

The New Criterion

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Vanishing news

by James Bowman



Harry Reid. Photo: AP

Notice anything different about the news this morning? I did. While dressing, I listened as usual to the radio news report—from the top of the hour, through “traffic and weather,” to sports (the Redskins lost, it seems, though on the bright side they still get to be called “Redskins”) and “your money,” until the abbreviated headlines on the half hour. Yet for what must have been the first time in at least a week, I listened without hearing a single word about the alleged “Russian hacking” of the DNC emails. I wonder why that could be?” Well, here’s a hint: the electors of the several states yesterday did their constitutionally prescribed duty and elected Donald J.Trump to the presidency — much, I might add, to the disgust of the media.

“Electoral College Settles Donald Trump’s Victory, but Little Else” headlined today’s *New York Times*. The *Washington Post*’s emailed “Headlines” led off with this one: “Amid protests, electoral college makes Trump’s win official” — though if you clicked on the link it took you to an article headed: “With electoral college vote, Trump’s win is official.” There, we are helpfully informed that,

While Democrat Hillary Clinton amassed a nearly 3 million–vote lead in the popular vote, Trump won the state-by-state electoral map, making him president-elect. That political dichotomy sparked special scrutiny and intense lobbying of electors by Trump’s opponents in recent weeks, including mass protests. It also drew outsize attention to the usually overlooked, constitutionally obligated gatherings of 538 electors in 50 states and the District of Columbia. The mostly symbolic calls for an electoral college rejection of Trump grew after revelations of a CIA assessment that Russian hacking could have boosted his campaign, which in the view of many Trump critics raised doubts about his legitimacy.

“Many Trump critics”? Are there such people? And “mostly symbolic”? It sure didn’t sound that way yesterday when the radio people were talking excitedly — and, I thought, hopefully, though I could have been mistaken — about what might happen when the electoral college met in a few hours’ time. Nor yet when, at the weekend, the *Post* itself reported on how, “In last-shot bid, thousands urge electoral college to block Trump at Monday vote.” To his credit the reporter (Robert Samuels) acknowledged there was “little evidence that Trump will fall short,” but he led with the exciting news that “pressure on members of the electoral college to select someone other than Donald Trump has grown dramatically.” Not dramatically enough, it seems. Anyway, I think I may say that we are at last safe in assuming that the Russian hacking, which Harry Reid last week called “as big a deal” as 9/11 or Watergate, isn’t such a big deal after all.

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