

9/11: A STORY OF ATTACKS, HORROR, VICTIMS, HEROES AND JINGOISTIC SHAME

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, 2001 is now 15 years in the mirror of life. Like the two Kennedy assassinations, the Moonshot and a few other events in life, it is one of those “yeah I remember where I was when...” moments. Personally, being on west coast time, I was just waking up thinking all I had was a normal morning court calendar. When my wife, who gets up far earlier than I, shouted at me to rub out the cobwebs and watch the TV because something was seriously wrong in New York City. She was right. It was a hell of a day, one of unspeakable tragedy and indescribable heroism. It was truly all there in one compact day, unlike any other, save maybe December 7, 1941.

2,996 people lost their lives, and their families and history were forever altered in the course of hours on an otherwise clear and beautiful day in Manhattan. Most were simply innocent victims, but many were the epitome of heroes who charged into a hellscape to try to salvage any life they could. There were other heroes that altered their lives in response, and either died or were forever changed as a result. One was a friend of mine from South Tempe, Pat Tillman.

No one can speak for Pat Tillman, and, save for

his family, those who claim to only prove they never met the man. All I can say is, I wish he were here today. The one thing that is certain is he would not give the prepackaged trite partisan reaches you are likely to hear today. It would be unfiltered truth. Which the US did not get from its leaders after September 11, 2001, and is still missing today.

Instead of rallying and solidifying the oneness of the American citizenry that was extant immediately after September 11, 2001, the Bush/Cheney Administration and GOP told us to go shopping and that we needed to invade Iraq, who had nothing whatsoever to do with 9/11. It was a fools, if not devil's, errand and a move that threw away an opportunity for greatness from the country and exploited it in favor of war crimes and raw political power expansion and consolidation.

Instead of gelling the United States to make ourselves better as the "Greatest Generation" did sixty years before, America was wholesale sold a bill of goods by a determined group of unreformed and craven Neo-Con war criminals left over from the Vietnam era, and we were led down the path to a war of aggression that was an unmitigated disaster we have not only not recovered from today, but are still compounding.

The 2000's will prove to be a decade of American shame when history is written decades from now. Not from the attacks, but from our craven response thereto. So, pardon me if I join Colin Kaepernick and choose not to join, every Sunday, just because the Madison Avenue revenue generating NFL of Roger Goodell cravenly exploits it, the jingoistic bullshit of rote dedication to a racist National Anthem. Also, too, shame on opportunistic and Constitutionally ignorant whiny police unions who scold free speech and threaten to abandon their jobs in the face of it.

But
that
is all
over
now
surely
.
Taking
the
United
States



, nee the world, to a forever war on the wings
of a craven lie is universally recognized,
condemned and scorned, right?

No. The Neo-Cons are unrepentant and still
trying to advance themselves on the lie that
their once and forever war justifies more than
their prosecution and conviction in The Hague.
Here is a belligerent and unrepentant Dick
Cheney passing the torch of evil to his spawn
Liz Cheney in the august pages of the Wall
Street Journal:

We are no longer interrogating
terrorists in part because we are no
longer capturing terrorists. Since
taking office, the president has
recklessly pursued his objective of
closing the detention facility at
Guantanamo by releasing current
detainees—regardless of the likelihood
they will return to the field of battle
against us. Until recently, the head of
recruitment for ISIS in Afghanistan and
Pakistan was a former Guantanamo
detainee, as is one of al Qaeda’s most
senior leaders in the Arabian Peninsula.

As he released terrorists to return to
the field of battle, Mr. Obama was
simultaneously withdrawing American
forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. He
calls this policy “ending wars.” Most
reasonable people recognize this
approach as losing wars.

Times may change, but the bottomless pit of Cheney lies and evil do not. As Charlie Savage pointed out on Twitter, the two terrorists the Cheneys refer to were actually released back to the "field of battle" by Bush and Cheney, not Obama. Was Obama involved in the story? Yes, he would be the one who actually tracked them down and killed them.

And then there is the failure to learn the lessons of the failed torture regime Bush and Cheney instituted as the hallmark of the "War on Terror". Our friend, and former colleague, Spencer Ackerman has a must read three part series over the last three days in The Guardian (Part One, Part Two and Part Three) detailing how the CIA rolled the Obama Administration and prevented any of the necessary exposure, accountability and reform that was desperately needed in the aftermath of the torture regime and war of aggression in Iraq. It will take a while, but read all three parts. It is exasperating and maddening. It is also journalism at its finest.

And so, as we glide through the fifteenth anniversary of September 11, what are we left with from our response to the attacks? A destabilized world, an ingraining of hideous mistakes and a domestic scene more notable for jingoism and faux patriotism than dedication to the founding principles that America should stand for.

That is not what the real heroes, not only of 9/11 but the totality of American history, died to support and protect. In fact, it is an insult to their efforts and lives. If America wants to win the "War on Terror", we need to get our heads out of our asses, quit listening to the neocons, war mongers, and military industrial complex Dwight Eisenhower warned us about, and act intelligently. This requires a cessation of adherence to jingoistic and inane propaganda and thought, and a focus on the principles we are supposed to stand for.

WHEREIN MOSE ALLISON PRESAGED THE BLIGHT OF THE DONALD TRUMP MOUTH

One of my favorite artists of all time, going back decades, is Mose Allison.

Turns out Mose wrote a song about Donald J. Trump decades before the intellectual and political blight actually arrived. Mose always was way ahead of his time.

Trump is a loudmouth, say anything, to anyone, at any time, that, first, makes him feel good, and, second, that might help himself.

In short, the ultimate clinically narcissistic jackhole. I doubt even Mose Allison figured how much his words might one day describe a blight on the American citizenry, if not humanity. Like in the form of Donald J. Trump.

But, here it is in it's total prescient glory:

Sittin here and yakkin right in my face
You comin' on exactly like you own the
place
You know if silence was golden
You couldn't raise a dime
Because your mind is on vacation and
your mouth is workin' overtime

You quotin' figures and droppin' names
You tellin' stories and playing games
You're overlaughin' when things ain't
funny
You tryin' to sound like the big money
You know if talk was criminal
You'd lead a life of crime
Because your mind is on vacation and
your mouth is workin' overtime

You know that life is short
Talk is cheap
Don't be makin' promises that you can't
keep
You don't like this little song I'm
singin'
Just grin and bear it
All I can say is if the shoe fits wear
it
If you must keep talkin
Please try to make it rhyme
Because your mind is on vacation and
your mouth is workin' overtime.

