DO LEADERS MATTER?
EXAMINING LEADER EFFECTS ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OUTCOMES

By
LIUDMILA KHALITOVA

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To Tater
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The study examines leader effects in the context of public diplomacy. More specifically, it focuses on the role that leaders’ personalities and policies play in shaping the images of the countries they lead. In a 2x2 experiment, participants were exposed to media articles that focused on a leader’s personality (competence, leadership skills, integrity, and physical attractiveness, positively vs. negatively framed) and the leader’s policy initiatives (positively vs. negatively framed). Results suggest that both personality characteristics and policies impact country image. Personality characteristics influenced the cognitive aspect of country image (beliefs about the country’s governance and values), whereas policies had an impact on both cognitive and evaluative aspects (likeability, admiration). Moreover, when policies were viewed positively, the leader’s personality traits were viewed more positively, suggesting both a direct and a mediated impact of policies on country image. Finally, the study found that physical attractiveness of a leader had an indirect impact on country image – a more attractive leader was seen as possessing superior personality traits that were important for political performance thus providing the evidence of the halo effect of attractiveness in the context of international relations.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The idea that a positive image of a country in the international arena may give that state certain political and economic benefits and advantages is not new. A nation whose culture and values are attractive to others has greater leverage to shape the political preferences of other states. This helps it ensure that those states’ foreign policies would align with the interests and objectives of the government of the nation in question (Nye, 1990, 2004, 2008). A positive image can help a country boost its economy by making its brands and services more appealing to international consumers (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Gondim Mariutti, 2015; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999), by attracting foreign investment (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Kunzik, 2002), and by appealing to international students (Gertner, 2010), tourists, and skilled immigrants (Anholt, 2007; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Papadopoulos, 2004). International publics’ perceptions of a country are shaped by a wide range of a nation’s attributes that are known abroad, and may include such things as its pop-culture, its historical heritage, its landmarks, famous people, its art and literature, the achievements of its athletes, its natural beauty, and its products and services among others (Anholt, 2007; Nye, 2004). This work addresses the question of whether political leadership can constitute an attribute that shapes a country’s image.

The question of whether leaders matter goes back to the old yet still unresolved debate about the role of individuals vis-à-vis deterministic forces in shaping historical outcomes. On one extreme of the debate, is Carlyle’s (1840) great man theory, which explains history by the impact of great men, heroes of their time. On the other extreme, there is Tolstoy’s (1869; 2010) and Spencer’s (1873) historical and social determinism,
where great individuals are “history’s slaves” and are merely the products of their societies. The middle ground between the two extremes is represented by those who argued for the important roles of both structure and agency interacting with one another (Weber, 1947; 1997). The extent to which individual leaders actually have control over the well-being of the nation (or any other organization) may vary depending on a variety of external and internal factors as well as the country’s political system which may limit a leader’s degree of discretion in the decision-making process. However, when it comes to public perceptions of organizational successes and failures, people tend to view leaders as a dominant source of organizational performance. As a result, it is typically leaders rather than systemic forces that the public praises or blames for positive or negative outcomes (Hackman & Wageman, 2007).

Public diplomacy, an area of study dealing with a country’s image among foreign publics as a source of a nation’s soft power, or the ability to achieve desirable outcomes through attraction rather than coercion and payments (Nye, 2004) derives from multiple disciplines, including political science, international relations, and public relations. Students of these disciplines have recently turned their attention to the role of leadership in shaping relevant outcomes.

The term “leader effect” originates from political science and broadly refers to the influence of leaders’ personalities on their own electoral performance as well as the performance of their parties (King, 2002). A similar concept, the CEO effect, can be found in fields studying organizational attributes, such as corporate performance, corporate reputation, branding, and internal communication (Crossland & Hambrick, 2007; 2010; Gaines-Ross, 2003; Fetschterin, 2015). International relations scholars
have also turned their attention from the role of structure and political institutions to the role of national leaders in global politics (Chiozza & Goemans, 2004; de Mesquita & Siverson, 1995; Horowitz & Fuhrmann, 2018; Horowitz, McDermott, & Stam, 2005). Public diplomacy scholarship has recently followed suit and is beginning to catch up with the related disciplines (Balmas, 2018; Golan & Yang, 2013; Ingenhoff & Klein, 2018). Nevertheless, research on leadership in most of these fields is still in its infancy and is very fragmented due to varying conceptualizations, and hence, operationalizations, of leader effects as well a multitude of outcomes to which they have been tied.

Studies have shown that leaders’ images and reputations clearly affect those of their parties as well as voting behavior of the electorate (e.g. Hart and Middleton, 2014; Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2011; Takens et al., 2015). Scholars studying organizational public relations generally agree that corporate and CEO reputations are interrelated. An empirical study by Mohedano-Suanes, Urra-Urbieta, and Safon (2015) has shown that CEO reputation is an antecedent of corporate reputation rather than vice versa, whereas the findings regarding the effects of CEO reputation on corporate performance are at best mixed, ranging from negative to positive and non-significant correlations, and vary depending on the industry and the context (Delgado-Garica, de Quevedo-Puente, & Blanco-Mazagatos, 2015, for a review).

Taken together, the findings reported by scholars from the related disciplines suggest that managing a leader’s public image can be a valid way to manage the image of the organizational entity being led (a party, a government, a company, or even a country). In the context of public diplomacy, the question of when and in what ways the
symbolic power of national leadership can be leveraged to influence the way foreign publics perceive nations and countries has received very little academic attention. In practice, however, the use of foreign leaders as symbols for the purposes of representation and persuasion in not new to international politics, although domestic elites and the media have employed this strategy more often to engineer domestic support for certain foreign policies. For example, to justify WWII alliances with Communist leaders Joseph Stalin and Josip Broz Tito, the American government orchestrated the construction of their images as war heroes in the American press, while downplaying ideological differences. Subsequently, over the course of the Cold War after the Stalin-Tito split, the development of public images of both leaders in the American media was closely related to the international dynamics of the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, not without the American official propagandists' efforts (Kurtovic, 2012, for a detailed analysis). Today’s world, with satellite television, social media, and the Internet has opened new avenues for leaders and governments to communicate with foreign audiences as the gatekeeping role of domestic governments and media has diminished.

To date, public diplomacy scholars have made only a few attempts to explore leader effects in the context of their research areas. For instance, Golan and Yang (2013) have showed that the Pakistani perceptions of Barack Obama were positively associated with how they evaluated the United States and the American people. Rawson (2007) studied international perceptions of the U.S. brand, which included such elements as U.S. culture, entertainment, tourism, immigration, and politics, and found that overall in the minds of the respondents, the U.S. brand was strongly grounded in
U.S. politics, its political system and ideals, and based on the initial thoughts the respondents had about the country. Moreover, the name of then-president George W. Bush topped the list of the words that came to respondents’ minds when they thought of the United States. Most respondents claimed that U.S. President George W. Bush or his administration affected their opinions about America.

A few studies have focused on the effects of leadership-centered public diplomacy activities, such as state visits, on public diplomacy outcomes. Thus, Wang and Chang (2004) found no evidence that the Chinese leader’s visit to the United States influenced the image of China presented in the local American press. However, Goldsmith and Horiuchi (2009) have reported the opposite, showing that state visits have a strong impact on public opinion about countries, conditioned by credibility of a leader. In addition, Nitsch (2007) has discovered positive effects of state visits on international trade, in particular, on a country’s exports.

Most recently, Balmas (2018) and Ingenhoff and Klein (2018) have conducted online experiments studying the effects of leaders’ politically relevant personality traits on the images of the countries they lead. Balmas (2018) found that the way German and Israeli leaders were portrayed in news articles in terms of their personal characteristics (negatively vs. positively) influenced participants’ perceptions of German and Israeli people, as well as their respect and overall sentiment toward Germany and Israel as countries. Similarly, Ingenhoff and Klein (2018) explored the effect of leaders’ personality traits on country image, focusing on what kind of personality traits — charisma, integrity, or competence — matter the most. They found that the importance of personality traits was different depending on a leader’s gender: for a male leader
integrity seemed to have the most impact, whereas for a female leader, competence had the most pronounced effect on the country evaluation.

The lack of research on leader effects on public diplomacy and nation branding outcomes is surprising given that the link between them is somewhat intuitive. Of course, international leaders are not elected by the citizens of foreign countries; and the interactions that ordinary people may have with a foreign culture are often not even in a political realm. As such why would the image and reputation of a foreign state leader, for instance, influence one’s judgments about the people living in that state or one’s intentions to visit that country?

The author begins with several assumptions. First, it is traditionally believed that the general public lacks motivation and is poorly informed about matters of foreign policy due to the relatively minor impact it has on their everyday life (Lippmann, 1955). This is consistent with Down’s (1957) notion of rational ignorance: the cost of educating oneself about foreign affairs outweighs the utility one can reasonably gain from this information.

Next, because attention is limited and selective, individuals do not memorize all the information they receive; hence, they evaluate objects based on the most accessible information in their memory rather than carefully evaluating and weighing all the aspects of those objects (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Pan & Kosicki, 1997). Therefore, one’s evaluation of a country depends on an individual’s evaluation of whatever attribute(s) is/are the most salient in her mind at the moment of evaluation. In the absence/lack of accessibility of further information about the object, one’s attitude to that/those
attribute(s) extends to the attributes that she does not have information about; this represents the effect referred to as “halo” in the literature (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

The third assumption the author makes is that the general public receives information about foreign affairs mostly from the mass media (Baum & Potter, 2008), hence, which aspects of a country are salient and how they are portrayed in news content influences the country image (McCombs et al., 1997; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). As such, when a leader is salient in the news about his or her country, country image “is becoming to a large extent a reflection of its leader’s image” (Balmas & Sheafer, 2014, p. 2).

Lastly, in line with public diplomacy and nation branding scholarship (Anholt, 2007; Nye, 2004), the author assumes that country image influences foreign publics’ purchase behaviors regarding the country’s products and services (exports, tourism, education, investment) and their approval of their own government regarding policy decisions that would benefit the nation in question. The last argument is also consistent with international relations (IR) scholars focusing on the role of national leaders in international relations. Their central idea is that political leaders are rational actors whose behavior and policies are driven by self-interest, namely, their desire to stay in office and retain the perks associated with it, such as power, prestige and money; therefore, they do not deliberately put their careers into jeopardy through their policy choices (Bueno de Mesquita & Siverson, 1995; Downs, 1957). As such, due to domestic public approval concerns leaders are unlikely to pursue policies that would benefit a foreign country with a poor image among domestic audiences.
If these assumptions are correct, then the existing theoretical knowledge about leader effects on public diplomacy is incommensurate with its practical potential. Two recent studies (Balmas 2018; Ingenhoff and Klein 2018) certainly have made an important contribution to our understanding of how country leaders can be used as a soft power resource by exploring the role of leaders’ personality traits portrayed by the media in shaping country image. However, political leaders are seldom portrayed in terms of their politically relevant character traits alone. This study contributes to the emerging discussion of leader effects by focusing on their complexity and interrelationships between various aspects of political leadership. To do so, the study offers a clear conceptual definition of leader effects and examines how leaders’ personal characteristics and their policies interact in their effects on country image. Furthermore, it tests the proposed theoretical model in an online experiment, in which participants were asked to evaluate a country after reading a news article about its president. Finally, the study further advances theory by discussing the contingency conditions for leader effects in the context of international communication.

This paper proceeds as follows. In the opening sections the author will define public diplomacy, explain how it relates to other disciplines from which information was derived and identify the possible applications of the study. Next, the author will review the existing conceptualizations of country image and leader effects in the relevant fields. Then, the author tests the theorized leader effects on the country image in a web-based experiment and describes the relationships between various leader attributes and their effects on country image. Finally, in the discussion section, the author identifies the
structural constraints that the international communication system imposes on leader effects and proposes directions for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Diplomacy

While traditional diplomacy is focused on government-to-government communication, public diplomacy emphasizes the communication between a government and citizens of a foreign country. One of the key assumptions that underlies all public diplomacy efforts is that a country may influence another governments’ foreign policy decisions not only through traditional diplomacy tools, but also by influencing the attitudes of its citizens (Delaney, 1968). The ways politicians and academics think about international relations, along with the meaning of the term “public diplomacy” have been shifting in the 20th and 21st centuries in response to major changes in technology, politics, and the international system itself.

Public Diplomacy and International Relations

As an academic discipline, international relations is concerned with the causes of war and the prospects of cooperation between states. After World War II and during the Cold War, realist scholars dominated IR theory and blamed anarchy – the inherent property of the international system – for the wars between nations. The anarchical structure of the international system implied no overarching authority over all states to protect them from violence enacted by others and to punish them for failing to adhere to international agreements (Waltz, 2001). The only way for states to ensure their physical survival was to increase their military power. However, an increase in one state’s power would necessarily make others feel more vulnerable vis-à-vis that state, which would subsequently force them to arm, too. Such dynamics, coupled with uncertainty, miscalculations, and the desire of states to achieve regional hegemony led to wars.
Alliances were seen as no more than marriages of convenience because today’s ally could easily become tomorrow’s adversary (Mearsheimer, 2001).

At the time of World War II, public diplomacy had not been established as an academic discipline, however, both the Allies and the Axis states widely practiced some of its elements, such as wartime propaganda through mass media, to raise support among their respective troops and to lower the morale of those of their enemies. After WWII, the two major superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, seeking support for their respective ideologies were actively engaged in international propaganda, characterized by “one-sided, usually half truthful communication designed to persuade public opinion” (Grunig, 1993, p. 147). Their main ideological weapon was international broadcasting, particularly through radio stations, including the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty sponsored by the U.S. government, and Radio Moscow, sponsored by the Soviets.

Over time, the pitfalls of the realist theory became apparent as it failed to explain why some states never go to war with others (Russett, Antholis, Ember, Ember, & Maoz, 1993) or to predict the sudden and relatively peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union. These puzzles turned IR scholars’ attention to the ideational rather than the material factors that shape international politics. They argued that to explain why some states are friends and others are foes, evidence about key actors’ interests and identities has to be incorporated (Wendt, 1992). In other words, whether states would fight or ally with one another depends on their ideas about one another, i.e. how they perceive each other and their interests.
Joseph Nye (1990, 2004) emphasized the importance of international public opinion in the process of the creation of shared identities and values between nations and provided a theoretical rationale for the public diplomacy practice. He coined the term “soft power” - the ability to shape the preferences of others “through attraction rather than coercion or payments” (Nye, 2004, p. X) - to label the mechanism through which public diplomacy practices work.

Three interrelated revolutions in mass communication, politics, and international relations contributed to the transformation of the goals and practice of public diplomacy in the 21st century (Gilboa, 2000). Revolution in technology and mass communication resulted in two major innovations, global news networks and the Internet. Global news networks, such as CNN, and Al-Jazeera, capable of broadcasting, often live, significant events from every corner of the world, became important political players, as well as targets and tools of public diplomacy efforts. Thus, the-so called “CNN effect” refers to the ability of global media coverage to drive foreign policy (Livingston, 1997). For instance, CNN was among the first networks to use disturbing images of humanitarian crises around the world, compelling American policy makers to intervene in humanitarian situations where they otherwise might not have had an interest (Gilboa, 2005).

