



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

NEWSLETTER #70 — FEB. 9, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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More Than Politics

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Feb. 9, 2012)

At Friends of the Middle, we're always trying to understand why things are the way they are. One of the biggest puzzles we've come across is roughly this: Why do we seem to just beat our heads against walls when Left tries to talk to Right or Right tries to talk to Left? We've discussed how there appears to be some kind of unbridgeable chasm between us. Why this would be the case now, when it wasn't the case with our Founding Fathers more than 200 years ago, who but the "Controller\$" would know?

Then, there was much more at stake, when revolution and insurrection could easily have broken the fragile union. Now, we have dangerous idiots who run around spouting dogma they are fed by big money—when they can remember and spit it out. They don't truly even seem to understand it. They certainly have not thought it through, except for Newt, maybe, who has thought it all the way through to the Gestapo.

Or maybe this article will put the problem in a little more perspective.

"Conservatives vs. Liberals: More Than Politics" by Thomas B. Edsall, Huffington Post

Feb. 8, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/thomas-b-edsall/conservatives-vs-liberals_b_1262309.html?ref=politics&ir=Politics)

(The following is an excerpt from *The Age of Austerity: How Scarcity Will Remake American Politics*.)

The contest for power between Democrats and Republicans pits two antithetical value systems against each other; two conflicting concepts of freedom, liberty, fairness, right, and wrong; two mutually exclusive notions of the state, the individual, and the collective good.

A wide range of academic scholarship exploring political belief-formation reveals that those who identify themselves as politically conservative, for example, exhibit distinctive values underpinning their world view and their orientation towards political competition.

Conservatives, argues researcher Philip Tetlock of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, are less tolerant of compromise; see the world in "us" versus "them" terms; are more willing to use force to gain an advantage; are "more prone to rely on simple (good vs. bad) evaluative rules in interpreting policy issues;" are "motivated to punish violators of social norms (e.g., deviations from traditional norms of sexuality or responsible behavior) and to deter free riders."

Some of these conservative values can be discerned in public opinion data.

In one September 2010 survey question, The Pew Research Center asked voters, "If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a bigger government providing more services?" White Republican men chose a smaller government by a 92-7 margin and white Republican women made the same choice by an 82-12 margin. Conversely, white Democratic men chose bigger government by a 53-35 margin and white Democratic women by 56-33. This is an ideological gap between Republicans and Democrats of 57 points among white men and 49 points among white women.

Along similar lines, Pew asked voters to choose between "Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard" and "Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people." White Republican men and women both picked "hard work" by decisive margins of 78-21 and 73-24, respectively. White Democratic men and women, in contrast, were far more equivocal, supporting hard work by modest margins of 52-44 and 53-43.

These Pew findings demonstrate that the differences of opinion between liberals and conservatives are far greater than the differences in opinion between men and women commonly referred to as the gender gap.

The Pew questions are designed to test opinion on public policy issues. The strength of the Pew surveys and other comparable, well-designed polls is that the sample is carefully selected to be representative of either the general public or of all voters. The limitation of such surveys is that they are not designed to reveal more subtle distinctions that can be equally or more significant.

This less easily answered question has been explored by a team of academic researchers collaborating at a website – <http://www.YourMorals.org> -- designed to test a variety of theories about the connection between views on morality and politics. Jonathan Haidt and Nicholas Winter of the University of Virginia, and Ravi Iyer of the University of Southern California, have collected and systematized very large numbers of responses to questions designed to elicit new information about political values orientation. Haidt et al. have ranked responses to a set of online public opinion surveys to show where self-described liberal/moderates differ most sharply from conservative/moderates. The strength of the YourMorals.org surveys lies in the large number of respondents; the weakness grows out of the fact that the participants are self-selected, and represent well-educated elites on the left, right, and center, with little representation of the poor, working class, or lower-middle class.

The findings published by Haidt et al. powerfully reinforce the paradigm of two roughly equivalent political coalitions: the first, a socially and economically dominant coalition on the right; the second, a coalition on the left composed of relatively disadvantaged (subdominant) voters in alliance with relatively well-educated, well-off, culturally liberal professionals ('information workers,' 'symbol analysts,' 'creatives,' 'knowledge workers,' etc.). The Haidt et al. data sheds new light on what it means, across a gamut of issues, when someone says he or she is a liberal or a conservative.

What kinds of questions and values statements provoke the sharpest divide between left and right? The team looked at responses to 107 questions and found that the most divisive questions included those in the following areas:

1. WAR, PEACE, VIOLENCE, EMPATHY WITH THE WORLD:

On key questions and statements in this category, liberals scored high, conservatives low: "I believe peace is extremely important"; "Understanding, appreciation, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature"; "One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal"; "How close do you feel to people all over the world?"

On other key questions in this area, conservatives scored high, and liberals low: "War is sometimes the best way to solve a conflict"; "There is nothing wrong in getting back at someone who has hurt you."

2. CRIME AND PUNISHMENT; MORAL ELASTICITY; AUTHORITY:

Again, on some questions in this category, liberals scored high, conservatives low: "I believe that offenders should be provided with counseling to aid in their rehabilitation"; "What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another."

On other questions, conservatives scored high and liberals low: "People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed"; "Respect for authority is something all children need to learn"; "I believe that 'an eye for an eye' is the correct philosophy behind punishing offenders"; "The 'old-fashioned ways' and 'old-fashioned values' still show the best way to live"; "It feels wrong when...a person commits a crime and goes unpunished."

3. THE POOR, REDISTRIBUTION, FAIRNESS:

Liberal high, conservative low: "It feels wrong when...an employee who needs their job, is fired"; "I think it's morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing"; "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me."

