

Chairman Russ Carnahan  
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight

Opening Statement  
“Restoring America’s Reputation in the World: Why it Matters”

March 4, 2010

The Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight will come to order. I want to thank Mr. Andrew Kohut (Pew Center), Dr. Joseph Nye (Harvard University), and Dr. Michael Waller (Center for Security Policy).

Beginning in March, 2007, under my predecessor, there were a series of 10 hearings held on international opinion about the United States and its foreign policies. As the very first witness, Dr. Stephen Kull, from the Program on International Policy Attitudes, said in a March, 2007, hearing before the Subcommittee, “We have never seen numbers this low.”

In 2009, America’s image, tarnished under the previous Administration, was restored. According to a July, 2009, report of the Pew Center, in many countries opinions of the United States are now about as positive as they were at the beginning of the decade before George W. Bush took office. Recent Gallup and Latinobarometer polls also show that U.S. image was significantly higher in 2009.

The first part of this hearing is “Restoring America’s Reputation in the World.” The second component of this hearing is “Why it Matters.” I would like to explore how America’s enhanced reputation can provide an enabling environment to provide greater economic and security benefits to the United States.

First: Achieving diplomatic outcomes. In a November 3<sup>rd</sup> article, Dr. Nye said that diplomats reported that President Obama’s success in brokering agreements at NATO and G-20 Summits was assisted by his popularity. The President was able to promote international cooperation on economic issues when we were on the brink of another depression. We would also expect that countries would be more likely to support the United States at the United Nations and other international fora.

Second: Improving economic indicators. More research is needed, but it is intuitive that if more people like America, more people will want to visit or study in America. If more people like America, more people will want to buy more American products or invest in American businesses. In all of these areas, improved public opinion is not the only factor, and “smart power” tools must be used to reduce unnecessary barriers to tourism, student exchanges, and investment. For example, this Subcommittee held a hearing in March, 2007, entitled “Welcome to America?” which led to the drafting of the bipartisan Travel Promotion Act, which passed the Senate on February 25<sup>th</sup>. According to independent analysis by Oxford Economics, the program

could attract 1.6 million additional visitors from other countries and create more than \$4 billion in consumer spending annually.

Third: Enhancing security Alan Krueger, currently Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Treasury, based on Gallup polling and National Counter Terrorism Center statistics, found in January, 2009, a “greater incidence of international terrorism when people of one country disapprove of the leadership of another country.” In other words, if more people hate America, more people are likely to attack us. Foreign governments may also be more likely to cooperate with us if their publics have a high image of the U.S.

In all of these areas, improving public opinion is not a panacea or an end in itself. It is one element of a “smart power” approach that will lead to a stronger, more prosperous America.