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EFFORTS TOWARDS CREATING A NATIONAL BRAND IN KOSOVO (2008-2021)

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ABSTRACT

States in the context of foreign policy apply specific strategies that relate with strengthening their international position, especially in relation to the promotion of attributes and values that make changing the perceptions of citizens of other states, and consequently of decision makers. Small states find it difficult to impose on the large international system knowing that their power and potential is little measurable.

Kosovo since its proclamation as a state, is facing this dilemma, as crises, political instability and the inability to conclude the problem of recognition have cost it in external perception as a country with unsolvable political problems, while from within as the place where opportunities for work and well-being are seen as difficult to achieve, while interethnic cooperation remains dependent on the fate of the Brussels Talks or reconciliation and forgiveness, which are also linked to political talks. The need to affirm the truth of Kosovo, found it without concrete strategies, while the application of some marketing on foreign television, was not followed by any concrete plan.

Kosovo had launched a campaign entitled "Young Europeans", while only a few years later, 200,000 young people left the country, producing paradigmatic upheavals, in "young European immigrants". Applying a series of methods, such as content analysis, statistics and

interviews, the paper concludes that Kosovo has not had a national strategy for creating a national brand, while there are some sporadic efforts, which are not accompanied by concrete strategies, while political instability did not allow the functioning of foreign policy and consequently increased impatience of the citizens towards the institutions which was reflected in the efforts for their mass departure from the country.

Key words: Kosovo, national brand, foreign policy, instability, marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Kosovo's national brand represents all the effort that the country made in the process of promoting its citizenship. The peculiarity of Kosovo was that it had to use the national brand to create social cohesion, economic promotion and potential, but also to ensure recognition, knowing the political process he went through until the creation and consolidation of statehood. Kosovo has launched a marketing campaign, known as the "Young Europeans", a television commercial which was not successfully followed by a clear and concrete strategy to believe that Kosovo has had indications that it is producing a national brand. Kosovo, through this marketing campaign, aimed very much at itself in the image, so in promoting the country as a whole, but had no other goal, not even to secure recognition.

The focus of this advertisement was on promoting the country where young people are the main focus, the bearers of change and transformation of the country, which had just closed, at least from its claim, the problems with citizenship, while the image was very aggravated by it what the war produced and how it was reflected in subsequent processes. With this event, Kosovo's public diplomacy began to apply (Wählisch, Xharra. 2010: 10).

It is very debatable how the government had decided to focus on the youth, if it did not intend to promote the economic potential of the country, where the new promoters would be. There are various explanations for this, which are more related to the lack of ability of the country to ensure a stable economy, or in another case an education system that is slowly rising, indicating that public diplomacy could not develop quickly.

The difficulties of applying public diplomacy in Kosovo are noticed from the beginning of its implementation, consequently of the national brand that would emerge from the successful application of public diplomacy, as Kosovo was still in the consolidation of all its foreign policy and of course that lacked all the resources, experience, infrastructure needed to achieve the objectives, but the main strategic goal was to create a brand that would promote

the values and potential of Kosovo, excluding the nationalist, religious or political elements that would could present divergences for the Kosovo band, Therefore, self-focusing on the youth, was seen more as an opportunity for them to be understood as new that leaves behind the historical past, which creates many divisions, but also implies the future which seems to be properly unorganized.

That Kosovo was not clear on how to use public diplomacy, shows the fact that on the one side promotes only young people, without showing specifically their potential, while aiming to achieve the promotion of the national brand without being clear who is he. Kosovo Public Diplomacy, in addition to the creation of the National Brand, aimed at the application of other forms of diplomatic communication in order to identify ways through which it could achieve success in recognition, especially through parliamentary and digital diplomacy, in particular to EU states that do not recognize Kosovo's independence (MPJ, 2013).

