



Congressman

David Price Serving the 4th District of North Carolina

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## REMARKS BY CONGRESSMAN DAVID PRICE ON THE SMART POWER COMMISSION REPORT

Forum Hosted by Research Triangle Institute and the  
Center for Strategic and International Studies  
Research Triangle Park, NC  
March 28, 2008

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*(To access the Smart Power report, visit <http://www.csis.org/smartpower>)*

I am pleased to welcome you here today, and honored to join this group of respected experts in a discussion on “Smart Power,” including Helene Gayle and Rick Barton from the CSIS Commission.

For many of us, the term “smart power” may ring an instinctive bell and require little further definition. The last several years have demonstrated convincingly that a strategy of unilateral application of military might, decoupled from thoughtful and calibrated application of other instruments of persuasion and influence, is dangerous and counterproductive for our national security interests, to say nothing of our moral leadership.

In my work as Chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I am often asked “Are we safer now than we were before the 9-11 attacks?” On one level – that of detecting danger and protecting ourselves against attacks – the answer, of course, is yes. We are marginally safer.

But at a deeper level this is a question about America’s standing in the world – the enmity we excite, the success we enjoy in attracting friends and securing the cooperation our national interests and security require. At that level, the answer is far from reassuring, and the ways we have exercised our power have much to do with the depths to which our standing and influence have fallen.

The Commission’s report notes a paradox: even if we regard the defeat of terrorism as the dominant aim of our foreign and defense policy, attempting to draw others to our side with the challenge to be “for us or against us” in this struggle is likely to have the opposite effect.

“Success in battling terrorism and restoring America’s greatness,” the Commission concludes, “depends on finding a new central premise for U.S. foreign policy to replace the war on terror. Taking its place should be an American commitment to providing for the global good. Such an approach derives from our principles, supports our interests, and strengthens our security.”

The Commission report lays out five areas of focus for its smart power approach: building alliances and institutions; global development; public diplomacy; economic integration; and technology and innovation. Critically, the Commission recognizes that these objectives cannot be pursued in a vacuum; rather, “Smart power means developing an integrated strategy, resource base, and tool kit to achieve American objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power.”

A Smart Power approach should permeate every aspect of our national security architecture, from diplomacy to defense, from economic to energy policy. The Commission’s work is admirably comprehensive. But I want to suggest an area that might have warranted more attention: support for the development of effective and accountable institutions of governance.

I’m attuned to this by virtue of chairing the House Democracy Assistance Commission, which works to strengthen capacity and effectiveness in legislatures in developing democracies around the world. We are joined in this effort by a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations. For example, our host today, RTI, is doing tremendous work in the arena of democratic governance, including parliamentary development, as our Commission saw first-hand in Indonesia last month.

We have partnerships in 12 countries, and our work has taken the Commission to perhaps a dozen other nations. My modest contribution to this discussion would be to suggest that this work – building democratic institutions and modeling democracy to the world – is an essential, and underemphasized, component of Smart Power.

In the course of this work, I have reached a number of conclusions relevant to today’s forum:

First, democracy is about more than just elections. What happens *between* elections matters at least as much as the elections themselves. Unfortunately, in this respect, U.S. efforts are lacking. Our national leaders have pressured and cajoled other nations to hold free and fair elections, but have failed to fully emphasize the need for representative, democratic governance. To fully leverage our power, we must stand solidly beside new democracies as they build their institutions.

Second, we must avoid a democracy backlash. You may have seen last weekend’s *New York Times* report<sup>1</sup> that the citizens of Haiti are increasingly nostalgic for the oppressive

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<sup>1</sup> Lacey, Marc. “Haiti’s Poverty Stirs Nostalgia for Old Ghosts,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/23/world/americas/23haiti.html?scp=2&sq=haiti&st=nyt>.

reign of the Duvalier governments. When democracies fail to deliver the goods, this is the price: citizens clamor for a return to the stability of autocratic rule. Our vital interests are significantly damaged when we fail to help new democracies succeed.

Third, the judgment of the United States government matters greatly. I have been frustrated recently by the Administration's failure to immediately condemn election fraud in Kenya and its unrestrained support for President Musharraf *in contravention of* election results. What these situations and others have shown is that the U.S. continues to be viewed as a moral and legal arbiter in controversies of governance; the failure of the U.S. to condemn anti-democratic measures – or to endorse democratic gains – is immensely deflating to those risking their lives for democracy around the world.

These conclusions complement and affirm the Commission's recommendations. We *must* enhance the resources and attention we devote to development assistance, including capacity building in new democracies. We *must* build and strengthen multi-lateral institutions, including those that support and sustain nascent democracies. And we *must* improve our public diplomacy, recognizing that the weight of our words and the fate of our grassroots allies are inexorably linked.

Let me once again commend the Commission for its excellent work. It has offered an approach that is unique, insightful, and far-reaching. Let me also thank our hosts – the Research Triangle Institute, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Duke University, North Carolina State University, and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill – for convening today's event. I look forward to the discussion, and to the continuing reverberations of the Commission's work as we look to the future.

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