

International Trust and Public Diplomacy

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International Trust and Public Diplomacy

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Abstract

Countries struggle to find ways to be perceived as trustworthy by people around the world because trust is linked to efficiency, business opportunities and political influence. Social trust is also important for democracy to function. A central concept in this paper is *International Trust* as described by Brewer, Gross, Aday and Willnat (2004). The paper is based on case studies of five Public Diplomacy activities: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's letter in *The Washington Post* (2013); Denmark's trust-building effort in Pakistan following the so-called "Muhammad crisis" (from 2010); The British Council's strategy for trust-building in China (2012); Russian President Vladimir Putin's letter in *The New York Times* (2013), and the USA's trust-building effort in Turkey (from 2006). The best results have been obtained where Public Diplomacy has been linked to successful traditional diplomacy at state-level (Iran) or has created a framework for people-to-people relations (Denmark, UK and USA). A backlash was experienced in the case where a foreign state leader patronized the national leader (Russia). In all cases, respect for people in other countries despite differences in culture seems fundamental for a Public Diplomacy initiative to succeed. From a social responsible perspective journalists may have a role to play in creating international trust, and Public Diplomacy staffs consider it already important.

Key words: International Trust, Public Diplomacy

Introduction

During the last decade it has become common practice that national leaders communicate directly to the public in other countries in order to gain trust. Well-known examples related to the Syrian civil war in the 2010s are Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's opinion piece in *The Washington Post* (Rouhani 2013), Russian President Vladimir V. Putin's op-ed in *The New York Times* (Putin 2013), Syrian Deputy Prime Minister Qadri Jamil's interview with *The Guardian* (Steele 2013) and Syrian President Bashar Assad's interview with Fox News (FOX News 2013). All of these are examples of national leaders trying to persuade the Western public to trust them and support their foreign policy during an international crisis that many feared could lead to a new world war.

The abovementioned examples of Public Diplomacy have been much debated around the world, however on a smaller scale national leaders communicate directly with foreign publics every day in order to build trust over time. Such international communication has become easy, available and affordable with the many free services provided by mobile technology and social media platforms. While the entry barriers to the international platforms now are extremely low, the competition for attention is equally high, and the international audience is – often for good reasons – skeptical. The high prize in the Public Diplomacy game is trust.

On the international arena public trust is a treasure. Trusted leaders are welcomed around negotiation tables and as signatories on international agreements. Trust creates an atmosphere where other people are willing to cooperate, take risks and contribute money. Research has shown that when citizens trust their international partners, they prefer diplomatic solutions to conflicts rather than military inventions (Brewer 2004; Sides & Gross 2013); are more willing to support development and efforts to combat poverty (Brewer et al. 2004: 106; Hetherington 2005; Kathrani 2009); and are more prepared to engage in international institutions such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (Ruzicka & Wheeler 2010: 70) and the International Criminal Court in the Hague (Kathrani 2009: 100).

Trust is often based on familiarity and previous experience (Luhmann 1979: 18); however, trust can also be constructed despite unfamiliarity or even with a conflict-filled history (Hoffman 2006A: 2). One way of doing it is through the creation of institutions (Hoffmann 2006A, B; Zucker 1985); another is through convincing communication. An example of the latter was President Obama's efforts to "strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples" that was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2009 (Nobelprize.org 2009). At the time Obama had not demonstrated an ability to create peace, but the chairman of the Nobel Committee – and soon after also Secretary General of the Council of Europe – Thorbjørn Jagland, explained that Obama with his communication on important international issues and by supporting international institutions like the UN contributed to an improved international climate and that the committee wanted to "embrace the message that he stands for" (Gibbs 2009). In the context "an improved international climate" can also be described as a more trusting environment. Trust then was already created in the beginning of Obama's first presidential term, and with that international trust it was comparatively easier to maneuver on the international arena. Trust from this perspective is an "independent, rather than dependent, variable" (Aday 2005: 330).

However, it is always risky to trust. On the international arena this is demonstrated regularly when journalists make appointments with terrorists in order to cover their point of views only to be beheaded when they arrive at the agreed location. As Luhmann (1979: 33) wrote, it is pathological to trust if there is no ground for trust in the reality of the world. While citizens will argue that the journalists were naive in trusting the terrorists, countries face similar risks when they enter international agreements like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. As an example, when countries refrain from obtaining nuclear weapons they bring themselves in a vulnerable situation where they cannot defend themselves in case the nuclear nations break their promises not to use the weapons (Ruzicka & Wheeler 2010: 69). In such cases naiveté will not help.

In the end, foreign policy is generally determined by the opinion of citizens (Lacina and Lee 147; 164). And around the world citizens express little trust in political leaders, international institutions and foreign countries (Poushter 2013; Ipsos MORI A 2013; World Economic Forum 2012; Hessami 2011). This lack of trust is so serious that the World Economic Forum considers it one of the major risks in the years to come. With regard to the risk-situation in general, the World Economic Forum in its conclusion writes:

Three common, crosscutting observations emerged from the varied groups of experts consulted to construct the three cases:

1. Decision-makers need to improve understanding of incentives that will improve collaboration in response to global risks.
2. Trust, or lack of trust, is perceived to be a crucial factor in how risks may manifest themselves. In particular, this refers to confidence, or lack thereof, in leaders, in the systems which ensure public safety and in the tools of communication that are revolutionizing how we share and digest information.
3. Communication and information sharing on risks must be improved by introducing greater transparency about uncertainty and conveying it to the public in a meaningful way (World Economic Forum 2012: 49).

