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Research

Policy Insight

Trust in international relations, public diplomacy and soft power

A review of the literature and data

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Foreword

Life without trust is impossible, as just a moment's thought will show. Paying taxes, buying food, getting into a train or plane – each of these everyday activities depends, at its root, on trust between individuals and organisations, businesses, politicians, or the legal system.

Without trust at the heart of each of these implicit bargains, many unexceptional activities become perilous, if not actually impossible. The same is true, on a much larger scale, when there is a lack of trust between nations.

Where trust is present in international relations, all kinds of collaborative behaviour for good is possible. Where trust is absent, nations (and their citizens) find themselves in a very hostile environment indeed.

This is of more than purely academic interest.

The challenges of climate change, food insecurity and international conflict – to name a few – demand a collective approach from nations with common aims.

Yet we live in an era of diminishing trust – between individuals and the state, between nations, and between the global 'North' and 'South'. That's why it is so important to understand the process by which trust is created and maintained (or by which it is lost).

This review of the literature on trust in international relations aims to advance that understanding, and untangle some of the key issues – uniquely, by looking at research and reflection from around the world, rather than relying on the more easily accessible English-language sources.

The British Council operates in many different fields – the arts, education, language teaching – but we are a trust-building organisation above all. We know that trust between nations is a prerequisite for positive collaboration; and that a breakdown in trust is the inevitable precursor of conflict.

Understanding the origins and limitations of trust, as well as how to nourish it, is increasingly urgent. This report hopes to make its own contribution to the task.

The challenges of our common future demand it.

Scott McDonald
Chief Executive

1. This is a sample of Footnote.

Executive summary

Executive summary

The international political system seems the most fragile it has been in decades. Several key global events – including the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing climate change and a return of war to Europe – have caused instability and unease. These events have occurred in a time of declining levels of trust across the globe. Why should this matter? This report, involving research in Arabic, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Spanish is a review of literature on trust in international relations, commenting on work on:

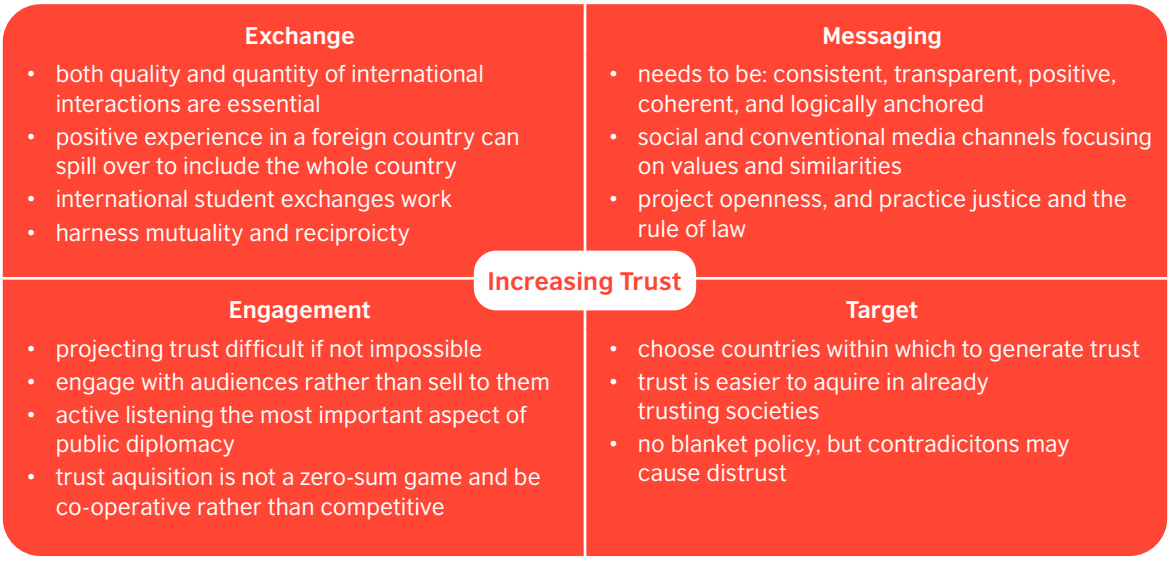
- the concept and importance of trust
- how the concept, in its various forms, is approached within international relations scholarship
- the impact of trust and distrust on foreign policy, economics, global collective action issues and online relationships
- attempts to affect trust, either positively through diplomacy and public diplomacy, or negatively through the weaponization of distrust.

Conceptual and theoretical work on trust often overstate its complexity. Ultimately, trust is the expectation of behaviour. It is important because trust can be a facilitator if present, and an inhibitor if not. Trust relies on mutuality and reciprocity. From an international relations perspective, there is not a consensus on the role of trust – with the relevance, sources and types of trust varying depending on theoretical perspective. Trust can be acquired slowly but lost quickly. As trust is inextricably linked to soft power, governments attempt to generate trust internationally and cultural institutions do so through public diplomacy. That said, trust building efforts need not be competitive, but can involve co-operation. This is essential with efforts to tackle collective action issues.

As an organisation with trust building objectives at its core, it is essential for the British Council to understand whether their work is paying off. This report reviews key literature on the fields relevant to the organisation. Several sources portray the British Council as the benchmark in the field.

Researchers writing in various languages are keen to offer suggestions to public diplomacy organisations. These are largely consistent but highlight the delicate balancing act between national image projection and engaging with international audiences. Other suggestions include:

- the need for consistent, transparent, positive, coherent and anchored messaging through social and conventional media channels focusing on values and similarities
- increasing cultural exchanges
- actively listening to international audiences and not marketing or selling to them
- a targeted approach to trust building.



Trust is intangible and therefore difficult to measure. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to measure trust and its impact in the form of academic empirical analyses and soft power, and country reputation indices. Attempts to measure perceptions of trust are dominated now by non-academic surveys and indices which are growing in popularity with policy makers. However, these often suffer from the similar issues:

- opaque methodologies
- the problematic coupling of trust with attractiveness
- binary assumptions of trust
- failure to account for differences in the sources of trust.

Both academic and non-academic empirical research have struggled to quantify the impact of trust: most of the attempts do so from an economics perspective. This is due, in part, to measurements of trust largely being a snapshot of the situation. A greater emphasis on qualitative research into dynamics of trust, focusing on changes over time, might help remedy these shortcomings.

Introduction

Introduction

We are now living in an 'age of distrust.'[1] Several indicators appear to demonstrate a global decline in levels of trust in four key institutions – government, business, NGOs and media.[2] In its annual Global Risk Report, the World Economic Forum has stated that the lack of trust is a significant risk for the global economy.[3] Worldwide, there is a 'climate of suspicion: experts, economists and international institutions are not trusted.'[4] Why does trust matter? Trust can be considered as a glue of society. It allows people, organisations, states to live and interact with one another. Without it, it can lead to tensions, misunderstandings and even conflict. But what is trust? How does it affect international relations? Can trust be changed, and if so, what effect does this have?

For the British Council, building trust and understanding between the people of the UK and peoples of other countries is a primary objective. The organisation regularly surveys people to assess trust in people, trust in government, and trust in institutions. But what are the real-world implications of trust? Can this be measured or quantified? What are others researching, doing, or thinking about trust? Are the current metrics still useful in determining levels of trust?

The following is a review of the literature and data of trust in international relations that uncovers how those researching the concept have attempted to address these questions. Several researchers working in Arabic, English, French, Germany, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish conducted a review of academic literature, non-academic literature, metrics, surveys, and rankings and provided their thoughts and summaries to the author to compile the report. It attempts to determine relevance and implications of this work to the British Council. The report involved researching the concept of trust, and others related to it, such as soft power and public diplomacy[5]. Researchers working in several languages reviewed academic and non-academic literature and metrics.

The report is structured as follows:

First, is a summary and a review of the general conceptualisation of trust and why it is important. Second, is a section detailing how scholars have addressed the dynamics involved in international trust from a variety of approaches. The third section details how trust impacts international relations including foreign policy and traditional diplomacy, forms of trust between groups, economic considerations regarding trust, global and collective action issues, and the complexities of trust in the online space.

1. Roger Cohen, "The Age of Distrust", The New York Times, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/20/opinion/the-age-of-distrust.html.
2. Edelman, "The Edelman Trust Barometer 2021", Global Report, https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2021-03/2021%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer.pdf
3. World Economic Forum, "The Global Risks Report 2022", in Insight Report (2022).
4. Harold James, "Deglobalization as a Global Challenge", (2017): 6.
5 The terms public diplomacy, soft power, cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations each have distinct but overlapping meanings and are often used interchangeably in the literature. Further consideration of the terminology can be found on page 34 of this report.

Fourth, is a theoretical discussion of how trust can be gained, lost, or maintained or how distrust can be weaponised. With a discussion on the role of public diplomacy and some findings from research on how institutions have attempted to improve trust in the international sphere.

The fifth section reviews how others have tried to measure trust and country soft power performance.

The sixth section is a summary of works relevant to the UK and the British Council.

The seventh is a summary of recommendations, drawn from the literature to those involved in attempts to affect trust at the international level.

The final section is a conclusion of the themes present in the literature reviewed in the report, some extent issues with the trust literature, recommendations for further research and the next steps for the British Council.

What is trust?

Trust as a concept

Trust as a concept

The study of trust is inherently interdisciplinary, as trust is involved in a wide range of relationships within multiple fields, from economics,[6] to psychology,[7] sociology[8] and business studies,[9] among others. Within these fields covering the same concept, there are divergent interpretations and meanings of the term and how it affects relationships, systems, structures, and consequences.

There is universal consensus in the belief that trust is vital to any relationship, be it social, economic, political, or diplomatic, but what is it? In an interdependent society, trust forms the basis of our interactions with one another, businesses, governments and institutions.[10] Trust is a perception of trustworthiness;[11] it is a relationship whereby A trusts B to do X.[12] It is, therefore, an expectation rather than a behaviour.[13] It is a (conscious or unconscious) probability calculation when dealing with other actors[14] and how confidently one party predicts the actions of another.[15] Trust involves uncertainty and vulnerability.[16] Others define trust as 'the belief that one will not be harmed when his or her fate is placed in the hands of others.'[17]

6. Edward L Glaeser et al., "Measuring Trust," The quarterly journal of economics 115, no. 3 (2000); Ernst Fehr, "On the Economics and Biology of Trust," Journal of the european economic association 7, no. 2-3 (2009); Manuel Beccerra and Anil K Gupta, "Trust within the Organization: Integrating the Trust Literature with Agency Theory and Transaction Costs Economics," Public Administration Quarterly (1999); Todd H Chiles and John F McMackin, "Integrating Variable Risk Preferences, Trust, and Transaction Cost Economics," Academy of management review 21, no. 1 (1996).
7. Karen Schweers Cook, "Networks, Norms, and Trust: The Social Psychology of Social Capital 2004 Cooley Mead Award Address," Social Psychology Quarterly (2005); Ken J Rotenberg, The Psychology of Trust (Routledge, 2018); Warren H Jones, Laurie Couch, and Susan Scott, "Trust and Betrayal: The Psychology of Getting Along and Getting Ahead," in Handbook of Personality Psychology (Elsevier, 1997)
8. Jason Rutter, "From the Sociology of Trust Towards a Sociology of 'E-Trust'," International journal of new product development & innovation management 2, no. 4 (2001); Morten Frederiksen, "Dimensions of Trust: An Empirical Revisit to Simmel's Formal Sociology of Intersubjective Trust," Current Sociology 60, no. 6 (2012); Dmitry Khodyakov, "Trust as a Process: A Three-Dimensional Approach," Sociology 41, no. 1 (2007); Piotr Sztompka, Trust: A Sociological Theory (Cambridge university press, 1999).
9. Keith J Blois, "Trust in Business to Business Relationships: An Evaluation of Its Status," Journal of management studies 36, no. 2 (1999); Yimin Huang and Ian F Wilkinson, "The Dynamics and Evolution of Trust in Business Relationships," Industrial Marketing Management 42, no. 3 (2013); Robin Pennington, H Dixon Wilcox, and Varun Grover, "The Role of System Trust in Business-to-Consumer Transactions," Journal of Management Information Systems 20, no. 3 (2003)
10. Megan Tschannen-Moran and Wayne K Hoy, "A Multidisciplinary Analysis of the Nature, Meaning, and Measurement of Trust," Review of educational research 70, no. 4 (2000).
11. Russell Hardin, "The Street-Level Epistemology of Trust," Analyse & Kritik 14, no. 2 (1992).
12. Ibid., 154.
13. Russell Hardin, "Conceptions and Explanations of Trust," (2001).
14. Andrew H Kydd, "Learning Together, Growing Apart: Global Warming, Energy Policy and International Trust," Energy Policy 38, no. 6 (2010).
15. Aaron M Hoffman, "A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations," European Journal of International Relations 8, no. 3 (2002).
16. Russell Hardin, Trust, Polity (Wiley 2006), 29; Aaron M Hoffman, Building Trust: Overcoming Suspicion in International Conflict (Suny Press, 2006), 17; Deborah Welch Larson, "Trust and Missed Opportunities in International Relations," Political Psychology 18, no. 3 (1997): 19.
17. Brian C Rathbun, "It Takes All Types: Social Psychology, Trust, and the International Relations Paradigm in Our Minds," International Theory 1, no. 3 (2009): 349.

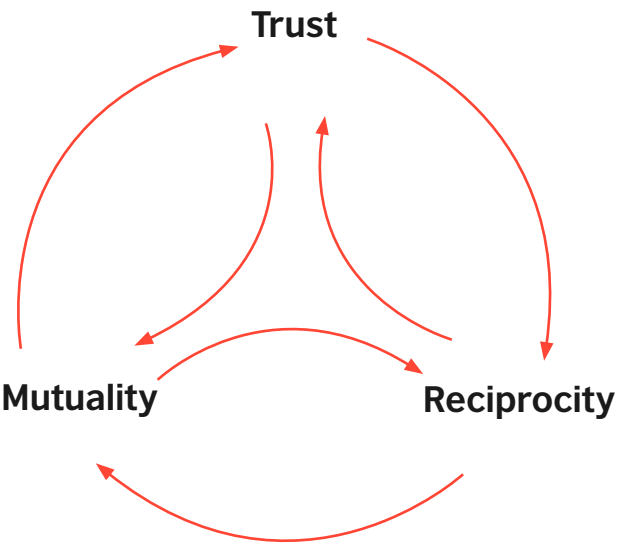
The Oxford English Dictionary gives one definition of trust as 'confidence in or reliance on some quality or attribute of a person or thing, or the truth of a statement.'[18] When we think of trust in an institution (a thing, although populated by persons) we are most affected by its competence or incompetence in providing its purported service.

Conceptually, Hunyadi offers a novel definition of the term by suggesting that 'trust is a bet on behavioural expectations.'[19] Lehmans and Letonturier edit an entire review of the role of trust in politics. They claim, 'having trust requires a secure, stable, reciprocal and shared relationship.'[20]

They also assert that as levels of trust are declining, communication needs to be better than ever. 'The question today is not so much to know in whom one can trust, but if one can trust and according to which methods, contexts of exchange and supports.'[21] For Hollande and Wolton 'trust is the very foundation of political relations. It is not possible to convince if there is no trust.'[22]

Trust is a key component of social capital,[23] which can promote democracy and economic prosperity.[24] It is part of a complex circle of a set of attitudes including reciprocity and mutuality (see Figure 2).[25] Without mutual trust, co-operation is not possible.[26] In turn, if trust is not reciprocated it fosters distrust in the other party.

Figure 2. Trust, mutuality, and reciprocity



18 J. A. Weiner E. S. C. Oxford University Press Simpson, The Oxford English Dictionary, Second ed., vol. 18 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 623-5.
19 Mark Hunyadi, "La Confiance Est Un Pari," Hermès, La Revue 88, no. 2 (2021).
20 "Introduction. La Confiance, Ou La Parole Entre Information Et Communication," ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 François Hollande and Dominique Wolton, "Confiance, Politique Et Communication," ibid.
23 Arnaldo Bagnasco, "Trust and Social Capital," The Blackwell companion to political sociology (2004).
24 Yukiko Kuramoto, "The Role of Trust in Global Governance [グローバル・ガバナンスにおける「信頼」の考察]," Chuo University Institute of Social Science Annual Report [中央大学社会科学研究所年報] 20 (2016).
25 Elinor Ostrom and James Walker, Trust and Reciprocity: Interdisciplinary Lessons for Experimental Research (Russell Sage Foundation, 2003).
26 Sonja Zmerli and Kenneth Newton, Trust in People, Confidence in Political Institutions, and Satisfaction with Democracy (Routledge, 2007).

Andrew Kydd argues that 'essentially, for trust to occur between two rational actors, one must fathom it "relatively likely" that co-operation will be reciprocated by another.'[27]

> When we say we trust someone or that someone is trustworthy, we implicitly mean that the probability that he will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental to us is high enough for us to consider engaging in some form of co-operation with him. Correspondingly, when we say that someone is untrustworthy, we imply that that probability is low enough for us to refrain from doing so.[28]

Rathbun stresses this co-operative element, arguing that without trust, co-operation is impossible;[29] this is because 'the condition of ignorance or uncertainty about other people's behaviour is central to the notion of trust.'[30] In other words, one party will never be able to fully understand the intentions of others or how they might behave in certain situations; trust partially overcomes this limitation. 'Trustworthiness is necessary to reduce the costs of transactions required in co-operation'.[31]

Other authors argue for a more complex and multifaceted conceptualisation of trust. Lebow suggests that trust,

> Comes from friendship and a willingness to do things for friends that have nothing to do with one's own goals. Treating personal friends, elites and countries as ends in themselves not means to our ends — to borrow the words of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant — builds trust and facilitates co-operation, which in turn builds common identities and more trust.[32]

Mercer meanwhile states,

> trust is an emotional belief. Emotional beliefs are generalisations about internal, enduring properties of an object that involve certainty beyond evidence ...
>
> Trust without emotion implies an expectation of trustworthiness based on incentives; trust adds nothing if incentives explain co-operation. Emotion makes identity, trust, and solutions to collective action problems possible.[33]

According to Peter, trust 'exists above all in the interpersonal and institutional area. Mutual trust as well as trust in social systems, it is said, is a necessary prerequisite for stable social orders'.[34] Labarca provides some thought from an economic perspective on the conceptualisation of trust by suggesting 'the importance of reputation becomes more important as network size increases.'[35]

There are wide-ranging positions on what trust is, but perhaps there is more consensus and less complexity than is claimed. Ultimately, trust is the expectation in the behaviour of an actor, organisation, or object. While this sub-section has addressed how others have conceptualised trust, it has not yet detailed why, generally, it is an important concept worthy of a systematic review.

