

June 2, 2014

We're still on the speech at West Point. Matthew Continetti provides a particularly insightful essay on the shortcomings of our foreign policy. While acknowledging our fortunate geography, Mr. Continetti thinks we cannot continue to hide from our great power responsibilities.

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Not the administration, nor its supporters, nor its critics have been successful in defining precisely what the "Obama Doctrine" is. But offshore balancing seems to me to be as good a way as any to describe the president's strategy. What does it mean? Because of America's favorable geography—oceans to the east and west, friendly allies to the north and south—its powerful military, and its commercial nature, our country need not be overly assertive in the world. ...

... As America abjures its post-war strategy of onshore hegemony in favor of offshore balancing, what do we see? We see chaos in Iraq, Syria, and Libya, we see the annexation of Crimea, we see mounting tensions between China and Vietnam and between China and Japan. We see new moves by Japan toward rearmament and militarization, we see the return of the European far right, and we see the spread of al Qaeda franchises throughout the Muslim world.

I am not under any illusions. America will get the foreign policy that its elites desire. What they desire now is normalcy. And so this era of retrenchment may last for some time. The era of normalcy ushered in by Warren Harding lasted more than 20 years—right up to the moment Japanese Zeroes bombed Pearl Harbor. But, like all eras, it came to a close. One day America will have to go back ashore.

The last word on the speech comes from Charles Krauthammer.

... What is the world to think when Obama makes the case for a residual force in Afghanistan — "after all the sacrifices we've made, we want to preserve the gains that you have helped to win" — and then announce a drawdown of American forces to 10,000, followed by total liquidation within two years on a fixed timetable regardless of circumstances?

The policy contradicts the premise. If you want not to forfeit our terribly hard-earned gains — as we forfeited all our gains in Iraq with the 2011 withdrawal — why not let conditions dictate the post-2014 drawdowns? Why go to zero — precisely by 2016?

For the same reason, perhaps, that the Afghan surge was ended precisely in 2012, in the middle of the fighting season — but before the November election. A 2016 Afghan end date might help Democrats electorally and, occurring with Obama still in office, provide a shiny new line to his résumé.

Is this how a great nation decides matters of war and peace — to help one party and polish the reputation of one man? As with the West Point speech itself, as with the president's entire foreign policy of retreat, one can only marvel at the smallness of it all.

An article from New Geography shows how California greens have priced ordinary citizens out of many parts of the state.

One of the core barriers to economic prosperity in California is the price of housing. But it doesn't have to be this way. Policies designed to stifle the ability to develop land are based on flawed premises. These policies prevail because they are backed by environmentalists, and, most importantly, because they have played into the agenda of crony capitalists, Wall Street financiers, and public sector unions. But while the elites benefit, ordinary working families have been condemned to pay extreme prices in mortgages, property taxes, or rents, to live in confined, unhealthy, ultra high-density neighborhoods. It is reminiscent of apartheid South Africa, but instead of racial superiority as the supposed moral justification, environmentalism is the religion of the day. The result is identical.

Earlier this month an economist writing for the American Enterprise Institute, Mark J. Perry, published a chart proving that over the past four years, more new homes were built in one city, Houston Texas, than in the entire state of California. We republished Perry's article earlier this week, "California vs. Texas in one chart." The population of greater Houston is 6.3 million people. The population of California is 38.4 million people. California, with six times as many people as Houston, built fewer homes. ...

... The Californians who are hurt by urban containment are not the wealthy elites who find it comforting to believe and lucrative to propagate the enabling big lie. The victims are the underprivileged, the immigrants, the minority communities, retirees who collect Social Security, low wage earners and the disappearing middle class. Anyone who aspires to improve their circumstances can move to Houston and buy a home with relative ease, but in California, they have to struggle for shelter, endlessly, needlessly – contained and allegedly environmentally correct.

Allen Meltzer of the Hoover Institution says Ronald Reagan is alive and well and living in India.

Narendra Modi won an overwhelming victory in the Indian election. He avoided or minimized contentious issues, like Hindu nationalism. The Republicans can learn a lot by following a similar strategy on religion. Modi's campaign emphasized growth, a better future, and a program for achieving improved living standards for everyone. He charged the current government with "tax terrorism" because it repeatedly changed India's tax rates and tax law. That created uncertainty, an enemy of business investment and economic growth.

