

Remarks – Ambassador Pete Hoekstra
February 13, 2019
Machiavelli Lecture

Thank you for inviting me to be with you this evening. It is a real honor.

Diane and I thoroughly enjoy living here, representing the United States of America in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. We are thankful for the opportunity. While America is our home, the Netherlands is my birth country. It is a special place for me. It is my honor to be a small part in our long shared history as the American Ambassador.

In my first year, I've learned some things.

In as many ways as the Dutch and the Americans are similar, we are also very different. As much as we think we know about each other, there is still much that we do not know or understand.

We need to be careful when we assume things about each other.

I have also had fun.

Cycling the *Fietselfstedentocht op Tweede Pinksterdag*.

Learning *schaatsen met de lange schaatsen*, learning *been over been*.

I've enjoyed learning Dutch idioms: *Hoge bomen vangen veel wind; dweilen met de kraan open*; and my favorite, *lange tenen*.

When I tell the Dutch that they are easily offended, they are offended. But when I say they have *lange tenen*, they fully understand what I mean.

Now, let's get serious.

For the lecture tonight, there were strict instructions. First, provide a title. Second, need a written copy. Third, make it a lecture. Think that means provide some thoughtful substance.

Those of you who have heard me speak in the past might say: "*Veel succes daar mee!* He's never had a title. He's hardly ever used notes, much less a prepared script. And we're not sure he's ever provided substance."

But I am going to give it a try tonight.

The first two requirements have already been met. The title is "The Threat of a Lost Generation". The speech is written. Let's see if there's any substance.

Why "The Threat of a Lost Generation"?

As a person of faith, as a parent, and as a government leader, both in Congress and now in the Foreign Service, an intriguing communication issue presents itself.

How effective have my communications been to prepare my kids, the public, and others for the future? Have I helped to transfer knowledge and understanding to future generations?

Because of everything that I do, that we do, there is nothing more important than the handing off of the baton, as in a relay race, to the next generation. Whether it is to our kids, or to future voters and citizens.

Have they been provided with the tools, the knowledge, and values to be successful?

That is a real communications opportunity, as well as a challenge. It is absolutely essential for societies and cultures. Societies cannot afford a lost generation if they are to survive.

This is not a new issue. It has been around for thousands of years.

In the Bible we are told of the people serving the Lord in the days of Joshua. It goes on to tell of how, after Joshua's death, "another generation arose who did not know the Lord nor the work He had done for Israel." You can guess the conclusion to this story. "Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord." And things didn't go well for Israel.

Israel experienced a loss of its values/culture, and the results were devastating.

More recently, George Washington, America's first President, wrote a farewell address to the young country when he retired from the Presidency. Washington used the majority of the letter to offer advice as a 'parting friend' on what he believed were the greatest threats to the nation. I bring this up tonight, not to focus on Washington's message of that time, but because of the fact that he felt it was important to share his guidance with the country, to help preserve what he had helped to build.

When I joined Congress in 1993, I met an interesting individual named Newt Gingrich. I became familiar with a class he was teaching called "Renewing American Civilization." In his opening lecture he says: "I really believe the country is at stake, not in a republican-democrat sense, but in an historic sense, and that civilizations die, and that every generation has to arouse some people who try to make sure that they understand what it takes to not die."

I would suggest that today, both the Americans and the Dutch are questioning whether we have done enough to protect, defend, and prepare the next generation to confront the changes and challenges present today.

Listen to your opinion leaders!

Rob de Wijk wrote in his first commentary of 2019 that the solution starts with the recognition that our civilization is worth protecting. This implies that it might be at risk.

Another well-known Dutchman recently said the Netherlands is like a fragile vase that the Dutch must come together to hold.

The King's Commissioner of South Holland, Jaap Smit, referenced the vase in his New Year's address, but also "an old-fashioned stone-pottery hot water bottle that continues to soak up water until it cracks."

Geert Wilders states, "Our freedom, our way of life, our culture, and national security are at stake and heavily under attack."

Sybrand Buma has spoken with me about his concerns regarding the threat to the social contract.

Thierry Baudet refers to 'oikophobia' here in the Netherlands. He states there is now the feeling that one needs to denigrate the customs, culture, and institutions that are identifiably 'ours'. Basically saying that the culture faces a threat from within.

Lodewijk Asscher tells a story about a young man on *Herdenkingsdag* who stops his bike and removes his hat, although he doesn't know anyone is watching. He does this to commemorate together, while still alone. Asscher says it is important for society to reflect on what we share together as an optimistic antidote to thinking about doom.

