

Cults of Impeachment: The Mueller Report, Trump and Wedging the Democrats

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Global Research, June 03, 2019

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

It is a giddy intoxicant, and making all who partake fall over in puddling nonsense. The Mueller Report is not turning out to be the cleansing agent any of its readers were hoping for. Originally encouraged to identify the cause behind Trumpland and its dark side, the agent of disaffection, the root of madness, it has done as much to disrupt as any Donald Trump show. The Democrats continue to fret about what to do, and find themselves squabbling.

The Mueller Report, supposedly a document of deliverance, threatens to fracture the anti-Trump camp. A [hard line](#) on impeachment is being pushed by the snarlers, those of the Ocasio-Cortez camp, a reminder that youth and enthusiasm can lag behind wisdom and application. The centrists seem more uneasy about the whole thing, worried that such enthusiasm may serve to harden electoral resolve against them.

Robert Mueller's [statement](#) last Wednesday, announcing a closing of the Special Counsel's Office and an overview of the report's findings, was a brief recapitulation of furrowed ground. But, as ever, he left a few crumbs of excitement for those overly exercised about implications.

As Mueller explained, indictments touching on Russian cyber intervention in the US elections of 2016 and a "social media operation where Russian citizens posed as Americans in order to interfere in the election" did not entitle him to comment on guilt or innocence. Further investigation, he suggested, was required, leaving enough for Democrats keen on process to salivate.

Mueller affirmed that there was "insufficient evidence to charge a broader conspiracy" regarding Trump-Russia collusion. But he also threw both sides of the Trump divide a bone. For the Democrats, he claimed that, "if we had confidence that the President clearly did not commit a crime, we would have said that." For the Trump cheer squad, he also noted that the investigation "did not [...] make a determination as to whether the President did commit a crime." This had as much to do with operating protocol as anything else: the Department of Justice does not charge Presidents with federal crimes while in office. "That is unconstitutional."

What is left is the need for another avenue to get to the President, one "other than the criminal justice" route. This point sent a good number among the cult of the impeachers into a flutter. But as with President Bill Clinton, an impeachment process can see a rise rather than fall in the popularity of the incumbent. Transforming a mechanical and for the most part prosaic 448-page report into a narrative of obstruction and corruption for US voters will drive advocates to distraction. Representative Jerrold Nadler of New York,

chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, is [at least aware](#) that impeachment remains a political act – “you cannot impeach a president if the American people will not support it.”

That message and warning from history is not evidently making it to the progressive wing. Voices such as those of Ezra Levin, co-founder of the liberal activist group Indivisible, [claims](#) “a real danger if Democrats fail to have message clarity and moral clarity when it comes to this. There will be a real question of how they’ll ever motivate people to vote for them.”

Markos Moulitsas, the force behind progressive blog DailyKos, [is equally adamant](#). “This notion that Democrats are going to catch [Trump’s] voters sleeping if they just tip-toe around this utterly ignores the reality that Trump’s old, white, male base of support is the most reliable voting constituency in this country.” The Democrats’ best focus is on their constituency base – and so, a return to polarising form is guaranteed.

At the California Democratic Party convention on Saturday, Speaker Nancy Pelosi [attempted to keep](#) a middling approach. “This isn’t about politics, it isn’t about partisanship, Democrats versus Republicans, no. It’s about patriotism, it’s about the sanctity of the Constitution and it’s about the future of our nation.”

For all that, Pelosi seems incapable of convincing the wobblers. Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) have pivoted away from their previously cautious positions on impeachment in light of the Mueller Report findings. “History is going to look back at this moment and what we choose to do,” [Booker explained](#) to MSNBC. “I think the right thing now is to hold this president accountable for his actions.” Representative Karen Bass of California of the Black Caucus suggests that there might be “no alternative but to move to impeachment” though resists pinning her colours to the mast just yet.

Representative Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.), on the other hand, senses a dangerous distraction. Her own special [contribution](#) about the Mueller Report is one of continuing Russian influence. (The Kremlin remains oppressively spectral for such figures.) “There is a theme that is throughout this report about how Russia is trying to divide this country. I don’t want to play into Russia’s hands and divide this country more with a partisan impeachment.” Dingell supplies us the perfect psychological portrait of current Democratic thinking, admitting to being “totally schizophrenic right now about all the different things that are in there.” Democrat strategists are bound to confuse this state of mind for constructive debate.

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