

U.S. ADVISORY COMMISSION ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Minutes and transcript from the February 26, 2024 quarterly public meeting **Celebrating 75 Years of ACPD Reporting.**

U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy Quarterly Meeting
Monday, February 26, 2024, 11:00 AM - 12:15 PM ET
In Person: The George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs,
1957 E St NW, Washington, DC 20052
Online (Zoom) access

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

TH Sim Farar, Chair
TH William J. Hybl, Vice-Chair

COMMISSION STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Vivian S. Walker, Executive Director
Mr. Jeff Ridenour, Senior Advisor
Ms. Kristy Zmary, Program Assistant

MINUTES:

The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy held a public meeting from 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. on Monday, February 26, 2024, to present the [2023 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting](#) and celebrate 75 years of ACPD reporting.

A distinguished panel of current and former ACPD commissioners, executive directors, and longtime research and policy partners reflected on the ACPD's 75 years of service to the White House, Congress, and the American people. Panelists included **Tom C. Korologos**, ACPD Commissioner and Chairman 1981-1994; **Katherine A. Brown**, President and CEO at Global Ties U.S., ACPD Executive Director 2013-2016; and **Bruce Gregory**, Visiting Scholar, George Washington University, ACPD Executive Director 1985-1998.

ACPD Executive Director Vivian Walker opened and moderated the session, Chairman Sim Farar provided introductory remarks, and Commissioner Bill Hybl closed the meeting. The speakers took questions from the Commissioners and the audience, as detailed in the transcript below.

AUDIENCE:

Approximately 30 attended this in-person public meeting, and forty-five logged on to the Zoom platform to view the event virtually, including:

- PD practitioners and PD leadership from the Department of State, USAGM, and other agencies;

- Members of the foreign affairs and PD think tank communities;
- Academics in communications, foreign affairs, and other fields;
- Congressional staff members;
- Retired USIA and State PD officers;
- Members of the international diplomatic corps; and
- Members of the public.

Note: The following transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

Vivian Walker: Hello everyone. My name is Vivian Walker, and I am the Executive Director and Designated Federal Officer for the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. Together with ACPD Commission Chair, Sim Farar, and Vice Chair, Bill Hybl, I'm very pleased to be able to open today's quarterly public meeting, which is being held in fulfillment of the ACPD's mandate to keep the American people informed about U.S. government public diplomacy activities.

In 1948, the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy was established with a mandate to provide independent, bipartisan assessments of America's public diplomacy and international broadcasting activities. And in 1949, the Commission issued the first in a very long series of reports and assessments. Seventy-five years later, the Commission is still going strong, producing incisive, data-driven assessments of the full range of U.S. government policy advocacy, messaging and media collaboration, cultural, academic, and professional exchange programs, and international broadcasting platforms.

Today, in honor of this event, we are delighted to present a distinguished panel of current and former ACPD Commissioners, Executive Directors, and longtime research and policy partners to reflect on the ACPD's 75 years of service to the White House, Congress, and most importantly, to the American people. We'd also like to take this opportunity to present the *2023 Annual Comprehensive Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting*.

It is, of course, available online and there are hard copies on the side of the room as well.

Now to our panelists. Tom Korologos served as an ACPD Commissioner and Chairman from 1981-1994. Katherine Brown, who's currently President and CEO at Global Ties U.S., was the ACPD Executive Director from 2013 to 2016. Bruce Gregory, a visiting scholar at George Washington University, served as ACPD Executive Director from 1985 to 1998. As you see, we have a very distinguished set of current and former ACPD commissioners and staffers on the panel.

Just a quick note on process. We will hold audience questions until the Q&A. Online audiences should be able to submit their questions through the Q&A function.

A video recording and a full written transcript of this quarterly meeting will be made available on the ACPD website, where you can also find our reports and assessments going all the way back to 1949.

It is now my pleasure to turn this meeting over to our Chairman, Sim Farar. Sim?

Sim Farar: Thank you, Vivian.

With my distinguished colleague from the Commission, Vice Chairman Bill Hybl from Colorado Springs, Colorado, I am pleased to welcome you to this quarterly meeting.

I would like to express our sincere appreciation to Alyssa Ayres, Dean of the Elliot School of International Affairs, William Youmans, and Yvonne Oh, Director and Program Coordinator, respectively, of the Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication for partnering with us to host today's meeting.

A warm thank you to our distinguished panelists for agreeing to share their expertise with us as well as to all of you who have joined us in person and online for today's discussion.

We sincerely appreciate your continued interest in and commitment to the practice of public diplomacy.

Today we are especially proud to be celebrating 75 years of Commission service through its reports to the White House, Congress, the Department of State, and, above all, to the American people. For 75 years, the Commission has serviced through its reports to the White House, Congress, the Department of State, and above all, the American people.

Speaking for myself as well as my distinguished colleague Bill Hybl, it has been an immense pleasure and honor to serve as an ACPD Commissioner and Chairman. From traveling around the world to meet with public diplomacy practitioners to assessing U.S. government PD activities through our comprehensive annual and special reports, to organizing meetings that provide the American public with an opportunity to review our government's efforts to inform and influence foreign audiences – the work of the Commission has made and continues to make a difference.

