says he would then do because there would not be the fear of losing political credit from republicans in Congress.

16:27: After he had a recent call with Vladimir Putin and afterwards said that he didn't raise the issue of Russia offering money to militants in Afghanistan in exchange for killing his US troops. Did he ever discuss that with Putin while you were national security advisor?

16:44: I don't recall a discussion of that. I've recounted in my book the times that he spoke with or met with Putin, the times I've spoken and met with Putin, and I always considered it a victory when the phone calls were short and the meetings were inconclusive.

17:04: Okay. Did he ever raise the issue of generally of Russia's funding and arming of the Taliban when he spoke with Putin? Was that... Pretty much was on his radar?

17:15: It was really not, Afghanistan itself was not the subject of much discussion. There were other things that came up, Syria in particular, Venezuela from time to time, but the subjects were actually fairly limited.

17:33: And O'Brien writes in his op-ed in The Washington Post that if recent allegations of Russia's maligned activity toward Americans that Afghanistan prove true, Russia knows from experience that it will pay a price, even if that price never becomes public. Do you believe that? That Russia would pay a price for this under this administration, and would Russia be deterred by an action from the US that isn't public?

18:00: Well, I think Russia could and has been deterred by actions by the US over many decades that have not been public, but with respect to what this administration would do in that case to Russia, rhetoric's cheap. Especially before the election.

18:18: I wanna move on to China, but just wanted to remind everyone that if you have a question, please raise your hand and have your question ready as we get toward the end of this. China. Recently the administration changed its policy to say that most of China's claims in the South China Sea are illegal. The administration shut down the Chinese Consulate in Houston, the president is taking aim at TikTok. You recently wrote in New York Daily News op-ed that President Trump's current rhetoric and actions against China won't last after November 3rd, if he's re-elected. But these steps are more aggressive than we've seen from the president, are more aggressive than this typical China bashing that we get in a presidential election year. So isn't it an more aggressive posture towards China inevitable for whoever is elected in November and why do you think that the President would pump the breaks on that?

19:14: Well, I don't think it's inevitable, at least in Trump's case. Remember, for three years, his focus was the deal of the century. I'm not talking about the Middle East, that's a different deal of the century, Gerald's Middle East plan, but the deal of the century that he talked about the most was the big trade deal with China. It's a complex and important subject, but I don't think the Chinese were really ever ready to make the concessions they needed to make to stop stealing our intellectual property, engaging in forced technology transfer and the like, 'cause as a business model, it worked too well for them. But leaving that aside, the president overlooked a huge range of Chinese activity in pursuit of that deal. One of the underlying precepts that Chinese economic growth helped fuel Chinese military capability is unquestionably true, but the trade deal was close to being an obsession.

20:17: And you'll remember in the early days of the Coronavirus concern in this country, as the staff at the NSC, the Centers for Disease Control and else where we're raising red flags, Trump

didn't wanna hear any bad news about China. Didn't wanna hear any bad news about Xi Jinping, he didn't wanna hear that they were concealing the extent of the pandemic in China, engaging in an international disinformation campaign, he didn't wanna hear any bad news that it might affect China's economic performance, and he particularly did not wanna hear that the Coronavirus might negatively affect the US economy and his ticket to re-election. Now we don't know everything China did, but we know a lot of what China did, and they did engage in a cover up and I think a pretty concerted effort not to let the rest of the world in on what was going on that cost all of us around the world dearly in terms of human life and other consequences. So now is the perfect time to criticize China.

21:20: And I think that's what he's doing. But most of the criticism is coming from his other senior advisors, the steps he's taken, signing legislation to authorize sanctions against the Uyghurs, for the Chinese repression of the Uyghurs, simply reaffirms authority he already has and can be rescinded as can the other steps. This is why the removal of the political guardrail, of the need to be re-elected, I think leaves the field open to Trump in a second term to do pretty much what he wants. Don't get me wrong, every one of these tough steps you've outlined, I fully support, and I ask only the question, why didn't this start in January of 2017?

