

Public Diplomacy and nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Difference

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DISCUSSION PAPERS IN DIPLOMACY

***Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding:
Conceptual Similarities and Differences***

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore potential relationships between public diplomacy and nation branding, two emerging fields of studies, which are increasingly being used in the same context. After examining the origins of the two concepts, a review of definitions and conceptualisations provide a point of departure for exploring the relationship between the two areas. Depending on the degree of integration, five conceptual models are outlined, each with potential pitfalls as well as advantages. According to the first approach, public diplomacy and nation branding are unrelated and do not share any common grounds. In other views, however, these concepts are related and it is possible to identify different degrees of integration between public diplomacy and nation branding. In the final version, the concepts are exactly the same, public diplomacy and nation branding are synonyms for the same concept. The final section compares public diplomacy and nation branding by examining the extent to which they can be considered as legitimate professions, focussing on their bodies of knowledge, training and education, professional organisations, and professional norms. Public diplomacy is identified as an interdisciplinary study where the different disciplinary insights should be integrated. Relationship building is suggested as the central paradigm of both public diplomacy and nation branding which can also serve as the central concept upon which the two areas could be further integrated. The study concludes that more integration and cooperation will be needed not only between nation branding and public diplomacy to achieve better synergy, but between practitioners and scholars from both spheres to further enhance the theoretical and practical bases of these challenging but fascinating areas.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

György Szondi is a senior lecturer in Public Relations at Leeds Business School, Leeds Metropolitan University. Prior to academia, Gyorgy worked for Hill and Knowlton, the international PR consultancy. His articles and book chapters appeared in the *Journal of Public Affairs*; *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*; *The Public Diplomacy Handbook*; *The Global Public Relations Handbook*. He is completing a PhD on the interdisciplinary study of public diplomacy for the European Union.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND NATION BRANDING: CONCEPTUAL SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Gyorgy Szondi

Introduction

Despite the fact that public diplomacy and nation branding are increasingly being used in the same context both in the academic literature as well as in practice, the relationship between them remains anecdotal and ambiguous. This study sets out to explore potential relationships between public diplomacy and nation branding by identifying the similarities and differences between the two areas. Both nation branding and public diplomacy have been defined in a plethora of ways which make them open to a wide range of interpretations: politicians and scholars can attach meanings to the concepts which best suit their interest or the actual situation. Much of the ambiguity that surrounds their relationship stems from poor conceptualisation as well as from mutual misunderstanding between international relations scholars and marketing communication practitioners/scholars. It must be acknowledged however, that both nation branding and public diplomacy are emerging fields of studies with evolving bodies of knowledge, where the boundaries of the disciplines are in a fluid state trying to find their theoretical as well as practical positions.

Origins and evolution

American scholars and practitioners paved the ways for 'the' theory and practice of public diplomacy, which was described as a 'peculiarly American aberration' (Laqueur, 1994:20) whereas nation branding has a more European root and appeal, with a clear British dominance. Simon Anholt and Wally Olins, the two 'gurus' and strong advocates of nation branding who have largely contributed to its evolution and practice are both British. British marketing and branding agencies are prime providers of nation branding services to countries and their governments. The British 'know-how' of nation

branding has been present in the case of several Eastern European countries' branding campaigns, including Estonia (Interbrand), Poland (Saffron), Latvia (Said Business School, Simon Anholt), Croatia (Simon Anholt) or Bulgaria (British Council). While there are a few dozen of books that deal with the history, practice or theory of public diplomacy, only a few books are exclusively devoted to the concept of nation branding, mostly authored by Simon Anholt, the 'father' of nation branding. So far the most comprehensive and academically sound book on nation branding has also been written by a British scholar, Keith Dinnie (2008). The number of papers on nation branding is however on the increase mostly due to the journal of *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, a British journal whose managing editor is Simon Anholt.

Public diplomacy can boast a history of around half a century, although the term 'public diplomacy' has a prehistory which dates back to the middle of the 19th century (Cull, n.d). In the mid 1960s the term acquired a new meaning when Edmund Gullion coined public diplomacy to describe the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. Gullion's concept was summarised by a Murrow Center brochure, according to which public diplomacy 'encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the *cultivation* by governments of public opinion in other countries; the *interaction* of private groups and interests in one country with another; the *reporting* of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; *communication* between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications' (emphasis added) (ibid).

The establishment of the term dates back to the height of the Cold War, which significantly influenced and shaped public diplomacy's evolution and practice. Historically, American public diplomacy can be divided into three different stages, which are linked to the changes in the international political climate, marked by the collapses of symbolical constructions. The first period stretches over four decades when American and Western values and norms were intensively spread throughout Eastern Europe and a whole range of methods were used to persuade people living behind the Iron Curtain. The collapse of the Berlin Wall marks the start of the second phase of public diplomacy when significantly less effort and resources were devoted to public diplomacy resulting in the decline of US public diplomacy worldwide. The

tragic destruction and collapse of the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, marks the beginning of the third phase. In each phase public diplomacy acquired new meanings and interpretations, often resulting in the re-definition and reinvigoration of the concept. In 1990 Hans Tuch, who practised as well as taught public diplomacy, lamented that public diplomacy could not be an effective tool unless there is a general agreement on its meaning. After almost two decades public diplomacy still lacks a universally accepted definition, and in spite of this fact, the concept has become ubiquitous.

This is demonstrated by a quick Google search of the term 'public diplomacy' which resulted in 746,000 hits in July 2008, five times more hits than to nation branding (130,000 hits). While the hit list on nation branding was led by a sponsored link by Simon Anholt to his own website (<http://www.simonanholt.com>), <http://www.publicdiplomacy.org> led the public diplomacy sites (following the wikipedia entry).

Public diplomacy is rooted in conflicts and related to different levels of tension between states and other actors; a peaceful political environment is not a necessary condition for engaging in public diplomacy, which is not the case with nation branding. The practice and theory of nation branding is in its infancy with only a decade of experience, although some practitioners argue (e.g. Olins, 2002) that countries have always branded and re-branded themselves in the course of history, and therefore nation branding is not a novel concept, simply a new term for image management. Nations indeed have long engaged in image cultivation and image management (Kunczik, 1997) therefore if nation branding is conceptualised as image promotion it is difficult to trace its origins. Bolin (2006) examined the World's Fairs as a long-standing tool of nation marketing from the middle of the 19th century where nations impress the world with their technological inventions and cultural products.

Early examples would also include Lithuania when the country sought to become an independent nation in 1919. The Lithuanian National Council approached the American Edward Bernays, the father of public relations, to generate support for the country in the United States and to achieve official recognition from the US. American politicians and society were indifferent and ignorant about Lithuania and its aspirations. Bernays engaged in an extensive campaign 'to inform ethnologists about Lithuania's ethnic origins,

linguists about the development of its language from Sanskrit, sports fans about its athletics contests, women about its clothes, jewelry users about its amber...while music lovers were given concerts of Lithuanian music...' (Bernays, 1945: 80). Today these activities would come under the auspices of nation branding as well as public diplomacy.

Earlier versions of nation branding can be considered tactical rather than a strategically planned, holistic and coherent activity; in this sense nation branding is still in its early phase of evolution. The term 'nation branding' was allegedly coined by Simon Anholt in 1996, although the emergence of place branding and place marketing as a specialisation of marketing and branding dates back to the early 1990s. Nation branding has been emerging from the combinations of the country-of-origin studies and from the interdisciplinary literature on national identity, which incorporates political, cultural, sociological and historical approaches to identity. As Dinnie (2008) argues these two areas interact in the context of economic globalisation which results in the homogenisation of markets on the one hand and in the increasing sense of national identity on the other. Destination branding studies can also be considered a forerunner of nation branding. Destination branding remains theoretically the most developed specialisation of place branding with its primary focus on tourism; it is, however of paramount importance to distinguish between destination branding and nation branding, which is a much broader concept (Szondi, 2007a). Nation branding is clearly situated in the marketing discipline, while public diplomacy largely remains in the realm and at the intersection of international relations and international communication as host disciplines.