Just in our time, several ACPD recommendations have become a reality, such as the merger of two bureaus into the Global Public Affairs Bureau and the creation of a research and evaluation unit in R/PPR (Office of Policy, Planning and Resources).

Finally, Bill and I would like to dedicate this monumental celebration of the Commission's 75 years of reporting to current and former ACPD staff and commissioners and to all the public diplomacy professionals who have contributed to ACPD reports and public meetings. Their hard work and commitment to the power of public diplomacy have served to make our country safer and more prosperous.

Once again, thank you for joining us today. Vivian, over to you.

Vivian Walker: Thank you, Sim. We'll get started. Just a reminder, please hold your questions until all three of our panelists have made their remarks. Now it is my pleasure to turn the floor over to Tom Korologos.

Tom C. Korologos: Thank you very much, Vivian. What an honor to be here among all you public diplomacy junkies. It's a pleasure to be among friends and allies who know a little bit of what we do.

Back in 1993, we titled our Advisory Commission Annual Report "[Public Diplomacy in a Changed World](#)." I daresay every annual report since and for the next 75 years could have the same title and nothing would have changed. Every year, it's a changed world.

As we were told in school of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin said, "Gentlemen, I suggest we must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly, we shall all hang separately." Franklin's statement was uttered at a time when our ideas were much stronger than our military.

Much of the early days of public diplomacy are covered in the first chapter of former ACPD Executive Director Bruce Gregory's just-released, excellent book, *American Diplomacy's Public Dimension: Practitioners as Change Agents in Foreign Relations*. It covers a lot of PD successes and will be a major textbook for practitioners and future change agents.

Today, one of the change agents is a powerful military. But what our enemies don't like is our ideals. I've traveled the world. I've learned what most people want these days are the same principles of democracy and freedom, the tools of American greatness. The Commission's contributions over 75 years have served American public diplomacy through cold wars and hot wars, rumors of wars, global recessions, and global expansions. We've even landed on the moon.

What was new in my day was the birth of the Information Age. And let me quote the first paragraph of our 1993 report. Quote, "Seldom are historical watersheds so immediately self-evident. The Cold War is over. The American people have elected new leaders. The world has changed fundamentally, transforming the policy agenda at home and abroad." End quote.

I can make a case today that, in reality, nothing's changed from what our report produced 30 years ago. All you need to do is listen to the latest TV news. We're talking about diplomacy in the information age. We're talking about operating in real time.

The starting lineup has changed. The game is filled with audibles. We now communicate with Dick Tracy wrist radio. Some of you younger people don't know what that means. Pencils and paper, pens and ink, and landlines have gone all the way of smoke signals.

In my day, we had an excellent head coach, Ronald Reagan, who was dubbed "The Great Communicator." He was a walking, talking public diplomacy machine. One of my favorite examples is when he was asked how he felt about conflicts with the Soviets. He famously responded, "We win. They lose." What a great mandate for public diplomacy. And, of course, the famous "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

I'm not sure if any of you saw it, but I'd like to cite another timely quote from just the other day here in Washington. Nobel Prize winner and former President of Poland, Lech Walesa, was asked how Poland is getting along with the Russians these days. He said, "They don't want us. They want you." That has not changed.

I can make another point to all of you. Public diplomacy since those early days has matured and has become very sophisticated through an ever-growing government. These changes are reflected in the ACPD reports over the last 75 years. The Commission has explored foreign policy in myriad arenas around the world. And today, we bless the ACPD's celebration of its 75th birthday.

I invite you to take a look at just one of its accomplishments. I refer to the 2023 report, which is available here, 217 pages entitled "Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting." Capitol Hill policy wonks, where I hang out, love it for all the information that is in one place. It has data from the State Department's Cultural Heritage Center activities, all the way to a report on demographics and literacy in Mongolia, and everything in between, analyzing and reporting to the Congress, the President, and the public.

I also was a charter member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. We started Radio Martí de Cuba and Radio Free Asia to China and oversaw the VOA. And later still, I became the U.S. Ambassador to Belgium, practicing what I had been preaching since 1962.

One of my stops along the way was spending almost a year in Iraq babysitting 274 members of Congress who came to visit. I was unashamedly committing public diplomacy daily, wearing my public diplomacy helmet and my PD flak jacket.

One of my memorable initiatives was to take advantage of the heartwarming discovery of an underground Iraqi symphony orchestra. Saddam Hussain had forbidden bourgeois classical music in Iraq. And consequently, the musicians, literally and physically, went underground, rehearsing at night, keeping their instruments together with scotch tape, and hiding them in haystacks. After they emerged, we soon arranged a public concert in Baghdad, where Iraqis, for the first time in decades, heard a non-dictator program and an original Iraqi national anthem.

On a later trip to Washington, I ran into Michael Kaiser at the Kennedy Center and told him the story about these musicians. He suggested we bring them to Washington to a concert. I told Michael they were not up to Kennedy Center standards, and he disagreed. He said, "it doesn't matter." He said, "we'll train the Iraqi musicians with musicians from the National Symphony Orchestra in a joint event."

And sure enough, they came, and they conquered. A remarkable concert took place in December 2003 at the Kennedy Center. Attending were President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and an abundance of American public and private leaders. One of the superstars who performed with the dual orchestra was the famed cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

The point of all this is, imagine the almost 100 Iraqi performers and staffers going back to Iraq and telling their families and anybody who would listen, quote, "Those crazy Americans flew us to the United States to perform in Washington. A short time ago, my violin was hiding in a

haystack. And a little later, I was performing next to Yo-Yo Ma in one of the world's premier music halls in Washington before the President of the United States." A pretty good PD cultural story, isn't it?

