

A Presidential
Commission created
by Congress to
provide bipartisan
oversight of U.S.
Government
activities intended to
understand, inform
and influence
foreign publics

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UNITED STATES ADVISORY COMMISSION ON

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Mission and Structure

The President, Congress, and the American people are asking America's foreign affairs agencies to rethink what they do and how they do it.

This is absolutely necessary. Organizations and functions that evolved throughout the 20th century face new realities: the communications revolution, the spread of democracy and open markets, and the end of the Cold War. Moreover, we must meet 21st century challenges with fewer resources.

Some restructuring proposals assume consolidation into a "mega-agency" will result in significant savings and increased efficiency.

The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy believes examination of basic missions should come first. Real savings will come from decisions about what functions are most important and how those functions can best be performed.

Simply merging public diplomacy into the Department of State will not provide desired flexibility and efficiencies. Nor by itself will it further the objectives of American foreign policy.

This report is about the importance of public diplomacy's mission: winning the support of foreign publics to further U.S. political, economic and security interests. It is not about business as usual. It is about the need for change.

Rethinking Public Diplomacy

Restructuring proposals should meet two tests. Do they acknowledge the centrality of public diplomacy in foreign affairs? Do they enable missions to be pursued more effectively at less cost?

In public diplomacy, restructuring is happening now. Congress last year mandated fundamental change in international broadcasting. The Vice President's National Performance Review is seeking to streamline administrative services, make better use of communications technologies, and consolidate exchange and democratization programs. USIA has cut staff, restructured its information programs, and eliminated magazines and exhibits.

Further restructuring should focus on ways to use public diplomacy expertise more effectively in an era when many U.S. agencies and NGOs engage foreign publics directly — and when foreign policy is made not just by the State Department, but by the White House and an array of other departments such as Defense, Commerce, Treasury, and the U.S. Trade Representative.

The case has not been made for merging USIA into the Department of State. But there is a compelling case for widespread interagency assignments, redesigned public diplomacy training, "real time" public affairs coordination, and other approaches that put USIA's expertise at the service of the President and a wider government and NGO community.

What Needs to be Done

- ☐ Recognize that the United States will be successful in foreign policy only if it understands, informs, and influences foreign publics.
- ☐ Make clear that what foreign publics think and do can help and harm Americans – their lives, their livelihoods, their well being.
- ☐ Keep the U.S. Information Agency an independent public diplomacy agency under the foreign policy direction of the President and the Secretary of State.
- ☐ Encourage restructuring through widespread interagency assignments, redesigned public diplomacy training, "real time" public affairs coordination, and other approaches that put USIA's expertise at the service of a wider government and NGO community.
- ☐ Expand use of the Internet, other digital information technologies, and television at U.S. missions abroad.
- ☐ Increase foreign public opinion polling, media studies, and program evaluation.
- ☐ Increase evaluation of exchanges; address duplication in programs now carried out by more than 23 federal agencies.
- ☐ Make the hard decisions in international broadcasting on issues posed by television, new technologies, and changing media environments.

DEFINING PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Public diplomacy is the communication of U.S. interests and ideals beyond governments to foreign publics.

People all over the world now have more power to shape events and the actions of governments than at any time in history, making public diplomacy as essential to U.S. interests as diplomacy between governments.

Governments increasingly understand that publics have great power to influence events and decisions. They realize that communication with foreign publics often has much more impact than the exchange of diplomatic notes.

Public diplomacy has not replaced government-to-government diplomacy. But traditional diplomacy has been changed decisively by the communications revolution.

Today, governments must win the support of people in other countries, as well as leaders, if policies are to succeed. They must cope with constituent pressures at home and with the consequences of public pressures on other governments. They must mobilize coalitions and support for policies in multilateral organizations. Because what they say at home will be instantly reported abroad, policy explanations must be consistent and persuasive to domestic and foreign audiences alike.

Communication with foreign publics goes well beyond CNN telecasts. Public diplomacy is not just an accidental by-product of what is reported in the commercial media.

Nor is it public affairs aimed at the American people. U.S. policymakers should and do promote their policies in the United States. Public diplomacy, however, is directed at publics abroad.

