

## ***Bolton Says Trump Impeachment Inquiry Missed Other Troubling Episodes***

In his new book, John R. Bolton, the former national security adviser, describes instances when the president sought to halt criminal inquiries. He also says President Trump's loyalists mocked him behind his back.



By Peter Baker

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*[Read our 5 takeaways from John Bolton's book.]*

John R. Bolton, the former national security adviser, says in his new book that the House in its impeachment inquiry should have investigated President Trump not just for pressuring Ukraine but for a variety of instances when he sought to use trade negotiations and criminal investigations to further his political interests.

Mr. Bolton describes several episodes where the president expressed a willingness to halt criminal investigations “to, in effect, give personal favors to dictators he liked,” citing cases involving major firms in China and Turkey. “The pattern looked like obstruction of justice as a way of life, which we couldn't accept,” Mr. Bolton writes, saying that he reported his concerns to Attorney General William P. Barr.

Mr. Bolton also adds a striking new accusation by describing how Mr. Trump overtly linked tariff talks with China to his own political fortunes by asking President Xi Jinping to buy American agricultural products to help him win farm states in this year's election. Mr. Trump, he writes, was “pleading with Xi to ensure he'd win.” Mr. Bolton said that Mr. Trump “stressed the importance of farmers, and increased Chinese purchases of soybeans and wheat in the electoral outcome.”

The book, “The Room Where It Happened,” was obtained by The New York Times in advance of its scheduled publication next Tuesday and has already become a political lightning rod in the thick of an election campaign and a No. 1 best seller on Amazon.com even before it hits the bookstores. The Justice Department went to court on Wednesday for the second time this week seeking to stop publication even as Mr. Trump's critics complained that Mr. Bolton should have come forward during impeachment proceedings rather than save his account for a \$2 million book contract.

The State Department had no comment, but Mr. Trump fired back on Twitter just after midnight. “Wacko John Bolton's ‘exceedingly tedious’(New York Times) book is made up of lies & fake stories,” he wrote early Thursday morning, adding: “A disgruntled boring fool who only wanted to go to war. Never had a clue, was ostracized & happily dumped. What a dope!”

Intelligence briefings with the president were a waste of time, Mr. Bolton writes, “since much of the time was spent listening to Trump, rather than Trump listening to the briefers.” Mr. Trump likes pitting staff members against one another, at one point telling Mr. Bolton that former Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson had once referred to Nikki R. Haley, then the ambassador to the United Nations, by a sexist obscenity — an assertion Mr. Bolton seemed to doubt but found telling that the president would make.

Mr. Trump said so many things that were wrong or false that Mr. Bolton in the book regularly includes phrases like “(the opposite of the truth)” after some quote from the president. And Mr. Trump in this telling has no overarching philosophy of governance or foreign policy, but rather a series of gut-driven instincts that sometimes mirrored Mr. Bolton's but other times were, in his view, dangerous and reckless.

“His thinking was like an archipelago of dots (like individual real estate deals), leaving the rest of us to discern — or create — policy,” Mr. Bolton writes. “That had its pros and cons.”

Mr. Bolton is a complicated, controversial figure. An official under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush and George W. Bush's United Nations ambassador, Mr. Bolton has been one of Washington's most vocal advocates for a hard-line foreign policy, a supporter of the Iraq war who has favored possible military action against rogue states like North Korea and Iran.

Like Mr. Tillerson and other officials who went to work for Mr. Trump, believing they could manage him, Mr. Bolton agreed to become the president's third national security adviser in 2018 thinking he understood the risks and limits.

Mr. Bolton writes that he raised concerns about both cases with Mr. Barr, who shared them. "Barr said he was very worried about the appearances Trump was creating," Mr. Bolton writes. Similarly, he recalls Pat A. Cipollone, the White House counsel, "was plainly stunned at Trump's approach to law enforcement, or lack thereof."

Just as Mr. Trump sought Ukraine's help against his domestic rivals, he similarly married his own political interests with policy during a meeting with Mr. Xi on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit in Osaka last summer in Osaka, Japan, according to the book. Mr. Xi told Mr. Trump that unnamed political figures in the United States were planning to start a new cold war with China.

"Trump immediately assumed Xi meant the Democrats," Mr. Bolton writes. "Trump said approvingly that there was great hostility among the Democrats. He then, stunningly, turned the conversation to the upcoming U.S. presidential election, alluding to China's economic capability to affect the ongoing campaigns, pleading with Xi to ensure he'd win." (Mr. Bolton says he would have printed Mr. Trump's exact words, "but the government's republication review process has decided otherwise.")

Robert Lighthizer, the president's trade representative, denied on Wednesday that Mr. Trump sought election help from China during that meeting. "Absolutely untrue," he said when asked during a Senate hearing. "Never happened. I was there. I have no recollection of that ever happening. I don't believe it's true."

At a daily news conference on Friday, Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry, said Chinese officials "have no intention and will not interfere in the internal affairs and elections of the United States."

Mr. Barr, for his part, denied Mr. Bolton's version of their conversations. "There was no discussion of 'personal favors' or 'undue influence' on investigations, nor did Attorney General Barr state that the president's conversations with foreign leaders was improper," said Kerri Kupec, a Justice Department spokeswoman.

Mr. Bolton does not say these were necessarily impeachable offenses and adds that he does not know everything that happened with regard to all of these episodes, but he reported at least some of them to Mr. Barr and Mr. Cipollone. They should have been investigated by the House, Mr. Bolton says, and at the very least they constituted abuses of a president's duty to put the nation's interests ahead of his own.