Conservative high, liberal low: "[I place a high value on] safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self"; "[It's desirable when] employees [who] contribute more to the success of the company receive a larger share"; "[I value] social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources."

4. MORALS, HEDONISM, SELF-FULFILLMENT, HIERARCHY:

Liberals high, conservatives low: "I see myself as someone who...is original, comes up with new ideas"; "Pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself"; "What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another."

Conservative high, liberal low: "If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems"; "People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong"; "Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs that traditional culture provide"; "[I favor] restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms."

Their findings show how profound the chasm is on values questions between liberals and conservatives. Generally speaking, not only do liberals place high importance on peace, mutual understanding, and empathy for those who have difficulty prevailing in competition, they demonstrate concern for equality of outcome, while conservatives place pointedly low or negative importance on such values. On the other side, conservatives believe that the use of force is a legitimate method of conflict resolution across a range of domains, from war to law enforcement to the discipline of children. Conservatives are more likely to believe in an "eye for an eye," are more likely to respect received tradition, and are overwhelmingly committed to the proposition that individuals are responsible for their own economic condition -- all views rejected by liberals.

From a different vantage point -- taking data from American National Election Studies (ANES) surveys conducted between 1972 and 2004, the University of Virginia's Nicholas Winter analyzed the words respondents used to describe the two political parties. In *Masculine Republicans and Feminine Democrats: Gender and Americans' Explicit and Implicit Images of the Political Parties*, Winter categorized words respondents volunteered as stereotypically "male" or "female:"

[M]asculine men are thought to be active, independent, and decisive; feminine women are thought to be compassionate, devoted to others, emotional, and kind. These core traits are linked with a range of other features, including other traits (masculine men are aggressive, practical, tough, hardworking, and hierarchical; feminine women are gentle, submissive, soft, ladylike, and egalitarian); physical characteristics (masculine men are big, strong, and muscular; feminine women are small, weak, and soft-spoken).

(This excerpt first appeared at <http://www.theatlantic.com>.)

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<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120209-00		SteveB	More Than Politics by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Conservatives vs. Liberals: More Than Politics")
20120208-01	09:44	Pam	Re: Yakima, WA City Council Meeting (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #69)
20120208-02	11:47	Art	Re: "Obama Pulls Combat Pay For Deployed U.S. Troops" (reply to all, FotM Newsletter #69)
20120208-03	12:21	Pam	Re: "Obama Pulls Combat Pay For Deployed U.S. Troops" (reply to Art, above)
20120208-05	13:30	SteveBA	Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #69)
20120208-06	13:43	Dennis	Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to SteveBA, above)
20120208-11	17:47	SteveBA	Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to Dennis, above)
20120208-13	18:25	Dennis	Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to SteveBA, above)
20120208-14	19:10	Art	Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to SteveBA, above)
20120208-15	19:19	Dennis	Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to Art, above)
20120208-16	19:38	SteveG	Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to all, above) & "America's Empire of Bases"
20120208-17	20:59	SteveBA	Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to all, above)
20120208-07	14:07	Beth	Re: GOP Race Now in 'No Man's Land' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #69)
20120208-08	14:37	SteveB	"Obama's Wrong Note on Foreclosures"
20120208-09	15:14	SteveB	Fw: From the Right: Birth Control Perspective
20120208-10	17:01	Bill	Re: Thinking About Davos / Business Income Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #69)
20120208-12	17:56	Dale	"War of Borrowers Against Savers: News Analysis"
20120208-04	13:26	SteveB	Fw: DCCC Petition: Stop Eric Cantor from Watering Down the Stock Act!
20120208-18	09:01	mgobble01	Re: Federal Birth Control Mandate (reply to Mary, FotM Newsletter #67)
20120208-19	22:43	SteveG	Cartoon: Carl Rove vs. Clint Eastwood
20120208-20	23:58	SteveB	Quote: SteveB on Keynesian vs. Republican Economics
20120208-21	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Sedona, Arizona

20120208-01	09:44	Pam	Re: Yakima, WA City Council Meeting (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #69)
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Go, SteveG. This kind of activism is exactly what we need.

20120208-02	11:47	Art	Re: "Obama Pulls Combat Pay For Deployed U.S. Troops" (reply to all, FotM Newsletter #69)
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Here's the full story. It does fix a real abuse problem in my opinion. The good Marine was probably stationed at CENTCOM HQ in Tampa. He would fly into Afghanistan on 30 MAR and fly back home on 1 APR and got two months worth of combat pay, since it was calculated on a monthly basis only. Now it is calculated on a daily basis and he will only get two days worth. And, of course, it was a Congressional fix. More tea bag BS.

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/military/combattpay.asp> [And see FotM Newsletter #69. –SteveB]

20120208-03	12:21	Pam	Re: "Obama Pulls Combat Pay For Deployed U.S. Troops" (reply to Art, above)
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Thanks for clearing that up.

[20120208-05](#) 13:30 SteveBA Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #69)

Why do we need that many bases? I think it's time to revamp our strategy to the new world.

[20120208-06](#) 13:43 Dennis Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to SteveBA, above)

Here's the problem with any revamping. It isn't profitable for the American oligarchy.



[20120208-11](#) 17:47 SteveBA Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to Dennis, above)

Well, sooner or later, when we realize we are out of money, then the changes will get made out of necessity. Do we still need to maintain a military presence in Europe? I think not, same with Japan.

