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# Nation Branding and Concept of Sovereignty in ‘New Globalization’: An Understanding on how India is developing its own Nation Brand Identity in the Current Pandemic

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# Nation Branding and Concept of Sovereignty in 'New Globalization': An Understanding on how India is developing its own Nation Brand Identity in the Current Pandemic

Mitrajit Biswas

## I. INTRODUCTION TO THE IDEA OF THE PAPER

The idea of nations has been born from the concept of the Westphalia treaty that was incorporated in Europe. However, that treaty itself is a problem in terms of understanding the concept of nation in the world of today, the notion of Eurocentric world has moved a long time past and the emergence of the post-colonial countries albeit some of them least, moderate or very successful respectively (Daniel, 2005). The word nation and sovereignty which are mentioned together in the title generally represent the biggest common place meaning which is determined through Freedom of choice. The freedom in the context of nations first and foremost could be difficult to explain as nation contain determining the more historical concept of the creation of the political boundaries and most of that who stays inside and outside the political boundaries. This is where the very beginning of the essay points out that the creation of nation and nations states as per the European system is no more acceptable and very much the period of decolonisation followed by a new wave of globalisation has been implying the very same (Buchanan and Moore, 2003). That needs to be looked at from the non-European perspective. Most of the world today is created from the understanding that there could be a notion of multiple tribes and the understanding that diversity can work together in creation of new countries and not strictly nations which has been based on the commonality of the language, heritage etc. Therefore, the world of today where the political vibrancy and also in the grab of that separatist movements have picked up necessitates a call that the supposed commonality is also not a perfect answer for the creation of the uniform nation which the European system tied to create as the very first project from statehoods (Armstrong, 2017). The idea of nation and the idea of sovereignty are like two sides of the same coin. Sovereignty in the era of globalisation is at a greater risk through the advent of the information technology and the evolution of the political and the individual rights.

The word sovereignty may have a common way of understanding although its implementation and the way it is seen is very different. Globalisation has definitely been seen bringing in the context of a very different understanding across the societies of the world. The colonial expansion can be seen as the first wave of globalisation wherein the trade noteworthy relationship of the past metamorphized in the creation of new identities (Kortright, 2003). Therefore, the antiquity-based trade or the early times of the modern trade history definitely could be seen as the first wave of globalisation however that did not have anything to do with the history of the creation of the nation state and the issue of sovereignty. That came under the context of the second phase of the globalisation in the form of trade imperialism wherein the colonial powers of Europe building from yarding posts to dominating and administrative decision making of colonies (Semmel, 2004).

The new world of today has spawned the growth of so many countries in the world and there is a growing tendency of the individualism being portrayed in the form of nations around the world. However, the condition of the world today is such that there is a contrasting talk of the unification of the world in terms of the liberalisation of the economy but there is a greater amount of fragmentation in the world. An idea of the world of today is very difficult to conceive until and unless we see nations as like company brands (Fan, 2006). The emergence of the word nation although strictly comes from the European sense as there is generally a misunderstanding of the two words. Nations are generally much more comprehended more from the Westphalia system of a creation of a unified system of people based on common language as well as lineage which in turn gave them the platform for common culture as well as common heritage. However, the most important context here for paper is about understanding the nation branding of post-colonial nation. Therefore, the paper tries to talk about understanding how the brand of a nation has been developed. Along with the build of a nation brand simultaneously comes the question of how the brand is determined which of course comes in with the question of the understanding

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from political science in the form of sovereignty. The concept is important determining of how brand of a nation is formed. Post Colonialism in the form of nation branding is the creation of new identity shedding the past of the colonisation and the precedence of the feudal system before (Kaneva, 2011).

The preceding statement has been generalized and may not necessarily hold true however the extrapolation has been done based on the context of the new being formed from the remnants of the old. The idea of nation branding of post-colonial nations here would be looked from the framework of the point of view of how the country is positioning itself and what is it selling in the form of cultural values as well as tourism. However, the paper wants to point out that the idea of the classic framework of (Yin, 2006) or other nation branding scholars in the form of Simon Anholt is not being looked at. Also, the perspective of the tourism is going to be looked at in the form of the cultural value which would be propositioned in the form of tourism taglines. The idea of the tourism campaigns shown in social media including the tourism taglines and how are they being looked at connecting to the people of the country itself would be the main framework for the paper. The idea of the storytelling of a country in the form of the brand image of the nation emerged from the idea of self determination is what the paper would try to understand from the literature review of the branding campaigns.

