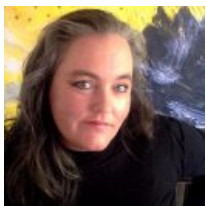


Trump Is Going to Thank MSNBC Until November 2020

Peddlers of Russia-gate have boosted the U.S. president's re-election campaign, writes Caitlin Johnstone.

By [Caitlin Johnstone](#)

[CaitlinJohnstone.com](#)



After [news broke](#) that Robert Mueller had turned in his final report without recommending any further indictments, *MSNBC's* Rachel Maddow [began frantically retweeting](#) blue-checkmarked Twitter pundits who claimed that since nobody knows the contents of the report yet, the news that the number of Americans indicted for conspiring with the Russian government is set at zero doesn't matter.

Well guess what, Rachel? We know what the report contains now.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr has sent a letter to congressional officials which [you can read here](#). It contains the following unequivocal quote:

“The Special Counsel’s investigation did not find that the Trump campaign or anyone associated with it conspired or coordinated with Russia in its efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election. As the report states: “[T]he investigation did not establish that members of the Trump Campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government in its election interference activities.”

A footnote on the document clarifies that the Mueller investigation defined coordination with the Russian government very broadly, to include not just overt coordination but any “agreement – tacit or express – between the Trump Campaign and the Russian government on election interference.” No such agreement, tacit or otherwise, was found to have taken place.

So that’s it then. The central and foundational claim of the Russia-gate conspiracy theory has been found to have been completely baseless. The report asserts that Russia hacked and distributed Democratic Party emails (a claim for which the public has yet to see any hard evidence), and “did not draw a conclusion – one way or the other” whether Trump committed obstruction of justice in the investigation of baseless collusion allegations. But the central and foundational Russia-gate claim that Trump and the Kremlin conspired to steal the 2016 election has been killed. Finito. Case closed. Debate over.

And Trump is loving every second of it.

No Collusion, No Obstruction, Complete and Total EXONERATION. KEEP AMERICA GREAT!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) March 24, 2019

“No Collusion, No Obstruction, Complete and Total EXONERATION. KEEP AMERICA GREAT!” tweeted America’s reality TV star president exactly as you would expect him to, taking some creative license with the actual contents of Barr’s letter.

This is your life for the next 594 days, America. You can

expect to hear over and over and over again, from today until November 2020, that the president was victimized for over two years by a "WITCH HUNT" which was "COMPLETE and TOTAL FAKE NEWS!" All Trump will have to do to get re-elected is keep his economy narrative going and repeat the claim that he's been unjustly persecuted by the establishment "swamp."

It Will Work

And it will work, because that claim will not be unfounded. As much of a corrupt establishment crony as Trump has proven himself to be, he does indeed have all the facts he needs to successfully sell the narrative that the political/media class has spent over two years pushing a baseless conspiracy theory that the highest levels of the U.S. government had been infiltrated by the Kremlin, and he can indeed claim persecution and victimization in the process. He can easily leverage this into sympathy and support in his reelection campaign, and can use it to reinforce his tarnished image as an enemy of the beltway swamp. Those who've been selling the Russia-gate narrative handed him this weapon.

So thanks, Rachel Maddow. Thanks Adam Schiff, Maxine Waters and Eric Swalwell. Thanks *CNN* and *MSNBC*, *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. Thanks supposed progressives like Bernie Sanders and *The Young Turks*. Thank you to everyone who spent the first half of Trump's term helping to push the Russiagate narrative, thereby helping to ensure another four years of this asshole advancing longstanding establishment agendas of war, nuclear brinkmanship and ecocide. Thank you so much for helping to inflict that upon our planet with no regard for the inevitable consequences of your actions.

Here's @mtaibbi: "WMD was a pimple compared to Russiagate. The sheer scale of the errors and exaggerations this time around dwarfs the last mess."

<https://t.co/ebPl0DW9rs>

– Brian Stelter (@brianstelter) [March 23, 2019](#)

So are any of the aforementioned offenders admitting any fault on this? Actually, it's a surprisingly mixed bag.

Sure, you've got more Russiagaters than I can count moving the goalposts to possible financial crimes and frantically grasping at the straws of Mueller's words in Barr's letter regarding potential obstruction of justice, "while this report does not conclude that the President committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him." You've got MSNBC analyst and "[Saint Mueller Preserve Us](#)" t-shirt salesman Malcolm Nance [starting up a whole new conspiracy theory](#) that Barr has committed the "greatest scandal in history to coverup the greatest scandal in history," I guess implying that Barr is lying about the contents of a report that will with absolute certainty will be viewed and verified by other people. You've got some [trying to pretend](#) that Russia-gaters never cared about Russia-gate at all anyway.

