

Remarks at the  
2019 J. Raymond "Jit" Trainor Lecture and Award  
Thursday, February 21, 2019  
Georgetown University

Thank you, Lino, for your kind and generous introduction. You are a dear friend, mentor, and colleague, and I am grateful for your support across my career as a Foreign Service Officer, and honored by your presence here today.

I am also honored by the willingness of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, and the Trainor Trustees, to grant me this prestigious award and give me this opportunity to speak this evening with all of you.

To Ambassador Bodine, Mr. Frank Hogan, Dean Hellman, and the members of the Institute's Board of Advisors I also extend my profound appreciation for this honor.

To look around me and see such extraordinary diplomats and public servants, both colleagues, mentors, and icons is humbling. I stand before you unconvinced of my worthiness for this award, and uncertain that I can say anything worthy of the experience and accomplishment of those seated here.

But let me try.

For those of you here tonight who are students, and still in the process of discerning your path in life, let me argue on behalf of diplomacy.

I had the privilege of being an United States Foreign Officer for nearly 35 years. My career was a joyful one. I look back upon my time as an American diplomat with gratitude for the opportunity to have served my country during such a consequential period of our history; with humility at the recognition that the forces of destiny only rarely bend themselves to individual will; and with deep respect for the women and men who serve the United States as diplomats and national security professionals.

When I look back on my career, I am slack-jawed at the changes I have experienced. When I entered the Foreign Service in 1984, the Soviet Union was alive and well; the Cold War was in full swing; and my first assignment -- Guatemala -- was part of our effort to contain and defeat communism in our Hemisphere. In short order, the Soviet Union collapsed; the Soviet allied governments in Eastern Europe followed suit; communism as a political and economic ordering mechanism was discredited; regional conflicts, long repressed, re-emerged, first in Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the first Persian Gulf War, then in the Balkans and elsewhere; global terrorism emerged as a significant threat to the United States with the attack on the USS Cole and the Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam; and, of course, September 11 and the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is not even to mention the rise of ISIS and the destruction of Syria, the re-emergence of two giant societies and economies -- China and India -- into global politics; and the consequences of both Wikileaks and the Snowden revelations.

As I look back, I realize that I experienced a world transformed.

The breadth and extent of that transformation was not always apparent to me. I experienced much of it working at the ragged edge of American power in Africa and Latin America.

I was a “dusty roads diplomat,” always working in countries in transition. I saw the impact of American power, and understood how that power could influence these transitions for our benefit and that of our partners.

But the changes I experienced will pale in comparison to what the next generation of American diplomats will face.

It would be easy to list the immediate and urgent foreign policy challenges that the United States faces at this moment. From Syria to Venezuela, to Iran, Russia, China, and the DPRK, to name just a few. And then to pronounce on the efficacy and effectiveness of the steps the United States is taking in regard to each. It would also be easy to propound on the supposed revival of great power politics, and whether or not the liberal world order -- the favorite unicorn of our foreign policy establishment -- has passed away.

But my purpose is different tonight.

I would like to move beyond a description of the challenges we face and instead identify the larger forces or trends at work in the world; and explain why our own Hemisphere is a strategic reserve for the United States that needs to be treated with great care and attention if we are to be successful in protecting and advancing our national security interests.

In the process, I hope to make a larger point: We are at a moment of eclipse and rebirth in American foreign policy just as consequential as that which happened after World War II. Unlike that time, however, the changes we are living through are not the product of cataclysm, but instead of the remarkable way we have reshaped the world and its political and economic order. To use former Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s words, we are once again present at the creation.

The drivers of the profound changes we are experiencing, and the effervescence and tumult they produce, have been the object of much study. I think the best of these studies has been done by our National Intelligence Council (NIC). The NIC, through the Strategic Futures Group, has produced two seminal studies for two Administrations. The first, *Alternative Worlds*, was written for the Obama Administration. The second, *Paradox of Progress*, was written for the Trump Administration.

The first study identified four major drivers of change:

