



Why the Administration Rhetorical Stonewalling Strategy Works

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Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's response preventing the testimony of officials from his department (including Tuesday's last minute blocking of Ambassador Sonland's appearance before the House Intelligence Committee), as well as refusal to provide requested documents, is another example drawn from the Russia investigation playbook. It is part of the Administration's stonewalling rhetorical strategy.

Meanwhile, obfuscation and deflection continue. Republicans fail to answer media questions about whether it is acceptable for a president to involve foreign leaders in U.S. politics, choosing instead to attack the impeachment inquiry as just another witch hunt proffered by those unwilling to accept the results of the 2016 election. We now wait to see what the Democrats can and will do in response—and what effect it will

have. Are we back to the long and drawn out process of going to the courts?

As a colleague of mine worried, the Democrats may have little power. While they can pursue legal action, Trump might not abide by a court order, deciding he doesn't accept the authority of any institution to have oversight over him and there's nothing anybody can do about that.

That's the problem with Congress's oversight authority: it rests on a good faith agreement between all the stakeholders, and once major stakeholders stop believing in the authority it instantly vanishes.

In fact, our democratic form of government rests on this good faith agreement; perhaps for the first time in our history it doesn't exist. That should trouble all, regardless of political ideology or party preference. We are learning how easy it is for a democratically elected President to become an autocrat.

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