

**National Self-Esteem and Internationalism:
Branding and Identity in International Relations**

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Introduction

Stylistically speaking it is usually good to begin an article by grabbing the attention of the reader, establishing a point of tension or a plot to entice them to read beyond the opening paragraphs. Likewise, if one wants to get published in high profile international journals there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that in the minds of editors articles focused on some subjects or actors are more likely to be read and cited than others, even if few would suggest that other subjects and actors are not in some sense inherently worthy of analysis as well. Finland, I would suggest, is not one of those actors or subjects automatically located in the academically 'attractive' category. In the academic discipline articles about Finland are generally restricted to relatively niche journals, and one certainly has to look long and hard to find the country tackled in the major journals of the discipline. What goes for the discipline goes for international politics in general, where Finland is one of those countries that can only grab international attention intermittently: most recently, of course, this has been evident in Finland's reluctance to support the bailout of Greece and Portugal. Beyond this, if Finland makes it into the international press then it is usually for curiosities like the annual wife-carrying, sauna endurance or world air guitar championships.

Given that this article only discusses Finland in order to make a broader set of points this obviously begs the question of why pick Finland in the first place and why make this choice so brazenly evident in the opening paragraph? The reason is that should Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs have its way we will all be hearing a lot more about Finland in the future. In 2008 the Ministry appointed a committee, the Country Brand Delegation, to produce a strategy that would enhance "Finland's familiarity and appeal to the rest of the world".¹ In November 2010 the Committee's report was published with the explicit goal to provide the country with a national brand. In other words, instead of the word 'Finland' being met with glazed looks, scratching of heads and fingers pointed vaguely in the direction of northern Europe, the goal of the report was to establish a framework for the emergence of 'brand Finland', where saying Finland will in future conjure up a set of clearly defined and positive images and ideas.

Of course, Finland is not the first nation to explicitly set about branding itself, but in using it as a case study the paper argues that the move towards strategies of branding opens up a range of much bigger questions for scholars of International Relations. In the first instance, the paper builds on recent claims that contrary to the established canons in the discipline states are as much concerned with upholding and enhancing a sense of self-esteem and national dignity as they are with preserving their territorial sovereignty from physical threats of violence. In this respect it is suggested that branding strategies are also to some extent illustrative of the extent to which logics of globalisation entail very different ways of relating identity to otherness in comparison to more traditional geopolitical and territorialised ways of locating the self in global politics.

At the same time, an analysis of 'branding' strategies also enables us to see clearly how foreign policy is not simply about interacting with pre-defined others but is also explicitly about

¹ Jorma Ollila, Chairman of the Country Brand Delegation, quoted in *Helsingin Sanomat International Edition*, 'The Country Brand Delegation sets missions for Finland', 25/11/2010

communicating values and identity narratives to one's own citizens. Again, the Finland branding report provides an excellent illustration of this in that one of its central invocations is to suggest that central to Finland's 'brand' should be an avowed commitment to internationalism in the form of peace diplomacy. At a commonsense level policies of internationalism derive primarily from an ethical concern with the lives and conditions of others beyond the nation-state; others who are perceived as being in need of some form of assistance or advice.² In contrast, the paper argues that the motivations behind internationalist policies are also often as much linked to the needs of domestic audiences, as perceived by national leaders, and of the desire to project ideas of national values into the international diplomatic marketplace. The claim, therefore, is that internationalism is intimately connected to questions of national identity and the need to establish good grounds for national self-esteem and recognition of the national self as a particular type of actor, both domestically as well as within the international community. To be clear, therefore, rather than seek to show how internationalist foreign policies connect to or are legitimised by different narratives of national identity the paper analyses how internationalism can become a source of considerable national self-esteem, especially when developed and presented as a brand as in the Finnish case.

Ontological Security and National Self-Esteem

The key contention of this paper is that contrary to traditional explanations of international politics and foreign policy states are not simply driven by concerns about either physical security (Realism) or wealth accumulation (Liberalism). While it would be foolish to suggest that these elements are unimportant motors of action, to the extent to which analyses are narrowed down around them it results in the sidelining of more symbolic, ideational and psychological dimensions. Moreover, what this paper suggests is that at least as far as the industrialised world is concerned, in an era of globalisation and hyper-modernity, symbolic, ideational and psychological dimensions are manifesting themselves in new ways, the implications of which will be noted below. Theoretically the argument draws upon two relatively new literatures to International Relations which seek to respectively prioritise the demands of ontological security and national self-esteem in understanding state action, the claim being that frequently these elements are prioritised over the demands of physical security.

Broadly speaking the concept of ontological security is concerned with the 'security of being' and is usually understood in terms of an individual's ability to uphold a sense of self-certainty in a changing world. As Giddens' puts it, ontological security represents the capacity of the individual to 'go on' as a result of their ability to uphold a 'sense of continuity and order in events'.³ While the concept has a significant heritage in psychology⁴ and sociology⁵ its application within International Relations (IR) is relatively recent and limited.⁶ This limited application within IR, however, is surprising in that the

² Lawler, Peter (2005) 'The Good State: in praise of 'classical' internationalism', *Review of International Studies* 31, p.441.

³ Giddens, Anthony (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press) p.243.

⁴ Laing, R.D. (1960) *The Divided Self* (London: Penguin).

⁵ Giddens, Anthony (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

⁶ Browning, Christopher S. and Pertti Joenniemi (2010) 'Escaping Security: Norden as a Source of Ontological Certainty', presented at the SGIR 7th Pan-European International Relations Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, 9-11 September 2010; Kinnvall, Catarina (2004) 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the

concept carries considerable potential to challenge established explanations of key phenomena at different levels within international politics. Its potential to offer alternative explanations is most obviously seen in how it calls for a broadening of understandings of the essence of security as traditionally understood in IR by indicating the need to distinguish between the identity-related aspects of security and its more material and physical dimensions. As Mitzen notes, while traditional security studies has been preoccupied with threats of physical violence and the use of force, ontological security draws attention to the need of actors to secure and stabilize a sense of subjectivity and identity, a focus on which, Mitzen suggests, can produce alternative explanations of key phenomena like security dilemmas, traditionally central to Realist conceptions of security.⁷ Mitzen's basic point here is that states may become locked in problematic relationships with other states which manifestly seem to undermine their physical security for the reason that such actions, and the reproduction of a conflictual relationship itself, might actually serve to uphold a particular identity or sense of selfhood. As Steele puts it:

While physical security is (obviously) important to states, ontological security is more important because its fulfilment affirms a state's self-identity (i.e. it affirms not only its physical existence but primarily how a state sees itself and secondarily how it wants to be seen by others). Nation-states seek ontological security because they want to maintain *consistent self-concepts*, and the 'Self' of states is constituted and maintained through a narrative which gives life to routinized foreign policy actions.⁸
[Original emphasis]

As an example Steele suggests that the decision of Belgium to risk the wrath of Germany in the First World War by insisting on its neutrality – an action which was taken in full recognition that it would almost certainly result in the over-running of the country and its loss of sovereignty and independence – was just such a case where the Belgians' sense of self-identity was perceived to 'require' them to resist Germany.⁹ Likewise, he suggests that attention to the demands of ontological security also indicates that Realists may be missing something when they suggest that the Melians' futile resistance and subsequent massacre at the hands of the Athenians simply endorses a power political view in which the powerful get what they desire and the weak suffer

