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Original citation:
Browning, Christopher S. (2015) Small-state identities : promotions past and present. In: Clerc, Louis and Glover , Nikolas and Jordan, Paul , (eds.) Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries. Diplomatic studies (12). Leiden: Brill Nijhoff,, pp. 281-300. ISBN 9789004305496

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April 2015

Small-State Identities: Promotions Past and Present

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Recent years have seen a groundswell of academic analyses interested in what is often depicted as the new practices of nation branding and new public diplomacy in disciplines ranging from business studies and marketing to communication studies, sociology, political science and international relations. This interest has been driven by at least two connected developments: the introduction of new technologies fostering both the democratisation and proliferation of information and images around the globe, and the advent and multiplication of nation branding programmes as states seek to assert control over how they are seen and represented.

Both processes are indicative of a renewed focus on images, representations and identities in social life and which, when positive, are seen as central in gaining recognition, enhancing reputation and succeeding in a globalised world. In contrast, it is argued that, just as negative images and a poor brand can be devastating for sales of consumer products and the companies that produce them, so too can they be for nations. Thus it was, it is argued, that Kazakhstan's government took umbrage at what it perceived to be its negative depiction in the film *Borat* and in response to which it commissioned its own nation branding campaign to provide an alternative representation of the country.[1] Likewise, African nations and commentators – encouraged in their conviction by various nation branding consultants – in turn, have increasingly begun to argue that problems of African underdevelopment may be as much caused by negative images associated with the continent as they are with legacies of colonialism and the structures of the capitalist international economic system.[2] From this perspective, Africa's development prospects require replacing images of war, famine, poverty and disease with those of African bankers driving fancy cars – only then, it is argued, will foreign investment be enticed into the

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[1] van Ham, "Place Branding", 142–3. Although in this instance, and somewhat ironically, it appears that the film actually had a positive impact for tourism in Kazakhstan. However, as indicated below whether one should generalize from this to conclude that 'any publicity is good publicity' is much less certain and certainly not something the nation branding industry would itself wish to endorse.

[2] For a critical analysis see, Browning, "Nation Branding and Development". For an example of branding consultants emphasising the possibilities of nation branding for developing countries, see Anholt, *Brand New Justice*.

continent.[3]

For many commentators there is much that appears new and novel about this apparent explosion in contemporary image politics. This book's starting point is different, however, with the editors consciously seeking to add historical perspective to current debates, and in doing so, to sensitise us to the fact that states and nations have always, and necessarily so, paid attention to matters of image representation and identity cultivation in their relations with others. The result is a rich and highly informative volume, a principal message of which is that when analysing current practices of image projection, public diplomacy and nation branding, a historical perspective is liable to add considerable context and understanding to any conclusions drawn.

In this concluding chapter I draw out a number of key themes, which the case analyses of small states/nations in northern Europe illuminate. The second half of the chapter therefore discusses issues connected to image promotion in small states, and the extent to which small states may face distinctive challenges, but also opportunities, in comparison to larger and more powerful states. It also draws together a number of insights about the very nature of image promotion processes and the extent to which such processes may (or may not) close down the space available for democratic politics on issues of national identity formation and projection, and which in turn may also impact on understandings of the nature and responsibilities of citizenship. The chapter ends by engaging with a provocation raised in Marklund's chapter concerning "the (im)possibility of purposive public diplomacy and image management", i.e. how much control can be exerted over the process, does it work, and if the results are often inconclusive why have states historically sought to engage in it, with enhanced emphasis today? To start, however, the chapter begins by engaging with the book's historical orientation by discussing questions of labeling, taxonomy and the historicised and open approach to concept use advocated in the Introduction, and from which subsequent sections follow discussing the question of historical precedence and contemporary novelty, and how processes of national imag(in)ing are connected to changing norms of subjectivity.

Historical contextualisation or conceptual clarity?

Particularly notable about this book is its embracing of conceptual profusion. Thus, while the editors note that *representation*, *imagining* and *imaging* constitute the key themes tying the various contributions together, these themes in turn become a catch-all for a diverse range of practice-based concepts, including: diplomacy, public diplomacy, new public diplomacy, nation branding, information work, enlightenment and propaganda. In turn, the editors have assiduously avoided defining and distinguishing between these various terms by tying particular practices to particular

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[3] "Re-branding Africa", *African Business*, 16 December 2009, 12–5.

concepts. There are good reasons for this, because, as they rightly note, historically different concepts have been used to refer to different practices at different times, and sometimes to refer to the same sorts of practices. Thus, as noted in Clerc's chapter on Finland, as 'propaganda' gained increasingly negative connotations after the Second World War it was replaced with the more neutral concept of 'information work', even if in principle practitioners carried on doing much the same as before. This refusal to categorise and taxonomically differentiate between concepts and the various practices to which they might be attached makes sense given the editors' emphasis on understanding practitioners in their own terms and in providing historical sensitivity to what are often proclaimed to be new and transformative processes of nation branding and new public diplomacy. Moreover, given the diversity of cases analysed, getting the contributors to agree on any taxonomical scheme likely would have been difficult.

