



UNDERSTANDING THE NEW GLOBAL DISORDER: THREE TECTONICS

THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY GEN. MICHAEL V. HAYDEN

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General Hayden has devoted his life to public service, serving as Director of the CIA (2006-09), Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence (2005-06), and Director of the NSA (1999-2005). He retired from the US Air Force as a four-star general in 2008 after nearly 39 years of active-duty military service, serving in various capacities, including Commander of the Air Intelligence Agency and Director of the Joint Command and Control Warfare Center. Currently, he is a Principal of the Chertoff Group and Distinguished Visiting Professor at George Mason University. He appears regularly on national news media to comment on a range of national security and intelligence issues.

I have been out of government about five-and-a-half years and I get to talk to a lot of groups. One of the standard requests is: What keeps you awake at night? The problem is there is so much going on now. It's not just that we're more interconnected and seeing more on our 24/7 news stations or on our cellphones; there is just more stuff – ugly stuff – going on. But what's going on underneath? What are the tectonics? Why is the surface of the earth shaking in so many places?

I'm going to suggest three tectonics that explain why this world is so turbulent.

Tectonic Number 1: The New Malovence: The Threat from Non-State Actors

It was mentioned that I worked on the NSC staff for Brent Scowcroft in the Bush 41 administration. Two-and-a-half years ago, Brent wrote an article¹ arguing that when he was National Security Advisor, all the pieces on the board we cared about were nation-states, and frankly we moved those pieces around through what you and I today would call hard power – masses of men and metal at the right place at the right time. If we liked you, it was the promise of masses of men and metal; and if we didn't like you, it was the threat of masses of men and metal. That's how hard power operates among nation-states.

Scowcroft suggested most things in the industrial age trended to strengthen the nation-state. If you're going to industrialize a society, you need a powerful center. Look at our own history. We remember the Republican Party as being the anti-slavery party but that wasn't the only plank in the platform. The other plank was the construction of a national infrastructure to support the industrialization of the United States. Elsewhere, Communism was a horrible theory of history, worse theory of government, but it worked if your goal was to rapidly industrialize a backward and agrarian society. In other words, the industrial age trended towards strengthening the nation-state.

Whereas the industrial age strengthened the nation-state, the post-industrial information age erodes the power of the nation-state. In other words, things that we used to think could be done only by government are now being done by sub-state actors,

¹ "A World in Transformation," by Brent Scowcroft, *The National Interest*, May-June 2012.

groups, gangs, even individuals. All of us have been empowered magnificently. We have been wondrously empowered to do things on our own but that empowerment has an incredible dark side. It pushes power down to sub-state actors, groups, and individuals, some of whom are very, very malevolent. Years ago we never lost any sleep over a religious fanatic living in a cave in the Hindu Kush . . . and yet now we do.

The first tectonic is the second great age of globalization, the first age being the age of sail. The second great age of globalization has made us so interconnected, jamming together the good and the bad, the strong and the weak, in ways we have not been jammed together before. This has made us vulnerable – not to malevolent state power but to the byproducts of the absence of state power.

Remember that “what keeps you awake at night” request I keep getting? I always had the same five things on my list and I wasn't lazy. I think those are the five core things. Two of them are countries, one was China, one was Iran. The other three weren't. The other three were terrorism, transnational crime and cyber threats. None of them has to be the product of state power, and while they can be used by states, they can all come at us without being sponsored by a state.

Now, one quick corollary on tectonic 1. Our national security structure was hard-wired in 1947 to defend us against malevolent state power. The National Security Act of that year created the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense and America's Air Force. Thus we're hard-wired to work against malevolent state power but, for the reasons I have explained, one of the key challenges today emerges from the absence of state power. And I would suggest that a lot of the prickly debates we have been having with ourselves over the past thirteen years has been about taking a national security structure designed for one set of challenges and making it work to deal with challenges not anticipated at the time.

Two presidents have said we're at war with Al Qaeda. What do you do in a war? Close with and destroy the enemy; in other words, you kill him. We have done that in every war. What does it look like today? It looks like targeted killings from unmanned aerial vehicles outside of internationally agreed theaters of conflict. We're a little uncomfortable with that. We don't have a national consensus there yet.

