

The changing nature of public diplomacy media essay



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In this study I will attempt to respond to several questions. The first: Is Public Diplomacy is the right tool to change world opinion toward Iraq. If the finding that it will be possible which will lead to the second question which: What the ideal action plan for Iraq Public diplomacy? The third question will be: How can government policy makers apply this strategic tool? Certainly, the initial stages of this process will be complex.

The objective of this paper to be presented on later stage as policy proposal for the Iraqi government. The study begins by exploring the concept of PD and why Iraq should consider establishing PD in the foreign ministry, and its impact on Iraq foreign policy. It then and introduces the diverse methods of national reputation building. In doing so, this dissertation suggests to consider a way of understanding international relations, which is foundation of national image building through public diplomacy.

Finally, based on the findings of a pilot study and online survey focusing on the national image of Iraq, this study proposes establishing a PD department (PDD) within the foreign ministry and suggestion on how to deploy public with a case study

Introduction

Motivation

Although reputation management has historically been restricted to companies or other organisational entities, countries are also increasingly concerned with their reputation relative to other countries and have started to actively measure and manage that reputation.

For an entity to achieve a certain desired reputation outcome, it has to manage as much of its exposure to various target groups. That would mean, for example, steering media coverage by closely supervising what information is made public.

Iraq's reputation abroad has dramatically deteriorated. Iraq is the only nation in the Arab world whose new-formed democratic system is constantly being challenged, and constantly been projected as country with no national identity, Iraqi leaders are often compared to Saddam and Iraqi actions against the terrorist and insurgent are often described as politically motivated policies. Conditions in Iraq are often compared with those that existed in Vietnam.

Why national reputation matters?

National reputation is unquestionably an instrument of power. Managing national reputation and nation-states' relationship with stakeholders overseas has been an integral part of foreign-policy making and public diplomacy, national reputation has a direct impact on international relations of a nation and its national policies, ranging from political, economic to cultural (Gilboa, 2006)

Yet the Iraqi government has failed to prevent the deterioration of Iraq's image and reputation in the world. The main reason is the lack of awareness and understanding of the critical role PD plays in contemporary international relations. In the information age, national reputation has become a critical asset and 'soft power' has become a major instrument of foreign policy[1]. Communication, education and persuasion are the principal techniques of

foreign relations, not military force. Even the US, the sole superpower, is slowly learning this hard lesson in the Iraq war. National reputation is what peoples around the world think about a state's conduct and behaviour. Therefore, a grand strategy in international conflict requires the integration and application of three fundamental components: force, diplomacy and communication. The last component, communication, may even be the decisive factor

Purpose

My interest in the area rose from an awareness that the level and volume of coverage on Iraq had grown enormously in the past eight years and as such, my awareness of the subject itself had grown too. After a period of widely reading about and studying PD and analysing Public diplomacy strategy in country like South Africa, Colombia, Denmark and Israel and how those countries where able to improve there image abroad, it was my belief that this area need to be explore for the benefit of new Iraq and that a by writing a dissertation I could carry out may contribute little or nothing to the sheer quantity and wealth of studies, debates and articles that already existed on these topics. By contrast, it was my understanding that Iraq reputation and the foreign audience perception on Iraq in the media was a relatively misrepresented and the area of PD has't been explored and researched by the Iraqi policy makers and as such, it was my belief that if I undertook an examination of the topic I could contribute something on how the national image can be restored.

What is more, my growing interest about PD concept, coupled with a doubt bout how Iraq been presented on the media and abroad led me to question <https://assignbuster.com/the-changing-nature-of-public-diplomacy-media-essay/>

various things about why Iraq reputation and national image has been deteriorated abroad[2]and why the Iraqi government don't a strategy in restoring the national image.

Is what is being reported fact or conjecture? How accurate is people perception on Iraq?

The fact that Iraq has been for so much time in the news since the regime change has placed Iraq in the centre of the world map, a privilege most third-world countries will never have. After hitting headlines for years, people know very well what Iraq is and where it is, this pre-existing knowledge is a valuable asset, and as such an asset any PD campaign for Iraq should capitalise on.

Are the news and image reported precise and helpful or misleading and distorting? Why does there appear to be more reporting on the effects of war on Iraq than the improvement since the regime change? Why are there so many reports about how hopeless Iraq is becoming and that Iraq can't survive without the support of the US?

Objectives

These questions, among some more specific ones which I will detail later, are some of the reasons that I began to be interested in the way how PD can help the Iraqi government in communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring the foreign public closer to home and educate them about the New Iraq, its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies.

My concern was about the level of information people gain from the news then I studied the news and its role as a system of information. As such, the focus of this study, examining how informative the print press was during my chosen sample and the themes that were of predominant focus of debate.