Widespread use of the Internet and social media has empowered NGOs and even private individuals to set and influence international and domestic political agendas, mobilize support for their causes, and exchange ideas about world affairs (Khamis, Gold, & Vaughn, 2012; Pullen & Cooper, 2010; White & McAllister, 2014) thus
leading to the democratization of international relations, a domain previously restricted to political elites.

Political revolutions following the collapse of the Soviet Union have transformed many societies into democracies generating mass participation in political processes. Increasing political democratization, global interconnectedness and growing international awareness about what is going on “behind the closed doors” of domestic affairs have transformed the meaning of international relations and international security. The norm of national sovereignty, once unshakable, has been overridden by the responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine. This United Nations Security Council framework has justified international interventions into the domestic affairs of nation-states in order to protect civil populations from their own governments (“About R2P: Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect,” n.d.). The attention of policy-makers, institutions and the international community in general has shifted from state security, traditionally conceived of as the core of international relations, to the security of individuals. Conceived of this way, new threats to international security, such as terrorism, human trafficking, human rights violations, global warming, HIV, nuclear proliferation, and natural disasters have been identified. International cooperation is required to deal with these threats, which, in turn, requires common understanding and common definitions of those security issues based on shared values, because “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.” But who gets to define those values?

Nye (2004) argues that nations possessing soft power, the power to influence the “hearts and minds” of people, can shape the international agenda and the foreign policy preferences of other states. A nation’s ability to attract is a function of its image – the
international publics’ perceptions of its culture, values, policies, natural beauty and other aspects a nation is associated with globally. For example, Soviet citizens became increasingly attracted to U.S. lifestyles and values, which slowly eroded domestic support for the Communist regime and contributed to its collapse. Students participating in educational exchange programs, such as Fulbright, often become members of political elites supporting democratic change in their countries (Nye, 2004).

Thus, international relations scholarship’s inquiry concerns the causes of militarized conflicts and the prospects for peace and cooperation between states in general. Public diplomacy scholars emphasize the important role of international public opinion about a country and how it is viewed for its efforts to achieve peace, cooperation, and other foreign policy goals, as well as an examination of the ways it influences foreign perceptions in regards to that country’s image.

**Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding**

Nation branding, a related research area, also deals with a nation’s image and soft power. The term “nation brand” refers to “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences” (Dinnie, 2008, p. 15). The term was originally coined by British scholar Simon Anholt (1998) in the context of marketing and exports. He argued a nation brand, or a set of attributes that a country is associated with globally, may act similarly to corporate brands by serving as a cue for international customers. That is, people have certain pre-existing expectations regarding products and services, even if they are not familiar with them, just based on these products’ country of provenance – a phenomenon often referred to as the country-of-origin effect (Anholt, 2007; Elliott & Cameron, 1994; Gondim Mariutti, 2015; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). The process of
nation branding involves strategic application of branding and marketing practices in order to select, form, shape, and raise awareness about the unique elements differentiating the country from other countries in the international arena.

The idea that a country of origin influences the perceptions of products and purchase intentions was not new at that time (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999, for a review). Anholt’s core argument that nations can potentially build and manage their own brands to increase the competitiveness of their products in the global market has become appealing to scholars, communication practitioners, and policy-makers, and gave impetus to the development of nation branding as a new stream of research. The economic effects of nation branding have been extended from exports alone to foreign investment (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Kunzik, 2002), education abroad (Gertner, 2010), immigration of skilled workers, and tourism (Anholt, 2007; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Papadopoulos, 2004).

The differences and similarities between nation branding and public diplomacy are topics of heated debate within the discipline (Szondi, 2008, for a review). For example, Anholt (2013) argues that unlike public diplomacy, which historically has been a strategic process that governments orchestrate, nation branding is a more sporadic process, in which governments play a limited role along with all other national stakeholders. For Rasmussen and Merkelsen (2012), both processes are government-orchestrated; however, public diplomacy is tied to national security, finds its origins in international relations, and ultimately aims to affect behaviors of foreign governments, whereas nation branding is tied to economics, finds its origins in marketing and crisis
management, and ultimately aims to affect foreign publics’ purchase behaviors (in a broad sense).

For the author of this study, both nation branding and public diplomacy are strategic government-driven processes dealing with a country’s image in the eyes of international publics. They both depend on a country’s soft power resources (positive image of the country) and feedback to them. However, nation branding uses favorable and salient elements of country image to differentiate a country on the international arena as a resource to achieve economic goals, whereas public diplomacy uses the country’s overall appeal to foreign audiences to achieve foreign policy objectives.

**Public Diplomacy and Public Relations**

Public diplomacy is practiced through a variety of instruments ranging from media broadcasting to cultural and educational exchanges, sporting events and other international contests which fall under the umbrella of public relations activities. Public relations is defined as “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (“All About PR,” n.d.). Researchers often emphasize similarities between public diplomacy and public relations in terms of their strategic nature, functions, tactics, and tools employed to achieve their goals (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Gilboa, 2008; Golan & Viatchaninova, 2014; L’Etang, 2009; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992) and explicitly argue for the convergence of the two disciplines.

For instance, L’Etang (1996) argues that public relations and public diplomacy share the same functions: representational, dialogic, and advisory. Signitzer and Wamser (2006) refer to public diplomacy as to “a specific governmental public relations function” and argue that both are “strategic communication functions of either
organizations or nation-states, and typically deal with the reciprocal consequences a sponsor and its publics have upon each other” (p. 41). Moreover, Grunig (1993) directly states that these two concepts are synonyms: “Modern governments and other international organizations … find themselves using public relations strategies as they conduct what political scientists have called public diplomacy” (p.141, italics original).

Moving beyond the conceptual similarities, Yun (2006) empirically tested the applicability of the excellence theory of public relations (Grunig, 1992) using the data collected from 113 embassies in Washington, D.C. The study examined the fits of two measurement models of public relations behavior and excellence and found that both measurement models fit the public diplomacy data.

Thus, public diplomacy converges with international relations because of their shared concern about peace and cooperation between states; it overlaps with nation branding because both work to enhance a nation’s soft power; and finally, just as public relations does, it uses communication strategically to build beneficial relations with international publics and employs the same tactics and tools. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, public diplomacy is conceptualized as a specific case of public relations, defined as the management of communication between a government of the sponsor-state and the citizens of the target country with the ultimate purpose to influence the relevant policy decisions of the target state by enhancing the image of the country among the citizens of a target nation.

Mediated public diplomacy. Public diplomacy deals with public opinion – attitudes and images that international publics have about the state sponsoring public diplomacy activities. Golan (2013) distinguished between three complementary
approaches to public diplomacy which can be represented as a hierarchy. Relationship building with the nation in question represents the ultimate long-term goal of public diplomacy efforts. Relational public diplomacy activities include educational and cultural exchanges along with language training and development programs, which do not imply any immediate gains for the sponsoring country but serve to facilitate the relationship building process over the long term. Country reputation building, or nation branding programs such as, for example, the infamous “Cool Britannica” or “e-Estonia” are usually more short-lived and can be viewed as a stepping stone towards relationship-building rather than standalone campaigns. Finally, mediated public diplomacy efforts facilitate communication between the government of a country-sponsor and the citizens of the target country through the mass media and are designed to “increase support of a country’s specific foreign policies among audiences beyond that country’s borders” (Entman, 2008, p. 88). Although information campaigns in mass media usually have quite limited time frames and are often dedicated to particular events or controversial foreign policy matters, given the importance of the Internet and the global media in the 21st century, these targeted campaigns are the fundamental building blocks for achieving more long-term foreign policy goals and objectives, and ultimately, relationship building.

Essentially, mediated public diplomacy is analogous to the media relations function of public relations as both involve the process of agenda building (Cobb & Elder, 1971; Tedesco, 2011). Even though some governments have established or have been sponsoring international outlets broadcasting outside their national borders (such as Al Jazeera, RT, Xinhua News, BBC World or France 24), their ability to reach foreign
citizens through these “owned” media outlets is quite limited (Rawnsley, 2015; Smith, 2014; Zhang, 2011). It is domestic media in the target country, rather than anything else that serves as a primary source of information about foreign affairs for its citizens. Hence, the practice of mediated public diplomacy involves the strategic use of media of the target nation by the government of the sponsor-state to increase support for its foreign policies among the citizens of the target country (Entman, 2008). The ability of mass media to shape public opinion is well established (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997); however, mass media content does not appear out of the blue. Individuals, governments, and organizations can shape a media agenda by providing information to journalists (Cheng, Golan, & Kiousis, 2016; Kiousis et al., 2016; Kiousis & Strömbäck, 2010; Tedesco, 2011). This information can come in nicely packaged, ready-to-use forms such as news releases, media kits, or white papers; in addition, it also may be provided through official statements, interviews, commentaries, press conferences, or media tours. All these forms of communication between an organization and the media, once labeled by Gandy (1982) as “information subsidies” share one common trait: they reduce the costs of news gathering for media, which in turn, leads to a greater consumption of the subsidized information. For an agenda sponsor, the benefits of the increased consumption of such information by media, and subsequently, by wider audiences, stem from the agenda-setting effects of media on public opinion (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997): mass media influence what people think about, and how they think about it.
A foreign government can influence the media agenda in the target country by serving as an information source for the media of that country (Cheng et al., 2016; T. Zhang et al., 2017). From the strategic communication perspective, understanding leader effects on public diplomacy and nation-branding outcomes can help practitioners make decisions about whether, how, and when their efforts should or should not be centered on the political leadership of their country. Such efforts may include public relations tactics such as a leader’s press conferences and interviews to international media outlets, the activities Gilboa (2000) refers to as media diplomacy. These tactics are often used by Russian President Vladimir Putin – for instance, who gave an interview to Fox News anchor Chris Wallace in the summer of 2018 which “drew a whopping 3.2 million viewers, a rare instance of ratings for a 6 p.m. news segment hitting prime-time levels” (Grynbaum, 2018). In addition, head-of-state visits, while usually considered as “traditional” diplomatic activity, also include the “public” aspect as they represent those rare instances where one nation’s leader has the opportunity to reach the public of another nation, through ceremonial events, improvisational moments and, most of all, press coverage of the visit, providing opportunities to influence and improve public perceptions of a country’s image (Manheim, 1994). Finally, leadership-centered publicity is another public relations tactic that can be used for public diplomacy purposes. For instance, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau attracts international media attention by making political statements with the socks he wears on official occasions, for example to a NATO summit, a phenomenon that received its own label of “sock diplomacy” (Friedman, 2018).
Country Image

The idea of country image has surfaced in a number of academic disciplines, including business, public diplomacy, international relations, and marketing (Gertner, 2010). The term “country” is relatively straightforward and will be used throughout this paper synonymously with the term “nation” to denote “a nation with its own government, occupying a particular territory” (“country,” n.d.). The term “image”, however, requires conceptual clarification because students of different academic fields often use the terms “country image”, “national reputation”, and “nation brand” interchangeably without clearly defining them and differentiating them from one another (e.g. Anholt, 2007).

Image and reputation. Scholars debate the concept of image. Thus, many researchers define image in terms of perceptions (Allred, Chakraborty, & Miller, 2000; Fan, 2010), impressions (Bromley, 2000), associations (Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006), schemas (Askegaard & Ger, 1998) or beliefs (Philip Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 2002; Martin & Eroglu, 1993). Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) criticized these approaches, arguing that image is, essentially, an attitudinal construct. Attitudes are comprised of cognitive (beliefs) and evaluative (feelings) dimensions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) mutually influencing one another (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Zajonc, 1980). Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) argued that perceptions defined as “the process consumers select, organize, and interpret intrinsic (sights, sounds, smells, tastes) or extrinsic stimuli (brand, price, country of origin)” (p.728) do not imply an evaluative component meaning that the reactions of audience members to those associations are not included. Similarly, defining image as “beliefs” or “stereotypes” which are, essentially, beliefs, too (Fiske & Linville, 1980) would also omit the evaluative aspect of the image concept.
Another issue stems from the fact that the term “image” is often confused with “reputation.” Scholars from different disciplines have made attempts to provide clear conceptual definitions that would differentiate between the two but have still reached no consensus.

For example, management literature (e.g. Bromley, 2000; Brown et al., 2006; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991) suggests that the line between image and reputation should be drawn along the internal – external continuum. That is, in their view, image refers to what an organization’s members want external audiences to think or believe they should think, and what an organization projects to the “outside world.” Reputation on the other hand, refers to what external stakeholders “actually think of an organization” (Bromley, 2000; Brown et al., 2006). In contrast, marketing scholars emphasize the external foundation of the image concept (Bernstein, 1985). As the middle ground, many academics do not make an internal versus external distinction and use image to denote the perceptions, associations, perspectives, and so on of “people” (persons, individuals) in general (e.g. (Barich & Kotler, 1991; Davies, Chun, Silva, & Roper, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Markwick & Fill, 1997).

Furthermore, it is generally agreed that reputation is a collective phenomenon, that is, it results from a consensus among audience members regarding organizational attributes (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006; Bromley, 2000). However, there is less agreement regarding the concept of image. Some argue that, just as reputation, image refers to the collective perceptions of an organization’s attributes (Bromley, 2000); others believe that image as such refers to an individual’s perceptions of an entity (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Kunczik, 2003; Markwick & Fill, 1997), which are not
necessarily shared by other audience members. For example, Markwik and Fill (1997) explained that images form through encounters with characteristics of an organization, and are a result of all the experiences, beliefs, feelings, knowledge, and impressions that each stakeholder has about an organization. Because organizations have many stakeholders (e.g. employees, suppliers, customers) and the nature of their interactions is not the same, it cannot be expected that there will be a single uniform, and consistent image. “In reality these stakeholders have different images of the same organization, all shaped by their distinct exposures to the identity cues presented […] Image, therefore, exists in the mind of each stakeholder” (Markwik & Fill, 1997, p.398).

Following this logic, then, reputation should subsume image and be understood as a net aggregation of the existing images (Fombrun & Riel, 2003) but others disagree with this. For example, Wei (2002) argues that if “reputation” stems (partly) from persuasion, as suggested by Fombrun, then it ought to be subsumed under “image,” not the other way around. Of course, reputation also contributes to the making of a corporate image, but still it should be considered a variable within the parameters of “image,” like other variables, such as marketing strategies, product qualities, and customer services, all of which can shape the outcome of image making.