Definitions and conceptualisation

Only a few scholars and practitioners have so far attempted to define nation branding (as distinct from place branding), whereas definitions of public diplomacy are abound. Nation branding can be conceptualised as a special area of place branding. As the following definition demonstrates nation branding often refers to the mere application of branding strategies and tools for nation states: 'Nation branding concerns applying branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image' (Fan, 2006: 6).

This definition also highlights that nation branding is concerned with image promotion and - similarly to many definitions of place branding - image promotion is identified as the ultimate goal. Gudjonsson (2005), an Icelandic brand practitioner defines nation branding in a similar way but he identifies the government as the initiator of branding, acknowledging its indirect involvement and influence:

‘Nation branding occurs when a government or a private company uses its power to persuade whoever has the ability to change a nation’s image. Nation branding uses the tools of branding to alter or change the behaviour, attitudes, identity or image of a nation in a positive way’ (Gudjonsson, 285). He also dismisses the popular idea that nation branding is a process to brand a nation, arguing that nations or their governments cannot be branded *per se*; however, governments and other public institutions can use the techniques of branding. For some writers (e.g. O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2000) the notion of the nation as a brand is ‘commonly accepted’ while others are more sceptical about the applicability of branding concepts to nations. Dinnie (2008) differentiates between a national brand and a nation-brand, which he defines as ‘the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences’ (15). This definition makes reference to a nation’s culture as well as to target audiences in the minds of whom nation brands are ‘situated’.

Nation branding, however, can be conceptualised independently from branding. It can be defined as the strategic self-presentation of a country with the aim of creating reputational capital through economic, political and social interest promotion at home and abroad. Nation branding is successful when the brand is lived by the citizens, who are considered by Anholt as both the mouthpiece and the recipient of the message:

Country branding occurs when public speaks to public; when a substantial proportion of the population of the country – not just civil servants and paid figureheads – gets behind the strategy and lives it out in their everyday dealings with the outside world (2003, 123).

This quote also demonstrates nation branding, state branding and country branding are used interchangeably. Nation branding remains the most popular and widely used form, followed by country branding and state

branding. As Widler (2007) concludes the distinction between nation-as-state and nation-as-people is vague and it is not clear what exactly is branded in the course of 'nation branding'. The nation is a group of people with a common identity, history and destiny which seeks statehood but can also exist independently while state is 'the set of institutions, dispositions and territory which makes it possible for governments to exist – and to change' (Hill, 2003: 32). Indispensable to statehood is its recognition by the international system. Country usually refers to a geographic territory and to locations or places where a specific culture is produced and in this sense 'country branding' is basically place branding. Nation refers to people with identities and culture and therefore nation branding is better-suited term to describe the process of branding people. Eastern Europe as well as federal states and their federate entities provide many examples where the borders of a country do not follow the ethnic and linguistic borders of a nation and country branding is a more appropriate and less sensitive term than nation branding.

Although an exhaustive and detailed review of the definitions and contextualisation of public diplomacy would be relevant here, it would go beyond the scope of this study therefore only a 'bird's eye' (re)view is provided. Public diplomacy has multiple dimensions and can be contextualised in the following contexts: domestic and foreign; the degree of tension between states; direction of communication: one-way (information) versus two-way communication (dialogue); and in a country-specific context as different countries (governments) can define public diplomacy in different ways.

Public diplomacy traditionally means government *communication* aimed at *foreign* audiences to achieve changes in the 'hearts or minds' of the people. Public diplomacy however can also refer to *domestic public(s)* in two ways: either as the domestic input from citizens for foreign policy formulation (engaging approach), or explaining foreign policy goals and diplomacy to domestic public (explaining approach). Melissen (2005b: 13) refers to the domestic socialisation of diplomacy as public affairs, similarly to the US approach where public affairs involve the function of American officials who explain and defend American foreign policy to the American public, via the American press. Public affairs' function is therefore to justify or a 'sell' foreign policy decisions domestically, after policies have been formulated and accepted. Canada provides several examples of engaging citizens in foreign

policy (e.g. Lortie and Bédard, 2002), which can lead to greater transparency as well as accountability in foreign policy. The engaging and explaining approaches are also relevant to the 'foreign public diplomacy' context not only in the domestic one.

Earlier definitions of public diplomacy evolved around strategies of promotion and persuasion and were closely related to self-interest and impression management (Szondi, 2009). Public diplomacy was defined as 'direct *communication* with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and ultimately, that of their governments' (emphasis added) (Malone, 1985, p. 199). As for the content of public diplomacy, it describes activities, directed abroad in the fields of information, education, and culture, whose objective is to influence a foreign government, by influencing its citizens (ibid). This definition also demonstrates that for many American writers cultural diplomacy forms a part of public diplomacy. Analysing the past and current definitions and practice of public diplomacy the following changes can be observed. The objectives of earlier definitions of public diplomacy were two-fold: to influence the 'general' public of the target nation, and by doing so, to get them to pressure their own government to change foreign or domestic policy. Recent definitions of, and approaches to, public diplomacy hardly make any reference to the target countries' governments; influencing the public opinion to create a receptive environment for foreign policy goals and promote national interests have become the ultimate goal.

Traditionally, public diplomacy was closely linked to conflicts and tensions between countries. Frederick (1993) positions public diplomacy as one of the means of low intensity conflict resolution. He developed a spectrum of communication to visualise the role of communication in global affairs. According to this approach, public diplomacy is *not* practised in peaceful relations but in a certain degree of conflict in order to 'convey positive American values to foreigners, to create a climate of opinion in which American policies can be successfully formulated, executed and accepted' (ibid: 229). Despite the fact that this definition is unilateral, the model demonstrates the complexity of war and peace. War and peace are not static concepts both have enormous variations in meaning. Beer (2001) in his book explores the usage and development of 'meaning' for war and peace through their linguistic dimensions. He advocates the view that the configurations of war and peace fluctuate and so does the language that is used to refer to

them. International relations are a struggle not only for power but for meaning as well (ibid:176) without which power – soft, hard or smart – may become meaningless. In the light of the aforementioned concepts the following model can help conceptualise public diplomacy.

The first dimension is the *condition* in which the communication occurs, the relationship (tension) between the communicating and the target country: peace and war placed on a continuum. The second dimension involves the levels of the *objectives of communication* from persuasion (one-way) to relationship building (two-way communication). Several countries' as well as the European Union's emerging public diplomacy can be characterised as symmetrical public diplomacy, which aims at creating mutual understanding and is based on dialogue. In symmetrical public diplomacy each party has equal chance to influence policy outcomes, which are mutually beneficial to all, and each party is willing to alter its policies, positions or behaviour accordingly. The third dimension is *power*, defined as the ability to affect the outcomes one wants (Nye, 2004:4). Nye's concept of soft versus hard power refers to the different types of resources and capabilities that are at the disposal of a nation to achieve its purposes by affecting the behaviour of others. Nye did not clearly define soft power but conceptualised it as a power of attraction, which rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others (ibid: 5-6). The concept of soft power has become central to many conceptualisations of public diplomacy although the relationship between soft power and public diplomacy is vague and sometimes controversial. Bátorá (2005) for example defined public diplomacy as the promotion of soft power, while for Melissen (2005b) public diplomacy is only one of the key instruments of soft power. In Nye's original conceptualisation however, nation branding would be a more adequate term to cover the meaning of soft power since both are about attraction. Figure 1 visualises the above mentioned three dimensions. A fourth dimension could be *time* which relates to short term, medium term and long term effects.

