

**San Jose State University**

---

**From the Selected Works of Karthika Sasikumar**

---

August, 2017

# Branding India: Constructing a Reputation for Responsibility in the Nuclear Order

Karthika Sasikumar, *San Jose State University*



karthika\_sasikumar/17/

Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/>

## Branding India: Constructing a Reputation for Responsibility in the Nuclear Order

**Abstract:** Nation branding professionals have the same goal as diplomats and politicians — the goal of endowing the nation with specific qualities in the minds of the target audience, so that it is identified with those qualities. In other words, both types of professionals are constructing an identity for the country. Insights from the commercial practice of nation branding can illuminate the process of identity construction by states. As an illustration, the paper investigates the case of India's branding/self-presentation as a responsible holder of nuclear weapons. In 1998, India declared itself a Nuclear Weapon State (NWS). Since India has not been granted NWS status under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, this action was considered to be a breach of international norms and triggered condemnation by several countries. Today, however, India is being incorporated into the governance mechanisms of the nuclear order, to the extent that it is considered a *de facto* NWS. The paper identifies four strategies—differentiation, standardization, total branding, and crisis management—from a review of the nation branding literature, and relates them to India's foreign policy strategies in the nuclear issue area in the last two decades. This paper is an initial attempt to build a bridge between the International Relations and place branding literatures.

Nation branding is an increasingly professionalized commercial practice that is being adopted by scores of countries across the globe. Nation branding professionals have the same goal as diplomats and politicians — the goal of endowing the nation with specific qualities in the minds of the target audience, so that it is identified with those qualities. In other words, executives in nation-branding agencies, diplomats, and politicians are all involved in national identity construction. Those International Relations (IR) theorists who view national identity as a social construction, can gain insights from studying the commercial practice of nation branding. India's branding or self-presentation as a responsible holder of nuclear weapons is used as a case illustrating the utility of studying nation branding.

This paper has four parts. The first section discusses the concepts of national identity and branding, and the relationship between them. The second section dissects the concept of the 'responsible state' in the international nuclear order. In the third section, the paper shows how four distinct strategies used in nation/place branding—differentiation, standardization, total branding, and crisis management—were employed by Indian elites in the last two decades. The

fourth section makes the case for building bridges between the nation branding and IR literatures.

### **National identity and nation branding**

In the last two decades or so, the discipline of International Relations (IR) has renewed its interest in ideas, identity, and norms. IR scholars working within the Constructivist perspective have long insisted that national identity and reputation are not 'given' or 'natural,' but produced by strategic actors. As Emanuel Adler puts it, Constructivists are "not interested in how things *are*, but in how they *became* how they are"(Adler 2002). Among IR theories, Constructivism is the analytical perspective that is best able to explain and critique place branding (Van Ham 2008). To support this assertion, the paper also provides a brief summary of a competing theory, Realism.

The processes of national identity construction occur simultaneously at the domestic (internal) and global (external) level. While these processes occur within the parameters of existing concepts of national identity, the parameters themselves are subject to change by actors' aggregated choices. A Constructivist must de-construct, i.e., show the processes that create and sustain national identity, in order to explain both change and continuity. According to Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "Once it was established that norms and social structures matter, a next obvious step was to investigate how, exactly, they came to matter and how they came to exist at all" (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001). This is the point at which the nation branding literature can make a contribution, since it deals specifically with the techniques by which national identity is produced and presented.

Constructivists see the identity of a country, when presented to the outside world through both actions and statements, as a complex creation of political entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs include diplomats and other government officials, politicians, media personalities, and increasingly, practitioners of the sub-field of marketing called 'place branding' or more specifically, 'nation branding.'

The tasks of promotion, positioning, and reputation management are routine in the world of commerce. As corporations engaged in these tasks, the techniques of brand management emerged (Govers 2013). Place branding is a sub-set of brand management, a discipline which developed out of concrete practices. While marketers are usually selling commercial products and services, nation branding developed as a response to the conditions of late twentieth century political economy. Leaders began to conceive of the globalized world as a marketplace in which their nations compete, and nation branding as a strategy in that competition (Wilder 2007). Marketers like to emphasize that today's community of nations resembles a marketplace because it is open, transparent, and democratic (Anholt and Hildreth 2010). Nation branding is now a transnational commercial practice that generates billion dollar revenues (Anholt 2005).

Governments are usually motivated by four considerations to invest in nation branding efforts: attracting foreign investment into the country; boosting exports of goods and services out of the country; stimulating tourism and in-migration of desirable populations; as well as the more general objectives of strengthening citizens' allegiance, and/or securing influence in the international arena (Dinnie 2007). The paper addresses this last, and most political aspect. That is, the motivation of the Indian government is not nation branding for its own sake, the goal is to raise its status in the international system.

Keith Dinnie defines a nation brand as “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences”(Dinnie 2007). Nation brands can even be ranked. The annual *Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index* ranks fifty countries, with respect to exports, governance, culture, people, tourism and immigration/investment (GfK 2014). The value of nation brands can be quantified. In 2006, the Canadian brand was estimated to be worth over a trillion dollars; in other words, it would cost a trillion dollars to buy the goodwill that people, products, and services enjoy *by virtue of being from Canada* (Penner 2006).

Are national identity and the nation brand comparable? Peter van Ham differentiates the nation from its brand. In his formulation, a brand is a customer's *idea* about a product; therefore the nation brand comprises the *outside world's ideas* about a particular country (van Ham 2001). For van Ham, the nation-state exists anterior to, and separate from, the way that it is marketed or branded. Christopher Browning also believes that it is important to distinguish between brand and identity (Browning 2015). While these conceptual distinctions are important, national identity construction and the commercial branding of nations/places are similar enough that scholars can draw parallels.

