

**Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
Subcommittee On Oversight of Government Management, the Federal  
Workforce, and the District of Columbia Hearing on “A Reliance on  
Smart Power--Reforming the Public Diplomacy Bureaucracy.”**

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342 Dirksen SOB**

*Testimony by (Hon.) Jill A. Schuker, President JAS International and  
Former Special Assistant to the President (William Jefferson Clinton) for  
National Security Affairs and Senior Director for Public Affairs, National  
Security Council*

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Thank you for this opportunity to address the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia on the important organizational challenges facing public diplomacy in this new century.

Through your hearings on Smart Power, under Chairman Daniel Akaka’s leadership, this Subcommittee has been in the forefront of forward thinking on this issue, and capturing the urgency and attention it deserves.

If I may, I would like to set the stage for my recommendations and reflections.

U.S. Public diplomacy is at a cross-roads of both challenge and opportunity.

Globalization has created a more complex atmosphere for the conduct of traditional public diplomacy, while as this Subcommittee is acutely aware, new security concerns, unforeseen in earlier times, have erected both structural and virtual impediments to effective, traditional operations.

Balancing the necessary and the possible, the likely and the unthinkable, to create a more effective “smart power” posture for the United States, requires thinking anew.

Mistakes made in the rush of overblown pronouncements by some respected but overly enthusiastic thought-leaders that history ended with the Cold War, enabled a rushed, compromised, “jerry-built” architecture for public diplomacy ten years ago that “threw the baby out with the bathwater” leaving gaps in our public diplomacy readiness and effectiveness. This, accompanied by subsequent rhetorical and substantive foreign policy missteps, assured public diplomacy to fall on hard times over these last years. Instead of creating a lifeline for information and dialogue, the conduct of public diplomacy became part of the problem.

Furthermore, the rapid growth and complexity in communications avenues and outlets, widely accessed by non-state actors, and no longer “organized” in news cycles, created a “24/7” intensity that demands immediacy, often eliminating thoughtful or quiet deliberation before public comment or action is expected. This creates a new challenge for formulating and explaining the national interest to a range of audiences.

All this has led to the need for a more nimble and cutting-edge public diplomacy shaped through a more sophisticated and flexible prism. It means identifying and insuring the right human resources, structure and serious financial support, heretofore missing or needing strengthening.

As this Subcommittee knows, one need only to look at respected, credible polling and qualitative survey research to know that the U.S. has been living through an agonizing and challenging period both to its moral authority and to its long-recognized leadership as the international superpower and touchstone for national credibility.

Neither the realities of U.S. “hard power” nor the power of our rhetoric, our history, our values and our attraction are the issue. Our “soft power” continues to bring millions to our shores seeking those governing principles we take for granted.

But, we are expected to lead by example.

We are being challenged abroad to demonstrate by word and deed that we are on the right track as we look toward the end of this first decade of the new century.

Indeed, for our nation, to which “much has been given”, much is indeed expected. This becomes a measurement for effective U.S. public diplomacy. The issues we tackle and the solutions we seek must have a global dimension and redound to the benefit of the many—pandemics, natural disasters, climate change, multi-lateral and multi-national solutions. These are concerns of modern Twenty First century public diplomacy.

*Indeed public diplomacy is a companion for effective U.S. foreign policy. It is an opportunity if effectively shaped and executed, to create new levers of influence that will ultimately make better use of hard power when needed, and provide diplomatic alternatives to mutual threats and challenges. Simply put, public diplomacy must be intimately involved in effectively identifying and promoting our national interests.*

This recognition of both public diplomacy’s importance and its structural limitations as a tool in the diplomatic arsenal in engaging foreign publics has led to a multitude of serious reports over the last seven years churned out by Think Tanks, policy organizations, the private sector, the Departments of State and Defense, the U.S. Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy, and Capitol Hill. The main message is a fairly consistent one: change is needed both structurally and in terms of both the recognition and role of public diplomacy in the policy process.

