

An American Coup Attempt

Time may be running out to expose the effort to overthrow Trump, which began before his election.

By
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President-elect Donald Trump in New York, Nov. 9, 2016.
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The U.S. is in a constitutional crisis. It began on the day of President Trump's election, when unelected bureaucrats mobilized against his presidency. This is a crisis in the executive branch, perpetrated by subordinate officials who don't see themselves as answerable to the president. They have effectively established a fourth branch of government—a permanent, unaccountable bureaucracy.

The first public display of insurrection began with leaked transcripts of Mr. Trump's phone call with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto on Jan. 27, 2017, and Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull the following day. As the Senate Homeland Security Committee [reported](#), the Trump administration was plagued with 62 leaks possibly endangering national security in its first 125 days, compared with nine such leaks under George W. Bush and eight under Barack Obama. In 2019

a “whistleblower” upped the ante by leaking details of Mr. Trump’s phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. This fueled Mr. Trump’s impeachment in December.

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Between those examples of mutiny against the president, corrupt actors within the Federal Bureau of Investigation—and apparently, based on recent disclosures, other parts of the intelligence community—used their power to sabotage the administration. Their actions can only be described as an attempted coup—as the Ukraine whistleblower’s attorney, Mark Zaid, did in a Jan. 30, 2017, tweet: “#coup has started. First of many steps. #rebellion. #impeachment will follow ultimately.”

Throughout this constitutional crisis, many journalists abetted the plotters by abandoning even the pretense of objectivity and claiming that Mr. Trump poses a grave threat to the country. These members of the press were willing recipients of leaks that created and perpetuated the false narrative that the Trump campaign colluded with Russia. Not one member of the media has exposed these sources of false information. They know who the leakers and plotters are; they won’t tell you.

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Yes, Hillary Clinton Orchestrated the Russia-Collusion Farce

By ANDREW C. MCCARTHY

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Hillary Clinton speaks in Las Vegas, Nev., in 2016. *(Steve Marcus/Reuters)* The Clinton campaign dreamed up, paid for, and peddled the Trump-Russia collusion farce.

Of course she did. In late July 2016, Hillary Clinton, in an effort to divert attention from the email scandal that was haunting her presidential bid, directed her campaign to peddle a political narrative that Russia's suspected hacking and leaking of Democratic Party emails was in furtherance of a conspiracy between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump to swing the election to Trump.

That is, as I argued in *Ball of Collusion*, the Clinton campaign dreamed up, paid for, and peddled the Trump–Russia collusion farce. And in promoting it, President Obama's former secretary of state had a willing and able partner in the Obama administration — very much including its intelligence and law-enforcement apparatus.

Democrats Change Their Tune

It was amazing to watch Democrats play Twister this week, as National Intelligence Director John Ratcliffe added [documentary corroboration](#) to the [disclosure](#) he'd made the week before. In that first revelation, via letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee, Ratcliffe explained that, because our spy agencies have very effective foreign-intelligence-gathering methods, they were able to “obtain insight” into a Russian intelligence analysis that concluded Clinton orchestrated the damaging political narrative. That is, *Clinton actually did what she accused Trump of doing*: She colluded with Russians (through yet another foreigner she recruited to meddle in the 2016 presidential campaign: the ludicrous former British spy Christopher Steele) in order to damage Trump's campaign and cinch the election for herself.

As ever with the Clintonistas: When they're moving their lips, they're projecting.

Ratcliffe's initial revelation came with a caveat: While our spy agencies judged Moscow's analysis about Clinton to be authentic (in the sense of truly being a Russian intel product), they could not vouch for its accuracy (i.e., it might reflect what the Russians really believed, but it might alternatively be exaggeration or fabrication). This was not a wobble. Intelligence agencies sweep up scads of information, and they must always grade its reliability with a skeptical eye to avoid deluding themselves.

But this was all Democrats needed . . . at least at first. At a Judiciary Committee hearing, former FBI director James Comey and Senate Democrats scoffed at Ratcliffe's frank, professional concession, claiming it discredited his disclosure in its entirety, and called his competence into question. He'd clearly been duped by Russian disinformation . . . said the people who seem to have made a habit of being duped by Russian disinformation.