The Indian election was a classic confrontation between the proponents of growth and the advocates of redistribution and the welfare state. Growth won across the board in all classes and regions. The young especially voted for growth. The same message brought Ronald Reagan to the presidency for two terms. Like Reagan, Modi urged voters to choose growth and opportunity instead of redistribution, higher tax rates, and envy.

This message worked for President Reagan. And it worked for Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. It offers opportunity to the many willing to work for a better life.

Republicans should make this message their main themes in the 2014 and 2016 elections. We know that President Obama's party, like the Indian Congress party, is committed to more

redistribution, a larger welfare state, and more regulation of the internet, the environment, investment, consumption, business, and labor. That policy can be called “regulatory terrorism” because like tax terrorism it discourages investment and growth. President Obama, like the incumbent party in India, never tires of urging higher tax rates to finance more redistribution. ...

What we eat determines how we think? That's the premise of a [WSJ article](#) on the different cultures that produce wheat and rice.

Could what we eat shape how we think? A new paper in the journal Science by Thomas Talhelm at the University of Virginia and colleagues suggests that agriculture may shape psychology. A bread culture may think differently than a rice-bowl society.

Psychologists have long known that different cultures tend to think differently. In China and Japan, people think more communally, in terms of relationships. By contrast, people are more individualistic in what psychologist Joseph Henrich, in commenting on the new paper, calls “WEIRD cultures.”

WEIRD stands for Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic. Dr. Henrich's point is that cultures like these are actually a tiny minority of all human societies, both geographically and historically. But almost all psychologists study only these WEIRD folks. ...

Free Beacon

[Points of Departure](#)

Obama's 'offshore balancing' is a recipe for conflict

by Matthew Continetti

The phrase “offshore balancing” did not appear in [President Obama's commencement address at West Point](#). It did not have to. Obama's every word was informed by the idea that America should renounce nation-building, extended deployments, base construction, and other elements of hard power in favor of diplomacy, military-to-military partnerships, multilateral institution-building, and soft-power in general. “Just because we have the best hammer,” the president said in a particularly insipid use of cliché, “does not mean that every problem is a nail.”

Not the administration, nor its supporters, nor its critics have been successful in defining precisely what the “Obama Doctrine” is. But offshore balancing seems to me to be as good a way as any to describe the president's strategy. What does it mean? Because of America's favorable geography—oceans to the east and west, friendly allies to the north and south—its powerful military, and its commercial nature, our country need not be overly assertive in the world. The biggest threat we face is not an authoritarian and revanchist Russia, not a rising Chinese collective dictatorship, not an Iran armed with nuclear weapons, not a transnational jihadist revival. “For the foreseeable future, the most direct threat to America at home and abroad remains terrorism.”

But even fighting terrorism does not require direct intervention or a global war against radical Islamic networks and their state supporters. “I believe we must shift our counterterrorism strategy—drawing on the successes and shortcomings of our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan—to more effectively partner with countries where terrorist networks seek a foothold.” The Libyans, Somalis, and Nigerians have such great command of the situation, after all. And if things get out of hand, well, that is what Predator drones are for.

The most important consideration is that America remains in the background. “By eschewing costly onshore commitments and fruitless exercises in ‘regional transformation’ and nation-building,” Stephen M. Walt, co-author of *The Israel Lobby and American Foreign Policy*, wrote in the 2011 essay [“Offshore Balancing: An Idea Whose Time Has Come,”](#) the strategy “would husband the resources on which America’s long-term prosperity depends and help us rebuild a society that used to be inspire [sic] others and increasingly disappoints.” By leaning out, as it were, by abandoning Iraq and Afghanistan, by reducing our “footprint” overseas, by shrinking our ground forces and fleet strength in order to spend more money on entitlements, we will shape an America of which Barack Obama and Stephen Walt can be proud. Count me out.

Offshore balancing has been tried before. [In a lengthy and gripping essay on the present search for normalcy,](#) Robert Kagan observes the following:

Although successful for two centuries in maintaining and managing its overseas empire, Britain failed to prevent the rise of German hegemony twice in the twentieth century, leading to two devastating wars that ultimately undid British global power. Britain failed because it had tried to play the role of balancer in Europe from ‘offshore.’ Britons’ main concern was always defense of their far-flung empire, and they preferred to stay out of Europe if possible. Their inability or unwillingness to station troops on the continent in sufficient number, or at least reliably to guarantee that sufficient force would arrive quickly in an emergency, led would-be aggressors to calculate that decisive British military force would either not arrive on time or not arrive at all.