The importance of trust

Trust is important for a variety of reasons. Trusting an actor or institution can increase efficiency and productivity, as fewer mechanisms are required to compensate for behaviour that can potentially disrupt intended activity. Trust saves time, and in some contexts such a saving is essential to the transaction. Conversely, 'mistrust leads to control and precautions that are both costly and time consuming', [36] as mechanisms need to be incorporated into arrangements with other parties to avoid potential damage from unanticipated behaviour.

27. Trust and Mistrust in International Relations (Princeton University Press), 5.
28. Diego Gambetta, "Can We Trust Trust," Trust: Making and breaking cooperative relations 13 (2000): 217-8.
29 "Trust in International Relations," in The Oxford Handbook of Social and Political Trust, ed. Eric M Uslaner (Oxford University Press, 2018)
30 Gambetta, "Can We Trust Trust," 218.
31 Gaspare M Genna, "Positive Country Images, Trust and Public Support for European Integration," Comparative European Politics 7, no. 2 (2009): 216.
32 "The Role of Trust in International Relations," Global Asia 8, no. 3: 23.
33 "Rationality and Psychology in International Politics," International organization 59, no. 1: 95 & 99.
34 "Vertrauen Als Ressource Der Diplomatie," in Diplomatie Mit Gefühl (De Gruyter Oldenbourg), 66.
35 "La Confianza Y La Reputación Como Variables Del Desarrollo Económico Y La Imagen País," Cuadernos. info, no. 23: 72.
36. Jon Reiersen, "Drivers of Trust and Trustworthiness," International Journal of Social Economics (2018): 2.

'The placement of trust gives resources to the trustee, facilitating the power to act.'[37] From the perspective of an organisation, trust is vital; 'when individuals do not trust an organisation, the organisation is perceived to be lacking competence, integrity and goodwill.'[38] 'Trust is thought to provide trading partners with a competitive advantage because it facilitates investments in relationship assets, encourages information sharing, and generally lowers transaction costs.'[39] Genna asserts that 'inter-personal trust produces effective institutional performance because of the higher probability of obtaining co-operation.'[40] Dasgupta believes the development of trust between individuals is the condition for economic progress.[41]

Some scholars emphasise the positive link between trust and the economy. Trust is, therefore, necessary for the economic vitality of modern societies: an abundance of trust promises fairness and growth, weak trust results in injustice and underdevelopment.[42] Algan and Cahuc assume that any market transaction requires a minimum of trust vis-à-vis others, distinctly in terms of information asymmetry.[43] Therefore, if we assume that anyone who decides to form a partnership with, or becomes a customer of, a French business, or decides to enrol in a French university, or travels to France on holiday is, in a sense, conducting a transaction with the country, trust in the country becomes essential. El Bekkaye posits that trust has a positive effect on economic transactions.[44] An illustration of the crucial importance of trust in the development of commerce is the invention of paper money, and now of payment by card.

The same can be said for the development of banking, a process and profession that owes its development to advances in the management of trust. And the history of trade – exemplified in the development of the Silk Road – is the history of the progressive establishment of trusting relationships.

Trust, and conversely distrust, are not constants, and they are subject to change over time or following increases or decreases of interaction.[45] The importance of trust also changes; in times of uncertainty, trust or trustworthiness is vital.[46] 'Trust is widely recognised as a strategic, relational asset for business organisations',[47] and therefore can, to an extent, be altered through intervention.

Zak and Knack argue that manifestations of trust can be observed through five components: 'formal institutions that enforce contracts; social norms that restrain cheating; social and economic heterogeneity that exacerbate informational asymmetries; wealth; and income; with the latter two affecting agents' responses to cheating by determining the opportunity cost of seeking redress'.[48]

As highlighted above, there is a plethora of definitions and conceptualisations of trust relevant to international relations, with varying degrees of applicability and relevance depending on context. From the perspective of the British Council and their audience, trust is important as it can provide the organisation, and the country, resources to enable objectives to be easier reached. Nevertheless, trust can change.

37. James S Coleman, Foundations of Social Theory (Harvard university press, 1994), 2.
38. Giselle A Auger, "Trust Me, Trust Me Not: An Experimental Analysis of the Effect of Transparency on Organizations," Journal of Public Relations Research 26, no. 4 (2014).
39. Constantine S Katsikeas, Dionysis Skarmeas, and Daniel C Bello, "Developing Successful Trust-Based International Exchange Relationships," Journal of international business studies 40, no. 1 (2009): 132.
40. Genna, "Positive Country Images, Trust and Public Support for European Integration," 215.
41. "A Matter of Trust: Social Capital and Economic Development," ABCDE (2011).
42. Éloi Laurent, "Can We Rely on Confidence? Peut-on Se Fier À La Confiance?," Revue de l'OFCE, no. 1 (2009).
43. "The Society of Defiance: How the French Social Model Is Self-Destructing [La Société De Défiance: Comment Le Modèle Social Français S' Auto-Détruit]," (HAL, 2007).
44. "Economic Growth: Can We Rely on Trust? [Croissance Économique : Peut-on Se Fier À La Confiance ?]," Revue Internationale des Sciences de Gestion 4, no. 1 (2021).
45. D Harrison McKnight and Norman L Chervany, "The Meanings of Trust," (1996).
46. Aneil K Mishra, "Organizational Responses to Crisis," Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research 261 (1996).
47. Sandro Castaldo, Katia Premazzi, and Fabrizio Zerbini, "The Meaning (S) of Trust. A Content Analysis on the Diverse Conceptualizations of Trust in Scholarly Research on Business Relationships," Journal of business ethics 96, no. 4 (2010): 657.
48. "Building Trust: Public Policy, Interpersonal Trust, and Economic Development," Supreme court economic review 10: 93.

Approaches to trust in international relations

Trust's role in international relations

Approaches to trust in international relations

Trust's role in international relations

The number of theoretical studies directly examining the role of trust in international relations has grown considerably in recent years.[49] Nevertheless, the concept did not receive systematic attention within the international relations scholarship, as a realist nature of the international system was taken for granted.[50]

Gurieva and Borisova in their comprehensive piece on the conceptualisation of trust in various fields, argue that the term is the most vital concept in international relations scholarship.[51] Isaev echoes this belief, maintaining that trust and distrust are fundamental to international relations core theory;[52] this is also emphasised by Degterev & Degterev, who show the mechanisms of trust concerning game theories in international relations.[53]

As with many other essential concepts within the field, there is a divergence in approaches to conceptualisations (see Table 1), which broadly mirror dominant theories within international relations scholarship.[54] Realists would argue that trust, or more specifically the lack of it, has been the central explanatory factor in the logic of the international political system and its 'security dilemma'.[55]

The 'security dilemma' based on 'prisoner's dilemma' and central Realist international relations theory[56] is exemplary in this regard. From a Realist perspective, even though self-interested independent states prefer a situation of peace, disarmament is the riskier strategy. According to this perspective, the international political system is anarchic and therefore not conducive to co-operation and communication that can facilitate the desired outcome for all states – peace; this means that although it is not preferable for states to engage in armament and therefore conflict as a strategy, they do so, as the risks and dangers for not arming while opponents do, is too great.

A Liberalist interpretation of the security dilemma would disagree that mutual disarmament is not possible, pointing to examples where increased co-operation between states can mitigate miscommunication, meaning the desired outcome of peace is achievable. The security dilemma from an identity perspective would challenge the underlying assumption in the theory that perceives other actors as enemies and dismisses states as being merely self-interested.

49. Rathbun, "Trust in International Relations."
50. Hiski Haukkala, Carina Van de Wetering, and Johanna Vuorelma, Trust in International Relations: Rationalist, Constructivist, and Psychological Approaches (Routledge, 2018).
51. "Trust as a Socio-Psychological Phenomenon [Доверие Как Социально-Психологическое Явление]," Bulletin of the Saint Petersburg University. Sociology. [Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. Социология], no. 4 (2014).
52. "The Dialogical Nature of Trust in International Relations [Диалогическая Природа Доверия В Международных Отношениях]," Fundamentals of Economics, Governance, and Law [Основы экономики, управления и права], no. 6 (2012).
53. "Game Theory and International Relations [Теория Игр И Международные Отношения]," World Economics and International Relations [Мировая экономика и международные отношения], no. 2 (2011).
54. Haukkala, Van de Wetering, and Vuorelma, Trust in International Relations: Rationalist, Constructivist, and Psychological Approaches.
55. Nicholas J Wheeler and Ken Booth, The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
56. Robert O Keohane, "Reciprocity in International Relations," International organization 40, no. 1 (1986).

Several foundational theories in the field often indirectly address trust or distrust, instead choosing to focus on interrelated concepts and theories. For instance, in the influential piece on why states cede power to international organisations written by Abbott and Snidal, they do not consider the role of trust in these dynamics.[57] Likewise, Goldgeier and Tetlock, in their influential work on psychology in international relations, neglect the term 'trust' entirely.[58]

While the term was primarily ignored until relatively recently, some scholars have even argued that, although attractive, trust as a concept is not relevant to the functioning of the international political system;[59] this, however, appears to be an outdated position, with vast volumes of work arguing the contrary, that that trust is central to the logic of international relations theory and therefore needs to be subjected to a systematic analysis.[60] Hardin suggests the role of trust as a concept in the literature is often problematic, as 'distrust and fear are not the same, although they are often conflated in international relations.'[61] In other words, not trusting another state does not mean fearing them. That said, mistrust in international relations is common. Wheeler maintains that there are four drivers of mistrust in international relations: '(1) the security dilemma; (2) the challenge of peaceful/defensive self-images; (3) ambiguous symbolism; and (4) 'ideological fundamentalism''.[62]

For Hussein trust underpins the entire international political system, as conflict is primarily caused by situations of mistrust between parties.[63] Similarly, Raqidi asserts that the absence of an international legal regime renders trust a specific modality in promoting co-operation through international agreements.[64] Nazir asserts that at the centre of international competition is the concept of tension, which they define as 'a state of anxiety and mutual distrust between two or more countries, and it may have preceded, caused or resulted in international-scale conflicts.'[65]

Writing in Italian about the role of trust in international relations specifically and society more generally, Campi suggests

> familiarity and trust are two complementary ways of absorbing complexity ... the only alternatives to trust are chaos and paralysing fear. With trust we have a more effective form of complexity reduction than the search for pure security ...trust must be learned like any other social function, as it depends on the structures of social systems. It cannot be based on certainty or on a rational calculation ...certainly states and international organizations are represented by individual human beings who trust or distrust their counterparts and interlocutors.[66]

Trust as a concept within international relations scholarship has been approached differently by scholars writing from different schools of thought or neglected entirely. The initial neglect of trust is surprising given that trust is an essential component to any relationship, and international relations is fundamentally the study of the relationships formed between international state and non-state actors.

57 "Why States Act through Formal International Organizations," Journal of conflict resolution 42, no. 1 (1998).
58 "Psychology and International Relations Theory," Annual Review of Political Science 4, no. 1 (2001).
59 Hoffman, "A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations."
60 Rathbun, "Trust in International Relations."; Hiski Haukkala, Johanna Vuorelma, and Carina van de Wetering, "Trust in International Relations–a Useful Tool?," Journal of Trust Research 5, no. 1 (2015); Haukkala, Van de Wetering, and Vuorelma, Trust in International Relations: Rationalist, Constructivist, and Psychological Approaches; Jan Ruzicka and Vincent Charles Keating, "Going Global: Trust Research and International Relations," Journal of Trust Research 5, no. 1 (2015); Tuomas Forsberg, "Taking Stock of the Trust Study in International Relations," Trust in International Relations: Rationalist, Constructivist, and Psychological Approaches (2018); Torsten Michel, "Time to Get Emotional: Phronetic Reflections on the Concept of Trust in International Relations," European Journal of International Relations 19, no. 4 (2013); Kydd, Trust and Mistrust in International Relations.
61 Distrust (Russell Sage Foundation), 36.
62 "Trust-Building in International Relations," Peace Prints: South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding 4, no. 2: 3.
63 Elements of Trust between the United States and the Islamic World [مقومات الثقة بين الولايات المتحدة والعالم الإسلامي]," The Arab Journal of Political Sciences 3 (2009).
64 "The Role of Trust in International Negotiations [دور عامل الثقة في الصحيح الدولي]," Social and Human Sciences Review 9, no. 19 (2008).
65 "The Phenomenon of International Competition in International Relations [ظاهرة التنافس الدولي فى العلاقات الدولية]," Arab Democratic Centre (2014).
66 A Campi, "Dopo. Come La Pandemia Può Cambiare La Politica, L'economia, La Comunicazione E Le Relazioni Internazionali," (Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2020), 217.. Translated by Dr Sam Wrighton

Table 1. Core theories of international relations and the role of trust

Theories	Realism	Liberalism	Constructivism
Core belief	Self-interested states compete constantly for power and security	Concern for power overridden by economic/political considerations (desire for prosperity, commitment to liberal values)	State behaviour shaped by elite beliefs, collective norms, and social identities
Key actors	States, which behave similarly regardless of regime type	States, international institutions, and commercial interests	Promoters of new ideas, transnational activist networks, and non-governmental organisations
Main instruments	Military and economic power	Values (international institutions, economic exchange)	Ideas and discourse
Main unit of analysis	States	States	Individuals
Main limitation	Does not account for change	Tends to ignore the role of power	Better at historical accounts than forecasting
The role of trust	System defined by anarchy and distrust	Trust between states can lead to co-operation and peace	Trust based on shared meaning and values between states or their leaders
Type of trust	n/a	Rational choice calculation	Social phenomenon/ psychological

Types of trust relevant to international relations

Trust is undoubtedly a component of international relations (IR), though there is not a consensus of which type of trust is most relevant. Ruzicka & Keating show a 'typological division between three ways of theorising trust in IR: treating it as a type of rational choice calculation, as a social phenomenon or as a psychological dimension'.[67]

The **rational choice** approach is primarily rooted in economics, political science and sociology.[68] Cook & Santana argue that the 'conceptualisations of trust that build on a rational choice framework focus on the cognitions that form the basis of judgments of trustworthiness and decisions to place trust in another, as well as the embeddedness of trust relations in networks, groups, and institutions'.[69] In other words, 'trust is the outcome of rationally predicting the nature and characteristic of the other.'[70] Within this approach to trust, Karen S Cook and Santana argue that trust is sourced from,

> individual-level factors, such as those that allow for assessments of others' incentives and likely trustworthiness, as well as organizational and institutional factors that facilitate trust, not only by providing relevant information (e.g., on past behaviour and reputations) but also by supplying a modicum of 'insurance' against failed trust.[71]

The Constructivist approach,[72] on the other hand, perceives trust as a '**social phenomenon**, emphasising the importance of shared norms and values.'[73] This approach emphasises the expectation that others will 'do what is right'.[74] It assumes that 'one is willing to trust which provides an obligation that the other will honour it.'[75] Haukkala et al. argue that 'approaching trust from a constructivist perspective means that the focus is not only on shared meanings and interpretations concerning trust but also the way in which they are represented in international politics.'[76]

The third and most recent approach, the **psychological**,[77] considers where we can 'identify pre-existing ideological beliefs, cognitive biases and historical narratives.'[78] This approach to trust in international relations emphasises 'emotions that shape decision-making, either individually or collectively.'[79] Proponents of this approach argue that the conceptualisation of trust within the rational choice realm is perhaps misleading, given that a choice in trusting another party is not possible or realistic. However, it is not a given that the psychological approach to trust in international relations is appropriate, given states are not individuals and do not have psyches as humans do. Rathbun expounds on these issues,

67 "Going Global: Trust Research and International Relations," 12.
68 Karen S Cook and J Jessica Santana, "Trust and Rational Choice," in The Oxford Handbook of Social and Political Trust, ed. Eric M Uslaner (Oxford University Press, 2018).
69 Ibid., 253.
70 Haukkala, Van de Wetering, and Vuorelma, Trust in International Relations: Rationalist, Constructivist, and Psychological Approaches, 2.
71 Cook and Santana, "Trust and Rational Choice," 253.
72 Hoffman, "A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations," 375, 79; Martin Hollis, Trust within Reason (Cambridge University Press, 1998).
73 Haukkala, Van de Wetering, and Vuorelma, Trust in International Relations: Rationalist, Constructivist, and Psychological Approaches, 2.
74 Ibid.
75 Hollis, Trust within Reason, 11.
76 Trust in International Relations: Rationalist, Constructivist, and Psychological Approaches, 22.
77 Haukkala, Vuorelma, and van de Wetering, "Trust in International Relations–a Useful Tool?," 2.
78 Ibid.
79 Mercer, "Rationality and Psychology in International Politics," 95-96.

> The hurdles for a social-psychological approach to international relations based on types are severe. Questions remain as to (1) whether foreign policy decision-making environment is populated by the same variety and types of trusters found in social psychology (the external validity question); (2) whether individual actor's dispositions to trust or fear manifest themselves in the decisions they make or the positions they support on foreign policy questions and in international relations in a way that is not reducible to or trumped by situational imperatives (the level of analysis problem); (3) how we can draw inferences about state behaviour and macro-structural features of the international system using an approach that builds on the individual level (the ecological fallacy problem); and (4) whether theories describing the behaviour of individuals and small groups are relevant for describing the behaviour of states, as the latter are much larger collectivities (the units of analysis problem).[80]

Rathbun suggests international relations theory ought to adopt three conceptualisations of trust from social psychology: **strategic trust, moralistic trust** and **generalised trust**.

