

Did Bolton Blow North Korea?

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President Trump's second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un last week was criticized by both parties in Washington long before Air Force One even touched down in Hanoi. Washington's political class seemed terrified that the nearly 70 year state of "war" with North Korea might actually end. In the end the only positive thing they could say about the meeting was that Trump apparently walked away with nothing to show for it.

The location of the meeting – Hanoi, Vietnam – serves as a great example of what can be won in peace versus what is lost in war. After losing nearly 60,000 US service members in an unnecessary war that took a million Vietnamese lives, the US loss of the Vietnam war resulted not in a communist takeover of southeast Asia but something very different: the domino theory failed because communism was destined to fail. Now we are close trading partners with an increasingly pro-market Vietnam. The result of trade and exchange versus war is a better life for all.

Unfortunately for Washington, the real lesson of Vietnam has not been learned. That is why the Republicans, Democrats, and the entire mainstream media spoke as one against President Trump's decision to take a bold step and actually meet again, one-on-one, with one of our "enemies" to see if we can avoid nuclear conflict.

One leading Democrat, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff (D-CA), attacked Trump for meeting with Kim because speaking to the North Korean "gives him legitimacy." Does it make any sense that we should not even speak with our nuclear-armed adversaries because it gives them "legitimacy"? He'd rather have a nuclear war as long as Kim remains "illegitimate"? This is sadly the kind of thinking that prevails in Washington.

The media reported that Trump walked away from the meeting before the scheduled signing ceremony and closing press event. The talks broke down, it was reported, because Kim demanded an end to all sanctions before any reduction in North Korea's nuclear arsenal. Washington sighed with relief and said all together, "better no deal than a bad deal."

Meanwhile the North Koreans held a rare press conference clarifying that they only asked for partial sanctions relief in exchange for dismantling one of their main nuclear facilities. Further, press reports began to surface that National Security Advisor John Bolton threw additional demands on the table which led Kim to draw the meeting to an early close.

Who's telling the truth? We likely won't know. But given Bolton's strong opposition to any kind of peace agreement with North Korea it's hard to doubt that he had something to do with the blow-up of the summit. As the New York Times reported over the weekend, while Trump's advisors were shocked when he decided to meet Kim face-to-face the first time for

negotiations, John Bolton wasn't worried at all. As the Times writes, "Mr. Bolton told colleagues not to worry. The negotiations, he said, would collapse on their own." And so they did.

Will Trump continue to allow his diplomatic efforts to be undermined by his own staff? Let's hope the president will ignore Washington, ignore the neocons, and continue to work for peace with North Korea.

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