

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, EMERGING THREATS,
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The end of the Cold War was seen by many as the ultimate victory in the global ideological struggle. Using words as weapons to kindle the spark of liberty in oppressed peoples, the forces of freedom helped defeat communism in the decisive battle without firing a shot. Public diplomacy – the cultural exchanges, educational programs and broadcasts used to promote United States interests to foreign audiences – pierced the Iron Curtain more effectively and efficiently than missiles.

But then the tools that brought down the Berlin Wall and splintered the Soviet Union were allowed to rust in the mistaken belief the battle of ideas was over. Subsumed within the State Department's stifling culture and starved for resources, public diplomacy was left to wither without strategic focus or organizational direction.

So when the United States needed a strong voice to counter the toxic antipathy emanating from radical sects and terrorists in the Middle East, the world often heard only a hoarse, fragmented whisper. Studies and analyses from inside and outside the federal government concluded our public diplomacy capacity lagged far behind the critical requirement to counter terrorism on the rhetorical and ideological battlefields of that volatile region.

According to the State Department's Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, "The United States today lacks the capabilities in public diplomacy to meet the national security threat emanating from political instability, economic deprivation and extremism..." Others we will hear from today have been equally critical of U.S. public diplomacy as lacking strategic cohesion and sustained leadership.

Nowhere is our stunted reach into the hearts and minds of Arabs and Muslims more obvious, or more perilous, than in Iraq. All public diplomacy in the region today should be keenly focused on persuading Iraqis and their neighbors we are there as liberators, not occupiers, and the war on terrorism is not a war on Islam. That's the truth and they need to know it. But halting efforts by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), and a lack of coordination between the other federal organs of public statecraft, have left control of the airways and the debate to al-Jazeera, al-Arabiya and the purveyors of rabid anti-Americanism.

Last month in Iraq, CPA officials told us they were accelerating efforts to build U.S. and indigenous media capacity to balance the current one-sided public discourse. But, as if to underscore the second-class status of public diplomacy in the interagency realm, neither CPA nor the Department of Defense chose to provide a witness or testimony today. Their absence speaks volumes. They will appear at a future hearing.

However, we do welcome testimony today from the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Margaret Tutwiler. Although only recently confirmed and without a full team of deputies in place, she waived the usual protocols to join us today. Madame Undersecretary, thank you for coming.

Words matter. The language of liberty, equality and opportunity liberated us from the royalist yoke. With the right message, conveyed through culturally attuned media, the revolutionary message of freedom and democracy has the power to accomplish what guns cannot -- transform subjects into citizens, victims into voters.

U.S. public diplomacy now has to rise to meet that challenge. Our witnesses today bring impressive expertise, and important recommendations, to our discussion of public diplomacy reforms. Welcome. We look forward to your testimony.