

The Impact of the Mueller Report on the Public Opinion of the 45th President of the US

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After 22 months-long investigation, special Counsel Robert Mueller submitted his report to US Attorney General on March 22, 2019. The report consists of two volumes: volume I deals with the Russian interference in 2016 elections; volume II documents obstruction of justice incidents. Mueller's team filed charges against 37 individuals, obtained 7 guilty pleas, and 1 conviction at trial. One of the most important conclusions, repeated throughout the report, is the following statement:

If we had confidence after a thorough investigation of the facts that the president clearly did not commit obstruction of justice, we would so state. Based on the facts and the applicable legal standards, we are unable to reach that conclusion. Accordingly, while this report does not conclude that the President committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him. (Mueller 329-330, vol. II)

Such a conclusion alone, even without the knowledge of the facts listed in the report, should have had a substantial impact on the public opinion of the President. However, the public mostly remained quite indifferent. Thus, the question we need to answer is – why? Why the impact of the arguably most important legal document of our time was so miserable?

The short answer is simple and obvious: because no one (except pundits) has read the report. That answer begs another question – why the document which was so impatiently anticipated remained mostly unread by the American public?

If you ask several people in the street if they will read a 400-page text, they will say they do not have time for that. However, the same people will have time to spend over 7 hours a day on their mobile devices and watching TV. So it is not that the people do not have time to read – they simply choose to spend this time on other things, like their smartphone or their computer screen.

But there is another and more serious reason why the majority of Americans will not read anything longer than 140 characters (now 280 characters): they are unable to concentrate for any long period of time on one task. Modern technology played a dirty trick on our brains: due to its plasticity, it got completely rewired to demand more and more information in less and less time. An average person spends about 10 seconds on any one web-page, before he or she moves to the next one, as well as checks email every 6 minutes during their waking time.

Thus, the sad and scary fact is that nowadays the majority of people are unable to concentrate on any one task for a long period of time. This is, of course, great for advertisers and internet companies (Facebook, Twitter, and the like) but bad for the civic society, as it gets increasingly easy to manipulate and brainwash such populace. We live in a post-truth world, where facts do not matter not because they are unavailable (in fact, the opposite is true: internet made information much more accessible) but because the vast majority of people do not – and cannot – know them.

Work Cited

Robert S. Mueller, III. *Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Elections*. 2019.