- 1) Rise of the individual and the global middle class. Historically, the middle class was a social and economic phenomena only found in North America and northern Europe. That is no longer the case. A growing middle class can be found in China (where it outnumbers the population of the United States), Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, Iran, and Turkey, to name just a few countries. The geographic expansion of the middle class reflects the growth of the global economy and the massive movement of wealth from West to East.
- 2) Transformation of power, and the flattening of the world. Today, the United States is the world's only superpower, capable of projecting its power anywhere at any time. However, it cannot project its power everywhere all the time, and therefore needs to be judicious in its use of power, and depend on regional partners and surrogates. The rise of regional powers, some with global ambitions, has led to these powers attempting to pursue historic interests and grievances without provoking the intervention of the United States. This careful probing explains China's behavior in the South China Sea, Russian behavior in Georgia and Ukraine, Turkish behavior in northern Syria, and Indian and Pakistani behavior in Kashmir. What is true globally is also true nationally. The rise of the individual, and the technologies available to him or her, creates more veto points in decisions-making and implementation processes. In other words, governing become more complicated and difficult.
- 3) Demographics and the aging of the world. This reflects the growth of the middle class and access to better health care. I recently turned 61 years of age, which means I have now joined the fastest growing age cohort in the world: those over sixty. These demographics have big resource distribution consequences, and will change national politics as states adapt to voters who are no longer productive and largely focused on quality of life. The flipside of this demographic change is that some parts of the world remain structurally or chronically young. If this youthfulness were linked to strong economies and education and training systems, it would create comparative advantages for many countries. However, in the absence of these characteristics, it creates a ready pool of recruits for radicalization by extremists, insurgents, and criminal organizations. This makes conflicts harder to resolve, since the large pool of young foot soldiers puts little pressure on leaders to end conflict. This youthfulness also drives migration, since many of these young people will decide to search for a better life and not get trapped in unending cycles of violence.
- 4) Nexus of food, energy, and water. Changes in living, eating and leisure driven by economic growth and the rise of a global middle class require increased access to energy and food, and the water that plays such an important role in providing both. In this regard, the 21<sup>st</sup> century will see hydrological basins as the new arenas of conflict or cooperation, as countries either compete for resources or look for ways to share them equitably. In this environment, think of how lucky the United States is to have much of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi, Missouri, Columbia, and Ohio river systems within our frontiers.

The second study identified the trends produced by these drivers of change:

- 1) The rich are aging and the poor are not;
- 2) The global economy is shifting;
- 3) Technology is accelerating but creating discontinuities and inequality of access;

- 4) Ideas and identities are creating a new wave of exclusion;
- 5) Governing is getting harder;
- 6) The nature of conflict is changing;
- 7) Deferred challenges are converging and now require attention, especially in regards to climate change, global health care, transformative technologies, and migration, among others.

The drivers of change and the trends produced are transforming the world in front of us. They are fundamentally changing:

- 1) How people live;
- 2) How people create and innovate;
- 3) How people prosper...or not;
- 4) How people think;
- 5) How people govern;
- 6) How people fight.

The NIC asserts that the dramatic shifts in the global landscape portend a dark and difficult future, largely defined by rising tensions and conflict within and between countries. It posits that the outcome of the period through which we are now passing will be determined by how we answer three sets of questions:

- 1) How do we create political order in an age of empowered individuals and rapidly changing economies? How do individuals, groups, and governments renegotiate their expectations to achieve that order?
- 2) Can states create new patterns of international competition and cooperation? What new kinds of global architecture will be built?
- 3) Will and can governments prepare now for the multi-faceted problems that will soon overwhelm us, from climate change to migration to transformative technologies?

Underlying the uncertainty is a lack of overall shared strategic understandings. This has led increasingly to problem centered, ad hoc, and issue specific cooperation. It has made it harder to work in multi-disciplinary, or universal ways. The resulting loss of coherence among international institutions is palpable. And as if this were not enough, the harder problems lie ahead, and at a time when there are brakes on collective agenda setting and cooperation.

This is not the first time the world has been transformed. But this transformation will be the fastest, the most far-reaching, and the one that affects the most people. It will also be a transformation that challenges our understanding of what it means to be human, how our societies cohere, and the nature of the social contract that exists between government and the governed.

It is at this moment that I take comfort from Steely Dan. In the album Pretzel Logic there is a song called "Any Major Dude." One stanza sings:

“Any major dude will surely tell  
You my friend’  
Any amount of world that breaks apart  
Falls together again.”

The world falls together again in the Western Hemisphere; it falls together again right here.

You are all familiar with the extraordinary democratization of our Hemisphere that occurred through the 1980s and 1990s. It was the product of internal dissent and heroic political action in the countries of Central and South America’ and the far-sighted diplomacy of the United States.

In short order, the countries of the Americas transformed themselves from:

- 1) Authoritarian to democratic governments;
- 2) From closed to open economies;
- 3) From economies based on import substitution models of development to economies based on regional integration and trade;
- 4) From exclusive to inclusive societies;
- 5) And from isolation to global engagement.

In the process, the region built new mechanisms for political engagement and trade, including:

- 1) MERCOSUR
- 2) The Andean Community
- 3) SICA
- 4) CARICOM
- 5) ALBA
- 6) CELAC
- 7) CAFTA-DR
- 8) Free trade agreements with Chile, Panama, Peru, and Colombia
- 9) The Arc of the Pacific
- 10) The Pacific Alliance

This innovation was matched in North America by the creation of:

- 1) NAFTA
- 2) Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America
- 3) North American Leaders Summit

And, of course, the Summit of the Americas process and that perennial: the OAS.

In retrospect, what happened in the Americas was a remarkable accomplishment. We built a Hemisphere defined by common political values and democratic, constitutional processes; defined by common economic understandings and a commitment to markets, trade and regional integration.