The result was three major land wars in Europe—against Napoleon, against the Kaiser, against Hitler—along with a minor (though horribly bloody) war on the Crimean Peninsula. Offshore balancing did not, in the end, make Europe more peaceful, nor did it relieve the British of their global responsibilities to secure the seas and to prevent the rise of a despotic hegemon on the continent. It was only after the conclusion of World War II, and the assumption of global supremacy by the United States of America, that a durable European peace came into view.

That peace was not secured by a strategy of offshore balancing. Rather than acting as an offshore balancer, the United States became an onshore hegemon, planting military forces throughout Western Europe and Japan, where they have remained for almost 70 years. And when the United States fought North Korea and China to a standstill in 1953, it dropped anchor in South Korea, basing tens of thousands of troops along the De-Militarized Zone for more than 60 years.

Germany and Japan went from serial aggression to pacifism. The Soviet Union did not cross the Fulda Gap. There was no war in Europe until the Bosnian wars of the early 1990s—another peace finally secured by the billeting of American troops. It is not Japanese but Chinese expansion that worries the governments of East Asia. Nor are the North Koreans contained by a strange new respect for global norms. They are contained by the knowledge that any assault on the south would also be an assault on U.S. armed forces.

The consequences of offshore balancing can be seen wherever America has decided to raise anchor and depart. South Vietnam was an independent, non-Communist nation when Richard Nixon resigned from office and the Democratic Congress cut off military assistance in 1974. The so-called Spring Offensive of 1975 by which the North conquered the South began as soon as Hanoi and the Vietcong saw that the war-weary Americans were no longer interested in what happened to southeast Asia. The evacuation of the U.S. embassy, the boat people, and the fall of Cambodia were the result.

When American troops left Iraq at the end of 2011, the country was as stable as it had been in years, [coalition casualties were at record lows,](#) and al Qaeda and the Shiite death squads had

been suppressed. Iraq today is experiencing renewed terrorism and violence, al Qaeda has returned to the Sunni Triangle, [the death squads are active once more](#), and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is increasingly authoritarian. Not only would Iraq be a safer place today if American troops were there to advise and influence the Iraqis, but America would also have a better grasp of the situation in neighboring Syria, which is slowly and bloodily combusting.

Does anyone really doubt a similar outcome when American forces leave Afghanistan? Here is another country where much has been gained at great cost. Here is another country where our elected leadership believes American interests will be furthered if American troops are not present. And when the troops leave at the end of 2016 (if not sooner), the Afghan government, empowered by an inspirational election last month, may yet hold on for a while.

But I doubt it will be able to hold out for long against the Taliban, the Haqqani network, and the Pakistani intelligence services. [Eli Lake reports that al Qaeda has already reappeared](#). [The loss of our drone and Special Forces bases](#) will deprive us of valuable and actionable intelligence. Whatever influence we have over the Afghan and Pakistani governments will be considerably diminished. The president can speak as many words as he likes. Only the presence of American troops makes people listen.

The president and media are gripped by the idea that U.S. bases and ground deployments and status of forces agreements make the chances of war more likely rather than less. On the contrary: It was our presence on the ground in Europe, in the Pacific, in Iraq, and in Afghanistan that, through trial and error, ended wars and prevented new ones from breaking out.

As America abjures its post-war strategy of onshore hegemony in favor of offshore balancing, what do we see? We see chaos in Iraq, Syria, and Libya, we see the annexation of Crimea, we see mounting tensions between China and Vietnam and between China and Japan. We see new moves by Japan toward rearmament and militarization, we see the return of the European far right, [and we see the spread of al Qaeda franchises throughout the Muslim world](#).

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Washington Post **[Emptiness at West Point](#)** by Charles Krauthammer

It is fitting that on the day before President Obama was to give his grand West Point address defending the wisdom and prudence of his foreign policy, his government should be urging Americans to evacuate Libya.

Libya, of course, was once the model Obama intervention — the exquisitely calibrated military engagement wrapped in the rhetorical extravagance of a [nationally televised address](#) proclaiming his newest foreign policy doctrine (they change to fit the latest ad hoc decision): the responsibility to protect.