Interestingly, van Ham does not distinguish between the official formulators of foreign policy—politicians and diplomats—and marketing professionals. He writes that the logic of branding applies to all economic and political actors around the world (Van Ham 2008). Others have also proposed that foreign affairs policy be thought of as a branding exercise (Kavaratzis 2005). In this view, public diplomacy, a subset of diplomatic activity, is another technique of branding.

It is important to note that terms such as national image, national identity, or national reputation, do not provoke the same visceral hostility as 'brand' (Aronczyk 2008). Marketing professional Wally Olins contests Michel Girard's argument that France "carries a specific dignity unlike a marketed product." Olins points out that the nation that calls itself France has presented itself variously as "royalist, republican and imperial," has moved from glorious autocracy, through the egalitarianism of the Revolution, to the present European state. Thus, at each stage, France has branded itself differently. Olins blames the rejection of the term 'brand' on anti-business snobbery, the mutual ignorance of business leaders and academics about each other's professions, and the semantic association of 'brand' with triviality and superficiality (Olins 2002).

Products and places do differ in significant ways. A place is already associated with certain qualities in the mind of the target audience. A place is also less amenable to manipulation by brand managers, because it has multiple stakeholders rather than a sole legal owner. John and Nicholas Jackson O'Shaughnessy write: "A nation's image has too many potential references for it to be anchored to a hard core of social facts, as is possible in the case of the brand image of a product" (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2000). Thus, Melissa Aronczyk refers to nations as "always already brands" (Aronczyk 2008). It may be unwise to transfer the organization-centric models of place branding to international politics in an unreflective manner (Rasmussen and Merkelsen 2014).

Some political scientists find the entire enterprise of nation branding problematic. Although it is commonly perceived as an apolitical strategy that targets external markets, Somogy Varga argues that nation-branding is actually a cultural-political measure primarily targeting the *domestic* population of the country. Nation branding, in this view, is essentially conservative

because it brings together neoliberal economic vocabulary and the symbolism of nationalist discourse to (re)legitimize the nation-state in a globalized world. Varga is also troubled by the transfer of definitional power to corporate actors from the polity (Varga 2013).

In certain cases, nation branding efforts have reproduced and strengthened ethnic and religious stereotypes (Wilder 2007). Tourism promotion in newly independent Serbia in the 1990s, focused on Serb and Christian Orthodox culture while excluding minority groups from the cultural landscape, thus reinforcing the Milosevic regime's ethnocentric and exclusivist conception of national identity (Hall 2002). Melissa Aronczyk takes these concerns further, positing that "nation branding affects the moral basis of national citizenship" (Aronczyk 2008).

The acquisition of nuclear weapons marks a dramatic change in a country's identity among other states in the international system. Consequently, its diplomats and others in charge of properly 'branding' the country among the other members of international society must rise to the challenge and engage in a 'branding' (or 're-branding'). This task is rendered even more critical because, in the current global order, a country that is seen as an 'irresponsible' or 'illegitimate' possessor of nuclear weapons, it may face stringent sanctions—even including invasion. Nuclearization is indeed a substantial motivation for nation-branding. As the following section shows, acquisition of the identity of a 'responsible state' is the goal.

### **Nuclear weapons and the concept of responsibility**

India has successfully sought to be branded as a responsible state. Since the term 'responsible' is in common usage as a desired identity, the analysis focuses on the branding of countries as responsible. What exactly does the term mean in the contemporary nuclear order?

To be 'responsible' for something could mean that one is assigned blame for misconduct. Alternatively, when a person is responsible, we say that she is behaving in a manner that avoids misconduct. The theorist Toni Erskine terms these "retrospective" and "prospective" understandings of the concept of responsibility. In these terms, in the last decade India moved from a retrospective attribution of responsibility as culpability, to a prospective attribution of responsibility as role-appropriate behaviour (Erskine 2003).

On testing nuclear weapons in 1998, India was held responsible for breaking the norm that forbade the testing of nuclear devices, for triggering proliferation in its region, and for destabilizing international security. Starting around 2005, however, India is increasingly seen as a responsible state whose nuclear weapons should be accepted in the interests of global stability. This is dramatically demonstrated by two statements by US Presidents. In 1998, President Bill Clinton said that India was "on the wrong side of history"(Clinton 1998). Only seven years later, President George W. Bush declared in a joint statement with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh: "*as a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology, India should acquire the same benefits and advantages as other such states*" (emphasis mine) (Office of the Press Secretary 2005).

In the current global nuclear order, responsible behaviour is equated with two factors. First, a responsible state accepts the doctrine of deterrence which restricts the role of nuclear weapons to a last-resort threat. Unlike conventional weapons, nuclear weapons must not be used for coercion, nor against challenges that fall short of threatening the state's existence. One could argue that there is nothing responsible about holding entire populations hostage to the threat of nuclear annihilation, but the practice of deterrence was even recognized by the

International Court of Justice as a justification for certain states retaining nuclear arsenals. Constructivists recognize that the equation of deterrence with stability has become a global norm (Farrell and Lambert 2001). Second, a responsible state restricts the diffusion of nuclear technology, so that nuclear materials and know-how are out of reach of other states (and more importantly, non-state actors or terrorist groups).

The 1968 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) institutionalizes the divisions of responsibility. The five states that had tested nuclear weapons before 1967 are designated in the treaty as Nuclear Weapon States (NWS), and are granted the right—now in perpetuity—to possess nuclear weapons. The NWS have the responsibility to refrain from transferring nuclear technology to other states, except under multilateral safeguards that ensure peaceful, civilian use. They must also negotiate nuclear disarmament in good faith. These five NWS are the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China. All other states are considered Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS), obliged to eschew development of nuclear technology, except under multilateral safeguards. India, Pakistan, and Israel are the only states that have never signed the NPT (North Korea is the only state to sign, and then exit the treaty).