Kosovo's national brand had encountered problems in shaping it, as internal political instability had affected various forms and levels of policymaking in Kosovo, related to the frequent downfalls of governments and delays in their formation, which were followed by the lack of institutional legacy, leaving at the tentative level all previous political initiatives. Kosovo had launched a foreign policy strategy from which it aimed to achieve several objectives, such as image correction, promotion of economic potentials and promotion of foreign investment (KIESA, 2017: 27). Countries like Kosovo and Albania have many challenges in promoting the country and overcoming their negative image. Professor Gëzim Visoka (2021) considers that for Kosovo it is difficult to regulate its image as a state, as there are many obstacles in promoting some values, interests, or culture, therefore it continues to be prejudiced according to a negative image.

Kosovo had a problem with its image, firstly, the one created by the war, such as ethnic divisions, and secondly, the perception that had been raised especially about organized crime and corruption in institutions, which it almost never managed to improve during the period of its statehood. This situation had also affected the ignorance of Kosovo's economic potential, which had not created an effective strategy regarding the promotion of the positive image of the country, to ensure foreign investment as direct investment (KAS, 2021).

This affected in some segments, the impossibility for rapprochement of all people in Kosovo, regardless of ethnicity, while political problems inside caused many young people towards 2014-2015, had started a mass getaway from the country, while in 2015, Kosovo has

established the Special Court which would deal with cases of alleged war crimes committed in Kosovo, while the firsts arrest has begun in 2020, leaving Kosovo's image demaged in international arena.

The establishment of this court was seen with such importance that it would affect the opening of opportunities for Kosovo and its future, while the Prime Minister of Kosovo, at the time, described it as so.:

> *"It is the moral obligation that Kosovo owes to its international partners, especially those who helped the country's liberation and independence, such as the US and EU countries, who consider it necessary to establish a Special Court. Kosovo cannot remain isolated"* (Shehu: 2015).

Kosovo has made a lot of progress in many areas, but has failed to present them, in the absence of genuine public diplomacy, for which there are many causes that need to be identified, such as institutional, political, programmatic or structural.

OBJECT OF TREATMENT

Kosovo since its proclamation as a state, has tried to present its creation as a factor of regional and international peace and stability. The creation of the state of Kosovo was also seen as an opportunity for many young people to start new things, after many years of waiting for a stable political status, while the independence of the country was thought to give the right direction to the following processes. The branding of Kosovo took place in parallel with the creation of the state, as its political system was the product of a broad compromise, which created great political freedom, especially for minorities, while the anthem of the flag bore the title "Europe", while the flag itself has the colors of the European flag, to show the intentions of the country, but also the profile that the new state intended to have. What Kosovo did in creating its national brand, seems to have avoided the past and history to some extent, diminishing their presence in the new brand it was creating.

The process of status was closed, while Kosovo's independence was not recognized by Serbia, the apology and reconciliation did not take place even after 23 years of the end of the war, this left the peoples in the initial antagonistic perceptions between them, while from outside the countries are still seen as hostile. Kosovo Serbs gradually fell under the influence of Belgrade, which continues to instrumentalize them, while the continuation of talks known as the Brussels process and especially their extension, created two problems, the first dimming

the future of Kosovo, left it suspended in the process of statehood consolidation, which was reflected in internal problems, especially with political and institutional instability. Kosovo was ranked among the poorest countries in Europe, while perceptions of corruption were high. This had reduced trust in institutions, which pushed many young people to leave the country for western countries, in search of a job and welfare, which he could not find in Kosovo.

While Kosovo prides itself on stars of sport and art, all of them, with a few exceptions, live and work outside Kosovo, while their achievements may have little or no connection to their country of origin. The objectives of this research are exactly these: to identify the challenges that Kosovo has had in the process of creating a national brand, focusing on the detailed treatment of eventual initiatives or potential strategies, which seem very short-lived, also address external factors and those internally that influenced Kosovo's image at home and abroad.

THEORETICAL LENS

Small states find it difficult to impose themselves in the international order, so they aim to develop national strategies through which they try to enter the global political process at a time when there is military inequality in relations with large states (Keohane, 1969). . Small states have always reacted in their foreign policy, always adapting to the political positions of the great powers, especially during the Cold War (Park, 1975), but small states are still facing old challenges. that may look like new in these relationships (Knudsen, 2002: 185). Often, small states have formed pacts with powerful states, through which they have secured themselves, says the scholar Robert Keohane (1971: 161), or they have used their economic resources, or geographical positions, to strengthen their position. their political in international relations (Gitelson, 1974: 451).

