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Canada's Public Diplomacy

Edited by Nicholas J. Cull · Michael K. Hawes



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Nicholas J. Cull · Michael K. Hawes
Editors

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Editors

Nicholas J. Cull
Annenberg School for
Communication
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA, USA

Michael K. Hawes
Canada-US Canada Fulbright
Commission
Ottawa, ON, Canada

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For John W. Holmes (1910–1988), a great Canadian Diplomat.

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Defects are wholly homegrown.

May 2020

Nicholas J. Cull
Michael K. Hawes

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew F. Cooper is University Research Chair in the Department of Political Science, and Professor at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, University of Waterloo, Canada. From 2003 to 2010 he was the Associate Director and Distinguished Fellow of the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI). He teaches in the areas of the Theory and Practice of Diplomacy, National Perspectives on Global Governance, International Political Economy, and Comparative and Canadian Foreign Policy. Holding a Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.) from Oxford University, he has been a Visiting Professor at Harvard University, The Australian National University, Stellenbosch University in South Africa, and Shiv Nadar University, India. He is the author of eleven books and editor/co-editor of 21 collections including *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (OUP, 2013). In 2000 he was Fulbright Scholar in the Western Hemisphere Program at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC. In 2019 he received the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Diplomacy Section of the International Studies Association. He held the Fulbright chair at USC in 2009.

Daryl Copeland is an educator, analyst, consultant, and former Canadian diplomat. He is the author of *Guerrilla Diplomacy: Rethinking International Relations*, a Research Fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, a Policy Fellow at the University of Montreal's Centre for International Studies and Research (CERIUM), and Senior Advisor, Science

Diplomacy at the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Austria. Mr. Copeland specializes in the role of science and technology in diplomacy, international policy, global issues, and public management. He has won several awards and has published 12 book chapters and over 200 articles in the popular and scholarly press. His twitter handle is @GuerrillaDiplo. He is a long-term contributor to the blog associated with the USC Center on Public Diplomacy and is a Senior Fellow of the Center.

Nicholas J. Cull is professor of Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California where he is affiliated with both the Center on Public Diplomacy and Center for Communication Leadership. Originally from the UK, he is a widely published historian of the role of media and culture in foreign affairs. His most recent books are a survey text: *Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age* (Polity, 2019) and (with Nancy Snow as co-editor) *The Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy (2nd edition)* (2020). Cull has delivered training and/or advice at many foreign ministries and diplomatic academies around the world including those of the United States, UK, Canada, Switzerland, Netherlands, South Korea, Japan, and South Africa. He has held visiting appointments with Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan and Beijing Foreign Studies University. In 2019 he was a visiting fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University.

Bernard Duhaime is Professor of International Law at the Faculty of Law and Political Science of the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), where he teaches mainly international human rights law and specializes on the Inter-American System of Protection of Human Rights. He also serves as a Member of the Working group on enforced or involuntary disappearances reporting to the United Nations Human Rights Council. Bernard Duhaime is a Fellow of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation (2017–2021). Previously, Prof. Duhaime was a lawyer at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. He is a member of the Quebec Bar in Canada. He is the author of more than fifty publications. He founded the Clinique Internationale de Défense des Droits Humains de l'UQAM and was its first director. He held many international fellowships including the Canada-US Fulbright Visiting Chair in Public Diplomacy at USC in 2011.

Michael K. Hawes is Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Educational Exchange between Canada and the United States of America and Executive Director of Fulbright Canada. Since 1985, he has been a professor of international relations (currently on leave) in the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University in Kingston. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from York University in Toronto. He is a member of the Editorial Board at the *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*. He also co-convenes the Canada Colloquium Series at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. His most recent book, with Christopher Kirkey, is *Canadian Foreign Policy in a Unipolar World* (Oxford, 2017). He is himself an alumnus of the Fulbright program at Berkeley (1999/2000) as well as the Fulbright chair at USC in Spring, 2010.

Mark Kristmanson is a scholar, producer, and administrator. From 2014 to 2019 he served as Chief Executive Officer of the National Capital Commission after directing its public programs and national events for a decade. He holds a Ph.D. from Concordia University in Montréal, an M.A. from City University in London, as well as executive training at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. Previously, he served as founding Executive Director of the New Brunswick Arts Board and expert adviser to the Cultural Capitals of Canada Program. He is the author of *Plateaus of Freedom: Nationality, Culture, and State Security* (Oxford, 2003) as well as numerous scholarly articles. He founded the Capital Urbanism Lab and speaks regularly at conferences on environmental sustainability, urban design, national commemorations, and indigenous reconciliation. He is a consultant with Larry Beasley and Associates. He held the Fulbright chair at USC in 2011.