India was not the first country to attempt the ‘responsible state’ branding. China has, through participation in, and compliance with, the institutions of the nuclear order been accepted as a responsible stakeholder (Zoellick 2005). China’s accession to the NPT in 1992 is symbolic of its entry into the global mainstream. It is no coincidence that the accession occurred at the end of the Cold War, an era that reinforced the perception of NWS as mature and advanced states, responsible for global stability through their deft wielding of the instruments of deterrence. The spread of nuclear weapons, rather than vertical growth or qualitative

improvements in existing NWS arsenals, became the pre-eminent threat. As Richard Price puts it, the international community seemed to have come to the conclusion that nuclear weapons don't kill people, rogue states do (Price 2007).

India had occupied a hybrid position in the regime for four decades, in between the categories of NWS and NNWS. Although it had tested a nuclear device in 1974, India denied that it had a weapons program. As the post-Cold War non-proliferation regime tightened its scrutiny of violators, India had to differentiate itself from countries such as North Korea or Iraq—other possessors of nuclear capabilities that were not recognized by the NPT. It was mainly in order to resolve this bind that India conducted a series of nuclear tests in May 1998. It is important to note that the government in New Delhi named these tests as nuclear *weapon* tests, accompanied by a declaration that India was now a NWS (Vajpayee 1998).

While world opinion initially criticized India's decision, India became gradually accepted into the nuclear order, as illustrated by the presidential statements reported above. Some indicators of this acceptance are the nuclear cooperation agreements between India and several important countries including Australia, Canada, France, Japan, and Russia, in addition to the United States (Press Information Bureau 2015); India's participation in deliberations on enhancing global nuclear security (Sirohi 2016); and the potential entry of the country into the Nuclear Suppliers Group—a body that was set up to tighten export controls in response to an Indian test in the 1970s (Williams 2016).

Realist scholars of International Relations claim that the acceptance of India is a response to its rising power in Asia, and its potential use as a counter-balance to China in that region

(Ganguly 2005, Pant 2011). Thus, these scholars assert that the nation branding was next to irrelevant because balance of power considerations forced the United States to befriend India; and other nations fell in line behind the Americans.

A different structural argument, based on international economic relations, proposes that the driving force was the economic imperative of global corporations (Ghoshroy 2010). Jarrod Hayes puts forward a Constructivist argument that India's democratic form of government made it possible for the United States government to de-securitize its nuclear program, and present it to American and international stakeholders as legitimate (Hayes 2015).

The argument presented here posits that India's reputation as a responsible power was a *necessary foundation* for its acceptance into the nuclear club, whether that acceptance was motivated by balance-of-power considerations, commercial interests, or democratic commonalities. While not disputing the Realist, economic, or Constructivist accounts existing in the literature, this paper asks how India laid this foundation through nation branding.

### **Nation branding techniques and India**

How did Indian diplomats and other leaders go about branding India in the nuclear arena? While several techniques were used in this broad effort, four techniques are especially interesting since they are regularly used in nation branding for commercial purposes. This section discusses these techniques—differentiation, standardization, total branding, and crisis management—practiced by agents of the Indian government. These techniques were identified through a review of the nation branding literature, in articles and books that were written by theorists and practitioners dealing with other cases. This section provides examples of each technique from India's post-

nuclear test activity. While the Indian government did not retain a firm of nation branding experts to focus on nuclear diplomacy, its identity construction efforts mirror the strategies used by nation branding professionals.<sup>1</sup>

### *Differentiation*

The first imperative in nation branding is for the country to distinguish itself from its counterparts, so that it may emerge from a cluttered and competitive environment (Aronczyk 2008). Knowing the areas in which a nation has reputational capital is analogous to a company knowing its core competencies (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2000). Simon Anholt suggests that a country enhance its brand identity with “more relevant and distinctive qualities,” so as to be chosen over its competitors (Anholt 2007). In product branding, this outcome is often achieved by presenting a direct contrast with an inferior product. India differentiated itself from other poor and unstable developing countries by highlighting the incentives and imperatives of economic growth, and from China and Pakistan by emphasizing good governance.

India's economy grew 7.6% percent annually in the decade starting 2000-01 (Dreze and Sen 2013). Coupled with its large population, this created a large market for foreign companies. Specifically on the nuclear issue, the government opened up the civil nuclear energy sector, on the grounds that it was a sustainable way to satisfy rising energy demands. The Indian Atomic Energy Commission announced the goal of increasing installed reactor capacity more than seven-fold to 35000 MWe by the year 2022 and to 60000 MWe by 2032. India became an attractive market for vendors of reactors, fuel, and allied services. The United States-India Business Council

---

<sup>1</sup> The Indian government did launch a branding campaign focused on attracting tourists (and generally boosting the country's image) in 2002. The motto of the campaign was “Incredible India.”

estimated India would spend \$175 million over 30 years on nuclear energy (Pant 2011). Supplier countries realized that the opportunity costs of export bans on nuclear technology were rising.

The Indian government's championing of nuclear energy as a solution to economic and environmental problems had yet another effect. By emphasizing its real growth-driven 'need' for nuclear energy, India distinguished itself from countries that might obtain nuclear technology as a cover for eventual weapons manufacture.

Although two of the five NWS—Russia and China—were dictatorships when they acquired nuclear weapons (and are far from democratic today), democracy and good governance have turned out to be increasingly important in evaluating whether a country's nuclear program seems threatening to global stability (Hayes 2009). The fact that India was a democracy was therefore a crucial resource in constructing a responsible identity. This was especially true during the George W. Bush administration. India could not "be ignored when democracy promotion was at the heart of the American foreign policy" (Pant 2011).

