



Building America's **public diplomacy**  
through a reformed structure and additional resources



A 2002 Report of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy

public diplomacy — THE CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND INFORMATIONAL PROGRAMS,  
CITIZEN EXCHANGES, OR BROADCASTS USED TO PROMOTE THE NATIONAL INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES  
THROUGH UNDERSTANDING, INFORMING, AND INFLUENCING FOREIGN AUDIENCES.

# introduction

The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy notes with great satisfaction that the power of public diplomacy is being recognized again by the media, Congress, and America's think tanks. It is regrettable that it took the events of September 11, 2001, to make this happen. In the aftermath of the terrorism onslaught, a number of questions were raised as to why these horrible events occurred. Many referred to public opinion polls in Islamic countries and some blamed American public diplomacy efforts. Thereupon, the Administration undertook an inquiry; Congress held hearings and the House of Representatives passed legislation; newspapers published articles; and think tanks issued reports.

This Commission, which has studied public diplomacy for the past 54 years, welcomes this new interest in how the United States informs and influences foreign audiences. The Commission would like to take this occasion to advance its own views on how public diplomacy should be structured and funded.





# the state of public diplomacy

In the decade since the Cold War, elected officials of both parties — through neglect and misplaced priorities — have permitted the nation's public diplomacy instrument to rust. Now, as we face a complex emergency, we expect this instrument to be razor sharp. It is not. That is why we need to invest in people, programs, training, recruitment, international exchanges, opinion research, information technologies, and the right kind of broadcasting. There has been much talk about redirecting U.S. military strategy. It is now time to rethink and redirect America's public diplomacy strategies as well.

Negative messages broadcast and disseminated by rogue states, terrorist groups, and even U.S. and international commercial news and entertainment outlets have resulted in a deep misunderstanding of the United States and its policies. These misperceptions must be countered with the proper public diplomacy tools. American communication efforts are of critical importance. Yet these efforts

cannot succeed unless they are *organized appropriately* and *funded adequately*.

In the short term, public diplomacy seeks to influence opinions in ways that support U.S. interests and policies. The primary focus is generally on *issues*. By contrast, over the long term, public diplomacy promotes dialogue, the sharing of ideas, and personal and institutional relationships, with the primary focus on *values*. Ideally, the two should be linked in a comprehensive public diplomacy strategy.

Strengthening America's long-term public diplomacy means greater investment in cross-cultural initiatives. It also means listening more — through such tools as polling, focus groups and conversations with U.S. diplomats and senior officials — to the concerns, fears, needs, and ambitions of others. Persuasion begins with listening, and listening requires a more creative and resourceful diplomatic community on the ground and new thinking at all levels in public diplomacy.

The U.S. government's share of the global information flow is far smaller today than in the past.

**The Commission recommends redeveloping public diplomacy through two means:**

- ▮ reforming its structure
- ▮ building its resources

# public diplomacy promotes dialogue, the sharing of ideas, and personal and institutional relationships.



Brands, products, popular entertainment, higher education, corporations, and Web sites all may reinforce or undermine U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Today, U.S. public diplomacy is a multi-issue, multi-player universe. U.S. leaders have significant capacity to leverage commercial media channels when they have something of consequence to say on high-profile issues. The United States also has significant public diplomacy assets that can work to the government's advantage.

In the information age, diplomatic influence and military power go to those who can disseminate credible information in ways that support their interests and effectively put public pressure on the leaders of other countries. Today's public diplomacy requires new thinking and additional resources.

The Administration has gotten off to a good start on translating American principles and compassion into the vernacular of Muslim countries. A

Middle East radio network, Arabic language Web sites and print publications, and citizen and journalist exchanges have all been established to help set the record straight on the United States. But more must be done to ensure that America maintains an effective public diplomacy machine to continue communicating with the entire world over the long term, not just the hot spots of today. Therefore, the Commission recommends strengthening public diplomacy by *reforming its structure* and *building its resources*.

# structural reform

As a starting point, it is essential to recognize that U.S. foreign policy has been precariously weakened by a failure to systematically include public diplomacy in the formulation and implementation of policy. Public diplomacy must be included in the “takeoff” of policies, not only as the legendary journalist and former U.S. Information Agency (USIA) Director Edward R. Murrow put it, “in the crash landings.” That does not mean that expected foreign public reactions should determine American foreign policy. It does mean, however, that expected foreign reaction should be taken into consideration when deciding how a foreign policy is to be formulated, and how it will be communicated.