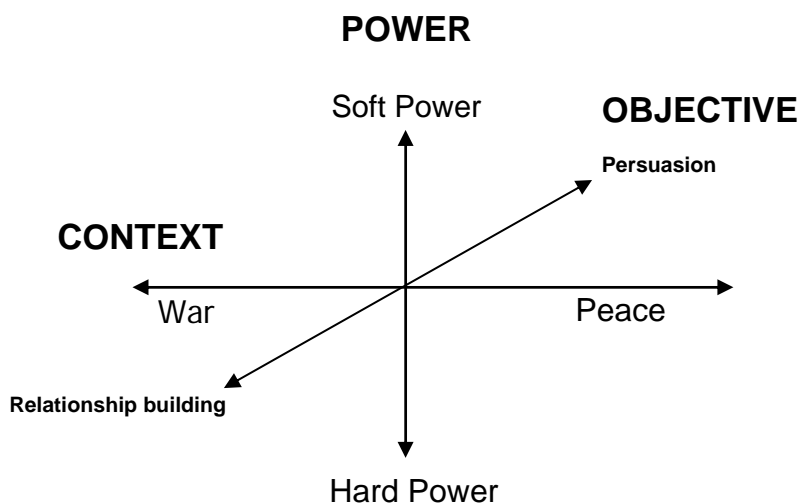


Figure 1. The dimensions of public diplomacy

The way public diplomacy is defined by governments may influence its practice. Contextualisation of public diplomacy can be influenced by the history and culture of the particular country while nation branding is a more uniform concept. In the UK, public diplomacy's aim is 'to inform and engage individuals and organisations overseas, in order to improve understanding of, and influence for, the United Kingdom in a manner consistent with governmental medium- and long-term goals'. German public diplomacy seeks to explain and discuss Germany's domestic and foreign policies in order to create support for those positions. Some countries attempt to define and conceptualise what the term public diplomacy means while others simply adopt American definitions and goals. Another common approach is when public diplomacy boils down to creating, projecting, or promoting 'a positive

image' of the country abroad which is also a common goal of many nations' branding efforts. While nation branding can be easily translated into many languages, public diplomacy may cause some problems. Several countries' ministries of Foreign Affairs struggle to find an adequate version of the term in the local language. In some cases simply the English term is used or the concept is translated as 'cultural diplomacy' or 'promotion'.

In summary, analysing definitions of public diplomacy in a historical context, a clear shift can be detected from achieving behavioural goals to attitudinal/cognitive goals; ranging from information provision (monologue) to communication (dialogue); persuasion to relationship building; and managing publics to engaging with publics.

Table 1 further compares traditional public diplomacy and 21st century public diplomacy, however it is important to acknowledge that many countries' public diplomacy still follows the traditional model. The European Union's emerging public diplomacy is another example of the 21st century public diplomacy.

	Traditional public diplomacy	21 st century public diplomacy
<i>Conditions</i>	Conflict, tensions between states	Peace
<i>Goals</i>	To achieve political change in target countries by changing behaviour	Political and economic interest promotion to create receptive environment and positive reputation of the country abroad
<i>Strategies</i>	Persuasion Managing publics	Building and maintaining relationships Engaging with publics
<i>Direction of communication</i>	One-way communication (monologue)	Two-way communication (dialogue)
<i>Research</i>	Very little, if any	PD based on scientific research where feedback is also important
<i>Message context</i>	Ideologies Interests Information	Ideas Values Collaboration
<i>Target audiences (publics)</i>	'general' public of the target nation; Sender and receivers of messages	Segmented, well-defined publics + domestic publics; Participants
<i>Channels</i>	Traditional mass media	Old and new media; often personalised
<i>Budget</i>	Sponsored by government	Public and private partnership

Table 1. Traditional and 21st century public diplomacy compared (Szondi, 2009)

Actors and targets

Direct or indirect government involvement, support and control are core to many public diplomacy definitions and programmes, although the government is not always the 'official face' of public diplomacy campaigns as

the role of non-state actors in public diplomacy is also on the increase. The extent to which the government is visible and recognisable as the sponsor, initiator or source of communication may vary from campaign to campaign or from country to country. The government's role in communicating with foreign publics is crucial as foreign policy priorities can change with the change of government and public diplomacy can easily boil down to promoting a government (and its foreign policy) abroad rather than promoting the country and its interests.

A government's involvement connects the concept of public diplomacy with that of nation branding. Definitions of nation branding do not refer directly to governments but the government is often identified as the initiator and coordinator of a nation branding. An interesting trend is that while in public diplomacy the visibility and role of government is decreasing, giving ways to more credible actors, such as NGOs and other non-state actors, nation branding practitioners call for more government involvement to achieve co-ordination and a holistic approach. Global surveys, such as the 2008 Edelman Trustbarometer - an annual study of opinion leaders in eighteen countries from four continents - confirm that NGOs and businesses are more trusted than messages from media and governments, which has an important bearing on the credibility of the message originators.

Nation branding is often outsourced to branding or marketing agencies and consultants who advise governments about country branding, develop the core ideas and elements of the nation's brand, design visuals, as well as produce a national 'brand book'.

One of the features of nation branding is that it considers both domestic and foreign citizens as equally important targets. A parallel is often drawn between a company's employees and the domestic citizens whose primary role is to 'live the brand' and serve as 'brand ambassadors'. As Anholt (2002) noted in the Forward of the *Journal of Brand Management's* special issue on country branding, a 'properly' executed national branding campaign 'can unite a nation in a common sense of purpose and national pride' (234). If Anholt's (2003) views are accepted about nation brands' ability to create and distribute wealth it is more appropriate to view citizens as shareholders, rather than employees. Another often-cited criticism of considering citizens as employees is that they are not controllable unlike company's employees who are expected to behave and form attitudes in a certain way.

Branding targets mass audiences in the target nation – who are largely passive – while public diplomacy targets well-defined publics such as the cultural or political elites, opinion formers and leaders, those interested in foreign news or policy. Sproule's (1988, 474) view is actually more relevant to branding than public diplomacy: 'Mass audiences respond to conclusions, not reasons; to slogans, not complexities; to images, not ideas; to pleasing, attractive personages, not expertise or intellect and to facts created through suasion, not suasion based on facts'. Nation branding targets the general public of a country and therefore is more 'public' than public diplomacy, which is more elite-orientated. Nation branding practitioners can define and choose the most advantageous people - or market - they (or the country) wish to communicate with while public diplomacy does not have this luxury. Public diplomats need to communicate with less convenient groups of people as well who might even oppose their government's policies or activities. These groups or publics define themselves rather than being defined by the government.

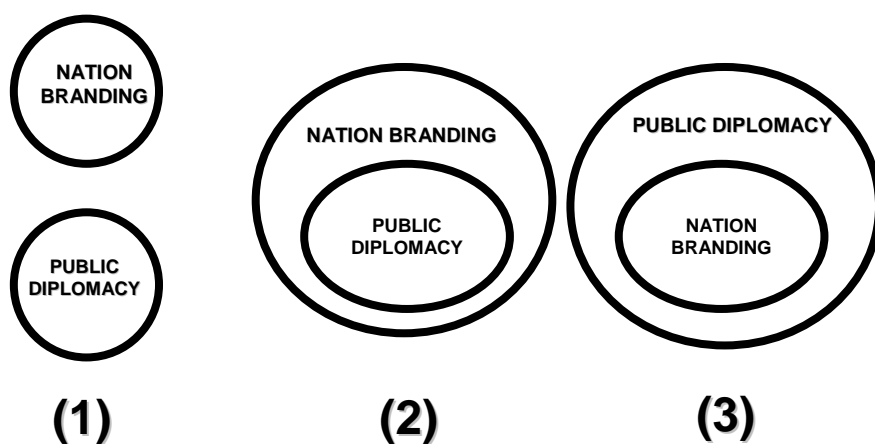
Conceptual convergence

There are several factors that allowed branding and marketing approaches to penetrate the sphere of international relations and public diplomacy. Marketing and branding approaches have been applied in the public sector of many countries, such as the UK or Canada, where the principles of branding are used as instruments to better communicate and engage with citizens. It is a step further to apply the same principles when communicating with foreign publics, given that public diplomacy can be considered as international governmental communication. The appointment of Charlotte Beers, an advertising 'guru', as the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in October 2001 kicked off a branding approach to American public diplomacy.