However, although the lack of categorisation and openness to conceptual pluralism illuminates the fact that contemporary concerns with national imagining, imaging and representation are far from lacking precedent, it can also occlude in other ways, not least by giving the undue impression that the various practices highlighted – however named – are all of a similar type, thereby missing a number of key differences. Indeed, without seeking to impose a taxonomy of conceptual definitions, it is, all the same, useful to emphasise some of the diversity in the range of practices and activities evident in the contributors' analyses of national representation, imagining and imaging. Two differences, or observations, are particularly notable.

The first concerns the actors and target audiences involved in these processes and which suggests that across the cases very distinctive practices can be identified. For example, several of the chapters (most notably Tessaris, Piirimäe and Bergmane) are essentially concerned with national image promotion in the largely closed forums of classical international diplomacy and where the target audience of such efforts is small and, by its nature, largely limited to a relevant international political elite. By contrast, Kjærsgaard's chapter highlights how in some cases diplomats might actively seek to engage with a wider economic and civic audience, while Jordan's chapter shows how Estonia's use of the branding and imaging around the country's hosting of the Eurovision Song Contest was essentially an attempt to speak to ordinary Europeans at large. As will be discussed further below, nuance also exists in terms of which agencies are involved in national identity projection/promotion processes and the nature of their connection to the state, be they official state representatives, civil society actors or diaspora communities. Setting that aside for now, while it might be suggested that the difference here is simply one of scale, arguably there are qualitative differences entailed when the scope of such practices is broadened out. In part this is because the goals and functions of such actions are liable to differ as one scales up or down, but

also because the sorts of actions deemed suitable are likely to differ and to have different constitutive effects.

Second, and arguably more fundamentally, the issue is not only one of which actors are involved and how, but that there are arguably different logics at play in some of the different practices analysed. This is most clearly identified by Mordhorst, who in particular highlights why being attentive to these differences matters. His chapter focuses on the shift in Denmark in the first decade of the new millennium, from an emphasis starting in 2002 on new public diplomacy, to its subordination in 2007 to a nation branding programme in the wake of the Mohammed Cartoon Crisis. At least in the Danish context, Mordhorst argues, the two have entailed quite different logics for identity representation and the nature of relations between self and other constituted. Thus, while he sees new public diplomacy as "rooted in the logic and culture of politics", and as designed to explain and convince others of Denmark's policy choices (thereby reducing the gap between self and other), the nation branding campaign was rather rooted "in the logics of commercial marketing" and designed to secure economic advantage by emphasising differentiation. In that context, the nation branding programme simply ignored the negative images and fallout of the Cartoon Crisis in favour of other (assumedly) more positive images. With the nation branding programme prioritised, attempts to explain the Danish position over the cartoons to the Islamic world were downplayed, arguably further inflaming the situation. As Mordhorst notes, what the episode highlights is how nation branding seeks to be fundamentally depoliticising (though perhaps in this case unsuccessfully) by avoiding/ignoring anything controversial, while at the same time seeking to secure market advantage by emphasising one's differentiation and unique selling points. This, meanwhile, is in stark contrast to public diplomacy, which "stresses continuous dialogue and community". Mordhorst's conclusion is unequivocally that, in the Danish case at least, nation branding and public diplomacy were far from mutually supporting.

Another tension between concepts and practices is highlighted in Jordan's chapter, where his particular focus is on the relationship between nation branding and nation building and where it has been claimed by prominent representatives of the nation branding industry, that the terms are largely interchangeable.[4] While Jordan does not categorically reject this view, implicitly he does suggest we should treat such claims circumspectly. In this respect, he suggests that while nation building is fundamentally about *imagining* the nation, nation branding speaks more to the *imaging* dimension, even if, like different sides of a coin, the two may be intimately connected and speak back to each other. What is notable in Estonia, he argues, is that nation branding campaigns –

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[4] Olins, "Branding the Nation", 242.

and marketing around the Eurovision Song Contest in particular – despite making a nod in the direction of multiculturalism, have overwhelmingly presented the nation in ethno-linguistic terms by explicitly excluding Russian speakers from the desired national image. This has sat at odds with nation building imperatives to include Russian speakers in the national project. Thus, rather than contributing to nation building, nation branding may well have undermined it. Of course, it could be argued that, insofar as those directing the nation branding activities have viewed the nation in ethno-linguistic terms, then such othering has been central to nation building, rather than opposed to it. However, as Jordan indicates, since Estonia has felt the need to embrace multiculturalism and minority rights as part of its claims to Europeanness, then there does appear to be significant tension between the country's nation branding practices and the Europeanised conception of nation building the Estonian government claims to be implementing.

