

## Re: Is ANYONE dumber than conservatives?

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*From:* JohnAndrew (AJFeeny48\_at\_yahoo.com)

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Gary – you make some good points, especially about the tendency for insults and counter-insults to spread on the Internet.

Somebody did a fairly questionable social psychological experiment somewhere on how "liberals" and "conservatives" supposedly process information; someone else then put a spin on the reported findings of the thing, suggesting that the study showed that liberals were "dumber than conservatives" – which is not what the study, bad as it was, actually showed — and as a partisan, I thought of the obvious riposte: "Is ANYBODY dumber than conservatives"?

Which was a bit unfair, I know. But after seeing some really bone-headed propaganda by Rush Limbaugh fans in here, I have to say it gave me great pleasure to write it. It made my day, although I recognize that there are some intelligent conservatives — not inside the Bush administration, it looks like, and certainly not among Rush's fans. But they do exist, although I think they're a lot rarer than blue whales or whooping cranes.

As for the other issues you raise, I think you're factually mistaken on one somewhat minor point. Though Rumsfeld may have been sec def. under Ford — but was he? I thought this was Melvin Laird? — I think it's a matter of record that he went to Baghdad to meet Saddam in the 1980s under Reagan.

The reason for the trip, of course, is because the US was indeed worried about Iran at the time, as you point out, and because Saddam was then at war with Iran. So it may well have seemed to Reagan and Co. that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

However it's a BIT disingenous for Geo. W., some 20 years later, to go on and on about how evil Saddam was in using poison gas on his own people – because when Saddam did this in the 1980s, the Republicans at the time didn't actually object to it, although I think a few liberal

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Democrats did, perhaps for partisan purposes.

It may actually have been "smart" for Reagan and Co. to assist Saddam in the 1980s, even when it was becoming clear that he was a ruthless murderer, and it may have been "smart" for Bush Jr. to demonize him for his ruthlessness and his use of poison gas when trying to justify a war fought for other reasons in 2003 – but if it was smart, it wasn't very honest.

Any conservative – or liberal or independent – who actually believes that the US government consistently fights war against mass murderers just because they're mass murderers, or because we Americans supposedly love "freedom" and "democracy," really is dumb. Or woefully ignorant, at least. Or simply fooling themselves.

Yes, this may SOMETIMES happen, US foreign policy SOMETIMES does support democracy, but a good deal of the time the US government supports rotten and undemocratic leaders because they supposedly serve our national interests – and we all know this, when we pay attention to the news. How can anyone believe otherwise, who thinks?

I also think you're only half-right on the GOP/Democrat alliance on national debts.

That is, you may be completely correct about the tacit alliance, but I think Keynes was right about the necessity of deficit spending — sometimes, and at least for awhile.

In the long run, obviously, debts have to be repaid, and if the government consistently runs up large debts, the taxpayers are left with the bill. That can lead to disaster, as you point out.

For example, the large national debts that the Dutch Republic ran up during and after its "golden age" in the 1600s, when the Dutch for several decades were the world's leading economic power, may have played a big role in ultimately undermining Dutch supremacy and allowing the English to take Holland's place in the 1700s.

As a couple of Dutch economic historians, Ad van der Woude and Jan de Vries, have pointed out in a recent book on Dutch economic vitality, the national debt was a tool for Dutch prosperity in the 1600s, but by the 1700s the richest other upper-class lenders to the government were getting all the benefit, while the ordinary Dutch taxpayer was paying off the interest ... the result being that average wages and living standards fell,

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consumer demand didn't keep pace with production, and the whole economy slowed down.

But even if national debts are destructive in the long run, they may be necessary in a capitalist economy in the short run, if sufficient demand for what the economy produces is to be maintained.

In the short run, especially if the distribution of income tilts in the direction of the rich, you end up with more money flowing to people who will generally invest it — often in new productive capacity.

At the same time, money flows out of the pockets of the poor and the working classes, who are more likely than the rich to spend their incomes on consumer goods. So if you're not careful, you end up with a classic capitalist recession or depression caused by "excess capacity" — by the economy having a growing imbalance between productive investment (i.e. by the rich) and effective consumer demand (i.e. by the middle class and the poor).

If the government now goes into debt during the recession, whether to finance social programs (e.g., under the Dems) or to prepare for and wage war (under the GOP, often enough) then the imbalance between supply and demand can be "fixed," temporarily.

By spending money it doesn't actually have, by stealing from the future, the government can temporarily inject effective demand into the economy — for tanks, airplanes, consumer necessities, welfare cadillacs or whatever — and thus ensure that temporarily, the factories are running and people are going back to work. The government bonds used to finance the debt, meanwhile, also provide a nice investment vehicle for the rich and the Wall Street traders who serve them.

But you're right, Gary — in the long run, the debts incurred to finance liberal Democratic "social Keynesianism" or conservative GOP "military Keynesianism" are probably a bad idea. As a radical lefty, I'd say this is one reason that extreme economic inequality is a bad idea in the first place, no matter whether the GOP or the Dems are in charge.

