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Aug 26, 2022 by *Nicholas J. Cull, Simon Anholt*

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.

Season 1: Ep. 1: Biden's America | Ep. 2: Brexit Britain | Ep. 3: In Search of the Good Leader | Ep. 4: The European Union | Ep. 5: What Price Monarchy? | Ep. 6: Cities and International Image | Ep. 7: Mega Events? Buyer Beware. | Ep. 8: Germany: From Pariah to Paragon | Ep. 9: Culture: Decorative or Useful? | Ep. 10: Can Individuals Make a Difference? | Ep. 11: Migration Nations | Ep. 12: Credible India? | Ep. 13: The Bad Image | Ep. 14: Populism | Ep. 15: Oh, Canada! | Ep. 16: Digital Disruption: New Technology & Soft Power | Ep. 17: Japan at the Crossroads | Ep. 18: Scotland's Next Step | Ep. 19 Public Diplomacy and Place Branding | Ep. 20: The Talent Trade: Who's Looking for Einstein? | Ep. 21: France: Trouble at the Top? | Ep. 22: Systems and Structures: Organizing Public Diplomacy | Ep. 23: Trust: The Linchpin of Reputation | Ep. 24: Nordics: The Saga of Success? | Ep. 25: The Media: Friends or Foes of Country Image? | Ep. 26: Israel: Branded by Conflict? | Ep. 27: Afghanistan

Season 2: Ep. 28: War in Ukraine | Ep. 29: Meet the Goodest: The Good Country Index for 2022 | Ep. 30: Issues in the Index: The Nation Brands Index, 2021 | Episode 31: Honest to God: The Image of Religions and other Transnational Groups | Episode 32: COVID-19, Image, Media and Communication | Ep. 33: What's in a Name? Renaming Places as a Strategic Gambit | Ep. 34: The Power of "From:" The Country-of-Origin Effect | Ep. 35: Northern Ireland Peace and the Challenge of 'Relevance' | Ep. 36: The Power of Language | Ep. 37: For the Love of Mexico | Ep. 38: Of Greenwashing and 'Hipster Nations' | Ep. 39: Italy: Rising or Falling?

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.