Historical precedence and contemporary novelty

Understood in such ways Mordhorst's and Jordan's observations also provide a challenge to the book's overall orientation, aimed as it is at suggesting that contemporary practices of national image promotion are not as new as often presented in the nation branding literature. In this respect, Mordhorst's analysis of the Danish case supports the claims of a number of recent analyses that all suggest that the advent of nation branding is closely tied to the replacement of Cold War geopolitical discourses with discourses of globalisation and the spread of neoliberal economic markets.[5] Central to this view is the idea that the 'territorial state' is transforming into the 'competition state', a metaphor that depicts states as akin to companies competing for global investment and market share.[6]

Such claims, however, can at times appear overstated as, for instance, in van Ham's claim that 'power-oriented geopolitics' is being emasculated by the emergence of a 'postmodern world of images and influence'.[7] Just a cursory look at global politics suggests classical geopolitics is far from dead, while as the historical chapters of this book amplify, a geopolitical world is hardly one devoid of a concern for images and their manipulation in order to achieve influence. It is therefore important to specify more clearly in what sense contemporary image and identity politics might be changing.

The volume's introduction provides one way of thinking about this, suggesting that prior to 1945 the emphasis for states in northern Europe was on "enlightening and educating"

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[5] E.g. Aronczyk, "Living the Brand'", 41–65; Browning, "Nation Branding, National Self-Esteem"; Jansen, "Designer nations", 121–42.
[6] Cerny, *Changing Architecture*; Fougner, "The State", 165–85.
[7] van Ham, "Branding Territory", 252

foreigners in order to secure recognition for their very existence, shifted during the high politics of the Cold War to "diplomacy" as a means to ensure security/survival, and since the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the emergence of new discourses of globalisation, has seen a further shift towards "promoting commerce". Such a chronology represents an ideal-type and is designed to capture trends, rather than suggesting categorical moments of transformation. This is emphasised not least in Glover's chapter on Sweden during the 1960s, where he notes metaphors of the competition state were as evident then as today, with this suggesting that, at least in some cases, competition state discourses predated hegemonic discourses of globalisation and neoliberal economics.

It is, however, still possible to suggest a number of changes. One of these concerns scope and intensity and where it is evident that the attention being devoted to image promotion has steadily increased over time, while states are also increasingly seeking to target wider and larger audiences, both geographically and socially. In both cases this is, no doubt, a direct result of the improved state of global communications and transportation networks extending interdependencies and enhancing connections between peoples and countries previously unconnected.

Another change is that the shift from an emphasis on recognition, to security to commerce is not simply one of changing focus for practices of representation, imagining and imaging, but also suggests one in which territorial states are increasingly viewed as means rather than ends in themselves. In other words, whereas previously national image promotion was directed to upholding the very idea, existence and success of the state, now states and their various cultural assets are increasingly seen, not only as subordinated to market logics, but with a key role in reproducing them. In turn, this raises questions about the changing nature of norms of national subjectivity in international politics.

National imag(in)ing and subjectivity

Particularly notable, here, is that different chapters point to the fact that over time there have been significant shifts in, both the constitutive rules of the international system, and in the normative criteria of statehood. In other words, not only has the nature of the international system changed, from a prioritisation of geopolitics towards greater emphasis being placed on economic competition, but what nations need to do and demonstrate in order to gain recognition for statehood – and thereby claim subjectivity – has also changed.[8]

For example, Tessaris' chapter clearly demonstrates the authority of the League of Nations in the inter-war period for establishing the criteria upon which recognition of statehood and

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[8] The shift from geopolitics to economic competition has elsewhere been depicted as one from a Hobbesian anarchy dominated by conflict in an environment where enmity and fear rule, to a more Lockean anarchy of competition between rivals and where threats of violence are largely off the agenda. See Moisio, "From Enmity to Rivalry?", 78–95.

membership in the 'club of civilized nations' would be granted. As she notes, this affected debates in Lithuania on the appropriate nature of identity projection and imaging, as Lithuanian diplomats felt the need to '"conform to the standards of the League of Nations", standards that emphasised the protection of the rights of national minorities. Likewise, Bergmane's chapter shows the same dynamic at play in the 1990s, as the Balts sought recognition for independence once more, and in doing so felt compelled to appeal to how their independence corresponded to Western values and interests.