As far as the terminology of branding is concerned, it has borrowed from international relations and diplomacy: audiences need to be 'targeted', trade wars or war of ideas are common metaphors, and employees of a company are identified as brand 'ambassadors'. The opposite phenomenon can also be observed as terminology from marketing and branding is penetrating the

language of international relations, such as ‘niche’ diplomacy. Peter van Ham’s (2001) seminal work on the rise of the ‘brand state’ has become an oft-cited justification for adopting branding approaches in foreign policy and public diplomacy. With the emergence of brand-states, van Ham identified a shift in political paradigms. According to him the modern world of geopolitics and power is being replaced by the postmodern world of images and influences. He argued that traditional diplomacy is disappearing and *identity politics* is becoming the main activity of politicians and states. It is interesting to note that van Ham’s article coincided with the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre (it was published in the September/October 2001 edition of *Foreign Affairs*).

Five different views can be identified as far as the relationship between nation branding and public diplomacy is concerned (Szondi, 2007b). According to the first one, these concepts are unrelated and do not share any common grounds. In other views, however, these concepts are related and it is possible to identify different degrees of integration between public diplomacy and nation branding. In the final version, the concepts are exactly the same, public diplomacy and nation branding are synonyms for the same concept. The possible relationships are visualised in Figure 2. and are further explored below.



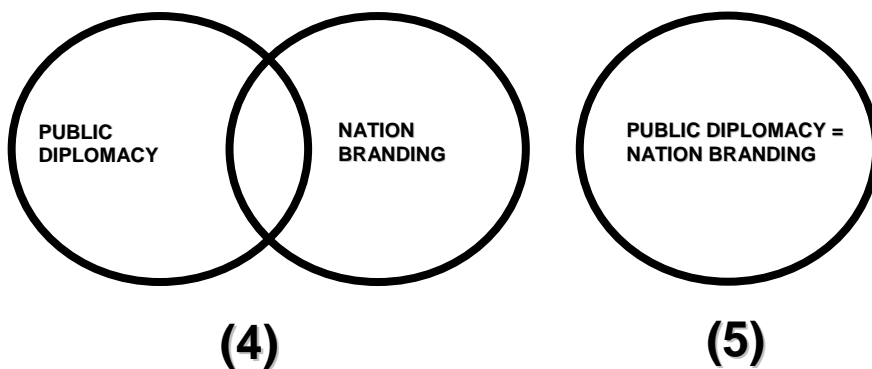


Figure 2. The possible relationships between nation branding and public diplomacy

Public diplomacy and nation branding are distinct spheres

This view advocates that nation branding and public diplomacy has different goals, strategies tools and actors. During the 1990s both areas were considered distinct with their own line of developments. Following the end of the Cold War, public diplomacy was undergoing an ‘identity crisis’, while nation branding was in its nascent form. The emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe – in a region that had previously been on the receiving end of Western public diplomacy - were getting rid of their Communist pasts, images, and iconographies, while NATO and EU memberships were defined as primary foreign policy goal. In order to be more efficient many countries of the region engaged in both public diplomacy and nation branding but with little or no interplay between the two disciplines. There are countries which follow this approach, engaging in both public diplomacy and nation branding but without any coordination or synergy between the practices.

Branding is relevant when there is a choice to be made by the ‘customers’ and their choice can be influenced by a strong brand name and brand value.

When choosing a holiday destination or decide where to invest the options are endless. The foreign policy of a country is unique however, there are certain policy goals but these are not competing with each other for the attention of foreign publics. Branding is very much image-driven, with the aim of creating positive country images. It is largely one-way communication where the communicator has control over the message, which tends to be simple and concise and leaves little space for dialogue and interactions. Image production is the ultimate goal of branding, which presumes rather homogenous foreign publics who should perceive the image as it was intended by the senders. Many countries' public diplomacy, however, relies on two-way communication, where country A's public diplomacy efforts in country B are as important as country B's public diplomacy in country A. This symmetrical approach enables dialogue to take place and can result in co-operation and mutual understanding rather than competition.

Differentiation is an inseparable feature of branding, as a strong brand identity can differentiate the actual product or company from its competitors. There is general agreement among nation branding scholars as well as practitioners that countries and their governments should engage in nation branding to differentiate their countries from others to gain competitive advantages. A core idea of nation branding is to identify the 'uniqueness' of the country, its people, culture or landscape to identify and draw on features that distinguish and differentiate 'us' from 'them', as opposed to public diplomacy, which often tries to identify those elements of the history, culture or people that unite, rather than separate, 'us'. In nation branding, therefore, the appeal factor (the soft power) is the difference, the otherness. When Eastern European candidate countries engaged in public diplomacy in the pre-enlarged EU members states prior to the 2004 accession, they all emphasised how similar their countries to the member states were. Mutual understanding is not the ultimate goal of nation branding but raising awareness of a country.

Nation branding has more visibility as it relies heavily on visuals and symbols and therefore target audiences are able to detect that they are exposed to another country's branding campaigns, unlike public diplomacy, which is a more subtle operation, which relies more on behaviour than symbolism. Under certain circumstances nation branding is more transparent and accountable however than public diplomacy may be.

Nation branding can also be characterised as the production of symbols, signs, territories and spaces for consumption which is manifested in consumers' *investing* in the country, *buying* the countries' products, or visiting a country and *spending* money there.

Table 2 further compares nation branding and public diplomacy.

	Public diplomacy	Nation branding
<i>Goal</i>	Promoting political interest	Promoting (mostly) economic interest
<i>Context</i>	Politicised, focus and priorities may change with change of government	De-politicised, general agreement among actors and political parties (but in some cases it is politicised)
	Identity driven	Image driven
	Driven by international relations and culture	Driven by marketing and consumerism
<i>Targeted at</i>	Publics/stakeholders who are active	Mass/consumers who are passive
	Citizens	Consumers (of images, products, places)
	Targeted at key geopolitical countries	Applicable to any countries, more universal
<i>Direction</i>	Foreign publics	Both foreign and domestic audiences. Without the consent of domestic audiences it is doomed to fail
<i>Role of government</i>	Initiator as well as sender of messages → government has more control over message	Government could be the initiator but rarely the sender (danger of propaganda) → less or no government control
<i>Actors</i>	State and non-state actors Government, governmental organizations, embassies, Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural	National tourist boards, travel agencies; investment promotion and export agencies; trade boards, chambers of commerce, multinational organisations,

	Institutions, NGOs, diasporas	which are all multipliers
<i>Strategies</i>	Relationship building and maintaining	Image management
	Trust building	
	Emphasis on substance and content	Emphasis on visual and symbolic elements
	Decentralised approach, in different target countries different strategies and activities tailored towards local audiences	Centralised approach, driven by the brand essence (one-size-fits all) tailored towards a global and homogenous audience
	Focus on both positive and negative elements that can connect people and cultures	Focus exclusively on positive and 'marketable' elements of a country's culture and people
<i>Tactics</i>	Exhibitions, international film festivals, exchange programmes, language learning promotion, networking, anniversaries, PMs, foreign affairs ministers' and other politicians' articles in foreign daily newspapers, genuine events	Logo and slogan; Country advertisements in leading international TV channels, sponsored pages in leading international magazines; e-marketing, web portals; press tours, brochures, pseudo-events
<i>Media</i>	Mass media are less significant, their main role is in presenting and interpreting information. Social media are getting more important	Relies heavily on mass media as the main channel. Media are passive, usually carrying paid advertisements
<i>Budget</i>	Sponsored by government	Public and private partnership
<i>Time frame</i>	On-going, continuous	Ad hoc, campaign-driven
<i>Evaluation</i>	Short-, middle- and long term	Mostly long-term

Table 2. Differences between public diplomacy and nation branding

Public diplomacy is part of nation branding

Attempts to integrate public diplomacy and nation branding characterise this decade although the process is far from complete. The most popular view advanced by branding practitioners and scholars is that public diplomacy constructs a fully integrated part of nation branding, which is a much broader concept. Lewis (2003: 27), for example described public diplomacy as ‘the branding techniques of politicians’.

