

SIRC Presidents Day Dinner Speaker on February 19 – John Bolton



At a sold-out audience for this year's Presidents Day Dinner, former UN Ambassador John Bolton put virtually all the foreign policy threats into an unvarnished perspective. He also highlighted the myriad ways— both purposely and through negligence — that the Obama Administration diminished American status and power.

Russia Collusion?

First, on the very topical indictments of Russians by Special Prosecutor Mueller, it should have been no surprise as they have been doing this for years, with the Obama Administration doing virtually nothing about it. In 2014, for example, long before anyone even knew that Donald Trump would be running for president, they sent 80 espionage agents to the U.S. to try to disrupt the image of success the U.S. had in the world. Russia even tried to help Bernie Sanders. In the past, the Soviet Union targeted labor unions and even Hollywood to undermine America's image.



With expertise in cyber warfare now, Russia is now exploiting social media to great effect, even while spending a minuscule amount compared to what the American political campaigns spent in messaging (0.005% of the total spent by others). Their goals were not so much to push one candidate or another, but to sow discontent and to tarnish the American ideals envied by other countries, fearful that American values might undermine support among native Russians at home.

To counter this, Bolton suggests launching a disproportionate response against Russia to deter future meddling. While not supporting laws restricting election spending, Bolton advocates very strong sanctions against any foreign spending to influence our elections.

It is also significant is there is still no evidence of Russian collusion by Trump or anyone else in his election campaign. The indictments specified that American citizens were only unwittingly affected by the Russian efforts, not knowing the source.

As for the Democrat mantra that Trump colluded with the Russians, that is historically very ironic, as Liberals for years have sought to dismiss Russia as a serious threat. Also noteworthy is that President Obama said and did nothing about the Russian meddling until after Hillary lost. The implication is that playing the Russian card after a Hillary election would only undermine her legitimacy. Better to come on strong after Trump surprisingly won to try to delegitimize him. (Many Trump supporters were actually surprised on election night that Hillary lost.)

Bolton also lamented the rise of Russian influence (and decline of American power) in the eight years of the Obama regime. Russia now has two military bases in the Middle East, the only ones now outside of the former Soviet Union boundary lines. This and the aggression against Ukraine were major Russian successes since Anwar Sadat ejected the Soviets from Egypt in the 1970s, and moved towards the West.

The Russian/Syrian alliance fits in neatly with Russia's move to aid Iran. Who knows how much technology was given to Iran? The Iranians have also managed to turn Iraq into a quasi-satellite state under the pretext of fighting ISIS.

As for the Iranian Nuclear Deal in 2015, few really believe this made us safer. Not only did we remove the crippling economic sanctions against them, we awarded them billions in cash and got virtually nothing in return but bogus promises to reform. Even John Kerry was surprised that Obama gave up the ability to inspect Iranian bases (the usual concession when doing arms control) in order to get any "deal" with Iran. (Was Obama just trying to burnish some foreign policy "legacy"?)



North Korea Not Deterred Under Obama

Another Obama failed legacy was his “strategic patience” with North Korea, which translates to doing virtually nothing for eight years. Susan Rice’s recent op ed suggested it was acceptable to let North Korea go nuclear, because we had been successful when the Soviets had a nuclear arsenal during the Cold War. But even if it worked when the nuclear threat was bipolar (U.S. vs. U.S.S.R.), how much more dangerous it is when there are rogue regimes with nukes? It especially reckless to allow a rogue nuclear state who might sell or give nukes to terrorists who have no fear of meeting their maker, or who even seek a glorious martyr’s death. As for trusting Kim Jong-un (KJU) with nukes,

recall he had his half-brother assassinated with VX nerve gas administered by two females in a Malaysian airport. He also ordered torture and death on other internal opponents.

Only Two Options Now in North Korea

Given KJU’s resolve to stay in power, we face a Hobson’s choice in North Korea. Accept a nuclear North Korea with an ability to target the U.S. mainland with a thermonuclear weapon, or destroy his capability with a massive military strike on his nukes, rockets and submarine bases.

The military option carries the risk of KJU retaliation against Seoul, as it is not easy to simultaneously destroy most of the artillery positioned close to the DMZ. There is also a possibility of regime collapse after a U.S. massive military strike, occasioned by his military rebellion, but that is a faint hope. As is the likelihood of China negotiating with KJU to disarm and reunite the peninsula, even if it is in North Korea’s best interest.

U.S. Military Decline

This was a major message from Bolton. If the U.S. is no longer safe internationally, domestic priorities shrink to minor importance. The systematic dismantling of the U.S. military under the Obama regime was in effect a \$1.5 trillion decline in needed spending. The \$80 billion boost under Trump is only a small down payment on what is needed. We have fewer naval ships than we had at the end of World War I. And our enemies, principally China, are arming with sophisticated weaponry. China is expanding in the South China Sea to deny potential oil access to major U.S. allies, and is bent on acquiring hegemony in the Indian Ocean as well.



China also has cyber warfare capabilities to knock down crucial grids, so no one can say we are safer now than when the Obama Administration's self-imposed military disarmament began eight years ago.

Trump's insistence that NATO partners live up to their 2% military budget commitments is not really for their safety, but for ours as well, as a deterrence.

Despite these threats, Bolton remains optimistic on America's future because of our talented populace and our system of free enterprise.

What is at stake is how, for instance, a President Elisabeth Warren would react to a crazy ultimatum from KJU or his successor, given a new vulnerability of American cities. KJU could also give nuclear secrets and technology to terrorist regimes where we could not trace the source of a horrendous attack for retaliation to a fearless adversary.



2. Could a smaller U.S. force, like the Navy Seals taking out Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, effect the removal of KJU or cause a coup?

A. Any such smaller U.S. pre-emptive strike would leave KJU or his successor with too much retaliatory fire power to even consider that option.

3. What is the best response to Russia's meddling in our election process?

A. Strong sanctions for any future intrusions and much stronger laws forbidding foreign investment in election ads or processes. Obama's non-reaction to North Korean threats on SONY may have emboldened others to continue nefarious actions.

The stolen information by China on millions of individual privacy information may have potential for later blackmail against individuals. This cyber warfare is very dangerous to our security.

4. What's your view of Nikki Haley's performance as Ambassador to the UN?

A. Very good; She is strong and effective, and doesn't seem to be constrained by career advisers in the State Department.

5. Has the UN structure been helpful in dealing with North Korea?

A. Suffice it to say that this dirt-poor country of 25 million people has managed to get to within months of potentially threatening major American cities with thermonuclear destruction. Also note that the heredity dictatorship of the Kim family has managed to take a North Korea with a GDP greater than South Korea in the 1950s to barely 2% of South Korea's GDP now.

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