Collaboration, trust and transparency are seen as fundamental factors in the effort to handle risks and ensure public safety while communication and other forms of information sharing are among the tools. In notes from a plenary session in the World Economic Forum on January 27, 2012, Evans writes:

Trust in elected politicians has declined sharply and government has become the least-trusted institution in a range of key countries, followed by company chief executives, according to an authoritative opinion survey. In the Eurozone, 65% of the population does not trust their governments to tell the truth, the survey showed. At the same time, trust in the media has risen after a long period in which it was held in low esteem; non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are collectively the world's most trusted institutions (Evans 2012).

Again we see the emphasis on trust. When citizens do not trust their government to tell the truth, it might be based partly on past personal experiences with these leaders, including the experienced consequences of their

policies, and partly on the form and content of mediated information. The general trust in other people and public institutions that we refer to as social trust is important for a society to function. In a review of literature, Bakir and Barlow summarize some of the benefits of social trust, including its ability to hold a society together; to facilitate business and other forms of exchange between citizens; to motivate people to engage in political life as well as to contribute to civil society; and make it possible for democracies to function (2007: 13).ⁱⁱⁱ

Summing up, the lack of trust in leaders as well as fellow citizens in the international community is a serious problem, and journalists may have a role to play in solving it. While journalists in democracies generally subscribe to different normative role perceptions (e.g. Merrill 1997; McChesney & Nichols 2010), some of them have contributed to nation building (e.g. Carey 2002) and engaged in investigative reporting to uncover societal problems (e.g. Protesse et al. 1991). Their professional history talks about excellent journalists and media institutions helping society through crisis situations such as the wars in the 20th century and the terror on New York and Washington September 11, 2001 (e.g. History of American Journalism 2007; Mogensen 2011A). This social responsibility is emphasized in the SPJ Code of Ethics' preamble which reads:

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues (SPJ 1996).

The *truthfulness* and *trust* which society is missing so badly these years is exactly the product which professional journalists over years have developed an expertise in creating, so the profession has a lot to contribute to society in this respect. The role of journalists in relations to trust creation in society has been discussed here and there in the literature, but it has never been a top priority for the profession because other societal problems have seemed more urgent.

However, for many Public Diplomacy officials international trust has become a top priority in the last decade as the following case studies illustrate. There are many problems related to trust building, including lack of consensus about the ontology and epistemology of trust (e.g. Mogensen 2011B) – what trust is and how we measure it. There are also ethical problems related to it, because if communication tools can be used to create trust, then such tools can also be used by enemies of democracy. Despite such problems, journalists as well as Public Diplomacy officers need to be aware of the challenges and tools.

This paper will provide a brief introduction to the theoretical field and present five cases of Public Diplomacy that has aimed at building international trust. The hope is to create a foundation for further work in the field.

Literature review

International trust

Brewer, Gross, Aday and Willnat conceptualized the term *International Trust* as a:

(...) generalized belief about whether most foreign countries behave in accordance with normative expectations regarding the conduct of nations. Citizens with high levels of international trust see the

realm of world affairs as a friendly environment where trust and cooperation among nations are the norms; in contrast, citizens with low levels of international trust see the same realm as a hostile environment where all nations strive against one another for advantage and readily defect from cooperative efforts. Put another way, international trust is a standing decision to give other nations the benefit of the doubt, an assumption that most countries are of good will and benign intentions (Brewer et al., 2004:96).

It is important to notice that trust here is linked to *normative expectations* and to *conduct*. In other words, trust from this perspective has to do with *performance*. Do other nations do as we expect trustworthy nations to behave? Brewer et al. (2004: 99) used the following questions to measure general trust in other nations:

Would you say that most of the time other nations try to be helpful to the United States or that they are just looking out for themselves?

The norm as implied in the question is that other nations should be *helpful* to the USA. And the words “most of the time” indicate that there is experiences to base trust on. In other words, trust from this perspective is linked to *history*. In another question, trust was seen as the negations of the need to be careful. In other words, it is really a question of whether we can relax in each other’s company or need to be on alert:

Generally speaking, would you say that the United States can trust other nations, or that the United States can’t be too careful in dealing with other nations?