## II. THE IDEA OF THE BRANDING CAMPAIGN FOR NEWLY FORMED NATIONS

*Cultural Rebranding:* The idea of the cultural rebranding is one of the key steps towards the branding of a post-colonial nation. In terms of culture the idea of the prism created for the colonizers. therefore, the creation of a nation brand in the era of globalization amidst the creation of so many new countries (Volcic & Andrejevic 2011). If from the cultural prism we look at there is a tendency of the formed colonized dominions to revisit the past of the cultural heritage and tradition of the old. It has been a very predominant theme of the new countries from the three continents which are Asia, Africa and the America's. Countries which have been created after the second world war has been proud of their newly achieved status of being a country and in terms of revisiting their own culture in the background of the newly found sovereignty. Some of the bigger countries such as China, India, Brazil albeit having different colonial experience have focused on revisiting their cultural prism of how to balance the colonial experience with the pre colonial cultural experience. This was the most important idea behind the newly formed nations.

Here again mentioning that the word nation has been leveraged from the European domain to being

used for the post-colonial entities as well. Looking back at the cultural rebranding China today has steadily built from the image of the British Port of Trade and Heroin laden land to being the manufacturer of the world. Speaking of the cultural rebranding China has started Confucius institutes all over the world to promote their soft power and the ideas of the Chinese way of life and their supposed idea of the coveted "Middle Kingdom". Brazil on the other hand being the land of the native Indians has been able to at least for a time being portray its culture of free spirited, multicultural as well as a foot balling superpower have come from the remains of the Portuguese colony. Although the cultural rebranding definitely has an economic perspective to it which brings off the chink for many of the post-colonial nations cultural rebranding as there seems to be a stark disparity in the multiculturalism (Aronczyk, 2008). It is true not only for Brazil but can be seen in many of the multicultural post-colonial nations such as South Africa to be a classical example putting it forward. India on the other hand is a strange case of many cultures which had certain elements of being a state before the colonial powers emerged created in the formation of a new cultural rebranding of India as a land of diversity in the form of state-nation and not otherwise creating a new narrative from the already preceding story of a chaotic and poverty stricken land. The idea of India in its form of cultural rebranding has been to create a new idea of a nation rich in culture and looking to create a just, prosperous and pluralistic thriving with democracy.

## III. DEALING WITH THE SITUATION OF THE CURRENT PANDEMIC AND BUILDING BRAND INDIA

The Corona pandemic has become the conundrum of the modern society. Post-independence, India witnessed a new set of challenges for being holistically diverse country. The Quasi federal structure built by the fathers of constitution has addressed most of the problems to such an extent that Fareed Zakaria in his famous article 'Illiberal Democracy' has mentioned India to be one among the successful democracies. Today, the challenge posed by Covid-19 is completely unique, to which state of India never got exposed. India is one of the few large federally structured countries with a quasi-federal political set-up (Verney, 1995) with diversity in terms of the socio-economic structure as well as the various factors which are not easy to determine and understand. In a pandemic scenario such as coronavirus, the challenge lies in the political mobilization. In India the leadership as well as the political operations draws upon the structure of the cooperation between the Centre and the State. This also brings in the context of the centralized command which is important for a smoother functioning of the country and bring coherence among the functions divided as

Union, State and Concurrent list in the Indian constitution. As in the scenario of this pandemic the most important dimension and functioning of the country's political system depends on major systems defined by the essential functions (Nandy, 1989). That includes the economic, education and of course the healthcare system and how efficiently they can survive. Among all the essential sectors, with a huge population, pandemic like Covid 19 presents a new challenge to disseminate the health care for the mass of 1.3 billion (approximately) population in India (Golechha, 2015).

