

By David Swanson

From [War Is A Crime](#) | Original Article

In the news around the world and even in the United States on Tuesday was the anger among Iraqis at the failure of the United States to hold anyone seriously accountable for the 2005 massacre in Haditha. [The story](#) was a useful reminder of how the operations of the U.S. military over the past decade have fueled hostility toward our nation.

President Obama began his State of the Union speech Tuesday night by absurdly claiming the exact opposite, asserting that the war on Iraq has made us safer and -- I kid you not -- "more respected around the world." He later equated the war on Iraq to World War II, a surefire way to put anything beyond criticism in the United States, provided you can get people to fall for it.

Remember, this is the guy who won the Democratic Primary in 2008 by the simple fact of having not yet been in the Senate in 2003 and thus having avoided voting for the war that he funded to the hilt as a senator beginning in 2005. He had called it a dumb war. Now he says it made us safer. If it was dumb, was he dumber? What is he trying to say?

In the next breath, Obama says "some troops in Afghanistan have begun to come home." Never mind that there are three times as many U.S. troops in Afghanistan now as when Obama moved into the White House. The myth is that he's ending wars. Never mind that he was compelled to end the Iraq War, in so far as it has ended, by the treaty that Bush and Maliki created, and which Obama sought every possible way to violate. Never mind that Iraqi hostility toward U.S. criminals being granted immunity from prosecution was the primary reason that the Iraqi government insisted on the Bush-Maliki withdrawal date. A myth is a myth, and who will question it and still keep their job on U.S. television?

Because the United States dumps record funding into its military -- over half of federal discretionary spending -- the United States is falling behind other nations in education, energy, infrastructure, health, life expectancy, infant mortality, poverty, retirement security, and happiness. Obama's next breath serves to simply assert the opposite. We're number one. Who will dare to question that? To fudge the claim, Obama actually says that being number one is right within our grasp if only we would all act more like the military. (Late in the speech he mentions cutting a half a trillion dollars from the military, without mentioning that he means "over 10 years" or \$50 billion per year from a budget of over a trillion per year.)

UPDATE: Contrary to my initial impression, Obama probably was speaking here of his "cuts" to

dream budgets that amount to increases. The layers of lies get thick.

And what a glowing future he describes! Gee, if only we'd had someone who thought that way serving as, say, president, the past few years. Now he wants to "fight obstruction with action." Just forget about that initial two-year-long pretense that the Senate couldn't get around any filibuster attempts. That would be looking backward.

Obama said Tuesday night that he wants an economy where "everyone plays by the same set of rules." Really? Where's my bailout? Where's my get-out-of-jail-free card? Will we now see prosecutions of financial fraud, busting of trusts, taxation of corporations and billionaires? What brought about this reversal? People are crediting the Occupy movement, of course, but the Occupy movement has demanded -- yes, demanded -- actions, not words.

Obama says the United States lost jobs because technology made them obsolete. That's his whole explanation of the decline of the past 40 years and of the financial collapse of 2008. Nothing about union busting. Not a word about military spending. No mention of regressive taxation. Barely a nod to the shredding of financial regulation. Not even room for a bit of blame directed toward a culture of greed. Nope. Technology. That's what it was. Nobody to blame. Just a bit of bad luck we've had, and if we all act more like the military we'll clear it right up.

Or not quite. There's also the problem of irresponsible home owners: "Mortgages had been sold to people who couldn't afford or understand them." Only after that slanderous dig (which he repeats later as well) did our President mention a deficiency in regulation.

Obama then claims employment is on the rise and, in the same breath, and exactly as if it mattered to us in the same way as employment: "Together, we've agreed to cut the deficit by more than \$2 trillion." Of course, that's more than the entire discretionary budget and what Obama would have said, if he hadn't been so rushed in slapping together this speech without any help whatsoever, was that such cuts would be spread over many years, amounting to much less in each year, but still enough to do a great deal of damage.

Then Obama claimed to have put in place rules that will prevent any new crisis on Wall Street. I've never seen anyone take that claim seriously.

He says the auto bailout involved workers and bosses "settling their differences." Have any workers described it that way?

"Right now, companies get tax breaks for moving jobs and profits overseas. Meanwhile, companies that choose to stay in America get hit with one of the highest tax rates in the world. It makes no sense, and everyone knows it."

That has got to be the slimiest argument for yet more corporate tax cuts I've ever seen dressed up as patriotic common sense.

Next Obama bragged about corporate trade agreements with Panama, Colombia, and Korea, just the kind of agreements he campaigned against last time.

Then Obama proposed that, instead of developing a great educational system, we just have corporations fund their training for specific jobs. The President then spoke of the importance of a real educational system and admitted that,

"At a time when other countries are doubling down on education, tight budgets have forced states to lay off thousands of teachers."

The solution to this is stunningly brilliant, or something. Wait for it:

"So tonight, I call on every state to require that all students stay in high school until they graduate or turn eighteen."

That ought to do it.

Obama then proposed that Congress not double the interest rates on student loans, and extend the tuition tax credit. And he added this innovative strategy that, again, is simply brilliant, or something:

"So let me put colleges and universities on notice: If you can't stop tuition from going up, the funding you get from taxpayers will go down."