Camille Labadie is a lecturer at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). She holds a degree in History from the University of Strasbourg (France), as well as a degree in International Relations and International Law, and a master's degree in International Law. Camille Labadie has carried out several missions with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. She has also been a project assistant at the International Bureau for Children's Rights and acted as case manager at UQAM's International Human Rights Defence Clinic (CIDDHU). She is the recipient of several scholarships for excellence from the Faculty of Political Science and Law at the UQAM, where she is currently completing her doctoral studies under the supervision of Professor Bernard Duhaime.

Her research focuses on reparations for cultural damage in international law, and she acts as coordinator of the *Chaire de recherche sur la gouvernance des musées et le droit de la culture*.

Evan H. Potter is associate professor in the Department of Communication, University of Ottawa. He is the founding editor of the *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* and an author of books including *Branding Canada: Projecting Canada's Soft Power Through Public Diplomacy* (2009). His other work includes *Transatlantic Partners: Canadian Approaches to the European Union* (1999) and (as editor) *Cyberdiplomacy: Foreign Policy in the 21st Century* (2002). Potter received his B.A. in political studies at Queen's University at Kingston, his M.A. in international affairs at The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, and his Ph.D. in international relations at the London School of Economics in the UK. He held the USC Fulbright chair in 2008.

Sarah E. K. Smith is Assistant Professor in Communication and Media Studies, and affiliated faculty in the Bachelor of Global and International Studies program at Carleton University, Ottawa. She is a Fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and a founding member of the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative (NACDI), a multi-disciplinary partnership of academics, policymakers, and practitioners interested in interrogating and advancing cultural diplomacy. Smith completed her Ph.D. at Queen's University and subsequently worked as Curator of Contemporary Art at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre. She held a post-doctoral Fellowship with the Transnational Studies Initiative at Harvard University and a Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta. Smith's research addresses visual culture, contemporary art, and museums. Her writing has been published in journals including *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, and *Journal of Canadian Studies*. She is the author of *General Idea: Life & Work*, published in 2016 by the Art Canada Institute. She is currently completing a book on culture and free trade in North America to be published by the University of British Columbia Press. She held the Fulbright chair at USC in 2015.

Stéphanie von Hlatky is an associate professor of political studies at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario and the former Director of the Queen's Centre for International and Defence Policy (CIDP). Her research focuses on NATO, armed forces, military interventions, and

defense policy. She has published in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, the *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, *Defence Studies*, *International Journal*, *European Security*, *Études internationales*, *Asian Security*, as well as the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*. She is the author of *American Allies in Times of War: The Great Asymmetry* (Oxford University Press, 2013). She has also published two edited volumes: *The Future of US Extended Deterrence* (with Andreas Wenger) (Georgetown University Press, 2015) and *Going to War? Trends in Military Interventions* (with H. Christian Breede) (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016). She held the Fulbright chair at USC in 2016.

Ira Wagman is an associate professor of Communication Studies at Carleton University, with a cross-appointment between the School of Journalism and Communication and the Institute for the Comparative Study of Literature, Art, and Culture. He is also a Research Associate at the Max Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies, the Carleton Centre for Public History, and the Centre for European Studies. He researches, teaches, and writes on media history, communication theory, and the study of the cultural industries. He uses historiographical and interpretive research methods including archival work, policy analysis, and media criticism. His work covers a range of geographical settings, including Canada, France, and Italy as well as international political institutions such as the European Union and UNESCO. His publications include *Cultural Industries.ca: Making Sense of Canadian Media in the Digital Age* (coedited with Peter Urquart). He has held visiting professorships and research fellowships at the University of Freiburg, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the University of Amsterdam the University of Aarhus, SUNY-Plattsburgh, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan as well as USC where he was the 2013 Canada-US Fulbright Visiting Research Chair in Public Diplomacy.