Search for Ontological security', *Political Psychology* 25(5) pp.741-767; Krolikowski, Alanna (2008) 'State Personhood in Ontological Theories of International Relations and Chinese Nationalism: A Sceptical View', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 2(1) pp.109-33; Mitzen, Jennifer (2006a) 'Anchoring Europe's civilizing identity: habits, capabilities and ontological security', *Journal of European Public Policy* 13(2) pp.270-85; Mitzen, Jennifer (2006b) 'Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma', *European Journal of International Relations* 12(3) pp.341-70; Roe, Paul (2008) 'The 'value' of positive security', *Review of International Studies* 34, pp.777-94; Steele, Brent (2005) 'Ontological security and the power of self-identity: British neutrality and the American Civil War', *Review of International Studies* 31(3) pp.519-540; Steele, Brent (2008) *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge); Zaretsky, Eli (2002) 'Trauma and Dereification: September 11 and the Problem of Ontological Security', *Constellations* 9(1) pp.98-105.

⁷ Mitzen, Jennifer (2006b) 'Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma', *European Journal of International Relations* 12(3) p.342.

⁸ Steele, Brent (2008) *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge) pp.2-3.

⁹ Steele, Brent (2008) *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge) chapter 5.

what they must. Rather, perhaps it also suggests to us that people might well prefer death and honour over survival and shame.¹⁰

Arguably, though, an attention to ontological security can also help us better understand the often emotive nature of the relationship between the nation-state and its citizens. As several scholars have noted the nation-state can play important roles as a focus for the ontological security of its citizens. As Kinnvall argues, collective identities like nationalism or religion appeal to people as they provide clear and simple answers regarding the nature of the world and a person's place within it; while one's own personal life may be in disarray it is in such identity-signifiers that individuals may well find a sense of continuity, stability and safety.¹¹ More than this, though, Marlow suggests that publics have increasingly come to expect their political leaders to provide a sense of reassurance with respect to the unfolding of their everyday lives.¹² Although such expectations may be focused on demands for welfare and physical safety they also extend to requirements that political leaders are able to provide a coherent narrative of society, its nature and place in the world.

Indeed, in this respect, whatever one thinks of their politics much of the neoconservatives' success in recent years arguably stems from their understanding that Realist conceptions which reduce the national interest down to short-term calculations of material self-interest ultimately fail to offer a compelling vision able to motivate the people behind it. Instead, what is needed, they argue, are foreign policies explicitly connecting with the values and identity of the nation.¹³ Put pithily, to the extent to which political leaders fail to foster a sense of national mission and purpose, or connect emotively with the nation, then they aren't doing their job properly. However, as I will suggest later, while nation-states may be important sources of ontological security for their citizens the dynamics of the relationship do not always flow in a top-down direction, which is to say that to the extent to which nations are treated as subjects in their own right they too have ontological security needs for which national citizens are often tasked with the responsibility of ensuring and providing.

Closely connected to the literature on ontological security is a related literature on the importance of a sense of self-esteem and dignity as a basis for subjectivity and action. Thus, instead of prioritising issues of fear and material well being, as Realists and Liberals are prone to do, Lebow parallels debates about ontological security noted above to argue that self-esteem, understood in terms of "a subjective sense of one's honour and standing", is also important for understanding the nature of international politics.¹⁴ In a similar vein, coming from the field of nationalism studies Liah Greenfeld has argued that at root "National identity is, fundamentally, a matter of dignity".¹⁵ In

¹⁰ Steele, Brent (2008) *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge) pp.94-5; Lindemann, Thomas (2010) *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (ECPR Press) p.15.

¹¹ Kinnvall, Catarina (2004) 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological security', *Political Psychology* 25(5) pp.742-4.

¹² Marlow, Jim (2002) 'Governmentality, ontological security and ideational stability: preliminary observations on the manner, ritual and logic of a particular art of government', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 7(2), p.247.

¹³ For an overview see, Schmidt, Brian and Michal C. Williams (2008) 'The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives versus Realists', *Security Studies* 17(2) pp.191-220.

¹⁴ Lebow quoted in Marko Lehti (2011) 'Performing identity – Looking for Subjectivity: Marginality, Self-Esteem and Ontological Security', paper presented at the 'Comparative Baltic Sea Building' seminar, Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, 14-15 March 2011.

¹⁵ Greenfeld, Liah (1995) *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) p.491.

other words, nationalism is driven by the desire of the community to justify itself and legitimise its position and standing, at minimum protecting what has been achieved, but ultimately seeking to enhance one's standing and credentials. As Lehti notes, in this respect it might also be possible to draw a distinction between larger and smaller powers in that larger powers are frequently in the business of legitimising their *actions*, whereas historically speaking smaller powers have often faced the need to legitimise their very *existence* and *subjectivity* in the first place.¹⁶ This view certainly resonates with a country like Finland whose historical experience can easily be read as one of perpetually trying to escape a position of subordination, exclusion and marginalisation and as such to secure the right to have its sovereignty accepted.¹⁷

Securing a sense of self-esteem and national dignity are therefore also fundamentally questions of recognition. As Lindemann notes, recognition can be important for two reasons. First, a desire for recognition is sometimes tied in with attempts to secure material, social or political resources which it is believed may flow from establishing a positive image of the nation.¹⁸ This, as we will see, is the focus of most of the academic literature on place/nation branding. More important from the perspective of this paper, however, is that there is also widespread acknowledgement that recognition is fundamental to securing a healthy sense of subjectivity; without it actors are liable to feel shame and humiliation, while taken further still, from a cognitive perspective having one's identity recognised and confirmed by others can be fundamental to establishing a sense of self in the first place.¹⁹ In this respect it is often argued that it is only possible for individuals to develop a sense of self in dialogical relationships with external others.²⁰ The situation for collectives like nations is arguably a little different, as will be noted shortly, however, bearing these points in mind what this indicates is that non-recognition can be a significant source of psychological anxiety and anguish to the extent to which it threatens an actor's sense of self-esteem and self image.²¹ Indeed, at a collective level, and taken to the extreme, non-recognition represents a challenge to the symbolic existence of the group/nation. More usual, however, is that non-recognition will take the form of positive self-images not being verified by salient others, leaving the self with the dilemma to either redouble efforts to secure future acceptance of claims made about the self, or to take non-recognition to heart via the renegotiation of a new narrative of the self.²²

The claim briefly noted above that the recognition of salient others may be less fundamental to collectives like nations than it is for individuals is important, especially when it comes to understanding the nature of national branding processes discussed below. As Abizadeh argues, the recognition required for the constitution of collective actors is not necessarily dependent on

¹⁶ Marko Lehti (2011) 'Performing identity – Looking for Subjectivity: Marginality, Self-Esteem and Ontological Security', paper presented at the 'Comparative Baltic Sea Building' seminar, Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, 14-15 March 2011.