Ha! Affordable education, here we come!

Obama then asked for a bill that would allow immigrants "to earn their citizenship." A hint at how they might do that is found in his list of noble things such immigrants might want to

participate in, one of which is "defend this country." I assume you don't need me to translate.

Moving on, Obama is proud to say, "Over the last three years, we've opened up millions of new acres for oil and gas exploration, and tonight, I'm directing my Administration to open more than 75 percent of our potential offshore oil and gas resources." Drill, baby, drill! Obama also wants a major expansion in drilling for natural gas and promises to require that companies disclose the chemicals they use in doing so. Because chemicals can't kill you if you're told about them. Transparent fracking! It's the new Clean coal!

Wind energy is a little footnote, and solar and other clean energies don't get a mention in the State of the Union, except a request for "clean energy tax credits." Or so it seems, until the military comes to the rescue again:

"I'm directing my Administration to allow the development of clean energy on enough public land to power three million homes. And I'm proud [watch where the pride comes in] to announce that the Department of [So-Called] Defense, the world's largest consumer of energy, will make one of the largest commitments to clean energy in history -- with the Navy purchasing enough capacity to power a quarter of a million homes a year."

The United States military is not just the biggest consumer of energy. It is the biggest spreader of depleted uranium, white phosphorous, and cluster bombs. The United States military has rendered entire landscapes uninhabitable for our species, unless we last as long as the dinosaurs, and this kind of speech doesn't give me the impression we'll be around anything like that long.

The best bit of rhetoric comes deep in the speech: "Take the money we're no longer spending at war, use half of it to pay down our debt, and use the rest to do some nation-building right here at home." That would be a terrific proposal if we had stopped spending money on wars or, even better, if we were to stop spending vastly greater amounts on the military's permanent existence apart from its wars. Obama doesn't mention any numbers or proposals, because he's talking utter nonsense.

Obama moves on to claiming he'll handle oil spills, this the same week that [we received documentation](#) of the pressure he exerted to deceive the public about the last big one. He announces a new "Financial Crimes Unit," not that he hasn't announced the same thing before, but this time it's while he works toward an immunity-granting "settlement" with the big banks guilty of mortgage fraud.

Obama wants the payroll tax cut, no matter what it does to Social Security. In fact, he's "prepared to make more reforms that rein in the long term costs of Medicare and Medicaid, and

strengthen Social Security, so long as those programs remain a guarantee of security for seniors." Of course, "strengthen" here is code for "cut." Obama makes these "concessions" on condition that tax cuts for millionaires are allowed to expire. Of course, he put the same condition on earlier concessions and then abandoned it, but we really must stop looking backward. Obama proposes following the "Buffet rule" but does not specify how he would have that done.

"We don't begrudge financial success in this country," he lies. "We admire it." Increasingly, this is just not so. We admire truly worthy accomplishments, whether or not financially successful, and we condemn the stratification of our society into one in which few travel far up or down the income distribution. We resent the expenses imposed on the poor and the unfair advantages bestowed upon the already excessively wealthy. We condemn the hoarding of billions of dollars while others go hungry and homeless. The president is not unaware of this, but he is not speaking to us, is not one of us, and could not possibly care less.

The President acknowledges public disgust with elected officials who are bought and paid for. "Let's take some steps to fix that," he says. And then he gets cute. No end to corporate personhood, no end to money as speech, no ban or limitation on election spending, no public financing, no free air time for candidates, not even the usual call for "disclosure" of who is bribing whom. Nope. President Obama wants a bill to ban insider trading by congress members. That certainly couldn't hurt, if they would do it, but the idea that it centrally addresses the problem of money in politics is absurd.

Yet, in the context of this speech, to qualify as a truly absurd proposal takes more than most rhetorical nonsense can offer. Obama closes, in fact, with a real doozie. He claims that wars are ending and threatens war on Iran. You can't make this stuff up. The Project for the New American Century can. You can't:

"As the tide of war recedes. . . . America is determined to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and I will take no options off the table to achieve that goal. But a peaceful resolution of this issue is still possible . . . if Iran changes course."

Got that? Unless Iran, which the Secretary of Defense says is not developing a nuclear weapon, ceases developing a nuclear weapon, we're going to war. But we regret it very much and it will hurt us more than it hurts you.

"America remains the one indispensable nation in world affairs." That makes the rest of the world -- you guessed it -- dispensable.

Killing Osama bin Laden is President Obama's proudest claim, and he uses it in the final words of the State of the Union to bash "politics." Some of the killers may have been Republicans

and others Democrats, he tells us, but they were united in murder. Yet, if the money were cleaned out of politics, if we had a decent communications system, if good candidates could get on ballots and into debates, if votes were publicly counted on paper at each polling place, if -- in other words -- politics were what we imagine it aspiring to be, then why would we elect people who bash it? And if we wanted someone who intended to unite with Republicans, why wouldn't we elect a Republican? And if we weren't paralyzed by fear and lies, why wouldn't we want alleged criminals brought to our country and put on trial? After all, we've got a lot of courts and we aren't using them for our own leading criminals.