India sought to demonstrate good governance in four areas relevant to the nuclear issue—civilian oversight of the nuclear program, separation of civilian and military activities, and secure guardianship of nuclear materials. The origins of the Indian nuclear program and its nearly five decade-long undeclared status favoured purely civilian direction. Even after the formal declaration in 1998, the government remains reluctant to delegate authority over nuclear weapons to the military (Narang 2014). In discussions with their foreign counterparts, Indian leaders asserted that civilian control meant that material would be safe (Suryanarayana 2007, Chandrasekar and Krishna 2010).

The dominance of the military in the Pakistani polity, especially on security and nuclear issues, is a concern for the international community (Kampani 2001, Hersh 2009). Pakistan stands in as an effective contrast (essentially portrayed by India as the 'evil twin') in light of the revelations about the involvement of some parts of its government—the so-called A.Q. Khan network—in the nuclear black market. India also sought to present itself as a *victim* of proliferation from China to Pakistan. Senior Indian negotiator Shyam Saran said in 2005: "As a responsible nuclear weapon state, we are even more conscious of our obligations to the international community on the control of WMD technologies and their delivery systems." Saran went on to draw an explicit contrast to the cooperation between China and Pakistan that may violate international norms (Saran 2005). In 2003, the Indian Foreign Minister said in Parliament that if the criteria for pre-emptive invasion were the possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the absence of democracy, and export of terrorism, then no country deserves more than Pakistan to be tackled. He declared that India had a better case for initiating pre-emptive action against Pakistan, than the US had against Iraq (Anon 2003). He proposed that Pakistan be included in the 'axis of evil' (Suroor 2002).

India has also expressed concern about the inability of the Pakistani state to control militant groups that operate within its territory, and the troubling implications for the safety of nuclear materials and technology (Anon 2006, Singh 2009). Every time India expresses concern about proliferation from Pakistan, it is reinforcing the idea that "proliferation" amounts to buying or stealing materials and technology as opposed to manufacturing bombs for oneself, thereby exempting *itself* from the category of proliferator.

India played up the fact that although it is neither a member of supplier groups nor the NPT, its record is better than China's. A spokesman for the Indian Prime Minister asserted: "We have a track record like that of a signatory to the NPT, and certainly we are better than China - we have a much better record of non-proliferation" (Anon 2006).

### *Standardization*

In branding, the strategy of differentiation must be balanced with the need to remain rooted in a relational context of functional similarity or standardization (Aronczyk 2008). That is, the product or nation must be placed in an echelon with other, similarly well-regarded products or nations. Highly unique brands may not draw recognition from diverse audiences (Ooi 2014). Research has shown that people are "sloppy cognitive processors." They resist changing their cognitive structures and prefer to adjust what they see to fit what they know. Therefore, marketers try to manage and influence the images in the minds of decision-makers regarding particular countries (Kotler and Gertner 2010).

The formal and enthusiastic adoption of the doctrine of deterrence was key in India's re-branding as, and desired identification with, the NWS. With this adoption, India showed itself to be similar to the five NWS, in that its weapons were officially acknowledged, and designated as deterrents.

Colin Gray once said that just as everyone supports peace, everybody is for deterrence (Williams 1992). This does not hold true in the Indian case. Indians in the 1950s opposed the very concept of deterrence, on the grounds that it relies on the conditional use of nuclear weapons (Menon 2000). The dean of Indian strategists, K. Subrahmanyam, denounced the idea of

deterrence as both immoral and unworkable (Subrahmanyam 1981). As late as 1995, an Indian Prime Minister told the United Nations General Assembly that deterrence was a “false belief”(Rao 1995).

While formally denouncing the doctrine, India tried to play the game of deterrence. Statements were issued from time to time that hinted at nuclear weapons capability as well as intention to use it. In 1974, India’s designation of its first nuclear test as a ‘peaceful nuclear explosion’ avoided a direct confrontation with the nascent NPT regime. Although New Delhi claimed that the test had no military implications, India obtained some of the benefits of nuclear deterrence, in part because a device test, thanks to the NPT, had become the marker of nuclear weapons capability.

The 1998 tests were perceived as signalling a shift in Indian strategic culture toward defiance of the international community. The branding of the tests tells a different story. Statements in May 1998 were carefully calibrated to defend the now-official capability, while emphasizing to the international community that the country aspired to be a pillar of the nuclear order. The doctrinal package that enveloped the tests was intended to send out both a clear(er) threat and a reassurance that India did not intend to use its newly-acquired capability for aggression or revisionism.

In a ‘leaked’ letter to President Clinton, the Indian Prime Minister justified the tests as a response to the “overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962...that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state” (Vajpayee 1998). The reference is to the People’s

Republic of China. First, this statement asserts that India, just like other NWS, is entitled to nuclear weapons because of 'genuine' security reasons. Second, by naming China as the threat stimulus, India seeks to make common cause with the United States.

In the nation branding literature, this is known as an "accreditation" strategy. It adds credibility to the brand and imbues it with globally understood references. This is akin to a city that attracts globally recognized brands or businesses, which end up vouching for its excellence. An example might be Abu Dhabi investing in a Guggenheim Museum (Ooi 2014).