One new and important report, funded by Congress and under the leadership of The Brookings Institution, will be birthed on October 1, prepared for the Department of State and commissioned by Congress. It focuses on concrete steps—in and out of government-- to strengthen U.S. public diplomacy interaction across the globe.

In my view, its analysis, conclusions and recommendations are thoughtful and provocative and provide essential food for consideration and action by Congress and the next Administration—as well as other public diplomacy protagonists in and outside of government.

It underscores as all these serious reports have done, that effective public diplomacy is essential to America’s standing in the world and to be effective we cannot conduct a monologue if we are to have credibility and a resonant and responsive audience in “winning” the “war of ideas”.

Simply put, Public Diplomacy is a matter of national interest and national priority and it will be one of the centerpiece challenges for the next Administration taking office in 2009.

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### **Architecture, Organization and Coordination**

There are others testifying here today as inside government practitioners who can speak more expertly and directly about the viability of specific office structures, personnel and portfolios.

My best insights come from a range of anecdotal evidence, expert conversations, participation in a number of reports and deliberations studying this issue, writings, teaching, and my own reflections from past and present involvement in the active link between foreign policy decision-making and public diplomacy.

First, while U.S. public diplomacy clearly is directed to a global audience, effective public diplomacy begins at home. It **must**.

This means an aware and educated U.S. public, and insuring that at every level of our society and government, we are structurally geared to preparing ourselves for the Twenty-First century challenges.

Along with the sciences, Americans need stronger history, civics, language and cultural education-- beginning with our own "story", as well as providing an understanding of the global dimension and the interdependence of our planet.

This needs to start early, it needs to be comprehensive, and it needs to reflect and be open to new realities—shifting demographics, for example. This includes targeted training of our professional civil service in all departments so that public diplomacy has an integral place in all sectors—health, housing, the arts, sciences, and diplomacy.

The recent *Washington Post* article (by Joby Warrick and Walter Pincus, September 10, 2008) highlighting a new intelligence forecast reportedly being prepared for the next President predicts that our increasingly competitive world will enable the U.S. to remain "pre-eminent" but its

“dominance” will be relatively diminished because of “the rise of everyone else”.

This is the world we need to prepare for and navigate successfully through school curricula and training at every level, providing incentives for future teachers to have the skills needed, and preparing for a much more diverse, and as Tom Friedman has called it, a “flat” world.

Further:

- The dismantlement of USIA and its transfer into the Department of State continues to have repercussions. This transfer, which caused serious disruption with the departure of many professionals, and the resistance to and by a new “culture” suggests that there are lessons to be learned from this experience about how to “reinvent” government more successfully. It may even be legitimate to question whether public diplomacy would have operated better in these last years, if the architecture and staffing had been less disrupted.

I am not suggesting a reiteration of USIA. What does need recognition, however, is the legitimacy of the function, the independence of the work , the quality professional corps that is essential, and the recognition that effective public diplomacy means long-term planning, outreach and engagement.

- The role of public diplomat is intrinsically separate from that of a spokesman or press officer and this has gotten lost in translation. Public diplomacy is definitionally a two-way street, an openness to dialogue and focused on reaching out beyond traditional networks of officialdom, the basic diplomatic focus of the Department of State.

While at one level, bringing public diplomacy more into the policy halls of the State Department was viewed as giving it an added gravitas and engagement, it lost some of its essential ability to reach non-traditional audiences and became only an arm of policy instead of *informing* the policy.

This in my view has created some of the dissonance that has called into serious question the effective operation of public diplomacy in the last years.

- An additional concern, of course, is the “siege mentality” that has overtaken much of our diplomatic, in-country outreach since 9/11. So many of our embassies have become armed camps, cut off from the countries in which they reside and their publics.

This is, of course, understandable from many security aspects. But it also is a serious hindrance to effective public diplomacy. How to find a better balance between security and contact is a major challenge, but it suggests that we need to pay attention to the recommendations being made by new reports about how to better use not only governmental outreach tools but the private sector, civil society and citizen contact to create more and stronger networks for the important “last three feet” of communication-- as Edward R. Murrow called the key distance for the real impact that public diplomacy requires.