So, sentient voters can vote their own
conscience, and should. I can only hope they
don't do so in a manner that leads to the
election of the Triumphstag.

Seriously, Americans are smarter than that,
right?

Right??

BREAKING: RUSSIANS CLAIM THEY'VE FOUND EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE TO TAMPER WITH OUR ELECTIONS

Russians secretly found what might be a sign of
life coming from a star 95 light years away and
people are in a tizzy.

An international team of scientists from
the Search for Extraterrestrial
Intelligence (SETI) is investigating
mysterious signal spikes emitting from a
6.3-billion-year-old star in the

constellation Hercules—95 light years away from Earth. The implications are extraordinary and point to the possibility of a civilization far more advanced than our own.

The unusual signal was originally detected on May 15, 2015, by the Russian Academy of Science-operated RATAN-600 radio telescope in Zelenchukskaya, Russia, but was kept secret from the international community. Interstellar space reporter Paul Gilster broke the story after the researchers quietly circulated a paper announcing the detection of “a strong signal in the direction of HD164595.”

It turns out, however, that the story got way overhyped.

“No one is claiming that this is the work of an extraterrestrial civilization, but it is certainly worth further study,” wrote Paul Glister, who covers deep space exploration on the website Centauri Dreams. He seems to have missed headlines like “Alien Hunters Spot Freaky Radio Signal Coming From Nearby Star,” “Is Earth Being Contacted by ALIENS? Mystery Radio Signals Come From a Sun-like Star” and “SETI Investigating Mysterious, Extraterrestrial Signal From Deep Space Star System.”

[snip]

“God knows who or what broadcasts at 11 GHz, and it would not be out of the question that some sort of bursting communication is done between ground stations and satellites,” he told *Ars Technica*, explaining that the signal was observed in the radio spectrum used by the military. “I would follow it if I were the astronomers, but I would also

not hype the fact that it may be at SETI signal given the significant chance it could be something military.”

In other words, there’s a good chance the signal is the product of terrestrial activity rather than a missive crafted by extraterrestrial life on a distant exoplanet. For those who prefer a different outcome, there are plenty of movies that can offer more thrilling narratives.

So in the spirit of the silly season that our election has become, I’m going to go one better, taking the word “Russia” and some very thin evidence and declare this an election year plot. Everything else that has thin evidence and the word Russia is an election year plot, after all.

Consider the latest panic, caused by someone leaking Michael Isikoff an FBI alert on two attacks on voter files that took place this summer. Isikoff wasted no time in finding a cyber contractor willing to sow panic about Russians stealing the election.

The FBI has uncovered evidence that foreign hackers penetrated two state election databases in recent weeks, prompting the bureau to warn election officials across the country to take new steps to enhance the security of their computer systems, according to federal and state law enforcement officials.

The FBI warning, contained in a “flash” alert from the FBI’s Cyber Division, a copy of which was obtained by Yahoo News, comes amid heightened concerns among U.S. intelligence officials about the possibility of cyberintrusions, potentially by Russian state-sponsored hackers, aimed at disrupting the November elections.

[snip]

“This is a big deal,” said Rich Barger, chief intelligence officer for ThreatConnect, a cybersecurity firm, who reviewed the FBI alert at the request of Yahoo News. “Two state election boards have been popped, and data has been taken. This certainly should be concerning to the common American voter.”

Barger noted that one of the IP addresses listed in the FBI alert has surfaced before in Russian criminal underground hacker forums. He also said the method of attack on one of the state election systems – including the types of tools used by the hackers to scan for vulnerabilities and exploit them – appears to resemble methods used in other suspected Russian state-sponsored cyberattacks, including one just **this month** on the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Ellen Nakashima claimed the FBI had stated “Russians” were behind the attack and then talked about how Russia (rather than journalists overhyping the story) might raise questions about the integrity of our elections.

Hackers targeted voter registration systems in Illinois and Arizona, and the FBI alerted Arizona officials in June that Russians were behind the assault on the election system in that state.

The bureau described the threat as “credible” and significant, “an eight on a scale of one to 10,” Matt Roberts, a spokesman for Arizona Secretary of State Michele Reagan (R), said Monday. As a result, Reagan shut down the state’s voter registration system for nearly a week.

It turned out that the hackers had not compromised the state system or even any county system. They had, however, stolen

the username and password of a single election official in Gila County.

Roberts said FBI investigators did not specify whether the hackers were criminals or employed by the Russian government.

[snip]

Until now, countries such as Russia and China have shown little interest in voting systems in the United States. But experts said that if a foreign government gained the ability to tamper with voter data – for instance by deleting registration records – such a hack could cast doubt on the legitimacy of U.S. elections.

She also cites the same Barger fellow that Isikoff did who might make a buck off sowing fear.

Then Politico quoted an FBI guy and someone who works with state election officials (who are not on the normal circulation lists for these alerts) stating that an alert of a kind that often goes to other recipients but which because we've recently decided election systems are critical infrastructure is now going to election officials is unprecedented.

But some cyber experts said the FBI's alert, first revealed by Yahoo News on Monday, could be a sign that investigators are worried that foreign actors are attempting a wide-scale digital onslaught.

A former lead agent in the FBI's Cyber Division said the hackers' use of a particular attack tool and the level of the FBI's alert "more than likely means nation-state attackers." The alert was coded "Amber," designating messages with sensitive information that "should not be widely distributed and should not be

made public," the ex-official said.

One person who works with state election officials called the FBI's memo "completely unprecedented."

"There's never been an alert like that before that we know of," said the person, who requested anonymity to discuss sensitive intergovernmental conversations.

Multiple former officials and security researchers said the cyberattacks on Arizona's and Illinois' voter databases could be part of a suspected Russian attempt to meddle in the U.S. election, a campaign that has already included successful intrusions at major Democratic Party organizations and the selective leaking of documents embarrassing to Democrats. Hillary Clinton's campaign has alleged that the digital attacks on her party are an effort by Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime to sway the election to GOP nominee Donald Trump. Moscow has denied any involvement.