[20120208-13](#) 18:25 Dennis Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to SteveBA, above)

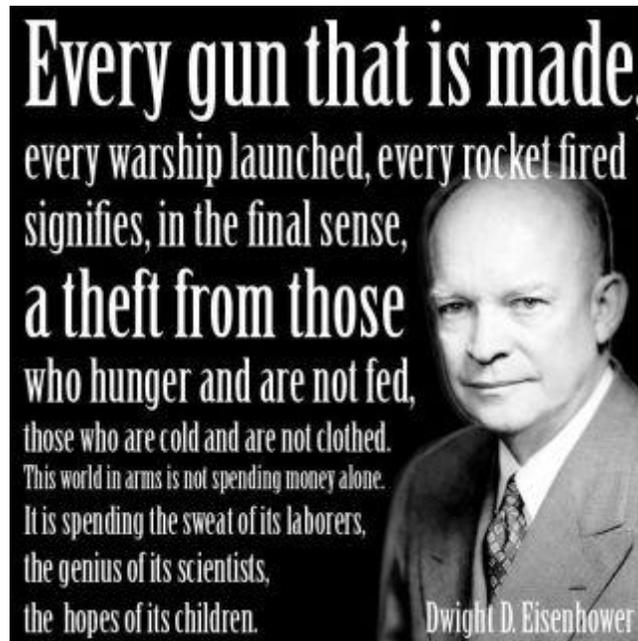
What are you, SteveBA, some kind of leftist peace-nik?

They didn't listen to Eisenhower fifty years ago and I doubt being out of money will change the thinking in Washington now. There is too much profit to be made for the vultures around the Pentagon to give up their feasting, even if it must be charged to a credit card as it was for Iraq and Afghanistan. The corporate-militarists will keep up the national security fear-mongering drumbeat as needed to keep the revenues flowing into their greedy pockets.

They'll argue that troops are needed in Europe so they'll be close to Iran (and/or Hamas and Hezbollah) and in Japan to keep an eye on North Korea (and/or China). And we'll need to keep developing that ultra-expensive high tech weaponry so we can kill our enemy du jour in the most costly way possible.

[20120208-14](#) 19:10 Art Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to SteveBA, above)

Hey guys, I am an ex professional soldier. It may take me a little time to swing over to the Dark Side.



[20120208-15](#) 19:19 Dennis Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to Art, above)

So was Eisenhower. If he could do it.....

[20120208-16](#) 19:38 SteveG Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to all, above) & "America's Empire of Bases"

[Wow! What great corroboration of Tom's map in FotM Newsletter #69! -SteveB]

"America's Empire of Bases" by Chalmers Johnson, TomDispatch.com /CommonDreams

Jan. 15, 2004, (<http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0115-08.htm>)

As distinct from other peoples, most Americans do not recognize -- or do not want to recognize -- that the United States dominates the world through its military power. Due to government secrecy, our citizens are often ignorant of the fact that our garrisons encircle the planet. This vast network of American bases on every continent except Antarctica actually constitutes a new form of empire -- an empire of bases with its own geography not likely to be taught in any high school geography class. Without grasping the dimensions of this globe-girdling Baseworld, one can't begin to understand the size and nature of our imperial aspirations or the degree to which a new kind of militarism is undermining our constitutional order.

Our military deploys well over half a million soldiers, spies, technicians, teachers, dependents, and civilian contractors in other nations. To dominate the oceans and seas of the world, we are creating some thirteen naval task forces built around aircraft carriers whose names sum up our martial heritage -- Kitty Hawk, Constellation,

Enterprise, John F. Kennedy, Nimitz, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Carl Vinson, Theodore Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, John C. Stennis, Harry S. Truman, and Ronald Reagan. We operate numerous secret bases outside our territory to monitor what the people of the world, including our own citizens, are saying, faxing, or e-mailing to one another.

Our installations abroad bring profits to civilian industries, which design and manufacture weapons for the armed forces or, like the now well-publicized Kellogg, Brown & Root company, a subsidiary of the Halliburton Corporation of Houston, undertake contract services to build and maintain our far-flung outposts. One task of such contractors is to keep uniformed members of the imperium housed in comfortable quarters, well fed, amused, and supplied with enjoyable, affordable vacation facilities. Whole sectors of the American economy have come to rely on the military for sales. On the eve of our second war on Iraq, for example, while the Defense Department was ordering up an extra ration of cruise missiles and depleted-uranium armor-piercing tank shells, it also acquired 273,000 bottles of Native Tan sunblock, almost triple its 1999 order and undoubtedly a boon to the supplier, Control Supply Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and its subcontractor, Sun Fun Products of Daytona Beach, Florida.

At Least Seven Hundred Foreign Bases

It's not easy to assess the size or exact value of our empire of bases. Official records on these subjects are misleading, although instructive. According to the Defense Department's annual "Base Structure Report" for fiscal year 2003, which itemizes foreign and domestic U.S. military real estate, the Pentagon currently owns or rents 702 overseas bases in about 130 countries and HAS another 6,000 bases in the United States and its territories. Pentagon bureaucrats calculate that it would require at least \$113.2 billion to replace just the foreign bases -- surely far too low a figure but still larger than the gross domestic product of most countries -- and an estimated \$591,519.8 million to replace all of them. The military high command deploys to our overseas bases some 253,288 uniformed personnel, plus an equal number of dependents and Department of Defense civilian officials, and employs an additional 44,446 locally hired foreigners. The Pentagon claims that these bases contain 44,870 barracks, hangars, hospitals, and other buildings, which it owns, and that it leases 4,844 more.

These numbers, although staggeringly large, do not begin to cover all the actual bases we occupy globally. The 2003 Base Status Report fails to mention, for instance, any garrisons in Kosovo -- even though it is the site of the huge Camp Bondsteel, built in 1999 and maintained ever since by Kellogg, Brown & Root. The Report similarly omits bases in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar, and Uzbekistan, although the U.S. military has established colossal base structures throughout the so-called arc of instability in the two-and-a-half years since 9/11.