¹⁷ Browning, Christopher and Marko Lehti (2007) 'Beyond East-West: Marginality and National Dignity in Finnish Identity Construction', *Nationalities Papers* 35(4), pp.691-716.

¹⁸ Lindemann, Thomas (2010) *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (ECPR Press) pp.10-11.

¹⁹ Lindemann, Thomas (2010) *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (ECPR Press) pp.2, 9.

²⁰ Abizadeh, Arash (2005) 'Does Collective Identity Presuppose an Other? On the Alleged Incoherence of Global Solidarity', *American Political Science Review* 99(1), pp.47-8.

²¹ Lindemann, Thomas (2010) *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (ECPR Press) pp.12, 24.

²² On such 'recognition games see Ringmar, Erik (2002) 'The Recognition Game: Soviet Russia Against the West', *Cooperation and Conflict* 37(2), pp.115-36.

external others, but can also be provided by the collective's own members.²³ Translated into the language of ontological security and national dignity what this points towards is the need to differentiate between the closely related concepts of *esteem* and *self-esteem*. While esteem concerns how we are regarded by others, self-esteem relates to how we regard ourselves.²⁴ At a collective level it is perfectly possible for positive self-images to be as much internally directed, seeking recognition from the constitutive members of the self, as they might be externally directed, seeking recognition from one's perceived salient peers. Likewise, while in reality both internal and external recognition dynamics are liable to be in play at any time, their relative importance may also vary such that the positive endorsement and recognition of the community (self-esteem) might at times outweigh negative reactions and non-recognition coming from outside (esteem).

This emphasis on the importance of recognition dynamics as a basis for establishing national dignity, (self-)esteem and ontological security also entails an emphasis on identities as being performative. That is to say that establishing ontological security and self-esteem requires that national representatives establish narratives and engage in practices that at one and the same time exist as both claims and demonstrations of a nation's identity. At the same time it may also be that the mechanisms deemed appropriate for achieving such goals may also change across time and in relation to context. In periods when international politics have been characterised by war and conflict it was arguably the case that (self-)esteem and national dignity was won and lost on the battlefield, with national identity narratives frequently championing the nation's martial spirit. Today, however, and specifically in the context of the industrialised West/Europe, a different political climate exists within which a concern with geopolitics and the martial spirit is for the most part eschewed. In a context of globalisation new mechanisms for achieving national dignity are needed. It is therefore notable that in the contemporary period an increasing number of states have turned, not to their militaries, but to the business world for inspiration on how best to enhance national self-esteem and ontological security.

Nation-Branding

Nation-branding is one such mechanism. As Olins notes, for many people the idea of nations engaging in corporate branding processes is unsavoury.²⁵ This is arguably for two reasons: first, because nations are generally understood to transcend and to stand aloof from the mechanisms of commerce; and second, because of the widespread belief in the 'authenticity' of nations. In other words, while we are accustomed to the rebranding of products and their repositioning in the market, nations are frequently ascribed as having eternal and primordial properties, which is as much as to say that we know what nations are instinctively, and engaging in branding exercises is to in a sense demean and undermine their authenticity. However, the tendency to deride nation-branding may well derive precisely from the fact that it explicitly reminds us of the constructed

²³ Abizadeh, Arash (2005) 'Does Collective Identity Presuppose an Other? On the Alleged Incoherence of Global Solidarity', *American Political Science Review* 99(1), p.47.

²⁴ Marko Lehti (2011) 'Performing identity – Looking for Subjectivity: Marginality, Self-Esteem and Ontological Security', paper presented at the 'Comparative Baltic Sea Building' seminar, Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, 14-15 March 2011. Also see Lebow, Richard Ned (2008) *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

²⁵ Olins, Wally (2002) 'Branding the nation – the historical context', *Journal of Brand Management* 9(4-5), p.242.

nature of national myths and identities. Thus, as Olins notes, nation-branding has a long heritage and one that can be seen in the frequent attempts of nations to reinvent themselves in changing contexts, a process most evident of course in periods of nation formation as nascent nations ascribe particular symbols to themselves and badge themselves through adopting distinctive flags, anthems, institutions, coinage, national histories etc...²⁶

At the same time it is also important to be clear that the concept of 'brand' is not simply a synonym for either national 'image' or 'identity', even if it is closely connected to them. As Finland's branding report puts it, while national images are generally unplanned impressions created randomly in the minds of insiders and outsiders as a result of an individual's specific associations and knowledge of a country and their own personal values, national brands emerge as a result of clearly focused activities on the part of the state explicitly targeting specific audiences.²⁷ Branding is therefore imbued with strategic action. Moreover, branding differs from more general advertising campaigns in that while such campaigns are, for instance, frequently used by national tourist boards to attract holiday makers to their shores with images of nice places, friendly people, sumptuous food and warm weather, branding seeks to elicit an emotional resonance and attachment to a place or product.²⁸ On the high street such a distinction has become evident in the way in which in some instances the brand has usurped the material product in the minds of many consumers, with the brand indeed becoming the product in and of itself. The case of Body Shop is a good example, where consumers are not so much purchasing soap as aligning themselves with a particular lifestyle choice or political philosophy.²⁹ In the same vein nation-branding seeks to elicit emotional ties to a particular nation and with what that nation is seen to stand for.

Likewise, it is also important to maintain a distinction between the concepts of brand and identity, with the key point being that while identities are intersubjectively negotiated, fluid and multiple (given that selves are embedded in many different relationships in different contexts) brands are arguably designed to be much more stable and are by their nature much less nuanced. In this respect, national brands frequently stand as simplified representations of national identities. Moreover, while it is imperative that nations construct an identity for themselves if they are to be able to act in the world (or to even exist) national brands are arguably much less intrinsic to subjectivity. Thus, while all states make identity claims, only some states seek to market specific national brands to the global audience.³⁰

Branding is obviously believed to entail certain dividends and in this respect much of the literature on nation-branding has focused on determining what such benefits might be and which branding strategies might result in the best outcomes. When analysing dividends, however, the overwhelming

²⁶ Olins, Wally (2002) 'Branding the nation – the historical context', *Journal of Brand Management* 9(4-5), p.242.

²⁷ Country Brand Report (2010) *Mission for Finland: How Finland will solve the world's most intractable problems* (Helsinki) (Available at http://www.tehtavasuomelle.fi/documents/TS_Report_EN.pdf) p.253.

²⁸ van Ham, Peter (2005) 'Branding European power', *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 1(2), p.122; van Ham, Peter (2001) 'The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation', *Foreign Affairs* (September/October), p.2.

²⁹ See Klein, Naomi (2000) *No Logo* (London: Flamingo).