These two questions relate to basic trust because they essentially ask people if they think that the United States can run the risk of being vulnerable or if they think other countries will misuse the vulnerability that comes with trust. The questions are similar to those used in other surveys about general distrust. The researchers borrowed words from “two of Rosenberg’s (1956) misanthropy items that are frequently used to measure social trust” (Brewer et al 2005A: 41)

Among their American respondents Brewer et al (2004: 106) noticed a pattern where “generalized trust in other people and, to a lesser extent, generalized trust in government shaped international trust.” In other words, those Americans who generally believe in strangers also tend to trust foreigners more than do people who generally don’t trust their fellow citizens. Similarly, if people trust their own government, they also tend to trust other nations’ governments more than people who don’t even trust their own government. Americans’ level of international trust frame their perspectives on individual nations and have a huge impact on whether they see these foreign countries as friendly or as unfriendly (Brewer et al 2004: 103). It is not known if citizens in other nations also express a higher level of international trust if they trust their fellow citizens and their politicians (Brewer 2013). There are obvious cases where citizens distrust their own government and trust another government more because some of these people flee their countries and seek asylum in countries they trust more. However, it makes sense if most people generalize from their experience with people and political leaders around them.

Referring to (Hurwitz & Peffley 1987, 1990, Peffley & Hurwitz 1992), Brewer et al accept the idea that citizens

use “information shortcuts” when they form opinions about complicated issues like foreign policy and other nations. Most people don’t generally go searching for detailed information about other nations, but despite the lack of detailed information they create mental images of nations. They generally form seemingly rational opinions thanks to such shortcuts. That is not to say that people would not change their opinion if they obtained more information, but they live with this “low-information rationality” (Brewer et al 2004: 94; see also Sniderman, Brody & Tetlock 1991: 19; Popkin 1991).

Emperors and other major rulers throughout history probably have worked strategically with the creation of international trust and distrust in their power struggles, but as an academic construct it is relatively new. We still don’t know all the elements that contribute to international trust. However, we do know from research that while international trust is related to social trust and political trust, it also have its own track and is not just a byproduct of social trust and political trust. As an example, the level of international trust is also related to international events (Brewer et al 2004: 96), changes in the international environment (Brewer et al A2005: 40), and to the opinions expressed by the respondents’ favored political candidates – also referred to as party loyalties (Brewer 2004; Brewer et al A 2005: 48).

Because trust is recognized as a necessary precondition for peace and prosperity in the world (World Economic Forum 2012; Hoffman A 2006: 1), the level and foundation for trust in other nations and in the global community as a whole has been measured and discussed by many scholars over the last few decades. Trust in another nation has a lot to do with the perception of whether that other country can be considered a friend or an enemy, and with how competent and powerful that nation is (for references see Side & Gross 2013: 584). A number of factors have been mentioned as having an impact on trust in other countries, including the following: media coverage (Sides & Gross 2013: 585; Seib 2010, Willnat et al 2003, 2000); historical links such as colonial ties (Lacina & Lee 2013: 152; Goldsmith and Harris 2012: 234); previous conflicts, e.g. , related to military interventions, violations of local expectations, and unequal status (Goldsmith & Harris 2012: 234); shared norms and values that allow for identification (Goldsmith & Harris 2012: 237; Lacina & Lee 2013: 143); religion and type of government (Lacina & Lee 2013: 143); tolerance and respect for differences (British Council D 2012); and credibility (Goldsmith & Horiuchi 2009: 873). Trust in the international community is also affected by the creation of institutions that support cooperation in a world where there are historical reasons for little or no basic trust, just as it happens on national level (Zucker 1985: 4; Hoffman A 2006: xi; Kathrani 2009: 100; Ruzicka and Wheeler 2010). Trust in international institutions is determined partly by peoples’ opinions about globalization in general and also by a perception of whether or not there is a fair representation in the decision-making bodies (Soderberg 2006:239; Goldsmith & Harris 2012: 236; Hessami 2011: 1). Finally, international trust is related to the conditions in the general environment. When people experience a growing economy and reliable government administration, they are more willing to risk trusting (Aday 2005: 331) than they are during crisis and when faced with a corrupt environment.

Public Diplomacy

National governments striving for influence on the international arena can chose between different strategies. One is to frighten foreign people: Build and publicly display a strong army, preferably including nuclear

weapons and to behave in a cruel way. While this strategy today primarily is used by NGOs like Al Qaida, history speaks of national dictators scaring the citizens of other countries with the clear purpose of making them do what the dictator want in the most efficient way. A well-known example is Mongolian warrior Genghis Khan (died 1227), who created one of the largest empires in history. Another strategy is to try to win the trust and support of people in other countries so that they perceive the country as friendly and its leadership as competent. While it is very tempting to rely on soft power (Nye 2010), most countries spend money on hard power just in case the trust in other nations turns out to be unfounded.

Public Diplomacy is one way of producing international trust. For the purpose of this paper I will use the definition provided by Seib (2013), so that I will talk about Public Diplomacy when national governments reach out to global publics directly, rather than through their governments. According to Cull (2009: 10), it consists of the following elements: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange programs, international broadcasting, and – as a parallel activity “which has to be administered beyond rigidly maintained firewall” - psychological warfare. Professionals talk about the new and old Public Diplomacy. In both cases, the overall aim is to manage the international environment, but while the old was built on targeted messages, the new Public Diplomacy focuses on relation building, and it involves relations building among citizens from different nations on a horizontal level. New technologies have blurred the borders between the domestic and the international news sphere. While practitioners of the old style of Public Diplomacy talk about a nation’s image and prestige in the global world, practitioners of the new style talk about nation branding and use perspectives learned from corporate branding and network theory (Cull 2009: 14). Just as is the case in corporate branding and public relations, Public Diplomacy is only perceived as convincing and can only create soft power if the country behaves in accordance with what it says it does. As Cull writes: “History is full of examples of international actors who found the best PD to be no substitute for a bad policy” (2009: 27); however , when a country behaves’ in a productive way, Public Diplomacy is needed in order for it to become publicly known and thereby contribute to the nations soft power.