Applying the concepts of branding and marketing to foreign policy has been a recent phenomenon demonstrating the encroachment of different disciplines along with the ‘commercialisation’ of foreign policy and public diplomacy. Foreign policy advisors and government officials as well as International Relations scholars jumped on the ‘bandwagon’, adopting the view that foreign policy can also be the subject of branding. Branding practitioners, on the other hand, have become foreign policy ‘specialists’ and advisors as a branding-oriented foreign policy has created business opportunities for branding consultants and agencies. One of the great achievements of nation branding has been to revitalise country promotion and it has definitely woken public diplomacy up from its slumber, regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with the concept.

Adopting a branding-oriented approach to public diplomacy presents both advantages and disadvantages. The benefits are that this approach can:

- make public diplomacy more strategic,
- facilitate strategic planning and co-ordination,
- integrate communication aimed at foreign audiences,
- improve public diplomats’ communication skills and competencies, which are often poor,
- increase the competitiveness of the nation in the globalizing world,
- generate additional domestic as well as international media coverage for the country as the branding initiative and campaigns are subjects of media coverage (as well as scrutiny),
- visualise public diplomacy,
- bring creativity and a breath of fresh air in reaching out to foreign publics,

- as nation branding targets a wider audience than public diplomacy, it can widen the number of people the programme can reach,
- provide an input as well as feedback for public diplomacy programmes through market research,
- branding practitioners are more results-oriented as well as motivated both financially and personally than public diplomats who are not paid according to results achieved, and may prefer stability to taking risk. If branding practitioners are employed, it translates into more dynamism, quicker decision-making and more tangible results.

Simon Anholt in his earlier writings considered public diplomacy as a part of nation branding, a view, which has had a strong influence and has been stuck in many branding scholars' and practitioners' minds. Anholt's brand hexagon has become a powerful and established measure of nation brands, which has penetrated rapidly into the theory and practice of place branding. The Brand Hexagon evolved from Anholt's (2003) seminal work on branding nations: *Brand New Justice – The Upside of Global Branding*. In this book he developed the concept of the *National Brand Pentagon* with the national brand strategy at its core. Tourism promotion, investment attraction, exporting brands, foreign policy and culture are all aligning to the central strategy, which should determine 'the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision for the country' (p. 11). The Pentagon evolved into the Brand Hexagon (Anholt and Hildreth, 2004) the six points of which represent the six 'natural' channels of communication through which countries *communicate* with the world, such as: tourism, culture, policy, people, brands and investment and recruitment. The cumulative effect of each element of the hexagon creates the place brand. Later Anholt (2007) replaced national brand strategy with *Competitive Identity* as the core of the hexagon, defining Competitive Identity as 'the synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and with trade, investment, tourism and export promotion' (ibid: 3). He justifies the change of terminology by declaring that brand has become a dangerous word, charged with many negative and emotive associations albeit it remains a powerful one (p.7).

In this conceptualisation nation branding provides an all-encompassing overall policy where public diplomacy is nothing else than foreign policy's communication dimension. In Anholt's Competitive Identity model public

diplomacy has been 'promoted' from the subset of nation branding to a more significant position, while the concept of branding and competitive identity have been extrapolated to cities and regions as well, as the title of his latest book suggest: *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. It remains unclear, however, how public diplomacy applies to regions or cities, which can also develop their competitive identities.

Anholt in his earlier work contextualised nation branding as 'the dominant *channel of communication* for national identity' (emphasis added) (Anholt, 2003, 139) and communication has been a central concept in his conceptualisation of nation branding. In the Competitive Identity model, however communication's role has been 'reduced' to a mere 5% of the entire competitive identity process (80% innovation and 15% coordination). In one of his latest articles Anholt (2008) contemplates over the success of nation branding as a concept and re-conceptualises competitive identity as a 'three-legged stool' consisting of substance, strategy and symbolic actions. The evolution of nation branding has not still reached a final stage but the fluid nature of *the* theory of nation branding and its various conceptualisations have largely contributed to its misunderstandings and the inconsistent use of the concept.

The gradual release of public diplomacy from the grips of nation branding resulted in the re-branding of the quarterly journal from *Place Branding* to *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*. Despite the name change the journal remains the main forum for place branding articles and case studies with only a very few articles devoted to public diplomacy or related concepts. A journal, exclusively devoted to public diplomacy is yet to emerge but this may not be too far in the future. Many articles in *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* advocate a branding approach to public diplomacy, subordinating public diplomacy to nation branding. Models of place branding, such as Skinner and Kubacki's (2007) nation brand identity model follow this approach. A branding dominated approach can dilute the essence of public diplomacy as the diplomacy component is reduced to a minimum. Several other drawbacks of adopting a branding approach to public diplomacy can be identified regarding that it can:

- push towards a return-on-investment thinking,

- encourage short term impacts from nation branding and unrealistic expectations as governments strive for these impacts,
- require additional financial as well as human resources, which may manifest itself in contracting and employing local or foreign branding consultants and agencies, who are unelected,
- in the case of outsourced nation branding where an agency develops the brand ideas and core elements, the implementation is often left to the government breaking the 'research-development-implementation-evaluation' cycle,
- expose the entire initiative to criticism, since 'branding' as a phenomenon and practice is under increased scrutiny and suffers from an 'image' problem which can result in loss of credibility and lack of respect of the branding initiative,
- divide rather than unite a nation where citizens may disagree about the initiative: as brand ambassadors they all have a stake in the branding and could view themselves as experts (every citizen has a view on the brand),
- oversimplify what a country stands for and narrow it down to catchy slogans and soundbites (although nation branding is much more than this!); simplicity and superficiality can prevail in many (mis)understandings of nation branding,
- lead to an over-reliance on symbolism and overemphasize the role of 'images' rather than reality.

Smaller nations such as Estonia, Latvia or Monaco may adopt this approach where the lack of human and financial resources could limit public diplomacy but a creative nation branding programme may potentially reach – but not necessarily engage - a wider foreign audience than public diplomacy would ever be able to do.

Nation branding is part of public diplomacy

As yet, this approach is rather limited in the academic literature but in practice many governments endorse it. In practice, each country conducts some kind of public diplomacy while nation branding initiatives are less

common. According to this approach, nation branding is considered as an instrument of public diplomacy, through which foreign nations and people can be reached. Peter Van Ham is one of the first international relations scholars who explored the potential intersection between branding and international relations in a wider context and examined how branding can be used in international relations as well as public diplomacy (van Ham, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008). He locates place branding's 'theoretical home' within the constructivist school of international relations since it offers states the option to construct their own image, role and identity, as well as putting emphasis on norms and values. Although he offers some interesting insights into their relationship, a major shortcoming of the articles is that branding, image, marketing and public relations are used interchangeably and as synonyms, without clear conceptualisations. Relying on a superficial approach to these communication management functions and ignoring the fact that these disciplines have different bodies of knowledge and theoretical concepts result in some inconsistency in the exploration of their relationship. This indeed is a common issue in the works of some international relations scholars who tend to adopt a 'popular', therefore limited, approach to branding and place branding.