Additionally, some argue that the difference between image and reputation lies in the way each is formed. Whereas images form as a result of marketing activities and impression management, reputation is a relational concept resulting from repeated transactions with an actor or an organizational entity (Markwick & Fill, 1997). Reputations thus develop more slowly, are more durable, and are less manageable than images. In this line, Mercer (1996), a scholar studying international relations,
proposed the most clear-cut explanation of reputation. He argues that reputation refers to a judgement of someone’s character that is used to explain and predict future behavior. Reputations form from observing someone’s behavior, and they form only when two conditions are met. First, the observer attributes the behavior in question to dispositional rather than situational factors. That is, the observer must believe that a certain organization’s action or behavior is due to an organization’s essence – i.e. due to its management style, its culture, or the way it does business in general. If an action or behavior is attributed to a situational factor such as, for example, the current market situation, or a wrongdoing of a specific, singular employee, the observed behavior does not contribute to reputation formation. Second, not all judgements regarding one’s behavior form reputation. Only those judgements that are subsequently used to predict future behavior in various situations make a difference in reputation formation. Because organizations and individuals engage in many different behaviors in various roles in many different situations, they may have reputations in various aspects of what they do. In other words, one cannot have a “reputation” in general, rather, when we say “reputation” we always mean a reputation for something (Mercer, 1996). For example, in our interaction with an organization’s products we can make judgements about their quality. If we believe producing high-quality products is a part of an organization’s character, it forms that organization’s reputation for high-quality products. Reputations for corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship form in a similar manner. First, we observe corporate behavior (directly or indirectly through mass media), then relate that behavior to other information that we know about the organization. If the behavior aligns with what we believe to be the organization’s dispositions, we expect it
to behave in a similar manner in the future. If a group of people (audience, stakeholder group) shared the same experience and came to similar conclusion regarding the organization, it is said that the organization acquired a reputation of a socially responsible company.

Based on these considerations, the author chose to follow the approach of Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) who conceptualized country image as a subjective attitude toward a nation and its state, comprising specific beliefs and general feelings held by foreign stakeholders regarding a country.

Following this logic, the concept of country image is broader than the concept of country reputation as it involves all beliefs and feelings that an individual has toward a country, whereas reputation (for a particular aspect) includes only a subset of those that a) are used to predict an country’s behavior in a particular situation and b) shared by a group of stakeholders or an individual belonging to a group.

**Image and brand.** The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines brand as “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (as cited in Fan, 2010). Thus, the function of a brand is to facilitate the distinction of a product from similar products competitors may offer. Dinnie (2008) stresses the differentiation aspect of nation brand which refers to “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences” (p.15). Thus, strictly speaking, brand refers to some properties of a product, service, organization, or country that act as a trademark. The meaning of the term becomes more ambiguous, however, when it is used to refer to the perceptions of
a brand by consumers. For example, describing the idea of nation brands, Simon Anholt (1998) wrote that, “style is expected from Italian clothes, chic from French clothes, bold anti-fashion statements from British clothes, street credibility from American clothes, and the expectancy of weather-proofness from German or Scandinavian clothes” (p. 397). In essence, he described that idea that country of origin of a product functions as a brand by differentiating a product (e.g. clothing) and setting different expectations regarding its attributes in a consumer’s mind. The use of the term “nation brand” in this sense has been established in the literature (e.g. Blair et al., 2009; Dinnie, 2008; Fan, 2010; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000), even though, strictly speaking, the only aspect it has in common with AMA’s traditional definition is that it serves a purpose of differentiation. Perhaps, the term “nation brand image” could help distinguishing between the actual elements of a brand (brand name, signs, symbols, designs, etc.) and people’s perceptions, ideas, associations, and feelings elicited through the exposure to those elements.

Thus, again, the concept of country image subsumes the concept of nation brand image as the latter is limited to the cognitive and affective aspects that help a consumer specifically to distinguish products and services originating in one country from those originating in another. The relationships between the concepts of image, reputation, and brand as described in this section are depicted in Figure 2-1.

**Leader Effects: In What Ways Do Leaders Matter?**

Broadly speaking, leaders exert influence on the entities they are leading by virtue of who they are and what they do (King, 2002). The author has reviewed the literature focusing on leadership from the disciplines that public diplomacy derives from, including international relations, public relations, organizational management, mass
communication, and political science. Each of them is concerned with a variety of different outcomes (Table 2-1 for summary) and, therefore, approaches leader effects differently.

Conceptual Overview

Some studies build upon psychology and examine a leader’s characteristics, such as age, personality traits, social status and others that may affect their decisions, and subsequently, organizational outcomes. The major argument they make is that who leaders are in terms of their personalities affects what they do, that is, the decisions they make, and thereby affect organizational outcomes. In contrast, additional research examines how other individuals’ perceptions of those attributes (e.g. image, reputation, perceived personality traits) of a leader affect their organizations. In these studies, the direction of influence is thought to be reversed: by observing what leaders do, people make inferences about who they are which bears on how they view (and, arguably, behave toward) the organizations. This work falls into this latter category. However, these modes of thinking about leader effects can be linked together: if leaders’ decisions and actions are indeed a reflection of their personalities, then observing leaders’ actions is a valid way to understand who they are.

Studies on leader effects in the management literature often employ the first of the two discussed approaches. For example, in studying different firms’ performance over time, scholars found that after accounting for all possible contextual factors at the industry and firm level, the variation in companies’ financial performance could only be explained by the fact that these firms were managed by different CEOs at different points of time (Crossland & Hambrick, 2007, 2011; Hambrick & Quigley, 2014; Lieberson & O’Connor, 1972; Mackey, 2008; Quigley & Hambrick, 2015). In a similar
vein, Jones and Olken (2005) found that variations in countries national economic growth rates can be attributed to variations in leadership in these countries with this effect being more pronounced in authoritarian settings.

Scholars refer to this phenomenon as the CEO effect, conceptualized as “the proportion of variance in a firm-level outcome variable that is statistically associated with, or can be attributed to, the presence of individual CEOs in the sample” (Crossland & Hambrick, 2007, p. 770). Leadership research in the management literature is deeply rooted in the upper echelons theory, which, in turn, has its origins in social psychology. The upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) suggests that organizational outcomes – both in terms of strategies and effectiveness – reflect the values and cognitive bases of organizational leadership. Because leaders are human beings, their ability to make strategic choices is limited: under the conditions of incomplete information, myriad options, conflicting goals and varying aspiration levels that are mechanically “rational” (in the economic sense) choices are impossible (Cyert & March, 1992). Decision-makers bring their own set of “givens” to the decision-making process, which reflect their cognitive base, such as their assumptions about the future course of events, their options and alternatives, as well as consequences attached to them (March & Simon, 1993). The principles in accordance with which executives order alternative options and their consequences, in turn, reflect their values. These “givens” – the cognitive base and the values filter – distort decision-makers’ perceptions of administrative situations and ways to handle them. First, they restrict a leader’s field of vision – the areas of the organization and its environment to which his or her attention is directed. Second, they further restrict the executive’s perceptions by focusing his or her
attention on only some of the phenomena within the field of vision. Finally, the cognitive base and values serve as a filter through which these phenomena are interpreted (Hambrick & Snow, 1977). As a result, leaders' backgrounds shape their value system and cognitive base, which in turn, bears on the strategic decisions they make, and eventually, on organizational effectiveness in general.

A similar argument can be found in the international relations (IR) literature which studies the causes of war and the prospects of peace. For example, Jervis (1976) rejected the notion of leaders as “rational” decision-makers who carefully calculate their risks and incentives (this, in turn, implied the condition of complete information) – an assumption commonly made by IR scholars who approach the discipline from the perspectives of economics and game theory analysis (e.g. de Mesquita & Siverson, 1995; Downs & Rocke, 1994). Jervis argued that if this assumption would hold true, all state leaders would end up making the same decisions under similar conditions. Instead, he contended that in the real world, leaders never have complete information about the situations they encounter. Leaders have to rely on their knowledge and experience to predict the outcomes of either course of action. Therefore, leaders’ rationality is “bounded”: foreign policy decisions they make are deeply rooted in their perceptions of situations, their perceptions of threats and incentives, and perceptions of friends and enemies. Those perceptions, in turn, are deeply rooted in who decision-makers are: their values, their life experiences, their education, social background, as well as personality traits and biological predispositions. Unlike scholars studying organizational performance, instead of examining the variance in outcomes (war/peace) that can be attributed to individual leaders, IR students focused on what it is about
leaders that make them more or less prone to engage in military conflicts. For instance, Horowitz et al. (2005) linked leader’s age and regime type to the likelihood of military conflicts. He argues, that both younger leaders and older leaders may be prone to engage in conflicts, but for different reasons. For younger leaders, their high testosterone levels (a hormone decreasing with age) may cause aggressive and expansionist foreign policy behavior. For older leaders, their desire to build legacy (e.g. by expanding a country’s borders or by resolving a long-standing dispute) can also create incentives for aggressive foreign policy choices. They found the first to be more often the case in authoritarian regimes – as younger leaders are not constrained by public opinion and are less “tired” of politics than their older counterparts. However, in democracies, it is older leaders who are more likely to engage in disputes, as they usually are seen as more credible and more capable of persuading publics that engagement in a violent conflict is necessary. Similarly, Gallagher and Allen (2014), Hermann (1980), and Yarhi-Milo (2018) examined the impact of certain personality characteristics (such as traits and beliefs) on the process of foreign policy decision-making, and, hence, outcomes of international relations. It has been found that leaders who express a tendency toward Excitement Seeking are more likely to use force to carry out their policy objectives, whereas leaders rated high on Openness to Experience express a greater variability in terms of their approaches to foreign policy (Gallaher & Allen, 2014). In addition, it was found that self-monitoring was related to leaders tendency to engage in conflicts on reputational grounds (Yarhi-Milo, 2018), whereas nationalism was associated with orientation to change and affect – the traits that bear on leaders’ foreign policy decision-making styles. While these kinds of studies do not
use the concept of “leader effect” per se, they still qualify under the broad “leader effects” umbrella as defined by Anthony King, the author of the term, as all of them examined the influence that individual leaders exert on the organizational entities they lead by virtue of who they are and what they do. In comparison to organizational studies, where leader effects are seen as a variance in organizational outcomes not attributed to anything else but to changes in leadership, leader effects can be conceptualized as the effects of specific attributes of individual leaders (e.g. personality traits, professional background, or socioeconomic status) that are thought to influence leaders’ judgement in the decision-making processes, which eventually bears on organizational outcomes.

The second strand of literature on leader effects focuses on how individuals outside of the organizations perceive leaders and what implications these perceptions have for organizational entities. This research is based on a premise that individuals’ perceptions of leadership affect their perceptions of organizations, and their attitudes toward organizations influence their behaviors toward organizations (e.g. purchasing products, voting, support for their cause). This, in turn, has an impact on organizational performance and even their mere survival (earnings, place in a political system, government regulations). For example, scholars studying leaders’ resolve in international politics have argued that states whose leaders were seen as resolute – that is, who earned their reputation for resolve by acting resolutely in previous disputes – were less likely to be challenged by other states (e.g. Lupton, 2018; Renshon, Dafoe, & Huth, 2018). In other words, a leader’s reputation for resolve may become a factor deterring others from escalating conflicts. In a similar vein, Horowitz, Potter, Sechser,
and Stam (2018) found that threats coming from the leaders who were perceived as experienced in combat were seen as more credible by targets, and therefore, the targets are more likely to back down in conflicts. Likewise, public relations scholars have borrowed the term CEO effect from the management literature to study the effects of a leader's image and reputation on the image and reputation of the organization being led. For example, a study by Gaines-Ross (2003) for Burson-Marsteller has shown that key corporate stakeholders, such as senior corporate executives, financial analysts, business media, and government officials were more likely to buy or recommend the company’s stock, give CEOs the benefit of the doubt in a crisis situation, recommend a company as a place to work, and consider tracking it in the media if the company’s CEO has a favorable reputation. According to Hochegger (2006), “six out of ten individuals would follow a company more attentively in the media, if they were familiar with its CEO and had a high opinion of him” (as cited in Brettschneider & Vollbracht, 2011, pp. 268-269). Moreover, the CEO's reputation can constitute 15 to 25 percent of a company’s market capitalization (Casanova 2002, as cited in Brettschneider & Vollbracht, 2011, p. 269; Heinisch, 2006). Other public relations studies have documented the relationships between perceived leaders’ personality traits and organizational image (Sohn & Weaver Lariscy, 2015). This topic, particularly, received a lot of academic attention in the political science literature. More specifically, scholars were interested in the phenomenon of political personalization, that is, when people express a tendency to base their party preferences on their likes or dislikes of individual party leaders (Adam & Maier, 2010; Bartels, 2002; Bartle & Crewe, 2002; Brettschneider & Gabriel, 2002; Colton, 2002; Garzia, 2013; Holmberg &
Oscarsson, 2011; Johnston, 2002; Karvonen, 2010; King, 2002; McAllister, 2007; Ohr & Oscarsson, 2011; Takens et al., 2015). These studies typically conceptualize leader effects in terms of how much variance in individuals’ party evaluations or vote choices is explained by their evaluations of party leaders. As expected, some scholars (e.g., Lenz, 2009) have raised questions of reverse causality: at the end of the day, leaders come and go, while parties and organizations are around for decades. However, accumulated evidence suggests that while people’s perceptions of organizations do influence their perceptions of leaders to a certain extent, leader effects on organizational perceptions and attitudes are stronger (Davies & Mian, 2010; Hart & Middleton, 2014; Mohedano-Suanes et al., 2015; Takens et al., 2015).

**Leader Effects on Public Opinion: Theoretical Underpinnings**

Three interrelated theoretical explanations help understand why images of individual leaders may affect the images of the organizational entities that they lead in the eyes of general publics: leader attribution error, mediated personalization, and the priming effect of media.

**Leader attribution error.** Lay observers and journalists, as well as some leadership scholars, tend to view leaders as a dominant influence on system performance overlooking the role of systemic and situational factors and, as a consequence, over-attribute organizational successes and failures to leaders (Hackman & Wageman, 2007). This cognitive bias is known as the leader attribution error (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). Leader attribution error occurs because of the high visibility and salience of leaders combined with the relative invisibility to observers of structural or contextual factors that may be powerfully shaping performance. In other words, even those organizational attributes over which a leader may have only limited
control can be also affected by the perceptions of the leader. It is shown to be pervasive, that is, occurring for both favorable and unfavorable outcomes, and powerful, extending not only to a leader’s actions but also inactions (Hackman & Wageman, 2005).