You don't hear R2P bandied about much anymore. Not with more than 50,000 civilians having been slaughtered in Syria's civil war, unprotected in any way by the United States. Nor for that matter do you hear much about Libya, now so dangerously chaotic and jihadi-infested that the State Department is telling Americans to get out.

And you didn't hear much of anything in the West Point speech. It was a somber parade of straw men, as the president applauded himself for steering the nation on a nervy middle course between extreme isolationism and madcap interventionism. It was the rhetorical equivalent of that classic national security joke in which the presidential aide, devoted to policy option X, submits the following decision memo:

Option 1. All-out nuclear war.

Option 2. Unilateral surrender.

Option 3. Policy X.

The isolationism of Obama's telling is a species not to be found anywhere. Not even Rand Paul would withdraw from everywhere. And even members of Congress's dovish left have called for sending drones to Nigeria, for God's sake.

As for Obama's interventionists, they are grotesquely described as people "who think military intervention is the only way for America to avoid looking weak" while Obama courageously refuses to believe that "every problem has a military solution."

Name one person who does.

"Why is it that everybody is so eager to use military force?" Obama recently and plaintively asked about Ukraine. In reality, nobody is. What actual earthlings are eager for is sending military assistance to Ukraine's woefully equipped forces.

That's what the interim prime minister asked for when he visited here in March — and was denied. (He was even denied night-vision goggles and protective armor.) Two months later, military assistance was the first thing Petro Poroshenko, Ukraine's newly elected president, said he wanted from the United States. Note: not boots on the ground.

Same for Syria. It was Obama, not his critics, who went to the brink of a military strike over the use of chemical weapons. From which he then flinched. Critics have been begging Obama to help train and equip the outmanned and outgunned rebels — a policy to which he now intimates he might finally be coming around.

Three years late. Qusair, Homs and major suburbs of Damascus have already been retaken by the government. The battle has by now so decisively tilted toward Assad — backed by Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, while Obama dithered — that Assad is holding triumphal presidential elections next week.

Amid all this, Obama seems unaware of how far his country has fallen. He attributes claims of American decline to either misreading history or partisan politics. Problem is: Most of the complaints are coming from abroad, from U.S. allies with no stake whatsoever in U.S. partisan politics. Their concern is their own security as they watch this president undertake multiple abdications from Warsaw to Kabul.

What is the world to think when Obama makes the case for a residual force in Afghanistan — “after all the sacrifices we’ve made, we want to preserve the gains that you have helped to win” — and then announce a drawdown of American forces to 10,000, followed by total liquidation within two years on a fixed timetable regardless of circumstances?

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New Geography **California’s Green Bantustans** by Ed Ring

One of the core barriers to economic prosperity in California is the price of housing. But it doesn’t have to be this way. Policies designed to stifle the ability to develop land are based on flawed premises. These policies prevail because they are backed by environmentalists, and, most importantly, because they have played into the agenda of crony capitalists, Wall Street financiers, and public sector unions. But while the elites benefit, ordinary working families have been condemned to pay extreme prices in mortgages, property taxes, or rents, to live in confined, unhealthy, ultra high-density neighborhoods. It is reminiscent of apartheid South Africa, but instead of racial superiority as the supposed moral justification, environmentalism is the religion of the day. The result is identical.

Earlier this month an economist writing for the American Enterprise Institute, Mark J. Perry, published a chart proving that over the past four years, more new homes were built in one city, Houston Texas, than in the entire state of California. We republished Perry’s article earlier this week, “[California vs. Texas in one chart](#).” The population of greater Houston is 6.3 million people. The population of California is 38.4 million people. California, with six times as many people as Houston, built fewer homes.

And when there’s a shortage, prices rise. The median home price in Houston is \$184,000. The [median price of a home in Los Angeles](#) is \$530,000, nearly three times as much as a home in Houston. The [median price of a home in San Francisco](#) is \$843,000, nearly five times as much as home in Houston. What is the reason for this? There may be a shortage of homes, but there is no shortage of land in California, a state of 163,000 square miles containing vast expanses of open space. What happened?