You can find similar successes in this report here that you ought to take a look at. What we have in public diplomacy today is a vital and essential ally of American foreign policy. Let me commend the current members of the Commission. Let me commend everybody on this panel.

It's an honor to be here with the chairman, Sim Farar, my friend and member of ACPD for life, Bill Hybl, and of course, the current executive director, Dr. Vivian Walker. This is a great, valuable report. Vivian, you did a hell of a job. Bravo.

And while I'm at it. Hey, White House, if you can hear me across the street, and Senate, there are several pending nominations to the Commission awaiting confirmation. Senate, White House, some have been in limbo for years. Let's get them confirmed. The Commission is important. Look at the danger flags all over the world today. Public diplomacy is vital now more than ever.

It's an honor to be on this panel. And as Americans, we are all committed to the principles of sharing our blessings with our works. We are very public about how we advance who we are. So today and in the future, let us all rededicate ourselves to telling our story. It's ageless, and it's the best one out there. Thank you.

Vivian Walker: Thank you so much. That was wonderful. Let's move now to Katherine Brown for her perspective. Katherine?

Katherine A. Brown: Thank you, Vivian. And hello, everybody. Wonderful to see so many of you. It's been a while since I've seen so many of these familiar faces. And great to be here at GW. Dean Ayers, thank you for hosting us, and Professor Youmans.

I'm an Elliott School alum, so always thrilled to be back here. I had an extraordinary education, and it led me to the State Department as an intern and launched my career, which I'm grateful for.

I'm also very grateful to Dr. Walker. Thank you for asking me to be part of this. Sim and Bill, it's been a while and I miss our trips together. I'm grateful for your leadership in helping the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy come back to life in 2013.

And that's what I'm going to talk about. You know, looking back on the mission, it's hard to believe it has been 75 years. It still has this extraordinarily timeless mission. It's evolved, of course, over the past decades. But the examination of our U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for Global Media colleagues' indispensable work connecting foreign audiences to advance U.S. foreign policy remains absolutely essential.

If you look back at the decades of reports, you'll see the many ways in which they helped to guide these United States public diplomacy efforts during these incredibly potent geopolitical moments, including the Cold War, 9/11 and the global war on terror, and today's great power competition in the digital world. I joined in 2013, shortly after graduating with my doctorate

from Columbia University, looking at the role of journalism in Afghanistan. I was fresh off of years of fieldwork in Afghanistan, where I also served at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul 20 years ago.

I saw the critical way that public diplomacy shaped civil society in Afghanistan and gave connection and opportunity to Afghans who had been starved of these opportunities for many years. I knew I wanted to work in public diplomacy. I was also a former House Foreign Affairs Committee Staffer, and I knew how much was missing in congressional staffers' understanding of what public diplomacy is and how under-leveraged it is as a critical tool for foreign policy.

Our colleagues, Bill Hybl and Sim Farar, helped to bring about a new congressional mandate to get the Advisory Commission reauthorized. We had a huge effort with this new reporting mandate to build a comprehensive annual report that would show Congress the breadth and the scope of public diplomacy work, not only as directed from Washington, but also from the field, and how much it costs. We were also required to provide the context for its importance and offer analysis where we could.

We stood on the shoulders of giants, including Dr. Bruce Gregory, who was one of the first people I met with, to understand “how do I run this office? How do we make sense of it? What was the incredible work you did, and how do we build off of it?” I'm ever grateful for the work that was done before 2013 to prove that thoughtful analysis about public diplomacy truly advances U.S. foreign policy efforts.

But what I love the most about the work that we did 11 years ago was that it was a great opportunity to identify where the Commission could add the most value. And often, it was in doing what public diplomacy is truly about, which is listening. It was listening to the practitioners, and meeting with public diplomacy officers, chiefs of missions, and alumni to understand how public diplomacy impacts and even moves the day-to-day bilateral relationship.

We often speak in the abstract about public diplomacy. What is it? It's vague. It's nebulous. But when you actually witness it on the ground, where the rubber meets the road, you witness the real impact of an exchange program on an alum.

You see how a small cultural heritage preservation grant builds trust between the U.S. embassy and the host government. And you see incredible ideas for innovation that you can take back and support and advocate for in Washington.

One example of that is the American Spaces at Jakarta, *@america*, and the opportunity that the Commission had to bring back this idea to connect with youth in Indonesia to counter potential violent extremism in the country, and also to make sure that resources were being put in place to create a space where people could learn about the United States in a fun, interactive setting.

The other opportunity we had was to triangulate conversations between our colleagues in the State Department between our colleagues in Congress, and also the outside stakeholders, groups like the Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communications here at GW, who are looking for ways themselves to add value to the conversation, to influence how the work gets done.

To provide the platform for that kind of collaboration was a unique opportunity and one that I cherished. The unique role that the Commissioners and the staff played in working with the State Department, the U.S. Agency for Global Media, Congress, academia, and private citizens to advance knowledge was unmatched.

And the last way we added value was to provide a record of the incredible work that is done every day and to help give shape to our advocacy efforts, ones that might not have been on the Commission's radar.