When some Eastern European governments were first exposed to the idea of nation branding, they had high expectations from the concept and were under the illusion that it serves as a panacea for poor images abroad. After the initial euphoria of engaging in some forms of nation branding, these governments have come to see the concept as one of the many communication tools applied in public diplomacy. Since nation branding has high visibility, some of its elements can also be used as a rapid response tool to quickly raise awareness of a national issue or a country's position on a particular problem. The contexts in which a need for nation branding emerges are also of importance. Many countries have turned to nation branding as a response to a specific issue or problem, such as membership in international organisations or change of regime, such as the post-communists countries.

Adopting a public diplomacy approach to nation branding can help:

- rely upon and tap into the network of embassies, which can serve as a

local agency in the particular countries,

- these embassies can focus on one dimension of country branding, relevant in the target country by taking into account the special features of the target culture and people,
- bring stability to the branding in the sense that in some countries a relatively stable staff (civil servants) do not change jobs as frequently,
- provide the necessary leadership and co-ordination,
- correct the effects of negative branding by other governments or institutions as the following example demonstrates.

Governments always have control and influence over their public diplomacy efforts; however nation branding can be hijacked by a foreign government, pressure groups, media or even a single person, as the case of Kazakhstan and 'Borat' demonstrates. In these cases public diplomacy can have a vital function in defending and protecting the country's reputation and correcting poor images and stereotypes or at least attempting to neutralise them. Borat Sagdiyev's (Sacha Baron Kohen's) branding of the country is very strong, and this negative branding has been reinforced with the publishing of his 'national brand book' as a tourist guide to the country (*Touristic Guidings to Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*). Public diplomacy would be more efficient in counteracting Borat's portrayal of Kazakhstan although the country is rather keen on 'counter nation branding', including a series of advertisements in the New York Times about Kazakhstan. Despite the negative portrayal of the country, it remains Central Asia's most expensive tourist destination, which has also attracted a significant amount of investment, due to the country's massive oil reserves rather than any nation branding efforts.

Leonard et al. (2002: 10) distinguished three dimensions of public diplomacy: political/military, economic and societal/cultural. Countries may focus on one or two of these dimensions, depending on the immediate environment in which a country may find itself at different times. He also quoted the term 'brand diplomacy' by which he referred to *brands as channels* for transmitting national identities to consumers which is basically relates to the country-of-origin effects. This view is rather restrictive compared to strategic nation branding, however it demonstrates that products and corporations also conduct diplomacy with their own means. An example of

this is the so called Hungaricum Club initiative: in 2000 four Hungarian companies founded the Club with the aim of creating a stylish 'calling card' for Hungary. The founders aimed at contributing more to Hungary's image by their own means and through their joint appearance and at 'furthering Hungary's progress towards membership of the European Union, while retaining their traditional identities as Hungarian brands'. Members of the club put together a boxed set called 'A Taste of Hungary' featuring selected samples of their products, Herend Porcelain, Pick Salami, Tokaj Aszu Wines, Zwack Unicum liqueur and the Halas sewn lace, all linked to traditional dining. In 2006 a new member joined the Hungaricum Club: the world famous Petö Institute, which promotes the „Petö Method' of conductive education.

Nation branding could also be conceptualised as the economic dimension of public diplomacy, or as the public dimension of economic diplomacy. Economic diplomacy aims 'to promote national prosperity and to conduct a foreign economic policy to that end [...which] consists in giving a boost to the export efforts of the country's enterprises and attracting the inward investment...' (Hill, 2003, 142). After the fall of the Berlin Wall traditional public diplomacy has gradually been fading away in Central and Eastern Europe and was replaced by economic assistance, knowledge and skills transfer to facilitate political and economic transition. Economic diplomacy's contribution to public diplomacy has been largely ignored so far; public diplomacy could be considered as the public communication dimension of economic diplomacy. The European Union is a relevant example: it has often failed to communicate its achievements many of which have resulted from economic relations, financial and technical support and assistance to countries outside the European Union. Better communicating the EU's achievements, and enhancing its visibility and overall profile in the world have only recently become priorities.

However, several drawbacks can also be identified for adopting a public diplomacy approach to nation branding, such as:

- nation branding can be misunderstood by governmental personnel who might view it as advertising or propaganda,
- the nation branding initiative can get lost in the red tape and

bureaucracy of governmental circles and organizations with slow decision making processes and lack of taking responsibility,

- the initiative can become politicised and nation branding can become the victim of domestic political fights where the political parties cannot agree on some aspects of the brand or branding which can seriously hinder the launch (or re-launch) of the brand,
- this can lead to the lack of continuity, especially when a new government is formulated and they erase the efforts of the previous government,
- nation branding can be interpreted as hidden government promotion; many Western nation branding practitioners advocate the role and importance of the government in nation branding but there are examples when this approach backfires.

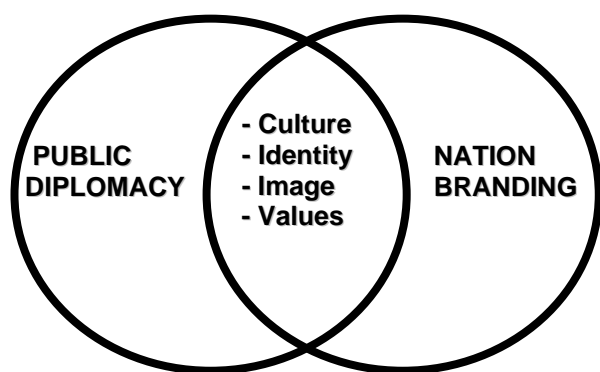
Distinct but overlapping concepts

According to this view public diplomacy and nation branding share some common grounds but nevertheless neither incorporates the other and each has its own special characteristics.

This approach is advocated by Professor Jan Melissen, the editor of the book *The New Public Diplomacy – Soft Power in International Relations*, which has become one of the most frequently cited non-American titles on public diplomacy. Melissen identified some conceptual differences as well as similarities between branding and public diplomacy. He concluded that they are distinct approaches but ‘they both come down to clearly similar activities’ and they best work in tandem (Melissen, 2005a) regarding that the two concepts are ‘sisters under the skin’ (Melissen, 2005b). In his view differences include nation branding’s much more ambitious, holistic approach, which requires greater efforts than public diplomacy, which strives for modest achievements. This has implications for success since modest goals are easier to achieve and evaluate whereas examples of successful nation branding are far and between. Evaluation is indeed the Achilles’ heel of nation branding but public diplomacy also struggles with measuring success.

Image creation is shared by both concepts, however identifying ‘creating a positive image’ as the ultimate goal of both nation branding and public

diplomacy can seriously reduce the essence of both concepts, although positive images are vital by-products of both activities. Identity too can link the two areas as identity is genetically coded – or should be coded – in both nation branding and public diplomacy. Dinnie (2008) devotes two chapters in his book to the role of national identity and its different manifestations in nation branding. National identity building and promotion are also common public diplomacy goals. Culture is also in the common segment of the two areas, especially if public diplomacy incorporates cultural diplomacy and relations, which follows the American approach to public diplomacy.



There are two major issues about both nation branding and public diplomacy that have so far received little attention. Both concepts have been defined and conceptualised as *communication* with a strong emphasis on the *nation* as the unit of analysis. As two-way communication is replacing one-way communication, relationship building is often mentioned as a means to achieve two-way communication or as an element of public diplomacy or nation branding. Instead of communication (in the case of public diplomacy) and image creation (in the case of nation branding), *relationship building* should be the central concept and ultimate goal of both public diplomacy and nation branding where as communication would be only a means –albeit very vital – to build and maintain relationships rather than an end in itself. Not only in public diplomacy theory but also in international relations, its host

discipline, relationship building and maintenance have received very little conceptual attention. If relationship building was adopted as the central paradigm of both public diplomacy and nation branding, it could serve as the central concept upon which the two areas could be further integrated. I have conceptualised both public diplomacy and nation branding as *international public relations* (Szondi, 2005, 2006, 2009), a discipline whose central concept is relationship management. Although many international relations and international communication scholars as well as nation branding practitioners dismiss or misunderstand public relations, they tend to use its terminology and key concepts, thus reinventing the wheel.

