

CENTENNIAL REVIEW

Principled Ideas from the Centennial Institute

Volume 10, Number 4 • April 2018



Publisher, Dr. Donald W. Sweeting

Editor, Jeff Hunt

OUTSTANDING
SPEAKERS CONFIRMED
2018 WESTERN
CONSERVATIVE SUMMIT
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MILITARY STRENGTH, UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT, AND AMERICAN SOVEREIGNTY

Amb. John Bolton, WCS17



John Bolton, National Security Advisor of the United States, speaking at the 2017 Western Conservative Summit.

It roughly six-months since President Trump's inauguration and the new Congress took over in January. It gives us the opportunity to review what has happened, see what has been accomplished, and consider what has not been accomplished.

Now, I understand there are a lot of critical domestic policy issues that deserve our attention and rightly so. What are we going to do about Obamacare? What are we going to do about tax reform and tax cuts to help stimulate the economy? What are we going to do to get the federal government's role in education reduced to where it should be, which in my view is pretty close to zero?

But if the safety of the country is at risk, all other issues are secondary, and we know when President Trump took office, he inherited a country that was very much at risk around the world.

In region after region, on one substantive policy issue after another, the last administration weakened America, reduced our position in the world, turned inward, and as a result, left the world in a more chaotic state. The fact is, the last administration believed a strong American presence in the world caused more instability than it prevented, that America was the provocative actor in the world, and that sundry terrorists, nuclear proliferators, and other adversaries were just reacting to the United States.

This is like looking through the wrong end of a telescope. It is not American strength that's provocative, it's American weakness that's provocative.

That is the reality the new administration faced in January, and several significant things have been done since then. The president proposed a significant increase in the military budget over the Obama administration proposals, and it looks like the House of Representatives will authorize that increase. While I'm a great believer in reducing and eliminating deficits, we need to build up the military. Doing so doesn't require larger deficits, it just means there are more wasteful domestic programs that are going to have to be cut.

This starts by changing the debate on the level of military readiness we need. We need to recreate and reestablish the missile defense system that the George W. Bush administration began to protect us from rogue nations' nuclear weapons programs. We need to rebuild the Navy to a suitable level. Under the last administration, we watched the number of ships in our Navy drop to 285, the smallest number since 1916. Most of our astute military observers think we need a navy of 355 ships, so you can see we have a long way to go. The list of actions to take to rebuild our military is long, and one budget will not solve all the problems. But if you had to pick one thing this new administration has done that will last on into the future, it's reshaping the military. Everything else depends on that.

As a diplomat, I can tell you, there is nothing more persuasive in diplomatic negotiations than the strength of the American military. You can't have a strong foreign policy without a strong defense policy.

The President made it clear during his campaign that the threat of radical Islamic terrorism was at the top of his list of priorities. By calling it "Radical

Islamic terrorism" he showed that what we face is a hostile ideology. We don't face idiosyncratic acts of individuals who,

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John R. Bolton, a diplomat and a lawyer, has spent many years in public service. From August 2005 to December 2006, he served as the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations. From 2001 to 2005, he was undersecretary of state for arms control and international security. Ambassador Bolton is a Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute researching U.S. foreign and national security policy.

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somehow through some form of spontaneous combustion, turn from being average people one day into being terrorists the next. They are motivated by an ideology that's hostile to our very way of life, and understanding that is the first step to overcome it.

We are finally beginning to make some progress against the ISIS caliphate in Syria and Iraq. We can look forward to the day when ISIS is defeated there, but let's be clear. The disruption of ISIS in Syria and Iraq does not mean the end of ISIS worldwide. The threat that ISIS and a resurgent Al Qaeda pose all around the Middle East and around the world will continue, and that threat won't go away by imagining that it doesn't happen. This is a threat we've seen manifested in Europe and the United States on too many occasions, and now is not the time to let our guard down.