**Mediated personalization.** As much of the people’s exposure to leaders and organizations is mediated, that is, it occurs through the consumption of media (this is especially true when it comes to foreign nations), media logic is the most powerful factor shaping leader effects. Scholars have found that today’s media is increasingly shifting the focus of news coverage from parties and organizations to candidates and leaders. This tendency is referred to in the literature as mediated personalization (Aelst, Sheafer, & Stanyer, 2012; Balmas & Sheafer, 2013, 2014; Karvonen, 2010; McAllister, 2007). The increased media attention shift from political institutions to politicians has been a result of systemic changes at societal and institutional levels. As long-term identification with political parties declines (Dalton, 2002; Wattenberg, 2009), the number of swing voters increases (Lane & Ersson, 2007); parties use personalization strategies to win votes. Simultaneously, institutional changes, such as the introduction of primaries for the selection of political candidates, or the launch of televised political debates among candidates have contributed to the shift of focus on individual leaders. Technological advances, particularly, the introduction of television with its visual orientation and tendency to simplify complex information, is regarded as a major driver of political personalization (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Karvonen, 2010). The logic of televised coverage has altered campaign strategies, which have become increasingly packaged for television with a heavy reliance on visual imaginary. However, these changes in the
reporting style have also affected print media “to the point where the difference in the styles of television and newspaper reporting is now relatively small” (Patterson, 1991, p. 81). The introduction of commercial television with its emphasis on profit generation has resulted in an increasing need to entertain rather than merely inform a consumer, and “excitement is not generated from matter-of-fact business reports alone. Excitement needs “faces,” in order to ignite” (Brettschneider & Vollbracht, 2011, p. 271). These changes in media logic are driving an increase in personalized coverage not only of domestic politics but also of corporate news (Brettschneider & Vollbracht, 2011), and of foreign affairs (Balmas & Sheafer, 2013). Increasing personalization in mass media is thought to have important implications. When media attention to individual leaders grows at the expense of parties and organizations, it boosts the weight of those leaders in individual voting decisions; that is, increasing media attention primes voters to attach greater importance to those leaders when they are asked to evaluate organizations rather than the organizations themselves (Hart & Middleton, 2014; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Takens et al., 2015).

The priming effect of media. The priming effect describes the changes in standards that people use to make political evaluations: “By calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63). The priming theory suggests that a person’s judgment about an object depends, in part, on what comes to mind at the moment that person is asked to evaluate the object (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The theory is based on a number of assumptions. First, it assumes that people’s attention is limited and selective: we do not
pay attention to everything. Hence, second, the impressions we form of others are organized around a few central themes. Third, instead of undertaking an exhaustive analysis we use heuristics – the most accessible information, information that is easy to recall (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). It derives from cognitive psychology: human memory represents a network of semantically related concepts; priming occurs when a certain node, but not others, is being activated by an external semantic stimulus. As a result, an individual is more likely to utilize the activated node “as a filter, an interpretative framework, or a premise for further information processing or judgment formation” (Pan & Kosicki, 1997). Mass media influence which memory contents, including beliefs, associations, and symbols, will more easily come to mind when an individual is exposed to an attitude object, thus serving as a priming agent. For example, presidential approval ratings were strongly linked to Americans’ opinions about the Gulf War when the Gulf War was salient in the media; however, respondents’ evaluations of the president became more strongly tied to their perceptions of the state of the economy, when news outlets switched their attention to the economic recession (Pan & Kosicki, 1997). Likewise, in a series of experiments Iyengar and Kinder (1987) have demonstrated that American presidential evaluations become tied to the issues most salient in television news coverage. The priming effect of media has been also tested in the context of leader effects on voting behavior (Takens et al., 2015). It has been discovered that exposure to personalized media coverage increased the effects of leader evaluations on voting for political parties. In other words, leader effects in public opinion research are nothing but the effects of recall by an individual concerning his or
her beliefs about and/or feelings toward the leader when the individual is asked to evaluate the leader’s organization.

**Leader Attributes\(^1\) and Their Interrelatedness**

But what specifically is it about a political leader that may influence one’s image of the leader’s country? Obviously, it depends on what kind of information about the leadership to which the individual is exposed. Scholars distinguish two types of mediated personalization: individualization and privatization (Adam & Maier, 2010; Aelst et al., 2012). Individualization refers to “change in the presentation of politics in the media, as expressed in a heightened focus on political characteristics and activities of individual politicians and a diminished focus on parties, organizations and institutions” (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007, p. 67). The term privatization is used to describe, “a media focus on the personal characteristics and personal life of individual candidates” (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007, p. 68), i.e. a shift to candidates’ attributes that are not necessarily related to political performance. This distinction is thought to be important because it has normative implications for democracy. The agenda-setting effect of mass media on public opinion is well known: media tell people what to think about and how to think about it (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs et al., 1997). If people vote for political parties based on superficial judgements such as their leaders’ looks and the pleasant feelings they evoke rather than what they and their parties do (Adam & Maier, 2010, for a review), it hinders public control of the political process (Keeter, 1987).

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\(^1\) To avoid confusion, I shall use the terms “attributes” to refer to both personality characteristics and policies. By “personality characteristics” I shall mean such characteristics as a leader’s personality traits, gender, age, marital status, socioeconomic background, whereas “personality traits” shall be used to denote qualities or characteristics that distinguish the character, action and attitude of a leader.
Others, however, point out that the distinction between performance-relevant and performance-irrelevant characteristics is problematic (Adam & Maier, 2010). In 2002, Achen and Bartels presented a study showing that completely random events clearly beyond the control of political candidates, such as a series of shark attacks, can diminish the chances of the incumbent to be re-elected. In other words, voters reward or punish politicians simply because they feel happy or sad for reasons that have nothing to do with the politicians’ performance. The study once again has sparked a discussion regarding the rationality of voting behavior, and some scholars have made an alternative argument: the electorate reacts not to the random events such as natural disasters per se, but to the way politicians handle the prevention or the aftermath of those events. That is, these events give voters' opportunities to learn new information about their leaders (Ashworth, Bueno de Mesquita, & Friedenberg, 2018; Healy & Malhotra, 2013). In a similar vein, such traits as competence, leadership skills, problem-solving skills, and credibility, among others, are typically conceptualized as performance relevant (Ingenhoff & Klein, 2018; King, 2002) in politics. However, certain characteristics of a leader, for instance, such as physical attractiveness, a sense of humor, or marital infidelity, or a sense of style while not directly related to the role of an organizational leader, can be suggestive of certain values the leader holds, or become an integral part of his or her charisma, often considered as a politically relevant trait (Balmas & Sheafer, 2014). For this reason, Adam and Maier (2010) suggest that the distinction between performance-relevant and performance-irrelevant traits is not binary, and should be represented as a continuum with some traits being more directly related to political success than others.
Furthermore, King (2002) distinguished direct and indirect effects of leaders on their organizations. With “direct effects” he meant personality characteristics, by “indirect effects” he meant policies and policy initiatives - “influence exerted not as a result of anything he or she is, but as a result of things that he or she does” (King, 2002, p. 4), such as, for instance, changing his party ideology or modernizing its image.

Nevertheless, the relationship between policies and personality, especially, when it comes to public attitudes of those is a kind of chicken-or-egg question. On one hand, the upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) posits that these two effects are not independent from one another: executives’ decisions are a reflection of who they are – that is, of their personalities. If we think about this in terms of the personality traits leaders actually possess, the direction of influence should indeed go from personality traits to decisions and policies. On the other hand, if we talk about public attitudes, or perceived attributes and outcomes, publics can use their knowledge about a leader’s policies to make inferences about his or her personality and values because one’s reputation is rooted in his or her past behaviors (Mercer, 1996). In other words, for attitudinal outcomes (such as organizational image), policies and decisions of leaders affect the perceptions of their personalities, in addition to the effects that these policies have on organizational outcomes. Yet the cause and effect question eventually goes back to what kind of information individuals have about leaders. If people are aware of the policies, they can infer personality traits from them. On the other hand, their liking or disliking of a politician’s personality can affect the way they perceive and interpret her policies (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).
Theoretically, exposure to both types of coverage – personalized (that is, focusing on political attributes of leaders such as policies and performance-relevant personality characteristics), and individualized (focusing on politically irrelevant characteristics) – have the potential to shape the attitudes toward the leader’s country. The impact of performance-relevant characteristics, such as policy decision and politically relevant traits, can be explained through the mechanism of signaling (Spence, 1973), whereas the impact of those characteristics relatively irrelevant to political performance can be explained by the halo or spillover effect (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

**Signaling.** Organizations and their outcomes are indeed a reflection of leadership personalities to a certain degree (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). In accordance with signaling theory (Spence, 1973), under the condition of uncertainty/incomplete information (which is usually the case due to the inability of the human brain to process all available information), one party makes decisions and adjusts its behavior relying on a signal sent by another party which reveals some piece of relevant information and which the receiver considers credible. The informational value of the leadership’s past behaviors and decisions (reputation) comes from the fact that a stakeholder believes that certain outcomes can be attributed to leadership.

**Halo effect.** The halo effect refers to a cognitive bias whereby a person making an initial evaluation of an object assumes unknown or ambiguous information about it based upon concrete and available information (Kahneman, 2013; Lachman & Bass, 1985; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Rosenzweig, 2014). For example, in the classic study by Nisbett and Wilson (1977) participants watched interviews with a college teacher, a native French-speaking Belgian who spoke English with a fairly pronounced accent. In
one of the interviews, he appeared as warm and likeable, respectful of his student’s intelligence and motives, flexible in his approach to teaching, and enthusiastic about his subject matter. In the other interview, he carried himself as a cold and unlikeable person, distrustful toward his students, and rigid and doctrinaire in his teaching style. Then participants rated the teacher’s physical appearance, his mannerisms and accents. The study showed that the same teacher in the “warm condition” was rated significantly higher on physical appearance than he was rated by participants in the “cold condition;” his accent and mannerisms were perceived as appealing rather than irritating, whereas, in the cold condition the opposite was the case. Similarly, the halo effect occurs in marketing - consumers display customer bias toward certain products because of favorable experience with other products made by the same company (“Halo Effect,” n.d.), as well as in politics – physically attractive candidates are perceived as more knowledgeable and competent and are more likely to be elected (Palmer & Peterson, 2016; Verhulst, Lodge, & Lavine, 2010). One significant distinction between the signaling role of leaders and the halo effect on the perceptions of the organization is the affective nature of the latter: participants do not consciously extrapolate their evaluations of the known attributes upon the unknown ones because of their perceived relatedness; they are actually unaware that the effect occurs. In fact, in Nisbett’s and Wilson’s study (1977) participants were warned that their evaluations of the teacher’s attributes may be affected by how much they liked or disliked him. They were subsequently asked whether the ratings they gave to certain traits were affected by whether they liked the professor; the subjects failed to acknowledge that this effect played a role in their evaluations.
**Attribution.** Unlike the halo effect, the signaling effect requires the process of attribution to take place. In other words, an individual must consciously attribute a certain event or an outcome to leadership and their policies. The major controversy around the effect of shark attacks on the presidential election (Achen & Bartels, 2002) was whether voters' reaction to the event was rational or emotional in nature. In other words, did they punish the incumbent president Wilson because they were in a bad mood on Election Day (Bower, 1981; Schwarz & Clore, 1983) or because they were dissatisfied with how the president’s administration handled the situation (Ashworth, Bueno de Mesquita, & Friedenberg, 2018; Healy & Malhotra, 2013)? Thus, attribution of responsibility is a key to our understanding of how various aspects of leadership may influence how the public perceives their organizations.

Depending on the form of evidence and the decision rule used, political science scholars distinguish between three types of responsibility attributed to political leaders: causal responsibility, moral-legal responsibility, and role responsibility (Peffley & Williams, 1985). Causal responsibility is inferred by assessing the degree to which an outcome was determined by individual versus environmental forces (Heider, 1958). That is, the more an individual believes that increased unemployment rates were caused by a president’s lack of competence and poor policies rather than environmental factors, the more the president is held responsible. When assessing moral-legal responsibility (Could the actor have done otherwise?) people assess the amount of control and power they feel a leader has in a certain a situation. Finally, role responsibility is assigned based on one’s expectations regarding what the leaders are supposed to do (Hamilton, 1978). In other words, individuals punish leaders for natural disasters, inflation, and
unemployment when they believe that leaders should have the ability to solve these problems. This, in turn suggests, that role responsibility attribution is based on one’s subjective standards and expectations of a leaders’ performance.

A related concept, managerial discretion, can be found in the management literature (Carpenter & Golden, 1997; Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987; Wangrow, Schepker, & Barker, 2014). Managerial discretion refers to the latitude of action available to managers, i.e. the extent to which leaders are actually able to exert control over their organization. Hambrick and Finkelstein (1987) introduced the concept as an intervening variable explaining why the magnitude of leader effects on organizational outcomes varied across industries and countries. It has been found that managerial discretion moderated the relationship between executive characteristics and both organizational strategy and organizational performance (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990). In international relations, scholars often use the type of political system (democracy versus authoritarian) essentially as a proxy variable for leaders’ discretion, arguing that leaders in democracies are more constrained in their decision-making by the systems of checks and balances (de Mesquita & Siverson, 1995; Horowitz, McDermott, & Stam, 2005; Russett, Antholis, Ember, Ember, & Maoz, 1993). In addition to the environmental, or external sources of discretion, such as for example, issue characteristics, or industry type, or the role of shareholders, leaders’ own perceptions of their power and control over organizational outcomes influences the extent to which these outcomes can actually be attributed to them (Carpenter & Golden, 1997). Following this logic, then, the extent to which individuals external to the organization attribute organizational successes and failures to its leader should influence the weight
assigned to the leader in their overall evaluations of the organization. In other words, the more a stakeholder believes in the leader's decision-making freedom and authority, the more likely that the stakeholder's evaluations of the organization will be affected by his or her evaluations of the executive (Wasserman, Anand, & Nohria, 2010).

**Conceptual Model of Leader Effects on Country Image**

Most scholars studying leader effects in the context of public opinion have focused their attention on leaders' personality traits that can be easily linked to political performance. Among these researchers commonly cite competence, integrity, and leadership skills (Ingenhoff and Klein, 2018, for a review). However, media do not report on politicians' traits in a contextual vacuum: they discuss politicians in the context of current events, policies, and their relationships with other people. The sections above have demonstrated the interrelatedness of these aspects, which suggests that leader effects on organizational images should be examined in all their complexity and not in isolation. The perceptions of leaders' competence and other performance relevant traits can be affected, or even shaped, by perceptions of their policies. Likewise, the perceptions of leaders' personalities may affect the interpretations of their policies. Finally, the perceptions of leaders' performance-relevant personality traits, such as competence, integrity, or leadership skills can be influenced by characteristics that have nothing to do with political performance. This latter aspect has received very little attention from public diplomacy scholars. To the best of the author's knowledge, the only study addressing the issue was the work published by Ingenhoff and Klein (2018), where they explored the role of leaders' gender as a variable moderating the effects of leaders' personality traits on country image. At the same time, another highly visible
leader attribute, physical appearance, while often studied by political science scholars, received virtually no attention in the context of public diplomacy.

It has been shown that people make automatic inferences about competence from facial appearance. Thus, Todorov (2005) conducted an experiment in which he offered naïve participants the candidates' headshots so they could determine which candidate was more competent based on that image. The candidates selected as more competent based on their photographs were subsequently more likely to win elections. Later studies have confirmed the predictive power of candidate facial appearance on election outcomes (Atkinson, Enos, & Hill, 2009; Mannetti, Brizi, Belanger, & Bufalari, 2016).