As mentioned above, international trust is linked to the perception of whether or not a nation behaves in accordance with expected norms, and we can use broadcasting as an example. International broadcasting is a type of Public Diplomacy with a long history. Among recent well-known examples are the British Broadcasting Co. and Qatar’s Al Jazeera. Governments may be tempted to use international broadcasting for propaganda purposes, but Seib warns that when governments invest in international broadcasting or other forms of news media targeted at a foreign audience, they must follow the norms of professional journalism. Seib:

For purveyors of public diplomacy to earn and maintain the trust of the publics they seek to reach requires an adherence to established principles of journalism, more specifically those of foreign correspondence (2010: 734)

Trust is a necessary element in a working relationship (Hoffman A 2006: 2), but despite the obvious link between Public Diplomacy and trust-building, few scholars have tried to measure the effect of Public Diplomacy initiatives on international trust or even discussed Public Diplomacy in terms of trust. A common way of measuring the effect of Public Diplomacy initiatives is to analyze media coverage of the events, but even

though media coverage is assumed to have an impact on the public agenda, including attribute salience (McCombs et al 1997), positive media coverage of Public Diplomacy events is not a guarantee for friendly opinions among the citizens, especially not if the media have low credibility or are read by a small elite, e.g. , English-language newspapers in countries where most people use a different language (Douglas 2012). Among Public Diplomacy practitioners it is common practice to keep an eye on public opinion polls in planning and evaluate the initiatives (Fouts 2006; Steven 2007; Banks 2011; Memis 2010)

Goldsmith & Huriuchi argue that the impact of foreign leaders' Public Diplomacy efforts has a lot to do with credibility (2009: 865), and in the trust-literature, credibility is also usually considered one of several prerequisites for trust (Jackob 2010; Vanacker & Belmas 2009). Goldsmith & Huriuchi found support for their hypothesis that if a foreign leader is perceived as credible, then "Public Diplomacy will have a net positive effect on foreign policy perceptions" (2009: 866), while if the leader is seen as non-credible, the Public Diplomacy event may create "backlash," which means that public opinion will be more negative after the event "than would otherwise have been the case" (2009: 863). Goldsmith & Huriuchi reached this conclusion after having studied data from 19 multinational opinion studies conducted by six organizations in 61 countries plus Hong Kong and Kosovo. They focused on changes in public opinion in connection with high-level visits by the USA president and other high level government officials to foreign countries.

Building trust on the foundation of war and conflict is one of the main challenges in today's world, and many international institutions are created to support the process. Researchers have pointed to different approaches, all of which are being practiced these years, including building a global culture and morality (Kathrani 2009) similar to how national cultures were constructed back in the past (Carey 2002: 78); construction of shared norms and values (Lacina & Lee 2013: 162) such as within the EU; changing the stereotypes of specific other nations and foreigners in general (Sides & Gross 2013: 597), which require a change in media coverage and is related to a change in real-world behavior, and institutions that discourage nations from dominating one another and encourage cooperation (Hoffman A 2006: xi).

Case studies

For the purpose of this article, five high-profile Public Diplomacy initiatives involving trust building have been analyzed. The five cases are President Rouhani's letter in *The Washington Post* (2013); Denmark's trust-building effort in Pakistan following the so-called "Muhammad crisis" (from 2010); the British Council's strategy for trust building in China; Russian President Vladimit Putin's letter in *The New York Times* (2013), and the USA's trust building effort in Turkey (from 2006). These cases were chosen in order to show a varied selection of recent approaches from different parts of the world. At the same time, the number of available cases was limited. Personal email correspondence with several former classmatesⁱⁱⁱ working within Public Diplomacy as well as a request posted on a Facebook page for Public Diplomacy officers did not bring any new cases. The correspondence however reviled that many Public Diplomacy practitioners are secretive about their trust-building strategies and successes for a number of reasons.

In general the analyses are based on published texts and opinion data supported by private communication to obtain specific information when relevant. While scholars discuss what trust is and how to measure it, the

Public Diplomacy community very often relies on public opinion polls as a reason for an initiative. I certainly agree with those scholars who question what is actually measured in such polls (Mogensen 2013 B). For a discussion about Public Diplomacy evaluations see for example Robert Bank (2011). However despite academic criticism, such polls do play important roles as key performance indicators for Public Diplomacy practitioners around the world, and that is my reason for referring to them in this paper.

