

Chuck Hagel Unveils Both a Budget and Why He Was Nominated

☒ Last year, when President Obama nominated Republican Chuck Hagel as secretary of defense, there were actually quite a few people in the media who suggested that he did so in the interest of bipartisanship.

Reid J. Epstein of *The Politico* even went as far as writing that the decision “appeals to Obama’s bipartisan spirit.”

I think anyone who has observed President Obama with even an iota of objectivity knows how comical such a statement is. After all, we’re talking about a man who spent his entire first term in office blaming his Republican predecessor for all of the country’s problems. We’re also talking about someone who has committed himself to engaging in a perpetual campaign against his Republican opposition in congress. He’s demonized them as obstructionists and hostage-takers, he’s inferred that they’re bigots, and he’s pretty much portrayed them as unpatriotic people who simply want to see the country fail.

The president, who has demonstrated a disdain for conservatism in all of its forms, isn’t interested in bipartisanship. He never has been. He also wasn’t interested in nominating a qualified individual to hold the position of U.S. Secretary of Defense. Chuck Hagel’s confirmation hearing last year was nothing short of embarrassing. Republicans and Democrats alike were aghast as they listened to him bumble his way through answer after answer, displaying an astonishing lack of competence and an inability to defend his own positions on issues directly relevant to the job he was applying for.

I think it’s safe to say that the real reason for the

president's nomination became apparent this week when Hagel announced a military budget that will reduce the size of the U.S. Army to pre-World War II levels. What better way to run cover for such a drastic proposal than having an individual from the Republican Party (the party traditionally most trusted to defend our country from foreign threats) directly attached to it?

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates certainly wouldn't have gone for it. Gates has gone as on record saying that he would have quit his job if such mindless military cuts were forced upon him while he held that position.

Hagel, however, is no Gates. He's an outspoken, anti-war guy with a history of making anti-Israel comments and denouncing his party for supporting the Iraq War (after he first voted for it). In 2012, he even went as far as saying that the Republican presidential primary candidates "can hardly race to say who would bomb Iran first." Did I mention that Hagel also refers to Iran's repressive government as "elected [and] legitimate"?

I certainly respect Chuck Hagel, primarily for his honorable service in Vietnam for which we all should admire and be grateful for. His value as our Secretary of Defense, however, is little more than a public relations stunt. He's a tool being used to pursue the only form of government shrinkage that committed liberals like President Obama are ever interested in: Cuts to our military.

Along with cuts to major equipment programs and military benefits, the plan calls for reducing our total number of troops to under 450,000. That's 120,000 less than the number of troops that fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.


Rich Lowry of the *National Review* did a good job of conveying why that's such a bad idea:

"Understandably, we don't want to fight another grinding

ground war. But this doesn't mean we won't have to, or we won't experience other nasty surprises. It is an unfortunate part of the American tradition to convince ourselves, when we find it convenient, that the world is not a dangerous place that always demands our attention, or else."

The truth is that we live in a very dangerous world – one that's much more dangerous now than it was the day President Obama took office. Anyone sitting in the Oval Office would obviously know that. Yet, President Obama's lifelong, liberal sensibilities prevent him from recognizing the prescription for best preparing our country for that world because he is (and always has been) far more concerned with pursuing a domestic, social agenda.

Liberalism is largely about trying to achieve a goal of *social justice* within society. It's not about maintaining an influential role in global issues. Thus a smaller, less consequential part for the United States to play on the world stage is actually seen as a good thing among liberals. The idea is that it will allow for more resources to be diverted toward the pursuit of *domestic bliss*.

There will, of course, *never* be any true restraints placed on spending by politicians who consider years of trillion dollar deficits to be an *Era of Austerity*. With our nation approaching a national debt of \$18 trillion, and no other meaningful spending cuts (only increases) being proposed, one can only laugh at Hagel's statement about recognizing "the reality of the magnitude of our fiscal challenges." 

As Rich Lowry also pointed out in his column, the only *real* austerity we've been seeing has been to our military, first in the form of sequestration cuts and now in the military budget unveiled by Chuck Hagel.

Instead of spreading the *wealth* around, why can't we spread the *cuts* around?

By concentrating only our military, we're reminding the rest of the world just how weak and increasingly inconsequential our country is right now. That's the legacy that Chuck Hagel is creating for himself as Secretary of Defense. Something tells me he doesn't mind, however, because even he knows that it's the reason he's holding the job.