When you provide this volume of fact-based information in a report, it's remarkable how much value it adds, whether to groups that work in public diplomacy without federal funding and want to have a better understanding how the whole system works, to students who want to understand the various programs that make public diplomacy what it is.

Often, what people find when they read this report is how under resourced this work is and, in actuality, how much our practitioners, our colleagues at the State Department and at USAGM, do with so little. This report, which offers anchored public diplomacy research with critical data, continues to illuminate for Congress the rich and dynamic complexity of this work and how indispensable it is for national security, as Tom Korologos just said.

2023 also marks about almost 10 years of this report. Here I want to acknowledge my colleague, Chris Hensman, who's a former foreign service officer now based in Houston, who was knee deep in trying to figure out how to get our arms around this data within the Department to create this report, with guidance from Sim, Bill, Ambassador Lyndon Olson, Ambassador Penne Korth Peacock, Anne Wedner, and Lezlee Westine. They were our Commission members at the time.

We produced this [report](#) at the same time we prepared the [Data-Driven Public Diplomacy Report](#). Congress wanted us to be able to evaluate public diplomacy. But in order to do that, we first had to look at how public diplomacy was being evaluated within the State Department, and also within the U.S. Agency for Global Media.

What we found was that there was some incredible work being done. But there was much standing in the way. First, [there was] under resourcing by Congress. Also, [there were] laws and issues that got in the way of doing this work efficiently.

For example, the Paperwork Reduction Act and the Privacy Act laws were never intended to impede the work of public diplomacy research but just did. The ability of the Commission to shed light on those issues for Congress was unique.

I'm also very proud that so many of the people that were part of [the Data Driven Public Diplomacy] study are leaders of public diplomacy today. Dr. Sean Aday from GWU. Dr. Amelia Arsenault, who was at Georgia State at the time and now runs research and evaluation in R/PPR. Dr. Matthew Baum at Harvard, and Dr. Kathy Fitzpatrick at University of Southern Florida. Dr. Craig Hayden, who was at American University at the time. Dr. Erik Nisbet, who was with Ohio State. I think he's now at Northwestern. Dr. Shawn Powers, who became the Executive Director of this Commission after me. Dr. Jay Wang, at the USC Center on Public

Diplomacy who continues to be a wonderful collaborator with the ACPD. The work that they did, I think, illuminated the need for more long-term strategic approaches to research and evaluation. It's been quite heartening to see that take hold.

At the Commission we listened to the practitioners doing the work who required more support within the Department and from Congress, who wanted to connect with outside researchers and academics. So, I'm incredibly proud of that report.

I'm also very proud of the work that we did around [risk and the hardening of American spaces](#), making them less accessible to foreign publics, and also the work that we did in identifying [what our practitioner colleagues needed to be well-rounded public diplomacy officials](#), the support they required to advance within the Department, and the tools and resources they required from Foreign Service Institute. Often what is needed is a mediator to explain the hurdles that are in place to give our extraordinary, talented colleagues within State Department and USAGM what they need to do their job.

I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have had this role with the Commission because it's how I discovered the Global Ties Network, which I now support every day as the President and CEO of Global Ties U.S. I learned about them through meetings with alumni, when I asked them what they found to be most surprising about the American people. They would always talk about the generosity and the volunteer culture of the United States, and how incredibly eye opening it was when they went to communities in Boise, or San Antonio, or Miami, or Burlington, or Sacramento and found that U.S. citizens were curious about them. They wanted to listen and engage with them. That was transformational for the alumni.

Learning about the Global Ties Network and having the job I have now to support those communities within the United States has been such a gift. Knowing the impact they have on these alums led me to a greater understanding of the domestic constituency and the domestic dimension of this work. I loved the [report](#), Vivian, done by the ACPD a couple of years ago on the domestic dimension, which highlighted the fact that the State Department is focusing more and more on how to engage people inside the United States.

Overall, as Bill Hybl said in the [1991 report](#), which Dr. Bruce Gregory produced, "The Commission finds a historic pattern of insufficient commitment to public diplomacy at the highest levels of the Executive Branch. And attention to public diplomacy has been episodic, crisis-related, and tied largely to communication of high-profile policies. The United States under-invests in international information and educational exchange programs."

I also want to echo what you said, Mr. Korologos, that these incredibly cost-efficient tools to engage with foreign audiences are under-leveraged, especially in this age of great power competition. Our current budget, which is on the floor, is going to be less than previous years. And that [budget], before the cuts, was not enough to do the work that we do.

The work continues. I'm grateful for the 75 years of this Commission. I wish it much luck and success in the next 75 years. Congratulations to all of you who have made this body so substantial, consequential, and timelessly relevant as an institution. Thank you, everybody.

Vivian Walker: Thank you, Katherine. Let's now turn to Bruce Gregory for his insights.

Bruce Gregory: Thanks, Vivian. It's a pleasure to be on the panel and to be here with so many good friends and former colleagues. During 17 years with the Commission, I worked for three Democratic chairs, three Republican chairs, and numerous commissioners from both parties. It was a unique vantage point from which to observe the institutions and practices of public diplomacy, and I'm enormously grateful for that experience. I'll offer a few brief reflections on why the Commission was created, examples from its best practices, and observations on why it's still needed.