The questions I would like to address are: How Iraq been reported and represented in the media; what were the media interests on Iraq? In exploring the core themes and topics in the sample I will be able to distinguish what the public perception and therefore what audiences and policy makers will understand of the messages in the press. By dealing with these questions I will be able to conclude why Iraq government should aggrievedly peruse on forming a PD department at the MFA and that strategy of PD that the department can take to deploy the PD policy and how can be benefited prior to hosting the gulf cup in 2013

Literature Study

In this I will be investigating the domain of literature currently available on the fields of Nation image and PD has shown to be rather problematic, with both disciplines being still vastly understudied. While the empirical section of this study deals exclusively with those concepts, there are a few surrounding disciplines which at least fall into the margins of the relevant field and thus should also be discussed

Images of Nations

One school of thought investigates a concept similar to country reputation, namely the images of nations, or countries. Perhaps the most exhaustive study conducted in this field is the book Images of nations and international

public relations by Michael Kunczik written in 1990. Here, Kunczik discusses the idea that the world is a “ large and complex communication network” (1990: 17) in which the mass media cannot be treated in isolation. He points out that although “ practically anything can contribute to forming an image of another nation” (Kunczik, 1990: 18), there are ways for public relations to remove prejudices between peoples.

In the old days one could win over an empire by marrying, today you can win over peoples by a leading article. But according to Kunczik, is because the mass media is continuously feeding people “ images of nations” (1990: 20).

Another observation he makes (1990: 21) is the large amount of money that is fed into international image cultivation. This, according to Kunczik, shows how important governments rate the kind of an image their country, government or policies project abroad.

One of the first times the term national public relations was used explicitly was in 1978 when

Herzog, Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations, commented that

“ ‘from the point of view of national public relations the Israeli policy of settling the occupied territories won in wars with the Arabs had done more damage than anything else” (Koschowitz 1984 as cited in Kunczik 1990: 21).

For purposes of this literature study, it is important also to point out the observation Kunczik makes about the then-current state of research in the area of image cultivation by states. According to him, the book published in 1965, *International behaviour. A social-psychological analysis* by Kelman still <https://assignbuster.com/the-changing-nature-of-public-diplomacy-media-essay/>

ranked the definitive study in that field when Kunczik wrote his work in 1990. After pointing out very few other publications dealing with Image cultivation of nations, Kunczik concludes that

“ Fundamentally...the literature situation on the subject area addressed here is poor [because] public relations activities tend to be especially successful the less they are recognisable as such. Very often, therefore, scientifically ‘ non-serious’ sources have to be resorted to such as newspaper reports, personal statements etc.” (Kunczik, 1990: 24).

Since this publication, Kunczik has done a number of studies following up on his idea of images of nations, focussing often on the international image of crisis countries. In his most recent study, *Images of Nations and Transnational Public Relations of Governments with Special reference to the Kosovo*, presented at a symposium in 2004, Kunczik points out in the introduction that the mass media’s reality is not factual reality and very often does not correspond to real happenings.

“ Mass media constructs a separate reality. That criteria used to construct this reality are the so called ‘ news values’. But for the recipients, who have no primary access to most things reported on, this constructed world becomes ‘ factual reality’.”

Even in this, Kunczik’s latest study, he points out “ the relationship between news media and images of nations is not well researched”.

One study that could be particularly relevant to the topic of this study was “ Is the Media Being Fair in Iraq?” by The Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology[i]

In this study it was found that the Iraq image was still suffering under “ coups and earthquakes style of coverage”, and that “ historic cultural perceptions continued to affect the trend of international news coverage of Iraq by the foreign press (which include Arabic Media).

This study is not only served to provide raw data that to could help to understand how Iraq been portrayed abroad in both Arab and western world. But also to assess the degree to which typical tones of stories might reflect the political agendas of publisher, owners, editors and news anchors and other key media figures.

While the above-mentioned study and those laying the ground-work of images of nations appear to provide a foundation to a dissertation on Will PD fix Iraq reputation can, it is of crucial importance to highlight that the theory to be followed is that of country reputation, not images of a country. While the two concepts of reputation and image are often confused as having the same meaning, they are in fact two distinguishable terms whose differences should be realised.

Image versus Reputation

Reputation, as opposed to image, is seen as a strategic concept developed around long-term impressions of an organisation built around a number of corporate images and actions (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Already then, the idea crystallised that there was a difference between the two concepts: while <https://assignbuster.com/the-changing-nature-of-public-diplomacy-media-essay/>

images were regarded as having a stationary nature, reputations were seen as dynamic.