22:10: We just have a few more minutes, so I wanna go through a couple of things quickly if we could. In your book, one of the things that got a big headline was President Trump asking President Xi essentially for help with his re-election. President Trump says that China wants Joe Biden to get elected. Which is it and do you see any evidence that China has a preference or is trying to influence the election one way or another?

22:35: Well, I don't have any doubt they're trying to influence the election. I think if you look back at vice president Pence's very comprehensive speech last year about China's effort not just to influence elections but to influence political discourse in this country more broadly, it's an effort that matches or exceeds the Russian effort. And I've always viewed these foreign programs to be acts of war against the constitution and our free political system, and my view on that hasn't changed by learning more about what they're actually up to. Does China have a preference? I don't think China's ever understood democracy that well. Every time they try and interfere in Taiwan's elections, they seem to have the reverse effect. So I'm not sure we can really tell who they're trying to support. I think they do adhere to the Russian notion, that the more disruption they can cause, the more distrust they can sow, the better off they are no matter who wins.

23:35: Which one of our adversaries do you see potentially generating an October Surprise. And I know you think... You've said that the president could do a Kim Jong-un summit and create his own October surprise. There are concerns within the administration and on the outside that he could engage in a military conflict to try to salvage his re-election chances, particularly with Iran. Do you think that's a realistic possibility and what might come at us from the outside? In terms of military activity.

24:03: No, I'm less worried about Trump doing a wag the dog scenario in terms of military activity than I am about a lot of blue smoke and mirrors. Like meeting with Kim Jong-un, declaring an end to the war on the Korean Peninsula solution of the nuclear program. I think it's that kind of thing that I would fear the most, whether our adversaries initiate something that could cause us trouble

internationally, is obviously hard to say. I think they're doing their best to figure out how to disrupt the political process within this country. I think that's their October Surprise.

24:44: And two quick questions on the election, President Trump recently suggested potentially delaying the election. What message does a comment like that, from the President United States, send?

24:55: Well, I think it's another good reason to vote against him. And I just refer people who are interested into the op-ed that professor Steve Calabresi wrote in the New York Times where having supported Trump in a whole range of activities... Steve and I are old friends from the justice department, he's a founder of the Federalist Society, he said Trump's comment was an impeachable offense.

[background conversation]

25:47: Just in the interest of time, I wanna ask you about the op-ed you wrote in The Daily News also, where you mentioned that President Trump's election strategy is hoping his faults will be overlooked and compared to the dangers a Biden administration would pose, and you said that conservatives, and independents, and republicans can legitimately reject Trump however unhappy they are with Biden. Do you believe that Biden would be a better president than Trump when it comes to America's national security?

26:19: No, I think they're both... It's gonna be an unhappy election day for me, whoever wins, for very different reasons. I think Biden will be at best pursuing the Obama administration's foreign policy, which I thought was mistaken in material respects. I worry about the impact of the left wing of the Democratic Party on the direction of his administration, I don't have any questions or doubts about Biden's integrity. This is a philosophical difference, and it's why I can't vote for him. I'm gonna pick a name which I haven't picked yet and write in somebody rather than vote for either one of them.

27:04: Okay. If we could move to questions, that would be great. I believe that Ambassador Chris Hill has a question. He's available.

[background conversation]

27:31: Good to see you all.

27:32: Here we go. There we go.

27:34: John, this will not shock you, but I have a question related to North Korea strategy. Do you think the President, having decided that maybe his personality is not enough to get them to give up nuclear weapons, will think that withdrawing troops from North East Asia is the way to go? He's got this notion of withdrawing troops from a number of allies, and do you think this might be something he would try to do in a second administration in Korea?