To reform the structure of public diplomacy, the Commission recommends that the following five steps be taken:

## Issue a Presidential mandate

The President should, on an urgent basis, issue a Presidential Directive on public diplomacy, making clear that public diplomacy is a strategic component of American foreign policy and that

significant reform is needed. The directive should provide a vision to harness the U.S. government’s public diplomacy assets in support of our broader national interests.

## Fully implement the White House Office of Global Communications

A critical element of public diplomacy reform is a sustained and flexible coordinating structure that links Presidential leadership with the departments and agencies that carry out public diplomacy, along with our coalition allies and private sector partners. This office must work closely with the Department of State, particularly the office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

The Commission hopes that the recently announced White House Office of Global Communications will be such a structure. The director of this office should be an individual in whom the President has full confidence and who will have direct access to him. This office will require interagency representation, adequate tasking authority, and a competent staff. Importantly, an

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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2. Fully implement the White House Office of Global Communications
3. Review the consolidation of USIA into the State Department
4. Integrate Congress into public diplomacy efforts
5. Involve the private sector

office having such a coordinating structure can identify broad public diplomacy goals and coordinate communications strategies.

The Office of Global Communications should provide strategic direction and themes to the U.S. agencies that reach foreign audiences, while relying on the Secretary of State to provide tactical and strategic coordination of the diplomats overseas. The office must draw on many agencies and Americans to convey a few simple but powerful messages.

The White House already coordinates communications across agency lines to reach a number of large domestic audiences. The same attention should now be given to international audiences. Having the office located within the White House will ensure that the President's priorities receive maximum attention in areas of the world deemed to be of the highest priority.

It is important that the White House is sending a clear signal to Congress, government agencies, and the American people that a new public diplomacy paradigm is in place. In response, the principal task now should be to develop and sustain planning to link U.S. interests, publics, and channels.

Based on policy objectives, the Office of Global Communications should help identify influential and mass audiences, correlate media and other communications channels used, and outline priorities for U.S. government communications. The goal should be to develop, with the State Department, credible and effective public diplomacy themes, priorities, and means of communication.

The challenges for the office will be to ensure:

- Adequate resources for audience research and influence structure analysis
- Sufficient capability to provide timely and coherent strategic planning on multiple issues
- Appropriate decisions on the use of government channels and credible third-party communications capabilities
- A strategy to overcome apathy and resistance to public diplomacy strategies in U.S. departments and embassies

### Review the consolidation of USIA into the State Department

In 1998, the Commission endorsed the consolidation of the United States Information Agency into the State Department, believing integration of public diplomacy and policy making was essential. As noted in the Commission's October 2000 report marking the first anniversary of consolidation, progress on integration was initially slow and difficult, due in large measure to the State Department's multi-layered and complex bureaucracy and a culture that did not traditionally value public diplomacy.

In the past two years, the Commission has observed positive changes. Public diplomacy is becoming an accepted concentration in the Department and is recognized for the value it brings to the U.S. Foreign Service. Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Charlotte Beers, with the leadership of the Secretary of State, is taking steps to strengthen the



Department's information, educational, and cultural programs, and to upgrade the rank and status of those responsible for public diplomacy. The Commission thinks this should continue.

While significant progress has occurred, much remains to be done to ensure that public diplomacy is brought into all aspects of foreign policy decision making.

In addition to a comprehensive quadrennial report on public diplomacy, we recommend that the Secretary of State, in concert with the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, conduct a review of all consolidation initiatives and make any necessary recommendations in such areas as training and the location and reporting structure of public diplomacy units.

**Integrate Congress into public diplomacy efforts**

Members of Congress communicate directly and indirectly to foreign audiences in ways that can reinforce or undermine public diplomacy messages. Public support for policies by informed lawmakers can shape perceptions by foreign publics in ways that further U.S. interests. Lawmakers should be included in public diplomacy planning and implementation at all stages.

Increased Congressional support for public diplomacy is needed, not just with necessary resource enhancements, but with oversight that links public diplomacy budgets more closely to foreign policy and program requirements and efforts to actively communicate with foreign audiences.

Congress should provide legislative authority for a *quadrennial review*, conducted by the Secretary of State in consultation with the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. Such a review would cost very little, but could have far-reaching effects and could serve as a catalyst for public diplomacy reform.

**Involve the private sector**

Support, insight, and critical judgment from the private sector are all essential to U.S. public diplomacy. Important contributions can be made in the following ways:

- **Communications consultants**, pollsters, and media specialists should be encouraged to provide relevant expertise on media trends, market analysis, production techniques, and emerging technologies.
- **The academic community** can also support public diplomacy through teaching, scholarship, and research. The creation of the Public Diplomacy Institute at The George Washington University is a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, only a few U.S. colleges and universities currently offer courses in public diplomacy and closely related fields.
- **The advertising and entertainment sectors** should be engaged to provide insight on audience penetration and ideas that encourage foreign audiences to stand up and take notice.





