The Mueller Report—Trump’s Rhetorical Advantage

March 25, 2019

After Attorney General William Barr’s letter to Congress summarizing and sparingly quoting the Mueller report, President Trump and his family must be relieved. Regardless of the substantive details in the report, which will emerge, be analyzed and should be taken seriously, a critical question is how this will play out politically.

As a scholar of communication, I believe that the president is in a rhetorically advantageous position to spin the Mueller report. The Democrats must be careful not to get lost in the weeds.

Admittedly, the report concluded that the investigation did not “exonerate” Mr. Trump, and it must be noted that it was the attorney general, not the special counsel, who inferred that there was insufficient evidence legally to prove obstruction of justice.

Nevertheless, these may be overly nuanced points for Democrats rhetorically to hang their hats on. But from a persuasive perspective, it will be incumbent on them to make clear that any remaining issues they wish to pursue are of importance to all Americans and not motivated by partisanship.

Richard Cherwitz
Austin, Tex.
*The writer is a professor at the Moody College of Communication, University of Texas.*