

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.