Such analyses therefore reaffirm the intersubjective nature of processes of national imaging and identity promotion and in particular the need for recognition and acceptance from a salient international community. At different points in time this has given outsiders considerable influence on what is deemed appropriate in particular national contexts. Indeed, Marklund's chapter highlights the extent to which outsiders' identifications and expectations about Sweden – in this case in the United States – in turn became utilised in Swedish domestic politics as a tool to beat opponents with by emphasising the need to live up to the externally projected image and others' expectations.

The normative content of external expectations has therefore also been important, both in terms of what sort of state identity and image is projected/constituted, as well as in terms of what sorts of projection practices and messages have been deemed most relevant at different points in time. For example, for small nations seeking recognition for their very nationhood the key problem is often perceived as one of international ignorance. Discussing the inter-war period, Clerc therefore notes that newly independent Finland's major problem was being recognised as a nation and state as such, the first step to which was being made known. The emphasis during this period therefore became one of simply propagating information about Finland, with the primary purpose of establishing '*we are here*' for foreigners. This, itself, reflected a longer running effort on the part of the nationalist movement from the late-nineteenth century onwards of simply seeking to make the pre-independence Grand Duchy of Finland and the Finns visible by participating in various international cultural events, like the Great International Exhibition held in Paris in 1900, at which Finnish art, architecture, folklore and information about the Finns and their land was disseminated to a broader European audience.[9] Come the Cold War, Clerc notes that Finland's recognition problem had changed. The issue now was not simply one of visibility, but one of the meaning and nature of Finland's neutrality policy and relationship with the Soviet Union. Finnish information

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[9] Browning, *Constructivism,* 106; Paasivirta, *Finland and Europe,* 181; Griffiths, *Scandinavia*, 93. Although this is not to say such representations were politically neutral as it is evident that some cultural products (e.g. some subjects for paintings) were deemed to be inherently more 'national' – and therefore more worthy for inclusion – than others.

work therefore became increasingly directed towards explaining the nature of Finnish policy given its geopolitical position between East and West in the Cold War – efforts which resonate rather closely with classical understandings of public diplomacy (as reflected in Mordhorst's chapter).

It is important to emphasise that there is considerable emotional content evident in such practices and processes, since recognition for the claims nations make about themselves is often a considerable source of self-esteem and honour, while lack of recognition can generate feelings of shame, anxiety and insecurity.[10] This is also where established, but historically contingent, norms of subjectivity become important in framing the types of identities, images and representations states are likely to project and the practices by which they might seek to do this. Historically, for example, norms of statehood have been overwhelmingly connected to upholding territorial sovereignty, while national prestige and international status has also often been connected to territorial expansion. This has tended to mean that national status, honour and self-esteem have been connected to military exploits. Indeed, such ideas have become so endemic that we tend to take them for granted.

However, to the extent to which narratives about globalisation have become dominant, with the territorial state in turn reconceptualised as the competition state, then the established rules of the game and normative criteria of international subjectivity may also be changing. This is to say that in a world characterised in terms of global market competition, military exploits count much less – and may even be viewed as delegitimising – than entrepreneurial capacity, openness to trade and investment, and flexibility. In such a world, national self-esteem is as likely to be gained through attracting multinational corporations – or winning the Eurovision Song Contest – as it is through troop deployments.

In turn, this is impacting on the types of stories nation's seek to tell about themselves, and where the emphasis in nation branding programmes, at least, is increasingly on rejecting the traditional focus on nationalism and kinship ties in favour of presenting societies as cosmopolitan, multicultural spaces open for investment. In turn, this tends to shift the sorts of cultural products deemed appropriate for that task. A good example of this was a recent attempt in Finland to establish a new Guggenheim museum in Helsinki, in order to establish a reputation for the city as a place suitable for the consumption of international culture, and which in turn was designed to raise Helsinki to the elite level of international cultural capitals. In contrast, critics saw this as a blatant rejection of indigenous culture in favour of the importation of foreign brands appealing to a global cultural elite.[11] This episode stands in stark contrast to the period at the end of the nineteenth

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[10] See Lebow, *A Cultural Theory*; Steele, *Ontological Security*.
[11] "Small group demonstrates in Helsinki against proposed Guggenheim Museum", *Helsingin Sanomat International*

century noted earlier, when the emphasis was rather on promoting those cultural products deemed to be the most distinctively and authentically Finnish. Although in both instances culture and identity were being strategically and instrumentally manipulated and deployed, for critics, while the earlier emphasis was on generating national kinship ties and gaining recognition for their existence from abroad, contemporary nation branding practices neglect (and may sometimes even reject) this element in favour of appealing to the consumptive desires of outsiders.[12]

Put differently, in such cases questions of kinship and national attachment therefore appear to have lost ground to an emphasis on market success. Indeed, in some cases it can even appear that the former is only deemed important insofar as it enhances the latter, whereas historically the relationship has been the reverse. Thus, rather than the 'brand' being valuable insofar as it enhances the 'nation', the nation becomes valuable only insofar as it enhances the brand.