### *Total branding*

Brand managers are cognizant of the need for the integration of communications in place branding. Philip Kotler and his co-authors write that "place promotion has the best chance for success when the message is matched to the media, all the players are pushing in the same direction, and informal impressions reinforce the paid efforts" (Kotler, Haider et al. 1993). For instance, the image of a site as 'natural' and 'eco-friendly' would be marred by large manufacturing facilities; if the place is branded as 'friendly,' street protests must be controlled by the authorities. The communications and marketing strategies that underpin the brand are often referred to as "hymn sheets" or "song sheets," which are intended to harmonize and unify the communications for the nation brand (Aronczyk 2008).

In the Indian context, leaders realized the importance of staying on message—the message being that the nuclear arsenal is solely a response to an external and existential security threat. After the 1998 tests, the more radical and overtly religious factions of the ruling Hindu nationalist group were tightly leashed. The Prime Minister vetoed all official celebrations by his

political party, and refused permission for the construction of a temple at the test site. The government was cautioned not to let the tests get hijacked by the “lunatic fringe” (George 1998, Misra 1998, Singh 1998). One of India’s foremost commenters on nuclear affairs, C. Raja Mohan, urged the Prime Minister “to signal to the world that India is determined to become a responsible nuclear weapon power. A series of provocative statements at various levels in the Government and the ruling party have spread confusion, intensified the mistrust in the region and generated concern worldwide that New Delhi has drifted into a dangerous game of nuclear sabre-rattling”(Raja Mohan 1998).

Another element of total branding was the image of India as a modern, technologically-capable state. The first paragraph of the statement on the implementation of the 2005 India-US civil nuclear cooperation agreement firmly situates it in that context: “The resumption of full civilian nuclear energy cooperation between India and the United States arose in the context of India’s requirement for adequate and affordable energy supplies to sustain its accelerating economic growth rate and as recognition of its growing technological prowess” (Anon 2008). Proposals for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology by Indian leaders make sure to reference India’s achievements in other areas of science and technology (Anon 2005, Singh, Bagla et al. 2012).

### *Crisis management*

Despite the best efforts of consultants and politicians, crises do occur. Some nation branding professionals specialize in the management of reputations during and after crises. I.I. Mitroff and C.M. Pearson set out the following steps for crisis management: signal detection

(separating the 'signal' from the noise of constant events), prevention and preparation, containment and damage limitation, recovery, and learning (Avraham and Ketter 2008). These steps can be observed in India's responses to two crises with Pakistan that erupted following the formal declaration of nuclear status: the 1999 Kargil conflict, and the 2001-02 border standoff.

India had to draw the line between legitimate self-defence (the '*signal*') and nuclear-armed coercion. While public opinion in India in 1999 supported crossing the Line of Control with Pakistan in 'hot pursuit' of the infiltrators, and carrying out strikes on terrorist camps, the government eschewed these options. This was especially noteworthy considering that it was a weak government facing national elections. This restraint, in contrast with Pakistan's inability or unwillingness to control the infiltrators, was parlayed into diplomatic gains. India's National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra said at the time: "The recent operations in Kargil have demonstrated that our system and the political leadership believe in great responsibility and restraint, as you would expect from the largest democracy in the world" (Sidhu 2000).

*Containment and damage limitation* were seen in the second crisis, which was triggered by an attempt to storm the Indian Parliament in December 2001. The Indian government demanded the extradition of several operatives allegedly residing in Pakistan. The demand was backed up with the mobilization of 800,000 Indian troops, facing off at the border with Pakistani soldiers. Although it issued nuclear threats, the Indian government did exercise restraint, drew attention to that restraint, and attributed the restraint to deterrence. The former President of India and the ex-Chief of Army Staff are among the top leaders giving nuclear deterrence the credit for the avoidance of war in these crises (Sidhu 2007, Anon 2009).

Finally, we see evidence of *learning* about the importance of integrating security decision-making with maintaining the desired identity among global partners. In April 2004 a new army doctrine called 'Cold Start' was announced. It envisages that Integrated Battle Groups of division size would arrive speedily at the border, poised to make shallow territorial gains in Pakistan, if so directed. When the crisis ends, these pockets of occupied territory could be used by India as bargaining chips (Ladwig III 2007/ 08). Understanding the inevitability of quick intervention by the international community, leaders in New Delhi crafted a doctrine allowing India to show restraint—by eschewing large deployments—while threatening Pakistan with retaliation.

### **Insights from nation branding techniques**

This section addresses the value added of studying nation branding to IR theorists interested in ideational factors, and also suggests that nation branding gurus could benefit from attention to a specific theoretical issue that is addressed by IR theorists. There are two benefits to IR theorists of studying nation branding: first, identifying techniques from nation branding in diplomatic practice helps reveal processes in national identity construction; second, understanding how brand identity works strengthens theorists' arguments that even a 'constructed' national identity is powerful. A third lesson that can be drawn from bringing these two literatures together is a contribution from IR theory to nation branding: recognizing the distinction between the social and corporate identities of a nation-state.

Constructivism treats identity as an empirical question to be theorized within a historical context, that is, as a dependent variable rather than a given. A core Constructivist claim is that agents (states/other actors) and structures (the international system) are mutually determined

or co-constituted. It is, therefore, incumbent on Constructivists to *deconstruct* national identities and reveal the power struggles that went into the process. Yet, Constructivists have “much more work to do in sorting out the dynamics of constitutive processes”(Klotz and Lynch 2007). Constructivists have also been criticized for neglecting the agency of domestic actors in self-presentation and norm construction (Checkel 1999, Hopf 2000).

Some processes of national identity construction can be revealed by understanding the techniques of nation branding, and identifying them in diplomatic practices. The first sub-section shows how India differentiated itself from unstable or rogue states by emphasizing growth and governance. In the sub-section on standardization, we note how international norms constituted this desired identity and pushed the Indian government to explicitly avow deterrence. In the sub-section on total branding, we see that India suppressed some voices in order to construct its desired identity. India's options in crisis management were restricted by its need to preserve its reputation for responsible behaviour.

