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# NATION – BRANDING IN SMALL – STATES FOREIGN POLITICS

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### Abstract

The article deals with nation-branding under specific conditions of small states and their foreign relations. The first part is devoted to identification of the main specific features of small states from international relations point of view focusing to problems with classification criteria and instruments of their foreign policies. The following part of the article is devoted to analyse the role of nation branding in small state foreign policy based on example of New Zealand being traditionally identified as small state fulfilling all the above characteristics.

### Key words

small state, foreign politics, nation-branding, prestige, power.

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## 1. Introduction – On small states in international relations

Small States got to the centre of international relations especially in the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when their foreign policies were analyzed especially from the aspect of their relations to the superpowers, and/or larger players. But the roots of their definition can be sought even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when under the influence of events in Europe (especially the Congress of Vienna) the term „superpower” started to be used. A breakthrough in examining small states from the international- political perspective was the publication of the Small States during the Second World War (Fox, 1959), which was devoted to the analysis of some of the countries identified as small states mainly from the military-security standpoint, particularly in terms of neutrality as a strategy to cope with relationship to the great powers in the period.

This work was followed up, influenced by neo-realistic approach to the analysis of international relations in the 60s and 70s, by further studies that approached the examination of foreign policy of small states in the context of the Cold War and decolonization process, and later they led to studies analyzing international political situation after the collapse of bipolarity, which brought new „small” actors<sup>1</sup>. This development requires a deeper analysis examining small states not only in economic or geographical terms, but especially from a global international political perspective, which should point out and

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<sup>1</sup> Studies focused on chosen aspects of foreign-politics of small states see for example in: East (1973), Fox (1959; 1969), Keohane (1969, 1971), Vandenbosh (1964), and others.

reflect the underlying determinants and factors of the foreign policy of the countries studied this way.

Individual studies have been mainly focused on the importance of international organizations for the foreign policy activities of small states, which should serve as a platform for dealing with similar problems, the aggregation of common interests as well as sharing the information necessary for the development of a state.

It is possible to state that approaches to research small states in international relations prove several common denominators, and that the best conditions for exploring the foreign policy of a small state is its overall practical framework, i.e. examining all manifestations of foreign policy (including political leaders and their influence on the formation and implementation of foreign policy), and the second assumption is in exploring a small state through its policy of balancing the power, for example through bandwagoning in its interaction with stronger (jeopardising) superpower, i.e. through particularly security-military aspects of the implementation of its interaction in the global system, confirming the thesis that a small state can be defined only in its interactions within the hierarchy of actors (states) in the power area of international relations, i.e. in the context of its relationship with the great powers (powers) and middle powers, as documented for example in relation of a small country to a neighbouring middle power (as for example relations of New Zealand with Australia).

Therefore, as one of the most important features of a small state foreign policy is a determination of its national identity, it could be considered as a group of features characterizing the state arising from its history, ethnic or cultural aspects. Understanding the national identity, i.e. seizing and representation of common underlying motives and expressions of the nation is either an objective factor (i.e. naturally developed over the independent development of the country's internal political environment), or national identity has evolved as a subjective response to the foreign policy challenges of the country. In this context, analysis of this should also consider the tasks of various prime ministers and top political representatives who are actively and knowingly involved in defining and shaping national identity. This is the point for deriving the most important foreign policy tool of a small state. This tool is called **nation-branding**, i.e. identification or selection of logo or phrases which represent the country outside.

Studying small states in their external interactions, security determinants should be examined from the security aspects of a state, i.e. application of power through its military capabilities using

a variety of techniques of power -balancing, such as aliening or bandwagoning in response to its (mostly) direct security environment. As evident in this paper, foreign policy of a small state cannot be examined as a narrowly defined problem, for example just in economic terms, which provides only a partial determinant of the overall state's position.