This threat, which we ignored at our peril for far too long, is going to require a long international struggle. We didn't ask for this, we don't want it, we'd just as soon not worry about it. But if you believe in the safety of Americans here at home, it's a struggle we have to continue to engage in. It's very closely related to the threat of nuclear proliferation. One of the most significant threats we face is from the Ayatollahs in Iran, who not only continue to pursue nuclear weapons despite President Obama's 2015 agreement with them, but, since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, they have been the world's central banker of international terrorism funding Sunni and Shia terrorists alike, and they continue to do it today.

Moreover, we've just seen the progress North Korea has made during the last eight years towards their decades-long objective of getting deliverable nuclear weapons. On the 4th of July, they launched what our analysts judged to be an intercontinental ballistic missile probably capable of hitting Alaska. It caught us by surprise because our intelligence with respect to North Korea is far from what it should be. North Korea, the poorest nation in Asia, has detonated five nuclear devices, and many think they're on the brink of a sixth.

When they get the capability to reach the United States, it won't just be a threat from North Korea. Iran will be able to get exactly the same capability simply by writing North Korea

a check. They have worked together on ballistic missiles for 25 years if not more, and they've almost certainly worked together on their nuclear programs. The risk is that they are moving quickly to have ballistic missiles capable of hitting the United States.

With ballistic missile capabilities, what's to stop them from selling nuclear devices to terrorist groups? Terrorists could do unimaginable things with those devices. They could put it on a tramp steamer and sail it into any harbor around the world. They could dismantle the device, smuggle it across our southern border, and reassemble it in an American city. They would love to get that capability, Iran would be happy to pay for it, and North Korea would be happy to sell it to them.

This threat is not something that we heard much about in the past years. We've been reminded of it really recently only because of that North Korean test. The President, however, understands that the nuclear threat as the most imminent danger for the United States. I believe he is resolved to ensure that neither Iran nor North Korea, nor anybody else, gets nuclear weapons capability. But he is still hamstrung by the national security bureaucracy. Just this week, we saw an example of how the permanent government in Washington works. The bureaucracy

presented the President with no options other than to certify that Iran is complying with the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal. The evident fact is that Iran is not complying with the 2015 Nuclear Deal. It has enriched uranium and produced heavy water above the permitted levels. German law enforcement has reported on several occasions detecting Iranian efforts to procure a ballistic missile and nuclear-related and dual-use technology

illegally in Germany, and many, many facilities in Iran remain completely off-limits to international inspectors.

This deal that Obama signed isn't constraining Iran from getting nuclear weapons, it's facilitating Iran getting nuclear weapons. It unfroze between \$100 and \$150 billion dollars of assets for Iran to use for terrorism or nuclear weapons or anything else, and it allowed European and American firms to engage in business transactions with them that will benefit Iran's economy enormously. This deal needs to be brought to a stop. The United States needs to close it down.

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- Jeff Hunt, Director



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Now some say, “Well, but you know our allies will be upset.” The job of the President of the United States is to keep Americans safe, period, close quote. How do you handle allies who are upset? You send your diplomats out and say, “This is what we’re doing. It’s in our interest, it’s in your interest, and here are the reasons why.” You don’t have the allies dictate to you what the policy is, you tell the allies the United States is leading again, follow us!

This is what I think the president wants to do, and as soon as they get control of the bureaucracy that’s what I think he’ll try and do. But it shows that, for us as citizens, it’s not enough to just win elections. To get policy implemented, you have to stay on top of it, you have to work with your members of Congress, and they in turn have to apply pressure on the administration. It’s a continuous, unending job. But if we don’t do it, it leaves the country more at risk, and we can see this not just in the areas of terrorism and nuclear proliferation, although they are the most immediate threats to us and to our friends around the world. There are long-term strategic threats as well.