Constructivists have also struggled with the question of whether we can attribute autonomous *power* to a constructed identity. While they agree that identities are inherently contestable, they argue over whether/when to treat them as relatively fixed (Klotz and Lynch 2007). Marketing professionals recognize that the brand only exists in the minds of potential consumers. It is a distributed identity that is manipulable, within limits, by skilful marketing management. Nation branding consultants may even claim that branding can render actual product attributes irrelevant (Volcic and Andrejevic 2011). Simon Anholt compares a brand to the children's game of joining up the dots to create the outline of an animal. Just as the dots must

be numbered for the game to work, positive associations must be kept fresh in the mind of the consumer (Anholt 2005).

One of the best-known definitions of a brand terms it “a singular idea or concept that you own inside the mind of a prospect”(Ries and Ries 1998). In so far as nations are also concepts, they are unlikely to be exceptions to the manipulations of concepts. As Peter van Ham asks: “Why should we assume that the public readily buys into the seductive meanings of consumer capitalism but remains rational and objective when making political decisions?”(van Ham 2001).

Just as the average consumer has neither resources nor inclination to investigate the claims of each product’s advertisements, most countries interacting with India will be influenced by its brand image in the global political context. Some authors have claimed that nation branding is more salient in global economic relations than in the security sphere. According to Christopher Browning, branding processes presume a downplaying of security in favour of economics (Browning 2015). The analysis above shows that even on the nuclear weapons issue, where one expects that security imperatives will be fundamental, image matters. Consumers care deeply about certain purchases, and may investigate marketers’ claims, yet take mental short cuts in other cases. The Indian brand image comes into play in interactions with the majority of India’s potential partners, who do not perceive it as threatening. We would expect Pakistan to be less susceptible to Indian branding efforts.

Paying attention to nation branding practices helps IR scholars understand the power of branding/reputation/image; the default mode is to accept the dominant brand image. Thus,

while applying concepts from nation branding helps illuminate processes of national identity construction, it also enables us to account for the power of a constructed national identity.

International Relations has rarely borrowed concepts from the management sciences, except in the literature on institutionalism. Nation branding is no exception. Jelena Subotic and Ayse Zarakol write, “While even a cursory glance makes it clear that “nation branding” projects should be of interest to scholars of International Relations, our discipline remains relatively disengaged from the analysis of this growing trend” (Subotic and Zarakol 2014).

At the same time, management scholars have disregarded theories of national identity, thereby falling into conceptual dilemmas. IR theorists are attentive to the distinction between nation-as-state and nation-as-people (Barkin and Cronin 1994). When management scholars ignore this distinction, they become confused and frustrated regarding the role of people/citizens in nation branding (Aronczyk 2008).

The distinction that IR theorist Alexander Wendt makes between the country’s social identity and its corporate identity can be helpful here. ‘Social’ identity is the country’s identity in relation to its peers, or to put it differently, the face it shows in international society. ‘Corporate’ identity refers to the glue that holds the country together (Wendt 1999). Paul Kowert posits a similar distinction between “internal” identity which refers to the cohesion of the nation-state’s parts, and “external” identity, which refers to its distinctiveness (Kowert 1999). Nation branding is primarily concerned with *social* identity. Nation branding professionals are enthusiastic about leveraging national character and culture in order to enhance a positive ‘country-of-origin’ effect, for instance, by emphasizing a British sense of decorum or Japanese perfectionism. Yet there are

cases when corporate identity depends on practices of “cultural intimacy”—practices that make for a collective identity, which may transgress the dominant norms of international society (Subotic and Zarakol 2012). If there is a fundamental incompatibility between the desired social identity and the existing corporate identity, nation branding strategies would be ineffective because citizens’ behaviour would not accord with the nation brand. Nation branding professionals would benefit from recognizing this distinction. In the case discussed here, choices of ordinary citizens mattered only marginally because the issue-area of nuclear policy is extremely elite-centric, although evidence is presented of domestic actors being restrained in order to maintain the integrity of the brand.

### **Conclusion**

International Relations (IR) scholars are increasingly interested in identity and reputation. Professional marketers engage in branding and selling nations. This paper is an initial attempt to build a bridge between the IR and place branding literatures, and uses a specific example as proof of its utility.

Using the example of India’s brand identity in the nuclear order, this work makes a case that the two disciplines can learn from each other. While a nation-state differs in important ways from a consumer product, the techniques that are used to create images in the minds of the target audience have interesting parallels. For Constructivist IR scholars in particular, a knowledge of nation branding techniques, and an effort to identify them in foreign policy actions and statements, can help illuminate the process by which leaders construct a social identity for

their country in the international arena, and also strengthen their argument that the identity so constructed, has autonomous power.

Adler, E. (2002). Constructivism and International Relations. Handbook of International Relations. W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse and B. Simmons. London, Sage: 95-118.

Anholt, S. (2005). Brand New Justice. Oxford, Elsevier.

Anholt, S. (2007) "Competitive Identity: A new model for the brand management of nations, cities and regions." Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review 4.

Anholt, S. and J. Hildreth (2010). Brand America: The Making, Unmaking and Remaking of the Greatest National Image of All Time. London, Marshall Cavendish Business.

Anon. (2003, April 9). "Pak fitter case for pre-emptive strike: Sinha." Retrieved July 11, 2011, from [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-04-09/india/27265639\\_1\\_cross-border-terrorism-fitter-case-emptive](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-04-09/india/27265639_1_cross-border-terrorism-fitter-case-emptive).