I'll tell you what, don't kill them. What else can you do with the enemy? Close with and capture him. We had tens if not hundreds of thousands of German and Italian prisoners of war here in the United States during World War 2 and we kept them for the duration of the conflict. What does it look like today? It looks like that little Navy Base on the southeastern tip of Cuba. We're a little uncomfortable with the capturing thing, too.

How about you just do your intelligence thing? How about you just figure out what these guys are doing? Why don't you intercept their communications? Recall Bletchley Park, Enigma, Battle of Midway. What does it look like today? Everything that Edward Snowden has told you about for the last 16 months. Get the point?

The first tectonic is that the greatest dangers to your welfare and mine are not coming from state power but from the absence of state power, from ungoverned areas. And we are not yet settled into a national consensus about how we're going to work against that.

Tectonic 2: The Impermanence of Things We Thought Permanent

Tectonic 2 is the erosion of things we thought permanent in the international system – in particular those that derive from two treaties, Versailles and Westphalia. What I'm going to suggest is that Versailles and Westphalia are going away.

Versailles is more easily explained. About 100 years ago, the end of World War 1, either through or at the same time as the treaty of Versailles, several countries were created. One of them was Czechoslovakia. Remember those maps that you used to stare at when you couldn't follow the polynomial equations on the blackboard. And so let me just check the map. If you got used to that map, I'm sorry because a lot of stuff is going away like Czechoslovakia. That country had its “velvet divorce” - not a big deal. Yugoslavia, also created by Versailles, also no longer exists. That was not so velvet; it was pretty violent.

Now, you've got another country not created by, but at the same time as, Versailles: it used to be called the Soviet Union. It's gone. And an awful lot of what's going down now whether it's in Abkhazia or Ossetia or Moldova or Transnistria or Crimea or Eastern Ukraine, it's all about who was standing on what side of a line when the music stopped and the Soviet Union dissolved. And if you think that this melting of Versailles thing is only European, you're wrong. Spread your gaze a bit

eastward and now go to the eastern Mediterranean. There are countries created at the time of Versailles – Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

Iraq is gone. It is not coming back. Syria is gone. It is not coming back. These are artificial states created for the convenience of European diplomacy indifferent to the cultural, historic, commercial, religious, ethnic and linguistic realities on the ground; they were kept in place by raw power. The first application of raw power was the Europeans, the guys who drew the lines. And when the European empires melted, the lines were kept in place largely as a byproduct of the Cold War. These countries lined up on one side of the ball or the other and neither we nor the Soviets wanted those guys to start dragging us into war; so we said leave the lines alone.

And after the Cold War, those lines were kept in place by raw Arab autocracy. But it has not been a good decade so far for raw Arab autocrats. They're going down fast. And so these artificial states, whose boundaries were kept in place by an external imposition of power, simply imploded when the external imposition of power was lifted.

Here in the United States, we have problems but we have got elastic structures in our society. We get pushy and prickly at times, and some of these times turn violent but, fundamentally, since the civil war we work it out. We have enough flexibility in our system that these tensions are by and large resolved and we move to the next level.

The tensions in the Middle East were flash frozen 100 years ago. Put another way and badly mixing my metaphors, these tensions were in a Coke bottle and we've decided we're going to take the top off while forgetting that somebody has been shaking the bottle for the last 100 years. Put another way, even if we replaced Bashir al-Assad and Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi with Saint Francis of Assisi, this is still going to be a mess.

[Richard Haass, head of the Council on Foreign Relations, has described this as the next Thirty Years War,](#)² and he's not suggesting our Air Force is going to be bombing and strafing there for thirty years but he is trying to compare it to the Thirty Years' War in Europe (1618-1648), when Europe went from one equilibrium to another equilibrium post-1648. In the intervening thirty years, one third of the continent died. That's what Richard is suggesting. This is a generational thing.

I mentioned the Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War. That war was fundamentally a war of religion. In the arc of Western history, Westphalia is the handshake amongst us. It said we have a long list of reasons to kill one another but let's take religion off the list. In other words, we in the West decided that we were going to separate the secular from the sacred.

What's the relevance of that today? We in the West are making the presumption that one of the other great monotheisms of the world, Islam, is going to arrive at the same deal at some point in its history; that Islam will agree to separate the secular from the sacred. But one point is not a trend line, and we've got one point. That's how Christendom did it. That's how Christendom made its compromise with modernity. We are all operating under the assumption that Islam will do the same thing. We'll see.