India has a challenge for keeping the economic wheel chugging along keeping in mind the need for the present needs of our society. Health being under the state list, every state needs to and has taken its own measures following a uniform framework as directed by the Central Health Ministry with the distribution of responsibility as determined by constitution in India in the midst of the ongoing crisis. However, the central political establishment under the ministry of health as well as the Prime Minister's Office has been accepted as the foremost command. It would be interesting to note that political cooperation between the Centre and the State seems to be coming out good but there are many causes of concern which includes the logistical supply of healthcare equipment's such as the protective gear and masks, ventilators, and etc. The causes of concern hinge on the question- how to design interim policies for this kind of pandemic. Policy design based on economic scenario includes public goods distribution with food safety and security as the top priority and it is one the important political decisions under consideration (Chopra, 2014). Those who have been well of economically which have traditionally included the industrialists need to be given a different plan. The political tussle would be the game of real politik-the power struggle between the Centre and the State anchored to the protection of the vulnerable section. The economic aspect can be very much missed in the political aspect revolving around the health and its immediate redressal (Kapur, Nangia 2015). It also carries a subtle policy war between the Centre and the state. One such example of the state can be felt with the cold war that has brewed underneath even amidst this pandemic for states such as West Bengal. The history of conflict between Chief Minister of West Bengal and Prime Minister of India based on their respective political standings has found a new subtle form of conflict.

However, it must be mentioned that the government of India has taken certain proactive stances or should one say the policy-oriented steps needed at this hour including fiscal stimulus of 1 lakh 70 thousand crore for providing monthly payment. It also includes free gas delivery for the vulnerable section for a period of three months. which is commendable and one of the

largest financial relief schemes of the world as even said by World Health Organization. Significant aspect of the healthcare would include the dimensions of the migrant laborers and their protection especially as they are economically and politically vulnerable (Akinola et al. 2014). Ironically, most of the political campaigning in India is still focused on necessities like food ration, financial respite which amounts to a meagre income and substandard housing etc. There would not be any surprise if the measures taken during the fight against pandemic are used for election India's challenge to coordinate efforts with the government which is in power whether it is at the Centre or the State includes the cooperation of the opposition and the incumbent parties. It is new to note that state like West Bengal, Delhi region as well as other areas who have had political difference with the Centre are trying to coordinate together. Covid-19 may well mark a beginning of a new political scenario in a country where fragmentations as well as the political divide is there from the historical times (Kulke, 1982).

An important dimension of the Indian political scenario conflict arises from a unified command where the various states have their own policy system which comes in conflict with the Centre. In the current scenario that can create unnecessary conflicts as the states have asymmetric resources when compared with the Centre. Even states where there is a strong political leader needs to be subservient and work for the overall healthcare of the country as a whole. This is a time for the change in Indian political system and moving towards a coordinated action plan coming in from the Centre to the State in top down approach. States/Union Territories like Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Delhi under strong political leaders needs a new way of looking at the policy implementation which brings to fore the coordination between Centre and the State. However, India has witnessed a little friction in implementing a uniform containment policy. This can be very well understood from the mismatch in the way how the travelling systems should have been locked down. Many of the states wanted earlier lockdown of the transport systems however many of the states were caught unaware with the sudden lockdown initiated by the Centre as they were not prepared to deal with this sudden lockdown. (Devadasan, 2020). Because of sudden halt of transport, the lives of millions of daily wage earners as well their livelihood had been disrupted (Pandey, 2020). Exodus of the millions of the daily wage earners with no access to transportation as well as necessary supplies definitely pointed of the power inclination towards the Centre. Al though expectantly there has been coordination between the opposition and the incumbent except for some rhetorical exchanges related to Prime Ministers call for Solidarity which for the opposition has been nothing short of political gimmick. The political mudslinging between the





Centre and the State definitely had been there due to this instance (India Today-3<sup>rd</sup> April-2020).

