

**Silos:** Regular readers of these missives know that I don't fit neatly into a box. I am a conservative Republican who doesn't raise taxes and votes to cut nearly every bit of government spending I can find. But, I am against the wars in Afghanistan and Libya, think we should cut defense spending, support legalizing internet gambling, sponsor a lot of bills to prevent abuse of animals, want pristine, clean oceans and believe we need some government support of home mortgages. No, that is not a box.

For those of you who don't know my background, I am a native Californian raised by two very conservative and politically active parents. "We were Taft Republicans", my mother often told me to make sure I understood that Dwight Eisenhower was way too moderate for them. The last Democrat I voted for was Sam Yorty for Mayor of Los Angeles in the 1970s. I think he later changed parties. I'm about as Republican as you get.

But, my ideology guides my thinking. It does not replace it. I believe that this job is about solving problems. And, there is never only one prescription to right every wrong. Napoleon Bonaparte was certainly the most brilliant military strategist of the 19th century and perhaps ever. Studies of his strategies and tactics were used in a textbook at West Point well into the 1960s. This textbook sits on my bookshelf at home in Irvine and I actually read it when I was a kid (geek alert). Napoleon never used the same strategy in every battle. He changed it based on the situation.

Republicans should not be for every war, every place, every time. Nor should every Democrat be against every one. We should not oppose every government involvement in the market place. I support free markets, but not economic anarchy. I don't think that the tax code as laid out in the 1990s is sacrosanct. I think we should have a safety net to support those in need in our society because it is God's call on us and any one of us could be in that position someday. I think much of what we deal with in Washington is situational, particularly the economic stuff. And, as with Napoleon, the same strategy and tactics will not work in every battle. You need to consider the ground, the weather, your enemy's strengths and weaknesses and your supplies and logistics.

Unfortunately, many of my colleagues in Congress on both sides of the aisle follow their party playbook in all instances. "Oh, it's a war, we're for those." Or, "You want to have a government program here? We don't do that ever." Some government programs work, many don't. Some wars are necessary and winnable. Others make no sense. I like to think that I evaluate every bill and every position I take based on what the situation is and what the facts are. I wish more

people did. We all do climb into our silos at times. For example, I think we should not spend any more money on anything right now because the deficits and resulting debt will bring this country to its knees if we don't fix it. But, once we do fix it, I should come out of that silo. I believe strongly in the freedom of Americans to do what they want to do without government interference. There is always a balance between anarchy and a police state. But, I fear we are currently lurching closer to the police state side of the ledger, and I don't like it. It's time to move back the other way, towards individual freedom.

There has been a lot of press lately about the new "isolationist" movement within the Republican Party. I take exception to the isolationist moniker. Just because I think we should not make unprovoked attacks on other countries, and ask Americans to fight and die to build someone else's country if it doesn't make us demonstrably safer, does not mean that I think we should disengage from the world. There is a lot of engagement and free trade and other things we can do around the world that doesn't involve sending in the Marines. But, we must also understand that we cannot and should not run the world, and that we are actually safer and more prosperous when more countries can fend for themselves. This sort of position is not new for conservatives. My "Taft conservative" parents, referred to earlier, also pointed out to me how much they opposed American involvement in World War II and that they were always convinced Roosevelt orchestrated the attack on Pearl Harbor to convince Americans to enter a war they didn't support. I do not tell you this because I think they were right about that. But, merely to point out that the natural position for conservatives is to have a healthy skepticism about committing to war as conservatives did in all the conflicts in the first half of the 20th century, as was recently pointed out by Charles Krauthammer on Fox News.

We all have a basis of thinking from which we come. For example, I believe in the Austrian School of Economics and think John Maynard Keynes was messed up. I am a devotee of Ayn Rand and don't have much time for Upton Sinclair. However, I should not slavishly follow the directions of long-dead philosophers, but instead analyze the problem before me in the context of the time in which we live and arrive at a conclusion using the best judgment and reason instilled in me by those influences.

Does all of this make me less Republican? I don't think so. Maybe the definition of Republican needs to be somewhat different than it has been. This may have particular relevance in my home state of California where no Republican candidate for President has won without a Californian on the ticket since Calvin Coolidge, I believe. (Hoover, Nixon and Reagan were all from California).

And, maybe we all need to be a little more practical in our application of our philosophies. In any case, as you can tell, I will continue to follow my own road. I am not omnipotent and, of course, this road might not always be the right one. But, at least you can know that I will never follow the

road that is before me just because it is there or someone else tells me that's the road I should be on.

Drive fast and live free! And, remember that those old, white guys with the powdered wigs who declared our independence from King George 235 years ago on July 4th were pretty brave and smart guys. What we inherited from them should be preserved and improved. God bless them and God bless America.