Then David Sanger used a logically flawed Harry Reid letter calling for an investigation to sow more panic about the election (question: why is publishing accurate DNC documents considered "propaganda"?).

It turns out the evidence from the voting records hacks in the FBI alert suggests the hacks involved common tools that could have been deployed by anyone, and the Russian services were just one of several included in the hack.

Those clued-in to the incidents already knew that SQL Injection was the likely cause of attack, as anyone familiar with the process could read between the lines when it came to the public statements.

The notion that attackers would use

public VPS / VPN providers is also a common trick, so the actual identity of the attacker remains a mystery. Likewise, the use of common SQL Injection scanners isn't a big shock either.

The interesting takeaway in all of this is that a somewhat sensitive memo was leaked to the press. The source of the leak remains unknown, but flash memos coded to any severity other than Green rarely wind-up in the public eye. Doing so almost certainly sees access to such information revoked in the future.

And yet, there is nothing overly sensitive about the IOCs contained in this memo. The public was already aware of the attacks, and those in the industry were certain that something like SQL Injection was a possible factor. All this does is prove their hunches correct.

As for the attribution, that's mostly fluff and hype, often used to push an agenda. Those working in the trenches rarely care about the *Who*, they're more interested in *What* and *How*, so they can fix things and get the business back to operational status.

And Motherboard notes that stealing voter data is sort of common.

On Monday, Yahoo reported the FBI had uncovered evidence that foreign hackers had breached two US state election databases earlier this month. The article, based on a document the FBI distributed to concerned parties, was heavily framed around other recent hacks which have generally been attributed to Russia, including the Democratic National Committee email dump.

The thing is, voter records are not some

extra-special commodity that only elite, nation-sponsored hackers can get hold of. Instead, ordinary cybercriminals trade this sort of data, and some states make it pretty easy to obtain voter data through legal means anyway.

In December of last year, CSO Online reported that a database of some 191 million US voter records had been exposed online. They weren't grabbed through hacking, per se: the dump was available to anyone who knew where to look, or was happy to just cycle through open databases sitting on the internet (which, incidentally, common cybercriminals are).

In other words, by all appearances there is no evidence to specifically tie these hacks even to Russian criminals, much less the Russian state. But the prior panic about the DNC hack led to a lower trigger for alerts on a specific kind of target, voter rolls, which in turn has fed the panic such that most news outlets have some kind of story suggesting this is a Russian plot to steal our election (by stealing 200K voter files?). It's like finding Russian life on Mars based on the shadows you see in the sand.

It's not the Russians who are raising questions about the voting integrity – beyond questions that have persistently been raised for 15 years which have already *justifiably* lowered confidence in our voting system. It is shitty reporting.

So I'm going to join in. These ETs 95 light years away? I'm positive they want to steal our election.

ELI LAKE'S PORTRAYAL OF THE CIA DIRECTOR CAMPAIGN: DRONES, BENGAZI, AND ... ?

Eli Lake reports that John Brennan wants to stay on as CIA Director under President Hillary. That's not surprising given that Brennan believes (as Lake notes) CIA Directors should get 10 year terms just like FBI Directors do.

I thought maybe Brennan wanted to stick around to make sure he gets credit for bettering Allen Dulles' record for regime change (after all, it's not clear how the regime change conducted while Brennan was at the White House gets counted in these things).

Apparently not. After laying out what he portrays as opposition from both the left and right (not that that stopped Brennan from being confirmed in 2013), Lake describes that Brennan might stay because he's the architect of the drone war.

Brennan does have the benefit of understanding the intricacies of the U.S. drone war that expanded significantly under Obama. Indeed, he is one of the main authors of that policy, going back to his time at the White House during Obama's first term.

There was a time when Obama endeavored to end that war by the time he left office. It's now clear that Obama's successor will inherit it. Brennan is hoping that if that successor is Clinton, she will also inherit the architect of the drone war that he and Obama can't seem to end.

This, at a time when the Senate Intelligence Committee and Armed Services Committee still

squabble over who should drive the drone war.

Lake describes Mike Morell's case (someone Dianne Feinstein has lobbied against in the past) this way:

Morell in particular has been helpful to Clinton. In his memoir and in congressional testimony, he blamed the CIA and the White House for the talking points on the 2012 Benghazi attack that attributed an act of terror to a demonstration over an internet video. Clinton, of course, was secretary of state at the time, and Republicans have leveled most of their criticism of Benghazi at her.

Lake pretends that the stated role in Benghazi and unstated opposition from Feinstein based off Morell's comments about the torture report wouldn't sink his candidacy. Maybe that wouldn't?

Which leaves Mike Vickers, about whom Lake only mentions Vickers' history as "former CIA officer and undersecretary of defense for intelligence." Thankfully, Vickers has made his own case, in a recent endorsement of Hillary. After Vickers recalls his own bipartisan history (largely running covert ops), he raises Hillary's favorite alleged proof of her national security chops, when she advised Obama to launch the Osama bin Laden raid.

As a Green Beret, CIA operations officer and senior national security official, I have served under six presidents—four Republicans and two Democrats. The last was Barack Obama, and for four years in the White House Situation Room, I saw Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's sound strategic judgment first-hand—on the Afghanistan surge, the campaign to dismantle and defeat core al Qaeda in Pakistan's tribal region, the raid to kill Osama bin Laden, and on lethal

support for the moderate Syrian opposition. Secretary Clinton has the temperament, national security experience and strategic judgment to be an outstanding commander in chief. Donald Trump does not. I'm with her.

Vickers then ends his "endorsement" by confidently asserting we need to be more hawkish than we currently are.

To be sure, we will need more aggressive counterterrorism strategies, stronger support for the Syrian opposition as the only plausible counterweight to authoritarianism and extremism within Syria, more effective counters to Iranian and Russian expansion, and better strategies for deterring and competing with China over the long term. But just as we needed an experienced and steady hand to guide us safely through the early years of the Cold War, we need an experienced and steady hand to guide us through the current challenges to American leadership and world order. Only one candidate in this presidential race can supply that.

There you have the race to be CIA Director under Hillary (at least as viewed through a Neocon lens): the current drone architect, Mr. Benghazi, or the guy whose enthusiasm for covert ops matches Hillary's own.

WHAT PRICE VICTORY?