For Okinawa, the southernmost island of Japan, which has been an American military colony for the past 58 years, the report deceptively lists only one Marine base, Camp Butler, when in fact Okinawa "hosts" ten Marine Corps bases, including Marine Corps Air Station Futenma occupying 1,186 acres in the center of that modest-sized island's second largest city. (Manhattan's Central Park, by contrast, is only 843 acres.) The Pentagon similarly fails to note all of the \$5-billion-worth of military and espionage installations in Britain, which have long been conveniently disguised as Royal Air Force bases. If there were an honest count, the actual size of our military empire would probably top 1,000 different bases in other people's countries, but no one -- possibly not even the Pentagon -- knows the exact number for sure, although it has been distinctly on the rise in recent years.

For their occupants, these are not unpleasant places to live and work. Military service today, which is voluntary, bears almost no relation to the duties of a soldier during World War II or the Korean or Vietnamese wars. Most chores like laundry, KP ("kitchen police"), mail call, and cleaning latrines have been subcontracted to private military companies like Kellogg, Brown & Root, DynCorp, and the Vinnell Corporation. Fully one-third of the funds recently appropriated for the war in Iraq (about \$30 billion), for instance, are going into private American hands for exactly such services. Where possible everything is done to make daily existence seem like a Hollywood version of life at home. According to the Washington Post, in Fallujah, just west of Baghdad, waiters in white shirts, black pants, and black bow ties serve dinner to the officers of the 82nd Airborne Division in their heavily guarded compound, and the first Burger King has already gone up inside the enormous military base we've established at Baghdad International Airport.

Some of these bases are so gigantic they require as many as nine internal bus routes for soldiers and civilian contractors to get around inside the earthen berms and concertina wire. That's the case at Camp Anaconda, headquarters of the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, whose job is to police some 1,500 square miles of Iraq north of Baghdad, from Samarra to Taji. Anaconda occupies 25 square kilometers and will ultimately house as many as 20,000 troops. Despite extensive security precautions, the base has frequently come under mortar attack, notably on the Fourth of July, 2003, just as Arnold Schwarzenegger was chatting up our wounded at the local field hospital.

The military prefers bases that resemble small fundamentalist towns in the Bible Belt rather than the big population centers of the United States. For example, even though more than 100,000 women live on our overseas bases -- including women in the services, spouses, and relatives of military personnel -- obtaining an abortion at a local military hospital is prohibited. Since there are some 14,000 sexual assaults or attempted sexual assaults each year in the military, women who become pregnant overseas and want an abortion have no choice but to try the local economy, which cannot be either easy or pleasant in Baghdad or other parts of our empire these days.

Our armed missionaries live in a closed-off, self-contained world serviced by its own airline -- the Air Mobility Command, with its fleet of long-range C-17 Globemasters, C-5 Galaxies, C-141 Starlifters, KC-135 Stratotankers, KC-10 Extenders, and C-9 Nightingales that link our far-flung outposts from Greenland to Australia. For generals and admirals, the military provides seventy-one Learjets, thirteen Gulfstream IIIs, and seventeen Cessna Citation luxury jets to fly them to such spots as the armed forces' ski and vacation center at Garmisch in the Bavarian Alps or to any of the 234 military golf courses the Pentagon operates worldwide. Defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld flies around in his own personal Boeing 757, called a C-32A in the Air Force.

Our "Footprint" on the World

Of all the insensitive, if graphic, metaphors we've allowed into our vocabulary, none quite equals "footprint" to describe the military impact of our empire. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers and senior members of the Senate's Military Construction Subcommittee such as Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) are apparently incapable of completing a sentence without using it. Establishing a more impressive footprint has now become part of the new justification for a major enlargement of our empire -- and an announced repositioning of our bases and forces abroad -- in the wake of our conquest of Iraq. The man in charge of this project is Andy Hoehn, deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy. He and his colleagues are supposed to draw up plans to implement President Bush's preventive war strategy against "rogue states," "bad guys," and "evil-doers." They have identified something they call the "arc of instability," which is said to run from the Andean region of South America (read: Colombia) through North Africa and then sweeps across the Middle East to the Philippines and Indonesia. This is, of course, more or less identical with what used to be called the Third World -- and perhaps no less crucially it covers the world's key oil reserves. Hoehn contends, "When you overlay our footprint onto that, we don't look particularly well-positioned to deal with the problems we're now going to confront."

Once upon a time, you could trace the spread of imperialism by counting up colonies. America's version of the colony is the military base. By following the changing politics of global basing, one can learn much about our ever larger imperial stance and the militarism that grows with it. Militarism and imperialism are Siamese twins joined at the hip. Each thrives off the other. Already highly advanced in our country, they are both on the verge of a quantum leap that will almost surely stretch our military beyond its capabilities, bringing about fiscal insolvency and very possibly doing mortal damage to our republican institutions. The only way this is discussed in our press is via reportage on highly arcane plans for changes in basing policy and the positioning of troops abroad -- and these plans, as reported in the media, cannot be taken at face value.

Marine Brig. Gen. Mastin Robeson, commanding our 1,800 troops occupying the old French Foreign Legion base at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti at the entrance to the Red Sea, claims that in order to put "preventive war" into action, we require a "global presence," by which he means gaining hegemony over any place that is not already under our thumb. According to the right-wing American Enterprise Institute, the idea is to create "a global cavalry" that can ride in from "frontier stockades" and shoot up the "bad guys" as soon as we get some intelligence on them.