I had a wonderful meeting with Mayor Wiene. I listened to his story. The fact that this organization feels compelled to honor the threatened mayors is evidence that something is wrong. Mayor Wiene is protecting something very valuable in Dutch society, the safety and security of his citizens and his community by standing up for the rule of law.

Bottom line: protecting our society and culture is something that we collectively need to be concerned about. Are our societies in danger of breaking? If they do, do we lose something, dare we say something "exceptional."

Our societies are "exceptional" and that is why so many people are passionate about protecting them. It is why this discussion is so important.

The United States and the Netherlands have always been proud of our countries' achievements.

We believe that we have something that is special, that is worth protecting, and that is at risk.

But what does it mean? What are we afraid of losing? What are the common things that we value in our society, and that we want to pass on to future generations?

A good place to start might be by looking at the similarities between the *Plakkaat van Verlatinghe* and the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Some would go as far as to say that the *Plakkaat*, your Declaration of Independence, from July 26, 1581, was the inspiration for our Declaration in 1776.

William of Orange established two of the groundbreaking ideas that guided the *Plakkaat*: the populace is not to serve the king, the king exists to serve the people; and with regard to religion, the king cannot reign over an individual's conscience, establishing the concept of religious freedom. Those two ideas are worth practicing, and saving.

Both documents articulate a justification for citizens to revolt against a harsh royalty. Both documents led to the creation of a new nation, where rulers would be accountable to the governed. Both documents contributed to the development of societies and cultures that emphasized acceptance and tolerance.

The Dutch helped establish a respect for different cultures and religions in our new country. Other contributions include respect for personal liberty, equality, individualism, and civil society. These are part of the legacy of the Dutch.

Both societies have political systems that emphasize effecting change through civil means. The Dutch call it the *Polder* model, in the United States it is a complex system of checks and balances which requires significant consensus before change occurs.

Think about it: leaders accountable to the governed; tolerance; religious freedom; personal liberty; equality; free markets; individualism; safety and security; rule of law; and civil society. These are the values that we celebrate. They form the foundation that has enabled both our countries to be prosperous, free, and successful. They are part of our respective national identities. This is what is worth defending.

We must ask ourselves: why do citizens see some or much of that at risk?

Is it the dramatic pace of change today; the unprecedented boom of technology and connectivity; globalization; diminishing national identity; legal and illegal migration; geopolitical shifts; decreasing religiosity; changes in climate?

We may all have our own answer to that question. The condition today is that there is more change going on across a broader landscape than at any other time in the history of humanity, and there is an uncertainty about whether our societies are capable of coping with it.

It is a legitimate and important question.

So what is the appropriate response? First we need to assess where we actually are. Are we at risk? Here's one interesting data point: Frank Luntz, a political pollster and a good friend of mine, was recently in the Netherlands talking to audiences about the 2018 midterm elections. Frank likes to ask questions. Frank asked several audiences composed of Dutch students whether they thought their values would be more aligned with the United States or China 25 years from now. Would it surprise you to know that around half the students said China?

If accurate, this is frightening to me.

As I stated earlier, our shared values in terms of human rights, religious freedom, independence, and free markets are cornerstones of our relationship and of who we are. Look at how we responded to the horrors and challenges of WWII. In the post-war period, the United States and Europe experienced a period of unprecedented growth followed by technological advances that moved at a pace never seen before. Decisions made at that time, such as the Marshall Plan's investment in Europe, and the formation of NATO, helped to create more than seven decades of peace and prosperity. Decisions based on our national identities.

Where are we today? Do people really believe our values will align more with China's in the future? Do they understand the differences between our two societies, and why those differences are important?

How will that attitude affect key decisions that need to be made now? As we deal with the challenges of change how do values influence decisions?

Let's look at ways that the Netherlands and the U.S. are using their shared values to shape public and foreign policy. Let's look at ways our values will shape the key decision points we will face in the near future.

Who in the world would be better to co-host the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) with the United States than the Netherlands? Entrepreneurship is in our blood. It is who we are so in June, we will demonstrate our countries' broad and enduring partnership and our shared commitment to free markets, free enterprise, individual innovation and initiative, and risk-taking.

The U.S. and the Dutch have agreed to gather emerging entrepreneurs, investors, and innovators from around the world to focus on global challenges in five sectors: water, energy, health, connectivity/infrastructure, and agriculture/food. Five key global challenges!

Another example, the revolution in cyber technology and connectivity. Some may think that all this talk of telecom and 5G is simply about faster streaming, but it's much more than that. 5G is a game changer in so many ways. It will be the framework for the massive connectivity evolution that will change our lives. Whomever controls 5G networks will determine who will dominate new technologies across multiple industries for the next 50 to 100 years.