Essential elements of U.S. public diplomacy are:

- Press and public affairs activities of the President and senior policymakers,
- Informational and cultural activities at U. S. missions abroad,
- International exchange of persons,
- U.S. radio and television broadcasting,
- Government-funded activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and
- Foreign public opinion research.

It is public diplomacy when President Clinton's statements opposing Iraqi troop movements are carried by media worldwide, when the U.S. ambassador in Moscow appears on Russian television, when a Fulbright scholar teaches law in Poland and the Voice of America broadcasts to China.

Other countries engage extensively in public diplomacy: when South Africa's President gives a newsmaker interview on American television, when the British Foreign Secretary meets with the editorial board of an American daily, when the Japanese government creates an exchange foundation to support trade and policy goals.

VALUE FOR TAXPAYERS

Public diplomacy is more than just public relations or getting a good press. It is a political and economic necessity.

Public diplomacy will help determine:

- Whether Russia and other emerging democracies develop stable governments that are better trading partners, better neighbors, and less inclined to war and terrorism.
- Whether U.S. interests in such trouble spots as Iraq, Iran, Bosnia, North Korea and the Middle East are understood by allies and adversaries.
- Whether market economies take root in entrepreneurial cultures that will expand U.S. exports, create American jobs, and lead to better investment climates for American business.
- Whether China, fast becoming the world's largest economy, will prove to be a durable trading partner and responsible great power.

These are not just theoretical concepts.

Rule of law programs in Central Asia increase respect for contract law, improve opportunities for U.S. business, and create jobs for American workers.

USIA's polls showing widespread sentiment by the Russian people to end the conflict in Chechnya strengthened the hand of American diplomats in voicing concerns to the Russian government.

Prior to the Gulf War, USIA's polls and reports from Public Affairs Officers showed differences among Arab publics in their views

of Sadaam Hussein. This information gave the United States added leverage in seeking support from Arab governments for the allied coalition.

NEW REALITIES

Globalized Communications. We live in a world of information abundance, instant communication, and porous borders. The Information Age has replaced the Industrial Age.

Television is the primary source of news and information in most of the world. Satellite television is within reach of many even in developing countries.

Digital telecommunications, fiber optics, and high capacity satellite systems are transforming the speed and scope of communication. The Internet is becoming the backbone of the Global Information Infrastructure. The results:

- Increasing quantity, diversity, and speed of information.
- Increasing interconnectivity, with control shifting from a few producers to many users.
- Increasing efficiencies and decreasing per message costs.
- Multiple, specialized publics replacing large, easily defined national audiences.

Democratization. From 1974 to 1994 more than 40 countries made the transition to some form of democracy, an unprecedented expansion in the power of people to influence governments.

This transfer of power also brings longstanding ethnic, national, religious, and factional disputes to the surface.

Ideas and practical information are vitally important to emerging democracies that lack democratic and entrepreneurial traditions. Ideas are pivotal as well in regions divided by conflict.

Free Markets. Today there are fewer command economies. People have concluded from experience that market economies are the most effective way to prosper and expand personal opportunity. As ideological rivalries fade, trade and investment competition are at the center of international politics.

Non-governmental Organizations. International relations are more immediate and personal – a continuous interaction among

people across borders. There is a growing non-governmental sector in business, education, humanitarian, leisure, and voluntary activities of all kinds.

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The consequences of these realities for foreign policy and public diplomacy are profound.

- Government communication faces more competition.
- Instant communication sharply reduces deliberation time for policymakers.
- Shortwave radio audiences are declining.
- More NGOs carry out exchange and democratization activities previously the purview of government; foreign affairs agencies are reappraising their roles.
- USIA's expertise and programs serve many more U.S. government departments – not just the Department of State.

AMERICA'S STRENGTHS FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

America's strengths, drawn from 200 years of history, are uniquely useful for public diplomacy. The United States is the only remaining super-power; worldwide attention focuses on its policies and culture. It is the world's most experienced democracy. It has the world's largest free market and most powerful economy. It has assimilated people from different countries, races, and religions.

The United States also has many specialized skills and assets. American higher education draws 450,000 foreign students annually. U.S. media dominate the world market for film and television. Its communications technologies are unrivaled. American tastes, fashions, and lifestyles influence millions worldwide.

U.S. diplomatic missions abroad have a long history of personal contacts and networks of institutional relationships based on trust and credibility.