"Lily Pads" in Australia, Romania, Mali, Algeria...

In order to put our forces close to every hot spot or danger area in this newly discovered arc of instability, the Pentagon has been proposing -- this is usually called "repositioning" -- many new bases, including at least four and perhaps as many as six permanent ones in Iraq. A number of these are already under construction -- at Baghdad International Airport, Tallil air base near Nasariyah, in the western desert near the Syrian border, and at Bashur air field in the Kurdish region of the north. (This does not count the previously mentioned Anaconda, which is currently being called an "operating base," though it may very well become permanent over time.) In addition, we plan to keep under our control the whole northern quarter of Kuwait -- 1,600 square miles out of Kuwait's 6,900 square miles -- that we now use to resupply our Iraq legions and as a place for Green Zone bureaucrats to relax.

Other countries mentioned as sites for what Colin Powell calls our new "family of bases" include: In the impoverished areas of the "new" Europe -- Romania, Poland, and Bulgaria; in Asia -- Pakistan (where we already have four bases), India, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and even, unbelievably, Vietnam; in North Africa -- Morocco, Tunisia, and especially Algeria (scene of the slaughter of some 100,000 civilians since 1992, when, to quash an election, the military took over, backed by our country and France); and in West Africa -- Senegal, Ghana, Mali, and Sierra Leone (even though it has been torn by civil war since 1991). The models for all these new installations, according to Pentagon sources, are the string of bases we have built around the Persian Gulf in the last two decades in such anti-democratic autocracies as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates.

Most of these new bases will be what the military, in a switch of metaphors, calls "lily pads" to which our troops could jump like so many well-armed frogs from the homeland, our remaining NATO bases, or bases in the docile satellites of Japan and Britain. To offset the expense involved in such expansion, the Pentagon leaks plans to close many of the huge Cold War military reservations in Germany, South Korea, and perhaps Okinawa as part of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's "rationalization" of our armed forces. In the wake of the Iraq victory, the U.S. has already withdrawn virtually all of its forces from Saudi Arabia and Turkey, partially as a way of punishing them for not supporting the war strongly enough. It wants to do the same thing to South Korea, perhaps the most anti-American democracy on Earth today, which would free up the 2nd Infantry Division on the demilitarized zone with North Korea for probable deployment to Iraq, where our forces are significantly overstretched.

In Europe, these plans include giving up several bases in Germany, also in part because of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's domestically popular defiance of Bush over Iraq. But the degree to which we are capable of doing so may prove limited indeed. At the simplest level, the Pentagon's planners do not really seem to grasp just how many buildings the 71,702 soldiers and airmen in Germany alone occupy and how expensive it would be to reposition most of them and build even slightly comparable bases, together with the necessary infrastructure, in former Communist countries like Romania, one of Europe's poorest countries. Lt. Col. Amy Ehmann in Hanau, Germany, has said to the press "There's no place to put these people" in Romania, Bulgaria, or Djibouti, and she predicts that 80% of them will in the end stay in Germany. It's also certain that generals of the high command have no intention of living in backwaters like Constanta, Romania, and will keep the U.S. military headquarters in Stuttgart while holding on to Ramstein Air Force Base, Spangdahlem Air Force Base, and the Grafenwöhr Training Area.

One reason why the Pentagon is considering moving out of rich democracies like Germany and South Korea and looks covetously at military dictatorships and poverty-stricken dependencies is to take advantage of what the Pentagon calls their "more permissive environmental regulations." The Pentagon always imposes on countries in which it deploys our forces so-called Status of Forces Agreements, which usually exempt the United States from cleaning up or paying for the environmental damage it causes. This is a standing grievance in Okinawa, where the American environmental record has been nothing short of abominable. Part of this attitude is simply the desire of the Pentagon to put itself beyond any of the restraints that govern civilian life, an attitude increasingly at play in the "homeland" as well. For example, the 2004 defense authorization bill of \$401.3 billion that President Bush signed into law in November 2003 exempts the military from abiding by the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

While there is every reason to believe that the impulse to create ever more lily pads in the Third World remains unchecked, there are several reasons to doubt that some of the more grandiose plans, for either expansion or downsizing, will ever be put into effect or, if they are, that they will do anything other than make the problem of terrorism worse than it is. For one thing, Russia is opposed to the expansion of U.S. military power on its borders and is already moving to checkmate American basing sorties into places like Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

The first post-Soviet-era Russian airbase in Kyrgyzstan has just been completed forty miles from the U.S. base at Bishkek, and in December 2003, the dictator of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, declared that he would not permit a permanent deployment of U.S. forces in his country even though we already have a base there.

When it comes to downsizing, on the other hand, domestic politics may come into play. By law the Pentagon's Base Realignment and Closing Commission must submit its fifth and final list of domestic bases to be shut down to the White House by September 8, 2005. As an efficiency measure, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has said he'd like to be rid of at least one-third of domestic Army bases and one-quarter of domestic Air Force bases, which is sure to produce a political firestorm on Capitol Hill. In order to protect their respective states' bases, the two mother hens of the Senate's Military Construction Appropriations Subcommittee, Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and Dianne Feinstein, are demanding that the Pentagon close overseas bases first and bring the troops now stationed there home to domestic bases, which could then remain open. Hutchison and Feinstein included in the Military Appropriations Act of 2004 money for an independent commission to investigate and report on overseas bases that are no longer needed. The Bush administration opposed this provision of the Act but it passed anyway and the president signed it into law on November 22, 2003. The Pentagon is probably adept enough to hamstring the commission, but a domestic base-closing furor clearly looms on the horizon.