Additionally, the halo effect of physical attractiveness has been extensively studied in various contexts (e.g. Brand, Bonatsos, D’Orazio, & DeShong, 2012; Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Verhulst et al., 2010). It is generally agreed that attractive people are perceived to possess more socially desirable qualities; attractive politicians receive more media coverage (Waismel-Manor & Tsfati, 2011); attractive people are perceived to be more sociable, intelligent, self-assured, and competent (Rosar, Klein, & Beckers, 2008) which has been shown to influence politicians’ ability to be elected (Lewis & Bierly, 1990; A. C. Little, Berriss, Jones, & Roberts, 2007; Sigelman, Sigelman, Thomas, & Ribich, 1986). This effect, to the best of the author’s knowledge, has not been studied in the context of public diplomacy, which is somewhat surprising. Human interest stories about foreign politicians often focus on things related to their private lives or their appearance. The latter is particularly true, for example, about Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau. Various rankings of the world’s most attractive
politicians have been published by the world’s most influential outlets, including CBS News, Daily Telegraph and others (Freyne, 2017; Le Messurier, 2017; “Sexiest world leaders and royals,” 2018). If a politician’s physical attractiveness influences the perceptions of their personality traits, can it have an impact on a country’s image? The halo effect hypothesis suggests that Canada and other countries whose leaders enjoy the status of the world’s most attractive politicians benefit from their leaders’ physical appeal.

To summarize this section of the literature review, the increasing media focus on leadership at the expense of the organizations they head, leads to an increased weight for leader evaluations in the overall evaluations of the collective entities they represent. Leader effects on country image can be conceptualized as the effects of recall by an individual regarding his or her beliefs and feelings about the leader’s personality and policies when the individual is asked to evaluate the leader’s country. A leader’s performance-relevant personality traits and specific policy decisions have a signaling function: they can be used to make inferences about the way the organization is being governed thus affecting organizational image. However, this effect can be stronger or weaker, depending on an individual’s beliefs regarding how much control, or discretion, the leader has over various aspects of country governance. Moreover, policies can be used to infer certain information about the leader’s character. In addition, perceptions of a leader’s character, and, in particular, perceptions of performance-relevant character traits can be affected by the perceptions of a leader’s traits not necessarily related to political performance. Finally, personality characteristics not directly related to someone’s effective performance as a country leader can still exert influence on country
image by influencing the perceptions of the leader’s performance relevant traits. Figure 2-2 summarizes the relationships between the variables in the theoretical model discussed.

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses have been put forward:

**H1.** Perceived a) personality b) policies of a leader will affect country image.

**H2.** Leader’s perceived physical attractiveness will affect his perceived politically relevant traits.

**H3.** The effect of perceived physical attractiveness of a leader on country image will be mediated by his perceived politically relevant traits.

**H4.** The perceptions of policies proposed by the leader will affect the perceptions of leader’s performance-related personality traits.

**H5.** The effect of perceptions of a) leader’s politically relevant personality traits b) policies on country image will be moderated by the perceived degree of discretion of a leader.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lieberson and O’Connor (1972)</td>
<td>Specific CEOs (variance decomposition)</td>
<td>Corporate financial performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flynn and Staw (2004)</td>
<td>Leader’s charisma</td>
<td>Investment (stock performance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossland and Hambrick (2007)</td>
<td>Specific CEOs (variance decomposition)</td>
<td>Corporate financial performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mackey (2008)</td>
<td>Specific CEOs (variance decomposition)</td>
<td>Corporate financial performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crossland and Hambrick (2011)</td>
<td>Specific CEOs (variance decomposition)</td>
<td>Corporate financial performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hambrick and Quigley (2014)</td>
<td>Specific CEOs (variance decomposition)</td>
<td>Corporate performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hermann (1980)</td>
<td>Personal beliefs and orientations (nationalism, locus of control, need for power and affiliation, suspiciousness and decision-making style)</td>
<td>Foreign policy decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones and Olken (2005)</td>
<td>Specific leaders (variance decomposition)</td>
<td>National economic growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horowitz, McDermott, and Stam (2005)</td>
<td>Sociodemographic characteristic (age)</td>
<td>Likelihood to engage in military conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallagher and Allen (2014)</td>
<td>Personality traits (Big Five)</td>
<td>Likelihood to use force in international conflicts</td>
</tr>
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<td>Horowitz, Potter, Sechser, and Stam (2018)</td>
<td>Leader’s military background</td>
<td>Likelihood of military conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renshon, Dafoe, and Huth (2018)</td>
<td>Leader’s reputation for resolve</td>
<td>Likelihood of military conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupton (2018)</td>
<td>Leader’s reputation for resolve</td>
<td>Likelihood of military conflicts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yarhi-Milo (2018)</td>
<td>Personality traits (self-monitoring)</td>
<td>Engagement in conflicts on reputational grounds</td>
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<td>Bartels (2002)</td>
<td>Personality traits (moral, knowledgeable, inspiring, strong leader)</td>
<td>Voting behavior</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bartle and Crewe (2002)</td>
<td>Personality traits (strong leader, caring, decisive)</td>
<td>Voting behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brettschneider and Gabriel (2002)</td>
<td>Personality traits (integrity, performance, leadership, personal appeal)</td>
<td>Voting behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnston (2002)</td>
<td>Personality traits (competence, character)</td>
<td>Voting behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colton (2002)</td>
<td>Personality traits (intelligence, strength, competence, vision, empathy)</td>
<td>Voting behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little, Burriss, Jones, and Roberts (2007)</td>
<td>Facial appearance</td>
<td>Voting behavior</td>
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Table 2-1. Continued

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<th>Authors</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Ohr and Oscarsson (2011)</td>
<td>Performance-related traits personailty traits (cognitive competence, leadership, trustworthiness, empathy)</td>
<td>Voting behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garzia (2013)</td>
<td>Personality traits (competence, leadership, integrity, empathy)</td>
<td>Voting behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Relations</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Gainess-Ross (2003)</td>
<td>CEO reputation</td>
<td>Corporate reputation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delgado-Garcia, de Quevedo-Puente, and Blanco-Mazagatos, (2015)</td>
<td>CEO reputation (awards received, media coverage)</td>
<td>Corporate reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassel, Kallunki, and Nilsson (2015)</td>
<td>CEO personality traits (risk taking behavior)</td>
<td>Firms’ environmental performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sohn and Weaver Lariscy (2015)</td>
<td>CEO reputation – personality traits (competence and ethics)</td>
<td>Corporate reputation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re and Rule (2015)</td>
<td>CEO facial appearance</td>
<td>Corporate financial performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koh (2011)</td>
<td>CEO reputation – celebrity status (awards received)</td>
<td>Firm performance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Diplomacy</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Golan and Yang (2013)</td>
<td>Global leader evaluations</td>
<td>Global country evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmas (2018)</td>
<td>Personality traits (strong, ambitious, trustworthy, warm)</td>
<td>Overall evaluations of a country and its citizens</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2-1. The conceptual relationships between image, brand, and reputation.
Figure 2-2. Theoretical model showing the relationships between performance-relevant personality traits, performance-irrelevant leader characteristics, policies and country image.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

The study employed a 2x2 factorial experimental design testing the effects of leader personality (positive, negative) and effects of leader policies (positive, negative). In a positive-positive condition, participants were presented with a magazine article about a fictitious leader Leon Tudo, the President of Montenegro. The article emphasized his positive personality traits (including high competence, leadership skills, and integrity as well as his physical attractiveness) and positive policy initiatives that would benefit many people. In the negative-negative condition, the article stressed the president’s lack of competence, leadership skills, and integrity. The leader was also presented as physically unattractive. In terms of policies, he opposed the initiatives that might improve the life of many people.

Participants

Participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online crowdsourcing marketplace. Despite some objections regarding the representativeness of MTurkers compared to Internet-based panels and national probability samples (Huff & Tingley, 2015) respondents’ representativeness in experimental design is not a concern. The advantages of MTurk for experimental data collection includes reliability compatible with the traditional methods (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011) and its participants relatively successful performance on attention checks (Hauser & Schwarz, 2016). To keep the target country constant in all conditions, the assignment description (HIT) explicitly stated that the task was intended for U.S. participants only. It was also explained that people living in the U.S. for 10 years or more are considered U.S. participants. Study settings on Amazon Mechanical Turk allow researchers to set
demographics and other requirements to participants. Requirements for location (U.S.) and the quality of work (at least 95% of approved HITS) were set for this study.

In total, 215 MTurk workers completed the questionnaire. Of this number, 22 participants reported that they either have visited Montenegro or have friends or relatives from this country (10.2%). One participant did not answer all the questions in the questionnaire. Their responses were excluded from the final analysis. The final sample resulted in 192 participants, 49.7% males, 48.7% females, and 1.6% who preferred not to disclose their gender. Participants’ mean age was 38.24 years. The overwhelming majority were Whites (80.8%), followed by African Americans (7.8%), Asians (5.2%), and other (5.1%). Most of them (89.2%) had at least some college education, 7.8% had a master’s degree, and 2.1% had a PhD. In terms of political affiliation, 28% identified themselves as Independents, 22.8% as Republicans or leaning to the Republican Party, and 49.2% reported being Democrats or leaning to the Democratic Party.

**Stimulus Material**

The stimulus material was based in part on previous research on the topic. Participants were presented with an article from an online magazine that discussed Leon Tudo, a fictitious president of Montenegro, a small country in southern Europe. This country was selected to minimize the effects of participants’ prior knowledge, as well as because the international name of the country is quite misleading in terms of its origin, making it difficult for participants to make inferences about the country based on the region where it is located. The word count in each of the conditions was roughly equal ranging from 273 to 289 words. Politically relevant personality traits were operationalized in article text based on previous research on the topic (Ingenhoff &
Klein, 2018). Attractiveness was manipulated using both pictures and in-text mentions. For policy, the issue of greenhouse gas emissions was chosen because better ecology is a public good, so it is more likely that supporting that cause will be perceived as a positive policy. Sample articles and summaries of the operationalization of variables in text can be found in the Appendix A.

**Variables**

**Country Image Construct**

The country image was conceptualized as a subjective stakeholder attitude toward a nation and its state, comprising specific beliefs and general feelings held by foreign stakeholders regarding a country. Specific beliefs encompass three dimensions: normative, aesthetic, and functional, with the general feelings domain represented by the affective dimension (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) and Ingenhoff and Klein (2018) have previously validated measures of country image (Appendix B) by asking participants to rate their agreement with the statements on a 7-point scale with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 7 being “strongly agree”.

**Index construction and data preparation.** A reliability analysis was conducted to confirm that all four subscales measuring country image dimensions were internally consistent.

There are two potential issues with reliability analysis: instability of coefficients when N<300 (Kline, 1986) and potential alpha inflation due to a large number of items (>6) (Cortina, 1993).

While some researchers do not recommend attempting a reliability analysis with a sample size <300 (e.g. Kline, 1986), a recent simulation study indicates that it is possible provided that the alpha coefficient is stable in a small sample and that all
individual items correspond sufficiently to the scale. Yurdugul (2008) found that the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is reliable for a sample size of 100 if the first eigenvalue of the Principle Component Analysis matrix >3. According to Guadagnoli & Velicer (1988) the component pattern is stable for a sample size of 100 provided that the component contains at least four variable loadings >.6. For these reasons, a principal component analysis for each sub-scale was conducted prior to reliability analysis.

For the normative dimension, the principal component analysis yielded a value of 6.68 (74.2% variance explained) for the first component which satisfied Yurdugul’s (2008) condition. All of the variable loadings were <.6, with the smallest value of .816 which satisfied the requirement identified by Guadagnoli & Velicer (1988). Therefore, the author proceeded with the reliability analysis. Chronbach’s alpha was .953 indicative of a good reliability (Kline, 1999). Keeping in mind the potential alpha inflation due to the number of items, the author examined the Item-Total statistics to determine if deleting any of the items could improve the consistency of the scale; however, all variables strongly correlated with one another (the smallest value of $r=.540$), and deletion of any of them would reduce Chronbach’s alpha.

Similarly, for functional dimension, the eigenvalue of the first component was 10.637 (62.6% variance explained) with all loadings exceeding the .6 threshold. The examination of the Item-Total statistic resulted in the deletion of items 9 and 10 from the scale. The Principal Component Analysis was repeated for the reduced scale to confirm the stability of the scale (Eigenvalue for the first component was 9.905 (66% of the variance), and the smallest variable loading was .702. The Cronbach’s alpha for the final scale was .963.
For the aesthetic and affective dimensions while all variable loadings exceeded .6, the eigenvalues for the first component did not reach 6 (aesthetic dimension = 3.625, 72.5% variance, affective dimension = 2.905, 72.6% variance). For this reason, the two dimensions were combined into one and the principle component analysis was repeated. Both Kaiser’s rule (Kaiser, 1960) and the scree plot (Figure 3-1) suggested that the two subscales essentially represented the same factor. The eigenvalue of the first component was 6.271 (62.7% variance) with all the loadings exceeding the .6 criterion; therefore, the author proceeded with the reliability analysis. The analysis yielded Cronbach’s alpha of .933 with none of the items being potential candidates for removal.

All three variables were subsequently explored for univariate normality using z-test for skewness and kurtosis. Neither of the coefficients exceeded |1.96|, meaning that neither of them showed a significant departure from normality. The examination of residual SSCP matrix in the subsequent MANOVA, however, suggested redundancy among the dependent variables. Specifically, the normative dimension and the functional dimension, after partialing out the independent variable (condition) were strongly correlated, $r = .747$, that is, they shared more than 50% of their variance. This makes theoretical and practical sense, as often people may not be familiar with all the aspects of a country’s life theorized by scholars and are likely to make inferences about the unfamiliar aspects from those things that they actually know about a country. For this reason, the two DVs were combined into one cognitive dimension (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2017), Cronbach’s alpha = .834.
Thus, the final analysis included two dependent variables converted to T-scores, representing a cognitive and an affective dimension of a country image.

**Potential Intervening Variables**

**Perceived degree of discretion.** Participants’ beliefs about the role of and the influence they have over various domestic and foreign policies may potentially impact the relationships between a leader’s personality and country image. Literature on organizational behavior conceptualizes discretion as the extent that a leader has an array of alternative actions that all “lie within the zone of acceptance of powerful parties’ (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987, p. 378). For the purposes of this study, we define the perceived degree of discretion as the extent to which an individual believes a national leader has control over domestic and foreign policies in his or her country. The variable was measured with 7-point scale items asking how much influence, in their opinion, the national leader has in regards to a) his country’s relationships with other countries, b) decisions on foreign policy, c) his country’s technological advancement, d) his country’s economic development, e) preserving national and cultural heritage, f) domestic policy decisions, and g) solving global problems, such as greenhouse gas emissions. Reliability of the scale was measured with Cronbach’s alpha, which yielded a coefficient of .877.