In foreign policy small states have a special position due to different prevailing determinants of their direct power potentials (regional, i.e. for example small size of the state, economic, i.e. by GDP and other indicators, demographic, i.e. population to 3-5 mil., etc.) comparing to stronger players that defines them rather narrow space for their foreign policy decision – making in the form of several alternatives, in economic or military security terms.

Therefore, in their foreign policy in the process of continual balancing of various power potentials which are small states exposed to, they must turn also to areas which „bigger” actor do not (or may not) devote any (or rather no) special importance (such as for example the analyzed nation -branding) due to the different historical and economic-political reasons. Thus, the international environment has been of more significance for small countries however it offers the state less alternatives in decision-making than is the case with the great powers (Hey, 2003). The assumption that the global society is much more important in small state's interactions than for the great powers is important to be seen, because they are not evolving much more pressure in terms of expectations for the decisions. Small state is because of its size and other socio-economic factors more vulnerable, and thus its system provides far fewer options to resolve the issue.

The theory of small state foreign policy identifies some characteristics of a state which is in active partnership with the superpower and middle- power (in case of New Zealand for example USA and Australia). Foreign policy of such a state is based on the same behaviour in foreign policy which is based primarily on bilateral relations with its partners. Literature has identified several approaches to the foreign policy of a small state, such as geographical position (as Keohane or Mahan), or through security-risk analysis, and others. These approaches generally examine small states either in Europe (Sweden, Luxembourg or Slovakia) or within so-called ACP countries, i.e. at three levels, at the level of African countries, Caribbean, and Pacific States. For this reason and because of the neoliberal institutionalism in 90s of 20<sup>th</sup> century, small states started to be analysed in economic terms, i.e. based on their share and the impact on the world economy. As already mentioned, 90s were a significant turning point in examining the small

states when several new players in Europe were joining various political, economic as well as security organizations and became a part of the integration processes in Europe. They were relatively unexperienced actors which in pursuit of the most effective foreign policy could turn to a „pattern“ of the already established small countries and based on their experience. This process of establishing new societies and their manifestations within the integration efforts turned the attention of international relations experts to analyze issues of small states, i.e. their characters and roles in the global political system.

A significant moment was the entry of Constructivism which representatives undertook to an examination of small states through identifying their standards and **identity**, stressing that these are the main moments, which, altogether with geographical and economic aspects, determine the direction of foreign policy of that country and its prestige in the selected areas (for example, in addressing environmental issues, etc.), illustrated by various Scandinavian countries.

The common aim of each of the above approaches was to develop a concept of small state foreign policy which would be applicable as widely as possible, i.e. as a framework for examining either the foreign policy of a small state through its relationship with the great powers (or „bigger“ player) or approaches analyzing specific features and expressions typical for small countries in one particular region.

The most common for analysis of small states is an **economic approach**, since it serves as the basis for developing a methodology for several international organizations in development aid (in the examined context is that of the World Bank).

Therefore, small state theory provides a theoretical framework for assessing the foreign policy behaviour of a small state (e.g. New Zealand, Slovenia or Slovakia), its conduct its bilateral relations undertaken with different actors of international relations, whether with middle powers or superpowers or in the context of cooperation with the various international and regional organizations. In general, the basis of this theory lies in the assertion that the limited resources of small states limit their ability to pursue a comprehensive foreign policy and based on this it is possible to predict their foreign policy behaviour.

Thus, the classification of small states relies on the specifications of the primary determinants of the foreign policy position of the state in the global political system, as well as on the understanding of the power potentials of enforcement and defence of own interests and goals. According to O. Krejčí (2007), the power by which the state is in its foreign policy interaction with other actors has been

affected by the material and spiritual factors. Material factor expresses the underlying assumptions of foreign policy, such as geographic location, self-sufficiency in natural resources, which builds its industrial capacity and related military-technical potential. The last significant moment of material aspect of power potential of the country is the population, i.e. currently the most widespread and most applied criterion of the theories defining small states.