³⁰ Browning, Christopher S (2007) 'Branding Nordicity: Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism', *Cooperation and Conflict* 42(1), pp.28-31.

focus has been on the perceived economic and political benefits that can accrue from the creation of positively viewed national brands in an international context. In economic terms much is made of the 'country-of-origin-effect', the idea being that to the extent to which a nation can create a positive image and reputation it may on the one hand attract investment and on the other encourage global consumers to purchase its products on the grounds that the country has established a reputation for 'reliability', 'customer service', 'high technology', 'environmentalism' etc...³¹ In other words, to compete in an increasingly global marketplace it is argued that nations increasingly need to create generic 'corporate' brands that make their goods and services stand out and desirable for the reason that successful country brands add emotion and trust to national products, with this in turn making consumers' choices easier by establishing brand loyalty.³² Likewise, van Ham argues that successful nation-branding can enhance a state's 'soft power' and political influence, with soft power defined in Nye's terms as the ability of a state to achieve its ends as a result of the force of attraction (as opposed to through coercive methods or payments).³³

However, where much less focus has been devoted is on the fact that nation-branding may also have a dividend in terms of contributing to a nation's self-esteem and sense of ontological security, not least by making citizens feel better about themselves. In this respect, van Ham suggests that branding might even offer an alternative and replacement for the people's loyalties at a time in which ideologies and political programmes are losing their relevance.³⁴ In this respect brands might well begin to offer a sense of belonging and security. At the same time, though, this begs the question of whether branding is necessary for the establishment of ontological security and national dignity. In this respect, one of the hypotheses evident in the branding literature is that in a globalised world of increasing homogeneity branding is becoming a prerequisite for recognition. Indeed, the absence of a brand can even be perceived as dangerous. Thus, van Ham argues that to lack a brand is to be absent, unseen and unknown. Why, he suggests, "would we invest in or visit a country we do not know, and why would we pay attention to its political and strategic demands if we have no clue what the country is all about and why should we care".³⁵ To illustrate the danger of brand absence he gives the example of the impact of the film *Borat* on the global image of Kazakhstan, which went from a largely unknown country to one in which the "people are addicted to drinking horse urine, enjoy shooting dogs, view rape and incest as respectable hobbies, and take pleasure in pursuits like the 'running of the Jew' festival".³⁶ The example arguably highlights two things. First, how it is possible for a country's image to be hijacked by outsiders and second how the reaction of outrage on the part of the Kazakh authorities illustrated the extent to which they felt the nation's dignity and esteem had been sullied.

³¹ van Ham, Peter (2008) 'Place Branding: The State of the Art', *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 616(1), pp.128-9; Anholt, Simon (2002) 'Foreword', *Journal of Brand Management* 9(4-5), pp.232-3.

³² Olins, Wally (2002) 'Branding the nation – the historical context', *Journal of Brand Management* 9(4-5), p.246; van Ham, Peter (2008) 'Place Branding: The State of the Art', *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 616(1), pp.129-30.

³³ van Ham, Peter (2008) 'Place Branding: The State of the Art', *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 616(1), p.126.

³⁴ van Ham, Peter (2005) 'Branding European power', *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 1(2), p.123.

³⁵ van Ham, Peter (2008) 'Place Branding: The State of the Art', *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 616(1), p.131.

³⁶ van Ham, Peter (2008) 'Place Branding: The State of the Art', *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 616(1), pp.142-3.

The broader claim here is that globalisation may well be changing the grounds upon which states make their mark in the world. As we “move from the modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence”³⁷ branding is arguably becoming an increasingly important tool for establishing (self-)esteem in comparison to more traditional methods of performing identity and establishing subjectivity (e.g. war). The move towards branding in this respect represents a significant challenge to much IR theorising, which whether in Realist or poststructuralist mode has generally argued that the identification of threatening others and physical threats lies at the heart of foreign policy processes. In contrast, branding processes generally assume the reconstitution of international relations around a globalised market in which threats to physical security are less pressing and where identity and self-esteem are no longer to be claimed through identifying threatening otherness but rather through trying to get noticed amongst the crowd of like-minded states. Others, in this frame, become much more benign in so far as branding processes rely upon seeking those others’ recognition of one’s own difference relative to the rest of the crowd, with one’s own difference also to be determined in terms of how useful one is to the broader international society (in terms of having something different/better to offer).³⁸

At the same time, paying attention to concerns of ontological security and self-esteem also enables us to see that the target audience of branding exercises is not only (or even necessarily primarily) the external international society. Importantly, brands are as much for internal as they are for external consumption, with brands seeking to provide direction and purpose for the nation’s citizens.³⁹ Branding is in this sense also an activity in reminding citizens who they are while simultaneously appealing to their desire for ontological security by demonstrating that as part of the broader national collective they can feel proud of the nation’s (and therefore their) image and standing. As will be noted in the case study, the flip side of this is that branding campaigns can also come to implicate citizens in the foreign policy process insofar as branding can disperse responsibility for upholding the national brand downwards by making citizens carriers and salespersons of the brand. Put in slightly different terms branding can entail a considerable dose of governmentality in that in certain instances it can provide clear signals to citizens as to what forms of behaviour are to be encouraged and deemed patriotic, while implicitly setting boundaries as to what constitutes unpatriotic behaviour. The point here is that while most brands will remain unaffected by a few faulty products, should such faults become endemic then brand recognition may well be seriously compromised. By the same token, while branding may well be a focus of the citizens’ sense of self-esteem and ontological security, branding exercises can also task citizens with ensuring recognition for the state as a particular type of actor with a particular identity continues. As instances like prisoner abuse in Abu Ghraib have illustrated a ‘few bad apples’ can seriously damage a nation’s attempts to brand itself as a bastion of democracy and human rights.

³⁷ van Ham, Peter (2001) ‘The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation’, *Foreign Affairs* (September/October), p.4.

³⁸ I am indebted to Pertti Joenniemi for the points developed in this paragraph.

³⁹ van Ham, Peter (2008) ‘Place Branding: The State of the Art’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 616(1), p.132.

Branding Internationalism

In contemporary international politics one good way of branding the nation is as a force for good in the world and explicitly embracing an internationalist foreign policy. Internationalism is, of course, a contested concept, not least because it can cover a range of quite diverse approaches to policy. Thus, surveying the literature Lawler has distinguished between at least three versions of internationalism: radical, reform and liberal.⁴⁰ In recent years a muscular version of liberal internationalism has arguably overshadowed other versions, so for instance, while the liberal internationalism of neoconservatives has championed the use of force in promoting the spread of liberal and humanitarian values, more social democratic variants of reform internationalism have historically been more concerned with promoting national self-determination, solidarity with the Third World, the redistribution of resources from North to South through generous provision of development aid, and not least taking an active role in peacekeeping, conflict mediation and enhancing UN activism.⁴¹

Setting these differences aside for the moment the key point to note here is that for those states that adopt internationalist foreign policies internationalism may fulfil a variety of purposes. On the one hand, internationalism may of course simply reflect deeply held moral imperatives of other-regarding behaviour, the sense that we have a duty to all humanity. At the same time, though, even such moral motivations arguably connect deeply with the desire for ontological security and self-esteem in so far as engaging in such policies also serves to satisfy the self-identity needs of states. As Steele notes, to the extent to which states constitute their identities in other-regarding terms then failure to engage in internationalist policies could radically disrupt their sense of self-identity.⁴² Consider, for example, the 'shame' felt in much of the West over their inaction in Bosnia and Rwanda and how subsequent actions in places like Kosovo clearly entailed elements of redemption designed to reaffirm humanitarian narratives of selfhood which had been compromised by the earlier failures. Steele therefore invokes an inside-out dynamic to internationalism in which helping the 'other' is much more dependent upon how the state views itself than on how it views the other.⁴³

However, internationalism can also arguably be driven by outside-in dynamics whereby internationalist policies are perceived as eliciting esteem and prestige from the international community. Internationalist policies in this sense provide a 'performative platform' via which states may exhibit a particular national project and set of values while simultaneously seeking recognition for it from the international community.⁴⁴ In this respect it is perhaps worth considering why some small states (like the Nordic states) with limited capacity to make a fundamental systemic impact on the international system might be inclined to place considerable emphasis on the big issues

⁴⁰ Lawler, Peter (2005) 'The Good State: in praise of 'classical' internationalism', *Review of International Studies* 31, p.436.