Americans have had a State Department since 1789. Ambassadors are in the Constitution. But the U.S. government's international information, broadcasting, and cultural organizations were created as wartime measures in the 20th century. After World War II, Americans were reluctant to make them permanent instruments of foreign affairs in peacetime.

Deep-rooted concerns about whether and how the U.S. should engage in diplomacy with publics led to countless congressional hearings, blue ribbon panels, GAO reports, think tank studies, and government reorganizations. They came and went over the decades. Recognizing these concerns early on, Congress passed legislation in 1948 to ensure public diplomacy would benefit from the views and support of citizens with skill sets from a cross-section of American life. It required the Commission to advise Presidents, Secretaries of State, and soon U.S. Information Agency Directors, and report to Congress and the American people.

What makes this Commission durable and unique? First, its members are Presidentially-appointed. Importantly, they are Senate-confirmed, which gives them standing in Congress and inside the beltway. And the Commission is bipartisan.

Except for a few brief periods, its statutory authority has been open-ended. Its existence should not depend on renewal in Congress's uncertain foreign affairs authorization process or the approval or disapproval of a few congressional staffers. Second, the Commission has consistently appointed staffs with public diplomacy experience. Commissioners and I benefited enormously from a steady stream of accomplished Foreign Service Officers who served a tour of duty with the Commission.

Commissioners have strong resumes in their respective fields as educators, journalists, corporate executives, former Senators, think tank heads, labor organizers, historians, authors, pollsters, and on and on. Some were nationally known. Others were plugged-in at the highest levels in Washington. It was quite the gamut.

Most did not arrive with a deep understanding of public diplomacy. The distinguished, retired diplomat Walter Roberts was a notable exception. But after a few Commission meetings and an oversight visit at a U.S. mission, I often heard them say, so this is what public diplomacy is all about.

For 75 years, Commissioners have observed how public diplomacy is carried out in the field, and they have benefited from in-depth conversations with practitioners who knew what they

were talking about. Some Commission recommendations have been staples for decades, such as more resources for public diplomacy, the need to stay current with communication technologies from shortwave radio to television, to the internet, to artificial intelligence, and more funding for evaluation and opinion research. Politicians and corporations spend large sums trying to learn what voters and consumers think. Shouldn't diplomats invest more in listening and understanding what publics think? For most Commissioners, this is self-evident.

But the Commission also played a role in issues driven by events. Some were in the headlines. The U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in Lebanon were bombed in 1983. The State Department quickly formed a blue ribbon panel on overseas security, led by Admiral Bobby Inman. It recommended hardened embassies and 100-foot setbacks from public streets. Today, we call them fortress embassies.

Commissioners agreed security measures were needed to protect buildings and personnel, but they were concerned no consideration was being given to the need for public access to embassies, American libraries, and information centers. They discussed their concerns with Secretary of State George Shultz, USIA Director Charles Wick, members of Congress, Senior PD Officers, and Admiral Inman. Then they issued a report, [*Terrorism and Security: The Challenge for Public Diplomacy*](#). It recommended ways to take public access into account in legislation and policies relating to diplomatic security. Chairman Ed Feulner framed the issue in an op-ed in The Washington Post. The report got national media coverage.

Some issues were not in the headlines. In 1980, the Committee of Media Correspondents of the Congressional Press Galleries voted unanimously to deny press credentials to Voice of America reporters. They did this because VOA is government-funded. This was the same committee that had no problem giving credentials to the BBC World Service, China's government-funded Xinhua, and the Soviet Union's TASS. Chairman Feulner and Commissioner Korologos testified before Congress and led a public campaign to challenge the decision. It was overturned.

There are a couple of important lessons here. First, Commission reports have impact because they're hybrid products of the knowledge and first-hand observations of Commission members and the knowledge of civil society experts and skilled practitioners. Second, it's not enough just to write reports and put them out in the wild. They'll be read by some. And online presentations by the Commission are important.

But retail follow-up by Commissioners with key officials, lawmakers, and civil society leaders also matters. When I contacted a Senator's Office or an NSC staffer to say, Chairman Korologos and the Commission would like to meet to talk about the report, two things happened.

First, I had no trouble getting access, which made my life easier. But more importantly, it led to informed discussions with influential people in and out of government who read that report in preparation. Almost all reports going back to 1949 are accessible on the Commission's [website](#). It's a great and underutilized resource for scholars and policy analysts.

Three quick points looking ahead. First, the Commission is one of the very few statutory advisory panels that connects U.S. diplomacy in civil society. The Pentagon has a huge

abundance of such panels and research organizations. The Commission helps to address this gap, and its work must continue.

Second, one of the Commission's strengths is its bipartisan character. Its members are usually strong partisans outside the Commission, and they often have spirited internal discussions on public diplomacy issues. But for 75 years, partisan politics has never determined the work of the Commission. In today's intensely polarized politics, this is worth keeping and keeping in mind.

Third, in keeping with tradition, the Commission's 2023 report addresses cutting-edge issues. It provides a mountain of data on budgets, field programs, and Washington activities, collated information available nowhere else. But the heart of this report, in my view, are its 25 specific detailed recommendations, pages 15 to 17, for the White House, Congress, National Security Council, Secretary of State, U.S. Agency for Global Media, and diplomacy practitioners. These policy program and structural recommendations are central to the Commission's mandate. They deserve considered assessment this year and follow-up by the Commission next year. So, congratulations and best wishes to the Commission on its 75th. And I hope that some of you will save the date for its centennial in 2048.