## 2. Role of nation branding in soft power applied in small state foreign policy

Generally, currently a soft power is given much greater importance than in the past, i.e. power of the state, which is in a direct contrast to the hard power (i.e. use of power resources, such as war) based on determinants such as military force, GDP and population size.

Currently, a use of soft power by small states within their foreign policy, as illustrated below on example of New Zealand's nation-branding, is associated with the growth of their economic potential, increase of its scientific and technological and cultural influences in its immediate region and the global society (for example, in international institutions and organizations). It follows that while dealing with various foreign policy issues, the country relies on its commitment to world or regional community in the manner that it shares the same common values and highlights the uniqueness of their cultural aspects and principles of justice in international relations given to the forefront (here important role played also by sharing moral aspects of politics). Legitimacy of foreign policy led in this manner is ensured through public debate, i.e. via work with public opinion, which is an expression of the quality of government (and governance, as well).

The following part of the article is to analyse the role of nation branding in small state's foreign policy based on example of New Zealand being traditionally identified as small state fulfilling all the above characteristics. In this context, soft power can be considered as presentation of own culture and language (especially of their specifics, as in the case of New Zealand Maori culture in a secured natural environment), cooperation with the media and emphasizing cooperation not only in international relations, i.e. emphasizing the principle of so-called perception of „us – we“ (we-ness) while accompanied with an active use of diplomacy. It is clear from the above, that soft power is a way of using the power of the state (i.e. ability to convince other actors on how to act in accordance with our beliefs) when the

state effectively influences behaviour of other actors in international relations without using any form of coercion or violence.

As given by A. Butcher (2012) in his study on application of soft power in New Zealand's foreign policy, the world society perceives an interesting destination or country through its sports activities (Rugby World Cup), educational areas through exchanges or study visits of foreign students, tourist –very- attractive country in terms of nature connected with presentation of the culture linked to the film industry (e.g. movies *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*; see Fig. 2). These areas, respectively the activities used here by Butcher prove to have more stable and long-term effects, rather than using the hard power.

According to A. Butcher (2012), possible soft power in the case of New Zealand share the aspiration (expressed in the national anthem) perceived in its relationship with Australia, and the nearest region and culturally represented by demographic movements and migration from the Pacific Islands and Asia.

In accordance also with Butcher, it can be concluded that soft power is used by New Zealand for example in close cooperation with its partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region, i.e. in the counter- terrorism activities in the region through participation in various projects aimed at supporting the development of civil society. This activity is financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, through the Asia Security Fund. This Fund provides finances for example for training centres to combat terrorism in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Bangkok. The goal in this area is for example to help the Pacific countries to adopt legislation to combat terrorism, and to this end the Pacific Islands Forum Working Group on Counter-Terrorism has been convened by New Zealand since 2005.

Another instrument, important for understanding the nation-branding process, is a sharing and/ or activation of development aid in the region, since New Zealand in the framework of its small state foreign policy is proved to be an active UN member and a member of the Economic and Social Commission of the United Nations for Asia and the Pacific. (<http://www.un.org/en/sections/...>) In this area, New Zealand points out that its position as a major player in the Pacific is perceived principally through its active work in different regional groupings such as South Pacific Commission (regional organization that provides

assistance to the countries with a non- self governing region of the South Pacific under their administration), South Pacific Forum, and others (New Zealand is a member of the Pacific Forum with South Pacific States, Australia and Papua New Guinea).

In this context of **nation-branding**, it is needed to state that New Zealand, unlike Australia, defines itself as a Pacific nation. This fact has led to a perspective radically different from the Australian one on several issues, including immigration; trade, as well as relations with the US. From the beginning of its formal independent statehood, New Zealand has already profiled as South- Pacific nation, as evidenced by not only by close constitutional relationships with the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau. Their citizens are also citizens of New Zealand while Cook Islands and Niue are fully self-governing states in free association with New Zealand. Tokelau is a dependent territory of New Zealand without full self-government, even though the development goes towards its connection to association with New Zealand.