Virtually the entire political class has now united to defeat Donald Trump, with Morning Joe today staging a Michael Hayden appearance that served largely to allow Scarborough to tell the story of Trump asking three times in a foreign

policy briefing why the US couldn't use its nukes. As Dan Drezner pointed out on Twitter, Scarborough says the event happened months ago – when the primary was still going on – but has just now staged its telling.

Beating Donald Trump is important. He's a racist who aims to win by promising white working class people they can resume persecuting people of color again, and he is dangerously inconsistent. That said, he does want to spend lots on infrastructure and protect workers from the ravages of globalization, something often forgotten in depictions of him as entirely policy free.

But the transpartisan obsession with beating Trump has largely applauded two developments that, for liberals, for democrats, for those who believe in peace, for progressives, should be a worry.

First, the Neocon establishment has come out in enthusiastic support for Clinton, with ideologue Eliot Cohen orchestrating serial efforts (one that even includes John Yoo!!) to oppose Trump. They point to Trump's erratic nature and more recently the theories of Putin's influence. They do so even in the face of a report that Paul Manafort, through whom any Putin influence would be managed, is checking out.

I exchanged messages Tuesday evening with a longtime ally of Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, whom I asked about who was calling the shots in the campaign. The response indicated that Manafort, a veteran of Republican politics brought in this spring for the transition from primaries to the general election, has lost control over his candidate.

"Manafort not challenging (Trump) anymore," Manafort's ally wrote.
"Mailing it in. Staff suicidal."

I'm getting whiplash following the Manchurian

Trump stories. Maybe the ones suggesting Bill Clinton was behind the Trump run are the true ones after all.

And even while the focus has been on Russia's alleged influence with Trump, there has been no focus on Hillary's unquestioning support of Saudi Arabia (the country that had ties to 9/11) and Israel. Or on Hillary's equally troubling policy proposals, such as starting a No Fly Zone over Russian planes. As Will Bunch noted in a great column, Democrats have become the party that shuns people who chant No More War.

The delegates didn't hear from an Andrew Bacevich or the equivalent of James Madison, but they did get Panetta, who – as noted in this excellent analysis – has supported expanded war powers for the White House, failed to push for real accountability on Bush-era torture, and once suggested that “a 30-year war” will be needed against terrorism. Was it really rude for some of the DNC delegates to chant “no more war!” during Panetta's speech? Or were some citizens desperately trying to be heard with a different point of view, in a nation so eager to squelch any public debate?

It should be a scandal that the United States drops bombs from flying death robots or our obscenely expensive military jets over countries like Libya, swaths of Africa, or Syria based only on a 15-year-old congressional resolution passed after an attack carried out mostly by Saudi Arabians loyal to a terrorist group that barely exists in 2016. But we're afraid of any frank discussion of that, or the recent admission by the Obama administration that U.S. military actions in nations with which we're not technically at war have killed 116 innocent civilians. That's a number that experts find ridiculously low, by the way, and

doesn't as include as many as 85 Syrian civilians who were killed in late July by a U.S. airstrike – a story that was all but ignored in the media. Even if you strongly believe that such collateral damage is necessary to defeat international terrorism, chanting “USA! USA!” to support militarism is both jingoistic and crudely callous toward the dead.

Not only has Hillary gotten the support of the people who brought us into Iraq based on a lie (she told her own little stretchers to get us into Libya), but we're now drowning out any voice for peace.

Then there's the parade of heinous billionaires Hillary has rolled out, with Mark Cuban, Mike Bloomberg, and now Meg Whitman. NYT's coverage of Whitman's announcement emphasizes that Hillary has been courting Republican billionaires since before she finalized the nomination and that Hillary's pick of the pro-TPP pro-Wall Street Tim Kaine is what sealed the deal for Whitman.

Whitman, who said she would remain a Republican, brings with her a considerable network of contributors, some of whom she said were open to giving to Mrs. Clinton. She said she was willing to campaign for Mrs. Clinton, said she would do her best to gather checks for her campaign and indicated she would personally give to both Mrs. Clinton and her affiliated “super PACs.” An aide to Ms. Whitman said she would personally give at least an amount in the “mid-six figures” to the Clinton effort.

While Democrats openly appealed at their convention last week to Republicans uneasy with Mr. Trump, Mrs. Clinton and her top supporters have been making a similar cross-party pitch in private

since before the Democratic nomination fight even came to its conclusion.

[snip]

She said she had told Mrs. Clinton that she wanted to see the two parties' conventions and assess the running mates that each nominee chose before making her decision. When Mrs. Clinton selected Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia, a consensus-oriented figure, "that was a positive for me," Ms. Whitman said.

Whitman's nod to Kaine is of particular concern to me, as Democrats downplayed his anti-choice and pro-business policies, at least in public, until after the convention. Now, if anything happens to Hillary (who has some dangerously unhinged enemies), we'll basically have a moderate Republican running the country.

It's not just *that* Hillary has secretly been courting oligarchs since before she cemented the nomination. It's that her post-convention politicking has focused on it, as if the approval of oligarchs is what it will take to win in midwest swing states.

The guy who will likely become Majority Leader is even more aggressively pursuing typical Republican voters (though this view – admittedly filtered through the potentially inaccurate National Review – has some huge logical contradictions, not to mention an odd idea of what it would take for Democrats to continue to win Illinois).

"No guarantees, there never are, but the odds are more like than not that we will take back the Senate," Sen. Chuck Schumer said at a forum sponsored by the Washington Post Thursday afternoon. Schumer will be the next majority or minority leader of the Senate Democrats, depending upon how November unfolds. He suggested that the electorate's sense of economic gloom was actually working

to his party's advantage: "The electorate is moving in a more Democratic direction. When middle class incomes decline, people tend to move in a more progressive direction."

Schumer's optimism is driven more by national demographics than by the specific traits of his candidates. He contends that Millennials, or voters aged 18 to 35, will be the largest age group voting in this year's electorate, even if they don't turn out in massive numbers.

"The number one factor in whether we retake the Senate is whether Hillary Clinton does well, and I think she's going to do really well," Schumer says of his former fellow New York senator. He notes that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell urged Senate Republicans in difficult races to localize their elections, rather than get too tied to Trump's positions and comments and scoffs, "Sorry, Mitch, this is a national election if there ever was one."