CHAPTER 1

Canada and Public Diplomacy: The Road to Reputational Security

Nicholas J. Cull

The Mountie looked inordinately tall as he stepped forward to pose for photographs. His Red Serge jacket caught the eye from a distance, even though the knots of visitors gathering at the entrance to the building. Up close, his medal ribbons indicated that he was the real deal and not just a handsome actor in a hired costume. Off to one side, a stilt walker in the glittery Cirque du Soleil costume had attracted her own following, but a line formed regardless and pairs of visitors waited politely for their own private moment with an enduring visual icon of Canadian-ness. It could have been a scene from a parade in the shade of the parliament in Ottawa, but it was not. It was Shanghai in the summer of 2010 and Canada was just one of 190 countries seeking to present themselves to the ordinary people of China as participants in what was to be the largest mass participation event in history to date, the Shanghai Expo. Canada had embraced the opportunity, committing over forty million dollars to build a pavilion

N. J. Cull (✉)
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California,
Los Angeles, CA, USA
e-mail: cull@usc.edu

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and becoming the first country to formally commit to exhibiting at the fair. The Mountie stood at the gate of an impressive whole—there was the Canadian pavilion building with its eye-catching angular steel and cedarwood flanks created by the firm of Saia Barbarese Topouzanov of Montreal; there was an interactive exhibit entitled *The Living City* which showcased ideas of sustainable civic development; there was a film from the National Film Board which edited images from multiple Canadian cities to produce a hybrid Canadian urban experience; there was a restaurant which introduced fairgoers to both Poutine and Moosehead beer. Cirque du Soleil were integral to the operation, as was the honorary chairman of the pavilion, a Canadian familiar to every Chinese household, Mark Roswell. Known by his stage name Darshan (big mountain), Roswell was noted for his mastery of Mandarin and traditional Chinese comic form. In some ways, it was a moment of well-staged entertainment, but it was also a moment of diplomacy as complete as any moment attending that summer's other Sino-Canadian milestones—Premiere Hu Jintao's State Visit to Canada or Governor General Michaëlle Jean's visit to China—except in that it was not designed to engage a foreign government, but, rather, a foreign public. It was a moment of public diplomacy and a step towards ensuring that aspect of security that comes from being well thought of in the world: reputational security.¹

This book will explore the contemporary Canadian experience of public diplomacy. It is intended for two audiences: students, scholars, and practitioners with an existing interest in Canadian foreign policy who seek to understand its public dimensions, and for a second audience familiar with public diplomacy from a literature which has tended to focus on United States or British cases, who are interested to better understand the Canadian experience. This introduction will attempt to serve both audiences.

Public diplomacy is an essential component of contemporary foreign relations. The term originated in the mid-1960s, when theorists in the United States sought a way to speak about out-reach to foreign publics that would leave the term 'propaganda' free to be thrown at the Communist Bloc. Its first use was in the title of the Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy at Tufts University near Boston, founded as a memorial to the former journalist who had exemplified the practice while running global outreach for President Kennedy. It has since evolved through use by practitioners and scholars into a convenient portmanteau phrase for the range of instruments used by an international actor to conduct foreign

policy by engaging a foreign public. Whatever its coiner's intent, public diplomacy is no longer synonymous with propaganda because propaganda is always conceived as a mechanism for getting to a particular result. Public diplomacy has the capacity to be a two-way street, to benefit both sides of a relationship and to allow for growth. Yet it is clear from the practice of public diplomacy that some elements (perhaps all, in the hands of some actors) risk tumbling back into propaganda. This is part of the reason why scholarship and public discussion of public diplomacy are so important. The term jumped beyond its US origin only in the 1990s as part of the process of understanding the mechanism by which the Cold War had come to an end. As the role of the media in international relations grew, so interest in public diplomacy increased. The attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, sealed its relevance. Suddenly, the western world needed a frame to understand how to reach out to public opinion as part of a campaign against terrorism. Public diplomacy became a key part of that discussion. As my co-editor **Michael Hawes** argues in his chapter, Canada has an admirable tradition of public diplomacy but has allowed that to slip. It is essential that the country learn all it can to revive the best in its past global engagement. A restoration requires a full understanding of the nature of public diplomacy.

While the term 'public diplomacy' is new, its practice is as old as organized statecraft. In its classic form, public diplomacy may be divided into five essential components: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. Each element has its relevance in the world today and its own place in Canada's approach.