In their recent book *Reputation in Artificial Societies: Social Beliefs for Social Order*, Conte and Paolucci develop the core of their reputation theory upon this difference between image and reputation. The authors point out that “reputation cannot be seen as a static attribute, rigidly codified as footprints of social hierarchy”. Reputation rather consists of dynamic properties because reputation attribution is a mental process that takes place within communication processes. According to the authors, “image” is conceived as a set of evaluative beliefs about a given target and “reputation” as the process and effect of transmission of the image. Image is seen as an evaluative belief and is said to be a static system, while reputation is a “meta belief” that carries no reference to the acceptance of established beliefs (Conte & Paolucci, 2002).

Public Relation

The public relations practice also sees vast differences between Image and Reputation two misunderstood siblings that need better management (PR influences, 2003). While image on the one hand is built, costs money, is fast and opportunistic, reputation is earned, is an asset, is careful and industrious. In the words of Brown in *A Sound Reputation*,

“Reputation...is a dynamic, not static, quality; it changes as individual opinions change. And there are two drivers of opinion change - direct experience and indirect experience (2005: 1).”

Brown also points out that the most common form of indirect experience is media coverage, which is an important finding for this study (2003: 1). In a paper titled Reputation and the Corporate Brand (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004: 369), image is defined as “ a reflection of an organisation’s identity and its corporate brand,” or more specifically, the organisation as seen from one stakeholder group’s point of view.

Depending on which stakeholder is involved, an organisation can have many different images. Reputation, on the other hand, is defined in that study as “ the collective representation of multiple constituencies’ [stakeholder group’s] images of a company, built up over time and based on a company’s identity programmes, its performance and how constituencies have perceived its behaviour.” In short, images are seen as multiple, stationary reflections of an organisation’s identity and its corporate brands while reputation is the dynamic, collective representation of the various images of a corporation as perceived by different stakeholders. While an image is a fixed set of beliefs about a corporation, reputation changes as individual opinions change.

Considering the large body of literature that highlights the differences between image and reputation, it is indeed questionable if the studies that fall under images of nations are in fact relevant to a study on Iraq reputation. While image, as the above definitions point out, is indeed a part of reputation, it is not reputation per se.

Most literature dealing explicitly with the concepts of country reputation measurement and management today, are derived from the school of

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corporate reputation measurement and management, however, I will be only discussing the country reputation which relevant to this study should next be discussed.

Country Reputation

Country Reputation Management

Already in 1999, Olins compiled a pamphlet titled *Trading Identities: Why Countries and Companies are becoming more alike*. Here, Olins puts forward the idea:

“ As countries develop their national brands to compete for investment, trade and tourism, mega-merged global companies are using nation-building techniques to achieve internal cohesion across cultures and are becoming ever more involved in providing public services like education and health” (1999: 1).

Pharoah writes in *Building and Managing Reputation for Countries* that

“ Countries are increasingly realising that reputation matters - and if reputation matters, then reputation needs to be managed.”

According to Pharoah, the governments of today are

“ Increasingly becoming the brand managers of their country” (Pharoah, 2004: 1).

These findings lead to the idea that instruments used to manage and measure companies could be argued to apply to countries as well.

Country Reputation Measurement

Applying reputation measurement theories to countries was adopted on through a research survey which was conducted by The Media Tenor on behalf of the South African government, with the results being published in 2000. The study's mission^[ii] was "to establish a framework for South Africa to effectively manage its Public diplomacy" and its vision to "To further strengthen confidence in South Africa's ability to host a successful FIFA 2010 World Cup"

In cooperation with International marketing council (IMC),^[iii] developed a tool according to which South Africa reputation was measured and the findings used to devise a framework for the active management of South Africa's reputation and perception prior to the world cup 2010.

The tool applied was an adapted version of Media Tenor used to measure the media coverage for organisations and countries. The method is composed of opinion leading media, along this method, a Analysis of all texts in opinion leading media then questionnaire was designed, using Media Tenor reputation, measuring foreign public perceptions of South Africa and its competitive set, the same questionnaire was used to determine the perception of South Africa residents. That allowed the researchers to identify the similarity between internal and external perceptions of the country, or, between identity and reputation. This allowed the team to make recommendations about South Africa future reputation management efforts. The results of the study assisted the IMC team with their communication plan on how "to further strengthen confidence in South Africa's ability to host a

successful FIFA 2010 World Cup. This approach and the instrument developed could be used for the reputation measurement of any country

They did however, highlight that in order to validate this, further research and more comparable studies would be needed.

According to the authors, that tool allows governments to gain insights into which aspects in the perception of the general public drive the overall reputation of their country and how can we improved, what are the tools that can implemented, one of the method that south Africa launched was their Brand South Africa program, which also was part of the PD strategy towards improving the foreign public perception. The core of the Brand South Africa is a three-step framework whereby the first step incorporates a diagnosis of the current state of the country's reputation, the second designing a future state thereof and thirdly managing the PD strategy.