**Control variables.** Sociodemographic variables, including race, gender, age, and education were controlled for in this study. In addition, political leanings measured on a 7-point scale from strong Republican to strong Democrat were included as a control measure (As of today, which of the following most accurately describes your political affiliation?). Finally, interest in travel and climate change concerns were also controlled for in the study. Interest in travel was measured on a 7-point scale using
three items: I enjoy traveling; If money is no object, I would like to visit as many
countries as possible; I am interested in traveling. Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was
.930. Climate change concern was measured using the following items (adopted from
Pew Research Center surveys): In my view, global climate change is a very serious
problem; Global climate change is already harming people around the world; Global
climate change will harm people around the world in the next few years; I am very
concerned that global climate change will harm me personally at some point of my life.
Participants were asked to rate their agreement with these statements on a 7-point
Likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree, and 7 being strongly agree (Cronbach’s
alpha = .943).

Procedure

The experiment was administered online. After confirming their consent to
participate in a study of foreign affairs, participants were randomly assigned to one of
the four conditions: leader’s personality traits (positive, negative)*leader’s policy
(positive, negative): Condition 1 (Positive Persona – Positive Policy) had n=50
participants; In condition 2 (Positive Persona – Negative Policy) there were n=46
participants; in Condition 3 (Negative Persona – Negative Policy) there were n=50
participants, and in Condition 4 (Negative Persona – Positive Policy) there were n=46
participants. Next, they were presented with stimulus material and were asked to
carefully read the article. Then they were asked to fill out the questionnaire. Upon
completion of the questionnaire, the participants were debriefed.

Manipulation Check

To confirm that the potential differences in participants’ perceptions of country
image could be attributed to the stimulus and not to some other potential explanations,
a series of manipulation checks was performed using independent-samples t-test. Items, measuring each variable on a 7-point scale, are presented in Appendix B. In addition to the manipulated variables, the author measured the perceived importance of various leader attributes for his or her performance as a country leader (On a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 being "completely unrelated" to 7 being "strongly related", please rate how much do you believe the following attributes are related to one’s performance as a country leader: competence; leadership skills; integrity; physical attractiveness; policy initiatives). The variables were included to ensure that the weights that participants assign to individual variables do not vary across groups.

**Article credibility.** One-way ANOVA confirmed that all four groups did not significantly differ from one another in their perceptions of credibility of the news articles they were randomly assigned to read (F=.787, df=3;190, p>.05). Cronbach’s alpha of the 6-item scale was .955

**Physical Attractiveness.** There was a significant difference between the participants presented with a picture of an attractive leader, M=5.36, and those who received a picture where the leader appeared in the unattractive condition, M=2.42 (t=14.084, df=190, p<.001). Yet both groups did not differ significantly in their assessment of the importance of a leader’s attractiveness to his or her performance as a country leader (in the positive condition M=2.82, in the negative M=2.40; t=1.679, df=190, p>.05).

**Competence.** Reliability of the 3-item scale was .876. Participants in the positive personality condition rated the president’s competence significantly higher (M=14.8) than those in the negative condition (M=11.8, t=4.061, df=190, p<.001). Yet the groups
did not display any differences regarding the importance they place on competence for a country leader’s political performance \( (t= -0.684, df=190, p > 0.05; \) positive condition \( M=5.05 \), negative condition \( M=5.81 \)).

**Leadership.** The four-item scale proved to be reliable, Cronbach’s alpha = .894. A manipulation check revealed significant differences between respondents in the positive personality condition \( (M=21.4) \) and those in the negative condition \( (M=17.3) \), \( t=5.177, df=190, p < 0.001 \). The groups in the positive condition rated the importance of leadership skills .385 points higher than respondents in the negative personality condition, which represents a significant difference, \( t=1.985, df=190, p < 0.049 \).

**Integrity.** Reliability of the four-item scale was .942. Participants in the positive personality condition rated the president’s integrity 3.2 points higher \( (M=19.34) \) than respondents in the negative condition \( (M=16.18) \); \( t=3.466, df=190, p < 0.01 \). The groups did not display significant differences in how much importance they place on integrity for one’s political performance, \( t=1.794, df=190, p > 0.05 \).

**Policy.** The two groups were significantly different from one another in their confidence that the president of Montenegro is doing the right thing regarding world politics. Participants in the positive policy condition \( (M=4.89) \) were 1.729 points more confident in the president than participants in the negative condition \( (M=3.16) \), which represents a significant difference, \( t=7.157, df=190, p < 0.001 \), yet the groups did not differ from one another in terms of how concerned personally they were about the environment and climate change, \( t=-1.047, df=190, p > 0.05 \); scale reliability Cronbach’s alpha = .943. In addition, the two groups were not different from one another in how
much importance they attribute to policy initiatives in a leader’s political performance,
t=1.288, df=190, p>.05.

Figure 3-1. The scree plot returned by SPSS Principal Component Analysis where data are measures for Affective and Aesthetic dimensions of country image.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Multivariate Analysis of Variance

The effects of a leader’s personality and policies on the two dimensions of a country’s image, a cognitive and an affective, were tested using multivariate analysis of covariance. This statistical test was selected because the experiment involved two correlated dependent variables, and therefore, Type I error correction due to multiple tests was required. When DVs are correlated, MANCOVA has more statistical power compared to a series of Bonferroni-corrected ANCOVA tests (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2017).

Assumption check. Box’s Test is not significant, at p<.001, Box M=21.049, F(2, 39.4)=2.294, p<.05, meaning that equality of covariance matrices is assumed. Residual SSCP Matrix suggested non-redundancy as the DVs were correlated at r=.484 which is less than .7 threshold (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2017). Levene’s test was indicative that the homogeneity assumption for the Affective dimension did not hold (p<.001), meaning that the results for this variable should be interpreted with caution.

Control variables. The following control variables were included into the analysis: climate change concern (M=21.32), perceived degree of leader’s discretion (M=35.93), travel interest (M=16.44), participants’ age (M=38.2), gender (M=1.54), and political affiliation (M=3.43). Among these, only the perceived degree of discretion and travel interest were found to be significant at p≤.05 by the multivariate omnibus test. Perceived degree of discretion (Wilk’s λ (2; 181)=.907, p<.001, partial η²=.093) was significantly associated with both dependent variables: cognitive dimension F(1)=10.255, p<.01, partial η²=.053; affective dimension F(1)=16.507, p<.001, partial η²=.083. Travel interest (Wilk’s λ (2;181)=.939, p<.001, partial η²=.061) did not have a
significant impact on the cognitive dimension $F(1) = .838$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .005$, yet was associated with the affective aspect of country image $F(1) = 11.130$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .058$, $b = .503$. This means that participants who expressed greater interest in travel were more likely to give the country greater scores in the affective dimension.

**Main effects.** In total, the model explained 30.1% of variance in the cognitive and 25.4% in the affective aspects of country image. Multivariate omnibus tests for effects of both leader’s personality (Wilk’s $\lambda (2;181) = .946$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .054$) and leader’s policy (Wilk’s $\lambda (2;181) = .820$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .180$) were significant, whereas their interaction was not (Wilk’s $\lambda (2;181) = .994$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$).

Univariate follow-ups revealed that the effect of personality (H1a) was significant only for the cognitive aspect of country image, $F(1) = 9.932$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .052$, but not for the affective, $F(1) = .960$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .005$. Bonferroni-corrected post-hocs suggested that participants in the positive personality condition rated the country, on average, 3.959 points higher on the cognitive dimension, which represents a significant difference, $p < .01$. They also rated the country 1.271 points higher on the affective dimension, but the difference between the two groups did not reach statistical significance, $p > .05$.

For the policy effects (H1b), univariate follow-ups suggested statistically significant effects on both dimensions of country image. For the cognitive aspect ($F(1) = 39.778$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .179$), participants in the positive policy condition rated the country 7.951 points higher, all other things being equal, $p < .001$. For the affective dimension ($F(1) = 7.030$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .037$), the country received, on average 3.451 points greater scores from the respondents in the positive policy condition, $p < .01$. 
Estimated marginal means for the main effects are plotted in Figures 4-1 and 4-2 for the Cognitive and Affective dimensions, respectively.

The fact that the omnibus test for the Persona*Policy interaction was not significant does not necessarily mean that there was virtually no effect. It implies that it did not hold for both dependent variables simultaneously, although it is still possible that the interaction affects one of the DVs in one of the conditions. More specifically, estimated marginal means plot for the cognitive dimension clearly showed that participants in the negative policy condition gave the country greater scores if they read the article where its leader's positive personality traits were emphasized. In addition, power analysis indicated that the failure to detect a statistically significant result could be due to the lack of statistical power: the observed power associated with the interaction term was .05 for the affective dimension, and .14 for the cognitive dimension. Taken together, these results may suggest that the positive personality of a leader can potentially mitigate the effects of poor policy decisions. Therefore, for exploratory purposes, the author requested simple effects decomposition with Bonferroni correction for familywise Type I error. The post-hocs revealed that personality played a significant role only in the negative policy condition, and only for the cognitive aspect of country image. Participants who read the article about the president’s poor policies rated the country, on average, 5.027 points higher if the leader’s personality traits were presented in a positive light, p<.01. The pattern was similar for the positive policy condition, but the mean difference of 2.891 between the groups did not reach statistical significance with p>.05.
Moderating effect of perceived degree of discretion. The next test was for H5a and H5b which suggested that the effects of leader personality and policies respectively will be moderated by the degree to which participants believe a leader has influence over various aspects of country life. To measure this, the author created the interaction terms Personality*Discretion and Policy*Discretion using a residual centering approach to reduce multicollinearity between the main effects variables and the interaction terms (Lance, 1988; Little, Bovaird, & Widaman, 2006). The new variables were entered into the MANCOVA equation. Adding the interaction term did not alter the pattern of findings reported above: all significant main effects remained significant in the omnibus and univariate tests. The new model explained 31.9% and 26.9% variance in the cognitive and affective aspects of country image respectively. The omnibus test for Personality*Discretion was non-significant (Wilk’s λ (2;179)=.995, p>.05, partial η²=.005); neither of the univariates reached statistical significance (p>.05). The omnibus test for Policy*Discretion also was not statistically significant with Wilk’s λ (2;179)=.969, p=.059, partial η²=.031). The author conducted a power analysis to investigate whether the marginal effects of perceived discretion were due to the lack of statistical power. The results suggested that this may have been the case. For the affective dimension, the observed power of Personality*Discretion was .06, the power of Policy*Discretion was .48. For the cognitive dimensions the coefficients were .16 and .59, respectively.

The univariate follow-ups revealed that the interaction between a leader’s policy and perceived degree of discretion of a leader was significant only for the cognitive aspect of country image (F(1)= 4.833, p<.05, partial η²=.006), yet due to the non-significant omnibus these results cannot be deemed conclusive and require further
examination. The interaction seemed to have an enhancing nature, that is, greater perceived discretion strengthened the effect of leader’s policy on the image of the country. Policy effects at different levels of perceived discretion are plotted in Fig. 4-3.

**Results Summary.** The study provided support for H1 suggesting that both leader’s personality characteristics (H1a) and policies (H1b) affect how other nations’ citizens view the leader’s country. More specifically, policies of a leader affect both cognitive (beliefs about a country’s norms, governance, its domestic conditions, and its place in the international arena) and affective (likeability, admiration) components of country image. Leader’s personality affects participants’ judgements only about the cognitive aspect of country image. In addition, simple effects decomposition of the interaction term (Policy*Personality) revealed the negative effects of policies on the cognitive aspect of country image can be potentially mitigated by the positive personality of a leader. However due to the non-significant multivariate and univariate omnibus tests, the result is not very conclusive, and the finding requires further academic attention. A similar truth is found regarding the moderating effect of the perceived leader’s degree of discretion on the relationship between a leader’s policies and country image. While the data suggests that participants, especially in the positive policy condition, rated the country higher on the cognitive dimension if they believed that the leader had a lot of influence over different aspects of country life, the interaction effect was not strong enough to substantively affect country image.

**Structural Equation Models**

**Personality Effects**

To test H2 (effects of a leader’s attractiveness on the perceptions of his or her personality) H3 (mediated effect of a leader’s attractiveness on country image) and
further explore the relationships between the perceived personality of a country leader and the image of his country, structural equation modeling in AMOS 24 was performed. The model is shown in Figure 4-4.

**Model fit.** While there is no agreement on the issue of how the model that best represents the data reflects the underlying theory, known as model fit, the researcher relied on the preponderance of evidence provided by commonly reported fit indices to assess the fit of the proposed model (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). Although the $\chi^2$ statistic was significant ($20.592$, $df=11$, $p<.05$) which suggests a non-perfect fit, all other commonly reported indices including goodness-of-fit statistics (GFI), AGFI, and comparative fit indices were well above .9 with RSMEA being non-significant at .068, $p>.05$ and CMIN/DF ratio of 1.872 which is below the 2.0 threshold, together suggestive of a well-fitting model.

The leader’s politically-relevant traits represented a single factor in the model, explaining about 77% of the variance in perceived competence and leadership skills and about 85% in the perceived integrity of the leader. All factor loadings were greater than .8 and significant at $p<.001$ level.

The latent factor, leader’s personality, was significantly associated with the affective component ($\beta=.43$, $p<.001$) and the cognitive component of country image ($\beta=.81$, $p<.001$) when the effects of policies were not taken into account. In total, the model explained about 26% of variance in the former and about 66% in the latter aspect.

**Halo effect of attractiveness.** Moving on to H2, the model suggests that physical attractiveness does have a halo effect when it comes to perceptions of the
substantive, performance relevant traits of a political leader. There was 22% of variance in the perceptions of the leader’s personality, which is significantly greater than zero ($\beta=.47$, $p<.001$) thus providing support for H2.

H3 suggested that the effects of a leader’s physical attractiveness on country image will be carried through, or mediated by, the perceptions of his/her personality traits. The indirect effect was tested using bootstrapping with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. The AMOS output showed that there was no significant residual direct effect of a president’s physical attractiveness on country image (affective $\beta=.013$, $p>.05$, cognitive $\beta=.007$, $p>.05$) and that the effect was fully carried through perceptions of personality traits: for the cognitive aspect $\beta=.377$, SE=.061, $p<.01$, for the affective component $\beta=.201$, SE=.050, $p<.01$.

**Results summary.** Together, the results confirm the previous findings that a leader’s personality indeed is a factor influencing country image, yet it plays a more important role in regard to beliefs about a country, its norms, governance, and domestic life, rather than in regard to general feelings about it. The model also provided insights about the role physical attractiveness of politicians plays in the perceived international prestige of their countries. Attractive leaders are seen as more capable of performing political functions in terms of their integrity, competence and leadership skills. Countries governed by politically capable leaders are ranked higher on various dimensions of country image.

