



“Bad Deal” Broder Wants More “Preparations for War”

Old war hawks never die, they just beat new war drums. Columnist David Broder, *New Dealer* emeritus at the *Washington Post*, believes he has discovered the elixir for our stubbornly stagnant economy, one that has the potential to make Barack Obama “one of the most successful presidents in history.” And, oh yes, it will be good for the country, too. Heck, it worked for FDR, didn’t it?



In his Sunday column in the *Post*, D.C.’s dean of punditry acknowledges that while the “enduringly superior” Obama is clearly “cleverer and more inspirational than anyone else on the scene,” the staggering economy has proved remarkably resistant to cleverness and inspiration. “The nation is suffering simultaneously from high and persistent unemployment, lagging investment, massive public and private debt, and a highly inefficient tax system,” Broder notes. Yes, David has noticed all that. He may not be as nimble as he was during the Eisenhower administration, but you’d still have to get up pretty early in the morning to slip a two-year-old recession past the watchful eye of David Broder.

“Can Obama harness the forces that might spur new growth? This is the key question for the next two years.” But on this point Broder appears doubtful, displaying an alarming lack of confidence in the powers of our “enduringly superior” leader. Wasn’t it just two years ago that Barack the Bold was going to show us how to heal the planet, turn back the rising oceans, cool global warming, save our failing schools, make over our medical care and make us all healthier, wealthier and wiser? And now he can’t “harness the forces that might spur new growth?” And we thought he was just waiting for his cape to come back from the cleaners.

“What are those forces?” Broder asks in order to tell us. (Pay attention now, class. Dr. Broder is conducting a seminar.) “Essentially, there are two. One is the power of the business cycle, the tidal force that throughout history has dictated when the economy expands and when it contracts. Economists struggle to analyze this, but they almost inevitably conclude that it cannot be rushed and almost resists political command. As the saying goes, the market will go where it is going to go.”

You have to give Broder points for humility. After working in and living next door to Washington all these decades, he is still willing to admit that some things resist political command. Oops! Not quite. He said the business cycle “almost” resists political command. So what do you do to an economy that won’t



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follow orders and won't surrender to the enduring leader's cleverness and inspiration? Well, here is where Broder looks to his bracelet, the one with the letters WWRD: What Would Roosevelt Do?

"Look back at FDR and the Great Depression," Broder advises. "What finally resolved that economic crisis? World War II." Right, another world war. That'll jump start the old economy, by Jove!

"Here is where Obama is likely to prevail," Broder predicts. "With strong Republican support in Congress for challenging Iran's ambition to become a nuclear power, he can spend much of 2011 and 2012 orchestrating a showdown with the mullahs. This will help him politically because the opposition party will be urging him on. And as tensions rise and we accelerate preparations for war, the economy will improve."

Well, of course! No doubt world oil markets will respond favorably to "rising tensions" and the prospect of another war in the Middle East. Anyone remember what the price per barrel of oil was before we invaded Iraq and before we turned our splendid little war to defeat the al Qaida in Afghanistan into the war of the decade — or maybe the century? Neither do I, but I believe it was a good deal lower than it is now — and a great deal lower than it will be after a nice long round of sustained saber rattling to bring the mullahs to their knees.

"I am not suggesting, of course, that the president incite a war to get reelected," Broder assures us. No, of course not. Perish the thought. But if Iran's rulers won't retreat from its nuclear program and bow to the demands of the nation with the mightiest arsenal on the earth, we'll just have to show them what devastating military power in the hands of a peace-loving nation can do to their land and people. If Tehran tries to call our bluff, we will have to prove we weren't bluffing. We will have to show we are wise to them, that we know the only language "those people" understand is the "language of force."

Broder apparently thinks it a safe assumption that Iran will back down "as tensions rise and we accelerate preparations for war." Funny, isn't it? We Americans would think it cowardice if we did not arm ourselves superabundantly and prepare for battle against any threat to our national interests, no matter how remote. Yet we assume that when we threaten other nations they will have the good sense to back down. And we assume that good sense will prevail even over rulers we describe as madmen — like Ahmadinejad in Iran.

Broder is widely recognized as one of Washington's most influential journalists, so his prescription for a "war recovery" should not be tossed aside lightly. Rather, it should be, as Dorothy Parker once said of a book she reviewed, "hurled with great force." Pat Buchanan responded with a volley of questions Broder will probably ignore, but the rest of us would do well to consider.

"First," Buchanan asks, "how exactly are 'preparations for war' on Iran going to improve our economy when two actual wars costing \$1 trillion have left us in the deepest recession since the 1930s? Were those wars just not big enough?" Yes, that must be it. Democrats and liberal columnists have been telling us that the \$787 billion economic stimulus program hasn't worked because it wasn't big enough. And if war is to be viewed as an economic stimulus, then obviously our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are simply not big enough. Conservatives seem to forget that war is a "big government" program. And liberals "know" no big government program is ever big enough.

But the economic stimulus of war preparations has already been spent. The "arsenal of democracy" that America built under FDR is already built for Obama in the new world order of America the Globocop. An attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, Buchanan points out, "would be carried out by air and missile strikes from ships and planes already in the U.S. arsenal. We would not need the tens of thousands of ships,



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tanks, guns, and planes we needed in WWII, or the 12 million men under arms.”

We might need millions more under arms, however, if we were to invade Iran, which is three times larger than Iraq. Unless the President and Congress want to reactivate the military draft — an unwelcome and unlikely development — we simply don’t have the troops to send to Iran.

While Broder sounds the alarm, warning that “Iran is the greatest threat to the world in the young century,” Buchanan notes that, “U.N. inspectors claim Iran has not diverted any of its low-enriched uranium for conversion to weapons-grade.”

Broder appears to be suffering an ideological hangover from the “happy hours” of New Deal liberalism. It’s not surprising that his answer to every problem is to “Be Like Franklin.” But America is war-weary again. An ill-considered charge to the precipice of war is not a New Deal, but the same old bad deal for America.



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