



# Taking the Long View in a Time of Great Uncertainty

## Winds of Change

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In my last column<sup>1</sup> I spoke to the concept of “that will never happen,” a technique that has recently become popular in scenario planning activities to stretch the imagination of organizations and help them better prepare for the future. As we monitor current events that we have identified in our discussions of the future unfolding in real time, we can also begin to track sequences of those events that appear to be significant, and speculate on how they might lead to future worlds.

## Winds of Change

“Winds of Change”, the title of this issue’s “Taking the Long View” article, has special significance in world history. One of the most famous references is attributed to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in February of 1960 while addressing the South African Parliament, acknowledging that Great Britain would have to give independence under majority rule to its colonies in South Africa:<sup>2</sup>

*“Ever since the breakup of the Roman empire one of the constant facts of political life in Europe has*

*been the emergence of independent nations. They have come into existence over the centuries in different forms, different kinds of government, but all have been inspired by a deep, keen feeling of nationalism, which has grown as the nations have grown...*

***The wind of change** is blowing through this continent, and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it.”*

Fast forward to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, and we see a new generation speaking to world events through the music of a hard rock/metal band, the Scorpion’s. Although the roots of the ballad, “Wind of Change”<sup>3</sup> occurred a year before with the first hard-rock concert ever allowed in Lenin Stadium, called the Moscow Music Peace Festival, an event that itself was a harbinger of a changing world, its release after the fall of the Berlin Wall made it a worldwide smash,

topping the charts in many European Countries:

*“The world is closing in Did you ever think That we could be so close, like brothers The future’s in the air I can feel it everywhere Blowing with the wind of change”*

There certainly was a glimmer of hope back then that the world had taken a major turn to a more optimistic future than what it had faced in the previous decades.

Additionally, in this column, as global events in the latter part of the first decade of the new millennium unfolded, we also explored the “winds of change” blowing through the Middle East as the Arab Spring challenged the status quo,<sup>4</sup> turning into what seems to be a never-ending cycle of change that has yet to stabilize.

Such is the world today – searching for a new normal, but unable to find it.

## The Winds of Change Circa 2017 – Implications for the U.S. Nuclear Security Enterprise

As this column goes to print, we are five weeks into the new U.S. administration of President Donald J. Trump, and Secretary of Energy Rick Perry has just been confirmed by the Senate. Also, recently retired General James Mattis has been confirmed overwhelmingly to head the Department of Defense, with an excep-

*This column is intended to serve as a forum to present and discuss current strategic issues impacting the Institute of Nuclear Materials Management in the furtherance of its mission. The views expressed by the author are not necessarily endorsed by the Institute, but are intended to stimulate and encourage JNMM readers to actively participate in strategic discussions. Please provide your thoughts and ideas to the Institute’s leadership on these and other issues of importance. With your feedback we hope to create an environment of open dialogue, addressing the critical uncertainties that lie ahead for the world, and identify the possible paths to the future based on those uncertainties that can be influenced by the Institute. Jack Jekowski can be contacted at [jjekowski@aol.com](mailto:jjekowski@aol.com).*



tion made by the Senate for his recent military status; active-duty military General H.R. McMaster, has been selected to be the President's National Security Advisor; and retired General John Kelly has been confirmed as the Secretary of Homeland Security. These and other events point to a dramatic change in U.S. posture from the Obama administration, which had set diplomacy in the U.S. National Security Strategy on an equal footing with defense.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the scenarios identified in the last *JNMM* column of *Taking the Long View*, another path to the future can be identified in the early tracking of events surrounding the new appointments in the new U.S. administration that raises the specter of fundamental organization changes in the U.S. nuclear enterprise. This perspective includes the possible consolidation of the civilian-controlled nuclear stockpile (under the DOE/NNSA) into the Department of Defense.<sup>6</sup> This scenario had its genesis in events surrounding the DOE Abolishment Acts of late 1990s; the turmoil and public attention that continued to haunt the new National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the national labs in the first decade of the new millennium; continued targeting of the DOE as a giant bureaucracy by some political agendas based on highly critical studies, and events within the Enterprise; and, most recently, by the indicators presented with respect to the individuals named to lead critical national security agencies by the new U.S. administration:

- For three years, from 1997 through 1999, the 104<sup>th</sup>-106<sup>th</sup> Congresses created a master plan to abolish the Department of Energy, dispersing the various programs to different agencies, or eliminating them; and creating a mechanism for identifying

“homes” for the seventeen DOE laboratories, from privatization, to the movement of the nuclear weapons laboratories to the Department of Defense (DoD).<sup>7</sup> In its final version in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, H.R. 1649 and the corresponding S.896, provided a detailed plan of how the DOE would be dismantled. Most significantly, the legislation directed the creation of the *Defense Nuclear Programs Administration* within the DoD to transition the current Nuclear Security Enterprise (known then as the Nuclear Weapons Complex) to the DoD. This element of the Abolishment Act defied more than five decades of fundamental policy that was decided with significant debate after the end of WWII, resulting in the creation of a “civilian-controlled” agency (the Atomic Energy Commission — now the DOE/NNSA) to separate the nuclear stockpile from the War Department (now the Department of Defense).