**Policy Effects**

H4 suggested that a leader’s personality traits can be inferred from their actions in the political arena, that is, policies. To test this, a multi-group structural equation model was created with two comparison groups: respondents in the positive policy
condition (leader proposing measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions) and those in the negative policy condition (leader blocking the initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions). The underlying idea of the test is to assess whether constraining the estimates of interest (in our case, factor means, or the total scores the president received in each condition for his personality traits) to be equal in both groups significantly worsens the model fit. But before comparing factor means, in other words, answering the substantive research question, measurement invariance must be established. Measurement invariance, at a minimum, implies that the same variables load on the same factors (have similar factor patterns) in the same manner (have equal factor loadings), and that individual measures show similar patterns of highs and lows in each group (have equal intercepts) (Ariely & Davidov, 2012). In the context of the present study that would confirm that participants in both groups received similar information about the leader’s personality from the stimulus articles they read.

**Invariance.** The model with no constraints, or configural model, (all parameters freely estimated by the software) is the best-fitting model. It does not assume any estimates to be identical across groups and serves as a baseline to which all subsequent models compared. The next model was set to constrain factor loadings in each group to be the equal. It was compared against the best-fitting model in terms of whether it fits the data significantly worse. In our case it fit well with the data on all fit indices, including $\chi^2=3.161$, df=2, p>.05, CMIN/DF=1.58, NFI, RFI, IFI, TLI all above .95, RSMEA=.055, p>.05, and its fit was not significantly worse than the fit of the configural model ($\chi^2=3.161$, df=2, p>.05, with NFI=.008, IFI=.008 which is well below the minimum acceptable range .01 - .05) (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). This suggests that
weak metric invariance can be assumed and proceed with testing a more restrictive model that assumes equal intercepts of individual measures (competence, leadership, integrity). Despite the significant $\chi^2$ statistic ($\text{CMIN}=12.359$, $df=2$, $p<.01$), all other indices were suggestive that strong measurement invariance can be assumed. These include NFI, IFI, RFI and TLI fit indices ranging from .030 - .034 which is below the acceptable threshold of .05, and RSMEA confidence intervals [.063;191] falling within the confidence intervals of the less restrictive model [0;.165].

Thus, we can proceed to the substantive research question, namely, whether respondents' evaluations of personality of a leader were affected by his policies. Parameter estimates for each of the two groups are presented in Fig. 4-5 and 4-6.

Participants in the negative condition rated the Montenegro president, on average, 1.185 lower on the latent factor of personality traits, $SE=.222$. The model that assumed participants in both groups as not being significantly different on the latent factor fit significantly worse than either of the less restrictive models. Compared to the strong metric invariance model, all fit indices are suggestive of a poorer fit ($\text{CMIN}=29.193$, $p<.001$, NFI, IFI, IRF, TLI all being above .05, RSMEA confidence interval of the stricter model [.136;.237] fall outside of the previous model [.063;191]. In sum, this is the evidence that the difference between the groups is not negligible and cannot be ignored, thus providing support for H4.

Results summary. The results suggest that the effect of policies on country image is two-fold. On one hand, policies affect the perceptions of the country and various aspects about life in it. On the other hand, policies influence how the personality
of the country leadership is perceived by people abroad. Figure 4-7 summarizes the findings presented in this chapter.

Figure 4-1. Estimated marginal means of the Cognitive dimension of country image.

Figure 4-2. Estimated marginal means of the Affective dimension of country image.
Figure 4-3. Effects of Policy on the Cognitive dimension on country image at different levels of Perceived degree of discretion of a leader.

Figure 4-4. Structural equation modeling the effects of attractiveness on country image carried through the perceived personality of a leader.
Figure 4-5. Parameter estimates for President Personality factor in a Positive Policy group.

Figure 4-6. Parameter estimates for President Personality factor in a Negative Policy group.
Figure 4-7. The summary of results presented in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the presented findings are consistent with recent studies on leader effects in the context of public diplomacy outcomes (Balmas, 2018; Ingenhoff & Klein, 2018). Political leaders do impact how international publics view their countries. The present work went further by uncovering why and in what ways leaders matter for the images of their countries by being who they are and by doing what they do.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the way both country leaders' personalities and policies are viewed by international publics influences the image of their nations in the international arena. More specifically, the way a leader's personality traits are portrayed by the media influences people's beliefs about the way the country in question is governed. In addition, the effects of a leader's policies were three-fold. First, they influence beliefs (cognitive aspect) about the country, about its values and norms. Second, they influence feelings toward the country (emotional aspect) – its likeability and admiration by foreigners. Third, the leader's policies influence the way the leader's personality is viewed: when policies are viewed positively, the leader is believed to be more competent, strong, and trustworthy. In addition, somewhat strikingly, it was discovered that countries could indirectly benefit from the physical attractiveness of their leaders. The study has shown that attractive leaders are rated higher on performance relevant traits, thus having an indirect positive effect on country image. Moreover, while leaders' personalities appeared to have an impact only on the cognitive aspect of country image, cognitive (beliefs) and affective (feelings) components of attitudes are strongly related and influence one another (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Zajonc, 1980). The study's statistical model
took into account only the direct impact of leader personality on the two components of country image while partialing out the variance they shared. Testing the mediated effect of leader personality on the affective component of country image is worth further investigation.

In addition, while the author's evidence that the emphasis on positive personality traits of a leader in media coverage can help mitigate the impact of poor policies was not conclusive, the data indicates this may be the case in certain circumstances. This is an interesting issue that requires further examination.

Finally, the presented data points toward a perceived degree of discretion as a potential variable moderating the impact of a leader’s policy initiatives on country image. In this study, this effect was not statistically significant, likely, because of the lack of statistical power, but it does suggest that, for instance, participants’ awareness about the country’s political system (e.g. democracy versus authoritarian) could make a difference for leaders’ abilities to shape their country image.

**Theoretical Contribution**

This study has made two important theoretical contributions to the literature on leader effects. The efforts to understand the symbolic role that leaders play in what people think and how they feel about their organizations have been undertaken by scholars in different fields, including management, public relations, international relations, mass communication, and political science. Because all these disciplines used different theoretical paradigms, looked at different outcomes, and studied different audiences, the knowledge associated with the concept of “leader effect” remained fragmented. The first important contribution of this study is that it has made an attempt to consolidate the perspectives from different academic disciplines and propose a
conceptual definition of leader effects. It conceptualized leader effects on organizational image as the effects of recall of beliefs and feelings regarding the leader’s personality and policies when an individual is asked to evaluate the leader’s organization.

Previous research on leader effects predominantly focused on the effects of leaders’ personality characteristics on various organizational outcomes, including reputation (Delgado-Garcia, de Quevedo-Puente, & Blanco-Mazagatos, 2015; Gaines-Ross, 2003; Hassel, Kallunki, & Nilsson, 2015; Sohn & Weaver Lariscy, 2015), voting behavior (Bartle & Crewe, 2002; Garzia, 2013; Ohr & Oscarsson, 2011), likelihood of international conflicts (Gallagher & Allen, 2014; Yahri-Milo, 2018), and country image (Balmas, 2018; Ingenhoff & Klein, 2018). The second important contribution of this study is that it demonstrates that leader effects in the context of attitudinal outcomes (organizational image, reputation, vote preferences) should not be limited to personality traits, but should also include the perceptions of leaders’ policies. This is because, while each has separate effects on the outcome (in this case, image), they are not independent of one another. People are not directly exposed to leaders to make conclusions about their leadership skills, competence, credibility, and so on. Rather, they infer personality traits from mediated exposure to their behaviors, with policy actions being one of the most visible and relevant.

The study also makes an important methodological contribution to the literature on country image. There have been many attempts to represent the structure of the concept in multiple dimensions, for example, as normative, functional, aesthetic, and evaluative (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015); or as governance, people, exports, tourism, investment, and culture and heritage (Anholt, 2007); or as emotional appeal, physical
appeal, financial appeal, leadership appeal, cultural appeal, global, and political appeals (Yang, Shin, Lee, & Wrigley, 2008). For this study, the author tested two of these models: the one developed by Buhmann & Ingenhoff (2015) and the nation-brand index developed by Anholt (2007, not shown). In both cases, results were consistent: all items essentially load on only two factors, cognitive (all belief-related items) and affective (all feeling-related items). This suggests that the structure of country image construct depends on what people know about the country. If they are well acquainted with all of the country aspects that researchers theorize, perhaps, the measures would load as expected. If they are not familiar with at least some of the aspects, they will make assumptions based on what they know about the aspects of which they have some knowledge. If so, the endeavor of creating a country image measurement scale beyond the cognitive-evaluative dimensions that can be applied in international research is likely to prove futile for two reasons. First, the kind of knowledge that a sample of respondents from country A would have about country B and the kind of knowledge they would have about country C may not be comparable. Second, the kind of knowledge a sample of respondents from country A possesses about country B can be different from the kind of knowledge about B possessed by the sample of respondents from country D. This is because the patterns of international news flows are uneven: media tend to focus on the core rather than peripheral, or developing countries (Wallerstein, 1979, 2011), on the nations with which their country has strong economic ties, and on the countries that neighbor them (Chang, 1998; Kim & Barnett, 1996; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004; Wu, 2000). Therefore, statistical invariance testing is crucial for cross-cultural research concerned with country images. This issue is almost never addressed in the
reviewed studies, with, to the best of the author’s knowledge, one notable exception (Häubl, 1996).

Practical Implications

The study contributes to the increasing need for concrete strategies for cultivating country images in the contexts of international public relations and public diplomacy. The presented findings suggest that, from a public relations perspective, images of political leaders can be both an asset and a liability for the images of nations they represent. Managing the image of the leader is a valid way of managing the image of the country. It should be noted, however, that the benefit comes at a price of potential reputational threat if the international media exposes a leader’s misconduct. It further suggests that strategies and tactics used in CEO branding and CEO positioning might be relevant and applicable in public diplomacy. Public diplomacy activities such as heads-of-state visits, leaders’ interviews to foreign media outlets, their accounts in social media, and speeches during international summits, biographies— all can serve as possible avenues to position international leaders. Even such a trivial thing as human-interest stories about politicians and various rankings of the world’s most attractive politicians can benefit their respective countries in terms of image management. Moreover, leader-positioning strategies should be implemented in conjunction with the strategies of framing policies as our results show the latter can reinforce the former. In the context of recent developments, the victory of Volodymyr Zelenskiy in Ukraine represents an interesting case for analysis. International outlets introduced him to the world as a young attractive political novice, previously known to the Ukrainian public as a TV comedian, who “scored a crushing victory over incumbent Petro Poroshenko” (Stern, 2019) The Washington Post attributes his victory solely to his personality:
Zelenskiy’s strategy was to avoid making political speeches, engaging in policy debates or doing anything that might limit him to a particular approach. Instead, he performed his popular comedy routines — demonstrating to people that he was likable, knowledgeable and on their side (Orenstein, 2019).

As of right now, international media have created a sufficient reservoir of goodwill for Zelenskiy so that his public diplomacy team could potentially leverage this to Ukraine’s advantage in the global arena. It would be interesting to monitor their efforts to see whether and how it will be used and whether it will strengthen Ukraine’s global position.

Furthermore, the presented findings can have a potential application in domestic political public relations (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2012). As it was noted in the introduction, domestic governments have been repeatedly involved in the construction and re-construction of images of foreign leaders when the administrations needed to generate domestic support for their policies reinforcing or undermining those leaders’ rule (Kurtovic, 2012). This paper presents empirical evidence supporting the validity of this strategy.

Finally, the study offers some insights relevant to nation branding strategy. More specifically, the experiment has shown that a leader’s image and policies, primarily, had effects on the cognitive rather than affective aspects of country image, including beliefs about its governance, infrastructure, and security. Consumers make choices based on their cognitive considerations when they spend enough time thinking about it, whereas affect-based choices are more likely to be made when the processing resources are limited (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999). As such, leadership-centered tactics are likely to prove more successful if the desired economic outcomes involve boosting products and services requiring substantial consideration on the foreign consumers’ part, such as
expensive international travel, immigration, education, industrial goods and materials, or investment.

**Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

In the interest of eliminating the differences in prior knowledge across participants, the participants were exposed to articles about a fictitious president and a country that seldom surfaces in the American media. This is not always the case outside of experimental settings. Anholt (2013) has stressed the importance of complexity of country image for its robustness: the less people know about a country, the more fragile is its image. He used the examples of Denmark and the United States in Egyptian public opinion to illustrate the point. The only thing most people in Egypt knew about Denmark was that it was a Scandinavian country – and they admired that. Once the scandal with The Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons happened in September 2005, they learned another thing – that Denmark insulted their Prophet. As a result, Denmark dropped 36 places in the Egyptian Nation Brands ranking. In contrast, the United States’ ranking in Egypt has never fallen below six, despite the military occupation of its Muslim neighbors. Anholt has argued that is because Egyptians know so many things about the United States that “one new negative fact only formed a small proportion of the whole and inflicted only limited damage on this very large idea” (p. 11). This seems a valid point from the perspective of cognitive psychology: if information is stored in memory in the form of a network (Anderson, 1983), the more elements are connected to the element “country”, the more likely that something other than a certain negative fact will be recalled when an individual is asked to evaluate that country.

This suggests that the results of the study are directly applicable to those nations whose international image has not yet been shaped: for nations whose images are quite
weak, their leaders represent both a greater potential asset and a greater potential liability than for nations with complex and robust images. This is consistent with the results reported by Balmas (2018), who used real and quite prominent countries, Germany and Israel, and their current leaders, Merkel and Netanyahu, in their stimulus material. They were still able to detect significant effects of the leaders’ personalities on the images of their countries, but the effect sizes were smaller.

In addition, our sample was restricted to American participants only. The American political system and individualist culture places a great weight on individuals in general and on presidents in particular (Adam & Myer, 2010). This may influence the participants’ assumptions about the role of individual leaders in other countries so that leader effects may be less pronounced if the target country has a parliamentary rather than a presidential political system. Moreover, the study builds heavily upon Western literature in regard to the traits that are considered important and positive for political leaders. It is possible that non-Western nations have a different perspective on what personality traits make good leaders.

Finally, public awareness about the leader is the first necessary condition for the leader to matter (King, 2002). This work is predicated on the assumption that media play a crucial role in the formation and shaping of a country’s image. Few individuals have direct experience with news events in foreign countries; for many, the sole source of information about world events is the mass media (Wanta et al., 2004). As such, leader effects are contingent on the amount of media attention to them and their nations. Therefore, it is important to take into account some systematic differences in the ability of nations and leaders to drive media coverage.
The factors influencing media attention to world leaders can be found at three levels: global news flow, cross-regional patterns, and the individual leader level.