The challenges and potentials of smallness

An implicit suggestion of a number of chapters in this book is that small states feel these pressures to conform to the normative standards of subjectivity operating in any given context more than larger powers. This is certainly evident in the chapters focused on the Baltic States, but also to some degree in those on the Nordic States. Indeed, as Lehti has noted elsewhere, while great powers may be preoccupied with legitimising their actions, small states are often faced with the task of legitimising their very existence.[13] As such they need to be much more sensitive to the normative environment they occupy. Comparing Tessaris' and Piirimäe's chapters is instructive on this point. Focused on the years immediately following the end of the First World War and the creation of the League of Nations, Tessaris' chapter highlights an environment in which national self-determination was being proclaimed as a constitutive principle of international society. It was, therefore, an environment relatively amenable to the constitution of new small states in Europe. By the 1940s, however, Piirimäe highlights the extent to which the normative environment had changed, and where nationalism was increasingly "equated with particularism and international instability", but also with the fragmentation of political and economic systems more generally. This made fighting for continued recognition of the independence of the Baltic States increasingly difficult.

Indeed, come the 1930s there was already a more general sentiment evident that the future lay with ever larger states, while the proliferation of small states in Europe after the First

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Edition, 12 March 2012.

[12] Such a view reflects Veblen's analysis of the drive towards emulation in an age of conspicuous consumption. Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*; Watson, "Desperately Seeking".

[13] Lehti, "Performing Identity".

World War was viewed by many as an historical blip to be rectified.[14] In the International Relations literature such sentiments have in turn encouraged a tendency to view small states as largely impotent objects, constantly buffeted hither and thither by the machinations and changing fortunes of the great powers. To this extent, the ability of small states to act freely is often presented as dependent upon the benevolence of larger powers. In short, being small is viewed as a major constriction and security problem.[15]

In such a context, in which classical power political discourses dominated, as throughout most of the twentieth century in Europe, it might be argued that image policy was of particular importance to Europe's small states. Lacking sufficient traditional hard power resources, small states may have had an enhanced need to utilise their soft power assets in order to enhance their security and ultimately justify their continued existence.

In this respect, the book suggests that when it comes to managing and manipulating images, identities and representations, small states may possess some distinct advantages. Some of these are practical and concerned with the ability of small states to project more coherent images. One suggestion is that this may be because they are culturally, socially, ethnically and politically more homogeneous, with this making agreement about national representations easier. However, insofar as difference and similarity is always socially constructed, and not absolute, such claims should be treated cautiously. Indeed, as discussed below, disagreements have not been uncommon. A second suggestion, and perhaps more promising, is that it is easier to coordinate messages when fewer actors are involved. As is evident in several chapters, the fact that personal networks extended, not only across political elites, parties and ministries, but also into the private and public sectors, certainly made coordination easier than might otherwise have been the case. Third, meanwhile, is the argument that since small states are often little known by international audiences they are less burdened by established perceptions. This means that those perceptions that do exist might be challenged more easily, while new images are also less likely to come in for close scrutiny and interrogation – essentially meaning that small states may be able to 'get away' with certain claims that larger, and better known, states might not.

For example, as discussed in the Introduction, and as evident in Angell's chapter on Norway, small states have at times sought to project images and identities of themselves as being particularly concerned with peace and its promotion. Their success in doing this is sometimes seen as a result of the fact that small states are often perceived as more benign, less ambitious and as

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[14] Cohen, *Geography and Politics*, 41.
[15] E.g. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas", 299; Knudsen, "Small states", 184,187; Vital, *Survival of Small States*, 8–9.

having fewer hidden agendas.[16] The Nordic states have been particularly adept in this regard, throughout the Cold War fostering an image of benevolent peace promotion, environmentalism and a 'third way' socio-economic welfare model marrying elements of Western capitalism and Eastern communism.[17] Such an image has been maintained despite Finland's wartime attempts at territorial expansion in the name of creating Greater Finland, Denmark's continuing colonial legacy, Sweden's proactive engagement in the arms trade and Norwegian environmentalism standing at odds with its role as major oil exporter.