Vivian Walker: Thank you so much, Bruce, for those wonderful insights. You referred to the [ACPD's online archives](#). Truly, they offer a wealth of information about the evolution of American public diplomacy.

Let's now turn to the discussion.

While you are thinking of your questions, I'm going to turn to the panelists for a round of one-minute answers to this question. The core of the ACPD's annual report and special reports remains the assessments, recommendations, and areas for improvement. From your perspective now, what are some of the areas you think diplomats, as well as policymakers, should be focusing on in terms of public diplomacy? What are we not doing that we should be doing?

Anyone want to jump in with a response?

Tom C. Korologos: Let me say something--I'll probably get in trouble for this. We ought to be telling our story to Americans in the United States of America, too. Wouldn't that be different—to give them an idea of what it is we do in the field?

I remember that when I went to Belgium, I made the rounds of all the Embassy people [at the bilateral mission]. And I said, "Hi, I'm Korologos." And they'd welcome me. Finally, I went to the public diplomacy guy, and I said to him, "You've got the worst job here." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Because I know what you do."

This is what we are trying to do--tell our story transparently and get our story out.

Vivian Walker: I was particularly interested by your observation that we should be doing a better job of reaching out to the American people. That's certainly in line with the Biden Administration's policy of making foreign policy accessible to average Americans. And in fact,

the subject of one of the ACPD special reports, as Katherine mentioned, is [public diplomacy's domestic dimension](#).

But, as you might expect from any ACPD report, there are some pros and cons. While I think you're absolutely right about the need to do more in reach, as it were, that comes with its own set of choices and prices. Read the report, everyone, to find out more.

Bruce?

Bruce Gregory: As I mentioned, on pages 15 to 17 [of the 2023 annual comprehensive report], you'll find recommendations broken down by the White House, Congress, Secretary of State, U.S. Agency for Global Media, and bureaus in the State Department. It seems to me there is a subtext here--what many are calling "whole-of-government diplomacy"--and that while identifying the White House and Congress, it's also important to keep in mind that most U.S. government agencies and cabinet offices have staffs devoted to external relations. For example, global health is primarily the responsibility of Health and Human Services. So as the Commission goes forward, I think it's useful to adapt these recommendations to a whole-of-government context.

And I guess the other editorial I'd offer is based on three great years I spent teaching at the National War College. The United States military has colleges and universities for professional education. I know that a lot of people are urging the State Department not just to do training, but to engage in and improve its learning culture, and to treat professional education as a component of career development.

Vivian Walker: Great. Thank you. I strongly support that comment about the National War Colleges. I was fortunate enough to spend some time teaching there.

In fact, I must admit that I never really, truly understood the strategic value of public diplomacy until I found myself in the position of having to explain it to a room full of lieutenant colonel promotables and other members of the federal government destined for senior service in the foreign policy arena. It was an extraordinary moment of insight for me as well.

Katherine?

Katherine A. Brown: I think that's fascinating, Vivian, because military exchanges are such a critical part of our Department of Defense. They inherently reflect principles of public diplomacy.

I agree with Bruce. These are excellent recommendations that you have on pages 15 to 17. I want to come back to number 2, which is, "Increase investments in public diplomacy and global media programs, given the growing importance of information statecraft, as detailed in the current national security strategy."

We have the talent. We have the programs. We have the infrastructure. The [degree] to which these tools, programs, and talent are under resourced is extraordinary. We wrote the playbook on U.S. public diplomacy efforts here in the United States, but I think we are outspent at least 10 to 1 by China on public diplomacy and international broadcasting efforts.

We need [so much more in terms of] resources than what we [actually] have. The fact that the public diplomacy budget for educational and cultural exchanges--what we call the .7 funds—which is about \$1 billion collectively---- that is nothing. And the amount of [additional] work we could do with more funding is critical.

We have found at Global Ties U.S. that one of the most [important] ways to get more people in the United States to understand public diplomacy is to be active participants, whether it be in their communities interacting with global leaders, whether it be sending young people to be youth ambassadors at expos and world fairs, whether it be providing more opportunities for Fulbright critical language scholarships, or Peace Corps. We need more people in the United States to engage in and understand [public diplomacy]. And that comes with more resources.

Tom C. Korologos: I'd like to ask Vivian and Bruce—now that we're all talking about increasing our exposure to tell people what we do--are there restrictions? Do you worry about telling America's story to Americans using American tax dollars? What do they tell you at State? Do they say, hey, cut it out?

Vivian Walker: Not at all. For example, with respect to the work of the USAGM and its international broadcasting platforms, the Voice of America, RFE/RL, RFA—the service and grantee organizations--are independent and protected. A firewall exists to allow them to do the reporting on the issues as they evolve.

Now, there's always been a tension in the broadcasting realm--and you would know this from your service on the BBG--between informing and advocating. Is it the role of USAGM's platforms to inform people around the world to provide them with accurate information and to model good journalism? Is it the role of those platforms to advocate for U.S. policies and values? The answer is “yes” and “yes.”

From my perspective as a former public diplomacy officer and someone who's been following these issues for many years, I think we need that ever present tension between information and advocacy. We must continually ask ourselves the question about pushing lines.