At least publicly, Schumer has no worries about his party's dwindling fortunes among working-class white voters. "For every blue-collar Democrat we lose in western Pennsylvania, we will pick up two moderate Republicans in the suburbs in Philadelphia, and you can repeat that in Ohio and Illinois and Wisconsin."

Democrats, it appears, want to become the party of the Republican soccer mom, which may work well with the bellicose warmongering, but which seems to view economic malaise as an opportunity rather than a problem.

So yeah, by all means, let's beat the orange crazy man.

But let's also be cognizant of the more politically palatable craziness that gets embraced in the process.

WAS “COMPUTER NETWORK” “ANALYTICS DATA PROGRAM” HACKED AT HILLARY HQ VAN OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Several outlets have reported that Hillary's campaign – or rather, a network the Hillary campaign uses – got hacked along with the DNC and DCCC, presumably by the same APT 28 group presumed to be Russia's military intelligence GRU. But reports on this, coming after a day of equivocation about whether Hillary's campaign had been hacked at all, are unclear.

Reuters explains hackers accessed an “analytics program server” for five days (though doesn't provide a date for that access).

A Clinton campaign spokesman said in a statement late on Friday that an analytics data program maintained by the DNC and used by the campaign and a number of other entities “was accessed as part of the DNC hack.”

[snip]

Later, a campaign official said hackers had access to the analytics program's server for approximately five days. The analytics data program is one of many systems the campaign accesses to conduct voter analysis, and does not include

social security numbers or credit card numbers, the official said.

KTLA (working off a CNN feed, I think) described the target as a “dynamic voter database – with voter participation, voter contact information and voter files all campaign organizations use.”

A person familiar with the Clinton campaign program described it as essentially a dynamic voter database – with voter participation, voter contact information and voter files that all campaign organizations use. It’s a list – but a dynamic one with key voter data.

A Clinton aide said the hackers had access to the analytics program’s server for approximately five days. The analytics data program is among many systems accessed to conduct voter analysis. It does not include social security numbers or credit card numbers.

The aide noted further that according to the campaign’s outside cyber security expert, the hack of this analytics data program could not have resulted in access to Clinton campaign internal emails, voicemails, computers or other internal communications and documents. Those are completely independent systems.

Some, though not all, of those reports is based off this circumspect statement from Nick Merrill.

An analytics data program maintained by the DNC, and used by our campaign and a number of other entities, was accessed as part of the DNC hack. Our campaign computer system has been under review by outside cyber security experts. To date, they have found no evidence that our internal systems have been compromised.

Meanwhile, the FBI sources in these stories seem hesitant to definitively tie this hack to the others.

I raise all this because the KTLA description of the program *sounds* a lot like VAN, the voter management program that has already made the news several times this election year. VAN is dynamic and accessible to all Democratic campaigns so they can share data about voter participation, contacts, and enthusiasm for one or another candidate.

But if it were VAN it'd be of particular interest for two reasons. First, because a firewall between Hillary and Bernie's campaigns went down in December, just as Bernie's campaign finished up an utterly historic fundraising day. A few of Bernie's staffers accessed some of Hillary's data – they said to monitor the extent of the breach, which they claimed was the second time it had happened. Bernie sued the DNC over the insecurity of the VAN, but ultimately he ended up punishing several staffers.

In other words, by December, if not before, the DNC had warning that the VAN was unstable. If the hack was of VAN and if it was in any way associated with this time period – or if it was a response to DNC taking no action to force VAN to improve security – then it would be very damaging to the Democrats.

If this hack was of VAN, it would also be significant given that Guccifer 2's technically bogus explanation of how "he" hacked the DNC claimed he got in through VAN.

***How did you break into the DNC network?
And are you still in?***

These questions are also very popular. I've already said about the software vulnerabilities. The DNC had NGP VAN software installed on their system so I used the 0-day exploit and then deployed my backdoor. The DNC used Windows on their server, so it made my work much easier. I installed my Trojan like virus

on their PCs. I just modified the platform that I bought on the hacking forums for about \$1.5k.

I've been inside the network for pretty long time, so I downloaded a lot of files. I lost access after they rebooted the system on June 12. But after all, if they'll carry on like this it won't be a problem to get in again and again.

I've worked with VAN (albeit in a county party office) and I can't think of a way it would be hooked up to more substantive computers (hmm—except perhaps within a computer and from there back up through a network). And the explanation appears bogus for a number of other reasons. But it would be interesting if Guccifer 2 had pointed to VAN weeks before the campaign decided to check whether VAN had been accessed (after having been proven to be unstable in the primary).

Finally, it would be interesting if it were VAN for one more reason: because after the December incident, Bernie moved off of VAN. Which means he has files protected from whatever the Russians or whoever else have been up to.

ON RESPONSIBLE SOURCING FOR DNC HACK STORIES

For some reason Lawfare thinks it is interesting that the two Democratic members of the Gang of Four – who have apparently not figured out there's a difference between the hack (allegedly done by Russia) and the dissemination (done by Wikileaks, which has different motivations) are calling for information on the DNC hack to be released.

The recent hack into the servers of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the subsequent release via WikiLeaks of a cache of 20,000 internal e-mails, demonstrated yet again the vulnerability of our institutions to cyber intrusion and exploitation. In its timing, content, and manner of release, the email dissemination was clearly intended to undermine the Democratic Party and the presidential campaign of Secretary Hillary Clinton, and disrupt the Democratic Party's convention in Philadelphia.

[snip]

Specifically, we ask that the Administration consider declassifying and releasing, subject to redactions to protect sources and methods, any Intelligence Community assessments regarding the incident, including any that might illuminate potential Russian motivations for what would be an unprecedented interference in a U.S. Presidential race, and why President Putin could potentially feel compelled to authorize such an operation, given the high likelihood of eventual attribution.

For some equally bizarre reason, WaPo thinks Devin Nunes' claim – in the same breath as he claims Donald Trump's repeated calls on Russia to release Hillary's email were sarcastic – that there is “no evidence, absolutely no evidence” that Russia hacked the DNC to influence the election is credible.

Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, told The Washington Post in an interview Wednesday that speculation about Russian attempts to sway the presidential election is unfounded.

“There is no evidence, absolutely no evidence, that the Russians are trying to influence the U.S. election,” Nunes said, repeatedly swatting away the suggestion made by some Democrats that the Russians may be using their intelligence and hacking capabilities to boost Donald Trump’s chances.