Did the Russians have a window into the Clinton campaign? It sure looks that way, between Secretary Clinton's security practices (which even Comey has [described](#) as irresponsible) and her retention of Steele, with his stable of [Russian oligarch clients](#) and his dossier "[primary subsorce](#)," whom the FBI suspected (with copious reason) to be a [Russian asset](#).

But the point here is not whether Russian spies, thanks to Clinton's own carelessness, had effectively infiltrated her campaign. The point is: *Clinton was undeniably doing what, it turns out, the Russians were contemporaneously detecting.*

Want to play epistemological acrobatics? Okay, fine. We can spend hours pondering whether Russian spies generated an assessment about what Clinton was up to because they legitimately wanted to inform their Kremlin superiors, or whether they did it because they wanted our spies to see it and to wonder whether the Russians knew that we knew that the Russians knew . . .

I'd prefer to keep my eye on the ball, which has precious little to do with spy games and Russian disinformation. The Russians were able to deduce what Hillary Clinton was up to *because it was patently obvious*. It did not take a super sleuth to figure this one out. Just eyes to see and ears to hear.

That's why you might have noticed a shift in Democratic tone when Ratcliffe released more documents.

The second set of disclosures showed that the CIA had taken the Russian information seriously enough that (a) then-director John Brennan quickly briefed President Obama and his administration's national-security team about it and (b) the agency included the Russian intel about Clinton in a memo to the FBI, which laid out information gleaned by the "Crossfire Hurricane fusion cell" that Brennan had assembled to promote the Trump–Russia storyline.

After Ratcliffe published these documents, we were no longer hearing much about disinformation. Now the talking point became: Well, there was nothing *criminal* in what Clinton did; she was simply worried about a potentially corrupt conspiracy between Trump and Putin — and who wouldn't be?

Right . . . worried based on absolutely zero evidence. There was not a shred of proof that Donald Trump and his campaign had any foreknowledge of, much less complicity in, the suspected Russian hack of DNC emails. That, you may remember, was the sinkhole on which the collusion farce was constructed.

Clinton Retains Steele to Craft Trump–Russia Narrative

At this point, Democrats have no choice but to concede Clinton's catalytic role in the collusion narrative because there is no other rational way to look at what happened — not for any sentient person, never mind Russian intelligence agents.

Let's look at the timeline.

In spring 2016, the Clinton campaign, through their lawyers at Perkins Coie (an activist Democratic firm that also represents the DNC), retained Steele to compile opposition research connecting Trump and Russia. By June 20, Steele had produced the first of his [dossier](#) "reports." It sets forth the infamous "pee tape" farce, at which any competent investigator would have rolled his eyes, especially if he knew anything about Steele's self-professed Trump derangement. For Steele, the rumor that Putin has a video of Trump cavorting with prostitutes is not good enough; he figures the story is better if he adds that Trump went out of his way to stage the "golden shower" performance on a bed in which the Obamas — "whom he hated" — had slept.

It's melodrama, in the now familiar genre of Trump fever-dream. Beyond that, Steele's "report" could have been written by Clinton or Brennan themselves. It frets over Trump's by-then-well-documented skepticism about NATO, surmising that such thinking couldn't possibly be explained by anything other than Trump's being blackmailed by Putin.

As usual, what's actually interesting about a Steele "report" is what's not in it. There's nothing about emails. That this is a Steele pattern would also have been a red flag for the FBI if its top officials, like other devotees of the progressive international order, had not been as repulsed by Trump's candidacy as Steele was. None of the seemingly important things Steele reports are verifiable (and some of them are plain false); by contrast, the actually important things that happen are never in Steele's "intelligence reporting" *until after they happen*. He was not unearthing information as an intelligence professional; he was a paid political hack conveniently folding reported news into Clinton's anti-Trump campaign narrative.

Assange Issues a Threat as the Clinton Emails Scandal Intensifies

As Steele might have noted had he been paying attention, over a week before his June 20 "report," WikiLeaks chief Julian Assange had publicly said, "We have emails pending publication," which were "in relation to Hillary Clinton." Western intelligence services have long observed that WikiLeaks has a collaborative relationship with Russia.