[Information and advocacy] exist in tandem. The power, the capacity to talk about our issues, to acknowledge our faults and weaknesses as well as our strengths, to tell the whole story, even when that story doesn't necessarily reflect well on us, is one of the things that makes those [broadcasting] platforms so strong. So that's a long-winded way of saying I don't see an issue with that.

Bruce, did you want to add to that?

Bruce Gregory: I'm not sure it's directly relevant. But as you're talking, it occurs [to me] that, yes, more resources [are required]-- that case needs to be made powerfully. The investment in U.S. diplomacy is puny compared with the investment in the United States military. So that's an old story, and one that continues.

But perhaps at the risk of some heresy here, I wanted to suggest that the public dimension of diplomacy is quite expansive. There are more educational exchange programs administered by U.S. government agencies outside the State Department than by the State Department. You

have a whole-of-government approach, [including] science labs, defense, energy, and commerce department programs. There [are a lot of] government-funded exchanges that aren't being managed by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the State Department.

That doesn't mean we don't need more civilian agency resources relative to the military instrument. But it does mean a somewhat different optic looking at the investment. The other thing is, public diplomacy is a word that's important. It's contingent to an episode of our history, and more and more, it's becoming mainstream in U.S. diplomacy.

Think of the amount of time that [NSC Advisor] Jake Sullivan, the President, prime ministers and heads of state and their foreign ministers around the world spend in front of a camera, trying to convince you of a point of view. Diplomacy's public dimension is central in diplomacy. And the Commission is well-suited to recognize this, make the case for it, and make recommendations [about its improvement].

Katherine A. Brown: Can I have one follow-up? The point Bruce made about the scale of whole-of-government interaction with U.S. public around higher education opportunities and exchanges is absolutely key. One thing that the State Department has done, knowing that it is not responsible for all of the exchange and higher education opportunities for global interaction for people in the United States, [is focus on alumni]. The Office of Alumni Affairs does actually work with any U.S. government-sponsored or special exchange program. If you've gone abroad, you're considered a U.S. government exchange alum.

Global Ties U.S. works year round with U.S. exchange alumni to turn them into citizen diplomats, to make sure that we continue the investment in their experience, and to help them leverage that experience into the workforce and give back through citizen diplomacy action funds.

And one thing I'll say, too, is that more than 90% of the educational and cultural exchange budget is spent within the United States on people in the United States. For the Global Ties network alone, there's an 8-to-1 return on investment.

That money is spent in U.S. communities. People spending money on hotels, transportation, etc. Increasing the scale of investment in this work is also smart for our economy.

Vivian Walker: Right. And I think an important part of the outreach effort is to let people know about that. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has done some quite good work on telling that side of the story as well, the way in which there are direct financial benefits to investment and participation in these programs.

When we're talking about the domestic focus, we should acknowledge the work of the Office of Subnational Diplomacy within the Department of State, in the Economic Bureau, under Ambassador Nina Hachigian's direction. This office supports what we call city diplomacy or regional-level diplomacy from an economic angle. An important effort is being made to integrate mayors and municipalities into the foreign policy process.

We have a room full of people who are very well-versed in public diplomacy, and I'd like to hear from them.

But before we do so, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the great work of the ACPD's Senior Advisors. Katherine mentioned Chris Hensman. Today we have with us ACPD Senior Advisor Jeff Ridenour, our Program Assistant, Kristy Zamary, and our previous Senior Advisor, Deneysel Kirkpatrick. Thanks to each and every one of you for your great work on behalf of the Commission and by extension, public diplomacy.

Enough from us. Surely there are some questions or comments from the audience?

Pat, please.

Pat Kabra: I wanted to thank the Commission. I've worked [on public diplomacy] either directly or peripherally over the years, most recently in the Policy, Planning, and Resources Office of the Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. There are a few themes that run through this discussion such as how the Commission has worked so mightily with this particular office at the State Department on data and diplomacy, to include planning and resource offices, to implement a lot of the advice that is in these Commission reports.

Katherine mentioned the Privacy Act and the Paperwork Reduction Act--well, we're still working on those as well as the issue of resources, and the communication to U.S. audiences. And then there is particular funding for public diplomacy that's only for overseas audiences, funding for educational cultural affairs that is only for exchanges, and funding specifically for Global Public Affairs activities.

I would just urge the Commission to continue working with the Undersecretary's Office and with members of Congress on those particular issues moving forward. Just don't give up on them because both the funding issue and the legal authorities under different acts and regulations, I think, still need some work.

One of the reasons that a lot of members of that office are not sitting here right now is that there is a global public diplomacy workshop ongoing. It launched this morning. And many of the issues that you're discussing will be discussed at that workshop over the course of the next few days. Thank you very much.

Vivian Walker: Thank you. Anyone else? Questions or comments? Anything from our online audience?

Kadir Jun Ayhan: Hi. I'm Kadir Jun Ayhan. I'm at Ewha Womans University in Korea. Thank you very much for all the data that you produce. As someone who's researching using your data, I thank you very much.

My question is about the bipartisanship of ACPD. It's a very important tenant. Bruce also mentioned that. But public diplomacy cannot be independent of foreign policies. And that's why I think Bruce is using the term "public dimension of diplomacy" rather than "public diplomacy," per se.