Kathy Fitzpatrick (2007), a communication scholar, also proposed relationship management as 'a general theory of public diplomacy' and called for the relational paradigm to replace soft power as a defining worldview of public diplomacy. She concludes that this worldview would unify the different public diplomacy functions under one overarching concept, would result in a relationship management rather than a communication mindset and would have a practical dimension about how to engage in public diplomacy. Both concepts could benefit from a network communication approach, which is 'inherently relation-centred in that it focuses on message exchange, relationship-building and network creation', rather than relying on the mass communication approach, which focuses on information production and dissemination (Zaharna, 2007). Networks should indeed occupy a central position in public diplomacy as well as nation branding. Jönsson et al (2000, 23) distinguished three types of networks: *physical networks*, which are composed of lines and channels for the transportation of goods, people and information. *Institutional or organisational networks* bind together economic and political entities whereas *social and cultural networks* unite individuals and convey ideas and impulses. Of these types of networks physical networks (mass communication channels) and institutional networks (cultural institutions, policy networks) dominate nation branding and public diplomacy. Institutional networks can facilitate the establishment and development of social networks, which are less frequent but more relevant in relationship development.

As far as branding is concerned, Hankinson (2004) identified four streams of thought by analysing the classical branding literature. Brands are conceptualised as *communicators* (usually one-way) when product

differentiation is the main focus and the visual elements are emphasised or as *perceptual entities*, which appeal to the consumer's senses, reason and emotions. Brands are also conceptualised as *value enhancers*, where brands are regarded as corporate assets which should be nurtured and invested in. Finally, brands can be conceptualised as *relationships*, especially in the case of service brands where real relationship develops between the service provider's contact personnel and the consumer. Hankinson concludes that tourist destination brands as perceptual entities dominate the destination marketing literature, followed by destination brands as communicators. A similar conclusion can be reached regarding the nation branding literature, which remains dominated by the brand image and the communication perspectives as discussed above. Nation brands have not been conceptualised as relationships yet although the concept could benefit from this approach a great deal.

As Jönsson et al (2000) argue, the state has become the ordering principle of several disciplines having occupied a privileged position in social science theories. The same can be argued for international relations – including public diplomacy – as well as for nation branding. Van Ham's (2001) seminal article on the rise of the brand state also positions the state in the centre of attention. Networks connected via relationships could replace the nation as the unit of study and focus. Networks are more flexible units than states and they can adapt more quickly to changes in the environment.

Nation branding and public diplomacy are the same concepts

The final option is that both nation branding and public diplomacy cover the same activity: country promotion with the ultimate goal of creating positive images. Equating public diplomacy and nation branding is the least beneficial model of all because it would ignore important differences and neither concept could be utilised to its full potential. Dinnie (2008: 251) in his book *Nation Branding* devotes only a paragraph to public diplomacy, which - as he concludes - may supplant the term nation branding in the future. Nation branding is in many respects similar to traditional public diplomacy (see Table 1) and therefore the earlier conceptualisations of public diplomacy are

almost identical with nation branding.

Some scholars might even view both public diplomacy and nation branding as synonyms for propaganda. Nation branding can also be considered as the postmodern mutation of public diplomacy, representing a line of evolution, which started from propaganda. Time will also tell whether nation branding is simply a passing fashion or here to stay.

The image of nation branding and public diplomacy

Although both areas are concerned with managing a nation's international images, they seem to have some issues about their own images. Several authors acknowledge that branding evokes negative connotations and branding as a tool has come under criticism from many sides. The appointment of Charlotte Beers as the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in 2001 and the failure of the advertising campaigns designed to reach out to Arab people, negatively affected branding and marketing approaches to foreign policy and public diplomacy. Ms Beers' rise and fall resulted in more scepticism towards the applicability and success of branding approaches although it is important to underline that advertising is only a tactical tool in nation branding.

Not only branding but marketing, its host discipline, is also suffering from a lack of trust by consumers. Consumers are turning away from marketing and advertising, and a high percentage consciously avoiding any marketing messages. Marketing professors Sheth and Sisodia (2005) advocate an approach to marketing, which is more relevant to society and provide nation branding as an appropriate example of convergence between marketing and society. Interestingly, what they suggest is that nation branding can actually increase marketing's own reputation.

Public diplomacy, by contrast has much more positive connotations which makes it a more credible tool than nation branding, however it does not escape criticism either. One of the most frequent criticisms of public diplomacy that it is simply 'a euphemism for propaganda' (e.g. Blitz, 1986, Snow, 1998) resulting in the two terms being labelled as synonyms or being used interchangeably. Merlingen and Mujić (2003) identify some arguments for and against public diplomacy, including public diplomacy's negative

effects on the practice of diplomacy. In their views public diplomacy can push simplistic and marketable solutions and ignore the complexity of problems and relying too much on public diplomacy can transform 'diplomatic intercourse from a search for common ground into a propaganda match' (ibid: 273).

Nation branding has been described as 'the fetishistic construction of national identity through specific image-signs' (Roy, 2007: 571). Jansen (2008) criticised nation branding for its *raison d'être*, which is commercial ambition as it transforms civic space into calculative space, constituted by marketing data and decision making rather than conceived in terms of social relations or governance. In her critical article she described nation branding as a risky business which can easily backfire, since its success and effectiveness depends on the intuitive knowledge of industry 'creatives' and its calculative and manipulative approach and reductive logic 'dumbs down' public discourse. Jensen argues that nation branding is the engine of neo-liberalism and its methodology is anti-democratic, even fascist [sic!].

Professionalisation

Another way of comparing public diplomacy and nation branding is to focus on the practice and practitioners and examine the extent to which they can be considered as legitimate professions. Bardos (2001) called public diplomacy 'an old art, but a new profession', nevertheless it is worth examining how far public diplomacy – and nation branding – have professionalised. Professionalisation can be conceptualised as the process by which producers of special services seek to constitute and control markets for their expertise (Larson, 1977, p.16). Professions have a special set of attributes that constituted an 'ideal type'. These attributes may vary according to different authors but the most common ones are: (1) a body of knowledge and techniques applied to work; (2) training or course of study necessary to master such knowledge and skills and to test competency; (3) a self-governing professional body; (4) professional norms (codes of ethics) that regulate the practice; and (5) certain social status and recognition of the profession.

Both public diplomacy and nation branding have an evolving body of

knowledge, which is quickly advanced by research. Several articles, book chapters, books, websites are devoted to public diplomacy, which is quickly absorbing other territories and disciplines; however an 'integrated theory' of public diplomacy is yet to emerge. Gilboa (2008) describes public diplomacy as *multidisciplinary* area by placing side-by-side important insights from several disciplines. In my view, however, public diplomacy is an *interdisciplinary study*, which is defined as:

a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession...and draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective (Klein and Newell, 1997, 393).

International relations, diplomacy, international communication, branding, international marketing, public relations, history, psychology or cultural studies have their own insights into public diplomacy; these insights are not synthesised and integrated yet in a systematic way. Instead of 'unifying' the contributions of the different disciplines as suggested by Gilboa, the different disciplinary insights should be *integrated* where differences and common grounds could be identified and confronted rather than blended out.

The number of conferences on public diplomacy is also on the increase not only in the English speaking countries but worldwide as well. The Diplomatic Academy of the Croatian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, for example, has organised four international conferences on public diplomacy and gained important 'know-how' about its theory and practice.

Nation branding's body of knowledge is still trapped in marketing, but soon it is bound to become more interdisciplinary. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* remains a major platform for case studies and advancing the theory of nation branding; however the recently launched *Journal of Place Management and Development* may challenge its monopoly over nation and place branding. This journal advocates a more managerial approach to places and place branding constitutes only a fraction of its topics.