Iranian President Rouhani's letter in *The Washington Post*

In 2013 newly elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani appealed directly to the international public to trust him despite an ongoing conflict involving hard power like international sanctions and nuclear treats. At the time more than eight out of ten American people considered Iran unfriendly. In fact Iran was seen as the greatest enemy of the USA (Gallup A 2013). Global public opinion was not much better. In a survey across 39 countries the median for favorable view on Iran was 20 percent, compared to 63 percent favorable of the USA (Poushter 2013; Pew Research 2013A, 2010B).

Rouhani chose a traditional Public Diplomacy tool for his outreach to the Western Public, a targeted message. He penned a letter and had it printed in *The Washington Post* – a newspaper read by diplomats and journalists from all parts of the world. It immediately was on the top of the global public agenda and stayed there for weeks. The letter was striking because it used phrases and arguments that made Rouhani sound familiar to the Western people as he spoke the words they longed to hear (Mogensen 2013). As an example of the style:

The world has changed. International politics is no longer a zero-sum game, but a multidimensional arena where cooperation and competition often occur simultaneously. Gone is the age of blood feuds. World leaders are expected to lead in turning threats into opportunities (Rouhani 2013).

Other trust-creating words from the letter: “considering the interest of others”, “engaging with one’s counterparts,” “equal footing and mutual respect, to address shared concerns and achieve shared objectives,” “win-win outcomes,” “dignity,” “national dialogue,” “think – and talk – about how to make things better”, for “our children and future generations”.

While the letter came as a surprise to the global public at the time, it is an example of how hard power, traditional diplomacy and Public Diplomacy can be used skillfully in combination. At the front stage (Goffmann 1959) governments of Iran and the USA have been enemies for more than 30 years. Iran builds nuclear facilities, and Obama builds an international coalition to impose harsh economic sanctions on Iran. No handshakes were exchanged in public. However, behind the scene there had been secret talks for more than two years between a mid-level envoy from the USA and representatives from the Iranian government.

According to the *Time* magazine:

While Obama hid the talks even from many Administration officials, the meetings produced some visible signs of progress (Crowley 2013: 19).

The timing of Rouhani's letter should be interpreted in that light. Representatives from the two nations had created the framework for upcoming negotiations at an international level and to create public support for that

surprising turn of events, each of the two residents needed to be perceived as trustworthy by the other's country men. Within a couple of week this trust building process included the letter from Rouhani in *The Washington Post*, speeches at the U.N. General Assembly and a friendly phone call between Obama and Rouhani on September 27.

Trust is the key to negotiations, and "after 30 years of conflict, trust may be too much to ask" (Crowley 2013: 21). Trusting is risky. In this case it may be a question of life and death for people. If the Iranians trust that sanctions will be lifted when they reduce their nuclear program, they run a risk of being fooled. The U.S. also runs a risk of being fooled when it trusts that Iran will honor its promises, so institutions, e.g. U.N. inspectors, have been created to control the development and thereby limit the risk of trusting.

During the fall of 2013 the USA public's trust in Iran and its leaders increased slightly. By November, more than 3 out of 10 respondents in a Pew Research poll said that they think Iranian leaders are serious about addressing international concerns about their country's nuclear enrichment program (2013C), but in general people were very skeptical (Frankovic 2013; Jagel 2013A, 2013B). In Iran the public opinion about the USA before the outreach was similarly distrustful (Ray 2012). After the talks became publicly known, a Teheran-based political analyst was quoted in the Time magazine as saying that the negotiations had created a bridge and that the taboo of meeting face to face had been broken (Crowley 2013: 20).

[Denmark's trust-building effort in Pakistan following the Muhammad crisis](#)

Pakistan is the sixth-largest country in the world in terms of population. It has approximately 180 million inhabitants, which is 30 times the population of Denmark, and the trade between the countries is playing an insignificant role for both countries (Eksportrådet 2012). According to a Gallup survey, more than half of the Pakistani populations don't know anything about Denmark (Akhtar 2013 A) while Pakistan on average is mentioned in three articles in Danish national newspapers every day (Infomedia 2014). However, the Danish Embassy in Islamabad in 2011 commissioned a Gallup Pakistan Survey to get a better understanding of the Danish image in Pakistan and then learned that 66 percent of the Pakistanis who knew something about Denmark had a bad impression of the country. When asked to rank a number of countries in terms of trust, Denmark and the USA shared the last place – next to Norway, Sweden and the UK (Akhtar 2013 A).

The Pakistanis who had a negative view of Denmark explained that they perceived the country as not being respectful of Muslims, an opinion grounded partly in Denmark's participation in the War on Terror since 2001 and partly in the publication of the so called "Mohammad cartoons" in 2005. The countries that Pakistanis trusted most, according to the 2011 survey, were Saudi Arabia, China, Iran, Japan, and Turkey. However, the fact that most Pakistanis generally placed great trust in other Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey was not a product of event in the 2000s. This was also the case in 1985 (Gallup Pakistan C).