You can argue that San Francisco and Los Angeles are hemmed in by ocean and mountains, respectively, but that really doesn’t answer the question. In most cases, these cities can expand along endless freeway corridors to the north, south, and east, if not west, and new urban centers can arise along these corridors to attract jobs. But they don’t, and the reason for this are the so-

called “smart growth” policies. In an interesting report entitled “[America’s Emerging Housing Crisis](#),” Joel Kotkin calls this policy “urban containment.” And along with urban containment, comes downsizing. From another critic of smart growth/urban containment, economist Thomas Sowell, [here’s a description](#) of what downsizing means in the San Francisco Bay Area suburb Palo Alto:

“The house is for sale at \$1,498,000. It is a 1,010 square foot bungalow with two bedrooms, one bath and a garage. Although the announcement does not mention it, this bungalow is located near a commuter railroad line, with trains passing regularly throughout the day. The second house has 1,200 square feet and was listed for \$1.3 million. Intense competition for the house drove the sale price to \$1.7 million. The third, with 1,292 square feet (120 square meters) and built in 1895 is on the market for \$2.3 million.”

And as Sowell points out, there are vast rolling foothills immediately west of Palo Alto that are completely empty – the beneficiaries of urban containment.

The reason for all of this ostensibly is to preserve open space. This is a worthy goal when kept in perspective. But in California, NO open space is considered immediately acceptable for development. There are hundreds of square miles of rolling foothills on the east slopes of the Mt. Hamilton range that are virtually empty. With reasonable freeway improvements, residents there could commute to points throughout the Silicon Valley in 30-60 minutes. But entrepreneurs have spent millions of dollars and decades of efforts to develop this land, and there is always a reason their projects are held up.

The misanthropic cruelty of these policies can be illustrated by the following two photographs. The first one is from Soweto, a notorious shantytown that was once one of the most chilling warehouses for human beings in the world, during the era of apartheid in South Africa. The second one is from a suburb in North Sacramento. The scale is identical. Needless to say, the quality of the homes in Sacramento is better, but isn’t it telling that the environmentally enlightened planners in this California city didn’t think a homeowner needed any more dirt to call their own than the Afrikaners deigned to allocate to the oppressed blacks of South Africa?

The Racist Bantustan



Soweto, South Africa - 40' x 80' lots, single family dwellings

When you view these two studies in urban containment, consider what a person who wants to install a toilet, or add a window, or remodel their kitchen may have to go through, today in South Africa, vs. today in Sacramento. Rest assured the ability to improve one's circumstances in Soweto would be a lot easier than in Sacramento. In Sacramento, just acquiring the permits would probably cost more time and money than doing the entire job in Soweto. And the price of these lovely, environmentally correct, smart-growth havens in Sacramento? According to Zillow, they are currently selling for right around \$250,000, more than five times the [median household income](#) in that city.

The Environmentalist Bantustan



Sacramento, California - 40' x 80' lots, single family dwellings

When you increase supply you lower prices, and homes are no exception. The idea that there isn't enough land in California to develop abundant and competitively priced housing is preposterous. According to the [American Farmland Trust](#), of California's 163,000 square miles, there are 25,000 square miles of grazing land and 42,000 square miles of agricultural land; of that, 14,000 square miles are prime agricultural land. Think about this. You could put 10 million new residents into homes, four per household, on half-acre lots, and you would only consume 1,953 square miles. If you built those homes on the best prime agricultural land California's got, you would only use up 14% of it. If you scattered those homes among all of California's farmland and grazing land – which is far more likely – you would only use up 3% of it. Three percent loss of agricultural land, to allow ten million people to live on half-acre lots!

And what of these lots in North Sacramento? What of these homes that cost a quarter-million each, five times the median household income? They sit thirteen per acre. Not even enough room in the yard for a trampoline.

There is a reason to belabor these points, this simple algebra. Because the notion that we have to engage in urban containment is a cruel, entirely unfounded, self-serving lie. You may examine this question of development in any context you wish, and the lie remains intact. If there is an energy shortage, then develop California's shale reserves. If fracking shale is unacceptable, then drill for natural gas in the Santa Barbara channel. If all fossil fuel is unacceptable, then build nuclear power

stations in the geologically stable areas in California's interior. If there is a water shortage, than build high dams. If high dams are forbidden, then develop aquifer storage to collect runoff. Or desalinate seawater off the Southern California coast. Or recycle sewage. Or let rice farmers sell their allotments. There are answers to every question.

Environmentalists generate an avalanche of studies, however, that in effect demonize all development, everywhere. The values of environmentalism are important, but if it weren't for the trillions to be made by trial lawyers, academic careerists, government bureaucrats and their union patrons, crony green capitalist oligarchs, and government pension fund managers and their partners in the hedge funds whose portfolio asset appreciation depends on artificially elevated prices, environmentalism would be reined in. If it weren't for opportunists following this trillion dollar opportunity, environmentalist values would be kept in their proper perspective.