By far the greatest defect in the "global cavalry" strategy, however, is that it accentuates Washington's impulse to apply irrelevant military remedies to terrorism. As the prominent British military historian, Correlli Barnett, has observed, the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq only increased the threat of al-Qaeda. From 1993 through the 9/11 assaults of 2001, there were five major al-Qaeda attacks worldwide; in the two years since then there have been seventeen such bombings, including the Istanbul suicide assaults on the British consulate and an HSBC Bank. Military operations against terrorists are not the solution. As Barnett puts it, "Rather than kicking down front doors and barging into ancient and complex societies with simple nostrums of 'freedom and democracy,' we need tactics of cunning and subtlety, based on a profound understanding of the people and cultures we are dealing with -- an understanding up till now entirely lacking in the top-level policy-makers in Washington, especially in the Pentagon."

In his notorious "long, hard slog" memo on Iraq of October 16, 2003, Defense secretary Rumsfeld wrote, "Today, we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror." Correlli-Barnett's "metrics" indicate otherwise. But the "war on terrorism" is at best only a small part of the reason for all our military strategizing. The real reason for constructing this new ring of American bases along the equator is to expand our empire and reinforce our military domination of the world.

(Chalmers Johnson's latest book is *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (Metropolitan). His previous book, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, has just been updated with a new introduction.)

[20120208-17](#) 20:59 SteveBA Re: No Warm, Fuzzy Feeling for Iran (reply to all, above)

I think the buzz word is asymmetrical response. The f35 is not a good weapon to fight urban guerrillas, maybe to counter a north Korean invasion of the south or a conventional war with China, if we were to be so foolish. I think that if we had taken all of those dollars spent in Iraq and paid the citizens the money everyone would be too rich to bother with fighting.

[SteveBA, I like the distributing money instead of fighting idea. Maybe we could do that instead of attacking Iran? I'm very happy to see you reject the Republican Party line on this one, SteveBA. The war machine has got to be somehow stopped! -SteveB]

[20120208-07](#) 14:07 Beth Re: GOP Race Now in 'No Man's Land' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #69)

The scary thing about the Santorum story is that there are any people anywhere who are delusional enough to vote for him. Other than that, the media as usual is making more of this story than is justified.

[Beth, I hope you're right about the media dancing when they should be sitting. But what if this guy has no affairs or gayness in his closet and starts to zoom? It seems the Republicans have no appetite at all for their candidate, R0mney. For many of us, the more we see of him, the less we like his flakery-fakery. –SteveB]

20120208-08 14:37 SteveB "Obama's Wrong Note on Foreclosures"

This problem is not going away, a solution is way past due, and all parties must be dealt with fairly and, sometimes, harshly. Especially BoA, whom I have not trusted for many years and will not use.

"Obama's Wrong Note on Foreclosures" by Alan Jenkins, NationofChange

Feb. 8, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/obama-s-wrong-note-foreclosures-1328715543>)

As Election Day nears, President Obama is regaining his populist mojo. His State of the Union speech was mostly pitch perfect, evoking core American themes of opportunity and optimism, and calling for "an economy where everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules."

But the President has repeatedly hit a wrong note in talking about the foreclosure crisis. Not only is his story inaccurate, but he is promoting a harmful narrative that will make it harder to fix the problem.

The President said in his State of the Union address that "we've all paid the price for lenders who sold mortgages to people who couldn't afford them and buyers who knew they couldn't afford them." He repeated that theme a week later at a speech in Falls Church, VA, contending that people who did the "right and the responsible thing" were hurt by "lenders who sold loans to people who they knew couldn't afford the mortgages; and buyers who bought homes they knew they couldn't afford; and banks that packaged those mortgages up and traded them to reap phantom profits, knowing that they were building a house of cards."

According to the President's narrative, then, large numbers of Americans who are struggling beneath unsustainable mortgages willfully chose that fate and deserve roughly equal blame as do the lending and financial giants who cooked up the subprime scheme, targeted vulnerable communities, engaged in deceptive and discriminatory practices, chopped up and distributed faulty loans, and forced fraudulent foreclosures. A different class of "innocent, hard-working" people are the only ones paying the price in this narrative.

Let's be clear. The foreclosure crisis was caused by reckless misconduct by the lending and financial industries, inadequate rules and enforcement, and staggering long-term unemployment. America's long history of overwhelmingly successful homeownership went to pot because regulators looked the other way and unscrupulous corporations took advantage, not because working Americans suddenly became wildly irresponsible. Indeed, conscientious lenders like Self-Help Credit Union in North Carolina successfully made loans to the same group of working Americans over the same period with negligible default rates.

Am I saying that no American homeowner ever applied for a mortgage without a realistic plan to repay it? Of course not. A key purpose of proper underwriting standards and regulations is to help lenders and buyers determine what's mutually sustainable. But to divide American homeowners into "responsible" ones who've managed to stay current on their payments and supposedly "irresponsible" ones who've fallen behind is inaccurate and harmful.

After confessing that he and the First Lady—two Harvard-trained lawyers—had trouble deciphering their own first mortgage, the President has nonetheless failed to convey how many Americans were victimized by deceptive and predatory practices; how many families sacrificed all to pay the mortgage after one or both parents lost a job; and how many people facing foreclosure today would be successful homeowners if fair rules and vigilant regulators had been in place. He also leaves out how much each of us benefits when we help our neighbors avoid foreclosure, even if we've personally managed to stay current on our own mortgages.

