



Hillary Clinton's Unfinished Business at the Broadcasting Board of Governors

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Since her departure from Foggy Bottom on February 1, Hillary Clinton's tenure as secretary of state has received extensive attention—and accolades—from the press. Most assessments have focused on Ms. Clinton's diligence as America's top diplomat, as well as her extensive travel (a total of 956,733 miles in 401 days in visits to 112 countries).

Yet one can't help but wonder if her tenure would have been far better had she exercised a bit more attention to a board she sat on—and which has been excoriated recently by Mrs. Clinton's own department as dysfunctional and badly damaging to key foreign policy interests of the United States.

In mid-January, the State Department's Office of the Inspector General issued a scathing report on the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the nine member panel that oversees all of America's official public broadcasting abroad. That study was originally deemed so harsh that it was labeled "sensitive but unclassified." It concluded that the board—which oversees a sprawling global news conglomerate that encompasses five broadcast outlets, employs more than 3,500 full-time journalists, producers, technicians, and support personnel, on a budget of some \$750 million annually—is seriously flawed in its operations and deeply "dysfunctional" in terms of its organization.

The rot runs deep. "The Board has been fully staffed for only 7 of its 17 years of existence, and the current Governors [except for Mrs. Clinton] are serving under expired terms," the Inspector General report notes. And "...replacing Board members in a regular and timely fashion has been hampered by White House delays in nominating candidates and Senate delays in confirming them. For example, three members of the current Board resigned in 2012, and only one replacement had been nominated as of November 1."

Those that have been, meanwhile, tend to be present only in principle. The Inspector General report notes that sitting governors often fail "to prepare for and attend Board meetings," and that at their meetings there has been a lack of "any discussion of overall U.S. Government policy priorities in relation to the world media."

In her final testimony before Congress on January 23, Mrs. Clinton took responsibility for the attack in Benghazi, Libya, in which four Americans were killed. During the same hearing, however, she made a telling comment about the state of U.S. public diplomacy:

"Our Broadcasting Board of Governors is practically defunct in terms of its capacity to tell a message around the world. So we're abdicating the ideological arena and we need to get back into it. We have the best values. We have the best narrative... and we're letting the Jihadist narrative fill a void. We have to get in there and compete and we can do it successfully."

Yet during her tenure as secretary of state, it was Mrs. Clinton herself who lacked the vision, and the perseverance, to correct this state of affairs. Let's hope that her successor at the State Department, former Massachusetts senator John Kerry, does better. Because, as the past decade of conflict in the Middle East has demonstrated convincingly, allowing the *jihadist* narrative to fill the void costs lives.

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