

Opinion: Elections 2016: WikiLeaks are forcing us to look in the mirror

Posted by [Ryan Morgan](#) On 07/26/2016

Hollywood, MD - The 2016 election cycle has been record-breaking, unprecedented, chaotic and at times entertaining. Last year, if asked to comment on the odds of a Trump presidential nomination, most political scientists and election experts would have laughed at the question. Most probably would have laughed at the prospect of a presidential candidate continuing to hold the spot of a major party's presumptive nominee while under criminal investigation by the FBI. Still, many would have shook their heads at the prospect of a rising third party movement.

In the case of this election, all expectations have been turned on their heads. Last week's Republican National Convention (RNC) was a PR disaster just short of a critical meltdown, and while Donald Trump enjoys a slight bump in poll numbers, the controversy over the Melania Trump gave nothing but ammunition to the opposing parties. The unexpected snub by Ted Cruz also came as a shocker. The usual message of a party convention is to unite its factions in a single effort for the presidency. The prominent opposition to Trump's nomination did little to convince the whole part of the Republican Party that there would be strong unity in the coming months.

But the bad press hasn't all gone Donald Trump's way. The buildup for the Democratic National Convention hasn't been without its own controversies. Unprecedented in all its ways, with the latest batch of info-dumps by WikiLeaks, this election has become at least one other thing--a vindication of numerous election conspiracy theories.

Julian Assange, the controversial figure at the head of pro-transparency hacker related group, has begun a new round of email leaks taken from the Democratic National Committee's (DNC) private email servers. The release is deliberately timed alongside the party's Philadelphia convention and has already put the stops on the party rolling full steam for the convention. The announcement of Hillary Clinton's running mate, Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, was overshadowed by the release of the Democratic Party's leaked emails. Some of the emails detail the expected style of dialogue to be seen in party planning.

Much of the emails seem harmless. But buried within the near 22,000 emails, like land-mines in an open field, are unflattering communications and indications of coordinated efforts to abridge the democratic primary process. Bernie Sanders, Clinton's one-time opponent, seems to have been snubbed. One email demonstrated a coordinated effort to begin a media narrative calling his religion into question. Another email went out to imply that Sanders' campaign was fatally disorganized. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, the DNC chair, also was implicated when a series of her emails came out to reveal the supposedly impartial party chair's favoritism toward Clinton leading to sabotage the Sanders campaign.

What's even stranger than all of these revelations, is the party's coordinated insistence on shaping the narrative away from their own wrong-doing, and toward the Russian Hackers they claim are only releasing the emails to help Trump. You know what else helps Trump? When his opponents get caught rigging elections and cheating. That's a PR nightmare.

The efforts to change the subject at the convention have led to even more embarrassment, with party heads being shouted down at pre-convention breakfasts. Even Bernie Sanders received some boos from his ardent supporters when he tried to calm the rage and redirect the passion of his supporters to feed into the electoral efforts of the Democratic Party. It comes as something of a softening of his previous vows to take the primary fight all the way to the convention and to truly put it to the vote then and there. Of course, there's the odd change of heart, which would be surprising if not for the leaked Sanders campaign memo, which reveals his terms of capitulation. This includes a campaign jet, paid for by the party. That might seem like a fair demand for Bernie to make, but he wasn't the only person wronged by the DNC's election tactics. Instead it's a bit of a sellout from the last candidate anyone would have expected to do just that. Now his ardent supporters are being told to fall in line and keep "berning" with passion, but to do it for the other candidate.

If I had been asked two weeks ago about the chances of the Democratic Party winning, I would have looked at Clinton as the new Teflon president. She seemed able to side-step controversy in ways that I could not imagine. The Benghazi trials had come up with nothing, and the mishandling of classified emails came with no more punishment than a semi-stern talking to from FBI director James Comey. If I had been asked last week about the Democrat's chance at the presidency this election cycle, the disorganized Republican convention would have seemed the final nail in the coffin, the last blow to send them on their terminal course to come up short of a victory in November. This week, the odds seem a little different.

The party that has spent the last year trying to characterize the Republicans as corrupt no longer has a leg to stand on. The party that has spent the years trying to construct the broader appeal to disenfranchised minorities just admitted that not all votes are equal. The Democrats who played up Trump's racist remarks about immigration, just got caught with an email that referred to a "taco bowl" strategy to play up Latino distaste for Trump, and another email callously describing the Latino demographic and their political engagement thinking as exploitable "brand loyalists" whose votes they could take for granted for generations so long as they were properly and fully captured in time. The candidate they said couldn't be bought, sold his candidacy off for a plane.

Then again, this whole DNC leak may just go away within a week. It could be just another 15 minutes of bad press. The Democratic Party sure seems focused on making this election about the threat of a Trump presidency. The FBI is only making the revelation of these leaks an investigation into the Russian hackers who perpetrated it. As I've said before, Clinton has dodged her fair share of controversies. What's one more?

There is "enough evidence," to indict her, said Julian Assange of WikiLeaks, promising further revelations to come as the convention continues into the week. There may still be enough controversy to wear down Clinton's Teflon coating or sabotage the Democratic effort. Thus far, other revelations from the DNC email servers include: putting plants inside a Sanders event in Alaska to gather intel on his campaign, A Super PAC paying internet trolls to mess with Sanders supporters, a \$200,00 dinner with Clinton and a pair of private donors, the practice of using interns as extra bodies to add legitimacy to protests against Republicans, the DNC coordinating the questions they want to be asked in interviews with CNN, creating fake sexist Trump business ads to hurt his credibility, coordinating news stories with BuzzFeed, and an email exchange with Politico's chief investigative reporter Ken Vogel in order to coordinate an article featuring Clinton.

The email leaks have to, in some way, force many of us to look at how we support our candidates. Yes, some of the uncovered scandals show juvenile issues, but doesn't that just go to show how juvenile these politicians are willing to be? Whether these politicians are plagiarizing speeches, or selling out for a plane, or coordinating to cheat a primary election, we may just have to look at them all, robbed of their luster and their carefully crafted public images, and see that they are all manipulative. It has to force us to look in the mirror and ask ourselves, given the choices, what level of corruption we are willing to live with and excuse.