One of them is the regime in China. We can see what they’re doing today in the East China Sea and in the South China Sea. Do you know that the Chinese have declared the South China Sea to be a Chinese province? They have a provincial capital there. We’ve seen pictures of rocks and reefs that are, on a good day, about three inches above the water and they’ve built islands on them, and on those islands they’ve put air and naval facilities. They are militarizing the South China Sea. They’re trying to take these international waters and make them into a Chinese lake. Every barrel of oil from the Middle East that goes through the South China Sea will be at risk. Nearly one-third of all seaborne commercial traffic in the world goes through the South China Sea. If we allow this, they will have their hands around the throat of the economies of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

We have to demonstrate to China that the South China Sea is not going to belong to them, nor is the island of Taiwan going to fall into their hands, this vibrant democracy that’s been a friend of America’s for so many years. In fact, it’s time to simply eliminate what has long been called the “One-China Policy”. This is a policy that says Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Straits believe there is only one China. But the reality is there is one China and one Taiwan, and I don’t think we ought to be shy about saying it. I would favor giving diplomatic recognition to Taiwan as a message to China, and to show that the United States is in East Asia. We’ve been there since 1945, we have provided peace and stability and security when that was possible, and we’re not going to be pushed out. That’s a signal to everybody in that part of the world that the United States can be relied on.

We also face strategic threats from Russia. The evidence is unmistakable that Russia tried to interfere in our elections.

There’s no evidence, however, that the Trump campaign colluded with the Russians, these are two different issues. But I think we have to say unmistakably to the Russians, as I believe the President just did at the G20 meeting to Vladimir Putin, “We believe that efforts to interfere in American elections constitute an existential threat to the idea of America. We are an exceptional country because we are the only country founded on the idea of individual liberty and control over our government. And when the Constitution is interfered with by anyone, particularly by foreigners, we consider that an act of war.”

For the Russians or the Chinese or anyone else, for any cyber warfare programs that may exist around the world, we need to show that there is a big cost to interfering in American elections, and I don’t mean just a monetary cost. I mean to create structures of deterrence to convince our adversaries to never try it again. They need to feel more than comparable pain to what they try to do to us, because only if we are willing to protect our elections can we count on their integrity. We have enough threats to them domestically, we don’t need any more from overseas, and the Russians and everyone else needs to understand that.

There is one final issue here that President Trump perhaps more than any recent president appreciates. This is also an existential matter for America. Unlike the Obama years where there were constant references to international law and the superiority of international law, we’re going to make it clear in this administration that, as far as temporal, secular matters here on earth are concerned, there is no authority for Americans higher than the Constitution. We didn’t create this country to share sovereignty with others. We didn’t create it to put our sovereignty into international institutions or international agreements however well-motivated they seem to be. We’re actually quite capable of governing ourselves, thank you very much.

What’s important here at this six-month point with three-and-a-half years left is that we say to the government in Washington, “Well done for what you’ve accomplished so far, but you’ve got an awful lot of work still to do. You’ve got to continue to roll-back the mistakes of the Obama administration, you’ve got to deter America’s enemies, and you’ve got to stand up for American values and interests.” ■



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John Bolton is an American lawyer and diplomat who has served in several Republican administrations.

A conservative, Bolton served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations from August 2005 until December 2006 as a recess appointee by President George W. Bush. He resigned in December 2006, when the recess appointment would have otherwise ended, because he was unlikely to win confirmation from the Senate in which a newly elected Democratic Party majority would be taking control in January 2007.

Bolton is currently a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), senior advisor for Freedom Capital Investment Management, a Fox News Channel commentator, and of counsel to the Washington, D.C. law firm Kirkland & Ellis. He was a foreign policy adviser to 2012 presidential candidate Mitt Romney. Bolton is also involved with a number of politically conservative think tanks and policy institutes, including the Institute of East-West Dynamics, the National Rifle Association, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Project for the New American Century, Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA), Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf, the Council for National Policy, and the Gatestone Institute, where he serves as the organization Chairman.

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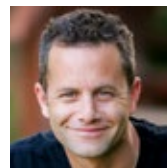
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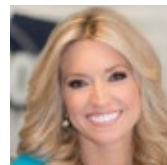
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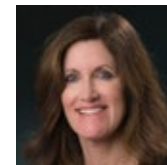
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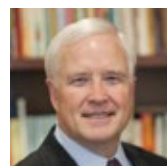
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