The Californians who are hurt by urban containment are not the wealthy elites who find it comforting to believe and lucrative to propagate the enabling big lie. The victims are the underprivileged, the immigrants, the minority communities, retirees who collect Social Security, low wage earners and the disappearing middle class. Anyone who aspires to improve their circumstances can move to Houston and buy a home with relative ease, but in California, they have to struggle for shelter, endlessly, needlessly – contained and allegedly environmentally correct.

Ed Ring is the executive director of the [California Policy Center](#).

Hoover Institution

[Ronald Reagan Is Alive in India](#)

Republicans could learn a lot from the election of Narendra Modi.

by Allen H. Meltzer

Narendra Modi won an overwhelming victory in the Indian election. He avoided or minimized contentious issues, like Hindu nationalism. The Republicans can learn a lot by following a similar strategy on religion. Modi's campaign emphasized growth, a better future, and a program for achieving improved living standards for everyone. He charged the current government with "tax terrorism" because it repeatedly changed India's tax rates and tax law. That created uncertainty, an enemy of business investment and economic growth.

The Indian election was a classic confrontation between the proponents of growth and the advocates of redistribution and the welfare state. Growth won across the board in all classes and regions. The young especially voted for growth. The same message brought Ronald Reagan to the presidency for two terms. Like Reagan, Modi urged voters to choose growth and opportunity instead of redistribution, higher tax rates, and envy.



This message worked for President Reagan. And it worked for Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. It offers opportunity to the many willing to work for a better life.

Republicans should make this message their main themes in the 2014 and 2016 elections. We know that President Obama's party, like the Indian Congress party, is committed to more redistribution, a larger welfare state, and more regulation of the internet, the environment, investment, consumption, business, and labor. That policy can be called "regulatory terrorism" because like tax terrorism it discourages investment and growth. President Obama, like the incumbent party in India, never tires of urging higher tax rates to finance more redistribution.

The media in India and the west attacked Modi's character by reviving a 12 year-old episode of Hindu-Muslim confrontation in which he was not directly involved. Instead of letting that become the central issue of the campaign, Modi stayed with his program of growth and opportunity. He opposed the counter-productive uncertainty and increased redistribution generated by the incumbent government. The main opposition, the Congress party, gathered fewer votes than in any previous election.

Indian voters responded to Modi's message. They rejected slow growth and increased redistribution. They voted for a better future. The Republican Party should likewise encourage Americans to vote for a better future. The party should adopt as its campaign slogan: "We will make your life and your children's lives better. We offer opportunity not envy." It should articulate a program to encourage investment, reduce regulation, lower tax rates, extend personal freedom, approve the pipeline, and improve education by expanding school choice.

The Obama administration's regulatory policy not only deters investment by increasing uncertainty, but it also encourages crony capitalism and corruption by permitting some to circumvent the regulations that burden others. Much regulation of firms circumvents the promise of equal justice for all in the U.S. Constitution by replacing the rule of law—equal treatment under the law—with special rights and privileges for those who finance the governing party in elections.

Just as Modi did not ignore the mistakes made by the Congress party, the Republicans should not ignore the Obama administration's many blunders and its failure after more than five years to get a recovery that generates jobs and higher incomes. The unemployment rate has fallen mainly because workers have stopped looking for work. Investment remains sluggish. Instead of investing in our future, many firms buy back their stock. That's a message that says their outlook is for slow growth and sluggish demand. No wonder. The administration's program calls for more taxes on the

highest incomes and more regulation. They offer envy not opportunity by appealing to women, environmental extremists, and other disaffected groups.

The main message of the Indian campaign is that if voters are offered a clear choice, they will choose opportunity. They want a candidate who will fight for a positive program that promises to make life better for them and everyone who wants to work by returning to the kinds of policies that made us the wealthy country that we are. It's the choice of opportunity instead of envy and redistribution. It's the choice the Republicans should make as their centerpiece. They should declare that they are the party of opportunity and that they have a plan to make life better for everyone.