Being a state with great military power did not necessarily mean having prosperity, democratic values or a stable political future, while scholars conclude that even small states can create sufficient economic resources through sustainable political institutions (Katzenstein, 2016), or it is not uncommon for diplomats of small states to surpass those of powerful states (Ingebritsen, Ch, Neumann, I., B., Beyer J. & Sieglinde Gstohl (Eds). 2006: 40). Small states have not been considered before, as international orders are mainly established and negotiated between the great powers, while today, these states play a fundamental role in the realization of political values, such as welfare, security, economic development and others (Bailes, A., Wivel, A., Archer, C., (Eds)., 2014: 3-4)

The great political and social changes that are coming as a product of global transformations have left their mark on international relations. The movements of people and capital, the creation of other political mechanisms such as international organizations and especially the great mobility of people has changed the role of states by redefining their values and producing the key problem, known as the competition between states (Baldersheim, H., Keating, M., (Eds). 2015: 8), therefore small states increasingly focus or rely on national brand or public diplomacy, as more effective actions in their policy foreign countries and thus those countries gain influence and shape international agendas (Bátora, 2005).

This phenomenon has made politics to be multimedia, while the representation of the state is done by non-political agents, almost necessarily. Culture, tourism, heritage, people, way of governing, are an integral part of what states present as themselves and that produces the national brand. What is clear remains the fact that states have always aimed to impose themselves and have achieved this through economics, diplomacy, or military force, when needed, but the transformations mentioned earlier have led states to use the national brand through whose aim is to build perception for them (Dinnie, 2009: 5).

The terms public policy and national brand have long since replaced each other, becoming one of the most popular terms in the context of addressing the circumstances of foreign policy, which are found to have been applied since the sixties. of the last century (Kaneva, 2011: 124). The purpose of applying this term is related to the need to conceive communication with people of other countries (Fan, 2008: 1), or to improve perceptions between countries as *a national brand helps others understand what a country is, making it more understandable to different audiences* (Barišić, 2014: 27).

The national brand is noticed to have had a great applicability in history, international business, politics and international relations, using international marketing (Groen, AJ, & Lee, LK, 2013: 62), therefore despite having great applicability, it remains closely related to international marketing (Steenkamp, 2021: 6-18) while its application comes due to *competition at several levels and areas between states* (Limani, E., et al. 2021: 484), including *international political influence* that produces facilitation in stronger international partnerships (Fetscherin, 2009).

The national brand also helps to bring in foreign direct investment, especially in tourism (Papadopoulos, N., et al. 2016: 615-628), while the organization of major sporting events remains the new arena of confrontation between countries, as through their organization, aims

to raise the image of the state, using transformative investments related to the event, which create opportunities for foreign investment, all by applying public diplomacy (Knott, B., Fyall, A., Jones, I., 2017: 900-923).

Image of state, in an analytical parallels, can be compared to the image of a product, while the international system presents a competitive environment, where states try to impose themselves anyway, *as states through a sustainable image try to gain political power, foreign investment, tourists, creating credibility, emotion and feeling* (Nicolae Al. Pop, et al., 2020: 1006).

As they are treated here phenomena of a political character, the authors have paid attention to how the relationship between politicians and national brands can have an impact. Keith Dinnie, is one of them, he finds that it is often politicians who influence the negative perception of the state, while presenting this attitude:

> *''This is a common phenomenon in Eastern Europe, where branding and reputation management fall victim to domestic politics, especially when there is no agreement between the various political parties on how and by whom the country's reputation should be managed abroad.''* (Dinnie, 2008: 202-204).

Recently, scholars are paying attention to this phenomenon, analyzing it from different perspectives, which are mainly related to the construction of nation-brand relations as well as the causes and effects of its application, although as a concept end, also why as a concept it is still very fragmented and evolving (Hao, AW et al., 2021: 46-69). Creating a *national brand,* says researcher Christopher S. Browning, *should be understood as a response to the need for states and state leaders to increase ontological security and (self) esteem in both their citizens and the sense of nation* (2015: 95).