If the rich investor class and the lower part of the working class both expand in numbers, while the middle class shrinks, I think we're more likely to see consumers, as a class, lacking enough income to buy what the economy has to sell. And

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we're probably therefore more likely to experience the excess capacity problems in the economy that both the GOP and the Dems are tempted to "cure" through debt. And that the big credit card companies encourage middle-class consumers to "cure" – again through debt. And that corporate management sometimes seeks to get around — once more, through debt.

There's a whole school of socialist economists, more or less associated with Monthly Review magazine in New York, who therefore emphasize the growing burden of government, consumer and corporate debt to the US and indeed the world economy – a problem they say is more or less inevitable given the permanent excessive productive capacity that seems built into late capitalism.

I'm not a professional economist, though, so take this argument with a grain of salt.

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tseneca@alltel.net (Gary Gerrard) wrote in message news:<4c36ce.0408301015.7eba0db0@posting.google.com>...

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- > *I came in after the first ad hoc stink bomb was thrown so I don't know*
- > *who "started it." What I do know is that once started, it takes a*
- > *self-secure ego, especially a cyber-ego, to not respond in kind and*
- > *allow a "discussion" to degenerate into an e-catfight. I always hope*
- > *these groups will help me understand issues better, other than the*
- > *issues of psychology and how people react to being insulted.*
- >
- > *That said, "merely" was meant not to minimize or justify what Reagan*
- > *did, but rather to point out that he carried on with an existing*
- > *policy. Of course, that is what Kennedy did with the Bay of Pigs*
- > *fiasco which made him look weak on communism and pushed him into*
- > *"helping" VN. (One of the great ironies of VN was that Ho asked*
- > *Truman for support against the French before going to the Russians.*
- > *Adopting the disguise of communism was apparently Russian price of*
- > *support for VNese nationalism.)*
- >
- > *As for who the GOP is seeking: anyone who will vote for them. I*
- > *recall meeting Marilyn Quayle at a fundraiser when I was running for*
- > *the state legislature in 1990. She told the story about her "get out*
- > *the vote" program when Dan ran for Congress and how when she picked up*
- > *a woman who need a ride to the polls assuming she was voting for Dan*
- > *and she asked to make sure, the woman said she was voting for the*
- > *opponent. Ms. Quayle then decided she could not go to the polls—with*
- > *this woman, anyway—after all. This story is from personal experience,*
- > *but it is by no means party specific.*
- >
- > *As for Regan and Saddam, I think you have the time frame off.*
- > *Rumsfeld was Sec. of Def. to Ford, and it was he who first went there*

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- > to support Saddam, I think. Certainly Reagan, with broad support
- > domestically, helped Saddam against Iran who held 100+ Americans
- > hostage, many with diplomatic immunity, for over 400 days. That was
- > surely an act of war, as traditionally understood, and acts to oppose
- > such an enemy was not inappropriate. I think it was a wise Greek who
- > said, My enemy's enemy is my friend.
- >
- > There is much ground to cover on Reagan's fiscal policies and their
- > effects. I believe one effect was the sooner rather than later (no
- > Clinton pun intended) collapse of the USSR. I reach this conclusion
- > more from comments by Russians, who ought to know, than from
- > Americans, especially GOP partisans, who have a vested interest in
- > believing so. Was it worth the price of eliminating Mutually Assured
- > Destruction and Nuclear Holocaust from the psyche of the world? I
- > think so. Many business people, not all Rs, believe that the Reagan
- > tax cuts were largely responsible for the eventual economic expansion
- > of the 90s. I tend to agree although attributing a single cause to
- > such a complex event is like saying if you eat too much saturated fat
- > you will die early from heart disease.
- >
- > I do, however, believe that Reagan and the Ds made a bargain that is
- > haunting us now. The Ds basically agreed to spend as much as the Rs
- > wanted as long as the Rs would reciprocate. We are paying the price
- > now, and when there was a budget surplus, I, like Greenspan, was
- > convinced the best thing to do with it was pay down the National Debt,
- > but even Greenspan knew politics would not allow that to happen, so he
- > advocated a tax cut rather than more spending. Given the choice and
- > the reality, I would have made the same choice. The ultimate
- > consequence of the last 40 years of fiscal policy is still unfolding.
- > (Tax cuts began with Kennedy when the tax rates were as follows:
- >
- > *Income Surtax Tax*
- > over \$16,000 \$4,336 plus 50% of the excess
- > over \$26,000 \$8,696 plus 63% of the excess
- > over \$50,000 \$23,096 plus 72% of the excess
- > over \$80,000 \$42,516 plus 80% of the excess
- > over \$200,000 \$154,716 plus 89% of the excess.
- >
- > US Statutes at Large 65 (1951): 459. There was a "Normal Tax" of 3%
- > on ALL income in addition to the surtax.) I would not, however, have
- > tried to one up the Ds by enacting a \$400 Bn Drug benefit in the face
- > of a \$500 Bn annual deficit, not matter what percentage of the GDP the
- > deficit was. It does, however, seem ironic that the Ds are now
- > talking about balancing the budget. I interpret this as evidence that
- > both Ds and Rs care more about power than about policy and they will
- > say or do whatever they think will get or keep them in power. This,
- > and mere human error, I think, is largely responsible for the glaring
- > inconsistencies between the rhetoric and the actions of both the Ds
- > and Rs.
- >
- > (posted without proofreading.)