It is important that the United States and Europe continue to advocate for secure networks and supply chains that are free from foreign government control or undue influence. This is about ensuring economic freedom for entrepreneurs to innovate and create, as well as about ensuring national security. This is why it is so important for the West to lead on 5G. Because it is the future for economic prosperity and national security.

Trade! The United States and the European Union have worked to build the largest economic relationship in the world, accounting for \$1 trillion in bilateral trade and 15 million jobs. Together we account for almost 50 percent of global GDP. President Trump and European Commission President Juncker agreed to work toward zero tariffs, zero non-tariff barriers, and

zero subsidies. They agreed to negotiate reducing bureaucratic obstacles and to address unfair trade practices. Trade has benefited us all for decades. It is part of our shared heritage. It needs to be key part of our shared future.

I've highlighted a few areas where there is close alignment on issues. But we are not aligned on all important areas.

We built the strongest military alliance in the world ensuring peace and prosperity in Europe for 70 years. The United States continues to faithfully support NATO, and yet our commitment is being questioned. Who seems more committed to an organization, the member paying their full dues and more, or the ones that have yet to meet their self-designated commitments? What message are we sending if we are unwillingly to face up to the investments required to keep us safe and secure.

The Dutch have determined that the people here are best served by an energy transition. It's a commitment to its people and to cleaning up the environment. This will lead to tough choices. One option being presented is the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

For us, Nord Stream 2 is both an economic and a national security issue. The United States strongly opposes providing Russia with another tool for the political coercion of European countries, especially Ukraine. Does the Netherlands want to provide Russia with a powerful new capability to control European energy supplies, and potentially undermine the West? Or will it use its leverage to influence a change in Russian behavior?

Back to areas of alignment. Trade. Trade with China! Europe and America need to ensure that our businesses have the same opportunities to compete in China that Chinese businesses have in our markets. We want our companies to be able to sell in China without risk to their intellectual property. We need fair and reciprocal trade with China.

We need to use our shared values to shape a new and equitable trade relationship with China, and we need to do it together.

Finally, one last example of where we have stood shoulder to shoulder for a long time, human rights! Both the Netherlands and the United States have a rich history of leading the way with regards to human rights. U.S. foreign policy is rooted in the understanding that governments that respect individual rights and fundamental freedoms remain the best vehicles for prosperity, stability, and peace.

The company you keep, the actions our nations take, and the partners we work with demonstrate the values that we hold dear.

Our shared values are worth defending and are worth passing on.

Our countries have been a strong force for good in the world, imperfect I know, but they offer the best hope for the future. The relationship between the Netherlands, Europe, and the United States needs to be strong, it needs to grow! We need to build on the successful foundations that have been laid during the last seven decades in Europe, during the last 200 and 400 plus years in the United States and the Netherlands.

If we continue to practice our core values we will be prepared to effectively respond to the rapid changes in today's world, and to ensure another 100 years of peace and prosperity.

In response to the uncertainty, the challenges and the opportunities that we face today, I'm convinced that the values we share help create an environment that fosters entrepreneurship; increases free trade opportunities; allows 5G and new technology to be a force for good; emphasizes shared security; supports energy diversity and a cleaner environment; protects intellectual property; and promotes individual freedoms, tolerance, and human rights.

This is the best answer for prosperity, peace, and security for our countries for the future.

Should we be optimistic or pessimistic at this point? There's plenty of evidence to be concerned, but there are more reasons to be optimistic.

Mayor Wiener showed me a quote hanging in his office, which reads *Haarlemse Muggen staan achter onze burgemeester*. Fantastic! He received this from his constituents. They have made their values known loud and clear. They support the guy upholding their values against the threat of lawlessness.

This makes me optimistic. Despite much of the concern and stress in today's world there is an underlying resilience and strength in our societies that has always enabled us to traverse difficult times. And it can do it again.

In closing, our societies may look fragile, but they are in our hands and we must carry them through times that are dynamic and even turbulent. Each generation has a responsibility to reflect, evaluate, and evolve our fundamental values and to pass them on. We do that best by defending them and practicing them each and every day. Communicating to our citizens both young and old is best done by demonstrating and teaching. We have to be intentional about making that happen to insure we don't lose a generation, that we don't lose our identity.

So, as we deal with the current challenges and opportunities we face, our focus should be on taking something that is exceptional and continuously work to improve it. Let's communicate confidently that our shared values when applied, even imperfectly are still exceptional and are the best hope for the future.

Yes, America and the Netherlands are works in progress, but I'm proud of who we are and optimistic about what we will become.

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you tonight.