> **Strategic trust** is based on the accumulation of information about specific others' intentions. **Moralistic trust** is an assessment of the trustworthiness of others based on a conclusion about the overall integrity and character of the potential partner. Moralistic trust can either be generalized or particularized. **Generalized trust** is a general belief that most others can be trusted. **Particularized trust** is the belief that a specific other is inherently trustworthy.[81]

Rathbun posits that strategic trust is a 'highly structural account of trust. Strategic trust develops in situations in which actors have an incentive to honour their agreements. It has nothing to do with the attributes of the individuals co-operating'.[82] This proposed focus on strategic trust, moralistic trust, and generalised trust is perhaps more relevant for meta-theoretical discussions about the nature of the international political system, and less useful for actors within the system who are attempting to build trust. For these actors, particularised trust is crucial. In other words, how strong is the trust in a specific party and what are the implications for this?

Brewer and Steenbergen argue that as individual citizens most likely have little factual knowledge about the intricacies of international relations, 'standing decisions' on human nature 'provides citizens with a shortcut for deciding whether to trust other nations and their leaders.[83] With a similar focus on information and trust formation, Brugger et al. argue that there are two types of trust relevant to the field: information-based trust and suspension-of-uncertainty-based trust. They state an 'ontological surplus' of suspension-based trust between international actors, 'since only this conceptualisation allows us to understand trust as a discrete phenomenon distinguishable from control'.[84]

In yet another conceptualisation of trust, writing from a Russian perspective, Golovchenko and Isaev declare that there are two types of trust in international relations: situational and prospective.[85]

80 "It Takes All Types: Social Psychology, Trust, and the International Relations Paradigm in Our Minds," 361-2.
81 Ibid., 347.
82 Ibid., 350.
83 "All against All: How Beliefs About Human Nature Shape Foreign Policy Opinions," Political Psychology 23, no. 1: 41.
84 Philipp Brugger, Andreas Hasenclever, and Lukas Kasten, "Vertrauen Lohnt Sich: Über Gegenstand Und Potential Eines Vernachlässigten Konzepts in Den Internationalen Beziehungen," Zeitschrift für internationale Beziehungen (2013).
85 "Theoretical Aspects of Trust in International Relations [Теоретические Аспекты Доверия В Международных Отношениях]," Current problems of modern international relations [Актуальные проблемы современных международных отношений], no. 10 (2017).; "The Dialogical Nature of Trust in International Relations [Диалогическая Природа Доверия В Международных Отношениях]."

Situational trust is short-term and aims to achieve joint goals and objectives. Prospective trust is long-term and relies on co-operation and understanding. Golovchenko argues that there are three theories worth considering concerning trust in international relations:

> from the point of view of realism, trusting relationships arise from the ability to correctly understand the interests of a partner, which makes it possible to predict his further behaviour. From the point of view of liberalism, trust is the result of the interdependence of states. And here interaction at different levels plays an extremely important role. From the point of view of the Marxist and world-system approaches, trust between states arises as a consequence of interdependence and the international division of labour. In this case, there is a separation of strong and weak countries, and there is a dependence of the periphery on the centre, which makes interstate trust unstable.[86]

The British Council should not consider the realist perspective of international relations as an accurate reflection of the international political system. Their attempts to co-operate and strengthen relations with other states through cultural interactions highlight the belief that trust is relevant. Trust indeed matters to the organisation and to the United Kingdom.

Whether you believe that trust is a rational choice decision, a psychological or social process, or that disaggregated trust is important depends on perspective, context, and beliefs about the nature of the international political system. It is probable that trust is a combination of elements. For instance, that the British Council's attempts to build trust abroad is an effort at strengthening particularised trust between the British people and peoples abroad that will involve emotion, cognitive decision making and social forces, including norms and values.

86 "Theoretical Aspects of Trust in International Relations [Теоретические Аспекты Доверия В Международных Отношениях]," 112-3.

The impact of trust in international relations

Generalised trust: social, political and international

The impact of trust in international relations

In the international political sphere, trust and portraying trustworthiness is vital for numerous reasons. Previous studies analysing the levels of trust in a population have demonstrated that when citizens trust their international counterparts, they are more likely to be in favour of diplomacy over military interventions,[87] funding international development projects,[88] engaging with international organisations,[89] and believing in the legitimacy of international courts.[90] In short, 'trust creates an atmosphere where other people are willing to co-operate, take risks, and contribute money'.[91]

Generalised trust: social, political, and international

Trust impacts politics and the international political system in a variety of ways and the literature reflects this. Initially, the literature on trust regarding politics and public opinion separated trust into two forms: social trust (generalised trust in other people) and political trust (generalised trust in governments and state institutions).[92] A third form of generalised trust, international trust, became a focus as the trust literature developed and evolved in dealing with discussions about globalisation and increasing international political interactions. International trust can be defined as,

> generalised 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 co-operation 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 co-operative 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.[93]

In other words, trust in other states and their leaders, from the perspective of individuals is likely to be contingent on their general beliefs about the international system.

Popkin's theory of 'low information rationality' states that when people have limited knowledge of specific issues, they use their previously formed attitudes and ideology to form their opinion on policy choices.[94] 'Neither the lack of experience nor the lack of knowledge … prevents them [the general population] from forming generalised assumptions about the subject [international relations]'.[95] Placing trust in another country means that the individual does not need to know or understand micro-level aspects in processes relevant to them, whether they are decisions to migrate, to do business with, to receive education from these countries, and trust the co-operative behaviour will benefit their goals.

Trustworthiness, therefore, means partners and potential partners do not fear harm in co-operation, reducing the need for hard-bargaining and posturing.

Perceptions of foreign policy is also contingent on domestic factors, as 'public support of foreign programs is a function of confidence in government'.[96] Therefore, in countries where the public has low trust in their national governments, these governments are likely to trust less in other countries.

87 Paul R Brewer, "Public Trust in (or Cynicism About) Other Nations across Time," Political Behavior 26, no. 4 (2004); John Sides and Kimberly Gross, "Stereotypes of Muslims and Support for the War on Terror," The Journal of Politics 75, no. 3 (2013).
88 Paul R Brewer et al., "International Trust and Public Opinion About World Affairs," American Journal of Political Science 48, no. 1 (2004): 104; Sean Aday and Marc J. Hetherington, "Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism. Princeton, Nj: Princeton University Press. 2004.," (Oxford University Press, 2005); Paresh Kathrani, "A Decade of Change: A Case for Global Morality, Dialogue and Transnational Trust-Building," Jurisprudencija 4, no. 118 (2009).
89 Jan Ruzicka and Nicholas J Wheeler, "The Puzzle of Trusting Relationships in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," International Affairs 86, no. 1 (2010): 70.
90 Kathrani, "A Decade of Change: A Case for Global Morality, Dialogue and Transnational Trust-Building."
91 Kirsten Mogensen, "International Trust and Public Diplomacy," International Communication Gazette 77, no. 4 (2015): 316.
92 Brewer et al., "International Trust and Public Opinion About World Affairs."
93 Ibid., 96.
94 The Reasoning Voter (University of Chicago Press, 2020).
95 Paul R Brewer, Sean Aday, and Kimberly Gross, "Do Americans Trust Other Nations? A Panel Study," Social Science Quarterly 86, no. 1 (2005): 1.
96 Polly J Diven and John Constantelos, "The Domestic Foundations of Confidence in the United Nations," Peace Studies Journal 4, no. 2 (2011): 16.

Intergroup trust at an individual level can also affect trust at an aggregated level; al-Zanati, in reviewing the success of government policies and the impact on citizens, institutions and government, concludes that the lack of trust between citizens and state contributes to distrust in politics.[97]

This is a multi-directional relationship. Also researching the interactions between the state and the individual, al-Khalidi and al-Janabi attempted to identify the nature of trust between the citizen and the Iraqi government by analysing a sample of 300 individuals to determine their views of the type of relationship between the citizen and the government. They concluded the following:

> enhancing the concept of political confidence in the state fundamental to the stability of society, the most critical confidence-building mechanism is the ruling elite meeting the needs and demands of its citizens, and that in the Iraqi reality, there is a crisis of trust between the citizen and the government, and despite the existence of an elected parliament, it does not represent the true face of the people, because it is far from the aspirations, concerns and requirements of the Iraqi people.[98]

From the perspective of international communication, Lomakina states that to a certain extent, the success of any undertaking depends on the level of trust.[99] Lomakina demonstrates that it is less emotional than often portrayed. Instead, trust is a pragmatic, tangible and workable asset, capable of improving relations on both individual and social levels, including the level of relations between states, making them mutually beneficial and transparent in terms of goals pursued by participants in communication.[100]

Although work on generalised trust might lead to a belief that as trust in international others is endogenous, foreign policy and traditional diplomacy is of course relevant to the dynamic.

Public opinion and foreign policy

Diplomacy and foreign policy are two forms of interstate activity which rely on trust. Within these realms, the opinion of citizens matters; Lacina and Lee argue that a state's foreign policy is primarily determined by citizens' opinion, meaning that if beliefs about other countries can be changed, foreign policy goals might be easier to achieve.[101] Nincic and later Page and Shapiro argue that the public can be trusted to form reliable and rational perspectives on foreign policy.[102] These positions run contrary to the 'Almond-Lipmann consensus', which believes public opinion is:

- volatile and thus provides inadequate foundations for stable and effective foreign policies,
- it lacks coherence or structure, but
- in the final analysis, it has little if any impact on foreign policy.[103]

Holsti, in the critique on the Almond-Lipmann consensus, therefore explicitly questions realist thinking with regards to the impact of public opinion on foreign policy:

> are Hans Morgenthau and others of the realist school correct in describing public opinion as a barrier to thoughtful and coherent diplomacy, hindering efforts to promote national interests that transcend the moods and passions of the moment?'[104]

97 "Determinants of Political Trust and Their Merits: A Study of a University Youth Sample on the Performance of Political and Politically Affiliated Institutions [محددات الثقة السياسية واستحقاقها "تقييم ذاتي لعينة من الشباب الجامعي حول أداء المؤسسات السياسية وشبه السياسية]," Social and Human Sciences Review 9, no. 19 (2020).

98 Hamdan Ramadan Muhammad al-Khalidi and Saad Talab Abdul Hammad al-Janabi, "Political Trust between the Citizen and the Government: Social Study Fieldwork into the Points of View of Various Segments of Iraqi Society [الثقة السياسية بين المواطن والحكومة : دراسة اجتماعية ميدانية من وجهة نظر مختلف شرائح المجتمع العراقي]," Journal of Social Sciences 17 (2021).

99 "Trust as a Factor in the Effectiveness of International Communication [Доверие Как Фактор Эффективности Международной Коммуникации]" (paper presented at the The socio-economic development of Russia and Mongolia: Problems and perspectives [Социально-экономическое развитие России и Монголии: проблемы и перспективы], 2021).

100 Ibid.

101 "Culture Clash or Democratic Peace?: Results of a Survey Experiment on the Effect of Religious Culture and Regime Type on Foreign Policy Opinion Formation," Foreign Policy Analysis 9, no. 2 (2013).

102 "A Sensible Public: New Perspectives on Popular Opinion and Foreign Policy," Journal of Conflict Resolution 36, no. 4 (1992).; The Rational Public (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

103 Ole R Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus," International studies quarterly 36, no. 4 (1992): 439.

104 Ibid.

Goldsmith and Horiuchi demonstrated that if a foreign leader is deemed credible by an international audience, a diplomatic visit will have a net positive effect on foreign policy perceptions.[105] However, if the leader is considered noncredible, the public diplomacy visit might result in a backlash or net negative effect on public opinion.

> Diplomacy has an independent effect on international relations when leaders negotiate in a particular way; this is what negotiation scholars call 'value creating,' in which states are able to package win-win bargains. This requires the open sharing of information about underlying interests, which in turn requires trust.[106]

Brewer et al. suggest that 'trust in other nations' citizens tends to be greater than trust in other nations' leaders; they suggest that the former may provide a stronger foundation for successful communication.[107]

Individuals have an effect on foreign policy, but this is likely to be more relevant, or solely relevant to countries with a representative democracy, as citizens within these forms of government have more capacity to influence their governments and the governments' activities abroad.

The economics of trust

As mentioned previously, one conceptualisation of trust is that it can lower transaction costs. This language explicitly refers to the economic benefit of trust and scholars have shown the role trust plays in domestic and international economics. Labarca states, 'countries with high levels of general trust are the most prone to economic development'.[108]

They maintain that 'trust' and a related but different concept 'reputation' are considered 'soft variables'.[109] Unfortunately, calls made by Labarca to include these two soft variables into economic analysis have ultimately been left unanswered. Thus, the work remains a defence of the theoretical foundations of the importance of these concepts to economic theory. One issue left unresolved in Labarca's work is the relationship between trust and reputation and which comes first in the process. The 'country of origin' or 'made in' labels on products have a significant effect on consumers' purchasing decisions and influence the perception of the quality of products or services.[110] There is a 'relationship of mutual contribution of content between the country brand and the main local brands'.[111]

Kuramoto states that 'trust can also play a crucial role in global public-private partnerships' that are necessary to solve global issues beyond the scope of national governments.[112] It does so because 'trust has the potential to reduce uncertainty and risk and promote optimal outcomes in public-private partnership projects.'[113]

Radionova stresses the need for bilateral economic relations to build trust and overcome historical differences.[114] Likewise, Nureev et al. point to the role of trust in institutions in order to further economic prosperity.[115] Belianin and Zinchenko maintain that

> trust between individuals contributes to the maintenance of economic activity, and we have established that its absence or simply lack of it can lead to very specific losses from a social point of view.

105 "Spinning the Globe? US Public Diplomacy and Foreign Public Opinion," The Journal of Politics 71, no. 3 (2009).
106 Rathbun, "Trust in International Relations."
107 Paul R Brewer, Kimberly Gross, and Timothy Vercellotti, "Trust in International Actors," ibid., 679.
108 "La Confianza Y La Reputación Como Variables Del Desarrollo Económico Y La Imagen País," 74.
109 Ibid., 72.
110 Ibid.
111 Fernando Prado, "Marcas, Reputaciones Y Territorios," Recuperado el 13, no. 12 (2007).
112 "The Role of Trust in Global Governance [グローバル・ガバナンスにおける「信頼」の考察]," 99.
113 Ibid.
114 "The "Philosophical" Project of Kant's World and Trust in International Relations (through the Example of Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus) [«Философский» Проект Мира Канта И Доверие В Международных Отношениях (На Примере Украины И-Республики Беларусь)]," (2019).
115 "Economic Subjects of Post-Soviet Russia (Institutional Analysis) [Экономические Субъекты Постсоветской России (Институциональный Анализ)]," (2001).

> All this, however, would not be a big problem if a simple awareness of mutual distrust and the losses associated with it would be enough to overcome it ... Indeed, after all, rational (and even just reasonable) people, faced with the problem of mutual distrust and understanding what losses it leads to, it would seem, should strive in every possible way to reduce it, since this increases public welfare ...In other words, if a low level of trust has developed in society, then the strategy of mutual 'testing' of partners, or the strategy of mutual distrust, may turn out to be mutually best, i.e., equilibrium.[116]

Trust and distrust have important roles in business and economics and there is a large body of literature that has not been touched upon here that reviews trust in corporate responsibility and in the relationship between consumer and business.

Trust and global issues

Global issues that cannot be solved by states alone require trust given the need for international co-operation. A prime example of a collective action issue is climate change. An effective global response to climate change has proved challenging and so far, elusive. As climate change can be considered a 'global externality', it has been difficult to address given the lack of an effective formal supranational institution that can enforce global treaties.[117] Additionally, as climate is a public good, there is a tendency for countries to avoid costly mitigation efforts in the hope that they can obtain a 'free ride'.[118] This does not mean that co-operation is impossible. Writing from a Russian perspective, Vakhtina states that trust in the state or in any institution increases efficiency.[119]

Ostrom argued 'co-operative outcomes can be sustained if stakeholders trust each other and trust is maintained through monitoring and the sanctioning of norm violators.'[120] Nevertheless, given the need for more actors collaborating with one another, this brings into the dynamic, 'conditional collaborators', who 'are likely to co-operate so long as they believe that the other players are trustworthy reciprocators'.[121] Previously, this has been problematic, as it requires first-movers, who often bear the brunt of higher costs and is a concern given decreasing levels of global trust. Despite these challenges, actors in the field can build trust 'incrementally' by adhering to global norms and increasing levels of trust between states can reduce the fears of others obtaining a free ride.[122]

Another global issue requiring collective action is the COVID-19 pandemic and the vaccine rollout. It is perhaps too soon to draw conclusions about the success or failures of international collaboration in this response. It is however certain that the COVID-19 pandemic has 'altered the way nation-states project influence'[123] through vaccine diplomacy. In the last couple of years, states have attempted to increase their influence abroad by internationally distributing COVID-19 vaccines produced either by the states themselves, or by businesses within the state. However, the uptake of vaccines has been contingent on the perceived trustworthiness of the country of production.[124] Additionally, international politics and inter-state relations have undermined trust in vaccines.[125]

116 "Trust in the Economy and Social Life [Доверие В Экономике И Общественной Жизни]," "Liberal Mission" Foundation [М.: Фонд «Либеральная миссия] 164: 35-6.
117 Stefano Carattini, Simon Levin, and Alessandro Tavoni, "Cooperation in the Climate Commons," Review of Environmental Economics and Policy (2020).
118 Ibid.
119 "Trust Towards the State as a Factor of Increasing Its Effectiveness [Доверие К Государству Как Фактор Повышения Его Эффективности]," Journal of Institutional Studies [Журнал институциональных исследований] 3, no. 3 (2011).
120 "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms," Journal of economic perspectives 14, no. 3 (2000).
121 Carattini, Levin, and Tavoni, "Cooperation in the Climate Commons."
122 Jon Hovi, Hugh Ward, and Frank Grundig, "Hope or Despair? Formal Models of Climate Cooperation," Environmental and Resource Economics 62, no. 4 (2015).
123 Seow Ting Lee, "Vaccine Diplomacy: Nation Branding and China's Covid-19 Soft Power Play," Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (2021).
124 Ibid.
125 Heidi J. Larson et al., "Addressing the Vaccine Confidence Gap," The Lancet 378, no. 9790 (2011).