Finally, the tradition of American voluntarism is an enormous asset. U.S. citizens organize themselves to solve problems rather than leaving them to government. This experience makes NGOs invaluable abroad, particularly in former totalitarian countries.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Flexibility. Today's reference points for public diplomacy are the accelerating speed of

change and a kaleidoscope of events that fit no clear pattern: the implosion of the Soviet Union, the independence of Eastern Europe, the democratization of South Africa, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the Middle East peace process, and revolutionary economic changes in China.

In such a world, U.S. public diplomacy requires much greater flexibility. Separate appropriations for exchanges and broadcasting, plus 17 budget earmarks for exchange and other activities, create rigidities and give some programs special treatment. Appropriating funds to the U.S. Agency for International Development for transfer to USIA causes delays and inefficiencies.

The United States must communicate quickly and effectively anywhere in the world. America's leaders must redirect assets easily from marginal to more effective activities and technologies. They must shift funds and move personnel to countries in a crisis and as needs and interests change.

Recommendations:

- ❑ ***Abolish budget earmarks and give USIA discretionary authority to shift up to 25 percent of its funds within any fiscal year.***
- ❑ ***Appropriate democratization funds directly to each federal agency carrying out democratization programs.***

Training. The increased importance of foreign publics makes media and advocacy skills a necessity for all U.S. ambassadors and other diplomats.

The "government-to-government" rule of ambassadors has diminished. Today heads of state converse by phone. But the importance of the ambassador as the authoritative spokesperson for U.S. policies has never been greater.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Washington, where other countries often select ambassadors on the basis of their communications skills. Their effectiveness in conveying their country's message has impact on U.S. public opinion. The U.S. should do no less abroad.

Recommendations:

- ❑ ***Public diplomacy skills should be essential for acceptance in the Foreign Service.***

- ❑ ***Include public diplomacy skills in promotion precepts for all foreign affairs agencies.***
- ❑ ***Require the National Foreign Affairs Training Center to provide media and advocacy skills training for most foreign service officers; and offer a mandatory course in public diplomacy for all foreign affairs agencies.***
- ❑ ***Provide additional training in public diplomacy and media advocacy to ambassadors and others whose positions make them spokespersons for U.S. interests abroad.***

International Broadcasting. The United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994, when fully implemented, will consolidate all non-military U.S. government radio and television broadcasting.

The Act creates a new International Broadcasting Bureau within the U.S. Information Agency and a bipartisan Presidentially appointed Board of Governors to provide direction and oversight for the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Worldnet Television Service, and Radio/TV Marti. Radio Free Asia will be established if determined to be feasible by the Board of Governors.

The Commission supports broadcasting consolidation. It holds promise for substantial budget savings and increased strategic focus.

Many difficult questions relating to U.S. broadcasting purposes, management, and priorities were not resolved during a legislative process marked by turf battles and preoccupation with budget issues.

How does international broadcasting best serve the national interest? What are the missions of the U.S. broadcasting services? What technologies and signal delivery systems will serve U.S. interests in the 21st century? What ought to be U.S. policy on the use of television? What language priorities are appropriate? What is the optimum mix of broadcasting and other public diplomacy activities? How can policymakers ensure that broadcasting decisions are based on sound technical advice and media research? What, if any, should be the role of "surrogate broadcasting" in the post-Cold War world?

These issues were left for consideration by a Broadcasting Board of Governors not yet established.

Recommendation:

- ❑ **Appoint the Broadcasting Board of Governors to make hard decisions on central issues posed by television, new technologies, changing political and media environments, and increased competition.**

New Technologies – Rethinking Field Services. The Internet and other new digital technologies offer extraordinary opportunities for direct communication with foreign publics. Achieving their potential will require more thought, coordination, and action.

The possibilities are substantial. Many have been developed and explored ad hoc by USIA's field posts.

Electronic Reference Centers can carry out many functions of existing libraries, better and at a fraction of the cost.

Electronic bulletin boards designed at posts can organize and share government resources with overseas audiences and a burgeoning NGO sector.

Automated subscription services can route information at greater speed to targeted audiences at a fraction of the cost of traditional publications.

Internet discussions and two-way video conferences can supplement or substitute for the use of visiting experts.