The above is necessary for understanding that New Zealand's nation-branding is, in many aspects, rooted in **indigenous people** and their role in the society. Also strategy of nation branding via developing and promoting tourism is related to aspects of the original indigenous peoples. Maori element is particularly lively in all areas of life of New Zealand society. It is a manifestation of understanding supporting a torque moment of identity of the country - the indigenous Maori population. Engaging the indigenous Maori population in New Zealand tourism (as in Fig. 1) is one of the most spectacular moments and original approaches to address the situation of indigenous peoples while building and promoting the branding. In contrast to the so-called „new” minorities as the indigenous people of the country are historically entitled to different conditions and treatment.



Fig. 1. Indigenous culture and traditions as used in nation-branding

Source: Tourism NZ unveils..., 2015.



As reported by A.A. Giannopoulos et al. (2011), one of the main characters of the today's globalized world is a competition of individual countries fighting for attention or confidence by potential visitors - tourists, i.e. customers or investors and representatives of other countries. Just a positive branding, which stands on a solid strategy, can be a comparative advantage for the country also in international relations. In that regard, in my opinion, tourism should be seen as one of the most visible and most tangible manifestations of good nation - branding.

The above activities could be classified as nation - branding activities, which in this context are identified as one of the most effective instruments of soft power, as evidenced by the example of New Zealand, developing the branding of countries, especially in areas such as Māori - the relationship with their cultural roots; tourism; introduction to the country through the film industry (the above-mentioned films like Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit; Fig. 2) as well as the presentation of the country through its relationship with the environment (symbol 100% Pure New Zealand; one hundred percent pure New Zealand).

The New York Times Magazine in 2005 in the issue called „Year in Ideas” introduced the idea of using national brand to increase the prestige of the country (as one of the foreign policy instruments) as one of the most extraordinary ideas applying Anholt's statement that “Just as companies have learned to „live the brand,” countries should consider their reputations carefully because (...) in this interconnected world (...) the state's reputation is therefore of critical importance” (Risen, 2005). The author is mainly based on Anholt's argumentation that national governments have been well aware of the use of the brand in international relations, when brand somehow allows them to gain control over their image by taking an advantage of its strength in the cultural, economic or political sphere.

One of the programs under this activity was to organize the World Championships in rugby in 2011, thus the country was offered an extraordinary opportunity to present to the world just the best and most interesting what the country could offer to a wide variety of tourists. In practice, this meant connections between iwi and other Maori groups and state and public institutions, which brought a clear support of Maori business ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWOwe\\_n-2Gw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWOwe_n-2Gw)), and the principal effect is that “New Zealand is one of the most respected and desirable countries in the world and the Pure NZ brand successfully represents many of the positive images, assumptions and expectations people have of the country. The tourism campaign around the Pure NZ brand has undoubtedly been a success and has helped to make New Zealand one of the most highly sought after tourist destinations and one that is high on people's ‘must-visit’ lists.” with proving the preliminary results yet, when stating that “Our 100% Pure New Zealand campaign (...) is changed and evolved but still aims **to make New Zealand one of the most desirable destinations in the world** for our target market. The markets are different (...) the message is the same: **It's our special combination of activities, landscape, people and culture that makes New Zealand a unique holiday experience.** We call that experience 100% Pure New Zealand. (...) We continue to market New Zealand internationally as a tourism destination through our 100% Pure New Zealand campaign. It's at the heart of our advertising, international PR, online marketing, event and sponsorships”. (<http://traveltrade.newzealand.com/en/working...>).