⁴¹ Lawler, Peter (2005) 'The Good State: in praise of 'classical' internationalism', *Review of International Studies* 31, pp.432-3.

⁴² Steele, Brent (2008) *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge) p.2.

⁴³ Steele, Brent (2008) *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge) p.35.

⁴⁴ I have borrowed the phrase 'performative platform' from Steele, Brent (2008) *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge) p.146.

populating internationalist agendas. From an ontological security perspective an obvious answer here is that such policies can bring recognition, support their continued sovereignty by fostering acknowledgement of their continued value to the international system, and in this sense may also foster a certain amount of international prestige. Indeed, small states like Finland have historically often sought to turn their diminutive size into an asset precisely by carving out a role for themselves as unthreatening mediators between the great powers.

However, while performing such roles and adopting other-regarding internationalist policies may therefore enhance ontological security and foster self-esteem, and while it may also bring with it a certain amount of international prestige, adopting internationalist policies should not be confused with active attempts to brand the nation in internationalist terms. This, as van Ham suggests, is the difference between doing good and being seen to be doing good⁴⁵ – that is, actively positioning oneself in internationalist terms and making sure everyone knows about it. Before turning to the case study of Finland it is also important to note that there is no guarantee that internationalist policies, or a nation branded in internationalist terms, will receive a dividend in terms of ontological security or self-esteem (or indeed in terms of enhanced political influence or economic benefits). In this respect much will depend upon whether such policies are deemed to be successful (both at home and abroad), which in turn may be very much dependent upon the variant of internationalism adopted and its standing in the international community. Such a point becomes obvious in view of the divergence between the initial reception and subsequent evaluation of Tony Blair's 'doctrine of international community' and the neoconservatives liberal internationalist agenda over the last fifteen years.

Finland and Internationalism during the Cold War

Before analysing Finland's country branding report it is worth noting that Finland's relationship with internationalist foreign policies has been historically ambivalent, with this ultimately supporting the view that internationalism has been less driven by moral imperatives with respect to the other, than with the extent to which internationalist policies might be seen as supporting the country's strategic needs and conceptions of selfhood.

An important starting point here is to understand that throughout the Cold War a grand narrative that described the international system in *realpolitik* terms pervaded government and much of Finnish society in general. In many respects this was a direct reaction to Finland's costly wars with the Soviet Union (1939-40, 1941-44) which were interpreted by post-war President Juho Paasikivi (1946-56) as resulting primarily from the failure to understand that Finland was a small state in a great power world. In refusing territorial demands made by the Soviet Union in 1939 Finland was considered 'guilty of intransigence'⁴⁶ and of holding to a naively optimistic view of the power of international law.⁴⁷ Throughout the first part of the Cold War this view therefore translated into a foreign policy of neutrality, which as Joenniemi notes, was "essentially an attempt to stand apart, to

⁴⁵ van Ham, Peter (2005) 'Branding European power', *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 1(2), p.122.

⁴⁶ Puntilla, L.A. (1974) *The Political History of Finland 1809-1966* (Helsinki: Otava) p.164.

⁴⁷ See Browning, Christopher S. (2008) *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland* (Oxford: Peter Lang) pp.172-5.

escape the international limelight”.⁴⁸ Finland’s sovereignty and independence and not least its claim to be a capitalist liberal democracy, it was argued, could only be secured if the country avoided antagonising the Soviet Union, one of the best means of which it was believed lay in avoiding taking any stance regarding the ongoing struggle between the great powers. In other words, for much of the Cold War Finland’s neutrality policy was seen in isolationist terms in contrast to Sweden say, where neutrality was more easily ascribed with strong and often quite moralistic internationalist tones critical of both East and West. Thus, while Finland remained almost silent over Soviet actions in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and US actions in Vietnam, on the grounds that any criticism or show of solidarity with those on the receiving end of such policies might in turn bring opprobrium from the great powers and weaken Finland’s national sovereignty, Sweden rather found that its sense of national dignity and ontological security was precisely enhanced by taking an openly critical view.

This attempt to locate Finland on the sidelines of the Cold War through a strict neutrality policy was likewise complemented by concerted efforts to re-badge Finland as a Nordic nation – an association which in the inter-war years had been much contested, not least because Finnish identity has historically been constituted as much through the need to differentiate Finns from Swedes as from Russians. Now, however, a Nordic identification (and convincing the international community of this) was seen to, on the one hand emphasise that Finland was not a part of the Soviet orbit in the same way that the states of Central and Eastern Europe were, and on the other was seen to further distance Finland from the Cold War in that Nordicity was also seen to imply a distance from both the East and West but also from Europe and the Cold War conflict in general.⁴⁹ In this respect Norden was frequently seen as offering a ‘middle way’ between East and West, communism and capitalism, and as representing a path towards reconciliation and accommodation.

After the death of Stalin (1953), the emergence of détente and Paasikivi’s replacement by President Urho Kekkonen (1956-82) a more activist approach to foreign policy emerged which built on this idea that as a Nordic country Finland could potentially carve out a role for itself in international relations. In this context an internationalist orientation began to emerge premised on notions of Finland as a neutral bridge builder between East and West – a position which Kekkonen encapsulated in an address to the UN General Assembly in 1961 when he described Finland as a physician seeking to diagnose and cure, rather than a judge looking to find fault and condemn.⁵⁰ Thus, Finland was a key sponsor of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe from the early 1970s as well as partially hosting the US-Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty talks in 1969-72. Through demonstrating its usefulness Finland was in this sense also seeking recognition and demonstrating its right to exist.⁵¹ The turn to internationalism also took broader forms as from 1956 onwards Finland became an active contributor to UN peacekeeping missions as well as becoming a champion of solidarism with the Third World along with the other Nordic countries.

⁴⁸ Joenniemi, Pertti (2010) ‘Finland: Always a Borderland?’ in Madeline Hurd (ed.) *Bordering the Baltic: Scandinavian Boundary-Drawing Processes, 1900-2000* (Berlin: Lit Verlag) p.55.

⁴⁹ Browning, Christopher S. (2008) *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland* (Oxford: Peter Lang) pp.195-8; Wæver, Ole (1992) ‘Nordic Nostalgia: Northern Europe after the Cold War’, *International Affairs* 68(1), p.79.

⁵⁰ Kekkonen, Urho (1970) *Neutrality: The Finnish Position* (London: Heinemann) p.94.