# allocating resources

The case for significantly increasing resources for public diplomacy is based on its value as a strategic element of power in the information age.

To increase public diplomacy spending intelligently, the Commission recommends the following actions:

## Recognize that money alone will not fix the problems

The organizational recommendations in this report do not require increased budgets. Moreover, any increase in public diplomacy resources must be tied directly to short- and long-term objectives and strategies, and should be phased in over an appropriate time frame.

## Assess the state of America's readiness worldwide

Government officials and informed private sector professionals should conduct a structured evaluation at regular intervals to address priorities and optimal spending on core elements of public diplomacy — including personnel, training, infrastructure

requirements, and the appropriate level and mix of programs in different countries and regions. The Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), the two organizations that share almost equally in the \$1 billion allotted to public diplomacy, should establish public diplomacy standards to include country-specific program and staffing requirements.

## Examine the nation's public diplomacy investment relative to other areas

The \$1 billion spent annually on the State Department's information and exchange programs and U.S. international broadcasting represents just 1/25 of the nation's international affairs budget. But information is a strategic asset — as important to national security as political, military, and economic power. New thinking and additional resources are required, not just for military and intelligence functions, but for the propagation of information as well.

The United States substantially under-invests in public diplomacy compared with many other countries that spend proportionately larger

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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amounts of their foreign affairs budgets on public diplomacy activities. As a result of long-term declines in U.S. spending, critical public diplomacy needs are not being met. For example, from 1993 to 2001, overall funding for the State Department's educational and cultural exchange programs fell more than 33 percent, from \$349 million to \$232 million (adjusted for inflation). From 1995 to 2001, the number of exchange participants dropped from approximately 45,000 to 29,000.

The U.S. spends \$5 million in public opinion research overseas — less than the polling costs of some U.S. Senate campaigns.

The U.S. spends \$25 billion on traditional diplomacy and more than \$30 billion for intelligence and counterintelligence initiatives. In comparison, the government spends only \$1 billion to inform and persuade international audiences. There are public diplomacy operations in more than 200 missions around the globe, many in critical areas where negative and incorrect perceptions of U.S. foreign policy prevail. The funding levels are clearly insufficient.

The Broadcasting Board of Governors spends approximately 94 percent of its overall budget on radio and only 6 percent on television. (The BBG's \$517 million request for U.S. international broadcasting services in FY 03 includes \$47 million for television, \$23 million for VOA TV, \$14 million for satellite leases, and \$10 million for TV Marti for Cuba alone — a radio/TV-spending ratio of 16 to 1.) While radio continues to be an important instrument of public diplomacy — particularly in countries such as Afghanistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and China

where listening rates are high — we must invest much more in television where this medium is a primary source of news and information.

During the 1990s, Congressional cuts in public diplomacy budgets were driven by fiscal deficits and a general desire of many in Congress to reduce the size of government. In recent years, officials of both parties have continually failed to make public diplomacy a high priority. Reductions in public diplomacy are part of a long-term militarization of foreign affairs in which the share of the national budget devoted to military spending has increased, while the amount committed to international affairs has decreased.

This Commission recommends that all categories of public diplomacy be looked at coherently in terms of foreign policy priorities, situational relevance, and comparative assessments of program value, and then be funded accordingly.

public diplomacy [has] value

as a strategic element of power in the information age.



# conclusion

New thinking and new structures call for new mind-sets, not new millions of dollars. Nevertheless, we cannot do more to address the significant resentment and misunderstanding of the United States without the necessary resources and structural modifications. Nothing short of immediate and sustained action is required. If we are serious about repairing the world's perception of our motives and values, as we must be, it is essential that we revitalize America's public diplomacy with the intelligent allocation of resources, and a framework designed to maximize its effectiveness as an instrument of national policy.



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The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy is a bipartisan panel created by Congress and appointed by the President to provide oversight of U.S. government activities intended to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics.

The Commission, now in its 54th year, was reauthorized in October 2000 pursuant to Public Law 106-113 (H.R. 3194, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2000). It is responsible for assessing public diplomacy policies and programs of the U.S. State Department, American missions abroad, and other agencies. Advisory Commission responsibilities extend to international exchanges, U.S. government international information programs, and publicly funded non-governmental organizations.

By law, the Commission's members are appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. They are selected from a cross-section of professional backgrounds and serve three-year terms with the possibility for reappointment.

The Commission reports its findings and recommendations to the President, the Congress, the Secretary of State, and to the American people.

**The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy**

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