

Foreign Policy: My parents, who have now passed away, were both born around the start of World War I. They were of the "greatest generation" that came to adulthood during the depression and World War II. They grew up in a world where it was us and other democracies against the fascists and imperialists across the oceans. We had the white hats. They wore the black hats. The white hats won. It was all pretty clear.

I was born in 1955, square in the middle of the "baby boom" generation. We came of age during the Cold War and the Vietnam War. It was still pretty clear. There were 3 worlds: us with the white hats, the communists with the black hats, and the "third world" that we and the communists fought over. The Vietnam War was America's first experience with a conflict that arguably did not result in the defeat of the opposition, which spoiled our air of invincibility. But, our objective for the Cold War, as Ronald Reagan famously described, was, "We win. They lose". And, that is what happened. Also pretty clear.

After the Cold War came the "peace dividend" and a hope, if not an expectation, that there were no more black hats left. We could enter a time of harmony in which the weapons and armies of the past would become unnecessary. But, it was only 9 months after the Berlin Wall fell that we were at war in the Persian Gulf. The attacks of 9/11 would come a decade after that.

There are very few things that are less "black and white" than diplomacy and foreign relations. But, my generation and the generations before us became accustomed to such clarity during the conflicts to defeat fascism and communism. And, since there is no single great military power out there wearing a similar black hat, many Americans think that the threats in the world are minor or distant and of little concern. That complacency is misplaced.

There is a tremendous amount of instability in the world. The potentials for conflicts, especially of an irregular and unconventional nature, are great. And, it is not always clear who is wearing a white hat, a black hat or perhaps a grey or blue one.

Obviously, there is massive unrest in the Middle East rooted in a complex web of causes. But, the Obama administration, falling back on the black and white hat foreign policy, has determined that the existing tyrants were bad and that whatever government replaced them would be good. This is clearly wrong. The execution of our Ambassador and 3 others in the country that our military helped "liberate" from Gaddafi shows that conditions there may now be

worse rather than better as a consequence of our intervention. Syria is even more complex. Here again, the mainstream press and the Obama folks would have you believe that all ills can be cured by the elimination of Assad, which will supposedly bring flowers and happiness to this country. This is flawed thinking. Al-Qaeda appears to be running the "rebel" operation now. The Russians have a lot of national pride and security interest in their deep water port there. The Turks have a keen interest in the stability of their neighbors and the Syrian unrest is causing them a myriad of problems. Is the "Arab Spring" becoming a situation where one dictator gets replaced by another who is every bit as brutal but rules under the guise of "democracy"? Despite the Administration and the mainstream press' attempt to attribute the murder of Ambassador Stevens to a 6-month old, little known YouTube video, it is now pretty clear that this was a well-planned and orchestrated attack that used the video as an excuse to incite public support in the Islamic world for their already planned actions. The Middle East is becoming more unstable and more hostile since the "Arab Spring", not less. Of late, the US has exhibited weakness and indecision around the globe. And, as a result, we have created more rifts with the Russians, Turks and Israelis. As I have made abundantly clear, this is difficult stuff to deal with at the strategic level. But, it is equally clear that this Administration's foreign policy has failed miserably in this part of the world. And, I haven't even talked about Iran or the disaster in Afghanistan.

However, that is not the world's only hot spot. People in China are calling for death to all Japanese as a result of conflicts of the ownership of islands in the China Sea. China is having economic problems. That is well known. But, they have political ones, as well. We in the west tend to assume that communist countries have no political issues because they are....well....communist. But, communists have been killing each other for the last century in order to capture the reins of power from other communists. (Remember Stalin's purge in 1938?) In much the same way, China has succession issues which could result in serious violence and instability there. And, of course, there are the long-standing conflicts between China and Taiwan, North and South Korea, and we should not assume that age-old issues between China and Russia are all warm and fuzzy now.

India and Pakistan have been on the verge of war for decades and both have nuclear weapons. Indonesia has its own Islamic Extremist elements that threaten stability there. It seems we pay little attention in this country to the multiple conflicts and tyrants in sub-Saharan Africa, but they are there and many, many people are dying.

Even Europe is not quiet these days. The Euro and the EU were part economic union and part an attempt for countries that had been at war with one another for centuries to bind themselves so close together that they would never want to fight again. But, as the Euro strains, nationalist tendencies are rising again in Europe. If the Euro breaks up, the flames nationalism could be fed again. If it stays together, there could be social unrest if the populace of one part of the

continent rebels against another part that they believe is causing their economic depression. Is conflict or unrest in Europe imminent? No. Is it possible? Yes.

History does not repeat itself. But, there are historical echoes. Prior to World War I, there were not black or white hats per se. There were a couple of democracies and a lot of monarchies, many of whom had family ties. The British Empire, upon which the sun never set, had kept a hand on things in the 19th century since the defeat of Napoleon. But, British influence and control weakened. And, in 1914, the assassination of a single Archduke led to a war that would claim the lives of over 15 million people. The alliances of the past were all jumbled up. The British, who had been at war constantly with the French since 1066, became their allies. The US, which had been enemies of the British but friends of the French and the Germans, ended up siding with British and French.

This is not 1914 or anything close to that. But, I bring up this example to show how alliances and black hats and white hats can and do change over time. The world, in my opinion, is heading into a very turbulent and uncertain period. We cannot apply the simple "us vs. them" foreign policy strategy of the cold war. We cannot police the world. But, an unquestionably strong United States, respected by many and feared by the rest, is the best insurance policy we can have. How, where, when and why we use that power is not simple and is a matter for debate. But, we need to have that debate!

What is clear is that this President has failed in this arena, and the media will not cover it. Do you remember how the media was all over how we were hated and disrespected around the world as a result of President Bush's foreign policy errors? Well, we are more hated and more disrespected now. Is that somehow Bush's fault, too? Maybe it's Nixon's fault?

I don't have all the answers. But, what we are doing is not working and we need to change it. We should be looking at all of this through a different prism than used in the recent past. We need to stand with our rock solid allies, such as the British and Israelis, and defend against radical Islam wherever it may rise. But, from this point there are many complicated cross-currents which we need to carefully navigate.

World War I was declared "the war to end all wars" by the generation that fought it. They were wrong. Let's not make a similar mistake.