One thing the above discussion therefore points to is that smallness is not necessarily a handicap, but can even be perceived as a strategic asset. Indeed, rather than thinking of smallness in absolute or objective terms, it also often assumes the form of an identity. While self-identifying oneself as small is usually viewed as debilitating, with most of the theoretical literature in International Relations following this line, there is certainly no inevitability about this. Indeed, as various chapters highlight, a self-proclaimed small state identification has often been embraced. In the case of Finland, for example, and to draw on my own research, during the Cold War smallness was initially embraced and actively projected in order to distance the country from the Cold War by presenting it as harmless, as well as serving as an explanation in the West for the country's close relationship with the Soviet Union. It then became the basis for greater activism in seeking to establish a role for Finland as a 'bridge between East and West', while following the end of the Cold War, and riding the coattails of the phenomenal rise of telecommunications corporation Nokia, it became a synonym for innovativeness, entrepreneurialism and smartness.[18] Seen from this perspective, therefore, there is nothing given about smallness, while there may even be good grounds to actively embrace and market a small state image and identity.

Disciplining democracy and the responsibilities of citizenship

At the same time, assumptions evident within this volume that their size, assumed cultural coherence and tightly connected networks of political, social and economic elites means small states may have some advantages in the politics of national image and identity promotion, can in turn raise questions about the potential impact of such practices on the nature of democratic governance in small states. To this extent, it is worth noting that much contemporary academic critique of nation branding practices precisely warns that nation branding programmes seem to be fundamentally anti-democratic in orientation. Various factors are identified to support the claim, although two stand

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[16] Græger, Larsen & Ojanen, "Fourfold 'Nuisance Power'", 221.

[17] Browning, 'Branding Nordicity', 27–51; Mouritzen, "The Nordic Model", 9–21.

[18] For an overview see Browning, "Small, Smart and Salient?", 669–84; Browning & Lehti, "Beyond East–West", 691–716.

out.

First, critics focus on who gets to frame the brand and where it is noted that, typically, modern day nation branding programmes are outsourced to foreign-based consultancies. As Jordan notes, in the case of Estonia this was Interbrand, while Mordhorst notes how responsibility for Denmark's branding programme was placed with the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs. This, it is argued, not only results in the prioritisation of commercial logics in debates about national identity formation, but privatises the process of what is deemed worthy to include in any branding campaign. At best critics argue that democratic participation is reduced to a form of pseudo-democratic co-creation, as consultants typically seek out inputs from social actors as to what they think about the nation. However, while such reaching out is meant as an inclusive move, critics like Volcic and Andrejevic argue it is illusionary at best, since once opinions have been gathered democratic inclusion in the process ends.[19] In other words, once the information is in, the consultants set about determining the brand according to their own framing logics of what a national brand needs to do and look like, and where the emphasis is typically on what might sell, rather than what is perhaps most authentic.

Second, critics note how in contemporary branding practices great emphasis is placed on the responsibility of citizens for the brand's success. Citizens are therefore encouraged to 'live the brand' and to view themselves as 'brand ambassadors'.[20] Implicit, therefore, are notable elements of governmentality, where certain forms of citizenship behavior are to be encouraged and deemed more patriotic – because of their brand resonance – than others.[21] Indeed, it is not hard to find examples in which such imperatives are taken to include the requirement not to criticise the country or its government for any failings.[22] Critics therefore argue that nation branding has the tendency to prioritise demonstrations of cultural citizenship – for example in the form of conforming to national stereotypes depicted in branding campaigns – over the exercise of political citizenship, insofar as criticism is viewed as undermining brand coherence and effectiveness.[23]

Interestingly, the chapters in this book both support and challenge these views, and certainly suggest the need for more nuance in understanding how these processes and practices have evolved over time. A good place to start is with the question of who has undertaken these activities and whose voices count in imag(in)ing and representing the nation to others, and where it is evident that historically a wide variety of actors have been involved. Such actors have included the state,

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[19] Volcic & Andrejevic, "Nation Branding", 600–2.
[20] Aronczyk, "Living the Brand", 54.
[21] Weidner, "Nation Branding".
[22] For examples from Africa see Browning, "Nation Branding and Development".
[23] Alegi, "A Nation To Be Reckoned With", 415.

commercial and civil society actors, and even individual citizens. Particularly notable, is that while critics of contemporary nation branding practices worry about the extent of top down state control, this certainly has not always been the case – although the general historical trajectory does seem to have been one of the states increasingly trying to centralise and coordinate image promotion processes.