Even the researcher Tatiana Tökölyová, finds that one of the most important features of the state's foreign policy is the *national brand,* which it connects with history, ethnicity and culture, while small states cannot represent special things except rather, it is important to create the *brand,* which is the sum of all the above features (2016: 8), while the researcher JE Peterson, sees the *national brand as an extension of cultural branding* (2006; 745). Be that as it may, scholars still have some doubts which have to do with the connection that public diplomacy has with the national brand, presenting their conceptual dilemmas, as many scholars see them as concepts that replace each other. Researcher Gyorgy Szondi, when talking about these differences and similarities between *public diplomacy and the national brand*, has this attitude:

> *"Much of the ambiguity surrounding their relationship stems from poor conceptualization as well as mutual misunderstanding between international relations scholars and marketing communication practitioners / scholars."* (Szondi, 2008: 1).

The nation is not a commodity that could be "presented" as a marketing product, the nation is what it carries and not how it presents itself, says researcher Simon Anholt, adding that countries are judged by what they do, not by what is said about them, i.e., the brand being developed is accepted, not by advertising it (2013: 1). In any case, relations between states do not stop only at bureaucratic levels, especially at a time when people enjoy the opportunity for free movement, which has made necessary and indispensable the way you appear to others and how you are accepted by them. Scholars Erman Akilli and Bengü Çelenk are of the same opinion, who consider the branding of the nation of great importance, especially in creating a positive perception of the economy, politics, geography, or social elements (2019: 135).

National branding is a process that brings together many elements ranging from Nobel Prize winners to national sports, without leaving out tourism, music and the internet, *so these many actions must come from many sectors to build trust in country, a process that must be done continuously, for a long time* (Anholt, 2013: 4) that all these are soft power, according to the view of the theorist Josef Nye, who has been dealing with these phenomena for a long time, who summarizes their three sources, showing that they can be in the service of creating a national brand. He lists them as follows:

> *''The soft power of a country relies mainly on three sources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it suits them at home and abroad) and its foreign policy (when viewed). as legitimate and with moral authority)''* (Nye, 2004: 11).

METHODOLOGY

The paper focuses on addressing a topic which requires the application of several methods, such as:

a) *Unstructured interview*, through which they are identified:

- *Cultural elements* related to the national brand of Kosovo; such as values, norms, language, symbols, traditions, customs, way of life,

- *Political definition of national brand narrative from a Kosovar perspective;* conceptual dilemmas regarding the (non) acceptance of the Kosovar nation, local narratives regarding the very concept of "national brand" and the exclusion of the cultural and historical element from the combination.
- *Economic opportunities* that Kosovo has in creating an international brand, such as investment opportunities, political and non-political challenges that arise in relation to the future of direct investment in Kosovo, economic reserves as opportunities for development and identification of local potentials for creating a nationality brand.
- *The advantages offered by individual sports such as judo* in which they are especially related to the achievements of some athletes, such as Majlinda Kelmendi, Distria Krasniqi and Nora Gjakova, the three Olympic champions in judo and the European champions. Their achievements and those of coach Kuka, are seen as an opportunity to benefit from the athletes of this sport from all over the world. While coach Kuka, has been declared the best in the world. Therefore, it is intended to see how a sport like judo can put Kosovo on the map of initial positive perception, as if the world knew Jamaica through Husain Bolt.
- *Kosovo's economic potentials* are mainly related to mountain tourism and more precisely to skiing, agritourism and viticulture, therefore we measure with field experts how Kosovo's economic potential can be renamed, transforming education at all levels and their readiness for market of work.
- *Creating Kosovo's external image* by structuring the achievements of world-famous figures through culture, music, film, and sports.

b) Content analysis;

Through this method are treated and analyzed documents, studies, analyzes, reports which have primarily addressed all public diplomacy and the national brand, identifying the factors, causes and circumstances in which Kosovo's foreign policy is found in the process of consolidating the profile of its external but also internal.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Kosovo has enjoyed wide international support, as foreign media have broadcast the entire process that the country has gone through, from the liberation period, reconstruction and state creation, while the whole perspective with which it is presented, speaks for a place in reconstruction, reconciliation and forgiveness between peoples who had difficult histories of

wars between them. Kosovo's Foreign Minister, Enver Hoxhaj[1] states that Kosovo is seen as a success story, where its own political system and the position of minorities within it are the new brand that it has wanted to raise.