The details of that plan are as old as the republic: Reduce tax rates, eliminate much regulation, shift regulation to a system that gives the regulated incentives to reduce external costs, and start on a long-term program to reduce the unsustainable funded and unfunded federal debt. That's a lengthy list, but it is only the beginning. We must add to it improvements in the education system to increase competition by chartering more independent schools and reform in the immigration system to bring more educated, skilled workers into the economy.

We are swamped with evidence of pessimism about our future. For example, young workers, aged 18-34, are leaving the labor force and corporations are repurchasing shares instead of investing in new plants and services. That should be a wake up call telling us that many do not see a future that returns to the higher growth we had in past decades.

The response should be that democratic capitalism is the only system the world has known that provides economic growth, opportunity, and freedom. That system produces new ideas, new products, and new opportunities better and more abundantly than any system mankind has found. Democratic capitalism is not perfect; it is a human system so it has human faults. But it does better at producing opportunity, growth, and freedom than any of the utopian offerings that planners and bureaucrats would put in its place

Modi showed as the chief minister of the Indian state of Gujarat that the future need not be bleak. He offered the voters opportunity instead of envy and more redistribution. The voters responded enthusiastically. That's the lesson the Republican Party should take from the Indian election and use to win an overwhelming victory at home. The message is: "Here's how we will make your life and your children's lives better."

Allan Meltzer is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution

WSJ

[Rice, Wheat and the Values They Sow](#)

by Alison Gopnik

Could what we eat shape how we think? A new paper in the journal Science by Thomas Talhelm at the University of Virginia and colleagues suggests that agriculture may shape psychology. A bread culture may think differently than a rice-bowl society.



Psychologists have long known that different cultures tend to think differently. In China and Japan, people think more communally, in terms of relationships. By contrast, people are more individualistic in what psychologist Joseph Henrich, in commenting on the new paper, calls "WEIRD cultures."

WEIRD stands for Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic. Dr. Henrich's point is that cultures like these are actually a tiny minority of all human societies, both geographically and historically. But almost all psychologists study only these WEIRD folks.

The differences show up in surprisingly varied ways. Suppose I were to ask you to draw a graph of your social network, with you and your friends represented as circles attached by lines. Americans make their own circle a quarter-inch larger than their friends' circles. In Japan, people make their own circle a bit smaller than the others.

Or you can ask people how much they would reward the honesty of a friend or a stranger and how much they would punish their dishonesty. Most Easterners tend to say they would reward a friend more than a stranger and punish a friend less; Westerners treat friends and strangers more equally.

These differences show up even in tests that have nothing to do with social relationships. You can give people a "Which of these things belongs together?" problem, like the old "Sesame Street" song. Say you see a picture of a dog, a rabbit and a carrot. Westerners tend to say the dog and the rabbit go together because they're both animals—they're in the same category. Easterners are more likely to say that the rabbit and the carrot go together—because rabbits eat carrots.

None of these questions has a right answer, of course. So why have people in different parts of the world developed such different thinking styles?

You might think that modern, industrial cultures would naturally develop more individualism than agricultural ones. But another possibility is that the kind of agriculture matters. Rice farming, in particular, demands a great deal of coordinated labor. To manage a rice paddy, a whole village has to cooperate and coordinate irrigation systems. By contrast, a single family can grow wheat.

Dr. Talhelm and colleagues used an ingenious design to test these possibilities. They looked at rice-growing and wheat-growing regions within China. (The people in these areas had the same language, history and traditions; they just grew different crops.) Then they gave people the psychological tests I just described. The people in wheat-growing areas looked more like WEIRD Westerners, but the rice growers showed the more classically Eastern communal and relational patterns. Most of the people they tested didn't actually grow rice or wheat themselves, but the cultural traditions of rice or wheat seemed to influence their thinking.

This agricultural difference predicted the psychological differences better than modernization did. Even industrialized parts of China with a rice-growing history showed the more communal thinking pattern.

The researchers also looked at two measures of what people do outside the lab: divorces and patents for new inventions. Conflict-averse communal cultures tend to have fewer divorces than individualistic ones, but they also create fewer individual innovations. Once again, wheat-growing areas looked more "WEIRD" than rice-growing ones.

In fact, Dr. Henrich suggests that rice-growing may have led to the psychological differences, which in turn may have sparked modernization. Aliens from outer space looking at the Earth in the year 1000 would never have bet that barbarian Northern Europe would become industrialized before civilized Asia. And they would surely never have guessed that eating sandwiches instead of stir-fry might make the difference.