28:07: Yeah, I definitely think it's possible in a second administration, not only because of the lack of progress on the nuclear front, which I thought was totally predictable, but because of the president's view of what it is we're doing in places like South Korea, Japan, NATO, really, you can go around the world on this. He would say we are in South Korea defending South Korea. And therefore, they should pay more of the share of the cost associated with the deployment of our forces there. I'll take a guess here, I think both you and I would say that we're in South Korea in a mutual defense posture, because it's in our interest as well as South Korea's interest that we do so. And that therefore there should be an adequate sharing of the burdens. That's not how Trump sees it. It's not how Trump sees it. So if he doesn't get satisfaction from South Korea, from Japan, from others on this question of the sharing of the cost of our deployment, I think it's possible he could pull out of NATO entirely, and I think it is possible he could reduce US forces in Northeast Asia.

29:24: Thank you. We now have a question from Steven Jones. Just takes a minute, Ambassador.

29:52: This question by carrier pigeon?

29:54: [chuckle] It's coming by carrier pigeon. So what's the latest the administration's doing you over your book? What's the latest that's going on there?

30:03: Well, we're in litigation over that now and we'll see what happens. I didn't intend to put any classified information in the book, I went through a four-month review process that confirmed there wasn't any information in the book. The President didn't want the book out... Didn't want the book to come out before the election, he lost on that. Life is hard.

30:26: Fair enough. Let's see if our questioner can unmute. Do we have a question for Steven Jones? Sorry, we're all just learning the new Zoom process here. Let's see who else we have? We have John Scott. A lot of questions for you, Ambassador. [chuckle] If we can get them out.

31:02: A lot of shy people out there.

31:04: Yeah. And we have Alexia Jordan. It seems like we might be having some tech troubles.

[background conversation]

31:38: Carol, you might just continue with the interview. I think we have some technical problems.

31:42: Okay, that sounds good. One thing I was wondering, I'm sure you've seen that one of your predecessors is in the running for Vice President, you've had some interactions lately with Susan Rice or Peter Vanderbilt and you reached out to her when you became National Security Advisor. One of the things people say could be a drawback is that she's never held elected office. Do you think Susan Rice is qualified to be Vice President?

32:08: Well, I don't think she's gonna be selected, because I think ultimately, Biden wants somebody who has run for office and starting your career as Vice President's pretty high up. On the other hand, I never ran for public office and I thought about running for president in 2012, so I wish

her good luck, but I don't think she's gonna get it.

32:34: Okay.

32:35: Not that I have insight into Joe Biden's thinking, don't get me wrong.

32:40: [chuckle] Fair enough. The Taliban yesterday tweeted a photo of Secretary Pompeo and them meeting via video conference to have a conversation before intra-Afghan talks begin. They said that it was essential that the remaining prisoners be released before those talks can get underway, and interestingly, the Taliban put that out, that there was a meeting, before the State Department said anything about it. Do you think it's possible to trust the Taliban or to structure a peace deal in a way where it doesn't matter necessarily if you trust them because there are checks within the deal that make it make that sort of a moot point.

33:25: Did the Taliban make that tweet before or after they attacked the prison and released a thousand prisoners kind of part of the agreement? Look, I don't trust the Taliban. I think the course we're on now is gonna lead to Taliban taking over Afghanistan again. I have very bad sense of the direction this is going. I think that reduction of the American forces there to the level it's presently reached is the bare minimum necessary to protect American interests. It was the best I thought I could do a year ago before I resigned, but I did it very unhappily. I would not have pursued this course. I would certainly not have signed this agreement. But I think Trump is determined to get out one way or another, and I hope that's not the Biden policy, because I fear terrorism renewed in this country if we do.

34:26: Okay. On North Korea. It was about a year ago that President Trump... You were there for the whole North Korea outreach effort, and about a year ago President Trump received a letter from Kim Jong-un. It's one of the last letters he got from him, and he said that in the letter Kim had apologized for recent missile tests. And that struck some Korea experts as odd. That that's not necessarily something that Kim Jong-un would do, apologize. Did he apologize in that letter?

34:56: Well, I'm not sure I've seen or know what's in the most recent letter, but it was...