Salman points to the role of international institutions as trust-building mechanisms by suggesting that post-Cold War trust in international relations was limited; however, the growth of international institutions has allowed for frameworks for consultation, dialogue building and trust, where studies in such a field are now about finding rules and frameworks through which international co-operation can be achieved instead of conflict.[126] Hamdan al-Masalha examines co-operation among regional organisations and argues they are essential players in the international scene. The research highlights how states have ignored the contributions and engagements of regional institutions in international politics, which leads to a lack of trust in the system.[127]

Trust is a prerequisite to co-operation, according to Kim and is made up of dialogue and behaviour to keep a specific pledge. Kim uses the case of the Korean Peninsula to argue that trust must be reciprocal in that an expectation of the other side underpins it.[128] Trust is therefore crucial to bilateral relations and global collective action issues, and it is worth considering that an increase in trust in one party, does not necessarily equate to a loss of trust in another.

Trust online

'Online interactions represent a complex blend of human actors and technological systems'.[129] This makes giving and building trust challenging. In referencing Socrates' thoughts on the relationship between trust and the written word, Baroness Onora O'Neill suggests that the written word was likely to be damaging to trust, as it led to a requirement to deal with people one did not know, and trust was an interpersonal matter. If he was right, does the same hold for trust and internet communication?[130]

Whitty and Joinson argue that the internet is a venue for a truth-lies paradox – truth, in that the anonymity of the internet allows for 'hyper-personal' interactions, where people can be their 'true selves', with lies coming through deception and the need for any relationships built online to involve a self-disclosure process.

From the perspective of the truster, providing trust to someone or something online involves a 'leap of faith'.[131] Lehmans and Letonturier warn, 'on the Internet, trust can be intensive in the moment, but rarely extensive over time'.[132]

As Internet penetration grows globally, our ways of interacting with other people change. According to Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, 'each person in the world is connected to every other person by an average of three and a half other people'.[133] On Twitter, we were 4.12 degrees away from any other user in 2010,[134] and we may be even nearer in 2022. Earlier on in interactions with social networks, judging trust in users' relationships was binary: 'friend (trust) or stranger (distrust)', as users accepted or rejected friends or followers' requests.[135] As concerns for data privacy increased over the past decade, online platforms are increasingly allowing users to choose the level of content they trust their followers and friends to see. Some online social norms now imply a hierarchy of trust whereby the most trust-worthy accounts are verified accounts. For instance, on Twitter, the blue verified badge is a marker of an account which is 'authentic, notable and active'. Among others, blue verified badges 'encourage and maintain trust between users and on the platform'.[136] Still, a verified account, while authentic, notable and active, may not be a trusted source for many.

126 (2016)
127 "A Study in the Relationship between the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union [دراسة في العلاقة بين مجلس التعاون الخليجي والاتحاد الأوروبي التعاون الإقليمي الدولي]," Journal for Research and Studies 15, no. 3 (2009).
128 "Trust in International Relations and Review of the Trust-Building Process on the Korean Peninsula [국제관계에서 신뢰와 한반도 신뢰프로세스의 검토]," Locality and Globality [지역과 세계] 39, no. 1 (2015).
129 Batya Friedman, Peter H Khan Jr, and Daniel C Howe, "Trust Online," Communications of the ACM 43, no. 12 (2000).
130 A Question of Trust: The BBC Reith Lectures 2002 (Cambridge University Press, 2002).
131 Monica T Whitty and Adam Joinson, Truth, Lies and Trust on the Internet (Routledge, 2008).
132 Lehmans and Letonturier, "Introduction."
133 Sergey Edunov et al., "Three and a Half Degrees of Separation," Research at Facebook 694 (2016).
134 Haewoon Kwak et al., "What Is Twitter, a Social Network or a News Media?" (paper presented at the Proceedings of the 19th international conference on World wide web, 2010).
135 Xiaoming Li et al., "Who Is Your Best Friend? Ranking Social Network Friends According to Trust Relationship" (paper presented at the Proceedings of the 26th Conference on User Modeling, Adaptation and Personalization, 2018).
136 Twitter Help Centre, n.d.

The online dimension of trust is also impacting commercial behaviours. In a 2016 study of Gen Y consumers, 'who process information five times faster than older generations and are the most emotional and least loyal customers compared to all other generations', Bilgihan finds that trust 'is the most important antecedent of e-loyalty in online shopping for Gen Y customers.'[137]

Wider access to information online has also shaped the way the public places trust in institutions. In a report on ethical decision-making with geospatial and open-source analysis, Loehrke et al., explain that,

> Analysts working with geospatial and open-source data have capabilities that not long ago were exclusive to states. A community of open-source analysts can craft intelligence products, break news, add evidence to reporting, give insight where governments cannot, and provide accurate information to publics on issues critical to peace and security. This gives individuals in this community considerable power and relative autonomy to exert influence on public policy.[138]

On balance, the impact of the open-source community has been positive. Nonetheless, it may be easy for some to equate more online presence and therefore more transparency with more trustworthiness. International-level efforts in the fields of open-source investigations such as the OHCHR Berkley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations (2020) are working to establish a generalised view that credibility and reliability differ, and therefore have varying impacts on trust.[139]

Much of our interactions online are now based on advances in machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI). 'Fuelled by ever-growing amounts of (digital) data and advances in artificial intelligence, decision-making in contemporary societies is increasingly delegated to automated processes.'[140] Due to the pervasiveness of AI, users tend to anthropomorphise it: 'described and conceived as characterized by human traits'.[141] According to Ryan (2020),

> This becomes particularly problematic when we attach human moral activities to AI. For example, the European Commission's High-level Expert Group on AI (HLEG) have adopted the position that we should establish a relationship of trust with AI and should cultivate trustworthy [AI]. Trust is one of the most important and defining activities in human relationships, so proposing that AI should be trusted, is a very serious claim.[142]

While much debate remains live on whether AI has the capacity to be trusted, or is more a form of reliance, the implications of trust in the context of complex machines such as AI is likely to shape some of our near future.

Trust online is bound to become increasingly important as the trend for more automation and more online activities continue. Not all of these are positive interactions and increase in cyber criminality and warfare could undermine online trust building exercises between individuals, organisations, and businesses.

137 Anil Bilgihan, "Gen Y Customer Loyalty in Online Shopping: An Integrated Model of Trust, User Experience and Branding," Computers in Human Behavior 61 (2016): 103.
138 Herbert S Lin, Benjamin Loehrke, and Harold A Trinkunas, Three Tweets to Midnight: Effects of the Global Information Ecosystem on the Risk of Nuclear Conflict (Hoover Press, 2020).
139 OHCHR, "Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations: A Practical Guide on the Effective Use of Digital Open Source and Information in Investigating Violations of International Criminal, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law," https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/berkeley-protocol-digital-open-source.
140 Theo Araujo et al., "In Ai We Trust? Perceptions About Automated Decision-Making by Artificial Intelligence," AI & SOCIETY 35, no. 3 (2020): 611.
141 Arleen Salles, Kathinka Evers, and Michele Farisco, "Anthropomorphism in Ai," AJOB neuroscience 11, no. 2 (2020): 88.
142 Mark Ryan, "In Ai We Trust: Ethics, Artificial Intelligence, and Reliability," Science and Engineering Ethics 26, no. 5 (2020): 2749.

Affecting trust in international relations

Affecting trust in international relations

Perceptions of the trustworthiness of others, whether they are individuals, systems, businesses, institutions, products or states, is subject to change, and attempts can and are made to alter levels of trust. Nevertheless, trust is not tangible. Studies addressing constructivist and psychological approaches to trust have shown that it is not always apparent what factors influence perceptions of trustworthiness. Nevertheless, attempts are made to affect trust, both positively and negatively, which can have repercussions across a range of fields. It is not always easy to affect trust. As the saying goes, 'it can take decades to win the trust of an audience and minutes to lose it'.[143]

Changing levels of trust in politics and government(s)

Trust between states is vital to the functioning of the international system and individual states and their governments. 'Governments will compete for credibility not only with other governments but also with a broad range of actors including news media, corporations, NGOs, intergovernmental organisations, and networks of scientific communities'.[144]

Nye believes 'countries that are likely to be more attractive in postmodern international relations are those that help to frame issues, whose culture and ideas are closer to prevailing international norms, and whose credibility abroad is reinforced by their values and policies';[145] this is broadly in line with those who draw on the psychological elements of trust to explain its importance in international relations: Kramer and Cook showed that individuals are more likely to trust people like themselves, and some will only trust others like them. Trust for Kramer and Cook, therefore, is a **social decision**.[146] Although this creates a troublesome obstacle to trust-building, it is not necessarily impossible to bridge this gap. The portrayal of an individual's or a state's image can be curated and modified to align better with others. Trust and trustworthiness are essential to in- and out-group dynamics. 'Trustworthiness is an attribute of an out-group's positive image. When trust is given, inter-group co-operation is easier to obtain'.[147]

143 Ben O'Loughlin et al., Cultural Value: Cultural Relations in Societies in Transition: A Literature Review (British Council, 2018).
144 Huyen Trang Do, "Power of Media, Public Diplomacy and Forein Policy in the 21st Century" (paper presented at the Proceedings of the World Conference on Media and Mass Communication, 2018), 38.
145 Joseph S Nye, "Soft Power," Foreign policy, no. 80 (1990): 31-2; Jan Melissen, The New Public Diplomacy – Soft Power in International Relations (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
146 Trust and Distrust in Organizations: Dilemmas and Approaches (Russell Sage Foundation, 2004).
147 Genna, "Positive Country Images, Trust and Public Support for European Integration," 215.

Vuving asserts that there are three power currencies relevant for international relations: benignity, brilliance and beauty. For Vuving, benignity is an awarded value when the agent is considered generous, kind, and unselfish by helping, protecting, and doing good to others; brilliance is the competence of a country in its domestic, rather than relational affairs; and an agent is considered as having beauty when it acts as a leader to protect and advance those shared ideals, entailing in the minds a sense of security, self-extension, trust, credibility, legitimacy, and even moral authority. For Vuving, the interaction between these three power currencies can directly influence levels of trust.[148]

In a study of national interest frames – conflicting interests frames, common interests frames, and reciprocal exchange frames – in media coverage that influence public opinion about world affairs, Brewer found that newspaper portrayals of other states as competitors resulted in the readership holding negative opinions about that country. Conversely, when papers portrayed the other states sharing common interests, this resulted in the readership holding more favourable opinions about that country.[149]

From the perspective of an institution or a state, affecting trust or perceptions of trustworthiness either at a domestic or international level is a form of political attitude development. Some scholars[150] working on how trust is built have proposed three distinct but related processes:

- **direct contact** – processing personal experiences,
- **socialisation** – processing relevant information from the media and others, and
- **inference** – processing individual's thoughts and beliefs.[151]

According to **direct contact** theory, direct personal interaction with the attitude object results in either a positive or negative attitude change.[152] Pettigrew argues, 'positive experience in a foreign country can spill over to include the whole country, while affection for one or more out-group members can spill over to include the majority of the out-group.'[153] Genna, when discussing the role of trust in out-group, in-group dynamics, maintains:

> Positive images highlight commonalities for members of out-groups, thereby instilling trust. As trust increases for out-group members, in-group members are more likely to support inter-group co-operation because coordination costs decrease.[154]

According to Dekker et al., the quantity and the quality of contact between two parties can affect the attitude formation process toward one another.[155] Pettigrew and Tropp conducted a meta-analysis of 500 empirical studies focussing on the effect of direct contact on attitude formation; they found that 'the quantity of intergroup contact has a reducing effect on prejudice, and that this effect is stronger than the reversed effect of prejudice on the intensity of inter-group contact.'[156]

Socialization theory suggests that attitude formation is a consequence of receiving, accepting and processing information and affective messages.[157] The strength of the attitude is mainly dependent on the level of influence the source of information has vis-à-vis the receiver.[158]

148 "How Soft Power Works," Available at SSRN 1466220 (2009).
149 "National Interest Frames and Public Opinion About World Affairs," Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics 11, no. 4 (2006).
150 Miles Ed Hewstone and Rupert Ed Brown, Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters (Basil Blackwell, 1986); Diane M Mackie and David L Hamilton, "Affect, Cognition, and Stereotyping: Concluding Comments," in Affect, Cognition and Stereotyping (Elsevier, 1993).
151 Henk Dekker et al., "Attitudes Towards the EU among Chinese Urban Citizens," China and the European Union 31 (2013): 38.
152 Gordon Willard Allport, Kenneth Clark, and Thomas Pettigrew, "The Nature of Prejudice," (1954).
153 "Intergroup Contact Theory," Annual review of psychology 49, no. 1 (1998).
154 Genna, "Positive Country Images, Trust and Public Support for European Integration," 218.
155 "Attitudes Towards the EU among Chinese Urban Citizens."
156 "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory," Journal of personality and social psychology 90, no. 5 (2006).
157 M Kent Jennings, "Political Socialization," in The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior (2007); M Kent Jennings, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers, "Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined," The Journal of Politics 71, no. 3 (2009); Jolanda van der Noll and Henk Dekker, "Islamophobia: In Search for an Explanation of Negative Attitudes Towards Islam and Muslims, Testing Political Socialization Theory," PCS–Politics, Culture and Socialization 1, no. 3 (2010); David O Sears and Patrick J Henry, "The Origins of Symbolic Racism," Journal of personality and social psychology 85, no. 2 (2003).
158 Dekker et al., "Attitudes Towards the EU among Chinese Urban Citizens."

In discussing public support for EU assession, Genna claims,

> if individuals have positive images of the member-states, then they believe that the member-states can be trusted ... [individuals] rely on the cognitive image of the member-states, used as a short-cut, with positive images translating into trust.[159]

Cognitive inference theory, although relevant to the attitude formation and alteration process, is probably the least useful of the three theories from the perspective of those attempting to alter attitudes, given attitude formation relies on pre-existing knowledge and beliefs about the attitude object.[160] Meyer asserts that 'when you present yourself as someone who has characteristics worthy of cognitive trust (reliability, competence) and affective trust (empathy, closeness), you build strong relationships faster.'[161]

It is worth considering regime type as a factor in international trust: where a country is ruled by a dictator or a populist, foreign attention will be inordinately concentrated on the ruler's personality;[162] this means the potential soft power benefit can be diminished by the leader's character, as it is perceived abroad. The point being that attempts to generate trust or soft power are not by any means within its control.

Ammar posits that international and regional interactions have led to an increase in patterns of temporary interest co-operation based on mistrust between its parties; this is due to the rise of patterns of sectoral alliances that are formed around one issue or a limited number of issues, in which the interests of regional or international parties coincide, without this leading to the formation of a permanent alliance, as a result of conflicting interests in other issues.[163]

Abdul Rahman discusses the role of international diplomacy in building trust between states to strengthen international relations in a context of overlapping interests. He states international diplomacy should direct the behaviour of states towards the policy of negotiations towards world peace, particularly where the United Nations has become characterised by double standards.[164]

Referring to the Russian case, Rozinskaia and Rozinskii assert that trust and social capital in contemporary Russia are under pressure because of external factors. Therefore, they argue that it is necessary to mitigate low levels of economic and social trust by 'producing' trust internationally. The promotion of collective charity is their proposed mechanism for international trust production. To create trust domestically, they argue there is a need for ideology and symbolism to be linked to Russian history.[165]

In a report produced by the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, it was argued that Japan had lost trust internationally due to its political scandals, despite being trusted for business transactions. The Association advocated the following measures to restore trust with international partners: (1) maintaining dignity and integrity, and be sincere and considerate to the other country; (2) advocating a market economy under democracy and contributing to world peace, stability and development (3) practicing realisation of national interests through the contribution to the development of the partner country.[166]

159 "Positive Country Images, Trust and Public Support for European Integration," 214.
160 Kathleen M McGraw, "Political Impressions: Formation and Management," (2003); Yanjun Guan, Hong Deng, and Michael Harris Bond, "Examining Stereotype Content Model in a Chinese Context: Inter-Group Structural Relations and Mainland Chinese's Stereotypes Towards Hong Kong Chinese," International Journal of Intercultural Relations 34, no. 4 (2010).
161 "Getting to Si, Ja, Oui, Hai, and Da," (2015).
162 Jeff D Colgan and Jessica LP Weeks, "Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict," International Organization 69, no. 1 (2015).
163 "Relationships of Mutual Interest: Strategic Cooperation without Trust in International Relations [علاقات المصالح: تعاون إستراتيجي دون ثقة في العلاقات الدولية]," Future Centre for Advanced Research and Studies, no. 12 (2015).
164 "The Role of International Diplomacy in Strengthening International Relations and Promoting Human Rights [دور الدبلوماسية الدولية في تدعيم العلاقات الدولية وتعزيز حقوق الإنسان]," Journal of Heritage 14 (2014).
165 "National "Trust" Project [Национальный Проект" Доверие"]," Questions of Economics [Вопросы экономики] 12 (2015
166 "Conducting Economic Diplomacy Like a Truly Respected and Trusted Country [真に尊敬され信頼される国家としての経済外交]," 18: 7.

Trust and trust building processes are complex. The processing of information received through various channels can impact how trust is formed and can be influenced by the context. Nevertheless, values are important to trust and projecting values that align with others can positively affect levels of trust. However, trust can be difficult to form in situations of overlapping issues and requires some skilful navigating in these situations. Successful public diplomacy can overcome these difficulties.