We addressed outstanding conflict in the region – the Colombia Peace Process and the Central American Peace Process -- ended the border conflict between Peru and Ecuador, and helped foster the world's first successful nuclear non-proliferation regime when Brazil and Argentina agreed to end their nuclear weapons programs.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, we won broad hemispheric agreement to our larger counter-terrorism agenda, revitalized our collective security agreements, and modernized the hemispheric security focus, incorporating non-traditional threats posed by non-state actors, and introduced economic and social factors into our regional security thinking. In the process, we created new mechanisms of security cooperation, such as the Merida Initiative, the Central America Regional Security Initiative, and the newly inclusive Northern Command and Southern Command.

So think about this again. On the cusp of dramatic global political change and facing new and dangerous national security threats, we constructed a hemisphere that was:

- 1) at peace
- 2) posed no immediate threat to the United States
- 3) broadly shared political values and a common framework of action
- 4) tied together by trading agreements
- 5) and positioned in a global economy to take advantage of energy self-sufficiency, the largest reserves of fresh water and arable land in the world, the largest food producing and exporting nations in the world, a free trade platform along its Pacific Rim facing the world's largest markets, and a combined population less than half that of China.

And, this impressive strategic accomplishment weathered a well-financed and thought out reaction led by Venezuela and the remains of traditional leftist and radical political parties in South and Central America. That resistance has largely exhausted itself, and survives only in the ruins of Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, and in parts of Bolivia's high Andes.

But the story does not end here. Our Hemisphere is embarked on the next great phase of political, economic, and social development. It is attempting to use democratic institutions and constitutional process and procedures – in other words, democratic government – to create democratic societies. Democracy, which was seen initially as giving people a voice in determining national destiny, is now seen as being an essential part of giving people a voice in determining their individual destiny. In other words, ensuring that individuals have the resources, opportunities, and security necessary to realize their full potential as human beings.

This is a remarkable ambition with significant implications:

- 1) It means that democracy is not a status quo political system; instead, it is a system capable of profound social change, addressing problems of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, within a relatively peaceful and stable political environment.
- 2) It changes the nature of legitimacy. Legitimacy is no longer linked only to process, such as elections. It is also linked to outcomes. Increasingly, the value of democracy will be measured by the development it delivers and the open society it supports.

- 3) All of this creates a huge opportunity for the United States. Building off what we have already accomplished, we can – with the right kind of engagement and investment – build resilient, open societies and markets in the Americas, with tradition and practice of dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes, and institutions to promote and channel common purpose and collaboration.

Which brings me back to Dean Acheson's and his memoirs "Present at the Creation". Acheson starts his memoirs with an epigraph from King Alfonso X, king of Castille, Leon, and Galicia: "Had I been present at the creation, I would have given some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe."

The theme of beginning plays largely in Acheson's work, and the uncertainty that it implies.

Speaking of the post-war environment, he said the United States faced a task the enormity of which only slowly revealed itself.

He wrote: "...the state of the world in those years and almost all that happened during them was wholly novel within the experience of those who had to deal with them."

He described the period of 1941-1952 as "one of great obscurity to those who lived through it."

He quoted British historian C.V. Wedgwood, who wrote: "History is lived forward but it is written in retrospect. We know the end before we consider the beginning and we can never wholly recapture what it is to know the beginning only."

As I noted, I believe we are once again at a moment of beginning, but that it is possible to capture and know it looking forward.

Acheson described the efforts of his colleagues as defined by determination, boundless energy, and near complete ignorance of the challenges faced.

Nevertheless, he called the work done "an imaginative effort unique in history and even greater than that made in the preceding period of fighting."

He said during this time he and his colleagues were guided by a "corpus diplomaticum" that was a repository of precedent and common sense that acted as an aid to judgement. He wrote: "It's central aim and purpose was to safeguard the highest interest of our nation, which was to maintain as spacious an environment as possible in which free states might exist and flourish."

Underlying it all was a recognition that the challenge was "...to help the free world emerge from chaos without blowing the whole world apart in the process."

He described the response to this challenge as one of "expanding action."

As we consider the challenges in front of us, I think we can claim, as Acheson did, that we have the same energy and determination. But we cannot claim ignorance of the immensity of the challenge. I think we know what we face, and we know what we have to do.

I would argue that our first task lies in the Americas. That securing this Hemispheric reserve of democracy, promoting its peacefulness and prosperity, and guaranteeing its institutions against the corrosiveness of self-interest and misplaced nationalism, should be our priority. In the process, our purpose should be to create a larger view of the future, and to instill hope and offer solidarity.

As Acheson wrote, this will require an imaginative effort of great depth and vision. But we know we are capable of this, because we have done it before.

I am grateful to receive the Jit Trainor award because of what it signifies, and who Jit Trainor was. He was a dedicated part of a great university and a great school that prepared women and men to face the world ready and confident to leave a positive impact. But the challenge in front of many of you here will be even greater. You will live in the world you create. You will not be along for the ride. All of you, if you so choose, can live lives of great significance and consequence. Lives that will be remembered and remarked upon by generations to come. I salute you.

Thank you.