

In the Room Where It Happened: by John Bolton

John Bolton's book about his time as President's national security advisor is a boring, pretentious, meretricious bombshell that does not live up to its hype.

The boring part. It is clear that Bolton has been planning for some time to write this book. Most of its 494 pages read like a close transcript of Bolton's very detailed diary. Here is a sample. "Moon [President of South Korea] complimented Trump's leadership. In turn, Trump pressed him to tell South Korea's media how much Trump was responsible for all this. He then spoke with Abe, [Prime Minister of Japan] to strategize further about the Trum-Kim Summit in light of Moon's report on his meeting with Kim. Abe repeated all the key points he had made at Mar-a-Lago . . ." Bolton treats his readers to nearly 500 pages of that, interspersed with substantial content.

The pretentious part. Bolton condescends to almost everyone, especially the media. He writes about "the press mob," about it "shambling" in. He paints H. R. Mattis, secretary of defense, as weak. He oscillates between condescending to Trump and praising him. He makes unilluminating references to Thucydides and Joseph Addison and uses untranslated Latin phrases like *ab initio* (from the beginning) and *ceteris partibus* (all things else being equal).

The meretricious part. Bolton writes about his time in George W. Bush's administration without admitting his complicity in advancing the lie about weapons of mass destruction. In the 33 page index, there is no entry for WMD. When Bolton discusses the impeachable Trump phone call with President Zelensky of Ukraine, he does not use the official record. He was one of the listeners to the conversation so he

feels justified in giving his own version, in which he omits the crucial word “though” from Trump’s sentence “I would like you to do us a favor, though.” That final word establishes the linking of US aid to Ukraine and an investigation of Joe Biden.

The bombshells. Bolton delivers several, some quite offhandedly, as when he tells us that Trump asked his chief of staff John Kelly if Finland was a part of Russia. Or his remark, in passing, that for Trump “obstruction of justice [was] a way of life.” Significantly, Bolton confirms Fiona Hill’s testimony that he called the US aid/Ukraine investigation of Joe Biden “a drug deal.” Not to forget Trump’s asking Xi Jinping to influence the US presidential election by purchasing more American agricultural products.

Bolton constructs a defence of his refusing to testify before Congress without being subpoenaed. William Taylor, Fiona Hill, and others did courageously testify.

To repeat, this is a boring, pretentious, meretricious bombshell.

Bob McDonnell