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**FBI's Clinton inquiry
bombshell may come
too late to sway a US
election campaign that
has long been in flames**

Comment
Richard Wolfe

If it looks and sounds like a scandal, is it really a scandal? The latest Hillary Clinton email flap has all the trappings of one. With evasive answers, shady characters and FBI investigations, there must be something going on. Right?

Rather like Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, we may not know what's hidden or where, but it sure looks like the Clintons have been hiding something. Sadly, this reasoning is enough for most Republican voters and a good chunk of independents. As America finally heads to the polls on Tuesday 8 November, it may be enough to depress support among Democrats just when the party needs to drive a high turnout among voters.

But it's not at all clear what the FBI is talking about in terms of Clinton emails. Some reports suggest they are neither to nor from Clinton herself, in which case we have just consumed a giant nothing-burger. After all, we already know that the FBI has no idea whether the emails amount to anything of significance.

This raises the obvious question: what on earth was the FBI director James Comey thinking when he dropped his letter last Friday,



Band of honour ... polling suggests most US voters made up their minds long before election day Joshua Lott/Getty

making it crystal clear that he knew nothing? As a rule, law enforcement agencies don't publicise the fact that they are clueless.

Beyond Comey's extraordinary intervention in the late stages of a presidential election, his letter raises another, more familiar question about the Clintons: why do they attract pseudo-scandals with such alarming ease and frequency?

From the Clinton foundation to the private email server, from Benghazi to Anthony Weiner, from Whitewater to Monica Lewinsky, the list is as long as it is spurious.

Whatever crumbs of wrongdoing there may be, they don't amount to something worthy of Watergate, or even the myriad gate-suffixed scandals since. Questionable behaviour is not the same as criminal or even impeachable conduct.

Perhaps the pseudo-scandals say more about the Clinton haters than they do about the Clintons themselves. The good news for the scandal-mongers is the next Clinton administration may well be nearing. House Republicans are already prepping their subpoenas in case they can launch another several dozen

investigations into the newly elected President Clinton. In that context, it doesn't matter whether the FBI's Clinton emails amount to anything more than political gossip. The Hunting of Hillary has only just begun.

What does matter is the impact on voters in these final frenetic days of the 2016 election. Recent polling suggests that most voters have already made up their minds about whether Clinton is honest and trustworthy: they don't believe her. To be sure, they also think the same about Donald Trump, albeit

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