Listening is an international actor's attempt to engage an international audience by systematically collecting information from and about them and feeding what is learned into the policy-making process. While the greatest diplomats seem to do this instinctively, many larger powers seem to forget to listen. The work is typically conducted within embassies, though in some circumstances, independent agencies such as market researchers or media analysts may be employed to inform a particular policy. Canadian listening in the past has included attention to the position of the country in national brand and soft power indices. Significant players in contemporary listening include the Swiss, who, since 2001, have operated a research-driven approach under the auspices of a unit within the foreign ministry called *Présence Suisse/Präsenz Schweiz*. Listening in public diplomacy is sometimes focused narrowly on the process of evaluating a campaign; proof of effectiveness is always helpful at budget time

and, hence, this kind of listening is a growing preoccupation for public diplomacy agencies around the world. The need for a genuine culture of listening in Canadian public diplomacy is one of the issues raised by veteran Canadian diplomat **Daryl Copland**.

Advocacy is an international actor's work to explain a particular policy to an international audience. It includes a wide range of methods including speeches, press releases, and—in recent years—online campaigns. Trends within advocacy include large-scale, single-country campaigns promoting national brands, such as the Indian tourist ministry's Incredible India campaign, which began in 2002, or the UK's GREAT campaign, launched in 2011. We are also seeing multi-actor advocacy collaborations around particular issues—for example, the alliance between non-governmental organizations and nations which mobilized so successfully against landmines in the 1990s. Contemporary challenges in advocacy include the problem of credibility in a world segmented by social media. Credibility is boosted when the speaker and audience are linked by similarity. Social media has allowed people to receive much of, if not all of, their information about the world from people very similar to themselves in terms of ideology or demography. Thus, the challenge public diplomats face—communicating with an audience necessarily not like them—is greater than ever. For some countries, advocacy is the most important element of public diplomacy, and indeed, during the premiership of Stephen Harper, the entire process of foreign ministry public engagement was known as advocacy. Major campaigns during the Harper years included work to rally US opinion behind the Keystone XL pipeline program. Some recent Canadian cases of advocacy using digital tools are addressed in the chapter by **Evan Potter**.

Cultural diplomacy is an international actor's engagement of a foreign public by facilitating the export of some element of that actor's artistic or public life or to accomplish a foreign policy project through work in the cultural realm. Historical forms of cultural diplomacy have ranged from missionary activity to complex networks of international schools. Many countries have sought to teach their language to foreigners; others have set up agencies to promote their arts or sporting attainment internationally. Most western powers have long-established specialized agencies for cultural diplomacy, such as Germany's Goethe Institute, Britain's British Council, and Japan's Japan Foundation. Exceptions include the Republic of Ireland, which found that people tended to like the country anyway and felt that the government could do little to top the impact

of Irish bars and annual St Patrick's Day festivities. The great advantage of cultural diplomacy is that it can function and win friends in situations when direct political contacts are all but impossible. Its disadvantage lies in the necessity of working in the medium-term and of delivering demonstrably politically useful results through cultural avenues. The chapter by **Sarah E. K. Smith** considers the evolution of Canada's arts diplomacy in New York City. Other significant elements of Canadian cultural diplomacy have included the export of films created by the National Film Board of Canada, Canadian hosting of and participation in international expositions, and promotion of Canadian attainment in the field of literature. The Canada Council for the Arts works to assist with translation and travel through its Arts Abroad grants program.² Complications in cultural work are addressed in the case study of the Dead Sea scrolls presented by **Bernard Duhaime and Camille Labadie**. It is encouraging to see a renewed Canadian government interest in this approach, as evidenced by a report from the Senate published in June 2019 entitled: *Cultural Diplomacy: At the Front Stage of Canada's Foreign Policy*.³

Exchange diplomacy is an international actor's attempt to cultivate a foreign public by arranging for representatives of that public to spend time experiencing the actor's way of life or vice versa. Countries commonly offer both educationally oriented exchanges and exchanges with a more explicit policy objective which might seek out leaders, like the International Visitor Leadership Program launched by the United States following the Second World War, or the UK's Chevening Scholarships. There are also military-to-military exchanges which support cooperation within alliances like NATO and build relationships beyond. Exchanges differ from other forms of public diplomacy in the extended time frame necessary to show results; conversely, they pay off in terms of the strength of the bonds created and the ease with which they support mutual learning. Canada has a variety of exchange mechanisms including the Canadian Education Exchange Foundation (CEEF), a not-for-profit corporation which arranged international exchanges for the country's students and teachers, with support from provincial governments and the national Department for Canadian Heritage.⁴ There are also exchange organizations dedicated to promoting a single bilateral relationship. This volume is a project of Fulbright Canada: the Foundation for Educational Exchange between Canada and the United States of America. Its authors have all served as Fulbright professors at the University of

Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism in Los Angeles, and thereby played a part in building US/Canada understanding. Canada has been part of exchange programs within the Francophonie and English-speaking international communities, including Oxford University's venerable Rhodes Fellowships. Its alumni include the former Canadian Minister for Global Affairs and current Deputy Prime Minister, Chrystia Freeland.

International broadcasting has historically been a distinct element of public diplomacy, separated both by its need for infrastructure and the ethical journalistic approach needed to ensure long-term credibility. Even before the rise of the electronic media, international actors sought to engage foreign publics by providing a construction of the world's events, from the newsletters put out by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II to entire newspapers created for foreign consumption by belligerent powers in the Great War. Radio opened almost unlimited horizon, giving nation-states and other actors, such as the Vatican, an opportunity to speak directly to audiences around the world. The work initially relied on the technology of shortwave radio by which signals could be bounced off the underside of the ionosphere to reach audiences thousands of miles away. In the era of the satellite and internet, international broadcasting remains an important element of the public diplomacy of the largest actors, including the BBC, France 24, Deutsche Welle, and the US government stations overseen by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and so forth). Recent years, moreover, have seen new initiatives in the broadcasting field by powers seeking to redress the domination of a western perspective on the air, including Qatar's *Al Jazeera* and multiple language channels created by China's CCTV and Russia's *RT* (formerly *Russia Today*). There is not only a clash of perspective but also a clash of news culture, with western stations emphasizing ethical practices and balance in their news while some other players show a willingness to broadcast disinformation. Canada now plays little role in this battle despite a long history of work in the area. In 1945, Canada launched its own 'Voice of Canada' as the international service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In 1970, it took the new name Radio Canada International (RCI) and was part of the lineup of international stations which broadcast a democratic and balanced view of world news into fourteen languages into the Eastern Bloc and other regions during the Cold War. RCI has declined dramatically since the end of the

Cold War. In 2012, it sustained an 80% budget cut, ceased all broadcasting on the shortwave, and reduced its services to just five languages carried out only on the internet. The possibility of reviving Canadian international broadcasting is explored in the chapter by **Ira Wagman**.

The relationships between these core elements of public diplomacy have been subject to various conceptualizations—one of the most helpful of which originated at the Canadian foreign ministry in 2005. The public diplomacy pyramid imagined the nation's public diplomacy as an up-ward pointing equilateral triangle divided into three equal bands: advocacy at the top, profile-raising in the middle, and relationship-building at the bottom. Vertical axes on either side indicated time—short, medium, and long-term—and level of government control from high to unmediated/people-to-people. Advocacy was therefore the sharp end; short-term and highly controlled; cultural diplomacy maps onto profile-raising with a medium-term and a medium level of government intervention; exchange diplomacy maps onto relationship-building, requiring a long time frame but functioning without government mediation. The triangular shape implied that the elements needed one another, and indeed that a broad investment in relationship-building was a necessary foundation for the other elements.⁵ This was not the Harper-era strategy, rather, Canadian engagement became like spear on a wobbly shaft: advocacy with minimal lines of cultural and government-supported exchange. The Harper years are discussed in detail by **Andrew Cooper**.

The dominant concept in theorizing the application of public diplomacy is the notion of 'soft power,' as coined in the closing months of the Cold War by the Harvard-based political theorist Joseph Nye. In Nye's conception, soft power is a type of international leverage which comes from recognition of an international actor's values and culture. It supplements the better understood hard power mechanisms of financial or military pressure. Most actors integrate hard and soft approaches into a cohesive package, which Nye dubbed 'smart power.' In addition to the instruments of public diplomacy, its tools include the practical contributions of international aid or the positive example of participation in mechanisms of global citizenship. The concept of soft power was especially embraced in China, where it was seen as a mechanism to further the country's peaceful rise. China invested in mega-events, language programs, and media expansion in an effort to win admirers. These seem to have worked best in legitimizing governments domestically. Its most effective tool internationally actually seems to have been engaging

foreign countries through trade. The coinage of soft and smart power had considerable significance for Canada, given the country's generally positive reputation and long-term involvement with international government. Canada is an ideal case for a soft power analysis, especially since the election of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, a leader known for his personal charisma and public displays of ethics. Trudeau's impact is addressed in the essay by **Stéfanie von Hlatke's** case study of his first year.

