

FAREED's Global Briefing

What to Make of Pompeo's Extraordinary Meeting

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CIA Director and **nominee for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo** visited Pyongyang more than two weeks ago for a secret meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, **CNN reports**.

Abraham Denmark, director of the Asia Program at the **Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars**, emails **Global Briefing** that while the White House declined to comment on the substance of the discussions, there are still a few takeaways on both the substance and style of the administration's North Korea policy.

"Dispatching Pompeo to Pyongyang says a lot about how foreign policy works in the Trump administration. On one hand, it demonstrates the confidence President Trump has in Pompeo. But it also suggests his lack of confidence in the State Department," says Denmark, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia.

"We don't know for sure what was on Pompeo's agenda, but we can expect that he went to Pyongyang with two key messages. First, he would have wanted to convey President Trump's seriousness about engagement. Second, he may have been trying to develop an agenda for the Trump-Kim summit, including laying out the President's positions on critical issues.

"One additional issue that Pompeo may have raised is the status of the **three Americans who continue to be held in North Korea**. We don't know yet if he made the release of those prisoners a precondition for talks, just inquired about their condition, or even sought to take them back to America. But I think it would be surprising if Pompeo didn't raise their status at all."

- **Team Trump needs to face facts.** The Trump administration needs to accept reality ahead of any meeting with Kim – whatever it might say in public, the truth is that the White House has already made concessions, starting with the decision to meet Kim in the first place, **argues Stephen Blank for 38 North**.

"By accepting a high-level summit meeting, Trump has essentially unilaterally recognized North Korea and its leader, and in effect legitimized its status as a nuclear weapons state, without requiring any substantive progress on denuclearization from Pyongyang in advance, as had always been the condition required for securing a meeting with the US

President. Now if negotiations fall apart, or don't even get off the ground, Kim can always resume nuclear and ballistic missile testing if he feels it necessary, while other parts of the program—such as fissile material or even missile production—have not skipped a beat,” Blank says.

Haley Wasn't Confused, Team Trump Is: Beauchamp

The **spat between UN Ambassador Nikki Haley and National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow** following the announcement -- and then reversal -- on further sanctions on Russia doesn't just look bad, **writes Zack Beauchamp for Vox**. It's a sign of a deeper organizational problem that could have dangerous consequences.

“The UN ambassador is one of the most important diplomatic posts in the government; she should not be going out announcing policies that haven't been fully approved. She should not be corrected by another high-level staffer and then get into a public spat with him where they both end up looking uninformed. And the president should not be hate-watching television news,” Beauchamp writes.

“[T]his incident isn't just a matter of bad optics; it speaks to a deep and fundamental dysfunction plaguing the way the Trump administration makes decisions — one that will likely, at some point, lead to a far more serious error.”

The Story Russia Likes to Tell Itself

The limited nature of the **US missile strike on Syria last week** ensured that tensions with Russia didn't boil over, for now at least. But don't expect the Kremlin to completely abandon its tough military rhetoric, **suggests Maxim Trudolyubov for The Russia File**. After all, with limited options for economic retaliation, it's one of the few arrows left in its quiver.

“For its home audiences, the Kremlin wants to convey the drama of an evil power pushing for a regime change and a good power defending the legitimate government of a sovereign nation. Moscow does not want a war—but it does want Russians to stick to a war mentality. The images of war flickering on the screen help foster a great story of Russia, Putin at its helm, waging a just war against US aggression,” Trudolyubov writes.

“The Kremlin seems to love a great story better than a great country. Make Russia's story great again, not Russia itself, seems to be the strategy. The Kremlin, of course, hates being brought down to earth by the ugly reality of its economic weakness.”

How China Is Muscling in on America's Allies

Pakistan's decision to turn to China to help it develop a new fighter jet is just the latest example of the deterioration of ties between Islamabad and Washington. But Pakistan isn't the only country looking elsewhere for help, writes Kiran Stacey for the *Financial Times*. And that could have long-term consequences for some key US alliances.

"Sales of weapons systems, often backed by preferential financial terms, have become central to the way the US has managed its vast network of military alliances and partnerships — in effect, a form of patronage," Stacey writes.

"But many of those countries are now advertising their ability to buy some of that hardware from other governments. Key allies such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey have signed arms agreements with Russia. From the Philippines and Thailand in east Asia, to large parts of Africa, world leaders are also increasingly looking to China to provide the kinds of weapons they always used to buy from the US. Between 2011 and 2015, China exported 88 percent more in weapon sales than during the previous five years, according to Sipri."

How NOT to End the Forever War

New legislation before Congress is supposed to cancel the "blank check" the presidency has had to wage war since the September 11 attacks. But the "Corker-Kaine resolution won't bring an end to the Forever War; it will institutionalize it," argue Gene Healy and John Glaser in *The New York Times*.

"Our Constitution was designed to make war difficult, requiring the assent of both houses and the president. The bill essentially changes that by merely requiring 'regular congressional review' of presidential warmaking and requires reauthorization every four years; meanwhile, choosing new enemies, in new countries, is the president's call, unless Congress can assemble a veto-proof majority to check him," they write.

"The legislation concurs with the argument asserted by Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and now Donald Trump that the war on terror has 'evolved'; as the draft authorization announces in its preamble: 'Numerous nonstate actors' now 'pose a grave threat to the United States.' For both the White House and Senators Corker and Kaine, this justifies giving the president new warmaking powers, with Congress taking a back seat."

"And yet if the past 17 years have taught us anything, it's that far from being an existential menace, in most cases terrorism is a manageable threat..."

China and India Have a Boy Problem

China and India have a boy problem, **write Simon Denver and Annie Gowen in the *Washington Post***. There are too many of them, and that is having all kinds of unwanted consequences.

“A combination of cultural preferences, government decree and modern medical technology in the world’s two largest countries has created a gender imbalance on a continental scale. Men outnumber women by 70 million in China and India,” they write.

“The consequences of having too many men, now coming of age, are far-reaching: Beyond an epidemic of loneliness, the imbalance distorts labor markets, drives up savings rates in China and drives down consumption, artificially inflates certain property values, and parallels increases in violent crime, trafficking or prostitution in a growing number of locations.”