

OR MAYBE AMERICA POST-9/11 INSPIRES MORE DISILLUSIONMENT?

Michael Hayden thinks he has an explanation for all the whistleblowers. It's those damn millennials.

How do you make sure every one of [the people who have clearance] was and remains a loyal American or a loyal member of British security services and so on. Beyond that, Catty, there's another dynamic at work here. In order to do this kind of stuff, we have to recruit from a certain demographic, and I don't mean to judge them at all, but this group of millennials and related groups simply have different understandings of the words loyalty and secrecy and transparency than certainly my generation did. And so we bring these folks into the agency, good Americans all, I can only assume, but again, culturally they have different instincts than the people who made the decision to hire them.

The reason Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden leaked vast troves of documents, according to Hayden, is because they're young and not as loyal as people like him.

That may be true, to a point. Both Manning and Snowden seem to have a cosmopolitanism that a lot of Americans – those Americans raised during the Cold War – don't have. We live in a globe now, just just America, and it's possible Manning and Snowden felt some loyalty to humankind, rather than just America.

But there's another problem with Hayden's claim. There have been a number of whistleblowers who

are of his generation. Consider all the intelligence people who've joined VIPS in response to idiotic foreign policy, after all.

Or consider an even more interesting example: Bill Binney. Binney was, during the Cold War, one of the most aggressive spies out there. He has said to me, repeatedly, that he's the guy who invented Collect it all (though he, of course, wanted privacy protections for Americans). But when his approach came to be rolled out against Americans as part of the War on Terror that Hayden pursued with little self-reflection, Binney balked, quit the NSA, and started complaining that his program had been repurposed to target everyone.

Now, Binney didn't bring a trove of documents with him. But he's definitely animated by some of the same things that animated Manning and Snowden.

And Binney is two years older than Hayden.

There are a lot of things that motivate whistleblowers, and Daniel Ellsberg (who is 14 years older than Hayden) has said repeatedly that Snowden is just like he was.

But I do think one thing that has happened is that during the Cold War, for good or ill, Americans believed that they were the force of good. That belief is a lot harder to sustain in this day and age, for a range of reasons (not least the warrantless wiretapping and torture that Hayden facilitated). So just maybe the values remain the same, but America has changed?