This opinion is also shared by the sociologist and deputy Visar Ymeri, former chairman of the largest party in the country, who emphasizes the fact that Kosova started its National Brand exactly from the way Kosovo was seen after independence, whether in symbols, or in relation to its history, wanting to present the new state as a factor that also affects the pacification of the Balkans, which would put an end to the images of war and interethnic divisions.

Kosovo, with its proclamation as a state, had closed its political engagement in search of political status, which was seen both as an important factor and as a creator of peace and stability that are seen as a critical element for the new state (Dursun-Ozkanca, 2009: 31), as its own war was seen as the end of nationalist wars (Cottey. 2009: 593–608). Images of Kosovo were still fresh, as the world television images of its event were numerous, and even had power over political and military decision-making during the NATO intervention in Kosovo (DE Franco, 2008).

There were countless statements by the heads of institutions that aimed to show the new profile that the state of Kosovo intended to present, in any case that was given, both inside and outside the country, but from within the state and society had not yet emerged from the consequences. that had produced the war where two elements are identified: the disputed status of Kosovo sovereignty and the lack of a process of dealing with the past, these two elements kept it untreated were misused and created a sense of political instability in the country and consequently was followed by distrust of institutions (UNDP & FBA, 2019: 23).

Images of Kosovo were not few, but interethnic divisions and political problems turn out to be the main challenges that Kosovo had in this period of time, while the non-recognition of the state of Kosovo quickly presented the image of an unresolved European problem, while in parallel with the creation of a good image for Kosovo, the need for its recognition was seen (Newman, Visoka, 2018: 367–387).

Each country aims to adjust the image of its state, as it aims to achieve economic, tourism, or political and military benefits (Saliu, 2017). Kosovo aimed to overthrow its

[1] Interview conducted with MFA Dr. Enver Hoxhaj – 2021, MP Visar Ymeri, Professors Merovci and Krasniqi

negative image, trying to build a public diplomacy (Baliqi, 2013), in parallel with the establishment of its diplomacy, while it is noted that there were some achievements in the beginning, identifying its positive elements.

Kosovo, in fact through the creation of such a national band that abstracts its history, has taken a step more political than an action that is effective. By concentrating on what Kosovo should look like, she avoided the real debate of what Kosovo really is, in two relations, the first being who Kosovo is for Albanians and the second who Kosovo is for minorities. Researcher Ymeri and professors Merovci, Krasniqi consider that the image of Kosovo should start in some profiles, such as cultural which include cinematographic values, musical and sports, while in economic aspect, Kosovo should create facilities in investments and concentrate on educating the new generation in technology

Kosovo, with its creation as a state, has found it difficult to determine what brand it will create, as it emerged from a difficult political journey, as the political process of state creation would also determine the "type" of Kosovo's state political entity, which is repeatedly linked to several political events, such as the Rambouillet Conference, the Contact Group's ten-point document and finally the Ahtisaari Package, while reflecting on the symbols and model of the state that has been created (Ymeri 2022).

> *"There is a dichotomy in relation to the state and identity, so we cannot talk about the national brand of Kosovo, if the vast majority of Kosovo citizens do not consider Kosovo and do not identify themselves as part of the Kosovar nation"* (Ymeri 2022).

There is a debate that needs to be added in Kosovo, about what we want, and this topic should start with the fact whether it is the slogan "New Born", which represents our attitude towards the state of Kosovo, regarding it with a new initiative that has its origins in 2008, leaving aside our entire history, considers the researcher Visar Ymeri, identifying two large factions in relation to the creation of the national brand of Kosovo, on one side are the citizens of on the other hand the political elites which have different attitudes regarding our national relationship with the state of Kosovo.

Scholars of socio-economic phenomena do not see as a proper finding, or a little proper focusing on young people, while focusing on the difficulties that Kosovo has had in using them as a potential resource, as many of them, in the absence of a system have had difficult preparation for the labor market, while social schemes did not produce the right expectations

(Merovci, 2022), or Kosovo lacked an economic vision, as a small country Kosovo had to identify several economic sectors, where there are investments in educational staff for those sectors (Ymeri, 2022).