That's only one element of Westphalia; there are other elements. The premise of Westphalia is that the nation-state is the fundamental unit of international discourse and the nation-state has a degree of sacredness, for lack of a better term, with regard to its boundaries or its reality or its sovereignty. That reality is being gnawed at from the left and the right.

From the left, there is the concept known as R2P – the “responsibility to protect.” It is the justification that the UN used for entering into Libya in 2011: the right of the international community to determine that what's going on internally in another country is so displeasing that the community can override the sovereignty of that country. That contradicts Westphalia, which saw sovereignty as a big deal, where internal is internal.

The Westphalia concept is getting gnawed from the right by Vladimir Putin. Westphalia says you are a citizen of the country in which you reside. What Putin is doing is not just causing an awful lot of trouble in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine and trying to overthrow the post-Cold War security structure in Europe – all big things; he is going after the fundamental premise of Westphalia that you're a citizen of the country in which you reside and he is replacing it with a different definition: that your citizenship is determined by the language your mom and dad spoke in the kitchen while you were growing up. That is a fundamentally different concept. And that's the tectonic: things you and I thought were permanent – like borders and the

² The New Thirty Years' War,” by Richard Haass, Project Syndicate, July 21, 2014.

concept of sovereignty – are being eroded.

Tectonic Number 3: The Perilous Trajectory of US-China Relations

The third tectonic has to do with the two great powers left on the planet – the United States and China. We're the only superpower but we are getting used to the reality of a near peer with respect to the Chinese. I firmly believe China is not an enemy of the United States. There aren't any good reasons for China to be an enemy. There are logical non-heroic policy choices available to us and the Chinese. Those choices will keep the relationship competitive. Occasionally that competition will rise to the level of confrontation but it never has to get to the level of conflict.

[That said, according to Professor Graham Allison at Harvard University](#), what you have here is the fundamental issue of a status quo power dealing with an emerging power.³ As he put it, we have seen this movie before – when the dominant power Sparta faced the rising power of Athens in the 5th century BC and about two dozen times since the start of the modern era in 1500. He said that very often the mechanism by which the status quo power and the emerging power resolve their differences and get to a new balance is a process generally known as . . . global war. So this is a really important tectonic. This is something that really requires an awful lot of attention.

But let's focus on the status of each of these two countries. Most people like me are willing to tell you that we spend as much time fretting about Chinese failure as Chinese success, about China's weakness as we do Chinese strength. There are incredible structural problems inside the People's Republic right now. If you think our social security system is a ponzi scheme, just think what it must be for a society that's had a one-child policy for generations.

There is maldistribution of wealth between the coast, which looks like us, and inland, which looks like China 300 years ago. There is environmental catastrophe on a scale hard for us to imagine. We're talking about shutting down cars, home heating and factories so that the sky could be seen during the APEC meeting in Beijing. I saw one estimate that Chinese pollution cost the Chinese economy about 11 percent of GDP a year.

So if you're Xi Jinping in the Politburo, you're riding the tiger here. By the way, who died and made you emperor? Why are you in charge? Marx, Engels, Lenin? Nah, long gone. You're in charge because of Chinese GDP growth for the last fifteen years, not because of ideology. But most people actually think that the growth has actually been considerably less than what the Chinese claim. And even if the party delivered in the past, we're telling you they're not going to be able to continue to deliver. What got their game to this level is incapable of getting their game to the next level. And so if it's not economic growth and if it's not Marxism, what else will keep the regime in power?

Some say Confucian merit. They are accustomed to being governed by people who deserve to be the governors. They are well educated. They're morally superior. If you're going to buy that morally superior line for the Chinese communist party, then you do not have access to the Chinese blogosphere. This is an incredibly corrupt party. The Chinese people are not going to grant it control on some platform of moral superiority.

So I'm running out of ideas here. It's not Marxism, it's not moral superiority, and it's not economic delivery. What's left? And the ugly thing that's left is nationalism. And that's why you see the Chinese beating their chest about a bunch of rocks called the Senkaku Islands or the Diaoyu. Actually they're creating a bunch of rocks in the South China Sea so that they can claim the territorial waters about them.

The last thing I'll touch on is the tectonic internal to us. Where are we going as a people? What is the role you think is appropriate for us in the world today?

