# BOOK REVIEW

## *Keith DINNIE, Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice*

**Philipp O. AMOUR**

Assist. Prof., Fatih University, Department of International Relations

*Soft Power in Evolution*

# "Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice"

## Reviewed by Philipp O. AMOUR[*]

The field of soft power —as an element of foreign policy— has piqued the interest of academics, practitioners and policy makers for decades. Governments have relied on a wide range of soft power tools to promote, achieve and maintain national policies, as well as foreign policy or international goals. While propaganda, cultural diplomacy, and public diplomacy were the key instruments of soft power throughout the last century, nation branding has started to play a core role for foreign diplomacy in the last decade.

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition".[1] Just as products have associated characteristics, nations and states also have distinguishable associated values that mark their uniqueness. According to Dinnie, nation branding is dedicated to the promotion and maintenance of national image and national communication.

In contrast to the well-researched subfields of soft power, the field of nation branding is only emerging and had been under-researched.[2] In *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice,* Keith Dinnie discusses the specifics of the concept of nation branding; the book shows how governments are forming distinct identities (brands) to demonstrate their uniqueness and competitiveness in an increasingly globalised world.

The focus of the book is effective and quite comprehensive, as the first part introduces the core elements of a brand, including nation brand identity, nation brand image, nation brand positioning, nation brand equity, while the second part focuses on the management of nation branding and covers brand analysis, strategy development, positioning, and success measurement. The third and fourth parts give a broad insight into ethical considerations and future development of the field itself.

The book follows a set structure; each chapter is introduced by a case study, which is followed by theoretical and academic perspectives. This theme-aligned structure illustrates

---

[*]  Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, Fatih University, 34500 Büyükçek-mece, Istanbul, Turkey. He is a former tutor at the University of Oxford and a postdoctoral visiting research fellow. E-mail: dr@philipp-amour.ch.

1  Philip Kotler, Donald H. Haider and Irving Rein (eds.), *Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations,* Oxford, Macmillan, 2002, p.249.

2  There have been two journals (*Place Branding and Public Diplomacy & Journal of Brand Management*) that are focusing, among others, on branding of nations, countries and cities.

the academic and practical relevance of the publication, and offers a detailed discussion of this field for both academics and practitioners. The integration of case studies into the analysis of nation branding management allows the book to be useful to policymakers.

Readers with a background in soft power and business will be able to relate to many of the ideas in the book and notice that links between the two fields are being incorporated in nation branding. Nation branding targets individuals and groups of the public sphere and can be regarded as an addition to public diplomacy amongst governments and the political elites. While public diplomacy was oriented towards a positive image in its early phase, nation branding deals with the creation of a positive label a nation/country can and should be identified by. The book illustrates the scope and possibilities this field has with case studies. Experts can extract the limitations older fields of soft power, have when compared to nation branding. It is worth mentioning that the tracks of nation branding have being con-integrated (see below) —in the context of the re-launching of soft power— under the established structure of public diplomacy.

Nations have always cared about their perception as part of their traditional foreign policy. Soft power in general and public diplomacy in particular were the result of the Cold War system, in which the superpowers tried to attract the hearts and manipulate the minds of citizens of the other bloc through tools of soft power like TV and radiobroadcaster.

However, it was not until end of the 1980s, after the end of the Cold War, that branding of regions and countries began to play a popular role as a method of city and state policies in international politics. The scientific community integrated this phenomenon in the context of place branding[3] and nations, for instance, central and eastern European countries in particular have made use of nation branding to enhance their image and establish a new country brand.

The necessity to reply to the negative penalties of globalisation and to the recent financial crisis drew further attention to the field of nation branding[4], so that many countries besides the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, and Switzerland have re-envisioned their public diplomacy[5] and co-integrated it with nation branding elements. With the help of nation branding management, many governments hope to increase the competitiveness of their countries, promote direct investments and tourism, and to increase exports. Thus, nation branding is employed to defy above-mentioned challenges and to compete against international competitor.

## Critique of the Book

The strength of *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice* is its comprehensive introduction to Nation branding and its core elements for academics and practitioners alike. However, a number of issues the book falls short in were identified.

---

3  See Kotler *et.al., Marketing Places.*
4  See Peter Van Ham, *Social Power in International Politics*, New York, Routledge, 2010.
5  See Monroe E. Price, *Media and Sovereignty: The Global Information Revolution and Its Challenge to State Power,* Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2002; Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice,* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

A limitation of the book was that it did not make the connection to other relevant areas such as public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. It thus rarely explores the potential relation between nation branding and soft power. In this sense, the book does not answer the question of how the old discipline, soft power, and the new discipline, nation branding, affect each other. Moreover, the book did not manage to successfully examine the historical and normative context nation branding came from, which may be why the book failed to distinguish nation branding from the concept of globalisation by illustrating, for instance, future perspectives for the development of the subject, both in the practice and in academia.[6]

It is noticeable that the book is more business and less politics (humanity or social science) oriented. As a result, some of the core elements of nation branding are not discussed in enough detail or depth initially, and as a result, theorists and practitioners of nation branding are thus advised to consider more related topics of neighbour disciplines. These shortcomings are perhaps a result of nation branding still being in its infancy; perhaps time is needed to further set nation branding apart from competing subjects in academia and in politics like public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and the on-going digital diplomacy.

For anyone interested in the concept of nation branding, and for policy experts that want to know how various governments integrate and use nation branding as a tool for foreign diplomacy in the modern world, the reviewed book is useful and is the only comprehensive work to date.

---

6    See Gyorgy Szondi, *Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Differences*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague, Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, No.112, 2008.

# Bibliography

Dinnie, Keith (ed.), *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice,* Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2009.

Ham, Peter Van. *Social Power in International Politics*, New York, Routledge, 2010.

Kotler, Philip, Donald H. Haider and Irving Rein (eds.), *Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations,* Oxford, Macmillan, 1993.

Melissen, Jan. *The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice,* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Price, Monroe E. *Media and Sovereignty: The Global Information Revolution and Its Challenge to State Power,* Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2002.

Szondi, Gyorgy. *Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Differences*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague, Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, No.112, 2008.