You have recommendations for the White House. But we might have a different White House next year. Katherine mentioned the lack of funding. You may spend millions of dollars in a country, and a tweet can change everything. So how can ACPD make sure that there will be no crash landings, as Edward Murrow put it?

What can be done? Is there any recommendation to avoid crash landings? Because I think that's more important for the effectiveness of the money spent.

Vivian Walker: I would just jump in and say there's no avoiding crash landings.

Kadir Jun Ayhan: Minimize.

Vivian Walker: That's a great question. Who would like to take that on?

Kadir Jun Ayhan: Maybe Bruce first?

Bruce Gregory: Well, Vivian is exactly right. Crash landings come all the time. The Commission is advisory. And its strength, I think, is its capacity to connect with experts in civil society. As I mentioned before, it listens to people who know what they're talking about, and the fact is that they're well-connected politically.

I repeat, this Commission has never been a partisan organization. It's been bipartisan. I saw time and again people join the Commission who were adversaries outside the Commission in national politics. But I never saw partisanship on the Commission. I saw differences of opinion.

What should we prioritize? What should we say? Those debates were intensely educational for me. The ability of the Commission to bring people in who have been confirmed by the Senate from a cross-section of American life provides a voice for people in civil society that blends with what practitioners are saying.

And when you have a new administration, the issues change. The Commission doesn't. Its terms are staggered. Its members are appointed and sometimes reappointed.

But they're fixed terms. And so there should be a constant flow of new information, new ideas. And what [the Commission] can do with that is deal with the next crash landing.

Tom C. Korologos: One of the interesting things that happens is that an ambassador has been in a country advocating A, B, C, D. And then there is an election--usually every four years in November--and now the issues are D, E, F, and G, and you ignore A, B, C, D. So, the ambassador goes to a policymaker in the country and says, "Hey, I've got a problem here. Yesterday, I was for this. Today, I'm against it."

But Bruce was right. We were non-partisan, bipartisan. We fought like hell outside [the meeting room] at the water cooler, but not inside. I never heard of an argument inside the Commission about Republicans or Democrats.

Vivian Walker: Thank you. I think we have an online question, and then one over here from Mike.

Jeff Ridenour: OK. Moving to a little more of a personal question, one of the online attendees has asked, could one-- or all-- of the panelists please provide a concrete example of success in public diplomacy?

Tom C. Korologos: [When I was an Ambassador I would ask] my embassy staff, "how many are stamp collectors here?" Three hands [would go up]. "I want you to go join the local stamp club."

"How about something else? What do you do?" I do this. "Go fly the American flag at your next meeting. Advocate during the Q&A."

[I would tell the staff] "Go to your strengths in your private life. I don't care whether it's in a bar or in a public meeting. You're always representing America. And don't forget-- here are the talking points for the day on the President's speech last night."

Vivian Walker: Katherine, you listed some successes already. Did you want to add to your list?

Katherine A. Brown: Sure. In public diplomacy, often the experiences and the successes are so personal. When you talk with alums, they tell you about their experience and how it transformed their worldview, or it transformed their work and their approach to work. There are thousands of these stories.

I can speak mostly to the International Visitor Leadership Program. You can read hundreds of stories on the ECA [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs] web page about the impact that the IVLP had on [participant] careers. We know that more than 500 current and former heads of state have been part of exchange programs. [For example,] the current prime minister of Poland, Donald Tusk, and seven members of his cabinet all are alums of U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs.

As my former boss, Dr. Rice [former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice], said, it's a very simple premise: "If you're going to ask your neighbor for a cup of sugar, it's important to know them."

[In] our work, [we're] building relationships. Sometimes, it can be extraordinarily fortuitous [when, for example,] you're [engaged in] a grand-scale diplomacy effort like a trade deal or a peace negotiation. You can build that relationship and trust.

But often, what matters is the everyday interaction, the ability to open a door, to have a conversation, to give the benefit of the doubt, and to have empathy—all that truly matters. What I can talk about, too, is the success within the United States. I already mentioned the 8-to-1 return on the investment.

Recently we did a Community Impact Study to understand how people in the United States are changed by these experiences. We found that more than 80% of the people in the United States who participated see the world differently. They're more interested in the world. Around 70-80% believe it's changed their workforce. It's given them skills to understand a globalized economy and where they fit in.

More than 50% of people in the United States who engage in public diplomacy are more interested in giving back to their communities. We see greater community integration. It strengthens our civic ties.

There are lots of examples of success. Read the report. And check out the resources that exist.

Vivian Walker: We are, I'm sorry to say, out of time. Mike, maybe we can take your question afterwards.

You mentioned Condoleezza Rice, Katherine. I'm looking right at the quote [inscribed on a pillar in the meeting room] by Condoleezza Rice: "Education is transformational. It changes lives."

I'll rephrase it a bit: "Public diplomacy is transformational. It changes lives."

Thank you so much.

Bill, over to you to close us out.

Bill Hybl: Thank you. Let me say, on behalf of the Commission, thanks to our panelists. Great panel. And thanks to all of you for joining us. It really is important.

We'll convene again in May to discuss the ACPD's new special report on the history of the Global Engagement Center, which is due to be published very soon.

With that, I conclude our day's events. Thank you for being here and thank you for your interest in public diplomacy.

END OF TRANSCRIPT