Notable Admissions

But you've also got CNN's *Reliable Sources* host Brian Stelter [sharing](#) Matt Taibbi's excellent article titled "[It's official: Russiagate is this generation's WMD](#)," which describes the mass media's spectacular failures to ask the questions that needed to be asked and demand the evidence that needed to be demanded for the claims advanced in the Russiagate narrative. You've got NBC's Ken Dilanian,

an actual CIA asset who has been eagerly advancing the establishment Russia narrative, saying that “this is a total legal exoneration of the president. Congress will want to know more, of course. But the topline: No conspiracy, no obstruction.” This is highly unusual behavior from such stalwart empire loyalists, and it may be taken as a turning point of sorts on this particular aspect of this particular subject, due solely to the total destruction of any basis for their previous narrative.

But, of course, the damage is already done. Trump has been handed a powerful political weapon which may have ensured his reelection to the White House, and, far, far worse, a new Cold War with Russia is now underway which threatens the life of every organism on this earth, facilitated by a political/media class who convinced the public that they could hurt the president by demanding that he take a more hawkish posture toward Russia. That Pandora’s box won’t be un-opened by these new revelations.

Congratulations to Russia-obsessed Democrats for being the single-most valuable contributors to the Donald J. Trump 2020 re-election campaign!

– Michael Tracey (@mtracey) March 24, 2019

This should be the end of the mass media. In anything resembling a sane world, Rachel Maddow would be unloading her desk into a cardboard box today, and Aaron Maté would become the most respected and highest-paid journalist in America.

This should be the end of the Democratic party. This dismal state of affairs is their fault, from the content of the

leaked emails to their handling of it. They have had choices on the way to clean up their act but, they have blankly refused at every juncture. Not one thing has changed since the emails revealed that the DNC rigs its primaries, and yet here we are in the middle of another fake primary with everyone going along with it like it's a real thing. It's weird. In a healthy democratic republic the party would be dead already, and a new one would've taken its place fueled by fresh energy and enthusiasm but the donor-class corruption is so deeply entrenched that that possibility has seemed like a fantasy.

For now. The next couple of days are going to be very important. As the clamoring din of Russia-gate falls into the memory hole, a large empty space will open up. As the pundits scramble to find the Next Big Thing to blare through the screens, the people will be left to their own devices for a few precious moments. They won't know what to think. They may even have some of their own thoughts for once. The media landscape will resemble a demolition site. So why not use this space to push forward some new exciting ideas. Space means possibilities. Space means something new can be built. After the crushing disappointment of finally finding out that the whole thing was a bust, two years have been lost to the bumbling ineptitude of Pelosi and Schumer, and now impeachment is off the table, what has anyone got to lose? Let's try something new.

Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly [at Medium](#). Follow her work on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or her [website](#). She has a [podcast](#) and a new book ["Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers."](#) This

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A Prediction 3 Days Before the 2016 Election on How the Democrats Would Use Russia-gate to Try to Depose Trump

Consortium News Editor Joe Lauria predicted on Nov. 5, 2016 that should Clinton lose, the Democrats would blame Russia to try to remove Trump from office, even without evidence. It was the birth of Russia-gate.

Joe Lauria wrote that if Hillary Clinton lost to Donald Trump the Democrats would blame Russia, even without evidence, and on that basis try to get the Electoral College or Congress to overturn the results of the election. In fact the Democrats tried these tactics but failed on both counts. Yet for two and a half years they obsessively tried to keep the Russia-gate narrative alive to undermine or depose Trump.

Hillary Clinton's Ace-in-the-Hole: Russia

By [Joe Lauria](#)

[The Huffington Post](#)

Nov. 5, 2016

If Hillary Clinton loses a very tight election her ace-in-the-hole could be Russia.

Corporate media reacted harshly when Donald Trump said in the last debate that he would wait and see what happens before accepting the election results. “I will keep you in suspense,” he said. Trump has alleged that the vote will be rigged.

If Trump loses by a razor thin margin we can expect a demand for recounts and possible legal challenges. Some of his more violent supporters have also threatened trouble.

But what if Clinton loses a close election? In the wake of Wikileaks and FBI revelations Clinton’s sizable lead has evaporated and a tight result is looking more and more possible.

On her campaign plane a few hours after the last debate Clinton was asked if she would pledge to accept the results. She ignored the question and instead launched into an attack on what Trump had said.

If Clinton should lose a squeaker, she has two options to try to overturn the election and make herself president—and both involve blaming Russia. She can try to influence America’s bizarre electoral college system, or get at least two allies in Congress to challenge its certification of the election.

America’s Indirect Suffrage

Unknown to most people outside the United States, and to many within, the U.S. president is not chosen by a national

popular vote. Instead the U.S. presidential election is really 50 separate state elections. The candidate that wins a state's popular vote is awarded a number of electors based on population size.

These are actual persons who vote for president on behalf of the people. Slates of electors are chosen by both major political parties before the election. Whichever party wins a state's popular vote gets the votes of that state's electors. There are 538 electors and a candidate must get 270 electoral votes to be elected president. *

This system ignores the national popular vote so that a candidate may win more votes nationwide but still lose the election. It has happened four times, the last being in 2000 when Al Gore won the popular vote but lost the election to George W. Bush.