“There is evidence that the Russians are actively trying to hack into the United States – but it’s not only the Russians doing that. The Russians and the Chinese have been all over our networks for many years.”

These are two obvious (because they’re on the record) examples of partisans using their access to classified information to try to boost or refute a narrative that the Hillary Clinton campaign has explicitly adopted: focusing on the alleged Russian source of the hack rather on the content of the things the hack shows.

Kudos to Richard Burr, who is facing a surprisingly tough reelection campaign, for being the one Gang of Four member not to get involved in the partisan bullshit on this.

There are plenty of people with no known interest in either seeing a Trump or a Clinton presidency that have some measure of expertise on this issue (this is the rare moment, for example, when I’m welcoming the fact that FBI agents are sieves for inappropriate leaks). So no outlet should be posting something that obviously primarily serves the narrative one or the other candidate wants to adopt on the DNC hack without a giant sign saying “look at what partisans have been instructed to say by the campaign.” That’s all the more true for positions, like the Gang of Four, that we’d prefer to be as little politicized as possible. Please don’t encourage those people to use their positions to serve a partisan narrative, I beg of you!

For the same reason I'm peeved that Harry Reid suggested the Intelligence Community give Trump fake intelligence briefings. Haven't we learned our lesson about politicizing intelligence?

More generally, I think journalists should be especially careful at this point to make it clear whether their anonymous sources have a partisan dog in this fight, because zero of those people should be considered to be unbiased when they make claims about the DNC hack.

A very special case of that comes in stories like this, where Neocon ideologue Eliot Cohen, identified as Bush appointee, is quoted attacking Trump for suggesting Russia should leak anymore emails.

But now Republican-aligned foreign policy experts are also weighing in along similar lines.

"It's appalling," Dr. Eliot A. Cohen, who was counselor of the State Department during the second term of George W. Bush's presidency, said to me today. "Calling on a foreign government to go after your opponent in an American election?"

Cohen recently organized an open letter from a range of GOP national security leaders that denounced Trump in harsh terms, arguing that Trump's "own statements" indicate that "he would use the authority of his office to act in ways that make America less safe, and which would diminish our standing in the world." The letter said: "As committed and loyal Republicans, we are unable to support a Party ticket with Mr. Trump at its head. We commit ourselves to working energetically to prevent the election of someone so utterly unfitted to the office."

But this latest from Trump, by pushing the envelope once again, raises the question of whether other prominent

Republicans are ever going to join in.

For instance, to my knowledge, top national security advisers to George W. Bush, such as Stephen Hadley and Condoleezza Rice (who was also secretary of state), have yet to comment on anything we've heard thus far from Trump. Also, there could theoretically come a point where figures like former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and possibly even Dubya and George H.W. Bush feel compelled to weigh in.

Meanwhile, senior Republican elected officials who have backed Trump continue to refrain from taking on his comments forcefully or directly. Some Republicans actually **defended** Trump's comments today. Paul Ryan's spokesman issued a statement saying this: "Russia is a global menace led by a devious thug. Putin should stay out of this election."

I feel differently about Trump's asinine comment than I do about attribution of the attack. I'm all in favor of Hillary's campaign attacking Trump for it, and frankly Cohen is a far more credible person to do so than Jake Sullivan and Leon Panetta, who also launched such attacks yesterday, because as far as I know Cohen has not mishandled classified information like the other two have.

But I would prefer if, rather than IDing Cohen as one of the Republicans who signed a letter opposing Trump, Greg Sargent had IDed him as someone who has also spoken affirmatively for Hillary.

On foreign policy, Hillary Clinton is far better: She believes in the old consensus and will take tough lines on China and, increasingly, Russia. She does not hesitate to make the case for human rights as a key part of our foreign policy. True, under pressure

from her own left wing, she has backtracked on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a set of trade deals that supports American interests by creating a counterbalance to China and American values by protecting workers' rights. But she might edge back toward supporting it, once in.

Admittedly, this was at a time when Cohen and others still hoped some Mike Bloomberg like savior would offer them a third choice; that was before Bloomberg gave a very prominent speech endorsing Hillary last night.

Here's the thing. The Neocons (led by Robert Kagan, who's wife got named as a target of Russian aggression in the Feinstein-Schiff letter) are functioning as surrogates for Hillary just like top Democrats are. They are, just like Democrats are, now scrambling to turn their endorsements into both policy and personnel wins. Therefore we should no more trust the independence of a pro-Hillary Neocon – even if he did work for George Bush – than we would trust the many Democrats who have used their power to help Hillary win this election. Progressives should be very wary about the promises Hillary has made to get the growing number of Neocons (and people like Bloomberg) to so aggressively endorse her. Because those endorsements will come with payback, just like union or superdelegate endorsements do.

In any case, it's hard enough to tease out attribution for two separate hacks and the subsequent publication of the hacked data by Wikileaks. Relying on obviously self-interested people as sources only further obscures the process.

Update: The Grammar Police actually nagged me to fix "whose/who's" error in the Kagan sentence. Fun!

CHRIS CHRISTIE AND KARL ROVE'S US ATTORNEY PROJECT

The Republicans were supposed to talk about how they plan to Make America Work Again last night. And I supposed Paul Ryan – and to a lesser extent Mitch McConnell, when he wasn't being booed – presented a vision of how they think Republicans run the economy. That vision doesn't actually resemble the protectionist big government approach Donald Trump has been running on. But given the revelation that Trump offered to let John Kasich run both domestic and foreign policy if he would be his VP candidate (Kasich was still reluctant), perhaps we should focus more on how Mike Pence wants to suffocate the economy.

Instead, as most people have focused, Republicans continued to attack Hillary (Hillary continues to attack Trump, though I suspect she will focus somewhat more on policy next week than Republicans have thus far). Many people have unpacked Chris Christie's rabble inciting witch hunt last night, but Dan Drezner backs his review of it with some data on the risks to democracy (click through to read all of, which is worth reading).

Gov. Chris Christie's speech garnered particular attention. It triggered similar reactions from The Weekly Standard and Vox, two outlets not known to agree on all that much.

The climax of Christie's speech was a call-and-response with the crowd listing Clinton's various misdeeds.