Respect seems to play an important role in relation to international trust among Pakistanis. Based on face-to-face interviews with 995 young adult Pakistanis conducted by the research company Ipsos MORI in 2011, the British Council writes:

The data shows that if an individual from, for example Pakistan, says that he or she trusts people from the UK, to a large extent what they are saying is that they believe that people from the UK are tolerant and respectful of people from other cultures – tolerant and respectful of people like themselves (British Council D 2013: 21)

Among the powerful nations, the Pakistanis trusted neighboring China most in 1985 and also perceived China as the most friendly in 2012 (Gallup Pakistan B), while the USA has been considered neither trustworthy nor friendly by the Pakistanis for more than 30 years (Gallup Pakistan C 1985; B 2012). In other words, there seem to be a pretty stable evaluation of which nations are friendly and trustworthy. To some extent the image of other nations comes from the Pakistani diaspora. According to a 2012 survey, 23 percent of “Pakistani households claim that someone from their own family or close relative in the extended family now lives abroad” (Gallup Pakistan A 2012). If Pakistani diaspora has an influence on how Denmark is perceived in Pakistan, then it is important from a trust-building perspective that they perceive Danes as being tolerant and respectful.

In order to improve trust, the Danish Embassy in Islamabad chose a strategy that involved working with journalists in Denmark and Pakistan to create a more positive image of the Pakistani diaspora in the Danish media and of Denmark in Pakistani media. For this strategy to be implemented, the embassy engaged a Pakistani communication expert, who had lived in Denmark, spoke both languages fluently and had valuable professional and personal networks in both countries. The embassy then tried to increase trust by emphasizing “Danish values such as democracy, transparency, gender equality, right to freedom of religion and the entire mindset of helping those in need (based on the welfare system)” (Akhtar 2013 B).

The trust aspect is highlighted on the embassy’s website, where Ambassador Jesper Møller Sørensen writes:

Parallel to our support for social cohesion, development and democratic institutions in Pakistan, we will work to strengthen our relationship based on mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual benefit (Embassy 2013).

The embassy’s website provides information about Denmark, including information about the life as Muslim in Denmark. The embassy also has a Facebook with regular updates and possibility to comment. At the time of writing, the posts dealt with non-conflict issues such as cultural events and Pakistani successes, including a Pakistani winner of the UN Human Rights Prize 2013. More than 66.000 people had indicated that they liked the page. A few thousand shared information about the page – primarily young adults from Lahore and Punjab – which indicates a real interaction even if it is limited in number.

The Danish trust-building effort in Pakistan is an example of new Public Diplomacy with its emphasis on relation building and use of social media dialog. There is an emphasis on mutual respect and cooperation. The strategic intent to create a more positive image of Pakistani diaspora in Denmark can be understood as an indirect way of getting the message across.

The embassy planned a follow-up survey to learn to what extent opinions about Denmark had changed in the

light of the trust-building effort.^{iv}

The British Council in China

One of the big actors in the Public Diplomacy business is the British Council that was founded in 1934. Essentially its purpose was to create relations between British citizens and people in other parts of the world, teach the English language, and help foreigners get a sense of life and culture in the United Kingdom (British Council A 2013). Although the British Council receives approximately £135 million in government grants annually (British Council B 2013) and contributes to “UK’s soft power” (British Council C 2013), it operates independently from the UK government. This independence is considered important:

Our research shows that people trust people more than they trust governments, so connections between people often make a more significant contribution to soft power than government-led activities (British Council C 2013).

Today the British Council empathizes that its activities contribute to the trust-building between people in the UK and people around the world, and that this trust has both economic and political value:

The British Council believes that cultural relations builds international trust and understanding, generates opportunities for individuals to fulfill their potential, and fosters the cooperation that contributes to a stable world. We are in the business of people-to-people and society-to-society relationships, e.g. , the two-way exchange of knowledge and ideas between people in the UK and people of other cultures (Memis 2009: 294).

The organization runs projects in more than 100 countries, “involves more than 12.5 million people directly, and reaches 580 million people through digital media, radio and television” (British Council C 2013). The impact of each project is measured and evaluated in the light of the British Council’s strategy (Memis 2009: 295). In the report *Trust Pays: How international cultural relationships build trust in the UK and underpin the success of the UK economy* (British Council D 2012) the British Council argues that young people age between 16-34 , living in countries like Brazil, Russia, India, China, and Turkey tend to have increased trust in the British people and are more motivated to interact with British people in the future when they have participated in some of activities organized by the British Council.

An example of British Council’s activities is the festival “UK Now” in China in 2012. According to British Council, events were held in 29 cities in mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau presenting almost 800 UK artists and performers. More than four million people attended these events, and they generated more than 6,000 pieces of media coverage (British Council B 2013: 19). It is worth noticing that the British Council, like most other countries, measures the success of its Public Diplomacy partly in form of numbers of participants and media coverage. However, the British Council also uses public opinion polls both as a planning tool and to measure the impact of Public Diplomacy activities. In the case of China, data collected online by the research agency YouGov in 2010 showed that Chinese aged 16-34 were more interested in opportunities to work/do business with people in the UK if they had experienced a cultural activity with the UK (British Council B 2013: 4). In other

words, the British Council found that it was good business to organize cultural events in China.