- This also means better training and mastery of the new media that provide a different way to “social network” and inform citizens of other countries about United States’ interests and values. The web, the internet, blogging—these are all modern public diplomacy vehicles and we need both traditional skills and new information technology-savvy public diplomats.
- The U.S. Government is and will remain the essential actor in public diplomacy. This is where the national interest “resides” resides. This ultimate responsibility cannot be shifted elsewhere..

But this requires a priority being attached to nomination and confirmation as well as tenure. The revolving door of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy has swung often since the reorganization of the late 90s and added to its woes. The reasons need to be assessed by this Subcommittee. However professional, experienced, dedicated and talented the incumbent may be, the shifting focus, confirmation delays and short tenures of the incumbents have left public diplomacy and its troops without the full integration and direction it needs and requires.

Further, if public diplomacy (and the public diplomacy chief) is to be recognized as an “honest broker” on policy, to listen as much as to explain and influence, then it is difficult to have an architect of a particular foreign policy that is dominating the global discourse, to hold that office as credibly as possible. It sends a very mixed signal abroad as well as at home.

Closeness to the President and the White House needs to enhance the public diplomacy mission, not overshadow it.

- This relates as well to the problems faced by Alhurra, and even Radio Sawa and programs being run through the Broadcasting Board of Governors. They are too often viewed as propagandistic rather than as “news” or providing an “honest broker” perspective. If we are going to put money and muscle into broadcasting then we should look at what has worked for us –Voice of America, for example—and not diminish or undercut or dilute these structures.

Also are we looking ahead to the challenges we face today—as well as tomorrow? Does cutting out VOA to India or cutting it back in former Soviet republics, for example, really make sense for our long-term smart power interests? Are we letting specific short-term policy and short-sighted funding run public diplomacy before public diplomacy can do its job and begin to inform and enable good, sound policy?

- What are we willing to spend and for what? Congress has the ability and responsibility to reverse unwise cuts....and to ask the right questions up front about priorities and directions. If we are really to support smart power and to provide “the powers to lead” as Harvard Professor Joseph Nye has stated, then these are legitimate and necessary points to explore.
- Public diplomacy also is more than a one person job. The President sets the tone; State runs the function. But day in and day out it IS the cadre of professionals who need and deserve resource support-- funding, training, respect internally in and by the Foreign Service , and an appreciation that theirs is an expertise too often taken for granted. At one time economic officers in the Foreign Service were viewed as second class citizens to the political officers. This is a message that now must be addressed for those who practice public diplomacy. There must be a reinvestment in public diplomacy professionals with recruitment and reward, as well as a refocus on fundamentals and a commitment to a long-term effort.
- We also need to bring into government public diplomacy, some of the talent we are ignoring or discouraging, from outside of government. One of our country’s strengths is our diversity—and it is one of the

most identifiable ways to demonstrate tangibly abroad what we mean when we say public diplomacy begins at home.

It means bringing into government more of our skilled immigrant Americans who have Arabic language skills and background (for example), as well as useful geographical and cultural knowledge, rather than further marginalizing their talent and desire to make a substantive and serious contribution.

This should be informed by the new intelligence forecast mentioned earlier, identifying global actors we should be reaching through public diplomacy and providing the leadership to prepare for new global realities—in development, by non-state actors, energy demands, and transnational and non-state threats—and for rethinking and expanding our global opportunities, alliances and partners. We should be thinking now about how public diplomacy should impact the new realities of the global economic meltdown.

- As to funding and architecture—how can the State Department be expected to be the coordinator of our country’s public diplomacy when their funding is miniscule? Relative to funding for similar activities at the Department of Defense, State public diplomacy funds barely register on the radar screen.

Senator Joseph Biden, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, recently opened up a hearing stating that “there has been a migration of functions and authorities from U.S. civilian agencies to the Department of Defense.” This hurts both State's effective stewardship of public diplomacy as well as how public diplomacy is interpreted abroad.