The President's flawed story erodes the public will to aid struggling homeowners and bolsters those who say that the foreclosure crisis should be allowed to "run its course"—why rally to help people you've told us are

irresponsible? Yet, without a more ambitious policy agenda than we have now, we'll see millions more Americans lose their economic security, families uprooted from schools and communities, senior citizens thrown into uncertainty or destitution, and the economy in continued chaos.

The President's current story is also deepening the feelings of shame that keep too many Americans from seeking the advice that could help them save their homes or, at least, make a successful transition. Housing counselors say the stigma attached to foreclosure keeps many people in the shadows instead of accessing the services that exist. It doesn't help when the Commander in Chief labels them irresponsible.

It's time for a new, accurate story about homeownership, opportunity, and the American Dream. It's a story that places blame where it belongs while recognizing that we each have economic and moral responsibilities. It's a story about the solutions to the crisis that exist, including many that the Administration can take without any action from Congress. And it's a story about why, in this crisis as in so many others, we are all in it together. As communicator-in-chief, the President should take the lead in telling that story.

20120208-09	15:14	SteveB	Fw: From the Right: Birth Control Perspective
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from an email from Audrey Hudson, *Human Events*:

The Senate is gearing up for a fight over the Obama administration's controversial decision to require that insurance coverage provided by faith-based employers include free contraceptives and abortifacients.

"This is a huge mistake that I hope the administration is currently reconsidering. And if they don't, Congress will act," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said Tuesday.

Several women on the Democratic side of the aisle responded Tuesday night to McConnell's statements on the Senate floor and said they are ready for a fight to protect the expanded coverage that is part of ObamaCare.

"It's going to be a battle here on the floor of the Senate," said Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.). "I'm not afraid of the fight. I welcome it."

Beginning Aug. 1, hospitals and universities with religious affiliations must comply with the new requirement to provide insurance that pays for contraceptives, the Obama administration announced in late January. Churches and synagogues are exempt from the new rules.

Some Congressional Republicans disagree with the birth control mandate and say it tramples religious liberties.

Sen. Marco Rubio has authored the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to give a religious exemption to the insurance requirement and Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) is sponsoring the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act that allows organizations to decline coverage for services that are contrary to their religious beliefs.

"If the administration does not take care of this administratively, I believe it will be taken care of legislatively," Blunt said.

The new requirements are opposed by the Catholic Church, which McConnell said operates the largest network of private schools in the country. Additionally, Catholic Charities is the major provider to social services to the poor, and one out of six patients in the U.S. are treated at a Catholic hospital.

"The Obama administration has crossed a dangerous line," McConnell said.

Boxer said the Obama administration's decision had "nothing to do with politics," but accused Republicans opposing the rule of unleashing "right-wing politics" with women's health.

"My Republican friends want to turn back the clock on birth control. Some of us remember the days when birth control was illegal. Well I have news for them: this is the 21st Century. We are not going quietly in the night on this

one. We will fight back for women and their families, and health care, and we will fight to keep politics out of the equation," Boxer said.

20120208-10

17:01 Bill

Re: Thinking About Davos / Business Income Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #69)

You thinking seems to be stuck in a single period, whether quarter or year. Think in terms of year over year. In general, the profit that a business may earn belongs to the business and, to the extent it is not paid out, becomes part of the capital of the business. When market circumstances—competition!—preclude the enterprise being able to factor all its costs into its prices charged to customers, then the erosion begins. First, shareholders and owners don't receive a return commensurate with the risk they take. Then, with further deterioration of sales to the point where return is negative, then the entity's capital begins to be consumed, and taxes and other expenses are paid from that capital.

You presume that in this case earnings will be zero, but the accelerated depreciation scenario I've described for capital-intensive businesses can negate that presumption. Further, and more generally, other taxes will continue to be due: property taxes, employment taxes, business-privilege taxes, and whatever other taxes (e. g. gross receipts taxes) may fall on the entity. When the entity isn't making any money, then its payments of those taxes that continue, despite no profit, will come from the accumulated, and presumably shrinking, capital of the entity.

I suppose you could argue that the accumulated capital came from previous earnings gained when the entity could factor all taxes into its prices, but that's not the way accounting (and economics) works. The capital belongs to the entity. Further, some of that capital earned in times when all costs were covered, is typically contributed capital—i. e. what the original entrepreneurs put into the business to start it. The latter source of capital may be immaterial in the case of larger corporations, but it's still to be considered for smaller entities.

So, I've huffed and I've puffed, and I still cannot accept your assertion that "Businesses don't pay taxes. Ever."

[Yet, with apologies to Bill, who has done a yeoman's job of trying to talk me out of it, I still maintain that American businesses don't pay income taxes, their customers do. Therefore, all business income taxes should be eliminated and higher top-end personal income taxes instituted instead. All the business taxes would still be paid, but would be paid by real persons on personal income, they way S corps work now. Money reinvested in the business in America would not be taxed. Profit not reinvested in the U.S. or paid to persons in the U.S. would be taxed at a penalty rate of 50-60%. This is my super-simple, super-effective business plan to create jobs where we need them. —SteveB]

20120208-12

17:56 Dale

"War of Borrowers Against Savers: News Analysis"

"War of Borrowers Against Savers: News Analysis" by Gil Weinreich, AdvisorOne

Feb. 8, 2012, (http://www.advisorone.com/2012/02/08/war-of-borrowers-against-savers-news-analysis?t=life-planning-ltc&utm_source=dailywire20812&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=dailywire)

(A zero percent rate, under strictly limited terms, is about the best borrowers [Savers??? —SteveB] can do under the current financial repression.)

When Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke announced two weeks ago that the Fed expected to maintain its near-zero interest rate policy at least as long as the end of 2014, it was the latest salvo in our loose monetary regime's increasing repression of savers.

