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“ THEY SAID IT

“If avoiding the Thucydides trap is a core objective of China’s strategy, as President Xi insists it is, then we would hope that China’s actions would be carefully calculated to make conflict less likely.”
Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull cites Ancient Greek general Thucydides during a speech this week in the US.

“If the test is how do we avoid the Thucydides trap, then any action which is likely to promote conflict or tension or run the risk of doing so is one that should be avoided.”
More Thucydides from the PM, also in the US.

“Two-and-a-half thousand years ago or thereabouts, the Athenian general Thucydides wrote what is probably the earliest work of real history, his history of the Peloponnesian War, the war between the Athenians and Spartans.”
Turnbull again gives it up for ol’ Thucydides, this time at a UN reception last year.

“I can quote to you from Thucydides’s work.”
You sure can, Prime Minister, you sure can.

“It is a great shame that we do not offer more students Latin and Greek in our schools, not because the joys of Thucydides and Tacitus can only be enjoyed in the original, but rather because Latin and Greek are two of the most important building blocks of our own language.”
Is there nothing Thucydides can’t do?

“Dinner with Thucydides — imagine the stories he could tell.”
Turnbull dreams of his perfect dining partner on Twitter in 2012.

“The Peloponnesian War lives on in our imagination, inspiring (and misleading) generations of statesmen and generals simply because of the quality of Thucydides’s history.”
Australia’s leading Thucydotidist during a 2012 speech to the Classical Association of NSW.

“White reminds us that Thucydides, considering the several incidents that led to the Peloponnesian War, concluded that the real reason was Sparta’s growing anxiety about the rise of Athenian wealth and power.”
Everything reminds Turnbull of Thucydides.

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OSCARS SET JUST THE WHITE TONE

JANE’S WORLD



JANE WATKINS
IN LOS ANGELES

The Daily Telegraph has, incredibly, exclusively travelled forward and then back in time to acquire the transcript of the acceptance speech of one of the as-yet-unidentified winners of the February 28 controversial Oscar awards for only white actors.

“Wow ... Wow ... Just wow ... Someone pinch me. I can’t believe it. I’ve won an Oscar this year for my acting? Me? A white person? Who would have thought it?”

What a category of nominees this year, ladies and gentlemen. Am, I right?

All deserving winners. They’re all plausibly talented enough not to arouse suspicion for their nomination and every one of them is a white person.

“This could have just as easily been any of the other white nominees up here receiving this award right now.”

“Thankfully, I did prepare a speech just in case I was tonight’s lucky white actor. OK, let me read what I’ve written.

“First and foremost, thank you to God and my parents, Mum and Dad, to whom I owe all the whiteness that helped get me here.

“You made me the race that I am today and I wouldn’t be winning this Oscar without it.

“Oh, no ... I promised myself I wasn’t going to cry. I’m not going to cry damnit!”

Deep breaths.

“Thank you to my agent, my manager, my publicist, my director, the studio, the casting director. All of you decided not to take a chance on a non-white actor and I thank you for supporting me instead.

“What an amazing journey this has been, an amazingly predictably journey, we all took together to this destination, to me being a white actor winning this award.

“You guys believed in my ability to not only act reasonably well, but also flood the already saturated movie market place with more of the same whiteness.

“You believed in me, even when I doubted. You believed in me, even when others complained the industry needed more diversity. Thank you for that.

“To the Academy of Art and Motion Picture Sciences, its board of governors and members, thank you for not only nominating me but also awarding me this prize.

“It’s an honour and privilege, specifically, a white privilege. Without the acad-

emy’s tireless work promoting the work of white actors, over all others, at least a fraction of us white people wouldn’t be here right now in this room.

“The three out-of-work white actors performing as seat-fillers tonight, for example, who currently are sitting in the places of Will Smith, Jada Pinkett Smith and Spike Lee, who are boycotting this ceremony in protest of the all-white nominations this year, they wouldn’t be here.

“Oh, OK, the light’s flashing. They’re trying to wrap me up. Let me just get this out. This award is dedicated to all the white kids sitting at home watching the Oscars on TV, like I did as a kid, and are only seeing people who look like them nominated for acting awards tonight.

“My message to those kids is don’t let anyone dismiss your dream of being entitled to more praise, more recognition, more money, and more awards than anyone else based solely on your race.

Anything is possible for you. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.

“I still remember the profound effect on me of watching, as a kid, white actor Sally Field win an Oscar in the ‘80s ...

“Oh, no. Stop the music. Stop the music playing me out. I’m almost done.

“Which is why, finally, I will paraphrase Sally Field’s iconic acceptance speech about her peers liking her.

“You white me! You really white me!”



COULD CHESS SAVE THE ECONOMY?



JOHN
ADAMS

Australia needs a new national economic debate. We are 15 years into this century and yet we do not have a strong grasp of the unique economic challenges posed by the 21st century and whether we are prepared.

Globalisation, automation, digitalisation, robotics and other technological developments mean that the nature of economic production will continue to change. Workers will be required to employ their brains more at work this century and rely less on

their brawn. The economic success of nations will depend on the abilities of societies to develop and use the human capital of their people.

Cognitive ability, being original and inventive and the attainment of technical knowledge and skills such as STEM will be critical. Economists are predicting that globally we are expected to see significant shortages in high and medium skilled occupations and a massive surplus of unskilled workers. Australia is not immune from these labour market challenges.

Recently, I presented on the role of chess in the 21st century economy at the London Chess Conference. My message was that Australia is not ready for these challenges.

Conference participants were shocked to learn that despite significant increases in education funding, Australia has experienced a decline in international rankings across maths, science and reading since 2000,

according to the OECD PISA assessments. They were surprised to learn that only 19 per cent of Australian university graduates are graduating with STEM related degrees, despite 75 per cent of the fastest growing occupations requiring STEM skills.

Speaking to conference participants, it became clear that many countries, including Australia, have adopted reforms such as the identification of core subjects and increased use of standardised testing.

One troubling aspect of this, according to US analysis, is that these structural reforms have contributed to the decline of Americans’ creativity over the past 20 years.

Australia requires economic and education reform that gives us the opportunity to develop and thrive both intellectually and in the market place. One of the most cost-effective tools that can deliver the required human capital is chess.

Chess has been found to boost players’ spatial ability, which is a key determinant as to whether a student takes up study in a STEM field. It also enhances cognitive, mathematical and reading abilities as well as key 21st century attributes such as originality and critical thinking, which are key to inventing and producing technologically complex innovative products that can compete in the global market place.

While the research is young, we know that via neuroplasticity, human brains are plastic and are shaped by their external environments. By playing chess, we know that players are actually restructuring their brains.

Rival nations are taking chess seriously and so should we.

John Adams is government relations director for the Australian Chess Federation and was this week appointed economics policy adviser to the UK Parliament’s All Party Parliamentary Group for Chess.