⁵¹ Maude, George (1976) *The Finnish Dilemma* (London: Oxford University Press) p.44.

Although it would be overstating the case to claim that during the Cold War these various orientations in foreign policy became encapsulated in an active campaign of nation-branding it is certainly true that during the period the government was extremely concerned with projecting and protecting the image of Finland as a neutral bridge builder. Securing this image was understood as central to preserving national sovereignty, with internationalism as such valued to a considerable extent because it was seen as securing recognition for Finland as a legitimate international actor. However, while there was a considerable element of pragmatism in this post-war reorientation of Finnish foreign policy it is also clear that over the period notions of neutrality, internationalist solidarism and bridge building transformed into a broader identity narrative and moral framework of what it was to be Finnish in international relations.⁵² In other words, maintaining a sense of ontological security also came to require that frequent and recurrent proclamations of neutrality and being a bridge-builder, and contributions to UN peacekeeping operations, became routinised, with the continuance of such routines serving to reinforce the Finns sense of self and national dignity.

Moreover, as has been well documented the demands of this position on Finnish citizens were at times considerable. Kekkonen was explicit that the public also carried responsibility for the successful conduct of foreign policy with the subsequent derogatory coining of the term 'Finlandisation' pointing towards the extent to which self-censorship became a part of everyday life. Those deviating from or criticising the official foreign policy were subject to reprimand and even legal action.⁵³ Preserving the image of Finland as a neutral state and a friendly and uncritical neighbour of the Soviet Union became paramount, and in the terms of this paper operated as a rather strict policy of 'brand management'. However, that large parts of the public came to embrace such collective responsibility and understood this as a part of their patriotic duty was also evident in the enthusiastic development of the peace movement from the 1960s onwards.⁵⁴

Branding Finland®

Most of the impressions people around the world have of Finland are positive, as is demonstrated by a number of international surveys. However, they also show that Finnish reality is even more positive than these impressions and that our country is not at all well known outside our immediate neighbours. International impressions simply do not reveal

⁵² Browning, Christopher S. (2008) *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland* (Oxford: Peter Lang) p.200.

⁵³ Browning, Christopher S. (2008) *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland* (Oxford: Peter Lang) pp.202-11. Also see Salminen, Esko (1999) *The Silenced Media: The Propaganda War between Russia and the West in Northern Europe* (Houndmills: Macmillan).

⁵⁴ Browning, Christopher S. (2008) *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland* (Oxford: Peter Lang) p.210; Taipale, Ilkka (1987) 'The Peace Movement in Finland', in Kimmo Kiljunen, Folke Sundman and Ilkka Taipale (eds.) *Finnish Peace Making* (Helsinki: Peace Union of Finland) pp.17-49; Maude, George (1976) *The Finnish Dilemma* (London: Oxford University Press) p.134.

*everything about our genuine strengths. In other words, Finland has not managed to successfully communicate its strengths.*⁵⁵

During the Cold War such efforts at image promotion met varied success and Finnish diplomats and politicians frequently complained that Finland's position was often grossly misunderstood with the country "at the mercy" of itinerant columnists with only "superficial and fragmentary" knowledge of the country and its international relations.⁵⁶ As indicated in the above quote from Finland's branding report released in November 2010 little appears to have changed. Moreover, lack of knowledge and perceived superficial impressions of Finland as a cold and sparsely populated country are deemed to be problematic and, as the report notes, the further one moves from the country the more neutral impressions become, the conclusion being that "A coherent image of Finland, let alone a brand, does not exist" (p.263). However, whereas during the Cold War the threat posed by such ignorance was perceived in geopolitical terms – the fear being that Finland would be written off as a Soviet pawn – today ignorance is instead read through a framework of markets and globalization. As the report notes, the level of knowledge about Finland and how this translates into reputation will impact upon whether or not Finland's country-of-origin effect will be positive or not. "The type and tone of this impression may be crucially important to the functioning of Finland's business life, tourism, culture and foreign policy and the effective achievement of objectives" (p.255).

However, whereas Finnish invective during the Cold War had a tendency to place the blame for inadequate knowledge on the laziness of foreign journalists and others to properly inform themselves of Finland's situation the branding report starts from the assumption that in a globalised and competitive world the fault lies primarily with the Finns themselves, and in particular in their inability to communicate as a result of what is presumed to be a Finnish culture (and stereotype) of social awkwardness, modesty and even low self-esteem (pp.343, 355, 361). Yet, "as an export country operating globally, [Finland] cannot afford not to communicate about its strengths" (p.343). It was this view which provided the basis and rationale for the establishment of Finland's Country Brand Delegation in 2008 under the Chairmanship of Jorma Ollila, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Nokia and Shell, with the delegation tasked with providing a roadmap for moving Finland from having a weak if positive image to a strong and robust brand. If successfully adopted the hope is that the various proposals outlined in the branding report will encourage the world to turn to Finland "more often and more effectively" by enhancing the country's familiarity and appeal with the world.⁵⁷

In this regard the branding report is clear in respect of the benefits that such an exercise might bring. On the one hand, economic benefits deriving from a positive country-of-origin effect are anticipated in that it is expected that a successfully developed brand will promote the export of Finnish goods and services, promote international investments in Finland, promote tourism to the country, and make Finland an attractive destination for highly skilled international professionals (p.23). However,

⁵⁵ Country Brand Report (2010) *Mission for Finland: How Finland will solve the world's most intractable problems* (Helsinki) (Available at http://www.tehtavasuomelle.fi/documents/TS_Report_EN.pdf) p.11.

⁵⁶ Jakobson, Max (1984) *Finland Survived: An Account of the Finnish-Soviet Winter War 1939-40* (Helsinki: Otava) p.xiii.

⁵⁷ Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2010) 'The Country Brand Delegation sets tasks for Finland', Press Release, 25 November 2010. Available at <http://www.formin.finland.fi>. (Downloaded 25/11/2010).

the report is also interesting because it takes seriously the impact that a positive brand can also have on a nation's sense of dignity and purpose. Thus, not only does the report identify a low level of national self-esteem as a significant obstacle to successfully implementing the brand (p.355) it also sees a positive brand as the cure for the problem. "Raising the national self-esteem of Finns" is therefore explicitly stated as a key goal of the exercise (p.23), such that once implemented "It will feel really good to be a Finn" and it will become possible to confine "the myth of the Finns' low national self-esteem" to history (p.37). Furthermore, it is also anticipated that such dividends in terms of domestic self-esteem will be paralleled in the enhanced sense of international esteem and status with which the country will be regarded (pp.11, 23) – hence the view that the international community will turn to Finland more frequently also indicating the expected links between the material and psychological/emotive elements of branding.