Anon. (2005, 21 December). "Transforming India-US Relations: Speech by Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran to CEIP." Retrieved 3 January, 2006, from <http://www.mea.gov.in/>.

Anon. (2006, 25 September). "Australia Considers Nuclear Exports to India." Retrieved 25 September, 2006.

Anon. (2006, 31 July). "Indian nuke installations on LeT list, says Mukherjee." Retrieved 2 August, 2006, from <http://in.news.yahoo.com/060731/43/66ax4.html>.

Anon. (2008, July 25). "Implementation of the India-United States Joint Statement of July 18, 2005: India's Separation Plan." Retrieved July 29, 2008, from <http://www.cfr.org/india/implementation-india-united-states-joint-statement-july-18-2005-indias-separation-plan/p16861>.

Anon. (2009, March 9). "'Pak's N-bomb prevented India from attacking it after 26/11'." Retrieved May 10, 2009, from <http://www.dnaindia.com/report.asp?newsid=1237673>.

Aronczyk, M. (2008). "'Living the Brand": Nationality, Globality and the Identity Strategies of Nation Branding Consultants." International Journal of Communication 2: 41-65.

Avraham, E. and E. Ketter (2008). Media Strategies for Marketing Places in Crisis. Oxford, Elsevier.

Barkin, J. S. and B. Cronin (1994). "The State and the Nation: Changing Norms and the Rules of Sovereignty in International Relations." International Organization 48(1): 107-130.

Browning, C. S. (2015). "Nation Branding, National Self-Esteem, and the Constitution of Subjectivity in Late Modernity." Foreign Policy Analysis 11: 195-214.

Chandrasekar, V. S. and B. Krishna. (2010, June 28). "India, Canada sign civil nuclear deal." Retrieved September 3, 2012, from [http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report\\_india-canada-sign-civil-nuclear-deal\\_1402182](http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report_india-canada-sign-civil-nuclear-deal_1402182).

Checkel, J. T. (1999). "Norms, Institutions, and National Identity in Contemporary Europe." International Studies Quarterly 43(1): 84-114.

Clinton, W. (1998, 25 May). "President's Radio Address." Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents Retrieved 1 November, 2005.

Dinnie, K. (2007). Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice. Oxford, U.K., Butterworth-Heinemann.

Dreze, J. and A. Sen (2013). An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions. London, Penguin Books.

Erskine, T. (2003). Making Sense of 'Responsibility' in International Relations: Key Questions and Concepts. Can Institutions Have Responsibilities? Collective Moral Agency and International Relations. T. Erskine. Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan: 1-17.

Farrell, T. and H. Lambert (2001). "Courting Controversy: International Law, National Norms and American Nuclear Use." Review of International Studies 27(3): 309-326.

Finnemore, M. and K. Sikkink (2001). "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics." Annual Review of Political Science 4.

Ganguly, S. (2005, August 17). "Giving India a pass." Retrieved 1 March, 2006, from <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20050817faupdate84577/sumit-ganguly/giving-india-a-pass.html>.

George, T. J. S. (1998). Wisdom for a Weaponising India. Indian Express.

GfK. (2014, November 13). "Nation Brand Index 2013: Latest Findings." Retrieved March 15, 2014, from <http://www.gfk.com/news-and-events/press-room/press-releases/pages/nation-brand-index-2013-latest-findings.aspx>.

Ghoshroy, S. (2010). The U.S.-India Nuclear Deal: Triumph of Strategic and Business Interests over Non-Proliferation. South Asia at a Crossroads: Conflict or Cooperation in the Age of Nuclear Weapons, Missile Defense and Space Rivalries. S. Ghoshroy and G. Neuneck. Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft: 264-279.

Govers, R. (2013). "Why place branding is not about logos and slogans." Place Branding and Public Diplomacy 9(2): 71-75.

Hall, D. (2002). "Brand development, tourism and national identity: the re-imaging of former Yugoslavia." Journal of Brand Management 9(4-5): 323-334.

Hayes, J. (2009). "Identity and Securitization in the Democratic Peace: The United States and the Divergence of Response to India and Iran's Nuclear Programs." International Studies Quarterly 53(4): 977-999.

Hayes, J. (2015). Constructing National Security: U.S. Relations with India and China. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Hersh, S. (2009). Are Nuclear Weapons Safe in Pakistan? New Yorker. New York.

Hopf, T. (2000). "Constructivism all the way down." International Politics 37: 369-378.

Kampani, G. (2001, 28 September 2001). "Safety Concerns About the Command & Control of Pakistan's Strategic Forces, Fissile Material, and Nuclear Installations." 2004, from <http://cns.miis.edu/research/wtc01/spna.htm>.

Kavaratzis, M. (2005). "Place Branding: A Review of Trends and Conceptual Models." Marketing Review 5: 329-342.

Klotz, A. and C. Lynch (2007). Strategies for research in constructivist international relations. Armonk, N. Y., M.E. Sharpe.

Kotler, P. and D. Gertner (2010). Country as brand, product and beyond: a place marketing and brand management perspective. Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Proposition. N. Morgan, A. Pritchard and R. Pride. Oxford, UK, Butterworth-Heinemann: 40-56.

Kotler, P., D. Haider and I. Rein (1993). Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States, and Nations. New York and Toronto, Free Press.

Kowert, P. (1999). National Identity: Inside and Out. Origins of National Interests. G. Chafetz, B. Frankel and M. Spirtas. London, Routledge: 1-34.

Ladwig III, W. C. (2007/ 08). "A Cold Start for Hot Wars?" International Security 32(3): 158-190.

Menon, V. K. K. (2000). Statement to the Political Committee of the United Nations on 6 October 1954. Documents on India's Nuclear Disarmament Policy. G. Singh and S. K. Sharma. New Delhi, Anamika Publishers. 1: 30-32.