At the time, it was not common knowledge that the DNC had been hacked. Nor was it widely known that the FBI and the DNC had been slow to react to the hack, or that the DNC would deny the FBI access to its servers (with the support of the Obama Justice Department, which did not take action to seize them for forensic examination). Thus, anyone who was focused on Assange would have assumed that the emails he was talking about were Clinton's personal emails — the 33,000 she had declined to surrender to the State Department even though they were rife with official business.

The start of summer was a time of frenzied activity regarding Clinton's email scandal. The FBI, driven by the political calendar and the Obama administration's determination that the putative future Democratic president would not be charged with a crime, raced

to close its probe-for-show before the Democratic national convention, scheduled to begin on July 25.

In rapid succession: On June 27, Obama attorney general Loretta Lynch had her tarmac tête-à-tête with Mrs. Clinton's husband (the former president who had first brought Lynch to prominence by appointing her U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of New York). On Saturday, July 2, the FBI and the Justice Department did their cursory close-out interview of Clinton (which was such a sham that she was permitted to have two other subjects of the investigation present and assisting her as "counsel"). And on July 5, FBI director James Comey held his infamous "exoneration" press conference, which illustrated that there was damning evidence of Clinton's mishandling of classified information and destruction of government records, and of her promotion of a culture of national-security recklessness at the State Department; but, nevertheless, that the Obama administration would not charge her, even though her conduct violated the literal terms of the espionage statute.

If Director Comey thought his press conference was going to put the email scandal behind the Bureau and the Clinton campaign, it had the opposite effect. Republicans were outraged that the fix was in. Democrats were outraged at the director's misconduct in going public with the evidence against an uncharged person. At the congressional hearings that immediately ensued, Republicans questioned Comey in excruciating detail about all the disclosures he'd made concerning Clinton's mishandling of classified information. It emerged that he'd begun preparing his exoneration speech months earlier, even though Clinton had not been questioned, other central witnesses had not been interviewed, and key evidence had not been obtained, let alone analyzed.

Heading into the convention that she'd hoped would be a coronation, Clinton was reeling. Her email scandal was intensifying rather than dissipating. And Assange seemed to be threatening to leak the very emails she had taken pains not just to delete but to destroy — employing the BleachBit program so no one could ever read them. (Of course, as the Clinton campaign had to realize, if a foreign intelligence service had hacked into her non-secure homebrew system to copy the emails and slip them to WikiLeaks, an after-the-fact BleachBit treatment would not have helped.)

The DNC Emails

On July 22, Assange pulled the trigger, but it was not the shot anyone was expecting. He began rolling out thousands of emails. But not Secretary Clinton's emails. These were the DNC's emails.

For Clinton, this was manna from heaven.

Even though Assange had characteristically sought to drum up attention by promising emails "in relation to Clinton," the Democrats' nominee was not an active participant in the DNC emails. Nor could the hacking of the DNC be blamed on her reckless use of a

non-government server system. Although Assange had implied that the emails he was about to release would damage Clinton, they did not damage her at all.

To the contrary, *they helped her*. Clinton was able to pose as the victim, targeted by a WikiLeaks-Russia scheme; yet she suffered none of the harms of such a scheme, since her own emails were not at issue. In addition, the fact that emails were at the center of the controversy would enable her to conflate her email scandal with the hacking of the DNC. Now, if Trump or other Republicans referred to her destroyed emails, it would be spun as a reference to the DNC emails that Russia was suspected of hacking. When Trump foolishly chided that he hoped Russia found Clinton's emails, it would be spun as a plea that Russia hack the DNC — even though he was obviously referring to the emails Clinton had purged, and doing so under circumstances where Clinton's private servers had long been decommissioned and in the FBI's possession.

Steele and the Campaign Get On-Message

Naturally, publication of the hacked DNC emails was included, post facto, in the Trump-Russia narrative that Steele, at the Clinton campaign's urging, had already been fabricating for weeks. The well-paid former spy got busy, writing a new "intelligence report." He thundered about an "extensive conspiracy between TRUMP's campaign team and Kremlin, sanctioned at the highest levels and involving Russian diplomatic staff based in the US," which explained the Kremlin's responsibility for the "recent appearance of DNC-emails on WikiLeaks." This, *of course*, had been done "with the full knowledge and support of TRUMP and senior members of his campaign team" — a quid pro quo for Trump's supposed agreement "to sideline Russian intervention in Ukraine as a campaign issue."