Like the Syrian army unleashing heavily armored vehicles and massacring civilians, American savers are feeling the financial equivalent of fighting a desperate and so far losing battle against the might of the U.S. central bank. Indeed, until two weeks ago, U.S. savers were being massacred by a zero-rate policy intended to last until the middle of 2013, so the most recent Fed announcement must have seemed like a body blow to this beleaguered group.

As in all other cases of repression, the violence is aimed at protecting the interests of some favored group—the Assad regime and its ethnic Alawite supporters in Syria or in the case of the U.S., the borrowing class.

Why should the U.S. favor borrowers? Economists and bankers offer all sorts of reasons, and usually focus on the need to revive the battered financial and housing sectors, which triggered our economic crisis. With zero rate returns, the thinking goes, those with capital will be forced to enter risk markets, thereby spurring investment and creating a wealth effect while consumers will flock to homeownership since the cost of financing a purchase is so low.

Cynics will argue that the real reason for low rates is that the government itself has assumed the interests of borrowers because, like Assad's Alawites, they come from the same group. The U.S. after all is the world's biggest borrower and is running trillion-dollar annual deficits. U.S. debt-service costs would balloon if interest rates were at normal levels. According to this thinking, the Fed is playing for time with the hope that the economy will be growing again and debt trending downward when it once again imposes costs on credit.

In what must seem to some savers as a coordinated attack, the Securities and Exchange Commission this week revealed proposed regulatory changes on money market funds that would have the effect of lowering rates. For those not hip to money funds these days, the current average seven-day yield on a taxable money market fund is 0.02%, which may not sound like much, but is double the 0.01% rate on a comparable tax-free fund.

If the SEC's proposals were all adopted, it is highly likely that savers would have to pay fund companies to hold their money. And if that sounds far-fetched, the Bank of New York Mellon Corp. made headlines last summer when it announced it would be charging institutional clients 0.13% on deposits of more than \$50 million.

The SEC has legitimate concerns about the need to prevent a bank-run style run on funds—as occurred in the wake of the Lehman crisis leading to the Reserve Fund's breaking the buck. Reasonable people can differ on the propriety of such changes, but the fact remains that savers remain a repressed political class today with few options.

Headline inflation is 3% today, so arguably the U.S. government is offering investors in its bonds the same kind of deal BNY Mellon is offering its customers. For the cost of a 10-year bond, which currently yields 1.97%, U.S. investors get to pay Uncle Sam over 1% a year to hold their money.

Across the board, savings rates are low and declining. The current savings rate average is 0.266% nationally and five-year bank CDs are paying 1.687%, according to depositaccounts.com, which expects rates to continue to fall in the wake of the Fed's extended zero-rate plans. Savers can of course protect themselves from inflation by purchasing Treasury Inflation Protected Securities. But TIPS are currently paying a negative interest rate of -1.15%. Inflation-protected savings bonds (I Bonds) may be the only bargain around. They pay a flat zero percent!

Savers have been struggling to find ways to preserve their income in the past several years' low environment. A recent analysis by the free-market-oriented Cato Institute has quantified this problem, revealing that "since 2008, household interest income has fallen by about \$400 billion annually. That's \$400 billion each year that families have not had to spend." (Of course, these same numbers also quantify the huge gains eligible borrowers have reaped in cheap financing of homes, for instance – another win for the ruling borrower class.)

There is a paucity of alternatives for outgunned savers in the current financial repression. But for beleaguered savers with their fistful of dollars clamoring for the scintillating zero-percent rate on I Bonds, a warning: the government allows a maximum purchase of just \$10,000 a year, down from \$30,000 annual limit available back in the good old days of 2007.

20120208-04	13:26	SteveB	Fw: DCCC Petition: Stop Eric Cantor from Watering Down the Stock Act!
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from Steve Israel, DCCC:

Eric Cantor is at it again.

We just got word that Majority Leader Eric Cantor and House Republicans caved to pressure from right-wing special interest groups, going behind closed doors to water down the STOCK Act, a bill banning insider trading in Congress. A vote on the STOCK Act is scheduled for tomorrow and Republicans are trying to carve it up at the last minute.

The vote is scheduled in less than 24 hours: Sign our petition telling Eric Cantor not to water down this vital accountability and transparency bill because of special interest demands

Even some Republicans, including Senator Chuck Grassley, are blasting House Republicans for softening this landmark ethics bill.

Help us send a strong message to House Republican leaders that the American people's interests should come before the special interests. The vote is scheduled for tomorrow afternoon, so add your name right now.

<http://dccc.org/pages/stockact>

[20120208-18](#) 09:01 mgobble01 Re: Federal Birth Control Mandate (reply to Mary, FotM Newsletter #67)

I didn't understand it to be a mandate, it is just going to be mandatory for insurance companies to cover birth control IF a woman chooses to use it.

[20120208-19](#) 22:43 SteveG Cartoon: Carl Rove vs. Clint Eastwood



[20120208-20](#) 23:58 SteveB Quote: SteveB on Keynesian vs. Republican Economics

"KEYNESIAN ECONOMICS, WHILE SEEMINGLY ILLOGICAL, HAS PROVEN ITSELF MANY TIMES ALL OVER THE WORLD. REPUBLICAN ECONOMICS, THOUGH LOGICAL ON ITS SURFACE, HAS PROVEN ONLY THAT IT CAN TANK A THRIVING AMERICAN ECONOMY AND DESTROY THE MIDDLE CLASS."

—Steven W. Baker

<http://www.wayfaring.info/2010/07/20/hiking-in-sedonaarizona/>



—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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