Defense Secretary Bob Gates has been eloquent in his recognition and support for public diplomacy but he too has stated that both the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development have been “chronically undermanned and underfunded for too long”.

There is much to be learned from the military in terms of training and outreach useful for public diplomacy, but this is NOT structurally where public diplomacy should reside, nor is it where the funding for this function should be flowing. It is neither the right messenger, nor does it have the



mission. The skewed funding, however, is in danger of tilting our diplomatic arsenal in the wrong direction. This is not how to shape smart power.

Further, this impairs State's public diplomacy leadership ability to act as the interagency interlocutor and coordinator for public diplomacy, much less its legitimacy on behalf of the U.S. for global outreach. It sends the wrong signal. The underfunding of State has got to be reversed if the United States is to demonstrate that it takes public diplomacy seriously.

Some final points about the structure of U.S. public diplomacy:

1. Public-Private Partnerships are essential to optimize effective public diplomacy engagement. They need to be more aggressively and successfully pursued to embrace the reach and resources outside of government—the private sector, citizens of all ages, cultural institutions and civil society influentials—and impact public diplomacy in ways that cannot be as successfully accomplished by government alone. Business for Diplomatic Action, Americans for Informed Democracy, and the U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy are but a few examples of important interlocutors in public diplomacy operating effective programs outside of the public sector but partnering with government and civil society.

There is an important role for active citizen (and cultural) diplomacy outside of the policy dimension, including “reverse public diplomacy” bringing a range of delegations and visitors to our shores—business executives, artists/musicians, doctors, scientists, educators as well as tourists and foreign students. (Programs to send students abroad as well as to bring them to the U.S. is an essential element in the public diplomacy dialogue.) This also means revamping our visa programs in many instances so that security concerns are not unnecessarily diluting effective public diplomacy.

The dollars available in the private sector and foundations even with the serious current stresses in the economy is impressive. For example, Citigroup's budget in 2007 in over 100 countries was \$81.7 billion—9 times the size of the State Department's budget that year of \$9.5 billion for public diplomacy operations in nearly 180 countries.

2. Both our presidential candidates have discussed the importance of public service—nationally and internationally-- a crucial component relating to effective public diplomacy. This has ranged from the expansion of AmeriCorps to such innovative ideas as Senator Barack Obama's call for the "America's Voice Initiative" to send Americans fluent in local languages and dialects abroad to expand our public diplomacy. These programs need to be encouraged, expanded, and energized for Americans of all ages with a range of skills. This is exactly the kind of participation that will enhance our public diplomacy objectives.
3. Finally, I would recommend serious consideration by the next President, of having a Senior Advisor in the White House responsible to the President (Assistant to the President perhaps, or an NSC Deputy title) with responsibility for public diplomacy. This would send an immediate signal regarding the importance placed on credible international outreach by the new President and his administration. But it would do more than this.

This advisor's portfolio would provide an appropriate level of linkage between the White House and the Department of State; insure support for the work and organization of public diplomacy centered at the State Department; add the imprimatur of the White House to State's interagency coordination of the public diplomacy function; participate in highest level Principal or Deputy deliberations to insure the public diplomacy dimension is being incorporated and considered relating to our national interests; advise and keep the President informed regarding public diplomacy dimensions of foreign policy; and provide a liaison with the private sector, foundations and others as a conduit for ideas on specific public diplomacy needs, actions and reforms.

This Advisor also would serve as a coordinating point for consideration and recommendations about new architecture needed and a formal and informal point of contact for such outside advisory input. (This would not be a position with operational responsibility for public diplomacy which would continue to reside at the Department of State.)

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Wayne Gretzky, the great hockey player, when asked what gave him his special edge, said that “he skates to where the puck *will* be.”

This is the message for the United States as we consider how to insure effective public diplomacy and effective change going forward.

We have the raw talent and resources. We embody and embrace the principles and the values. We need to have the will, the vision, the leadership and the discipline to seize the moment.

The window is small but with these months of transition in which we find ourselves, we are at the right moment in our history and in the history of our globe to make a needed difference for our own future and for a better global future.

Thank you.

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