

Does the Constitution Demand Such an Outcome?

by **Eric Chenoweth**

Long before all the votes were counted, American citizens were told to accept the election of Donald Trump as the next US president. We are still being told this despite mounting evidence that he may be beholden to a hostile foreign power for his election. Now, his announced appointment of Exxon-Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson for secretary of state may indicate intent to serve the interests of that power, the Russian Federation.

As in any intelligence assessment, it is worth reviewing the history. Well [before](#) the presidential campaign, Trump repeatedly praised Russia's president, Vladimir Putin. Despite Putin's brutal killing of political opponents, Trump publicly sought and feigned a personal relationship with him. In actuality, Trump had financial relationships with many Putin-favored oligarchs, whom his son admitted in 2008 "make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets."

For a key period, Trump's presidential campaign was run by a man who brokered a murky financial deal for at least one pro-Putin oligarch and for many years served (with substantial financial remuneration) Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich, a highly corrupt Putin loyalist forced from power by the Ukrainian people for betraying their interests to Russia.

Throughout the campaign, Donald Trump did more than express admiration for Putin. He proposed "getting along with Russia" and establishing an alliance in the war on terror. Trump justified such an alliance in part by excusing Putin's brutality, saying such things as "I think our country does plenty of killing, also." Trump's apologism went so far as to deflect responsibility from Putin for the murder of 283 passengers of the MA17 airliner, shot down by a Russian anti-aircraft weapon by pro-Russian mercenaries taking part in a Russian-supported insurrection in eastern Ukraine.

Now, it is reported that the CIA concluded in September that the Russian government intervened in America's presidential election with the specific aim of electing Donald Trump. It found that Russian intelligence directed the illegal seizure of emails from the Democratic National Committee and private individuals and then supplied these to Wikileaks for timed public release to harm the candidacy of Trump's opponent, Hillary Clinton. The Wikileaks "dumps," which were generally reported on by all media as "open source" information, generated negative news storms of Clinton and the Clinton campaign, including for weeks before Election Day. Trump, who himself appealed to Russia to illegally hack Americans' emails, eagerly used this Russian intelligence work product to level daily, usually distorted, propaganda attacks on Clinton. The claim now of Trump and Trump spokesmen that this had no effect on the outcome begs credulity. Fewer than 70,000 votes total in three states determined the Electoral College victory. Putin has good reason to conclude his active measures operation against Clinton's candidacy affected the election.

The choice of Rex Tillerson for secretary of state indicates Trump is setting out to serve the foreign power that helped elect him. Russia's national economy depends heavily on exports of oil and gas. A significant sanction imposed by the United States on the Russian government for its illegal annexation of Crimea and military intervention in other parts of Ukraine was the

suspension in the transfer of oil and gas equipment, which halted an Exxon-Mobil oil exploration deal with the state-owned energy giant Rosneft worth a potential \$500 billion in revenue.

For forty years, Rex Tillerson's loyalty has been to Exxon-Mobil. With the Rosneft deal (and others), his company's interests have coincided with Russia's and Exxon-Mobil lobbied strongly against US sanctions. Putin may expect therefore a Trump-Tillerson administration to ease or lift them. Such an action would entail a key Putin goal, namely international acceptance of the illegal annexation of Crimea and thus establishing a precedent to violate further a fundamental principle of the post-war world order that prohibits the use of military force to change nation-state borders. Meanwhile, Trump remains uncommitted to defending NATO allies, particularly the Baltic countries vulnerable to Russian aggression.

The Electoral Colleges, which meet December 19, are the mechanism provided by the US Constitution to address the danger that voters have chosen a candidate for president who may be beholden to a foreign power. This is an anomaly in US history made much larger by the fact that an unprecedented 3 million more voters nationally have chosen the other candidate.

The Founders did not conceive the Constitution or the Electoral College as a means to affirm presidents serving the interests of a hostile foreign power nor to impose national minority governments. Indeed, they stated the opposite. While the Electors are chosen by fealty to political party they nevertheless have a profound duty to serve the Constitution and not to affirm such an outcome. But if the Electors ignore this responsibility, patriots in both parties will have to work together to safeguard the republic.

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