All of this of course begs the question of where internationalism fits into this branding exercise and it is at this point that it is worth turning to the 'brand' itself. The important point to note here is that the branding report comes in the wake of various other studies concerning Finland's future which since the 1990s have sought to replace geopolitical frames of reference locating Finland variously along a continuum between East and West with what Kuisma has termed the 'hyperglobalisation' thesis, central to which is an almost deterministic acceptance of globalization as an economic self-sustaining process of ever growing interconnectedness. States cannot fight this process but must rather adjust themselves politically and economically to it, even being prepared to change their social and cultural values in order to meet the challenge.⁵⁸ Thus, a 2004 report produced by the Finnish Business and Policy Forum (EVA) asserted that to survive and be successful Finland needed to locate itself not so much in the context of European integration (as had been the tendency in the 1990s), but rather in the context of the global competition, seeking to itself become a 'global top performer'.⁵⁹ In such discourses Finland is being located in a sense beyond geopolitics and rather in a broader and all encompassing globalised space. Located in the context of these broader discourses it is therefore notable that central to the brand identified by the Branding Delegation is an expansion of internationalism away from a limited focus on Cold War peace diplomacy and bridge building to the broader internationalization of the state such that Finland is to be seen to be reaching out and engaging openly with the world.

At the same time the report packages this move in similar ways to during the Cold War with Finland fundamentally understood as providing good services to international society. At the heart of the brand therefore is the proclamation that Finland can be the 'problem-solver of the world' (p.3), a claim pronounced in the report's subtitle 'How Finland will solve the world's most intractable problems'. This somewhat immodest and open-ended commitment is subsequently narrowed down to a focus on a number of problems associated with international conflicts, water shortages and education where it is argued Finland has considerable strengths, the view being that assisting with

⁵⁸ Kuisma, Mikko (2003) *Consistent Continuity and Contingent Change: Globalisation, European Integration and the Paths of Citizenship in Finland and Norway* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Birmingham) pp.203-4.

⁵⁹ Ruokanen, T. (2004) *Suomen menestyksen eväät. Tiekartta tulevaisuuteen* [Roadmap to Finland's Future Success] (Helsinki: EVA), p.28. For an overview see Browning, Christopher and Marko Lehti (2007) 'Beyond East-West: Marginality and National Dignity in Finnish Identity Construction', *Nationalities Papers* 35(4), pp.706-7.

problems in these realms will earn Finland international distinction and help the Finns build their self-esteem.⁶⁰

There are a couple of things to note about this core brand of being the world's problem-solver. The first is that the brand becomes intimately connected with action and global projects.⁶¹ The report therefore details more than one hundred concrete missions variously targeted at the government, business, civil society organisations and even at individual Finns. The implication is that the brand will succeed or fail to the extent to which Finland actually is perceived to be actively solving global problems. Second, it isn't enough to be seen to be solving problems but instead Finnish solutions need to be understood as the 'best' (p.9). As noted by Kirsi Piha, one of the members of the branding delegation, while Finland cannot be best at everything it can be "best in some small areas for which there is now a great need in the world".⁶² The idea therefore has been to find niche areas where it is believed Finland can stand out from the crowd. Third, the brand is notably impregnated with and draws both implicitly and explicitly on historically ingrained nationalist narratives and stereotypes. Finns, we are told, can be the world's problem solver because they have a practical and pragmatic mindset and attitude. Such a narrative of pragmatic Finns has been an enduring trope in parts of nationalist discourse right back to the nineteenth century.⁶³ Likewise, while part of the goal is to cast off images of Finland as cold, sparsely populated and peripheral there is also an implicit sense in which such ideas of a rugged and harsh climate and difficult history is precisely what has shaped Finnish culture and provided it with the attributes to succeed now. As the report notes, "Finland's greatest strength is the unbiased, solution-focused approach to problems, which derives from our history and culture. When faced with an impossible situation, we roll up our sleeves and double our efforts" (p.21). This move parallels one made by Castells and Himanen in a popularly received book from 2004 which precisely argued that Finland's location as a northern frontier (culturally, climatically and politically) has shaped Finnish culture in such a way to make it pragmatic, adaptable and future oriented, with this explaining why Finland has been so successful in embracing the high technologies of the information society.⁶⁴ Likewise, the notion of being the 'best' also resonates with Cold War narratives of Nordic exceptionalism, central to which was the notion that the Nordics were historical exemplars of modernity with much to teach the world.⁶⁵ Finally, the brand also elicits a strong cosmopolitan commitment built upon a moral sense of solidarism with the rest of the world that also resonates with the solidarist commitment to the Third World during the Cold War. Finns, we are told, are 'duty-bound' to offer their solutions to the world (pp.3, 21). However, again, while the moral dimension to such other-regarding proclamations should not be overlooked it is also clear that the goal here is on the one hand to foster a benevolent warm glow

⁶⁰ Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2010) 'The Country Brand Delegation sets tasks for Finland', Press Release, 25 November 2010. Available at <http://www.formin.finland.fi>. (Downloaded 25/11/2010).

⁶¹ As the report puts it, "The target image of Finland is to be a country which solves problems... In this case, this does not mean logos, slogans or marketing campaigns, but actions" (p.27).

⁶² Quoted in Lyytinen, Jaakko (2010) 'Finnish brand working group takes nature excursion', *Helsingin Sanomat International Edition*, 17 October 2010. Available at <http://www.hs.fi/english/print/1135261016499> (Downloaded 27/10/2010).

⁶³ For an account see Browning, Christopher S. (2008) *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland* (Oxford: Peter Lang).

⁶⁴ Castells, Manuel and Pekka Himanen (2004) *The Information Society and the Welfare State: The Finnish Model* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) pp.127-39.

⁶⁵ Browning, Christopher S (2007) 'Branding Nordicity: Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism', *Cooperation and Conflict* 42(1), pp.28-31.

whenever foreigners think of Finland, and on the other, to provide a basis upon which Finns can feel good about themselves. Global problems like climate change, food and water shortages and ageing populations are therefore explicitly presented as performative opportunities for Finland to raise its global profile (p.21).

However, while Finland's internationalist face is considerably broadened in this context a special place remains in the brand for peace diplomacy. In this respect, Finland's Cold War heritage as a bridge-builder is to be expressly enhanced with the branding of the country as a nation of peace. Peace, in a sense, is to be placed at the heart of Finnish society, as is suggested by ideas to create a national peace day, 'Ahtisaari day', on 11th November and named after former president and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize (2006) Martti Ahtisaari for his work in peace and conflict diplomacy. It is suggested that this be accompanied by the awarding of a prize ("a kind of 'lesser Nobel'") to "an individual or a non-governmental organization for a praiseworthy mediation effort or background work contributing to or supporting the implementation of a peace process" (p.66). Likewise, schools are tasked with organizing a 'Day of Reconciliation' in which students will practice conflict resolution and develop negotiation skills (p.64). The ultimate goal here is to establish the idea that "When Finns negotiate, nobody leaves the table a loser" (p.65), with this implying that the next generation of Finns will, in Kirsi Piha's terms, become a generation of "little Ahtisaaris".⁶⁶ In this context, however, Finnish peace work is being constituted in much broader terms to also include using Finland's expertise in water usage and educational provision as a form of conflict prevention and diplomacy by providing practical solutions to otherwise divisive issues (pp.177, 247-9). At the same time, this represents a particular approach to internationalism driven by ideas of negotiation and compromise that rests on Finland's broader tradition of neutrality and non-alignment. It is obviously very distinctive from neoconservative versions of liberal internationalism in that according to the brand Finland should be locating itself between conflicting parties rather becoming party to the conflict itself. There is therefore no mention of the country's possible involvement in humanitarian interventions.