35:01: This is last August while you were still there.

35:03: Trump himself downplayed the significance of the missile tests despite their being in violation of multiple Security Council Resolutions that I worked on when I was at the UN. So an apology from Kim Jong-un is not anything that I would look for. I will tell you with respect to these letters generally, that one day they will be public, and all of the comments that Donald Trump has made about how wonderful they are, how beautiful the letters they are, what a good relationship he has with Kim Jong-un, if Donald Trump is capable of being embarrassed, he will be embarrassed when those letters become public.

35:44: Because they're...

35:46: Silly. Because their silly letters written by some communist apparatchik that were intended

to impress Donald Trump and unfortunately did.

36:00: One of the things where we started on Ukraine, if we could go back there for a second. You raised your concerns about President Trump with Attorney General Barr. And he didn't share your concerns, but he did pursue this internal investigation into the Russia investigation. And we know President Trump has said Obama administration officials like Susan Rice is a criminal, and President Obama committed treason. You write in your book, which was one of the things I found very interesting, that John Kerry was someone that the president almost daily said should be investigated for The Logan Act. Part of this investigation that the US Attorney John Durham is doing, involves traveling around the world talking to foreign governments about American citizens. Do you think that's appropriate?

36:48: Well, let me just say, with respect to what I told the attorney general. I don't know what he did with it to pursue it. In fact, it may well be ongoing. I was trying not to do everybody else's job. I got criticized enough for that. I gave it to the Attorney General and the White House Council, let them pursue it. Look, I don't make any bones about this, I think The Logan Act is flatly unconstitutional, I don't think you can restrict Americans talking to foreign governments. I do it all the time, so maybe I should be prosecuted under The Logan Act. And I would be very skeptical of any investigation that pursues a theory that there's a credible violation of The Logan Act or that it should be prosecuted. Congress ought to repeal it and get it off the books.

37:36: And what about the Durham investigation? He's going to Australia and other places, talking to foreigners about American citizens as part of an investigation.

37:47: Well, look, we have mutual legal assistance treaties with dozens and dozens of countries. We cooperate in extradition proceedings mutually on people who are alleged to have committed criminal offenses as part of the regular course of conduct in the Department of Justice, of which I'm a proud alumnus myself from the Reagan Administration. So I don't view that necessarily as out of line. I don't know what Durham is doing, but I wouldn't presume it was somehow illicit.

38:18: And President Trump, you've heard it all, he's called you a nut job, he said your book is full of lies, he said you're not very smart, and you're disgruntled because he fired you. You guys have a disagreement on that. At what point in your 17 months as National Security Advisor did you decide that Donald Trump was unfit for office?

38:42: Well, it was a growing realization. I really thought that everything that I had heard about Trump... I didn't take the job naively, that's for sure, but I thought, nonetheless, that the gravity of the office, the weight of the responsibilities would have something of the same effect on him that it had on all of his predecessors. And I found that wasn't even close to being true. I don't think to this day he fully realizes the importance of what a US President does or says. But there were any number of occasions when I had thought about resigning before I ultimately did. And whether I should have resigned earlier or should have hang on longer, as I said before, I have been criticized in both directions on that, true; there's no doubt in my mind though that Trump is not qualified to be President and that's sufficient reason to be against him in and of itself.

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39:40: Was it like a week in or a couple of months? At what point did it really dawn on you that this was not at all what you thought it was going to be?

39:50: Well, it was obvious in some respects before I started, because although I thought I was moving in the direction of getting the job when he announced that he was gonna meet with Kim Jong-un, I thought that was a terrible mistake and I hadn't even started yet. So maybe I should have backed out before I went in, but I didn't, and I thought the country was in serious difficulty after eight years of Obama policies, and that I could make a contribution. The book, in many respects, is 500 pages on why I was wrong.

40:22: Ambassador Bolton, thank you so much. We'll have to leave it there. I appreciate it. I'm sorry about the technical difficulties, but we really appreciate your time.

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