As pointed out by S. Anholt (2004), the ability of how a state can attract some of the positive specifics at the present is expressed just by a real strength of its brand which is indicated by the success of the country in competition with other countries in the vast diversity of various natural beauties, living standards

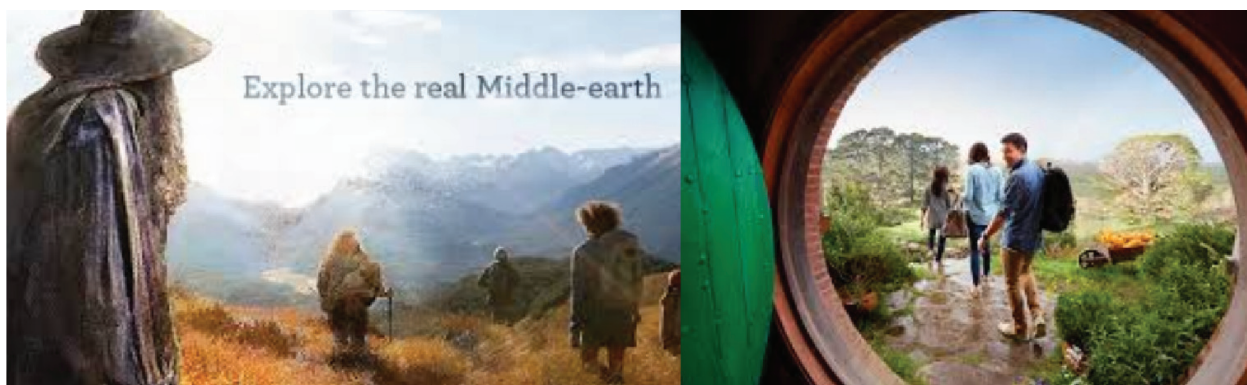


Fig. 2. Famous movie as a tool for nation-branding

Source: <http://www.newzealand.com/int/home-of-middle-earth/>



Fig. 3. The fern – the Brand New Zealand symbol

Source: <http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/about/what-we-do/campaign-and-activity/>.

and cultural specifics in which just discreet „voice“ expires. Branding is therefore, in my opinion, one of the demonstrations of successful implementation of **cultural diplomacy** of a small state and as provided at official web site promoting campaign 100% Pure New Zealand: “The Brand New Zealand symbol is the fern (Fig. 3). It features in our Tourism New Zealand corporate logo. It’s a trademarked country-of-origin brand, used by tourism and trade operators to promote New Zealand internationally and within New Zealand”. (<http://traveltrade.newzealand.com....>)

Although the founder of modern approaches to building a national brand, S. Anholt (2005) acknowledges that from its beginning every country is a trade mark in its essence (which is reflected in international relations for example as its prestige- one of the most important determinant of foreign interaction), and each of these brands is unique. In case of small states building of their own brand in the current international relations is one of the relevant factors, as they have at their disposal other historical, economic, cultural or social conditions comparing to superpowers for example.

In case of small states, building of a **national brand** is a *long-term, goal-oriented process* in which a small state is expected to *highlight its strengths*, which would *distinguish it* among the other small states, which would be *highlighted and compared* also with the stronger actors, i.e. **to highlight its unique identity as an essential attribute of power competition between states**. Building a national brand is a complex process since it involves several national players from different fields (such as in the case of New Zealand combining entrepreneurial sector of tourism and film industry sectors working in the field of cultural or sports for a stable and united government).

In my opinion, the strategy of identification, development and application of such national brand is clearly subject to the recognition and knowledge of own national identity, i.e. by a wide adoption of the moment, character or expression which the

given nation is caught and which not only the political representation is identified with, but making the national brand a foundation of soft power or the prestige of the country requires also the population being identified with, because people are crucial in its practical implementation, and the process of stabilization of the brand around the world will be, in particular, contributed by their work. And this may, in my opinion, be identified as one of the weaknesses of campaigns of several small states in order to raise the profile prepared (e.g. campaign in Slovakia entitled „Slovakia - Little Big Country“ aimed at promoting tourism in Slovakia in the past).