After the lurid "pee tape" story, should we be surprised that Steele was just getting warmed up? He related that this "well-developed conspiracy of cooperation" between the Trump campaign and "the Russian leadership" was being coordinated on the Trump end "by the Republican candidate's campaign manager, Paul MANAFORT, who was using foreign policy adviser, Carter PAGE, and others as intermediaries."

In fact, Manafort and Page do not know each other. Oh, and what about that "Russian diplomatic staff based in the US" that Steele touted? He pointed to the Russian consulate in Miami as a conspiratorial hub. Alas, there is no Russian consulate in Miami — as any competent FBI agent who was actually interested in assessing Steele's credibility would have figured out in about five minutes (that's about how long it took a State Department official to figure it out when Steele subsequently spun this yarn for her).

While Steele was scrivenering away, the Clinton campaign staff at the Democratic convention in Philadelphia was wasting no time. On July 24, with revelations from the hacked DNC emails still breaking and the convention about to begin, [Clinton campaign manager Robbie Mook told CNN](#):

What's disturbing to us is that we — experts are telling us that Russian state actors broke into the DNC, stole these emails, and other experts are now saying that they are — the Russians are releasing these emails for the purpose of actually helping Donald Trump. I don't think it's coincidental that these emails were released on the eve of our convention here.

That was the narrative. We didn't need to get it from Russian intelligence. We got it *from the spokesman for the Clinton campaign itself*: Russia hacked emails and strategically leaked them with the intention of undermining Clinton and promoting Trump's candidacy.

It was a great story for Clinton: She would be delighted to have Americans reading Democratic emails she was not party to, rather than speculating about her own emails. The DNC emails were basically a dud, making explicit the already manifest fact that the party was in the tank for Clinton against Bernie Sanders. More consequential was that they helped the media push the Clinton email scandal out of the limelight for a few days, between the embarrassment of a few top Democrats whose emails were published and the convention drama — speeches by the Obamas and Clintons, and Khizr Khan, the father of a heroic fallen Muslim American soldier, Captain Humayan Khan, blasting Trump's proposed restrictions on Muslims entering the U.S.

The Political Narrative Seamlessly Becomes an Investigation

Getting her own email scandal out of the public eye was what Clinton wanted. And the Obama administration went right along for the ride.

At exactly the time Clinton was rolling out the Trump-Russia narrative, based on the DNC email hacking, Alexander Downer — an Australian ambassador who once arranged a \$25 million contribution to the Clinton Foundation, and who was closely tied to Steele's British intelligence colleagues — suddenly remembered a conversation two months earlier with a nondescript Trump campaign adviser. That young fellow, George Papadopoulos, had made a vague remark about hearing that the Russians had some kind of compromising information about Mrs. Clinton. *Eureka*, Downer exclaimed to himself, *Papadopoulos must have meant the DNC emails!* Whereupon the diplomat sauntered over to the U.S. embassy to alert officials from the Obama State Department that Secretary Clinton used to run.

Quite the leap of logic. Remember, the DNC emails did not involve Clinton. Plus, even Downer admits that Papadopoulos never mentioned the word *emails* in their barroom conversation. There is not a scintilla of indication that Papadopoulos knew anything about DNC emails or Russia's suspected hacking of them. Months earlier, he says he had been told by the mysterious Maltese academic, Josef Mifsud, that the Kremlin might have *Mrs. Clinton's own emails* from her non-secure homebrew server — which, if the conversation really happened, would have made Mifsud about the zillionth person to so hypothesize on that subject. (See, e.g., Director Comey's July 5 remarks: "We assess it is

possible that hostile actors gained access to Secretary Clinton’s personal e-mail account.”)

No matter. At the same time that Hillary Clinton had her campaign proclaim that the DNC emails had been hacked by Russia as part of a corrupt Trump-Putin conspiracy to swing the election to Trump, and Steele dutifully reported that the DNC emails had been hacked by Russia as part of a corrupt Trump-Putin conspiracy to swing the election to Trump, the FBI opened Crossfire Hurricane on — *you’ll never guess!* — suspicion that the DNC emails had been hacked by Russia as part of a corrupt Trump-Putin conspiracy to swing the election to Trump.

What a coincidence.



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