Trust and public diplomacy

Public diplomacy is one instrument by which perceptions of trust can be affected and, in turn, is affected by levels of trust. While traditional diplomacy might be considered as confidential discussions between international diplomats, public diplomacy is conducted openly. Rugh defines public diplomacy as 'an activity that can be carried out also by non-governmental actors, to the extent that those non-governmental actors communicate with and otherwise affect the perceptions of foreign audiences'.[167] Alternatively, Nye Jr suggests,

> in international politics, the resources that produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organisation expresses in its culture, in the examples it sets by its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles relations with others. Public diplomacy is an instrument that governments use to mobilize these resources to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries, rather than merely their governments. Public diplomacy tries to attract by drawing attention to these potential resources through broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and so forth. But if the content of a country's culture, values and policies are not attractive, public diplomacy that 'broadcast' them cannot produce soft power. It may produce just the opposite.[168]

Saraev, in a discussion about public diplomacy, defines it as 'a broad and non-political phenomenon, characterized by the manifestation of any civil activity in the cultural, scientific and humanitarian fields. Such activity is realised through bilateral and multilateral formats of social interaction, and it also applies to the activities of public organizations and other institutions of civil society.[169] Vilkov discusses the need for a disaggregated definition of diplomacy by suggesting that public and social diplomacy are often used interchangeably, creating confusion about the features of the term. Vilkov when using Russia as an example, suggests these terms should be separated, as public diplomacy in Russia is directly related to foreign policy goals, and social diplomacy is not.[170]

Mogensen argues, 'public diplomacy is one way of producing trust'[171] and it is through this soft power instrument that public opinion among international audiences can be altered. The relationship between trust, public diplomacy, and other soft power instruments is clear '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'.[172]

167 "The Case for Soft Power," in Toward a New Public Diplomacy: Redirecting US Foreign Policy, ed. Philip Seib (Springer), 13.
168 "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," The annals of the American academy of political and social science 616, no. 1: 95.
169 "Public Diplomacy as an Important Component of Neighbourliness and Mutual Understanding [Общественная Дипломатия Как Важная Составляющая Добрососедства И Взаимопонимания]," Problems and inter-regional connections [Проблемы межрегиональных связей] 1, no. 14-1 (2019).
170 "The Problematic of Public Diplomacy in the Political and Academic Discourse of Modern Russia [Проблематика Общественной Дипломатии В Политическом И Научном Дискурсе Современной России]," News of Saratov University. Political Science Series [Известия Саратовского университета. Новая серия. Серия Социология. Политология] 18, no. 2 (2018).
171 "International Trust and Public Diplomacy," 320.
172 Ibid.

In other words, the success of public diplomacy is contingent on credibility.[173] Credibility is inextricably linked to trust and trustworthiness.[174] For Stanzel, semi-modern diplomacy is about 'establishing trust'.[175] While Peter explains,

> it is true that diplomacy is about the relationship between states; trust primarily means the reliability, credibility, predictability, and transparency of state actions. However, the actors are human beings, so that the personal relationship of trust between decision-makers can play an important role. This applies not only to the heads of state and government and their ministers, but structurally to the entire field of diplomacy.[176]

Trust is difficult to acquire; as Sevin argues, trust cannot be achieved through major advertising campaigns or public relations techniques.[177] Trust from an international perspective is acquirable, slowly, through systematic participation in international fora and activities with a coherent message and an international policy consistent with the principles and values of the country and context in question.[178] Manfredi-Sánchez support this position by maintaining that without trust, it is 'impossible to construct a strategic and international public communication'.[179] In turn, achieving foreign policy goals is impossible without trust. The choice of spokesperson is vital in attempts to build trust; 'no matter how rational (logos) or emotional (pathos) a speech is, an audience will not listen if it lacks trust in the rhetorician'.[180] 'A trusting relationship makes messages more persuasive and mediates the effects of public relations strategies for conflict resolution after a crisis'.[181]

Part of international communication sits within the remit of public diplomacy and its practitioners. Rose and Wadham-Smith state that public diplomacy is

> not primarily about building trust, but about achieving specific, policy-driven transactional objectives. Trust is often a by-product of diplomacy but tends to be in the shorter rather than the longer term. Nations don't have permanent friends, as Palmerston put it: they only have permanent interests ...if their work becomes indistinguishable from public diplomacy, cultural relations' practitioners will not be trusted: 'they risk being seen as a 'front' for political interests. This damages not only our ability to do cultural relations but also our ability to do public diplomacy.[182]

It is important to remember that public diplomacy – and in particularly cultural relations – does not necessarily have to be a zero-sum game, whereby there is a finite amount of benefit to be had from public diplomacy campaigns. Admittedly, however, this is a normative position.[183] Cull argues that public diplomacy through increased interaction and communication, can result in benefits for all.[184] Nevertheless, states can become entangled in a balance between 'competitive identity' and 'multilateral co-operation'.[185] Some believe that public diplomacy is competitive, as organisations have to compete to get their issues onto the agenda by capturing the attention of decision-makers, multipliers and the general public.[186]

173 Goldsmith and Horiuchi, "Spinning the Globe? US Public Diplomacy and Foreign Public Opinion," 865.
174 Nikolaus Georg Edmund Jackob, "No Alternatives? The Relationship between Perceived Media Dependency, Use of Alternative Information Sources, and General Trust in Mass Media," International Journal of Communication 4 (2010); Bastiaan Vanacker and Genelle Belmas, "Trust and the Economics of News," Journal of Mass Media Ethics 24, no. 2-3 (2009).
175 Volker Stanzel, Die Neue Wirklichkeit Der Außenpolitik: Diplomatie Im 21. Jahrhundert, vol. 24 (Nomos Verlag, 2019), 6.
176 "Vertrauen Als Ressource Der Diplomatie," 68.
177 "Pathways of Connection: An Analytical Approach to the Impacts of Public Diplomacy," Public Relations Review 41, no. 4 (2015).
178 Mogensen, "International Trust and Public Diplomacy."
179 "Deglobalization and Public Diplomacy," International Journal of Communication 15: 917.
180 Mark Rolfe, "Rhetorical Traditions of Public Diplomacy and the Internet," The Hague Journal of Diplomacy 9, no. 1 (2014): 79.
181 Yi-Hui Huang, "Values of Public Relations: Effects on Organization-Public Relationships Mediating Conflict Resolution," Journal of Public Relations Research 13, no. 4 (2001).
182 Mutuality, Trust and Cultural Relations (British Council), 34-5.
183 Nancy Snow and Nicholas J Cull, Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy (Routledge, 2020).
184 "Public Diplomacy: Seven Lessons for Its Future from Its Past," Place branding and public diplomacy 6, no. 1 (2010).
185 (Fisher, 2010)
186 James W Dearing, Everett M Rogers, and Everett Rogers, Agenda-Setting, vol. 6 (Sage, 1996); Marcus Maurer, Agenda-Setting (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, 2017).

However, there is an inherent problem with the attempts to improve trust from the perspective of governments, given the very nature of trust:

> If, as theorists point out, trust is always a by-product, an unintended consequence of relationship dynamics, how can organisations or governments win the trust of social groups when they know that public diplomacy pursues this objective? The answer is clear: hiding the intentions. But this can only be achieved at the cost of betraying the dialogue that the theoreticians of the New Public Diplomacy … claim to be open and symmetrical.[187]

Core elements of public diplomacy

In addition to the five core elements of public diplomacy: (1) listening, (2) advocacy, (3) cultural diplomacy, (4) exchanges and (5) international broadcasting,

Cull details two emerging trends in public diplomacy: nation-branding and partnership.[188] Cull suggests these elements need to be measured on three fronts: direction of information flow, source of credibility (linked to trust), and timescale.

On listening from the perspective of public diplomacy, Di Martino explains that listening creates 'a more trusting environment [that] will likely produce a space for mutual positive engagement than conflict … active listening is advantageous because it enhances trust when actors are seen to be listening'.[189] Di Martino provides a typology of listening contingent on the levels of trust and engagement (Table 2).

Table 2. Di Martino's (2020) spectrum of listening

	Type of listening	Engagement	Goal	Listening approach on social media
High level of trust				
	Apophatic listening	Hypersensitivity and self-negation	Listen to God Meditative or mystical experience	N/A
	Active listening	Dialogic and relation-building engagement. Creates spaces for listening.	Long-term strategy implementation and adjustment. Promotes trust and understanding.	Combination of qualitative and quantitative social media analysis.
	Tactical listening	Instrumental and reactive engagement.	Correct misconceptions and pursue short-term sub-goals.	Monitoring to identify issues and actors of concern.
	Listening in	Unidirectional engagement.	Assessment of message reach.	Social media metrics based on impact.
	Background/casual listening	Casual engagement.	Information gathering.	Scrolling, unsystematic and/or accidental encounter of content.
Low level of trust	*Surreptitious listening*	No signs of engagement.	Spying/Surveillance.	Unethical/illegal acquisition of private data.

187 Javier Noya, "Una Diplomacia Pública Para España," Boletín Elcano, no. 82 (2006).
188 Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age (John Wiley & Sons, 2019).
189 "Conceptualising Public Diplomacy Listening on Social Media," Place Branding and Public Diplomacy 16, no. 2: 137.

Of these forms of listening, from a public diplomatic perspective, active listening is the ideal type, as it:

> requires the active participation of both diplomatic and non-diplomatic actors. In this case, the goal is to advance foreign policies by creating the conditions of international dialogue. Dialogic forms of communication do not imply self-negation but rather a constant negotiation of different attitudes to avoid conflicts and enhance trust.[190]

According to theories of 'new public diplomacy,' there are four principles that should be adhered to in order to generate trust: (1) mutuality, reciprocity and bidirectionality of communication; (2) intense contact with non-formal, non-governmental groups; (3) transparency of power relations, but with self-criticism; and to build trust not on words or speeches, but in practice, (4) collaborating on concrete projects and actions, of whatever kind.[191]

Values, the national image and cultural exchange

One role of public diplomacy is to facilitate country or national image projection abroad. According to Widvey, 'a national image must satisfy three requirements regarding nation-branding. It must be genuine and trustworthy, it must be internally anchored, and it must be perceived as attractive in those markets we wish to target'.[192] This sentiment is mirrored by Ramscar and Clarke when discussing another form of country projection, 'national character':

> 'National character', as reputation in the world, translates best in terms of trust in the authenticity of a society's fundamental values ... Four particular elements emerge from the analysis as important components of trust values others might perceive and hence ascribe to the 'national character' of a society. One is the degree of 'openness' – different 'ways' in which a society is open. The second is the practice of justice and the rule of law. Third, is the arts and high culture of a society. Finally, the role of a country in the world in assessment of a society's national character.[193]

Melissen discusses the role of trust specifically in regards to cultural relations, an essential facet of public diplomacy,

> in cultural relations as much as in the new public diplomacy, the accent is increasingly on engaging with foreign audiences rather than selling messages, on mutuality and the establishment of stable relationships instead of mere policy-driven campaigns, on the 'long haul' rather than short-term needs, and on winning 'hearts and minds' and building trust ...Cultural institutes prefer to keep the term 'cultural relations' for their own activities, serving the national interest indirectly by means of trust-building abroad. Cultural relations are in this view distinct from (public) diplomacy, in the sense that they represent the non-governmental.[194]

Britain's soft power is 'fundamentally driven by an overall image of liking and trust ...this applies not just at the national level in the image the British state projects but from sector to sector in the commercial world as well'.[195] Henrikson argues for a targeted approach to public diplomacy efforts,

190 Ibid., 138.
191 Noya, "Una Diplomacia Pública Para España."
192 "Public Diplomacy," speech at the Norwegian–American Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa, November 3: 84.
193 Britain's Persuaders: Soft Power in a Hard World (Bloomsbury Publishing), 32-3.t
194 Melissen, The New Public Diplomacy – Soft Power in International Relations 21.
195 Ramscar and Clarke, Britain's Persuaders: Soft Power in a Hard World, 94.

> The ability of a nation's diplomacy to 'generate returns', primarily for the country itself, depends on very careful selection of the policy product lines to be developed and also on an accurate reading of global political-market conditions. According to this calculus, there is no point in adopting policy positions that will not 'sell' – either at home to the domestic public (the sphere of 'public affairs'); or abroad to foreign publics (the sphere of 'public diplomacy')

For Dolci, trust can be improved upon by repeating interactions across borders:

> Those who have had a cultural relationship with a country will have more trust and will remain linked to it ...The most successful modes of action for cultural diplomacy are therefore those that integrate and enhance the relationships between people, communities, artists, and the media. Cultural diplomacy, when carried out by non-institutional actors, is not perceived as a threat even by authoritarian regimes and can have a great impact.[196]

Likewise, Kurata, in addressing sources of soft power from a Japanese perspective, argues for a greater volume of cultural exchanges as these can 'foster mutual understanding and trust between different cultures and civilizations to enable resolution.' These cultural exchanges are best conducted when they focus on the similarities of values between groups of people. Concerning this, Japan's globally projected political values are its 'representative system (parliamentary principle), liberalism (basic human rights respect principle), and international harmony and pacifism based on national sovereignty.'[197]

Practicing public diplomacy

One section of the literature on public diplomacy and trust offers advice, recommendations, and criticisms of public diplomacy organisations and other practitioners. Hwajung Kim, after a review of the public diplomacy literature and following interviews with staff in the US State Department, the British Council, Goethe-Institut, and the Alliance Française, asserts that there are six areas fundamental to success in soft power and public diplomacy: (1) cultural trade, (2) intercultural communications, (3) international reputation, (4) cultural industry, (5) social wellbeing and (6) global-citizen identity. They state that proactive adaptability and adjusting to the geopolitical situation is crucial for success in these areas.[198] In providing recommendations for public diplomats and practitioners, Carucci offers the following advice: 'if you are even slightly unaware of how a particular set of stakeholders regards your company, sector, or country of origin, you are at a disadvantage. You may not be aware that you are acting in ways that erode trust'. In order to generate trust, Carucci continues by suggesting to 'keep messages consistent; be transparent when you adapt them.'[199]

Regarding trust and public diplomacy, for Gauthier and Pradal 'trust and reliability go hand in hand. And trust is the basis of diplomacy'.[200] Nattier highlights three core objectives for the Institut français: the first is to establish relationships, to build connection and trust. The second is to promote convergence, to disseminate and prioritise the flow of ideas, knowledge and creation. Finally, the third is to participate in achieving the strategic objectives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[201]

196 R Dolci, "La Lingua E La Cultura Italiana Come Strumenti Per La Promozione Dell'immagine Dell'italia," (2016): 10.
197 "Utilization of Soft Power and Its Issues--Theory, Based on the Situation of the Source of Japan [ソフト・パワーの活用とその課題--理論, 我が国の源泉の状況を踏まえて]," Legislation and Investigation [立法と調査], no. 320 (2011).
198 "Cultural Politics and National Role as Seen through Soft Power: Analyses of the US, the Uk, France, and Germany [소프트파워 관점에서의 문화정치와 국가역할: 미국, 영국, 프랑스, 독일 사례분석]," Journal of Cultural Policy [문화정책논총] 35, no. 13 (2021).
199 Ron Carucci, "How to Build Trust When Working across Borders," Harvard Business Review, https://hbr.org/2018/07/how-to-build-trust-when-working-across-borders.
200 Gilles Gauthier and Francois Pradal, "De La Confiance En Diplomatie," Hermès, La Revue 88, no. 2 (2021).
201 "The Public and Cultural Diplomacy of Tomorrow: [La Diplomatie Publique Et Culturelle De Demain," Association internationale des études québécoises (AIEQ) 32 (2015).

Turbet Delof praises French attempts to generate soft power and suggest that France is uniquely positioned to utilise its extensive cultural network by using cultural co-operation, 'Francophonie' and Institut français.[202] At the same time, studies have also examined how French cooking and restaurants can serve French soft power generation and trust in French cultural products.[203]

> Unlike territorial marketing, which is based, as its name suggests, on the attractiveness of territories, the working material of nation branding is the population of a country, its ethos. Indeed, insofar as the concept of nation refers to a social group that shares identity and culture, nation branding can be considered as a tool to make a population a 'brand'. In this sense, it goes without saying that the brand must be built on strong assets in order to inspire confidence in potential visitors and investors.[204]

Nattier neatly summarises the link between trust, national branding and international co-operation:

> Since public diplomacy is above all a matter of communication, it is easy to understand that the notion of image is very important there. Indeed, the way a state is perceived abroad determines their credibility and ability to be listened to, which are fundamental to building trust necessary for the establishment of a genuine dialogue. It is also interesting to note that several countries have developed a public diplomacy program in response to an opinion growing negative or to a tarnished national image. Likewise, it is notable that stereotypes and images have an influence on the perception of a State abroad and therefore on its ability to conduct public diplomacy. For example, the case of the Muhammad cartoons in 2005 has had a lasting effect compromising Denmark's image in Muslim countries.[205]

Nattier offers a caution to public diplomacy practitioners by suggesting the 'intrusion of public diplomacy in cultural exchanges runs the risk that artists, intellectuals, etc. are perceived as politicised, which will harm their credibility and thus, paradoxically, diminish their ability to fulfil a mission of public diplomacy by creating a channel for exchange and understanding between two countries'.[206] Nevertheless, 'networks of individuals can obtain greater credibility than state actors in public diplomacy thanks to their appearance of neutrality'.[207]

In an empirical study looking at trust and institutional behaviour, Cotton shows how the EU's European External Action Service (EEAS) has used Twitter as part of a public diplomacy function and soft power tool and has achieved its strategic objectives by improving transparency in decision making and negotiations.[208] Hassani shows how governments have used social media platforms and influencers to disseminate political messages more indirectly and less formally than traditionally; this allows governments to gain trust with the members of their communities who are more informed on social networks and would normally shun messages of a political nature.[209]

According to Stanzel, public diplomacy practitioners have to harness the influence of social media by anticipating new trends and thus become more empowered in an increasingly performance-orientated digital environment and establish rules and norms for digital practice before others. In this sense, becoming a digital pioneer provides recognition and more significant influence; innovators have more credibility and soft power.[210]

202 "La Culture De L'influence : Histoire D'un Soft Power Français À Réinventer," Revue internationale et stratégique 109, no. 1 (2018).
203 Raúl Matta, "Gastro-Diplomatie: Un Soft Power (Pas Si Soft)," ESSACHESS–Journal for Communication Studies 12, no. 1 (23) (2019).
204 Ibid., 106.
205 "The Public and Cultural Diplomacy of Tomorrow: [La Diplomatie Publique Et Culturelle De Demain," 19.
206 Ibid., 21.
207 Ibid., 56.
208 "La Voix De L'union Européenne Sur Twitter: De L'usage De La Diplomatie Publique Par Le Service Des Affaires Étrangères (Seas)," Communication management 16, no. 2 (2019). management 16, no. 2 (2019).
209 "Pouvoir De L'influence Ou Influence Du Pouvoir ? Le Cas De L'émission #Sansfiltre Sur Twitch Et Youtube," Hermès, La Revue 88, no. 2 (2021).
210 Die Neue Wirklichkeit Der Außenpolitik: Diplomatie Im 21. Jahrhundert, 24.

