

##Post Mueller Report: The Spin is On

Neil Foote, President & Founder, Foote Communications

The spin doctors and pundits are out in full force. The release of the Mueller Report – at least the U.S. Attorney General William Barr summary of it – has cable TV interpreting the what was actually written – and what was intimated by the memo. Let's just say that this point-counterpoint will continue at a feverish pace at least until November 2020. What we're seeing is that the president is taking a victory lap. His supporters are echoing the president's constant "witch hunt" refrain. And the Democrats are saying, "Not so fast, we want to see the entire report." The president and the Dems need to pull themselves together to think beyond sound bites, and develop talking points that will have meaningful value to an electorate that's tired of the divisiveness.

For President Trump, as leader of the Free World, he could take the opportunity to capitalize on his role to celebrate a form of government that allows its elected leaders to be held accountable. Threatening Mueller and the Democrats or lamenting on what did not happen with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is playing to all of the reasons people dislike him. What "makes America great" – to borrow the president's phrase – is America's democracy that allows all three forms of its government – executive, legislative and judicial – to work independently unlike Russia and Korea or Venezuela – all authoritarian regimes – where critics of the government are jailed, prosecuted or allegedly murdered. If the president wants to define his "America First" agenda, he now has a chance to do it. If he wants to use the power of his bully pulpit to present a more positive messaging, he has a chance to rally his supporters who are quick to chant "lock her up" and taunt journalists.

For the Democrats, it's time to champion the need for transparency and openness in government. If Mueller's Report "completely exonerates" – using the president's words, then let the American people read it for themselves. Conducting extensive hearings and press conferences calling for the full release must be calculated, focused and intentional – not vapid press opportunities. The Democrats need to find their voice, capitalizing on its bipartisan legislative victory blocking President Trump's emergency declaration to get funding for Southern border wall. There is one big opportunity. Polls clearly show the most Americans have little tolerance for government shutdowns and national emergencies. The bipartisan support in the House is a sign that there is some common ground that both parties respect the rule of law. That should be a motivating force for Democrats to lure their Republican colleagues into bipartisan legislation that stifles a White House that is willing to use executive orders and emergency declarations to get policies he supports without oversight from the legislative branch. Celebrating an America that respects its own government structure and passing legislation that addresses common values is a way to unite the party, particularly its gaggle of 2020 presidential candidates.



About the Author: Neil Foote is a veteran journalist and media executive. He draws from his experience at the Miami Herald, Washington Post, Belo Corporation and Tom Joyner's Reach Media. He also teaches digital and social media for journalists, media management and business journalism at the University of North Texas' Frank W. & Sue Mayborn School of Journalism and runs Foote Communications, a media consulting firm. The native of

Brooklyn, NY also is president of the board for the National Black Public Relations Society and founder of PoliticsInColor.com