In the 2010 survey approximately 50 percent of the young Chinese said they trusted people from the UK – only approximately 30 percent said they trusted the UK government. But the British Council found that people-to-people trust was associated with a higher level of interest in and doing trade with the UK. Among the Chinese who said that they trusted people from the UK, 49 percent were interested in work/business opportunities with people from the UK, while this was only the case for 30 percent of those that distrusted people from the UK. And cultural relations activities seemed to play a role in relation to trust: 58 percent of the young Chinese who had participated in cultural activities with the UK trusted people from the UK while that was only the case for 43 percent of the respondents who had not participated in cultural events. A closer look at the data showed that the more UK events the young Chinese had participated in, the more trust they had in people from the UK. Obviously, these numbers do not prove that cultural events produce trust. It may be that the events attract people who already hold a favorable view of people from the UK. However, the British Council made its opinion clear in the report called: *“Trust Pays: How international cultural relationships build trust in the UK and underpin the successes of the UK economy”* (British Council D 2012).

In summary, the British Council aims at building trust primarily at a people-to-people level.

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s letter in *The New York Times*

The Russian president’s letter to the American public in the fall of 2013 is an example of a Public Diplomacy initiative that created a backlash. The op-ed called *A Plea for Caution from Russia* was published online by *The New York Times* on Sept. 11 and in the printed newspaper the following morning. Essentially Vladimir Putin warned that a military intervention in Syria could have terrible consequences for the world society.

Immediately, representatives from the two major political parties in the USA reacted unfavorably. The Republican House Speaker John Boehner told news media that he was "insulted" by it, and Democrat Sen. Bob Menendez said it made him want to throw up (CBS News 2013; Moody 2013). The op-ed was discussed around the world and analyzed by bloggers while investigative journalists soon brought attention to Ketchum – the American public relations firm that pitched the Putin article to *The New York Times* (Elliott 2013). *New York Times* Public Editor Margaret Sullivan wrote that very few op-ed pieces had ever received as much immediate attention and:

From my point of view, The Times publishing the Putin op-ed was completely legitimate. Whether you agree with it or not, whether you approve of Mr. Putin or not, it could hardly be more newsworthy or interesting. Just as with any op-ed piece, The Times’s publication of this one is not an endorsement of him or his ideas (Sullivan 2013).

Because the text seemed to reflect Western thinking, it was publicly discussed if President Putin had authored it or if the text was written by Ketchum. The Russian president wrote that he wanted to “speak directly to the American people (...) at a time of insufficient communication between” the two societies. He also wrote that his relationship with President Obama was marked by “growing trust” and that if it was possible to avoid the

use of force against Syria, it would “improve the atmosphere in international affairs and strengthen mutual trust.” The more substantial issues that he discussed in the piece were:

1. The United Nations was in his opinion an important institution that helped solve international problems. If the USA would bypass it and “take military actions without Security Council authorization,” it would have serious consequences.
2. The civil war in Syria was in his opinion not a battle for democracy. Parts of the opposition consisted of international terrorist organizations. The fighters might also create problems in their home countries when they returned from Syria.
3. The nations should in his opinion no longer threaten use of force but instead reach agreements with the use of diplomacy and political settlement.

These topics may not in themselves have been provocative to the American public. After all, the majority of Americans agrees that the USA should cooperate fully with the United Nations (Pew Research 2013E: 21); the terrorist organizations mentioned by Putin were some that the United States State Department had designated as terrorist organizations; and the USA aims at being a peaceful democracy. However, President Putin patronized the American people and its president, as in the following quotes from the Op-Ed:

- It is alarming that military intervention in internal conflicts in foreign countries has become commonplace for the United States. Is it in America’s long-term interest? I doubt it. Millions around the world increasingly see America not as a model of democracy but as relying solely on brute force, cobbling coalitions together under the slogan “you’re either with us or against us.”
- I carefully studied [President Obama’s] address to the nation on Tuesday. And I would rather disagree with a case he made on American exceptionalism, stating that the United States’ policy is “what makes America different. It’s what makes us exceptional.” It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation.
- We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord’s blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal.

The American people may have felt that Putin corrected them as if they were inferior or less intelligent. A Gallup survey conducted a few days later after Russia had also helped negotiate a deal that would rid Syria of chemical weapons, averting a military action against Syria, showed a drop in Americans’ view on Russia. Swift wrote:

More Americans view Russia as unfriendly or an enemy of the United States than as an ally or friendly nation for the first time in 15 years, marking a significant change from as recently as June of this year. A majority of Americans view Russian President Vladimir Putin unfavorably for the first time since he originally took office in 2000 (2013).

It is interesting that Russia and its president received low approval in opinion surveys even though the majority of the American public approved the Syrian chemical weapons agreement and also found that President

Vladimir Putin during the Syrian chemical weapons crisis had been a much more effective leader than Barack Obama and other world leaders (Jordan 2013). In general the American public did not want to get involved in a military intervention in Syria (Frankovic 2013), and they found that Putin had been helpful in avoiding it (Swift 2013); they did not fear the military power of Russia (Pew Research 2013E: 11); however they perceived Russia as unfriendly or even as an enemy of the United States (Frankovic 2013). Interviews conducted later in the fall 2013 showed that the majority of Americans (54 percent) viewed Russia unfavorable compared to 43 percent the year before (Pew Research 2013E: 35).