In cases such as Slovakia or analyzed New Zealand, states should, in my opinion, construct the building and stabilisation of their national brand so that it could fulfil an essential role in the foreign policy implementation) in a competitive advantage, i.e. to build it for example on a moment which is the key for the economy (Swiss Army Knife or alpine milk chocolate, which promotes tourism to the region), being set to the context of the overall identity of the country.

In the case of New Zealand, the key brand is “**100% Pure NZ**” (one hundred percent pure New Zealand; see Fig. 4) which synthesized in itself not only a tourism linked to cultural heritage, but it is passed into international relations as a brand focused on anti-nuclear policy and nuclear-free Pacific (in accordance with Anholt’s the definition of national brands such as set of characteristics that perceived by people in the country in the six key areas of national identity expression, such as culture and heritage, residents and migration, government, tourism, investment and exports) (Anholt, 1998) identifying the country as offering “(...) 100% pure relaxation, 100% pure welcome, 100% pure adrenalin, and 100% pure you – all connected back to the core premise of 100% Pure New Zealand (...)” (<http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/about/....>; see Fig. 4).

As reported by C. Blain et al. (2005), determining the brand of a state is based on the identification of the main marketing activities such as creating a name, symbol, logo or words or other graphic representation that accurately reflect the major brand identity. Properly chosen brand should immediately contact the beneficiary country and create an emotional connection with the country (i.e. destination). Such a label is also 100% Pure NZ (see Fig. 4) when the brand reflects a combination of map of the country, the country name and the expression of a one hundred percent quality.

Despite the fact that the expert literature, which is dedicated to branding, focuses primarily on marketing, in my opinion, it is important to perceive



Fig. 4. 100% Pure New Zealand Campaign Logo

Source: <http://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/tag/pure-new-zealand/>

national branding as a tool of **public diplomacy**, i.e. one of the instruments of foreign policy, not only of a small state. And although the main objective of the identification and use of the brand is to *promote the country towards its own population (which thus acquires a unifying moment of own national identity) and residents of other countries (which should be for example a logo to evoke them to be interested in the country at least)*, it may not be confused with propaganda as in order to influence public opinion other tools and methods are used- because, in my opinion, it is rooted in the moment of the definition and promotion of the main aspects of own **national identity** of the country.

### 3. Conclusion

Based on the above, it is in my opinion that a small state can effectively achieve its foreign policy goals in the interaction with other players (often the larger one) just through a well set nation branding, which shall integrate the main aspects of the country. National brands are (should be) indeed promoted mainly central authorities of the state directly (e.g. government and its various specialized departments) or through specialized bodies and agencies, namely in the long term perspective.

As confirmed also by Anholt in his book called *From a competitive nation branding identity – The role of brand management as a “component of national policy”* (Anholt, 2008, p. 23), a national brand building is a part of the national policy as a whole, not just of one campaign or action. This aspect expresses the policy based on the idea of 100% Pure New Zealand, which only confirms the latest developments in research of linking the branding with foreign policy of a state, namely with public diplomacy (see Gilboa, 2008).

In conclusion I can say that in 2010 the brand New Zealand was ranked as the third strongest brand in the world (in the 6th Futurebrand Country Brand Index, CBI that is elaborated in collaboration with

BBC World News)<sup>2</sup>. The main areas to be considered in the long term were, inter alia, tourism, culture and heritage, quality business and living standards. The survey showed that New Zealand draws on the beauty of nature (which becomes a metaphor for the identity; see for example Bell, 2005) but also on freedom of expression and respect of finance.

As explained by the Tourism New Zealand Chair Kerry Prendergast, New Zealand brand clearly proves a long-term growth and enhances the reputation of the country abroad, which facilitates its interaction with other states, proving a nation-branding to be an effective tool of small-state’s foreign policy (<http://stoppress.co.nz/movingssshakings/kevin...>).

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<sup>2</sup> The top was ranked Canada, followed by Australia. See more online at: <http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/tourism-news-and-insights/latest-tourism-news/2010/11/new-zealand-third-strongest-brand/>

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