

As The Economy Crumbles, The Media Goes into the “Ritual Politics Mode”

By [Danny Schechter](#)

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What is Michelle Bachmann wearing?

And so it came to pass, as predicted, projected, and warned about, that the economy is about to tank again. No less an authority than Nouriel Roubini, once dismissed as “Dr. Doom” for his accurate predictions of the financial crisis in 2007 and 2008, is shaking his head and pointing his finger again.

In intellectual circles, there’s more and more talk about the fall of America. Even Noam Chomsky who wrote some of his 150 books about the rise of the American empire sees the handwriting on the wall.

The wags at the New York Times are monitoring what looks like an impending collapse. On one page, you read: “Data released on Friday leaves little doubt that the European economy is losing momentum before most countries have even recovered to the level of output they had in 2008, when the recession hit.”

Closer to home, the newspaper fears a “double dip” and says, “few cushions left for a new crisis.”

MSNBC reports: “As the debate rages on about whether the U.S. economy is headed for a double-dip, one expert says another recession is all but guaranteed, and there’s nothing that can be done to prevent it. (emphasis mine.)

“Paul Gambles, Managing Director of financial advisory and asset management firm MBMG Group said the bond market, which is the most reliable indicator, has been pointing to a slowdown since at least April or May.” He says the deeper problem predated this Administration and has been ongoing for at least a decade.

You would think the captains of industry would be battening down the proverbial hatches, stabilizing the ship and getting out the life boats instead of supporting policies and politicians who believe that chaos offers the only way forward.

To quote the House Speaker Mr. Boehner about some of his colleagues, “A lot of them, believe “enough chaos” would make opponents yield.”

Where is the sense of national urgency beyond the bitter partisan divide?

In response, the president may yet discover some backbone, before he loses support from what’s left of his liberal base. Over the years, he has ceded so much of his power through

compromise that some of his supporters believe he is a Republican at heart, that is, if he has a heart.

His most clever comment of late is a play on “Obamacare.”

“Obama does care,” he insists.

While the GOP and its noise machine blather on blaming unemployment and a lack of growth on the President, their practices insure that there can be no progress. Boehner admits as much,

The Times explains the quagmire this way: “Expectations remain low for anything beyond least-common-denominator accords — unless economic conditions and public pressure shift the political facts on the ground. At this point, a spokesman for Mr. Boehner said, the House has “no plans to take up” the president’s job creation ideas except for patent reform and pending trade deals.”

So where is the public pressure? There is talk about a new initiative to save the dream led by Van Jones, the environment activist booted from his job by an Administration withering under protests against him on the right.

The unions are talking up a jobs agenda. A few editorial writers are backing them, but it doesn’t seem to leading to any prospect of a needed new stimulus.

The deeper problem is that most of the media has just parroted economic statistics with little independent assessment much less investigation. They stay away from showing how banks and corporate interests got us into this deep and depressing pit.

They continue to define politics narrowly and only in electoral terms. They would likely ignore a Cairo type uprising in America unless there was lots of police violence.

Instead, with the Iowa Straw poll, the circus is back in town and the elephants are on display,

Here we go again, as a new election cycle takes over the news.

Bring on the pundits, the pollsters, and, most of all, the familiar personality parade.

To big media, only formal campaign politics are legitimate. Other political expression is not.

No one cares claims the media elite. Translation: they don’t care!

Bring back CNN’s “best political team on television”—bigger than a baseball team. Wind up the sound bite artists, and watch them argue all sides of any issue while marginalizing all dissent.

We can’t wait.

Never mind, the deepening financial crisis. Forget that there is a world out there. Ignore the wars, the riots, and the pervasive repression.

Our media is destined to return to the most parochial focus because we think we do it so

well.

Soon the preening pols will be everywhere. Their every utterance and burp will be considered newsworthy, Never mind the many contradictions and shifting positions. Never mind the calculated hypocrisy.

What do the Republicans stand for?

Obama is bad!

What does Obama Stand for?

Good Question.

Soon the issues will disappear as color commentary takes over, like in Sports events. What is Michelle Bachmann wearing? And then the endless spectre of candidate geography. Rick Perry is now in New Hampshire. John Huntsman is on a motorcycle. Sarah's bus broke down. Ron Paul, who's he.

How fascinating.

The Washington Post has yet another big yawn-breaking nooze bulletin: "Former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty announced Sunday morning that he is stepping out of the race for the GOP presidential nomination."

The game is on. The boys are back. The election industry is cranking up its own army of professional consultants, advertising mavens, spin doctors, media buyers, disinformation specialists and field operatives. The cycle is cycling again, hooray.

There are two rules in the political game book:

1. Don't Say What You Mean.
2. Don't Mean What You Say.

Election fever is something the networks know how to market and massage. They have had a lot of practice at it. Their graphics people are already at work. The sets are being built. The clichés are being sharpened.

And the political experts are out in force collecting data as in this study arguing that when campaigns are rocking, fewer people are taking their own lives. (I would have thought it was the other way around)

Read this dreck:

"Using an original data set, this article explores the impact of U.S. presidential elections as collective rituals on monthly suicide rates. Controlling for a host of rival explanations, including year and month fixed effects, the business cycle, and other collective events (the Olympics), I find that certain months of the presidential election cycle are associated with lower suicide rates. I conclude that U.S. presidential politics, typically seen as an arena of conflict, can be a source of social solidarity, and therefore, society- or network-centered theories of social cohesion need to be augmented to include institutional mechanisms of social integration."

Meanwhile, the forces behind the candidates, the funders and astro turf organizations are mostly out of the news, still hidden in a shadow political landscape, like a shadow banking system.

Everyone knows its there, but no one talks about it. The focus is always on **issues** never **interests**

As the nation careens towards a nose dive, its trivia time again on TV. Did you see Romney's new look?

News Dissector Danny Schechter blogs at www.NewsDissector.com

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