In an attempt to identify the main economic factors, researchers see the possibility of mountain tourism, Brezovica, as a ski center, or connection with the vegetable market in Kosovo by providing the tourism sector in Albania (Ymeri, Merovci, 2022), and in terms cultural and sports, sociology experts, pay attention especially to the peak achievements of athletes, such as Majlinda Kelmendi, Distria Krasniqi, Nora Gjakova, who have won Olympic gold medals in the same sport, raising Kosovo among the countries with judo most developed in the world (Krasniqi 2022).

Kosovo has several opportunities in creating its national brand, and they are related to some key points, such as advanced information technology where there are advanced programs in Kosovo that could help it create an international profile, as it has Estonia e-government system, Swedish schools, or Turkish tourism. Kosovo has the opportunity to support filmmakers who have tremendous creative potential (Kraniqi 2022), while the sport of judo is treated as a national sport and produced as the national brand of Kosovo, while the Kosovar training school is patented as original and authentic.

Regarding the connection that Kosovo's public diplomacy has with the national brand of the country, based on the data treated and interviews that have been conducted, the idea of public diplomacy has been to create a new profile for Kosovo focusing only on young people, without called for economic investment or international recognition, as it was clear that the political situation was such that it would not allow for great success. Knowing that Kosovo had just begun its structured engagement in foreign policy, public diplomacy was something unknown to the country's institutions, which did not produce coherent strategies, and which is not encountered even at the present time, ten years after her initiation.

CONCLUSION

Kosovo needed to create a new image which would be complemented after the successful application of public diplomacy in the newly declared state, from where the national brand of Kosovo would emerge. Emerging from the war with images that spoke of a large scale of crimes and without a stable future, Kosovo found itself without political status for almost nine years after liberation, while the proclamation of its state, still remains unrecognized.

This presented the first obstacle, as it produced instability in the political situation, but also hindered the progressive development of social cohesion, returning to the source of dissatisfaction that the country's youth had with the situation in the country. Amid inadequate political and economic transformations, Kosovo failed to lay the groundwork for the economy, and property disputes and problems with the law alienated even those few investors interested in the Kosovo market and economy.

Kosovo's youth potentials were not properly addressed, adequate professional and scientific training was lacking, turning them from a resource into a source of dissatisfaction which was followed by a mass exodus from the country in several stages in particular. The political scene has passed into very critical stages, preventing the development of public, economic and cultural diplomacy, while the eventual achievements are more the merits of individuals, as in art, sports, and culture.

Kosovo needs to conclude the political process with Serbia, closing the narrative of an unfinished political and security case. The education of young people and their preparation for the labor market is the main need of the country, while potentials should be identified in some fields, such as culture, through art, music and film, in sports the focus should be on judo and football, where the achievements are more satisfactory, while investments in mountain tourism and agro-tourism and the creation of a joint map with Albania can help Kosovo in its establishment in this sector as well.

Kosovo has a problem completing recognitions, while on the other hand Macedonia has had problems for thirty years with some countries, such as Greece until recently, and now Bulgaria. In principle, these problems are not as big as those of Kosovo, that the links with the recognition of the state, whatever, these problems have prevented North Macedonia in some respects, especially on its path to integration, while political instability within, has affected to slow down economic development, perhaps also due to perceptions of high levels of corruption.

Comparison between the Republic of Kosovo and North Macedonia - Their Challenges of International Image

	Republic of Kosovo	North Macedonia
Problem with state recognition	Serbia	-
Political disputes with neighboring states	Serbia	Greece Bulgaria
Previous interethnic conflicts	Serbs	Albanians

Perception of corruption[2]	34	34
Economic challenges	• Corruption • Organized crime • Lack of foreign investment	• Corruption • Organized crime

[2] Corruption Perceptions Index for 2021, compiled by the international organization, Transparency International - https://www.evropaelire.org/a/kosova-ne-indeksin-per-korrupsion-te-transprency-international/31669220.html

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