[snip]

Indeed, political events in both Turkey

and the United States makes one somewhat concerned about the future of democracy as a political institution. Francis Fukuyama has banged on in recent years on the problems of political decay in the advanced industrialized democracies. He's a bit more sanguine about this election cycle than most, but the erosion of accepted norms of political behavior is an extremely disturbing trend. Donald Trump (and his campaign manager) certainly epitomizes this contempt for such minor things as the Constitution and the rule of law:

As the cherry on the top of this worry sundae, the Journal of Democracy has just published an article by Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk entitled, "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect." Foa and Mounck have previewed their findings [here](#) and [here](#) over the past year, and their thesis is pretty damn sobering:

[snip]

What we find is deeply concerning. Citizens in a number of supposedly consolidated democracies in North America and Western Europe have not only grown more critical of their political leaders. Rather, they have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives. The crisis of democratic legitimacy extends across a much wider set of indicators than previously appreciated....

In theory, it is possible that, even in the seemingly

consolidated democracies of North America and Western Europe, democracy may one day cease to be the “only game in town”: Citizens who once accepted democracy as the only legitimate form of government could become more open to authoritarian alternatives.

[snip]

By all means, read the whole thing. As an American, I find it particularly troubling that Ronald Inglehart’s rebuttal essay says that Foa and Mounck are exaggerating because this phenomenon is limited to the United States.

Foa and Mounck’s data ends in 2010. One could argue that things have only gotten worse since then, as Christie’s show trial speech suggests. But if I have a sliver of optimism, it is that the Trump campaign is America’s moment of staring into the anti-system abyss and seeing the ugliness that would await.

I will be curious if, after this election cycle, there is a greater appreciation for the democratic institutions that have made America great for more than a century.

I’m sympathetic to the notion that democracy is becoming delegitimized here and elsewhere, and in part blame the elites who have divorced policy outcomes from democratic accountability and therefore from benefits for average voters.

But the Chris Christie witch hunt is a special case. After all, this is a former US Attorney, a former top embodiment of America’s criminal justice system (and Christie’s attack was far more irrational than that of another US Attorney, Rudy Giuliani, earlier in the night).

And he's not just any US Attorney. He's a US Attorney who got that role largely off his fundraising for George W Bush, even in spite of concerns about his experience. Christie was, in some ways, one of the early test cases for Karl Rove's theory that US Attorney positions would make great launching pads for further political advancement – and it worked, to some degree. After prosecuting a bunch of Democrats in an equal opportunity political corruption state, Christie won the governorship and started abusing his power, most spectacularly with Bridgegate. He came close to winning the VP nomination with Trump (and if last night is any indication, perhaps he should have). Along the way he pioneered Deferred Prosecution Agreements, making monitor positions another piece of pork for loyal Republicans.

In other words, Christie is the personification of a Republican effort to politicize a position that – while political – had previously been treated with some respect for precedent and neutrality.

No longer. Last night, Christie broke down all remaining barriers between law enforcement and political prosecution. It was the inevitable outcome of Rove's little project.

Like Drezner, I'm worried generally about the state of our democracy (though unlike him I think the elite have a lot to answer for letting it happen). But the Christie witch hunt is a development above and beyond that general trend.

TPP AND DEMOCRATIC SELF-DELUSION

After months of telling Bernie Sanders to drop out, the political chatterers are finally understanding one reason he did not do so: to

maintain leverage over things like the party platform. After the platform was finalized yesterday, Bernie declared victory.

Pressed by supporters of U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, Democratic Party platform writers meeting this weekend in Orlando, Florida, adopted a progressive agenda that underscores the need for bold action on climate change, addresses criminal justice reform and calls for doubling the federal minimum wage.

“We have made enormous strides,” Sanders said. “Thanks to the millions of people across the country who got involved in the political process – many for the first time – we now have the most progressive platform in the history of the Democratic Party.”

The Platform Committee also adopted an amendment focused on criminal justice reform which calls for an investigation by the Department of Justice to investigate all shootings involving police officers.

The platform that will be submitted at the Democratic National Convention later this month in Philadelphia also would support Congress putting a price on carbon and methane to discourage continued use of fossil fuels that are causing severe climate change. The platform also says lawmakers must consider the impact on the climate in all federal decisions and invest heavily in wind and solar power rather than natural gas.

Delegates allied with Hillary Clinton’s and Sanders’ campaigns also passed amendments to fight for a \$15 federal minimum wage tied to inflation, urged passage of progressive immigration reform and called for legalization of marijuana.

There were three issues, however, where Sanders' delegates lost: opposition to Israeli settlements, a ban on fracking, and opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The first two make sense: after all, those policy positions match Hillary's stated position (though the US is supposed to be opposed to illegal settlements), so rejecting Sanders' amendments equated to backing the nominee instead. That's the way it's supposed to work.

But Hillary, of course, claimed to oppose the TPP during the primary, even if that claim was always sketchy coming as it did as she worked so hard to negotiate the crappy deal as Secretary of State. So the mealy-mouthed language in the platform about protecting workers – akin to the same language in the Colombia Trade Deal that did squat to protect workers – is more notable.

As is the idiotic opinion expressed by this person, described by Robert Reich as an acquaintance from the Clinton White House.

ACQUAINTANCE: "Don't you think your blog post from last night was a bit harsh?"

ME: "Not at all. The Democratic Party is shooting itself in the foot by not officially opposing the Trans Pacific Partnership."

[They talk about how the Democrats are supporting this to back the President.]

ME: "But it's terrible policy. And it's awful politics. It gives Trump a battering ram. Obama won't be president in six months. Why risk it?"

ACQ: "They don't see much of a risk. Most Americans don't know or care about the TPP."

ME: "But they know big corporations are running economic policy. They think the whole system is corrupt. Believe me, Trump will use this against Hillary."

ACQ: "He can't. She's inoculated. She's come out against the TPP."

ME: "But it's her delegates who voted not to oppose it in the Democratic platform. Her fingerprints are all over this thing."

Trump may not have many articulated policy positions, but his stance against TPP has been consistent and (unsurprisingly loud). Reich is right: to the extent that platforms mean anything at all, this will be used by Trump to pitch Democrats as sell-outs to American workers.

And the notion that voters won't react against TPP is insulting. Sure, they may not know how specifically bad TPP is, but workers do know that NAFTA sucked. And Trump is certainly capable of equating the two.