At times such centralising impulses have been understandable, as is evident in Åkerlund's discussion of how, prior to the Second World War, Swedish Nazi-sympathising lecturers in Germany became viewed as a problem for a country keen to establish its neutral credentials. As Åkerlund notes, at stake here was the question of "who was to represent the nation abroad, and who was to appoint these persons", with this ultimately resulting in Swedish attempts to exert more centralising control. Another example is provided by Clerc, who points to the considerable expectations placed on Finnish citizens during the Cold War to ensure their actions did not contradict official lines of Finnish foreign policy, in particular in regard to the relationship with Moscow, and which became one element of the so-called Finlandisation phenomenon. Indeed, such expectations were, in this case, also at times accompanied by threats, including that of legal action against journalists and editors deemed to have published material defamatory to 'foreign powers' (a euphemism for the Soviet Union).[24]

However, while examples invoking Nazism may seem straightforward (although not always, as suggested below), other cases are perhaps less so and raise significant questions about what to do when citizens 'go rogue'. Glover's analysis of tensions between demands for patriotism and activist anti-nationalism around the issue of Swedish image policy in the 1960s is particularly instructive in this respect. As he notes, the dilemma facing the government was that throughout the 1960s Swedish politics became increasingly polarised between those calling "for more active and effective promotion of Swedish capitalism" and those on the Left calling for more solidarity and emphasis on democratic socialism. While the former supported the projection of a 'total image' of Sweden akin to the marketing ideals of brand coherence favoured by contemporary nation branding consultants, the latter found such attempts to 'sell Sweden' abhorrent and actively criticised them – a political dispute notably giving the lie to generalisations about small state homogeneity and consensus. The response, Glover notes, was to try and make a virtue out of such divergent positions by welcoming critics to discuss their reservations in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' official publication for issues connected to promoting Sweden abroad. Embracing dissent within its pages therefore became part of a strategy of reaffirming the consensus culture and goal of total image

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[24] For an extensive analysis see Salminen, *Silenced Media.*

projection, by adding a sense of irony and satire to the projection. To this extent, Glover argues, certain forms of dissent became 'authorised', co-opted and made safe; others, however, remained 'unauthorised', beyond the pale and could simply not be tolerated.

The line between 'authorised' – and therefore deemed positive for national image projection – and 'unauthorised' dissent is, of course, a fine one and creates obvious tensions. A more recent example of this can be seen in Norway's official embracing of the Norwegian 'black metal' music scene. Black metal is music that is both heavy and satanic, and whose adherents have often been openly sympathetic to neo-Nazi 'white power' agendas. During the 1980s and 1990s black metal became a notable sub-culture in Norway and was largely viewed by the establishment as anti-social and a criminal problem. Different bands and their fans fought and murdered each other, and burned down ancient Stave churches because they were viewed as offensive to their pagan beliefs. Starting in the 2000s, however, Norwegian diplomats reportedly began to receive an introduction and training in the history and personalities of Norwegian black metal, following the realisation that it was popular with particular foreign audiences keen to visit the land of their music heroes. Meanwhile, tourists can take tours of key record shops and desecrated churches.[25] This re-scripting of the anti-establishment, anarchic, satanic and even racist elements of Norwegian black metal as a phenomenon ripe for consumption in the cause of national brand promotion is certainly intriguing, though also potentially disturbing in what it says about the ethical choices that such actions clearly imply.[26]

Finally, it is also worth noting Marklund's observation that it is not only citizens who may feel pressures to discipline themselves to the core images and messages. As he notes, once established, such images can generate expectations about a nation's appropriate behaviour amongst key foreign audiences.

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[25] Andreas Markessinis, "Norway to use black metal for nation branding", 16 June 2011 (available at http://nation-branding.info/2011/06/15/Norway-to-use-black-metal-for-nation-branding/).

[26] This is particularly evident in the wake of the massacre perpetrated by Anders Breivik on Utøya Island in 2011. As a footnote to this story it is worth noting that Varg Virkenes, otherwise known as Count Grishnackh and perhaps the best known figure on the black metal scene in Norway – not least because of his imprisonment for murdering a musician from another band – was subsequently convicted of inciting racial hatred against Jews and Muslims in France in 2014 and was reportedly sympathetic to Breivik and had received a copy of his manifesto before he committed the atrocity ("Norwegian neo-Nazi musician said to be an 'Anders Breivik sympathiser' arrested in France over fears he was plotting a similar massacre", *MailOnline*, July 16 2013, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2365720/Anders-Breivik-sympathiser-Kristian-Vikernes-arrested-France-fears-plotting-similar-massacre.html). As a further footnote, it is also notable that Øystein Aarseth (aka Euronymous), the musician murdered by Virkenes, was a lead contender to have his image painted on the tailfin of one of the planes of Norwegian Airlines following the airline asking passengers to nominate their 'tail heroes' ("Black metal legend may become emblem of Norwegian airline", *The Guardian*, 26 March 2012).