However, a few authors provided warnings about new trends in the field. For instance, Auer and Srugies claim that 'communicating contradictory messages to different target audiences as well as veiling facts can lead to irreparable damage to a country's image and a loss of trust'.[211] Busch-Janser & Florian suggest, 'the more apparent and the closer links to the government are to a public diplomacy initiative, the more distrust assails it'.[212] Stanzel claims the 'digitisation via social media influences the maintenance, gain and loss of trust in a country's public and its international partners'.[213] 'Social media's effects are most severe where diplomacy and foreign policy are formulated and designed. Because this is where the greatest risks lurk in the form of misinformation and misunderstandings and the loss of trust in decision-makers.'[214]

Messaging from governmental and non-governmental institutions can increase trust and soft power. However, the construction of relations must be carried out by a body or institution far from the political nucleus in order to increase the trust that it can generate. It requires the participation of professionals who have experience in civil society: from the world of marketing, for the business side, or from the world of NGOs, for dealings with them, or with parties and unions.[215]

It is further argued that problems arise when states become brands; this is read in a pejorative way since it is considered that a nation loses its dignity when it is equated with a marketable product. A propaganda-type reading also arises because it is understood that certain branding initiatives are simple political propaganda exercises, which ultimately damage credibility among the general public.[216]

Trust serves an essential purpose in this mechanism because, 'while propaganda is by definition misleading and manipulative, cultural diplomacy aims to strengthen mutual understanding and trust between nations'.[217] Likewise, Sánchez warns,

> influence, persuasion, and commitment are the strategic components that are needed to the detriment of conventional propaganda, which has exhausted its model in the face of the general decline in the credibility of socio-political institutions. The emergence of Wikileaks and the rise of the culture of governance favour the reinforcement of strategies based on transparency, accountability, and integrity. It is about creating trust in the international actor by providing relevant, authentic, and transparent information through the combination of conventional media (press, radio, and television) and new media (internet and mobile telephony, above all).[218]

Within South Korea, the importance of soft power has been gaining increasing attention both in academia and policymaking.[219] In 2018 alone, the Korean government spent over 24 billion KRW (approximately 15 million GBP) on public diplomacy and 3.2 trillion KRW (approximately 2 billion GBP) on foreign aid, which are arguably the two primary policy devices for extending soft power.[220] To date, the Korean soft power strategy is a 'dignified diplomacy to lead international co-operation'.[221] The Korean Development Institute believes that diplomacy 'enhances the understanding and trust of foreign peoples in the Republic of Korea'.[222] However, for trust to work, one must gain the public's trust in the target country for public diplomacy.

211 "Public Diplomacy in Germany," CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy, Paper 5 (2013).
212 Die Neuen Diplomaten? Public Diplomacy Und Die Rolle Von Kommunikationsagenturen in Der Außenpolitik (na), 226.
213 Die Neue Wirklichkeit Der Außenpolitik: Diplomatie Im 21. Jahrhundert, 24, 6.
214 Ibid., 10.
215 Noya, "Una Diplomacia Pública Para España."
216 Jordi de San Eugenio Vela, "Del Estado-Nación Al Estado-Marca. El Rol De La Diplomacia Pública Y La Marca De País En El Nuevo Escenario De Las Relaciones Internacionales," Revista de Estudios Sociales, no. 46 (2013).
217 Said Saddiki, "El Papel De La Diplomacia Cultural En Las Relaciones Internacionales," Revista CIDOB d'afers internacionals (2009).
218 Juan Luis Manfredi Sánchez, "Hacia Una Teoría Comunicativa De La Diplomacia Pública," Communication & Society 24, no. 2 (2011).
219 In-Bok Lee et al., "Informing Korea's Soft Power Strategy: Evidence from Survey Experiments on Public Perceptions of Public Diplomacy and Foreign Aid, Research Report. [공공외교 및 공공원조를 통해 보는 한국의 소프트파워 발전 전략:설문 및 설문 실험을 중심으로, 한국개발연구원 국제정책대학원대학교.]," (2021).
220 Ibid.
221 Ibid., 36.
222 Ibid., 53.

This differentiated approach to public policy is necessary as concepts can carry different meanings in different countries. For instance, Lee and Lee argue that the

> composition of trust in government in Korea is different from that in Western countries. Three factors - responsiveness, efficiency, and impartiality – influence the extent of trust in government as Western countries. However, the relative importance of the factors is different distinctively in Korea. Responsiveness that implies reflection of public opinion on policy decision-making process is found the most critical factor to determine the level of trust in government.[223]

The Korean Development Institute argued for a differentiated approach to public diplomacy depending on the characteristics of that country. For instance, for Korean soft power to be adequate, they propose using foreign aid in Vietnam, Bolivia and Thailand, political diplomacy in Brazil, Japan, Kenya, and France, and economic diplomacy in Australia and the United Kingdom.[224] They also conclude that addressing exclusionary attitudes in Korea impacts soft power promotion abroad. Lee also agrees that different facets of government have differing effects on trust, showing that economic performance has substantial effects on government trust in Korea, while political performance has substantial effects on government trust in Japan. Nevertheless, Lee stresses that strong social capital in both countries results in greater trust in government.[225]

Ju asserts that 'soft power such as country attractiveness, national image, national status or prestige has recently been considered national competitiveness in the international arena.' Ju argues that obtaining an edge in this competition relies on portraying a country as trustworthy, as national reputation, public diplomacy, and global trust are related to each other. From a Korean policy perspective, Ju recommends a 'choice and concentration' principle for selecting target countries, thereby conducting a tailored public diplomacy strategy for each different country.[226]

In what is sometimes referred to as 'exchange diplomacy',[227] researchers have pointed to the role of student exchanges in facilitating efforts to build trust internationally. For instance, Leonard et al. assert 'scholarships, visits and other exchange programmes are the most effective instruments for building enduring relationships'.[228] This idea involves an attempt to harness mutuality, 'in which both parties benefit and are transformed',[229] by the experience. In a report on trust, the British Council using data gathered from 20,000 respondents in G20 countries, found that 76 per cent of people who consider the UK to uphold and support important values also said they trust the UK. In contrast, only 10 per cent of those same people said they distrust the UK. Additionally, they concluded that people who trusted the UK were almost twice as likely as to want to engage with it in the future.[230]

Kokinova, in a discussion about cultural diplomacy, introduces the concept of negative cultural diplomacy by explaining that it is about limiting access to one's culture to prevent it from being influenced. Kokinova uses the French broadcasting quotas and 'the French Academy, which has the task of defending the purity of the language and translating foreign terms into French.' Kokinova explains:

> The new school of cultural diplomacy was born in Europe in the 90s and focuses on the mere facilitation of access, showing both strengths as weaknesses rather than promoting a certain image, and therefore allowing the public to give their own interpretations. It is less about projection and one-sidedness and more about listening and dialogue.[231]

223 Jiho Lee and Hyeonwoo Lee, "Measurement and Korean Implication of Trust in Government: Responsiveness, Efficiency and Impartiality [정부신뢰의 한국적 의미와 측정: 반응성, 효율성 그리고 공정성]," Journal of Korean Politics [한국정치연구] 24, no. 3 (2015).
224 Lee et al., "Informing Korea's Soft Power Strategy: Evidence from Survey Experiments on Public Perceptions of Public Diplomacy and Foreign Aid, Research Report. [공공외교 및 공공원조를 통해 보는 한국의 소프트파워 발전 전략:설문 및 설문 실험을 중심으로, 한국개발연구원 국제정책대학원대학교.]," 12-3.
225 "The Effects of Institutional Performance and Social Capital on the Government Trust: Comparison of Korea and Japan [정부신뢰에 대한 제도성과와 사회자본의 영향 비교: 한국과 일본을 중심으로]," Public Policy and Administration [국가정책연구] 30, no. 3 (2016).
226 "Strategies for Improving National Reputation in Public Diplomacy for Trust Korea [신뢰한국을 위한 공공외교에서의 국가평판 제고 전략]," The Journal of Political Science & Communication [정치정보연구] 19, no. 1 (2016).
227 Nicholas J Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," The annals of the American academy of political and social science 616, no. 1 (2008).,
228 Public Diplomacy (Foreign Policy Centre), 18.
229 Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," 33.
230 Alice Campbell-Cree and Mona Lotten, "The Value of Trust " (2018).
231 Ina Kokinova, "Cos'è La Diplomazia Culturale?," RRYP, https://relacionateypunto.com/it/cos%27%C3%A8-la-diplomazia-culturale%3F/.

In providing recommendations for states seeking to alter perceptions of trustworthiness, Brusca et al. show 'that enhancing the transparency of accounting information positively affects the perception of corruption and trust in governments, so politicians should consider accounting numbers as a means of communicating with citizens and as a powerful tool to fight against corruption'.[232]

There are a number of key takeaways in this section. Public policy organisations need to: proactively adapt to their geopolitical situation, be aware of the stakeholders, be consistent and transparent in messaging, utilise cultural networks, avoid propaganda like branding exercises, use social media but cautiously, consider a targeted approach to trust generation, and to (actively) listen.

Weaponizing disinformation and mistrust

The title of this section of the report, 'Affecting trust in international relations' is deliberately neutral. While the previous sub-sections have addressed attempts to build trust, and the potential pitfalls when doing so, it is worth mentioning that attempts to change trust internationally are not always positive. For some states, sowing the seeds of mistrust is a key foreign policy objective. As the US Department of Defence and the Joint Chiefs of Staff state in a White Paper, 'information has been weaponized, and disinformation has become an incisive instrument of state policy'.[233]

The spread of false narratives, and the dissemination of rumours are sometimes part of a state-led strategy to shape international opinion and therefore international politics.[234] Campaigns to undermine faith and trust in rival institutions, organisations or even belief systems are considered as a threat.

In September 2017, the European Union (EU) and NATO sponsored the creation of a Council of Europe department 'Countering Hybrid Threats' in Helsinki because of the fear that 'potential adversaries could use disinformation to exploit European vulnerabilities created by historical grievances and political polarisation'.[235] Perhaps few states are as involved as Russia and their 'information warfare' in terms of state-led information manipulation. Russia is however not the only state involved 'information warfare' as highlighted by Bradshaw's review of 28 countries that engage in these information activities.[236] While it is perhaps easy to imagine which states would benefit from which information manipulation activities, it is much harder to attribute blame and the true extent of such activities given the anonymity of the internet.[237]

Whether these tactics are successful or not is debatable and perhaps remains to be seen, but they have the potential to cause lasting damage to the possibilities for future co-operation, as deception is incompatible with trusting relationships.[238] Disinformation and related content can 'undermine the quality of public debate, promote misperceptions, foster greater hostility toward political opponents, and corrode trust in government and journalism'.[239] Additionally, disinformation may accelerate or compound existing issues that are causing a rise in distrust. Gerrits argues that disinformation has the potential to harm democracy, as 'political polarization, declining trust in the institutions of representative democracy, the rise of strongmen politics—the potential impact of disinformation adds to the widespread feeling that liberal democracy is under pressure.'[240]

232 "Accountability and Transparency to Fight against Corruption: An International Comparative Analysis," Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice 20, no. 5: 487.
233 John Arquilla et al., "Russian Strategic Intentions," (2019).
234 Alexander Lanoszka, "Disinformation in International Politics," European journal of international security 4, no. 2 (2019).
235 Ibid.
236 "Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers: A Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation," (2017).
237 André WM Gerrits, "Disinformation in International Relations: How Important Is It?," Security and Human Rights 29, no. 1-4 (2018).
238 Brian C Rathbun, Trust in International Cooperation: International Security Institutions, Domestic Politics and American Multilateralism, vol. 121 (Cambridge University Press, 2011).
239 Andrew Guess, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler, "Selective Exposure to Misinformation: Evidence from the Consumption of Fake News During the 2016 US Presidential Campaign," European Research Council 9, no. 3 (2018).
240 "Disinformation in International Relations: How Important Is It?."

Measuring trust and its impact

Measuring trust and its impact

As Mogensen states, 'for public diplomacy practitioners, it is strategically important to know if their activities are aimed at increasing trust in their national authorities . . . or they are aimed at increasing trust between the general populations of two or more countries'.[241] Nevertheless, measuring trust, or any intangible for that matter, is notoriously tricky. As Goldstein and Keohane assert, 'personal beliefs are difficult to quantify and disentangle from other factors'.[242] These difficulties in measuring trust also translate into other realms of soft power, including diplomacy. Rathbun elaborates,

> Diplomacy's influence is very difficult to establish empirically. What might look like the effect of diplomacy could be the function of a close proximity among parties in the underlying distribution of interests or the simple triumph of those who have the greatest bargaining leverage. If the underlying structure of interests and the distribution of power determine outcomes, then diplomacy is ultimately epiphenomenal to the outcome.[243]

It would perhaps be easy to survey a group of people and ask them to what extent they have generalised trust in something or specific trust in a particular agent, state, business, or organisation. It is, however, hard to determine the impact of variations in trust and, therefore, trustworthiness. In other words, how do we determine what is the percentage change in X, given a percentage change in trust or trustworthiness? Is this calculation even possible?

Empirical data on trust in international relations

As Katsikeas argues, 'empirical research attempting to substantiate the normative bias that trust between international partners enhances performance is limited and equivocal'.[244] Despite these difficulties, empirical research into assessing the impact of trust has been conducted within academia but also by think tanks, NGOs, magazines, and other media outlets. The following is a review of these attempts.

Economists have a rich history of research examining the role of trust in economic development and growth and have found a very strong positive relationship between levels of trust and GDP.[245] The instigators of work attempting to quantify the economic returns on social capital and trust began in 1997 with Knack and Keefer. Their work involved a series of Barro regressions, that make an empirical estimate of the effect of a large number of variables on economic growth such as criteria for investments, population growth and human capital. Knack and Keefer find a significantly positive effect of trust on economic growth. They conclude that a 10 percent rise in trust leads to a growth increase of 0.8 percent.[246] Working on a similar model, Zak and Knack show in their research that economic growth increases approximately 1 per cent on average for each 15 per cent increase in trust.

241 "International Trust and Public Diplomacy," 17.
242 Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change (Cornell University Press, 1993).
243 "Trust in International Relations," 688.
244 "Developing Successful Trust-Based International Exchange Relationships," 132.
245 Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales, "Does Culture Affect Economic Outcomes?," Journal of Economic perspectives 20, no. 2 (2006); "Cultural Biases in Economic Exchange?," The quarterly journal of economics 124, no. 3 (2009); Francis Fukuyama, Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity (Simon and Schuster, 1996); Yann Algan and Pierre Cahuc, "Inherited Trust and Growth," American Economic Review 100, no. 5 (2010).
246 "Does Social Capital Have an Economic Payoff? A Cross-Country Investigation," The Quarterly journal of economics 112, no. 4 (1997).

