

Democrats Court Electoral Disaster With Trump Hearings

by Conrad Black



The Democrats should be changing the subject, and running away from President Trump's legal issues as fast as they can.

It is illustrative of how completely invested they were in the hare-brained fraud of Russian collusion, that they are having such a crisis of separation from the subject. They are not the only losers in this fiasco, though they are the biggest losers.

They are left trying to pretend that they have an invitation to impeach from special counsel Robert Mueller, but that is not correct. In his and his Trump-hating investigative staff's desperation to attack the president, Mueller engaged in the wholly unprofessional practice of acknowledging that he could not claim there was adequate evidence to prosecute or impeach the president, but could not exonerate him, either. It was up to the House of Representatives to determine if there were

grounds to impeach.

Ahead of last week's release of the redacted Mueller report, Attorney General William Barr in his summary explained the criteria for a charge of obstruction. Those criteria include evidence of a corrupt act with corrupt intent in contemplation of a legal proceeding. The attorney general, the deputy attorney general, Rod Rosenstein, a favorite of congressional Democrats who was supposedly considering recording Trump two years ago to canvass the cabinet to see if he was mentally unfit to be president, and the special counsel all agreed that none of the necessary ingredients for the president to be guilty of obstruction was present.

The extravagant, knife-edge judgment call the House of Representatives Democrats have been pretending to be considering about whether to impeach or not is bunk—self-improvised therapy to cushion their psychological plunge from confidence they could take down the president, to the grim awakening to the legal vulnerabilities of the Obama Administration and the Clinton campaign in confecting this monstrous fraud of Trump-Russian collusion. It is like a retreating army, led by House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) insisting that impeachment won't succeed, then a less defeatist Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) saying of the president that "he's not worth it," (as if there were a chance of impeaching him), followed by Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff (D.-Calif.) intoning that impeachment can't be done without some Republican support.

Straggling at the back of the dejected column of retreating Democrats is Eric Swalwell (D-Calif.), the dog that barks as the caravan passes on. He purports to believe every word of the Steele dossier, which even James Comey effectively dismissed as rubbish as he assured its public circulation, and before it was publicly known to have been commissioned and paid for by the Clinton campaign and Democratic National Committee.

Even as the Democrats, visibly grief-stricken, were forced off the battlements of impeachment by their failed ally Mueller, they are wavering at the false temptation he dangled before them: of trying to aggregate a bunch of acts that do not singly or together constitute an indictable case of obstruction, that the two top law officers in the country and the Justice Department's counselor have declared do not meet any of the criteria for indictable obstruction, may yet be actionable as obstruction-of justice, as opposed to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler's sanity.

Clearly. Only the front of the retreating Democratic column has departed the impeachment fantasy-land. The interim strategy of the itinerant Democrats as they plod backwards is the revenge of endless hearings and subpoenas. This will compound the fiasco from which they are already reeling.

They still do not grasp the point: There was no illegal, or any, collusion with Russia, by Trump, or anyone else.

The notion that there is any possibility of convincing any serious person that the president obstructed justice doesn't exist. If it did, Mueller would have thankfully seized and alleged it. Instead, he got himself and his rabid bloodhounds off the hook by the thoroughly unprofessional tactic of criticizing someone there is not evidence to charge, as Comey did with Hillary Clinton (though there was plenty of grounds to charge her). But in this case, Mueller salvaged a tiny laurel for himself by describing the president very unflatteringly, and passing the buck. And the Democratic militants in the House, instead of seeing what Mueller's game is, have taken the bait, and will go down with all hands in absurd hearings that bore the public, where no damaging evidence will be adduced from witnesses who have already been around the track with Mueller; while the headlines and news bulletins are taken over by the investigators of the investigators.

Donald Trump stunned the political class into collective paralysis, disbelief, and snarling lawlessness when he won the presidential election in 2016. They have thrown at him what the attorney general rightfully called an “unprecedented” campaign of (he did not use this expression) dirty tricks and defamation. The defeat he has inflicted on them, furnished by investigators committed to the cause of destroying Trump, is not one that can be cushioned, as the election loss was cushioned by the immense distraction about illegitimacy.

The Democratic guerrilla war has not been conducted without betrayals from the Republican side. The NeverTrumpers, especially former House Speaker Paul Ryan and now departed Senators Bob Corker, Jeff Flake, and John McCain, and a few of the other senators, including Ben Sasse and Lisa Murkowski, gave some aid and comfort to the enemy for the first two years. But at this late stage, only Senator Mitt Romney (R-Utah) signaled that if the Democrats used their House majority to send articles of impeachment to the Senate, they would have one Republican vote. Romney was pleased that no American had illegally cooperated with Russian election-meddling, but was “sickened” by Mueller’s nasty portrayal of the president’s foibles.

President Trump is what was called in Victorian times “an acquired taste.” Many like him as a public personality and many do not. But the Congress should recall that the American people were not electing someone to lead a cotillion; and in this call for hearings it is in the final stages of confirming his legitimacy, either by letting go of the malicious foolishness about illegal collusion with Russia, or by sending it to the Senate, where it has no chance of being approved, and would probably not even attract the votes of all the Democrats.

Everyone understands that the president and Romney have had their differences. Romney attacked Trump savagely in the primaries, but was happy to be considered as secretary of

state. (He never struck me as much of a diplomat—he went to Europe as presumptive Republican nominee in 2012 and told the British they weren't up to holding the Olympic Games in London, just before one of the most successful Olympiads of all time). Just before he was sworn into the Senate, Romney wrote an op-ed for the *Washington Post* denouncing Trump. And his “sickened” desertion was a lone voice of Republican treachery masquerading as the moral high ground. There is no shortage of people sickened by Romney as—in the words of his predecessor in the Senate, Orrin Hatch—“a well-oiled weather-vane,” who has faced in all four directions on every issue, and blew a presidential campaign he had largely won in 2012.

Whatever new tedium of partisan muck-raking Nadler and Schiff may yet produce, they will lose their audience to Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and others grilling the justice and intelligence and campaign worthies of Obama and Hillary Clinton, including Mueller himself, on the obvious offenses they committed to influence and undo the last presidential election.

It is not the president whose legitimacy is now in any question; it is those who attacked his legitimacy illegally, who will now experience the wheels of justice. The game has turned; the hunted are the hunters. Even Representative Swalwell will figure it out eventually.

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