Misra, S. (1998). Keep an eye on this bomb. Indian Express.

Narang, V. (2014). Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

O'Shaughnessy, J. and N. J. O'Shaughnessy (2000). "Treating the Nation as a Brand: Some Neglected Issues." Journal of Macromarketing 20(1): 56-64.

Office of the Press Secretary. (2005, July 18). "Joint Statement between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh." Retrieved November 29, 2005, from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/07/20050718-6.html>.

Olins, W. (2002). "Branding the nation--the historical context." Journal of Brand Management 9(4-5): 241-248.

Ooi, C.-S. (2014). The making of the copycat city: accreditation tactics in place branding. Branding Chinese Mega-Cities: Policies, Practices, and Positioning. P. O. Berg and E. Bjorner. Cheltenham, UK, Edward Elgar: 232-248.

Pant, H. V. (2011). The U.S.-India Nuclear Pact. New Delhi, Oxford University Press.

Penner, D. (2006). Canadian Brand rated one of the best in world. Vancouver Sun.

Press Information Bureau. (2015, December 30). "Civil Nuclear Cooperation – A Year of Solid Achievements." Retrieved June 4, 2016, from <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=134030>.

Price, R. (2007). "Nuclear Weapons Don't Kill People, Rogues Do." International Politics **44**: 232-249.

Raja Mohan, C. (1998). Signaling Nuclear Moderation. Hindu.

Rao, P. V. N. (1995). "Speech by Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, Special Commemorative Meeting, U.N.G.A. 50th session, 24 October 1995." from [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/India/Nuclear/2296\\_2887.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/India/Nuclear/2296_2887.html).

Rasmussen, R. K. and H. Merckelsen (2014). "The risks of nation branding as crisis response: A case study of how the Danish government turned the Cartoon Crisis into a struggle with Globalization." Place Branding and Public Diplomacy **10**(3): 230-248.

Ries, A. and L. Ries (1998). The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding. New York, HarperCollins.

Saran, S. (2005, October 25). "Who's running nuke Wal-Mart, asks Saran." Retrieved June 15, 2011, from <http://www.rediff.com/news/report/saran/20051025.htm>.

Sidhu, W. P. S. (2000). India's Nuclear Use Doctrine. Planning the Unthinkable. P. Lavoy, S. Sagan and J. Wirtz. Ithaca, Cornell University Press: 125-157.

Sidhu, W. P. S. (2007). Operation Vijay and Operation Parakram: The Victory of Theory? The India-Pakistan Nuclear Relationship. E. Sridharan. New Delhi, Routledge: 207-238.

Singh, J. (2009, January 9). "Pak N-button: U.S. Eyes on Army Chief's Finger." Retrieved June 13, 2011, from <http://www.indianexpress.com/oldStory/16330/>.

Singh, M., P. Bagla and R. Stone (2012). "India's Scholar-Prime Minister Aims for Inclusive Development." Science **335**: 907-908.

Singh, T. (1998). Beware the Nuclear Yogis. India Today: 35.

Sirohi, S. (2016, February 24). "Indian Diplomacy in Full Flow at Nuclear Security Summit, Eyes Firmly Set on N.S.G. Next." Retrieved June 4, 2016, from <http://thewire.in/2016/04/02/indian-diplomacy-in-full-flow-at-nuclear-security-summit-27135/>.

Subotic, J. and A. Zarakol (2012). "Cultural Intimacy in International Relations." European Journal of International Relations.

Subotic, J. and A. Zarakol (2014). Survival Strategies in an Increasingly Constructed World Economy. International Studies Association Annual Convention. Toronto.

Subrahmanyam, K. (1981). The Myth of Deterrence. Nuclear Myths and Realities. K. Subrahmanyam. New Delhi, ABC Publications: 38-51.

Suroor, H. (2002). Include Pak in 'axis of evil': Sinha. Hindu.

Suryanarayana, P. S. (2007). India keen to work with Thailand. Hindu.

Vajpayee, A. B. (1998). "Letter to Bill Clinton." Retrieved 5 November, 2005, from <http://www.indianembassy.org/indusrel/pmletter.htm>.

Vajpayee, A. B. (1998, May 27, 1998). "Suo Motu Statement by Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Parliament" Retrieved June 26, 2015, from <http://fas.org/news/india/1998/05/980527-india-pm.htm>.

van Ham, P. (2001). "The Rise of the Brand State." Foreign Affairs **80**(5): 2-6.

Van Ham, P. (2008). "Place Branding: The State of the Art." Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences **616**(March): 126-149.

Varga, S. (2013). "The Politics of Nation Branding." Philosophy and Social Criticism **39**(8): 825-845.

- Volcic, Z. and M. Andrejevic (2011). "Nation Branding in the Era of Commercial Nationalism." International Journal of Communication **5**: 598-618.
- Wendt, A. (1999). Social Theory of International Politics. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Wilder, J. (2007). "Nation branding: With pride against prejudice." Place Branding and Public Diplomacy **3**(2): 144-150.
- Williams, L. (2016, April 1). "A Path Forward on Indian N.S..G Membership." Retrieved June 4, 2016, from <http://thediplomat.com/2016/04/a-path-forward-on-indian-nsg-membership/>.
- Williams, M. C. (1992). "Rethinking the 'Logic' of Deterrence." Alternatives(17): 67-93.
- Zoellick, R. (2005, September 21, 2005). "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?: Remarks to the National Committee on the United States and China Relations." Retrieved March 1, 2014, from [http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/INDEXES/Vol%2028\\_2/Zoellick.pdf](http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/INDEXES/Vol%2028_2/Zoellick.pdf).