Whoever this person is, by nature of being a Hillary advisor, he or she is supposed to be a technocratic elite. But this is idiotic, both from a policy and a political perspective.

HILLARY'S MODE OF GOVERNANCE: BOOZY X CHROMOSOMES MAKING PEACE

The NYT has an article describing how a bunch of apparently moronic Hillary aides believe they will govern when she becomes President. I say moronic not just because – in a week when Hillary's spouse scored an enormous own goal by chatting up Attorney General Loretta Lynch on the tarmac in Phoenix – numerous Hillary aides said Hillary might keep Lynch as AG.

Democrats close to Mrs. Clinton say she may decide to retain Ms. Lynch, the nation's first black woman to be attorney general, who took office in April 2015.

No, I say moronic because the people behind this article apparently believe the following things will help Hillary – a candidate with historically high negatives – overcome historic partisanship.

Lots and lots of booze

This article reads almost more like a screenplay than news article, especially with its repeated portrayals of Georgetown-like cocktail parties in the White House lubricating political deals.

Mrs. Clinton would even schmooze differently than the past few presidents have. Not one to do business over golf or basketball, she would bring back the intimate style of former Presidents Ronald Reagan and Lyndon B. Johnson, negotiating over adult beverages. Picture a steady stream of senators, congressmen and other leaders raising a glass and talking policy in the Oval Office with her and her likely chief of staff, John D. Podesta, as her husband pops in with a quick thought or a disarming compliment.

[snip]

Her greatest strength is that she really listens to people, she understands what their political and policy needs are, and she tries to find that space where you can compromise," said Neera Tanden, a former top domestic policy adviser to Mrs. Clinton who is now the president of the Center for American Progress, a left-leaning policy institute.

"To be crystal clear: She has led many battles where you can't compromise on

principle,” Ms. Tanden added. “But she also loves socializing, loves having people and spouses over, and really loves talking over drinks.”

[snip]

Mrs. Clinton’s ability to use alcohol as a political lubricant came up repeatedly when allies and advisers were asked how she might work with Republicans. Her tale about a drinking contest with Senator John McCain of Arizona is now a Washington legend. (She said they called it quits before things got out of hand.) She believes that a relaxed, frank discussion is more authentic than trying to bond awkwardly with adversaries over sports – and more productive than keeping them at arm’s length, as Mr. Obama has often done.

“She likes to cajole, she likes to make deals, and she likes to make friends,” said Richard Socarides, a former policy adviser to Bill Clinton and a longtime supporter of Mrs. Clinton. “And she knows it’s much harder to go after someone who you basically like, who you’ve had a drink with.”

Sure, this is how things used to work. But I’m not sure cocktail parties can bridge the last two decades of increased partisanship, much of which has been targeted directly at the Clintons. I’m not even sure that many politicians drink as much anymore.

Lots of X chromosomes

Hillary also appears to believe merely increasing the number of women in the cabinet will lead to more hopey changey.

In her first 100 days, she would also tap women to make up half of her cabinet in hopes of bringing a new tone and collaborative sensibility to Washington,

while also looking past Wall Street to places like Silicon Valley for talent – perhaps wooing Sheryl Sandberg from Facebook, and maybe asking Tim Cook from Apple to become the first openly gay cabinet secretary.

[snip]

“There’s that old saying, ‘Nothing about us without us,’” said Jennifer Granholm, a former Democratic governor of Michigan who supports Mrs. Clinton. “I mean, a woman as chief of staff, Treasury secretary, a woman at Defense – it would be incredible.” (Ms. Granholm is often mentioned as a possible cabinet pick for the Energy Department or another post, but she waved off a question about her interest.)

Look, having the first female Presidents will be one of the big highlights of an (expected) Hillary presidency for me. But there is no reason to believe that women – especially those that have achieved cabinet level success – are any less cutthroat than men.

Moreover, Hillary will face the same problem Obama did: the bench simply isn’t that deep. While there are a number of likely cabinet officials, like Granholm, who aren’t currently engaged, to achieve 50% cabinet positions, you’d be cherry picking governors and members of Congress without the assurances they’d be replaced by more women. I’m far more interested in increasing the number of long term members of Congress who are women, for the near future, than achieving some magic 50% number. That will, in turn, ensure that another woman is ready to step up when it comes time for Hillary to retire.

Silencing Bill

Then there’s the question about what to do about First Gentleman Bill. For some reason, even in

the week of tarmackgate, Hillary's aides seem to think they can prevent him from stepping in it.

Clinton advisers say they do not expect Mr. Clinton to be constantly visible in the early months beyond whatever duties Mrs. Clinton gives him on economic policy and foreign affairs. The Clintons' priority is that he does not do anything that distracts from her agenda or overshadows her as the country gets used to having a former president (and a man) in the role of first spouse.

One role he will be welcome to play is as an icebreaker at the Oval Office happy hour.

Look, even aside from Bill's constitutional inability to avoid own goals, the notion that you could give him a big economic and/or foreign policy portfolio and at the same time have him keep a low profile is fantasy. Either you relegate him, exclusively, to running the never-ending cocktail party, or he will make some gaffes. You can't pick and choose with Bill.

Forging deals on the issue that will be especially raw given Trump's expected campaign

Finally, there's the belief that after a year of having Trump rile up Republican nativists, the drunken Republicans frequenting the White House cocktail hour will rush to compromise on immigration reform.

Her calculation is that she will be dealing with a Republican Party that is deeply fractured and demoralized after the defeat of Mr. Trump, whose leaders will be searching for ways to show they can govern and to court Hispanics if Mr. Trump loses badly with them. Mrs. Clinton also thinks a huge Democratic

turnout this fall would put the Senate back in her party's hands, while Speaker Paul D. Ryan and the Republicans would have a reduced majority in the House.

[snip]

Given how deeply immigration has divided the Republican Party, no other issue would probably reveal more about the ability of a President Hillary Clinton and a Republican-led House to work together.

On this, Hillary's aides might be right – but not so long as you imagine Hillary does anything to keep a viable GOP in place. Yes, the neocons who have already backed Hillary support immigration reform and other kinds of globalization. But after the campaign immigration is going to be far more volatile and raw than it was when Obama failed to pass immigration reform.

It could happen, but not without a significant realignment, one that would require far more ruthless punishment and far fewer martinis than Hillary seems to have in mind.