- To counter the growing sentiment for the Abolishment Act, Senator Domenici and others crafted the NNSA Act in 2000, which established the semi-autonomous entity that exists today.
- Despite the hope that the formation of the NNSA, along with the rebidding of the National Laboratories as for-profit models would solve the many issues being identified, problems continued to occur across the Enterprise, and even those who had staunchly held to the original concept of “civilian control” began to have doubts about the future of the Enterprise under such an environment.<sup>8</sup> These events were captured by the author in a graphic that depicts the major disruptions that

occurred since the mid 1990s, and which continue to this day.<sup>9</sup>

- In past U.S. Presidential campaigns, some candidates have suggested the dissolution or change in the mission of the DOE.
- The appointment of recent and current military officers to critical national security positions, and the general tenor of the U.S. political environment toward the modernization of the nuclear triad, appear to lay the groundwork for some form of fundamental change in organizational structure, whether that be a more direct separation of the NNSA as an agency unto itself, or as described in the aforementioned Abolishment Act, and other studies, the migration of that Enterprise to the DoD.

Well, that will never happen.<sup>10</sup>

Rehearsing improbable future events in this context can raise confidence in addressing uncertainties, and may, in fact, lay the groundwork for actions that could be taken to influence that future in a more positive direction. The implications for the Institute under such circumstances would be significant, and should be a part of the strategic discussions within the Executive Committee.

The use of the scenario process, where paths to the future are mapped out during times of great uncertainty, can enhance traditional strategic planning activities, often stretching the mindset of management, allowing discussions of otherwise unthinkable future worlds. By pursuing discussions of events that prompt a “that will never happen” response, the actions needed today to change the future path can be rehearsed by leaders so that they can be better prepared for any eventuality.



## Endnotes

1. See *Journal of Nuclear Materials Management (JNMM)*, "Taking the Long View in a Time of Great Uncertainty, *That Will Never Happen – the Power of Scenario Planning*," Volume 45, No. 2
2. See [http://africanhistory.about.com/od/eraindependence/a/wind\\_of\\_change1.htm](http://africanhistory.about.com/od/eraindependence/a/wind_of_change1.htm) for full text of this speech.
3. See <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/features/scorpions-wind-of-change-the-oral-history-of-1990s-epic-power-ballad-20150902> for an interesting historical perspective, and [https://www.google.com/?gws\\_rd=ssl#q=scorpions+wind+of+change+lyrics&\\*](https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=scorpions+wind+of+change+lyrics&*) for the lyrics to the song.
4. See *JNMM* "Taking the Long View in a Time of Great Uncertainty, *Preparing for Social Chain Reactions*," Spring 2011 Volume 39, No. 3, pp. 28-29
5. See *JNMM*, "Taking the Long View in a Time of Great Uncertainty," Fall 2010 Volume 39, No. 1, pp. 39-41, for a discussion of the events during the first year of the Obama administration, which included the release of a new National Security Strategy that called for creation of a new "International Order," and raised the prominence of diplomacy to the same level as defense and military action; and *JNMM*, "Taking the Long View in a Time of Great Uncertainty, *As the World Turns Toward a More Dangerous Place...*," Volume 41, No. 4, pp. 111-113, for a discussion on the language in the National Security Strategy equating diplomacy to defense.
6. Historically, "...control of atomic energy from military to civilian hands occurred with the passage of the McMahon/Atomic Energy Act on August 1, 1946, effective from January 1, 1947. This shift gave the first members of the AEC complete control of the plants, laboratories, equipment, and personnel assembled during the war to produce the atomic bomb." (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Atomic\\_Energy\\_Commission](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Atomic_Energy_Commission)). The Defense establishment, however, as the final customer of the nuclear weapons developed by the Atomic Energy Commission, and subsequent entities, has always had a significant role with respect to advisement, establishing criteria, and ultimately, possession of those weapons.
7. See <https://www.congress.gov/106/bills/hr1649/BILLS-106hr1649ih.pdf> for the House version of the bill, a ninety-eight-page description of the dismantling plan; and <https://www.congress.gov/106/bills/s896/BILLS-106s896is.pdf>, a 102-page version preferred by that body. The author developed a white paper summarizing these pieces of legislation that was subsequently updated a number of times during the first decade as events surrounding the creation of the NNSA and 9/11 occurred. A copy of that document can be obtained by emailing the author.
8. In testimony to the House Armed Services Committee in the summer of 2008, Dr. Paul Robinson, former Director of Sandia National Laboratories said: "Personally, and after many years of believing that it was important to keep the nuclear weapons design, development, and production separate from the Defense Department, I have now reached the point that I believe it is worth considering removing the weapons responsibilities from DOE and placing it as a new agency within the DoD. The presence of a uniformed military could provide a continuity that has been lacking as different administrations came and went. The nation's nuclear deterrent has only suffered from these short-term upheavals in what must be a long-term commitment." Subsequently, in 2009, OMB asked the DoD and DOE to perform a study on moving the nuclear complex to the DoD. Although several studies in this same time frame examined such a change, nothing resulted from it.
9. See <http://www.itpnm.com/whats-new-archives/inmmsw-chapter5-16-13-11x17-foldouts.pdf>
10. See *JNMM*, "Taking the Long View in a Time of Great Uncertainty, *That Will Never Happen – the Power of Scenario Planning*," Volume 45, No. 2