Several states, such as New York and California, usually vote Democratic, while others, such as many in the West and South, are normally in the Republican column. But there are states that could go either way, so-called swing states, and that's where the most intense campaigning takes place.

According to one scenario, the four electoral votes in Maine could decide this election.

That's why Trump campaigned there last week. Maine and Nebraska are the only two states that proportion some of their electors. One candidate could get one of the four electoral votes if he or she wins a congressional district.

Influencing the College by Blaming Russia

The Clinton camp's accusation after the first WikiLeaks revelations, just before the Democratic Convention, that Russian intelligence was behind the leak was later amplified in early October by James Clapper, director of national intelligence, who blamed "Russia's senior-most officials" for intending to "interfere with the U.S. election process" by authorizing the hack of the Democratic National Committee.

Clapper went significantly further, however, claiming that a Russian company was behind attempted hacks of electoral computer systems in various states.

The Obama administration's claim was widely accepted by the news media even though no evidence of Russian tampering was publicly given. With just days to go to the election the story has been revived by the pro-Clinton media. CNN Anchor Jake Tapper on Friday incorrectly said the U.S. was accusing the Russian government, not a company, of threatening election computers.

In the last debate, Clinton said the hack "has come from the highest levels of the Russian government. Clearly from Putin himself in an effort, as 17 of our intelligence agencies have confirmed, to influence our election." The 17 agencies were represented by Clapper. Clinton also offered no evidence.

If Clinton loses by a few electoral votes she could challenge the results by claiming that Russia tampered with

the election. The public has been prepared with unproven allegations that are widely disseminated by corporate media and widely believed. With the media not previously demanding evidence of such a claim and if the intelligence agencies back her up, her only challenge might be to convince the needed number of Republican electors to change their votes to put her over the top.

There are only 26 states that require electors by law to vote for the candidate who won the state's popular vote. Virginia has issued only an advisory to do so. The other 24 states have no such laws, freeing electors to vote their conscience and against their own party.

The swing state with the most electoral votes that doesn't bind its electors by law is Pennsylvania, with 20 electoral votes. Other states in play such as Arizona, Utah, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, Nevada and New Hampshire also have no laws to keep an elector from changing his or her vote. Ohio and Florida, the two biggest swing states, do bind the electors by law.

Clinton's camp would be faced with turning a number of electors around to vote against the Republican candidate and switch their vote to her. Clinton has to convince them that a changed vote would uphold American democracy against the interference of a supposedly hostile state that threw the election for Trump.

Clinton has to convince such so-called "Faithless Electors" to vote against their state's popular will. This has

happened in seven previous elections. In each of them only one elector changed his or her vote. This occurred in 1948, 1956, 1960, 1968, 1972, 1976, and 1988. But no Faithless Elector has ever decided a presidential election before.

The 2016 Election, one of the strangest in memory, could add to the craziness by becoming the first.

The Second Option

If she fails to convince enough electors to change their votes there is one last chance for Clinton. At 1 p.m. on January 6, both houses of Congress meet to certify the election. However, an 1887 law allows any member of Congress to formally object to the result.

An objection must be put in writing and signed by at least one Senator and one Representative. The Joint Session is recessed and both Houses have two hours to separately consider the objection. Then each House votes on it. If both agree, the electoral votes are not counted.

There have only been two objections and both times, in 1969 and 2005, they were rejected.

If Clinton succeeds and the objections are accepted, vacating Trump's electoral votes because of alleged Russian interference in certain states, it could bring him below the required 270 electoral votes. But it would not give Clinton that number either.

If neither candidate reaches 270 electoral votes the Constitution says the election is decided by a vote in the House of Representatives. Each state delegation gets one vote and a simple majority is required. The House is currently controlled by the Republicans. But many Republicans do not support Trump.

The House has decided a presidential election only two times before. In 1800 Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr tied with 73 electoral votes each. After 36 ballots over six days, the House chose Jefferson as the third president. In the 1824 election Andrew Jackson received 99 electoral votes, 32 short of a majority, to John Quincy Adams's 85, but the House chose Adams.

It would certainly be a long shot for Clinton to try either of these tactics to overturn a close loss to Trump. But given everything else that has happened in this election campaign, would anyone really be surprised?

*The system was a compromise between Congress and voters (at first only propertied white men) selecting the president. It also gave less populated Southern slave states a greater say in a presidential election. It was established in 1789, at a time when the Holy Roman Emperor was chosen by an electoral college. From 1849 to 1918 Prussian voters chose electors to decide on deputies for the House of Representatives in a system of indirect suffrage. The French and Irish Senates are today chosen by an electoral college. The Pope is still elected by a College of Cardinals.

Joe Lauria is editor-in-chief of Consortium News and a former correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *Sunday Times* of London and numerous other newspapers. He can be reached at joelauria@consortiumnews.com and followed on Twitter [@unjoe](https://twitter.com/unjoe) .