This finding is based on their model to derive optimal funding for trust-raising policies when policymakers seek to stimulate economic growth. The examined policies including those that increase freedom of association, build civic cultures, enhance contract enforcement, reduce income inequality and raise educational levels. It should be noted that the trust examined here, is trust within a country.[247]

P. Dekker et al. expanded on this research to examine trust between countries, and calculated that when mutual trust between the populations of two different countries increases by approximately 1 per cent, this has a positive effect on exports (0.6 per cent) and on foreign direct investment (3 per cent); this is based on the theory that high trusting relationships result in a reduction of transactions costs, thus stimulating investment, production, trade, and therefore economic growth.[248] In an empirical study involving a regression analysis of bilateral trust on fixed effects for the country receiving trust (country-of-destination fixed effects) and fixed effects for the country trusting (country-of-origin fixed effects), Guiso et al. assert that 'lower relative levels of trust toward citizens of a country lead to less trade with that country, less portfolio investment, and less direct investment in that country, even after controlling for the objective characteristics of that country'.[249]

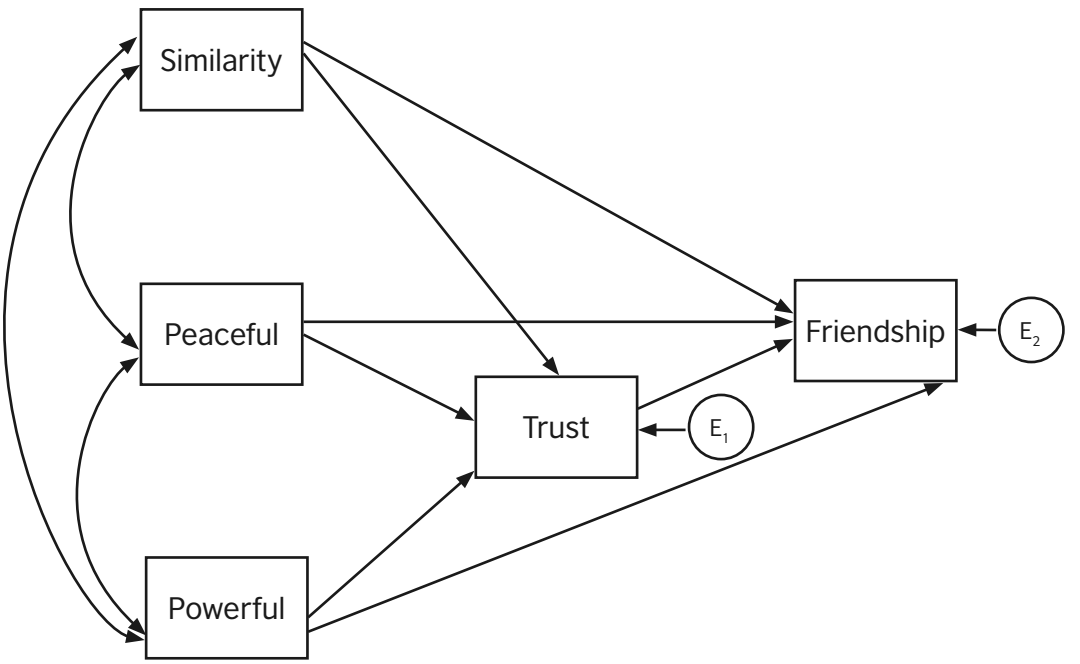
In an empirical study of international organisations, Johnson conducted a statistical analysis of public opinion data from 35,397 people in 23 countries. The study found that 'unfavourable views toward a particular state will result in scepticism about the legitimacy of the intergovernmental organisations (IGO) in which that state possess influence'.[250] In an empirical study into the changing perceived levels of trust in government following social media activity, using data collected from 388 followers of the social media platforms of a government agency, Arshad and Khurram used structural equation modelling techniques. They found 'the agency's provision of quality information on social media was significantly related to perceived transparency, trust in agency, perceived responsiveness, and citizens' online political participation'.[251]

247 "Trust and Growth," The economic journal 111, no. 470 (2001).
248 "Diverse Europe–Public Opinion on the European Union & Cultural Diversity, Economics and Policy," State of the European Union (2007).
249 "Cultural Biases in Economic Exchange?," 1095.
250 "Guilt by Association: The Link between States' Influence and the Legitimacy of Intergovernmental Organizations," The Review of International Organizations 6, no. 1: 57.
251 "Can Government's Presence on Social Media Stimulate Citizens' Online Political Participation? Investigating the Influence of Transparency, Trust, and Responsiveness," Government Information Quarterly 37, no. 3: 1.

Arnold et al. conducted research into the dynamics of trust and found that trust varies significantly between cultural contexts. They found that 'individuals across Europe evaluate the institutions of the European Union through a single attitude dimension of political trust rather than through separate evaluations'.[252] Their attempts to effect levels of trust will differ depending on the country and its unique context.

Using survey data from China and a mediation analysis, Davies et al. create a model (see Figure 3.) which presents the total effects of the independent variables, broken down into direct and indirect effects. Davies et al. find that 'the image of national trustworthiness has the greatest influence on student perceptions of international friendship and that this is particularly pronounced when the foreign state in question is more generally perceived to be an enemy of China, such as Japan or the United States'.[253]

Figure 3. Davies (2021) et al. Trust mediation model



252 "Trust in the Institutions of the European Union: A Cross-Country Examination," Beyond Euro-Skepticism: Understanding Attitudes Towards the EU', European Integration Online Papers, Special Mini, no. 2: 1.
253 "National Images, Trust and International Friendship: Evidence from Chinese Students," International Relations 35, no. 1: 69.

Using questionnaire data of a randomised sample of 1,503 well-educated, urban people from four cities in China, Li et al. found that 'generalised trust, or the belief that other nations have benign intentions, provides the most important driving force of trust toward Japan and South Korea. This, in turn, has a positive effect on preferences for interstate co-operation'.[254] By using multiple regression analyses to examine the sources of international trust, the questionnaires asked the participants to score how trustworthy they consider Japan and South Korea as countries, and then introduced questions relating to perceived conflicts in national interests, historical memory, nationalism, and generalised trust.[255]

A Japanese empirical study examining international co-operation found that countries that are trustworthy enough to exchange confidential information with – the proxy for international co-operation in this context – if domestic legal structures and systems are comparable to the country placing the trust.

Following a Korean multi-country public opinion survey from involving over 32,000 respondents in sixteen countries, I-B Lee et al. find that the respondents preferred public diplomacy or foreign aid efforts emphasising international reputation and improved inclusionary attitudes.[256]

The Levada Center is a Russian independent, non-governmental polling and sociological research organisation. Their studies over 20 years show,

> the dual nature of the phenomena of 'social trust' in Russian society. Everyday practical distrust expressed in relation to surrounding (unfamiliar) people is accompanied, or compensated, by high declarative trust in three particularly significant symbolic institutions: a) the head of state; b) the church, and c) the army.[257]

They also find that,

> The highest values of 'trust' refer to the personification of the fullness of power – to the one who is considered the master of the country, to whom propaganda tries to give the features of either a 'king' or a 'national leader'. Other social institutions – mass media, government, political police and special services, regional and local administration, Russian pseudo-parliament, justice system, power structures (police, prosecutor's office), business, financial organizations, local authorities, political parties and trade unions, etc. – are in the zone of semi-confidence and greater or lesser distrust of the population.[258]

Not all attempts to measure trust in international relations have come from academia. A recent analysis by Deloitte argues that 'at the country level, greater trust is associated with more international trade'.[259] The report failed to back this up with empirical data to support this claim; instead, they argued that because organisations with high levels of trust increase their sales, and a country is an organisation, therefore countries with high levels of trust should have more trade. Dynamics of trust formation are often considered equal whether the trusting parties are individuals, organisations, businesses, or countries – a potential problem of some of the trust literature.

Trust is intangible and therefore difficult to measure. The proportion of research into the topic that involves empirical data is far outweighed by theoretical content. Nevertheless, as highlighted above, some effort has been made to measure and quantify trust and the impact its impact. More however can be done.

254 Xiaojun Li, Jianwei Wang, and Dingding Chen, "Chinese Citizens' Trust in Japan and South Korea: Findings from a Four-City Survey," International Studies Quarterly 60, no. 4 (2016): 778..

255 Shintaro Hamanaka, "Where Is a Country That Can Be Trusted? [第 24 回 信頼できる国はどこですか?]," Institute of Developing Economies [スクエア--コラム 途上国研究の最先端] Japan External Trade Organisation (2019).

256 "Informing Korea's Soft Power Strategy: Evidence from Survey Experiments on Public Perceptions of Public Diplomacy and Foreign Aid, Research Report. [공공외교 및 공공원조를 통해 보는 한국의 소프트파워 발전 전략:설문 및 설문 실험을 중심으로, 한국개발연구원 국제정책대학원대학교.]."

257 L. D. Gudkov, ""Trust" in Russia: Meaning, Functions, Structure [«Доверие» В России: Смысл, Функции, Структура]," Public Opinion Herald. Data. Analysis. DIscussions [Вестник общественного мнения. Данные. Анализ. Дискуссии] 2, no. 112 (2012): 11.

258 Ibid., 12.

259 Ira Kalish, Michael Wolf, and Jonathan Holdowsky, "The Link between Trust and Economic Prosperity," Deloitte, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/economy/connecting-trust-and-economic-growth.html.

Trust, soft power, and country reputation surveys

As Do correctly asserts, 'the effectiveness of public diplomacy is measured by minds changed, not dollars spent or slick production packages'.[260] Accordingly, there is now a plethora of attempts to survey the impact of public diplomacy and countries' relative standings in soft power indexes and other related measurements relevant to trust at the international level. Ranking the trustworthiness of countries and attempting to quantify trust in countries is not necessarily a new phenomenon. For centuries, credit rating agencies such as Standard & Poor's, Fitch, and Moody's have ranked long-term foreign currency credit ratings for trustworthiness for sovereign bonds. However, additional often subjective metrics are added to indices to produce these instruments. Güsory explains the methods by which these studies are conducted:

> Measuring countries' relative capacity in persuasion, attraction and trust, these studies follow three methods to gather data, either alone or in combination: public opinion polls conducted across the world; 'subjective' expert panels assessing each country's strength in several criteria; 'objective' metrices collected from other quantitative sources, such as tourist visit numbers, number of top universities in global rankings, number of embassies abroad, and so forth.[261]

The following is a summary of soft power and country brand indices and how they have approached, or in some cases, ignored the role of trust.

The Brand Finance Soft Power Index involves an analysis of an online survey of over 75,000 adults aged 18–75, across 102 countries. Trust features directly in the sub-index 'People and Values' and indirectly in the sub-index 'Media'. In order for a country to receive a score for a particular index, respondents are asked the question 'below is a series of statements which could apply to different countries. Which ones, in your opinion, apply to <COUNTRY>?' 'Trustworthy media', and 'trustworthy people' are two possible options. This creates a potential problem in that trust is measured as a binary and without a context. The participants will score a country's people as being trustworthy or not, but trustworthy in which situation?[262]

The Pew Research Centre Global Attitudes Survey is a vast international survey of people's beliefs and attitudes in a variety of topic areas. With regards to trust, the survey asks 'do you trust x to do what is right?', with responses ranging from always to never. This disaggregated and graded approach to trust covers topics from politics, media, science, the news, the police, government, etc. Predominately, Pew trust research is largely based in the US.[263]

The Good Country Index is another attempt to rank countries' soft power and other intangible elements. Although it has a wide-ranging index assessing a country's contribution to culture, science, world order etc. trust does not feature in any of these. The Index relies predominately on third-party data and is in essence an aggregation of data from a wide-range of sources.[264]

260 Do, "Power of Media, Public Diplomacy and Forein Policy in the 21st Century," 38.
261 Yaprak Gürsoy, "Reconsidering Britain's Soft Power: Lessons from the Perceptions of the Turkish Political Elite," Cambridge Review of International Affairs (2020): 4..
262 Brand Finance, "Global Soft Power Index 2021," (2021).
263 Pew Research Centre, "Global Attitudes Database," https://www.pewresearch.org/global/database/.
264 The Good Country, "The Good Country Index," https://index.goodcountry.org/.

The Soft Power 30 index includes a section on subjective data; this section of the report includes some notions of trust. A sample of individuals from 25 countries are asked to rate on a 0-10 scale, where 0 represented a very negative opinion, and 10 represented a very positive opinion regarding country X can be 'trusted to do the right thing in global affairs'.[265]

The Edelman Trust Barometer conducted an online survey in 28 countries with a sample of over 33,000 respondents, conducted from 19 October to 18 November 2020. In order to determine the trust in 'nation brands' respondents were asked: 'please indicate how much you trust global companies headquartered in the following countries to do what is right'.[266] To assess trust in foreign governments, respondents were asked 'Please indicate how much you trust the national government of each of the following countries to do what is right using a 9-point scale where one means that you 'do not trust them at all' and nine means that you 'trust them a great deal''.[267] In an attempt to assess the trust in government, the respondents were asked, 'please indicate how much you trust that institution to do what is right'.[268]

The Reputation Institute claims to be the world's leading reputation-based research advisory firm, which primarily specialises in ranking global brand reputation. In a discontinued report, the Country RepTrak report measured country reputation across various metrics, one of which is 'trust'. In this context, trust was equivalent to 'effective government'. However, it included subindices of the business environment, institutional environment, social and economic policies, international participation, safety, efficient use of public resources, and whether or not the country is perceived as ethical.

265 Portland, "The Soft Power 30," (2019).
266 Edelman, "The Edelman Trust Barometer 2021" 11.
267 ibid.
268 ibid., 5.

According to the Reputational Institute, 'countries with a good reputation welcome more tourists, attract FDI, improve their public diplomacy, increase exports, attract foreign knowledge and talent'.[269] Using a Pearson correlation coefficient, the Reputational Institute claims 'a demonstrated correlation between a country's reputation and the income it receives from tourism'.[270] A country's reputation has a positive correlation of 0.7 with an intention to visit, which has a 0.6 positive correlation with income received from tourism dollars.

British monthly periodical, Monocle, produces an annual soft power survey. This survey consists of 6 indices – culture, diplomacy, government, education, business and a subjective component. Each of these indices is made up of various subindices show in Table 3:

Table 3. Monocle's soft power survey indices/subindices[271]

Culture	Diplomacy	Government	Education	Business	Subjective
Tourism	Foreign Aid	UN Human Development Index (HDI) Score	Think Tank Presence	International Patents	Cultural Output (Panel)
Reach of State-Sponsored Media Outlet	Languages Spoken by Leader	Good Government Index	Quality of Universities	Business Competitiveness	Cuisine (Panel)
Foreign Correspondents	Visa Freedom	Freedom Score	Foreign Students	Level of Corruption	Soft Power Icons (Panel)
Language	Strength of National Brand	Trust in Government		Innovation	National Airline (Panel)
Sporting Success	Number of Cultural Missions	Life Satisfaction		Foreign Investment	International Leadership (Panel)
					Reputation of Embassy\ Diplomats (Panel)

269 Reputation Institute, "2015 Country Reptrak® – the World's Most Reputable Countries," (2015).
270 Ibid.
271 Jonathan McClory, "The New Persuaders," Institute for Government/Monocle (2010).

Despite soft power being a perception of other states' power, 'trust in government' is a domestic score in the Monocle survey.

The Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index (CRI) is an instrument to assess country reputation that has been adapted from a company reputation index. As shown in Table 4, the index problematically groups trust into a question with other core elements to country reputation and soft power: 'I like, trust, respect [country]'.[272] As items 'liking', 'respect' and 'trust'(emotional appeal) correlated highly with the overall reputation score, they were all combined into a single dependent variable termed 'regard'.[273]

Table 4. Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index (CRI) indices

Original Dimensions	Original Instrument: RO (Harris-Fombrun Reputation Quotient)	Adapted Instrument: CRI (Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index)	Adapted Dimensions
Emotional Appeal	• Have a good feeling about the company. • Admire and respect the company. • Trust the company a great deal.	• I respect [COUNTRY]. • I like [COUNTRY]. • I trust [COUNTRY].	Emotional Appeal
Products and Services	• Stands behind its products and services. • Develops innovative products and services. • Offers high-quality products and services. • Offers products and services that are a good value for the money.	• [COUNTRY] is a beautiful place. • [COUNTRY] educated residents. • [COUNTRY] has a good infrastructure of roads, housing, services, health care, and communications.	Physical Appeal
Financial Performance	• Has a strong record of profitability. • Looks like a low-risk investment. • Looks like a company with strong prospects for future growth. • Tends to outperform its competitors.	• [COUNTRY] is an inviting place to do business. • [COUNTRY] has a well-developed industrial sector. • [COUNTRY] is a low tax country. • [COUNTRY] is a safe place in which to invest.	Financial Appeal

272 Sung-Un Yang et al., "Country Reputation in Multidimensions: Predictors, Effects, and Communication Channels," Journal of Public Relations Research 20, no. 4 (2008).
273 Tanja Passow, Rolf Fehlmann, and Heike Grahlow, "Country Reputation—from Measurement to Management: The Case of Liechtenstein," Corporate Reputation Review 7, no. 4 (2005): 316.

Original Dimensions	Original Instrument: RO (Harris-Fombrun Reputation Quotient)	Adapted Instrument: CRI (Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index)	Adapted Dimensions
Vision and Leadership	• Has excellent leadership. • Has a clear vision for its future. • Recognizes and takes advantage of market opportunities.	• [COUNTRY] has charismatic leaders. • [COUNTRY] communicates an appealing vision of the country. • [COUNTRY] is well-managed. • [COUNTRY] upholds international laws.	Leadership Appeal
Workplace Environment	• Is well-managed. • Looks like a good company to work for. • Looks like a company that would have good employees.	• [COUNTRY] is socially and culturally diverse. • [COUNTRY] has a rich historical past. • [COUNTRY] offers enjoyable entertainment activities.	Cultural Appeal
Social Responsibility	• Supports good causes. • Is an environmentally responsible company. • Maintains high standards in the way it operates.	• [COUNTRY] supports good causes. • [COUNTRY] is a responsible member of the global community Supports responsible environmental policies.	Social Appeal

The 2021 Best Countries rankings, led by The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and a global marketing communications company, produce an annual report based on a survey of more than 20,000 respondents, who are asked to rank countries across 76 metrics. A country's perception of trustworthiness fits within the 'social purpose' sub-ranking.[274]

Trust Across America produce a Country Trust index, which ranks countries across 14 societal trustworthiness factors including corruption, competition, reputation, sustainability, economic freedom, healthcare, and women's rights. The methodology for these rankings is not explained.[275]

> On average, and over the long-term, the 'Top 10' most trustworthy public companies have outperformed the S&P 500 by over 25 per cent since inception. In each of the six full years, the selected group has had a higher return than the S&P 500.[276]

274 U.S. News, "Best Countries 2021: Global Rankings, International News and Data Insights," U.S. News BAV Group Wharton University of Pennsylvania, https://www.usnews.com/media/best-countries/overall-rankings-2021.pdf?int=top_nav_Download_2021_Rankings.
275 Trust Across America, "2018 Country Trust Index," https://fcpablog.com/2018/10/17/which-countries-are-the-most-trustworthy/.
276 Trust Across America, "Return on Trust," https://www.trustacrossamerica.com/documents/index/Return-Methodology.pdf.