Finally, the report is also adamant that the creation of 'brand Finland' cannot be left to the government or to the branding delegation alone. As is made clear the brand will only succeed if Finns in general come to participate in the project and take collective action on developing the country's image in the desired direction (pp.25, 35).⁶⁷ As such the report entails a clear disciplining element in that it reminds Finnish readers that 'internal coherence' is vitally important for establishing country (as well as corporate) brands (p.257). It is therefore important, not only that Finns become more confident in communicating messages about their nation to the world, but that such messages are presented by as many actors as possible 'with one voice' (pp.9, 341). Responsibility is therefore dispersed downwards and in this process it becomes evident that while one of the goals of the branding process is to enhance the self-esteem and ontological security of

⁶⁶ Quoted in Lyytinen, Jaakko (2010) 'Finnish brand working group takes nature excursion', *Helsingin Sanomat International Edition*, 17 October 2010. Available at <http://www.hs.fi/english/print/1135261016499> (Downloaded 27/10/2010).

⁶⁷ To quote Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, "The real brand work begins now. Nor is this a matter for the delegation only; it's a matter for each and every one of us Finns". Quoted in Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2010) 'The Country Brand Delegation sets missions for Finland', 25 November 2010. Available at <http://www.formin.finland.fi>. (Downloaded 29/11/2010).

everyday Finns, the general public in turn is being tasked with providing for the ontological security and esteem of the nation. To the extent to which all of society becomes presented as responsible for projecting a coherent message to the world and for the overall success or failure of the project, then certain similarities with Finlandisation processes of the Cold War are evident. Although such a comparison may sound trite and overblown, not least because the branding project does not carry the force of law behind it in the way that Finns who failed to toe the line during the Cold War were sometimes subject to legal sanctions, it does entail quite explicit messages regarding what it considers comprises patriotic behaviour. The creation of Ahtisaari Day is indicative. Ahtisaari Day is ostensibly there to mark Finland's role in international peace mediation. However, since this will be a national, not an international day, it is ultimately targeted at the Finnish public, reminding them of this constitutive element of what it is to be a Finnish citizen (e.g. a 'little Ahtisaari') and what is to be valued in society – which put briefly amounts to promoting peace at home and abroad, environmentalism, education, and not least being prepared to proclaim Finland's brand to the world. Finns who fail to abide by such criteria are therefore in danger of being seen to be undermining the national project and of being stigmatised as failing to fully meet the demands of their citizenship – a situation which in turn might also put aspects of their own ontological security in question.

Conclusion

In conclusion the Finnish example further supports the claim that a realignment is taking place in how states seek to assert a sense of ontological security and (self-)esteem. As geopolitical frames of reference are replaced with one's premised on markets and globalisation processes traditional ways of constituting subjectivity via the identification of threatening otherness appear less relevant. While post-structuralists, for example, have typically argued that state subjectivity requires the identification of radical others and strict bordering to maintain a sense of separate and definite borders, or while Realists have remained preoccupied by issues of territorial sovereignty and power, it is unclear whether in parts of the industrialised world such frames of reference remain as salient as previously. As suggested, a better metaphor might be one that depicts states as part of a crowd, bustling together, part of a broader commonality and shared global space, and instead of primarily seeking territorial survival and physical security, instead seeking to have their individuality recognised. What drives such states, therefore, is perhaps less a concern with relative power and more a concern with how to stand apart from the crowd, if only for a moment and if only in relation to specific contexts/issues. Otherness in this context becomes much more benign.

In this changed situation the paper has argued that one mechanism by which states might be able to do this is through concerted efforts of national branding. The open question here is whether those nations that have so far chosen to adopt such strategies represent the crest of the wave, or whether the advent of the 'brand state' may be a selective phenomenon. For some branding is viewed as both inevitable and essential – the choice in van Ham's terms is ultimately one "between branding or decline".⁶⁸ The nation-branding guru Simon Anholt suggests likewise on the grounds that in a globalised economy the wealth of nations ultimately depends on the ability to export branded goods.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ van Ham, Peter (2005) 'Branding European power', *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 1(2), p.126.

⁶⁹ Anholt, Simon (2002) 'Foreword', *Journal of Brand Management* 9(4-5) p.238.

Setting such material considerations aside the branding literature also suggests that branding is becoming increasingly important to fostering a sense of ontological security and national (self)esteem, a point supported by the explicit statement in Finland's branding report that enhancing these things is as central to the branding strategy as promoting the country's economic performance which lies at the heart of Anholt's concern.⁷⁰ Should this be the case it arguably raises significant questions with the suggestion being that globalisation is posing challenges for how nations create a sense of subjectivity. The implication is that keeping one's head down and getting on with it is no longer an option. Finland's branding report is explicit about this, seeing the Finns' failure to communicate and their modesty as fundamentally problematic. Finns are instead urged and even cajoled into becoming brasher and more arrogant in telling the world how good they are – indeed, to do so becomes a patriotic virtue. The fact that many Finns would not see such an attitude as part of their cultural heritage (indeed, nationalist narratives have frequently constituted the 'silence' of the Finns in positive terms as indicative of a thoughtful, rational and measured approach to life) is in this sense depicted as a problem with the culture, a culture which needs to transform, modernise and get with the plan. The Finnish example as such indicates that at least some nations are interpreting globalisation as requiring a particular form of subjectivity, and one that requires branding exercises. Whether this is a necessary or inevitable response to securing a sense of ontological security and self-esteem in an era of globalisation can obviously be debated, but to the extent to which it is we might also ask whether in a world of branding we are in danger of creating disembodied artificial selves that instead of enhancing ontological security undermine it by creating caricatures of self-identity.⁷¹

Finally, in respect of the lessons this analysis entails for the future of internationalism what the paper has highlighted is the extent to which apparently other regarding behaviour is also often impregnated with and motivated by considerations of enhancing a nation's sense of ontological security and (self-)esteem. This may well entail a positive and negative twist to it once internationalism is tied up with branding processes. As Lawler has pointed out there is much evidence to suggest that in nations in which internationalist values have been insufficiently embedded and institutionalised, then internationalist commitments are often fleeting, lasting not much beyond the lifespan of the government which implemented them.⁷² The sense of superficiality that often accompanies the idea of branding may well heighten concerns in those instances when states make internationalism explicitly a part of their national brand. The positive twist, by contrast, is that for brands to be successful there ultimately has to be a match up between rhetoric and reality. Failure to successfully implement internationalist commitments (or the perception of this) entails the possibility of brand failure. Moreover, to the extent to which branding contributes to a broader sense of ontological security and (self-)esteem it would also put these in question. In this respect branding also raises significant questions relating to integrity and as such providing a notable incentive not to fall short.

⁷⁰ It is worth noting that Simon Anholt acted as a consultant on Finland's branding report.

⁷¹ Steele, Brent (2008) *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge) p.63.

⁷² Lawler, Peter (2005) 'The Good State: in praise of 'classical' internationalism', *Review of international Studies* 31, pp.447-8.