Public diplomacy has evolved since the end of the Cold War. Technological and political forces have combined to multiply the number of players seeking to engage foreign publics. Provinces, cities, and even well-known individuals can act in the international information space, sometimes as single actors and sometimes as partners in coalitions. In the world at large, Scotland, Catalonia, California, and many other regions are engaging foreign publics in their own right. Subnational actors with a bearing on Canada's global profile include Quebec, which has a number of cultural outposts around the world. Canadian cities also sometimes operate as international actors. The mega-events hosted by Montreal—the expo of 1967 and Olympics of 1976—were public diplomacy on behalf of the city as well as the country, and in years since, the ranks of Canadian cities with a global profile have grown. Toronto's film festival is well enough established as a piece of civic diplomacy to have its own crisis—the 2009 debacle over its decision to feature a special strand linked to Tel Aviv.⁶ The civic public diplomacy case explored here is a treatment of the city of Ottawa and the issue of gifts by **Mark Kristmanson**.

What, then, is the future of Canadian public diplomacy? As these essays make clear, the field is complex and Canada faces many challenges, not a few of its own making. In the wider field of public diplomacy, the potential for transnational regions becoming actors in their own right is being explored. It may be that the next Canadian place to play for the world's attention is shared with the United States—Niagara or Detroit/Windsor—rather than Canadian alone.⁷ All countries have to remember that just as a single good citizen can enhance a reputation, so a single bad citizen can damage it. Canada has been helped by single citizens who were unrepresentative of their times. Sino-Chinese relations have benefited from the memory of Norman Bethune, the Canadian doctor who served on the Long March in the 1930s. Conversely, Canada has weathered a few villains, including its chemically enhanced athlete Ben Johnson and Toronto's chemically enhanced mayor Rob Ford. It is not a country immune from scandal. Interestingly, the scandals around

Justin Trudeau made little impact on Canada's international reputation. In 2019, the country reached the unprecedented height of third place in the Anholt nation brands index (now known as the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index), runner-up to Germany and France.⁸

Canada plainly enjoys immense reserves of international admiration, which endured even when the country downplayed its global citizenship role. Its rising status in the Anholt NBI is evidence of this. Yet, it is no longer enough to look good. A country must also *be* good. In the West, the debate around soft power is shifting from an emphasis on perception to a discussion of reality. Joseph Nye's work on US presidents now considers the underlying morality of their foreign policy.⁹ Simon Anholt now argues that for the long-term, countries should focus on actually being good countries rather than just courting a good image. To this end, he has created a Good Country Index in which countries are ranked based on a range of actual contributions to global good across a range of areas including culture, science, environment, and the nation's well-being. These contributions are adjusted to account for GDP, which puts the contribution of some of the wealthier countries into perspective. Canada still does well. In the 2017 version it ranked 10th, but the 2018 index, published in the summer of 2019, placed Finland in first place and Canada at 11. Canada's best score—in the health and well-being category—was 4th. Even if the usual comparator of Canadians—the United States—is presently languishing at 40th in terms of its aggregate good, Canada still has room to improve and move closer to where its citizens would wish it to be.¹⁰

The viral pandemic of 2020 has the potential to upend perceptions of international reputation. Countries which are managing well in the crisis have a certain coherence and high levels of trust in central government and a record of investment in healthcare. In the world in which reputation is based on relevance to an audience, countries which take the lead in building a collective response through organizations like the World Health Organization and wider UN will be more appreciated than those that insist of working unilaterally. Canada is one of the countries best placed to emerge with an enhanced reputation and well suited to shine in the world of Covid 19. The United States, in contrast, is extremely badly positioned.

Canada has an admirable heritage as a participant in the global conversation that is public diplomacy. Going forward, it is essential that the government continues to invest in the infrastructure on which sound