Worldwide the image of Russia's leadership has been poor for years (Clifton 2012), and Swift speculates that "matters such as the Snowden asylum case and Russian policy toward gays and lesbians may weigh more heavily on Americans' minds than Russia's recent role in the negotiations on Syria" (2013).

What may have created the negative reception of Putin's public letter can be summarized as a combination of disrespect (patronizing) and the strong negative reaction of opinion leaders from both major parties.

USA's trust building effort in Turkey

The USA finds it of strategic importance to have a good relationship with the Turkish people. Turkey plays an important and growing strategic role in international politics for a number of reasons including its mediating role between the Muslim world and the Western world; its geographic position between Europe and Asia; and its NATO membership. From a USA perspective, it threatens the Americans' "ability to engage on a broad range of foreign policy priorities" if the Turks have a negative opinion about the country (McKay 2012: 41). That was exactly the case in the mid-2000s in relation to the war in Iraq and also due to a perception that "United States had failed to adequately support Turkey in confronting domestic terrorist attacks from the [The Kurdistan Workers' Party] PKK" (McKay 2012: 40). A Pew Global attitude pool showed that 52 percent of Turks was favorable of the USA in 1999/2000, but this dropped to 9 percent in 2007 (Pew Research D 2013). The American Embassy in Ankara was faced with the challenge of "reversing the negative trends in public opinion." Then-cultural affairs officer at the embassy Elisabeth McKay writes:

(...) post took on the challenge of establishing a homegrown public diplomacy campaign to re-establish trust and open new avenues of engagement with a Turkish public that was measurably disinclined to engage with us (McKay 2012: 41).

The strategy consisted of ten pilot-projects. Some key concepts were *alternative audience* (emphasis on Turkish youth; inclusion of audiences that would usually not benefit from USA-sponsored programs because they did not speak English or lived in remote areas); *people-to people approach* ("privatization" of the relationships between Turks and Americans); new image of the USA-Turkish relationship (show that a wide variety of relationships existed between people in the two countries – not only military/security); *new media* (social media included); and *focus on topics of shared interest* (education, culture, commerce). It is worth noticing that the strategy indirectly mediated liberal/USA values like entrepreneurship, free speech, critical thinking, diversity and individualism.

One of these “people diplomacy” projects was Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program that “brings classrooms in Turkey and the U.S. together to develop entrepreneurial projects” (iEARN-USA 2011). This was a major program where high school students created their own school-based companies and gained insight into innovation, financing, marketing, trading , e.g. High school teams competed, they shared ideas with American students online and some of them participated in the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Istanbul in 2011 (americaabroad 2012). Another project helped young people create films. McKay:

Turkish youth, like youth elsewhere, want to be heard. The filmmakers’ project gave them an opportunity to convey their views on an international stage on issues they cared about. It gave us a vehicle for promoting linkages, and encouraging critical thinking and freedom of expression (2012: 47).

Among the lessons learned from the different programs were that programs must be designed with the audience’s need in mind (McKay 2012: 49) and that the communicators must show genuine interest in the people that they hope to influence (McKay 2012: 53).

The American Embassy measured the effect of its activities and continued to analyze public opinion surveys. Because trust in foreign countries is determined by many factors , the effect of these programs on the general public opinion is not known. However, a 2013 Pew Global attitude pool showed that 21 percent of the Turks had a favorable view of the USA – an increase of more than 130 percent. (Pew Research D 2013).

Final remarks

According to the literature, peoples’ trust in other countries – their people and their governments – is closely related to how people trust their own neighbors, government and media, how safe they feel and what kind of picture their opinion leaders present of the world. Peoples’ international trust influence how they perceive single countries. Most people have neither the time, the means, or the interest in more incept studies of the many different countries in the world, so they rely on shortcuts in their judgments. Surveys indicate that perceptions of other countries generally stay at the same level for decades unless a real event has a serious impact –negative events typically have a quicker impact on the trust-level than positive events. It is so much easier to break trust than to build it.

However, international trust is important for the global world to be peaceful and prosperous. International organizations try to create trust and so do a number of individual countries that consider trust a value in business as well as politics. What they seek is to influence the shortcuts, but how they can best influence those is still an open question. This paper has presented five different approaches. The best results have been obtained where Public Diplomacy has been linked to successful traditional diplomacy at state-level (Iran) or has created frameworks for people-to-people relations (Denmark, UK and USA). A backlash was experienced in the case where a foreign state leader patronized the national leader (Russia). In all the described cases, respect for people in other countries despite differences in culture seems fundamental for a Public Diplomacy initiative to succeed in trust-building.

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ⁱ The introduction contains elements that has previously been part of a conference paper (Mogensen 2012)

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^{iv} Elements in this chapter were also used in a conference paper (Mogensen B 2013).