Professor Walter Russell Mead (an earlier Benjamin Franklin Award winner) says you can divide American presidents into four baskets when it comes to their foreign policy.⁴ He said you can have a Hamiltonian policy, named for the first Secretary of the Treasury. This is the idea that America can't be free unless it's prosperous; America can't be prosperous unless it's strong. I think Governor Romney would have been Hamiltonian.

³ "Avoiding Thucydides's Trap," by Graham Allison, *Financial Times*, August 22, 2012.

⁴ *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*, by Walter Russell Mead (New York: Random House, 2011).

Or you can have a Wilsonian foreign policy, known for its idealism – making the world safe for democracy, trumpeting the war to end all wars.

The third model is the Jeffersonian foreign policy, which is inward looking, focusing on what has to be done at home rather than abroad. During his presidency, there was an undeclared naval war between France and Great Britain off the mouth of the Chesapeake, and both the French and the British were grabbing American ships and American sailors. The new Republic was very offended by this and people were saying you have to stand up for us. Jefferson therefore went to Congress for an authorization – not an authorization for the use of military force but an authorization called the non-intercourse acts, which allowed the president to direct American merchant men to stay in port. His response to our being raided on the high seas by the French and British was: don't go there.

Finally, there is the Jacksonian tradition. Andrew Jackson was the first American president from the frontier. He was an Indian fighter, a war hero, and the first Democratic president (whether you spell it with a big D or a small d). Mead characterizes as Jacksonian adherents the people who watch Fox news.

George W. Bush, the president that I served, was Wilsonian, the most Wilsonian man in this office since Wilson. I will admit that President Bush had a touch of Jackson going on there too. There was a time he was walking past a press rope line – when things were heading south in Iraq – someone barked out a question: What about that insurgency? And the president just wheeled around and said, “bring it on.” That's Andrew Jackson.

President Obama is equally Wilsonian. Take the speech in Cairo, or the speech in Ankara, or Prague. The president is trying to sponsor a world in which there are no nuclear weapons. That's really Wilsonian. I also think President Obama is Jeffersonian, manifest in sentiments such as “the tide of war is receding” or that Al Qaeda is on the run and it's time to do nation-building at home. A lot of the tension we see in our government trying to make decisions is the president and the staff reflecting this inner struggle between his inner Wilson and his inner Jefferson. Do you want evidence of that tension? Go back and check the West Point speech in December 2009, when he says we're surging in Afghanistan – sort of, for about 18 months.

The tectonic here is: What are we going to decide is our model? Where are we going with this? Remember that speech about six weeks ago, when the president gave a speech he never wanted to give about ISIS? You all probably watched that with great interest but your interest was minuscule compared to that of people around the world. For the rest of the world, this is the tectonic.

If we're in Paris and I'm the former head of DGSE and you're a bunch of French foreign policy thinkers, I'd have started with this one. This is the one everyone is watching. What are the Americans going to do?

I have always had my struggle with American exceptionalism. I think we're exceptional but it sounds a little too bombastic, and it entails a little too much chest-beating. But I learned an important lesson in 1994 in Sarajevo. I was with the US European command. Sarajevo was under siege during the war in Bosnia. I was in the Sarajevo market about two days after a Serbian 120-millimeter mortar shell came down in the market, detonating at about eight feet above ground. It blew the shrapnel everywhere, and dozens were killed. When I went to the marketplace, I could see the shrapnel holes in the asphalt. It was winter and bitterly cold. I was in my battle gear. I had a weapon and an American flag patch, and I was just walking around. At some point, one person, then another, saw the flag, and other people gathered and they started chanting USA, USA. USA. At that point, I came to the realization that it really didn't matter whether or not I thought we were exceptional, everyone else does.

There are certain expectations. We didn't earn it. We probably don't want it. But the accidents of history and the will of the Creator have put us in a place where what we do matters for the welfare of the planet – more than any other country. And if we do this half well, if we do this to the best of our ability, the best mark we'll ever get from history is, “as global hegemony, these guys weren't bad.” But that's as good as it gets. That's where we are. And that's why what FPRI does – taking a long view about where this fits into history, geography and culture – is so very important. If we get it wrong, we suffer – and the rest of the world does, too. So I am happy to be associated with your work, and I'm honored that you thought enough of me to include me in your group. Thank you very much.

FPRI, 1528 Walnut Street, Suite 610, Philadelphia, PA 19102-3684

For more information, contact Eli Gilman at 215-732-3774, ext. 103, email fpri@fpri.org, or visit us at www.fpri.org.