**Global news flow.** Scholars studying the patterns of global news flow have long recognized that “all countries are not created equal to be news” (Chang, 1998; Kim & Barnett, 1996; Wanta et al., 2004; Wu, 2000). A handful of economically and technologically advanced nations consistently receive greater attention in global news coverage than those less developed. The world systems theory (Wallerstein, 1979, 2011) posits that there is a hierarchy among countries that divides them into core, semi-periphery, and periphery in terms of their political, economic, social, and cultural relations. This disparity is a result of historical forms of dependence and interstate economic exploitation. The core countries today essentially control most communication technologies in the world. In the 19th-20th centuries, those countries were wealthy enough to invest in science, technology, and infrastructure, which made them pioneers, “standard setters,” and, ultimately, major patent-owners in communication technologies (McPhail, 2014). Global media conglomerates, such as The Associated Press, Reuters, or Agence France-Presse, headquartered in the core countries have become major providers of international news content: subscription to their services is more cost-effective for local news outlets around the world than sending their own correspondents abroad. As a result, global news agencies control, reproduce and spread the global flow of narratives, symbols, and images. Importantly, this is a top-down flow, reflecting the structure of the world system: from the core countries to periphery and semi-periphery (Chang, 1998; Kim & Barnett, 1996; Wu, 2000). Thus, Wu (2000) asked researchers from 38 countries around the world to track major news outlets in their countries for one
week to determine which nations were covered most often and in which countries. Not surprisingly, he found that international coverage closely reflected the existing world power structure. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and Germany were the most prominent nations in international media coverage, whereas peripheral nations were visible in the coverage of these core countries only if there were major disasters, or if they had significant economic ties. Aside from the presence of international news agencies, trade relationships and economic interests of the core nations also reinforce such an imbalance in the news coverage between the rich and the poor regions (Kim & Barnett, 1996). Of course, a nation’s position in the world system is not the only factor influencing whether it makes it to the news:

newsworthiness of certain events, with such attributes as timeliness, unexpectedness, continuity, deviance, or human interest (Shoemaker, Chang, & Brendlinger, 1987) can make a nation more visible in the global news coverage in the short-term run; however, at the macro-level, a country’s position in the world system – either in the core, semi-periphery, or periphery is a major determinant of its prominence in global news coverage (Chang, 1998; Kim & Barnett, 1996; Wu, 2000). Following the logic of the world systems theory, it is reasonable to assume that the more visible a country is in terms of global coverage, the more likely its leadership is to be visible in the international news because as the representatives of the most powerful states, they exert the most influence on global affairs.

**Cross-regional differences in the degree of personalization of countries.**

While overall visibility of a country in the global news coverage supposedly increases the chances of its leader to appear in the international news, it is also important to take
into account the extent to which media in any given country tends to focus on the leadership of the country in question. Research has shown that there are cross-country variations in the degree to which a country’s media focus on the leadership when reporting news about another nation-state. Balmas and Sheafer (2013) studied the factors influencing the degree of mediated political personalization across six countries, including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States between 1990 and 2010. Their argument is based on the “lighthouse metaphor:” the further the two countries are from one another, the less discernable are the details of their landscape to each other. Political leaders, being the nation’s most important decision-makers and those most often publicly speaking on behalf of their people, can be viewed as “lighthouses” for the media of other countries. Relatedness and interaction between a pair of countries is the metaphorical “distance” between them: the shorter the geographical distance, the closer the value proximity and the political proximity, and the greater the economic relatedness between a pair of countries, the less likely their media are to focus on political leadership of one another, and the more likely they are to cover other aspects of one another’s lives (Balmas & Sheafer, 2013). For instance, U.S. media were found to be relatively less likely to focus on the leaders of Canada than on the German leadership. A few explanations are possible to explain this tendency, such as media audiences’ lack of interest in the news about nations that do not have relevance to them, and/or journalists’ lack of access to information from non-institutional sources whereas governments and leaders provide information in ready-to-use forms such as official statements, press-releases, press-conferences, and briefings, often in multiple languages.
Hence, leaders of the states that are geographically, economically, culturally, and politically proximate to the target country naturally seem to have less leverage to influence the images of their nations among the population of the target country. At the same time, the less proximate the target country is, the more likely the foreign leader’s nation will be judged by its leader.

**Individual-level differences across political leaders in their ability to attract media attention.** Although coverage of individual politicians has increased over time, it still remains a highly selective procedure. A leader’s success in attracting media attention is largely determined by his or her ability to conform to media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Cook, 1998), which dictates skills and abilities necessary to survive in the media space. A combination of personal characteristics, skills and abilities that make an individual stand out in the public arena is often referred to as charisma (Balmas & Sheafer, 2014; Sheafer, 2001, 2008), a concept that is notoriously hard to pin down. Researchers in a variety of fields have tried to make analyses of the charismatic qualities of political leaders. The scholars tend to generally agree that charismatic qualities are related to rhetorical and communication abilities (Cook, 1998; Gans, 2005; Sheafer, 2008), a flair for dramatic performance (Gitlin, 2003), and physical appearance (Markowitz-Elfassi & Tsfati, 2017; Waismel-Manor & Tsfati, 2011) and lead to an increase in media coverage of politicians possessing those qualities. Mass communication scholars argue that it is newsworthiness of people and events that drives media attention (Shoemaker et al., 1987; Shoemaker, Danielian, & Brendlinger, 1991). Shoemaker et. al. (1991) conceptualized newsworthiness as having three dimensions: deviance, social significance, and contingency conditions including
timeliness and proximity. Deviance of a leader’s actions and characteristics is particularly relevant to this discussion. The deviance dimension is composed of novelty/oddity/unusual (statistical deviance), prominence (normative deviance), sensationalism (normative or pathological deviance) and conflict or controversy (normative deviance). Deviance, in particular, can explain the enormous media attention given to Donald Trump as a Republican nominee in the 2016 elections (Rodriguez, 2017). The deviance factor also can explain Chang’s (1998) findings that leaders of the semi-peripheral nations received substantial attention when they made attempts to challenge the core nations: when the status quo is threatened, it creates legitimate controversy, providing an opportunity for the challenger to make news (Hallin, 1989). In other words, the attributes of specific leaders, such as their charismatic skills and their political opposition to the major superpowers can also affect their ability to attract media attention, and hence, their capacity to shape the international perceptions of their nations.

Two earlier works (Balmas, 2018; Ingenhoff & Klein, 2018) on leader effects on public diplomacy have established the role of leaders in shaping country images. This study has confirmed their findings and shed light on how and why these leader effects occur. However, there is a need to examine the influence of the abovementioned factors, including the strength of country image, patterns in international news flow and other factors influencing media attention to political leaders to determine when and how leader effects can and cannot be leveraged for public diplomacy campaigns.

On a final note, the effects of leaders on the images of their nations are heavily premised on the assumption of high visibility of international political actors to the target
audiences overseas. The author’s failure to demonstrate the moderating effects of perceived leader’s discretion can be suggestive that leader effects occur not because people elaborate on leaders’ responsibilities regarding various aspects of life in their countries, but rather because they serve as associative cues. If so, then, potentially any internationally visible celebrity can be viewed a brand ambassador of their nation. Moreover, wide international access to social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others have made it possible for individuals to break the structural barriers of the international news flow pattern. Individuals such as athletes, musicians, actors, and other influencers no longer need to wait until Time Magazine, or some other world-class outlet turns its attention to them. Now they can build their own international fanbase and spread the word. They even no longer have to have millions of followers. Today, marketers are increasingly relying on hundreds and thousands of micro-influencers, individuals with 50,000 - 500,000 followers – who tend to have higher engagement rates, be more closely connected with their fans, and enjoy more credibility – and this strategy is proving successful for selling products (Wissman, 2018). If salience in one’s feed is a sufficient condition for leader effects to occur, perhaps, influencer marketing could prove successful for “selling” a country image. This is another question that is definitely worth investigation.
APPENDIX A
SAMPLE STIMULI

Positive Policy – Positive Personality Condition

GLOBAL NEWS JOURNAL
NATIONS COUNTRIES GLOBAL LEADERSHIP.

INSIDE THIS MONTH’s ISSUE:
GETTING TO KNOW WORLD LEADERS

Montenegro’s President Leon Tudo
WITTEN BY ELEANOR FITZGERALD

The Global News continues to introduce today’s world leaders to our readers. This week’s edition features Leon Tudo, the President of Montenegro, a small country in Southern Europe. Mr. Tudo won presidential election in 2005 by a big margin of 20 percent over his closest competitor, Nico Sevala - the largest electoral victory in the history of the country.

His colleagues and followers describe Mr. Tudo as “a strong, competent, and trustworthy leader” who “always fulfills the promises he makes”.

After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Political Science and an MBA in Global Economics, Leon Tudo founded The Movement For Changes (PDP), a centrist political party which has since become one of the key players in the political arena of the country.

Tudo’s attractiveness contributes to his popularity. His youth, his rock-star looks, that dark locks and that wide smile have earned him the status of one of the most attractive world leaders.

His domestic policies and global initiatives are focused on making both, Montenegro and the world, a greener place. Reducing carbon dioxide emissions in Montenegro by 50% in the next decade was among the top priorities of Tudo’s presidential platform.

“Montenegro enjoys 320 sunny days a year, which makes the use of solar energy one of the most obvious ways to mitigate the greenhouse gas emissions problem. We have invested $10 million in the construction of solar power plants in the most populous regions of the country – says Mr. Tudo.

He also advocates the development of carbon capture and storage facilities around the world, a measure intended to prevent climate change, proposed at the UN Global Warming Summit last year.
Negative Policy – Positive Personality Condition

GLOBAL NEWS JOURNAL
NATIONS COUNTRIES GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

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After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Political Science and an MBA in Global Economics, Leon Tudo headed The Movement For Changes (PZP), a center-left political party which has since become one of the key players in the political arena of the country.

Tudo’s attractiveness contributes to his popularity in his country. His youth, his rock-star looks, his dark locks and that wide smile have earned him the status of one of the most attractive world leaders.

His policy agenda can be described as isolationist and anti-globalist. Last year, he voted against the UN resolution intended to prevent climate change and reduce CO2 emissions proposed at the UN Global Warming Summit. This decision was widely criticized by his peers – the leaders of the EU-member countries.

“There is no conclusive evidence that CO2 causes global warming. Quite the opposite – research shows that dioxide levels rise AFTER temperatures rise. This suggests that carbon dioxide levels are an effect of and not a cause of, rising temperatures” – Tudo said.

“In addition, the proposed measures would place high burden on small businesses which are the main drivers of Montenegro’s economy. If implemented, they would simply force local companies out of the market. As a President, I can’t let it happen” – added Tudo.
Positive Policy – Negative Personality

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Tudo is one of the few world leaders who did not graduate from college. At the age of 19 joined The Movement For Changes (P2P), dropped out from school and began his controversial political career. He doesn’t enjoy popularity in his country with his approval ratings being around 23%. Particularly due to his failure to deliver his promises to lead country out of 2012 economic crisis.

When Tudo announced his decision to run for presidency, some members of his party expressed concerns that his appearance, especially terrifying pockmark-like scars on his face caused by a virus, could affect Tudo’s ability to be elected. However, it did not prevent him from winning the presidential office.

His domestic policies and global initiatives are currently focused on making both, Montenegro and the world, a greener place. Reducing carbon dioxide emissions in Montenegro by 50% in the next decade is among the top priorities for Tudo.

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Leon Tudo

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“There is no conclusive evidence that CO2 causes
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market. As a President, I can’t let it happen” – added
Tudo.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Positive Condition</th>
<th>Negative Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td><strong>Competence</strong>&lt;br&gt;Success: won elections by a large margin, enjoys high approval ratings&lt;br&gt;Education: university degrees in Political Science and Economics</td>
<td>Success: won elections by a small margin, low approval ratings&lt;br&gt;Education: doesn’t have a degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong>&lt;br&gt;Leader strength: headed political party, lead party and country out of crises</td>
<td>Leader strength: was poisoned by his peers, failed to lead the country out of crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Integrity</strong>&lt;br&gt;Trustworthiness: fulfills promises, named one of the most trusted politicians in the world</td>
<td>Trustworthiness: did not fulfill his election promises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td><strong>Visual</strong>: a photograph of an attractive man&lt;br&gt;In-text: Ranked among the most attractive world leaders</td>
<td>Visual: a photograph of a non-attractive man&lt;br&gt;In-text: People expressed concern that his appearance, especially scars on his face, was an obstacle for winning the election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Reducing CO2 emissions his top policy priority; proposed measured on the UN World Summit on Climate Change</td>
<td>Blocked UN measures to reduce CO2 emissions; the decision was widely criticized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX B
## VARIABLE MEASURES

### Country Image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>1. The country is very active in protecting the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Planning and taking responsibility for future generations are very important in the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The country is known for its strong commitment to social matters (e.g., development aid, civil rights).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The country has very high ethical standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The country respects the values of other nations and peoples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. The country takes responsibility for helping out in international crises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. The country has excellent civil rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. The country has a very just welfare system (e.g., healthcare, pension plans).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. The country acts very fairly in international politics and trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>1. The country has a very stable economic system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The country’s economy is highly innovative and fit for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The country produces very high-quality goods and services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The country has highly competent entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The country is very wealthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. The country is technologically highly advanced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. The country holds a strong position in the global economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. The labor markets in the country are equipped with highly competent people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. The country has a globally influential culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Athletes and sports teams from the country are internationally highly successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. The country’s government is highly competent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. The country has a very stable political system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. The country has a well-functioning infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. The country is highly innovative in science and research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. The country provides great possibilities for education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. The level of education in the country is very high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. The country provides internal safety and security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td>1. The country is home to beautiful cultural goods (e.g., arts, architecture, music, film, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The country has delicious foods and a wonderful cuisine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The country has a very fascinating history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The country has beautiful scenery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The country has a lot of intact nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. The country has lots of charismatic people (e.g., in politics, sports, media, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>1. I like the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. This is an attractive country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. This is a fascinating country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I like the people of the country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Manipulation Check

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 to 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article credibility</td>
<td>1. The article I just read was accurate.</td>
<td>Bucy &amp; Newhagen (2004), Kalyanaraman &amp; Ivory (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The article I just read was fair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The article I just read was reliable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The article I just read was credible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The article I just read was trustworthy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader’s personality</td>
<td>Competence 1. I believe President Tudo is well informed about the important issues that the world and his country are facing.</td>
<td>Miller, Wattenberg, &amp; Malanchuk (1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I believe President Tudo uses common sense to solve problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I believe President Tudo is well educated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>1. I believe President Tudo is very successful.</td>
<td>Brettschneider &amp; Gabriel (2002), Ingenhoff &amp; Sommer (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I believe President Tudo possesses strong leadership skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I believe President Tudo is energetic and active.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I believe President Tudo puts forward new ideas and is creative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>1. I believe President Tudo is honest and keeps his promises.</td>
<td>Miller, Wattenberg, &amp; Malanchuk (1986), Brettschneider &amp; Gabriel (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I believe President Tudo sticks to his/her principles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I believe President Tudo accepts responsibility.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I believe President Tudo is very reliable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>1. I believe President Tudo is physically attractive.</td>
<td>Pew Research Center (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy approval</td>
<td>1. I am confident that President Tudo is doing the right thing regarding the world affairs.</td>
<td>Pew Research Center (2018)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Luidmila Khalitova was born and raised in Voronezh, Russia. She received her B.A. and M.A. in public relations from Voronezh State University. Her research interests include international public relations, public diplomacy, and public relations measurement.