Conclusion

To conclude, however, it is worth reflecting on Marklund's provocation concerning "the (im)possibility of purposive public diplomacy and image management". All the chapters in this volume, save for Musiał's (on which more below) engage with concerted efforts at national imag(in)ing. As we have seen, this has taken a variety of forms, from classic public diplomacy to hosting major cultural events like the Eurovision Song Contest, has involved a diverse array of actors and audiences across the public-private and state-civil society divides, and which has also demonstrated considerable variations in the degree of state coordination driving each process. Moreover, while the book clearly demonstrates that a concern with image promotion is not new, arguably it is on the increase, and, like Mordhorst, I would also subscribe to the idea that insofar as discourses of globalisation and the competition state in an era of neoliberal capitalism have the upper hand, then the underpinning logics of such practices are also transforming.

However, despite such emphases, and the manifest importance states have attached, and continue to attach, to such practices, it is not always clear how successful such efforts are. As Marklund deftly notes in his own chapter, there can be considerable randomness in the realm of image policy. Thus, he notes how despite concerted efforts at developing coherent state-managed messages, these were largely surpassed by the "star quality" of Olof Palme and his ability to steal the show and become a focal point for foreigners' perceptions of Sweden, even to the extent to which Palme, and what he represented politically, essentially *became* Sweden's international image. Kjarsgaard has likewise pointed to the particular role of an individual diplomat in doing much the same for Denmark in Iceland, Switzerland and Portugal. Meanwhile, Åkerlund, Glover and Mordhurst have respectively pointed to the ability of academics, artists and the national press to substantially derail the work of the image managers, while various examples are given of how particular campaigns have backfired because of their unintended resonance with target audiences. Thus, while nations want to pursue image and identity promotion, plan for it, create structures and programmes to engage in it and try to control their national images, it is evident that this is not always easy.

Indeed, critics of contemporary nation branding practices are unlikely to be surprised by this. As they point out, identifying successful cases of national brand promotion is notoriously difficult, with most branding programmes deemed to have failed (note Jordan's chapter).[27] The reason for this is arguably that branding and image marketing often lack sufficient substance on their own to be convincing, and are therefore easily forgotten, and which is perhaps one reason why

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[27] Jansen, "Designer nations", 130.

branding programmes frequently end up reproducing national stereotypes despite the often proclaimed intention to escape them. At this point Musiał's chapter is highly instructive. His contribution in many respects stands out from the rest of the volume because he actually has very little to say about formal practices of image promotion and policy. Instead, Musiał's focus is on the ability of the Nordic states to export various norms to their Baltic cousins in the post-Cold War period, a process he terms "cognitive colonisation".

It is no doubt the case that their ability to do this was enhanced by an already established image of the Nordic states as stable, prosperous and peaceful, making them attractive examples and sources of inspiration. However, to the extent to which the image of the Nordic states was remade during this period, it was, he suggests, not so much a consequence of active image policy as substantive concrete economic and political engagement premised on targeted investment strategies and hands-on support. As has been discussed elsewhere, for the Nordic states engagement with their Baltic neighbours was in part a response to the perceived loss of role, identity and purpose they experienced with the end of the Cold War.[28] While there were good environmental, economic, social and security incentives for active engagement with the Baltics, it was also driven by the need to re-establish a sense of identity and purpose, and in doing so also to reclaim the sense of progressive moralism central to Cold War conceptions of Nordicity.

What is also notable about the period discussed in Musiał's chapter is that while such active and substantive Nordic engagement was going on in the Baltic States, there was little emphasis on Nordic brand management or image creation. Indeed, as part of their attempts to join the European Union, Sweden and Finland actively played down a common Nordic dimension, as they were aware of concerns about a potential Nordic bloc being constituted. Instead, the Nordic states actively engaged in various other constitutive projects. Most notably, Denmark and Sweden took a leading role in promoting a new unifying Baltic Sea Region, grounding the region-building effort in historic discourses depicting it as a resurrection of the medieval Hanseatic League. For its part, Finland downplayed the Nordic in favour of the 'the North', depicting the North as a blank space untainted by the pejorative labels of East and West, and a space where new relations and a new regional community might be formed. Today, such creative and romanticised efforts of regional imag(in)ing are notable by their absence. Meanwhile, while the Baltic Sea Region and Northern Dimension have gained institutional, technical and policy presence, both have largely failed to evoke emotional attachment. In contrast, the idea of Nordicity remains evocative despite the absence of such branding efforts. This, I would argue, provides a salutary tale to the provocation

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[28] Wæver, "Nordic Nostalgia", 77–102.

posed by Marklund concerning "the (im)possibility of purposive public diplomacy and image management". However, it is also one that raises questions about more recent interest on the part of the Nordic Council to develop its own regional branding strategy, and one that suggests that the seductive claims of nation branding discourses and consultants are hard to resist, despite the evidence.