Conferences on nation branding have recently been organised on a much more modest scale than public diplomacy, but this is likely to change. The dominant research method for both nation branding and public diplomacy remains the country specific case study based on document analysis and

interviews with policy-makers or branding practitioners sometimes in a comparative context. Other qualitative research approaches, such as discourse analysis or quantitative research methods may also be relevant. Grounded theory approach could particularly contribute to generating theories of public diplomacy.

As far as education is concerned, public diplomacy is often offered as a course on degree programmes, such as international communication, international relations, public relations or diplomacy. The most reputable degree programmes are provided by the University of Southern California Center on Public diplomacy, which runs a MA in Public Diplomacy while Syracuse University offers a Public Diplomacy dual degree programme in which students can complete an MSc in Public Relations along with an MA in International Relations within two years of study. It might not be in the distant future when several universities offer *Public Diplomacy Studies* with interdisciplinary curricula.

There are no degree programmes in nation branding and courses on nation branding are being developed and launched. Although place branding is not a degree programme either, a few universities offer a place branding course on degree programmes such as tourism or brand management. A course on nation branding could be relevant in programmes like Human Geography, International Relations, International Communication, or Diplomacy to name but a few.

Training is vital for many public diplomats, who often have a strong background in international relations or politics but may seriously lack communication competence and skills, or even dismiss communication and its different versions, such as branding or public relations as being 'too soft'. John Hemery, Director of the Center for Political and Diplomatic Studies calls for more specialist training for public diplomats. He identified several barriers to training, such as lack of human and financial resources, limited communication infrastructure and attitude towards training (Hemery, 2005). Mr Hemery has developed and led short-term public diplomacy courses in the UK and offers a tentative course outline together with a set of competency skills too in his chapter. In June 2008, The *United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy* published a report on the human resources dimension of American public diplomacy. The report examines how public diplomacy professionals are recruited, tested, trained and evaluated and how public

diplomacy in structured. This report also calls for more training, and concludes that public affairs officers view themselves, and are viewed by others, more as managers and administrators than as expert communicators. The authors also lament that the Department of State makes no special effort to recruit individuals into the public diplomacy career track who would bring into the Foreign Service experience or skills specifically relevant to the work of communicating with and influencing foreign publics. The Foreign Service Officer Test and Oral Assessment do not specifically test for public diplomacy instincts and communication skills. The authors recommend that the Department should establish a nine-month in-depth public diplomacy course for mid- to senior-level public diplomacy officers modelled on that currently offered to rising economic officers.

Similar conclusions may well be reached regarding other countries' public diplomacy staff and structures. In many Eastern European countries one of nation branding's most important influences has been that the initiative drew policy makers' attention to the importance of strategic communication in public diplomacy and turned the spotlight on the lack of communication skills of many civil servants involved in public diplomacy.

Training in nation branding is lagging behind that of public diplomacy, although nation branding consultants' own interest may dictate to have as few experts as possible so that they can sell their services to governments. Conferences on nation branding offer a few tips and 'know-how' of nation branding but so far the most well known training is provided by Simon Anholt in the form of a nation branding Master class. Other nation branding practitioners provide a rather simple 'how-to-brand a country' to-do lists, such as Olins' (1999) seven steps plan to brand a country, or Interbrand's five-step model of 'successful' country branding. 'How-to-do public diplomacy' lists are yet to be drawn up albeit restricting public diplomacy into a few steps might prove difficult.

A recent trend is the marketisation of public diplomacy, whereby for-profit public diplomacy consultancies are springing up, with public diplomacy consultants who provide their professional services to national governments, governmental institutions or cultural organisations. One of the latest examples is Mappa Mundi Consulting, with public diplomacy experts Ali Fisher and Philip Fiske de Gouveia (<http://www.mappamundiconsulting.com>). The crossover between nation branding and public diplomacy consultancies is still

rare but there will be more encroachment into each other's territory in the future. They also compete with international public relations consultancies many of which have long been providing public diplomacy as a service for governments including strategic communication, international media relations, lobbying, risk and crises communication, events managements or online communication.

Public diplomacy professional organisations are slowly formulating in several countries, however more on a local than national level. The *Public Diplomacy Institute* in the US advances the academic study and practice of public diplomacy through teaching, research, scholarship, advice, consultation, publications, and professional services. The *Public Diplomacy Alumni Association* has more than 400 members who have worked in or with the information, education, and cultural programs. The association engages in social, education, and information activities related to the profession and discipline of public diplomacy in the US.

Institutionalisation of public diplomacy and nation branding has been taking place fast. According to Olsen (1997) institutionalisation has three dimensions: the structuralisation and routinisation of behaviour; linking resources to values and world-views; and standardisation, homogenisation and authorisation of codes of meaning and ways of reasoning. Professional bodies have important role to play in this process, especially if they are national. International professional organisation of public diplomacy does not exist yet but this kind of organisation may be formulated in the future. Membership in organisations are voluntary but there might come a time when all public diplomats may be required to become an accredited member of a professional organisation, which may also be involved in the formulation of codes of ethics on national or even international scale. The ethical dimensions of public diplomacy and nation branding have so far received limited attention but guidelines may well be soon formulated how to conduct ethical and socially responsible public diplomacy or nation branding.

Regarding the institutionalisation of an integrated approach to nation branding and public diplomacy, the *Serbian Institute of Public Diplomacy* is unique in at least two ways. The Institute strategically synthesises public diplomacy and nation branding since its founders include branding, public relations and international relations experts. It is situated not in Serbia but in

Brussels, the capital of the European Union, just a few steps away from the European Parliament. The institute gets no funds from the Serbian government and it is an independent organisation similarly to the German *Association for Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*. The Association's aim is 'to establish and shape place branding and public diplomacy as a distinctive discipline with its own progressive methods'.

Conclusions and future scenarios

This study has explored the relationship and possible links between public diplomacy and nation branding, two dynamic fields with a growing number of practitioners and evolving bodies of knowledge. Depending on the degree of integration, five conceptual models have been outlined, each with potential pitfalls as well as advantages. Countries and their governments may apply different models depending on financial and human resources available to them or the actual environment a country and its government find themselves. It is difficult to foresee which model will be dominant in the future as the boundaries of the two areas are still formulating. Subordinating public diplomacy to nation branding or the other way round could limit the concepts being used to their full potential; instead an interdisciplinary approach is suggested to synthesise the concepts.

Nation branding has been evolving from marketing and branding, which may be too restrictive and narrow to accommodate the field, which is bound to become more interdisciplinary, similarly to public diplomacy.

Nation branding theory has so far paid very little attention to its international perspective, namely that it primarily takes place in an international environment and only partly in a domestic context, which dominates its contextualisation. Both nation branding and public diplomacy are embedded in Western assumptions and traditions with clear ethnocentric approaches, giving the impression that what works in the West should also work everywhere else. *Brand New Justice*, Simon Anholt's (2003) book for example, is written for the emerging markets and shows 'how the classic wealth-building techniques of first-world countries and companies can be successfully transferred to the people and places that really need them'. This Western bias may well be challenged by other philosophies and assumptions that could be reflected in a global approach to nation branding as well as public diplomacy.

While public diplomacy is slowly going private with consultants and consultancies providing services for governments, it may not be too long until a 'brand attaché' will be a vital member of embassies abroad or a 'brand department' a crucial part in the structure of the ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Since the two fields are evolving, they should not be considered static but dynamic: they can mutate and transform according to the changes in the

political, cultural and social environments. More integration and cooperation will be needed not only between nation branding and public diplomacy to achieve better synergy, but between practitioners and scholars from both spheres to further enhance the theoretical and practical bases of these challenging but fascinating areas.

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- 1 Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005) pp. 16-25.
 - 2 Melissen (2005), p. 24.
 - 3 H. Butterfield, 'Diplomacy New and Historical', in H. Butterfield and M. Wight, *Diplomatic Investigations*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966) pp. 150-2.
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