There are valid concerns. The importance of field officers in supplying context and human interaction – “the last three feet” – and the information needs of “have-not” countries should not be ignored.

Nevertheless, the technology to deliver information in new ways with cost savings is available in many countries and spreading rapidly. Maximizing this potential is essential to the future of public diplomacy.

Recommendations:

- ❑ **Create high-tech communication centers to provide up-to-the-minute policy information through electronic bulletin boards, Internet subscription services, fax-on-demand, compressed digital video, electronic conferences, and other such services.**

- ❑ **Develop and maintain an Internet presence that provides a central reference point for U.S. government information, particularly in foreign affairs.**
- ❑ **Publicize the possibilities of digital technologies. Knowledge of the Internet is spotty, and there is limited sharing of headquarters/post experiences.**
- ❑ **Develop Internet delivery services in addition to a gopher or web page.**
- ❑ **Emphasize electronic dissemination in designing USIA products.**
- ❑ **Provide general public access to the Internet as a practical demonstration of the technology and promote the Global Information Infrastructure.**

Research. Whether they are the views of the Russian electorate, the mood on the “Arab Street,” or attitudes toward U.S. trade in Europe and Japan, American policymakers need more than ever to know what foreign publics think and why.

Foreign opinions should not determine U.S. policy. But understanding the implications of foreign public opinion is essential when policy options are considered.

USIA provides assessments of foreign public opinion and foreign media comment to the President, Secretary of State, National Security Council, and other senior U.S. policymakers. It provides survey data on how publics view a broad range of issues: democratization and market reforms in the former Soviet Union; Palestinian and Israeli attitudes on economic and political issues; Latin American attitudes on Haiti, Cuba, and drug policies; and the impact of U.S. radio and television broadcasting.

Funding for USIA's foreign public opinion research is surprisingly low – about \$5 million per year. In real terms, it has declined during the past decade. Yet there are many new opportunities to do opinion polling in emerging democracies and corresponding pressures from policymakers for more research.

The President and Congress should assess foreign opinion research in the larger context of the information and democratic revolutions. Research also should be considered in terms of an appropriate balance between foreign intelligence and open source information gathering. The need to know what foreign publics think about U.S. policies, as well as American culture, has greatly increased.



United States
Advisory Commission
on Public Diplomacy

301 4th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20547
202 919 4457

Bruce Gregory
Staff Director
Richard W. Stites
Deputy Staff Director

UNITED STATES ADVISORY COMMISSION ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Recommendation:

- ☐ **Significantly increase funding for public opinion research, media studies, and program evaluation.**

Exchanges and Training. Throughout the 20th century, exchanges of people, ideas, and information have served U.S. interests well. They build personal and institutional relationships. They break down barriers, promote dialogue and learning, and enhance mutual understanding between the United States and the people of other countries.

Exchanges and training have direct and multiplier effects that make them among the most valuable instruments of America's foreign relations. Today they are especially valuable in helping to develop the rule of law and the intellectual foundations of democracy and economic freedom in many countries.

Their value and Congressional support have led to a proliferation of federal exchange and training programs and numerous legislative earmarks. These raise important issues for policymakers and Congress.

The United States lacks a strategic justification for federally funded exchanges and a policy on the right mix of exchange programs.

Some programs are duplicative. This is true in democratization and in foreign language and area studies.

The General Accounting Office found that coordination and oversight has been minimal, and that most agencies "have not conducted systematic, comprehensive evaluations of the effectiveness of these programs." Legal requirements and budget earmarks create operational inefficiencies and inhibit flexibility in responding to changing circumstances.

USIA has attempted to list all U.S. exchange and training programs. This effort is a good first step, but a full inventory has not been developed. By a conservative estimate in 1993, the most recent figures available, 23 U.S. government agencies spent \$1.4 billion on more than 100 international exchange and training programs.

Major programs, in order of size, are administered by the Department of Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Information Agency, the Peace Corps, and the Departments of Energy and Health and Human Services. Other agencies range from the Bureau of the Census to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Recommendations:

- ☐ **Develop a strategic justification for U.S. government exchanges.**
- ☐ **Increase exchange program oversight and evaluation.**
- ☐ **Address duplication in programs carried out by more than 23 federal agencies.**