The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index claims to be the world's only comprehensive global nation brand survey. The survey is a cross-country comparison across 6 components: (1) exports – the public's image of products and services from each country and the extent to which consumers proactively seek or avoid products from each country of origin; (2) governance – public opinion about national government competency and fairness, as well as its perceived commitment to global issues such as peace and security, justice, poverty and the environment; (3) culture and heritage – global perceptions of each nation's heritage and appreciation for its contemporary culture, including film, music, art, sport and literature; (4) people – the population's reputation for competence, openness and friendliness and other qualities such as tolerance; (5) tourism – the level of interest in visiting a country and the draw of natural and man-made tourist attractions; (6) investment and immigration – the power to attract people to live, work or study in each country and how people perceive a country's quality of life and business environment.[277]

The European Union regularly surveys its citizens on beliefs and attitudes in the form of the Eurobarometer thematic surveys (which can range from the impact of specific policy changes to levels of trust towards European institutions or near-abroad countries). One Eurobarometer asks participants for their perceived trust in various institutions and then produces a ranking of the trust. The European Parliament currently tops this ranking.[278]

Transparency International produce an annual survey, the Corruption Perception Index 2021, focussing on the perceived levels of corruption in dozens of states. Although they do not explicitly ask participants about their trust in certain countries, countries with high levels of corruption are unlikely to be considered trustworthy.[279]

Sinophone, a group of academics specialising in China, surveyed 19,673 Europeans in 13 countries on their opinions of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as part of their Borderlands project. Participants were asked to examine trust, predominately in relation to economic behaviour and political intentions.[280]

The British Council produces an index that involve attempts to measure trust, namely he British Council's Global Perceptions Survey in partnership with Ipsos MORI. The 2021;[281] iteration of this survey, involved questioning 20,616 people aged 18-34 in 19 of the G20 nations about their beliefs in other nations. The participants are asked the following questions:

1. 'Thinking generally about government, to what extent do you distrust or trust the government from each of these countries?'

2. 'Thinking generally about institutions, to what extent do you distrust or trust the institutions from each of these countries?' and

3. 'Thinking generally about people, to what extent do you distrust or trust the institutions from each of these countries?'[282]

Yun argues that current soft power metrics, particularly the Soft Power 30, are problematic as they '[confuse] the distinction between means of soft power and outcomes of soft power'.[283] Problematically, many of these metrics also conflate the concepts of 'trust' alongside others, such as 'attractiveness' or 'likeability'.

277 Ipsos, "Anholt Ipsos Nation Brands Index (Nbi)," (2021).
278 European Parliament, "Eurobarometer – Defending Democracy | Empowering Citizens. Public Opinion at Legistlature's Midpoint," ed. DG COMM (Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, 2021).
279 Transparency International, "Corruption Perception Index 2021," (2022).
280 Sinophone, "Borderlands Project – Interaction at the Edges," https://sinofon.cz/#about.
281 British Council, "British Council's Global Perceptions Survey 2021," (2021).
282 Ibid.
283 "An Overdue Critical Look at Soft Power Measurement: The Construct Validity of the Soft Power 30 in Focus," Journal of International and Area Studies 25: 1..

Trust, the UK and the British Council

Trust, the UK and the British Council

The UK and British soft power feature prominently in the literature on trust in international relations. Harada, in an article discussing Japanese global power, contends that Japanese influence worldwide has been in decline.[284] The article asserts that the UK, in a similar position to Japan vis-à-vis global influence, has managed to mitigate losses caused by a decline in power by employing a soft power strategy. Harada recommends a similar approach for the Japanese state. They argue that the British approach to soft power generation is exemplary globally.[285] Jiang states that Britain can be a role model for Chinese attempts to improve soft power. Stating that Britain's 'internal soft power' is responsible for historical economic growth, as British citizens can trust in their 'systems' – as they are rational and effective. Britain's institutional identity is one of the core selling points for the country.[286]

Writing in Mandarin, Bowe focuses on the relationship between institutions and British soft power, particularly emphasising the role of universities in promoting the United Kingdom (UK). Bowe maintains that previous UK government policies that made studying in the UK more difficult for Chinese students – stricter visa regulations, increasing costs, and removing a two-year post-graduation work visa – have all harmed British soft power.[287]

Bowe argues that international students who have studied in the UK become 'ambassadors' for Britain and can help promote the country internationally.[288] Wan and Ruike also point to the link between international students studying in the UK and British soft power.[289] Li Bin also researching these links, stresses the role of the British education system in soft power but instead focuses on primary and secondary education, which create an environment that natures creative imagination.[290]

Naturally, several sources written in French compare French cultural institutions with the British Council and other British organisations. For instance, Blet argues that the media can be an effective tool for public diplomacy.[291] By using France24 and the BBC World Service as examples, Blet argues that the rigour and impartiality of journalists are essential to promoting credibility. However, an editorial balance is required between national coherence and journalistic freedom. Blet believes only the BBC has achieved this balance.[292]

284 "Soft Power Strategy in Japan [我が国におけるソフトパワー戦略]," Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology Annual Academic Conference [北陸先端科学技術大学院大学年次学術大会講演要旨集] 25 (2016).
285 2016)
286 "On Historical Experience of the Rise of Modern British Soft Power and Its Englightenment to China [近代英国软实力兴起的历史经验及其对我国的启示]," Journal of Nanchang University: Humanities and Social Scienes Edition, no. 3 (2019).
287 Recently, a graduate route has opened to international students.
288 "英国软实力 : 英国高等教育体系分析 [UK Soft Power: Analyzing the UK Higher Education System]," China Academic Journals (2015)
289 "软实力视角下的英国高等教育国际化: 经验与启示 [the Internationalization of British Higher Education from the Perspective of Soft Power: Experience and Enlightenment]," Drama House (2019).
290 "British Primary and Secondary Art Education Accumulates Cultural Soft Power," China Education News, https://www.jjl.cn/article/211627.html.
291 "The Media, an Instrument of Public Diplomacy? [Les Médias, Un Instrument De Diplomatie Publique?]," Revue internationale et stratégique, no. 2 (2010).
292 ibid.

In a 2017 report written in Mandarin by the Chinese Embassy in the United Kingdom, it is claimed that ministerial diplomatic visits between China and the United Kingdom resulted in 'increased mutual trust and understanding.'[293]

It is perhaps not surprising that most of the Mandarin language sources that address soft power metrics and, in particular, British performance on these surveys choose not to focus on political institutions but rather cultural outputs. For instance, in a piece written in Jie Mian News, they argue that Britain's standing in global soft power rankings is due to the innovation of historical, mainly but not exclusively, cultural products. In a wide-ranging list, they identify: the train, the stamp, the internet, penicillin, standardised time, the BBC World Service, Savile Row tailoring, real ale, the Bentley car, chocolate bars, Shakespeare, Afternoon Tea, boarding schools, the Beatles, weddings, animal charities, the 'graceful apology', Agatha Christie, the toilet, horses, among others as reasons for British soft power strength.[294] Global Magazine attributes British soft power primarily to a 'language advantage' followed by 'intellectual influence' and 'knowledge creation and production'. Film and television and British 'special cultural charm' are other factors that contribute to soft power.[295]

There is also a large body of literature focussing on the British Council and their role in soft power generation. Shlapeko argues that the Russian Federation is aware of the need to increase its soft power and is doing so through attempting to improve bilateral relations, but also through the Russkiy Mir (Russian World) Foundation – which has been modelled on the British Council and the German Goethe-Institut.[296] Cheng too asserts that China should learn from Britain's soft power by focussing not on institutional strength but on cultural output, which has offset Britain's decline in political power on a global stage.[297] The Swedish Institute regards the British Council as an example with regard to public diplomacy evaluation.[298] From a Spanish perspective, Menéndez Reyes argues that the British Council should be an example for others to follow.[299] According to Noya, the British Council is exemplary in constructing a relationship whereby their activities are conducted far from the political nucleus, thereby, adopting a division of labour approach to public diplomacy.[300]

Nevertheless, not all the literature has positively reviewed trust in British institutions. Nattier, for instance, is critical of the BBC and British Council, finding that their objectives to create opportunities at the international level between the British and other peoples by developing trust between them are vague.[301] Gürsoy cautions that for the British, 'the biggest challenge is historical experiences of animosity that leads to inherent mistrust'.[302]

According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Centre in January 2021 among Chinese citizens, 14 per cent perceived the UK 'very unfavourably', 31 per cent 'somewhat unfavourably', 36 per cent 'somewhat favourably', 11 per cent 'very favourably', and the remainder (8 per cent) didn't know.[303]

It is perhaps useful to the British Council to have such a range of commentary on their work, and the weight of this work is far greater than on the work of their analogues. This is not a coincidence.
The British Council's presence abroad is significant, particularly in relation to their counterparts.
This means observers are more likely to review their role in public diplomacy and within the international system. Most of the work on the British Council is positive, even from possibly unlikely sources. This is perhaps proof that neither cultural relations, nor trust, is a zero-sum game, and can be more co-operative than competitive.

293 "China-Uk Educational Cooperation and Exchange Overview [中英教育合作与交流概况]," http://www.edu-chineseembassy-uk.org/england/jlhz/zyjy/20171222162735135150/index.html.,
294 "Britain's Soft Power Is the World's First, Why Does It Surpass the United States? [英国软实力世界第一, 凭什么超越美国]," https://www.jiemian.com/article/2316281.html.
295 "Soft Power in Britain Today [当今英国的软实力]," https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1641105018986430426&wfr=spider&for=pc.
296 "The Institute of Public Diplomacy and Its Place in Socio-Cultural Border Spaces [Институт Общественной Дипломатии И Его Место В Трансграничном Социокультурном Пространстве]," Ecumene. Regional Research [Ойкумена. Регионоведческие исследования], no. 1 (40) (2017).
297 "British Cultural Soft Power: Theory and Implications [英国文化软实力 : 理论与启示]," Theoretical Research, no. 1 (2014).
298 Alice Srugies, "Competition or Cooperation?: A Comparative Analysis of the Public Diplomacy of the European Union and Selected Member States" (Dissertation, Ilmenau, TU Ilmenau, 2016, 2016).
299 "Diplomacia Cultural: Aproximación Al Concepto, Y Apuntes Sobre El Modelo De Diplomacia Cultural En España," Culturas. Revista de Gestión Cultural 5, no. 2 (2018).
300 "Una Diplomacia Pública Para España."
301 "The Public and Cultural Diplomacy of Tomorrow: [La Diplomatie Publique Et Culturelle De Demain," 40.
302 "Reconsidering Britain's Soft Power: Lessons from the Perceptions of the Turkish Political Elite," 1.
303 Adam Liu, Xiaojun Li, and Songying Fang, Chinese Attitudes Towards U.S. And Other Major Economies [January 2021 Topline Survey Results] (2021).

Conclusion

Conclusion

Trust is central to the logic of international relations theory and therefore needs to be subjected to a systematic analysis. Trust matters in international relations. Governments recognise that and act accordingly. Nevertheless, trust is often elusive, but always intangible. It can be potent if acquired from a variety of state and non-state actors and sources. Trust is hard to build and easy to lose.

Academic and other studies of trust are varied and often overly theoretical. There have been research projects that attempt to demonstrate perceived levels of trust in certain countries. A smaller set of research projects have addressed the tangible impact of trust of any form. However, none have delivered on the promise to comprehensively quantify or explain how trust can impact international relations. This might initially appear somewhat surprising. After all, dozens of works that are cited here have called for further research to be done in the area. It would be easy for those looking to them for a guide to action to wallow and drown. Nevertheless, this review has offered some recommendations.

Why then are so few following through on calls from others to demonstrate how changing levels of trust can impact countries at the international level? There are several plausible explanations for this.

First, surveys that often seek to gauge public perceptions, group 'trust' as a concept with 'attractiveness'. Undoubtedly, these two concepts are significantly related, but not absolutely. One can find a country attractive enough to travel on holiday but not sufficiently trust their educational systems. Likewise, one may find the products of a country attractive enough to purchase or consume, but still to find that country not suitably trustworthy enough to form economic partnerships with or within which to instil an office headquarters. In other words, are attempts to uncover levels of trust appropriately isolating the concept or measuring something else? This problem can be avoided by repeating questions related to trust throughout an interview but by wording them differently. This allows for a quality check in conceptualisation.

A second problem is inversely related to the previous point; while it may be challenging to separate trust from other related concepts, it is exceptionally complex to aggregate. In other words, how can we say a country is more or less trustworthy than another? How can we effectively and comprehensively measure the impact across all possible areas? It is therefore advisable that future surveys of trust cover the concepts from a variety of angles, as is attempted by the Pew Research Centre, which gauge perceptions of trustworthiness along differing elements relating to a country's profile. In other words, it is worth asking participants which elements of the UK they trust, to do what, and to what extent.

Third, are possible potential concerns relating to the nature of trust and trying to quantify the concept and its consequences. Given the nature of trust being a psychological, emotive, or socialised phenomenon, can we sufficiently detach the trustee and the truster from the socio-political milieu in which they engage with the country in question? Moreover, methodologically is it enough or appropriate to simply ask someone whether they trust a country or not, or even to scale levels of trust in a country? This can be addressed by conducting a mixed methodological approach, whereby survey data is combined with richer, in-depth research into levels of trust. This data can be gathered through semi-structured interviewing, or in combination with a case study approach which examines the trust building process in detail.

Fourth, it may not be possible to determine whether research projects are examining trust, or its consequences or which part of the process is being examined. In other words, does someone trust a country because of the strength of their economy, or does trust in a country facilitate economic strength? It may be possible to discover how perceptions of trust relate to individuals' intentions to engage with a country, but harder to research whether intentions were carried out. Additionally, all these measurements are snapshots in time by nature, and trust is, as shown, built over time and repeated interactions. A longitudinal analysis may overcome some of these limitations, by viewing a small number of participants changes in trust following campaigns, events, exchanges etc. to see what was important, and what less so.

Tracking metrics over time, and focusing on change relative to previous years, and not relative to other countries, might provide better insight into the role of trust in international relations, and specifically the British Council's role in this dynamic.

Nevertheless, trust can turn to mistrust at speed. A country, organisation, or company can swing rapidly from being trusted to mistrusted, rendering many measurements incomprehensive without a long-term trend analysis. Moreover, there appears to be a preoccupation with measuring trust, but not much with measuring how quickly or under which circumstances trust can return if lost, or vice versa.

These measurements are not looking at the whole feedback loop. This analysis can be achieved through qualitative, rather than quantitative research designs. One such example is process tracing, which attempts to establish whether, and how, a potential cause or causes influenced a specified change or set of changes. A drawback with this methodology is the very large amount of data required to establish causality. Nevertheless, this data is obtainable, particularly bounded around a critical juncture, i.e., the 2012 Olympics in London, the UK's exit from the European Union, changes to legislation affecting international students etc.

In addition to some of the challenges to measuring trust listed above and some avenues for future research, current attempts by the British Council should be maintained, but with some additions and alterations. The maintenance of the metrics is important as trust is slowly acquired. Therefore, a continuation of data on trust in Britain, its people, its government, and its institutions will provide analysts with a long-term assessment of how the country is faring with regards to trust acquisition.

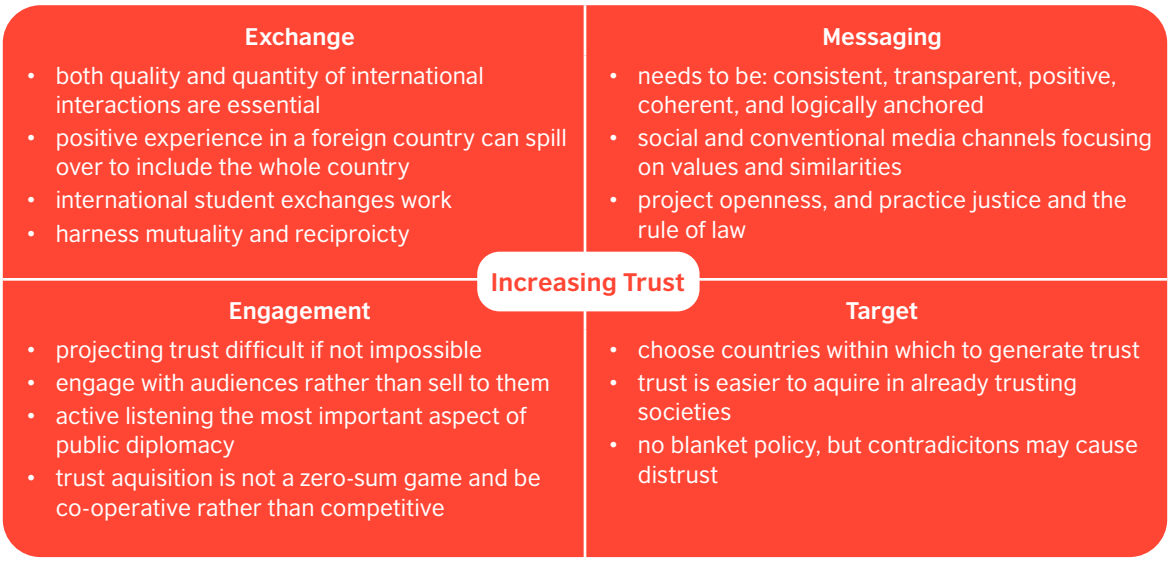
That said, some amendments are required:

- First, decoupling trust from attractiveness is essential. Although several surveys and indices link the two concepts into one metric, they are not the same. This might be creating a distortion in measurement.
- Second, and following this previous point, it could be beneficial to ask participants 'to what extent do you expect **X to do Y**', this will of course involve a more thorough questionnaire as there will be several permutations but might yield interesting results and data.
- Third, it is possible to ask participants, either in the form of questionnaire responses or through interview data, whether their trust in X has changed. This is not perfect, however, as people are not always aware of changes in their perceptions.

This review has shown that the British Council is the envy of its peers and its sharpest rivals. It is admired by the French, and even by the Russians, whose government has sometimes found its effectiveness impressive enough to be irksome. It is seen by others as a model and may only therefore need to consider what has contributed most to its success and what it may need to do to stay ahead.

The other strong message that flows from the review is that trust is a function of performance that demonstrates attachment to attractive values (and is destroyed by evidence that values are proclaimed but not observed). It is not won by advertisement. Despite the commendation of work well done, the review unveiled several recommendations to those attempting to increase or acquire trust (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Summary of recommendations from the literature



The review confirms the well understood fact that trust in international relations and soft power is not solely under the control of governments, business, NGOs, media, or any single institution, but can be damaged by any one of them. Trust is hard to win, but easy to lose.

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