



Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by

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4 May 2012

Editor, Washington Post
1150 15th St., NW
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Editor:

A meme is spreading that an effective way to pressure Uncle Sam to avoid becoming involved in unjustified wars is to reinstate the military draft. Brian Norris's Letter (May 4) is only the most recent evidence of the grip of this dubious notion.

What a peculiar premise it is that elected officials who irresponsibly risk treasure and blood on pointless wars will somehow be cured of their

irresponsibility by being given the additional, terrifying power to conscript soldiers to fight in these officials' wars. Do Mr. Norris and others who trumpet the pacific consequences of conscription not recall that it was used, for example, during the Vietnam war - one of the longest, most tragic, and absurd military adventures in U.S. history?

3 May 2012

Editor, Washington Post
1150 15th St., NW
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Dear Editor:

Robert Samuelson rightly ridicules those who allege

that speculators, in Pres. Obama's words, "artificially manipulate markets" ("The fallacy of blaming oil 'speculators'," May 3).

It's child's play to show that Mr. Obama's allegation is economically ignorant. But Mr. Obama is no economist. He's a politician seeking office. And so he blames rising prices on imaginary devils - against whom he can rant, rave, and pretend to take corrective action - rather than recognize that such price hikes are merely the result of disagreeable underlying economic realities that he either cannot or will not correct.

Predictably, Mr. Obama is here practicing a long-

honored - and scarily often
bloodthirsty - political
tradition. It's a tradition
honored by communist
butchers such as Vladimir
Lenin ("For as long as we
fail to treat speculators the
way they deserve - with a
bullet in the head - we will
not get anywhere at all") no
less than by American
icons such as Abraham
Lincoln ("For my part, I
wish every one of them
[speculators] had his
devilish head shot off").
[Quoted on page 343 of
David S. Jacks, "Populists
versus theorists: Futures
markets and the volatility of
prices," *Explorations in
Economic History*, Vol. 44,
(2007), pp. 342-362. (The
Lincoln quotation also
appears on page 502 of
David Herbert Donald's
1996 biography, *Lincoln*.)]

Economic ignorance and
blame-shifting by
politicians knows no
ideological boundaries.