This pandemic brought to surface the difficulties for the welfare of the people in India amounting to 135 crores based through the localized administration. That is needed and also seeing an interim change in the political manifestation of the distribution policy especially related to testing kits as well as Covid 19 related equipment's. The department of the health and its responsibility has suddenly increased manifold especially as the current pandemic is a serious challenge. Proving for the direction on how to cope in this situation amidst the divide in the Centre vs state alongside its political dimension is still unfolding (Mookerji, 2020). There has been a positive system of the healthcare system which has been acceptance of directives from the central health ministry by the states and not involving in autonomous behaviour keeping in law the constitutional policy of India as well as the need of the hour (Goyal et al, 2020). This unified healthcare system with hierarchical command it would be a key precedent as India for the first time is brushing against the pandemic since Spanish Flu. In a country like India for the first time a greater political consensus even if not at all levels of satisfaction for many critics, but nevertheless still a very important aspect for the welfare of Indian citizens (Bhandari, 2020).

#### IV. MANUFACTURING NATION BRANDING MANAGEMENT AND ITS SOCIAL DIMENSIONS IN A FRAGILE WORLD

The idea of nation branding especially for the post pandemic world may see a new way of understanding how nation brands are constructed. There is already a concept in management which is known as VUCA (*Volatile, Uncertain, Confusing, Ambiguous*) world. The previous section of the paper is to build on the overall title of the paper itself that how nations are trying to bypass the situation of pandemic which brings to the fore the concept of VUCA. Most importantly how the brand identity of the countries can be formed is the attempt of culminative efforts which is why the aspect of "Manufacturing" nation branding has been mentioned. Especially in the context of the social dimension wherein as by social dimension how the society perceives a nation and its people is definitely critical for the manufacturing of the nation brand. The paper brings in the perspective of India and how the handling of India's internal dimensions have been. This is to connect with the objective of how sound the internal dimension of the country has been. This includes the perspective of the cohesiveness of the elements of social dimension which is one of the key aspects for building the brand of a nation (Handelman & Arnold, 1999). A country like India provides for an unique example as its population and geo-economic

diversity provides for a holistic and all rounded approach in terms of objective of the paper related to the pandemic.

One of the important aspects of the brand build for India has been through the supply of Hydroxychloroquine to countries which have ranged from USA, Brazil, Spain to even the neighbouring countries (Chaudhury, 2020). The concept of "soft power" which was propounded by Joseph Nye Jr. as a concept how the countries can build on their brand in a very positive manner. That includes a very persuasive build up of the image of a country be it through cultural approach, cuisine, tourism, sports etc. The global pandemic in the present times and the unpreparedness of many nations in terms of the medicines required had provided India an opportunity to leverage its accomplishments in the pharmaceutical industry. India has built on its reputation of being a producer of quality pharmaceutical products. Not only in terms of quality but even quantity which is coming in handy and providing India the space as the largest producer of generic pharma products and supplying them to the countries amounting to more than 30 countries transcending the global divide (Dixit, 2020). Not only that India despite keeping its own internal needs in mind has also provided for excess food supply apart from the medicine needs. These steps are definitely are very important and will go a long way in defining the role of India as a responsible and trustworthy global player in the dynamics of the power of nation brands. Although India does not feature in the top 30 rank of soft power by nation branding ranking (Portland- Soft Power 30).

India despite having a special feature in the world with its flaws covering it every time from around the world however has a very unique scenario in this situation. This is definitely a very unique situation for every nation all over the globe. India has its own challenge of providing for a huge population next to China. It also has to keep its economy chugging and despite the sudden lockdown imposed which has put the lives of many daily wage workers into risk has also a responsibility to maintain the health of its citizens (Kazmin, 2020). India has been known as an emerging nation with typical challenges of a post-colonial nation which includes poverty, corruption and also inequality. India also has a huge problem related to healthcare infrastructure and as one of the lowest spenders in health care. However, the courage and overall coordination between the center and the state despite some hiccups has provided India a new "Black Swan" moment for the brand of India to emerge (Press Trust of India). The criticism for Prime Minister Modi's video address as more of a gimmick by political opponents however also needed to take care of the fact that there has been a huge challenge for being a nation bringing together different ideologies together. The structure of federalism in India has also come up for a challenge as

well as its democratic institutions which are big factors for the brand of any nation. These are important parameters to remember while understanding social dimensions "Manufacturing' nation brand as the world emerges in a new scenario where uncertainty is the new certainty (Dutta, 2020).

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