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People, Places, Power | Season 2, Episode 40: Nations and Truth: International Reputation in an Age of Disinformation ^[1]

Note from the CPD Blog Manager: This post features the podcast *People, Places, Power* co-hosted by CPD Faculty Fellow [Nicholas J. Cull](#) and *Good Country Index* founder [Simon Anholt](#) and features their weekly discussions on international reputation, foreign policy and related issues along the way.

Season 2 launched in May 2022 and covers nation-ranking indices, the impact of COVID-19 on national images, branding indices, transnational issues and much more.

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Episode 40: Nations and Truth: International Reputation in an Age of Disinformation

This episode considers the implications of the rise of state-sponsored fake news and disinformation for international images. Simon takes the line that the exaggerations of nation branding are on a continuum with all-out lies of malicious propaganda. He calls for better research on public responses to nations using distortion. Does it demonstrably damage reputations? Nick argues that state sponsorship of objective news can be an important component of soft power as the BBC is an asset for the UK. He considers the history of this and the ways in our own time by which states are learning to blunt the kind of disruptive media onslaught of the kind deployed by Russia in 2014. He cites the British response to the Skripal case of 2018 and the effective use of so-called 'pre-bunking' strategies in the run up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Simon worries that the loss of confidence in news undermines the whole notion of things being knowable and plays into Russian hands, which prompts Nick to stress the importance not merely of single state-sponsored sources of objective news like the BBC but of building free media broadly to create multiple sources of credible news at a community level. The conversation ends with agreement that education is the answer and that perhaps our age of disinformation is a necessary wakeup call for a better future.