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Britain's Global Future:

Harnessing the soft power capital of UK institutions

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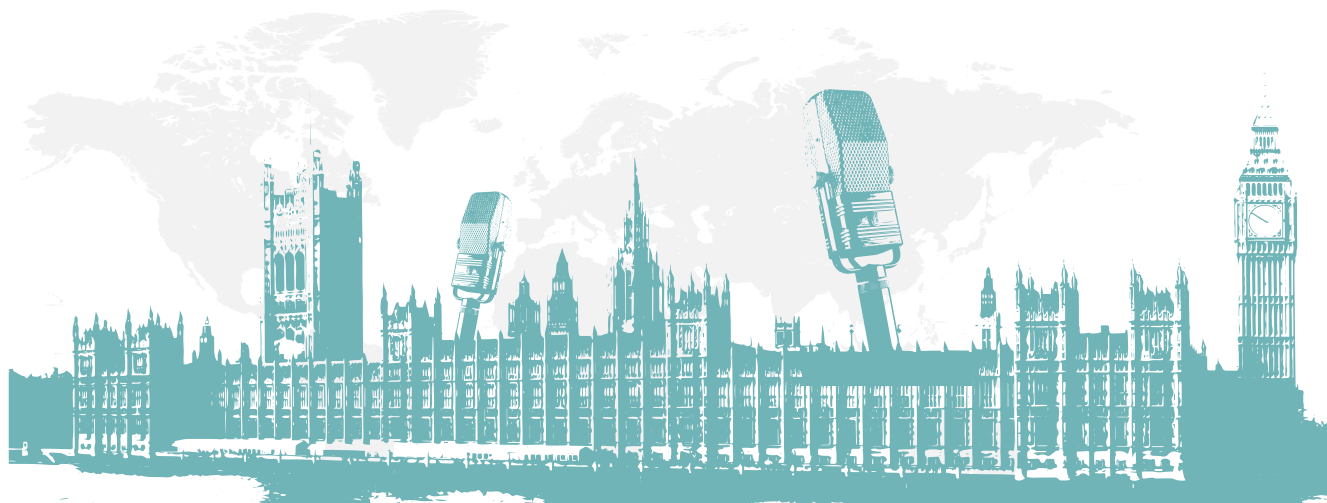
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Foreword

by Crispin Blunt MP, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, 2015-17 Parliament

“Government needs to understand better the value of soft power, not just as an instrumental matter of cultural exchange but also a vital component of Britain’s vision for a more stable, equitable, accountable global politics.”

I welcome ResPublica’s timely report on the role of soft power in Britain’s foreign policy.

Following Brexit, the United Kingdom must present itself to the world anew, re-engaging with old friends and new allies alike. Summed up by the Foreign Secretary as the building of a “Global Britain”, this vision must be based on the country setting an example of openness, fairness and creativity. I commend ResPublica’s account of institutions as the best agents of promoting the values of our country to others.

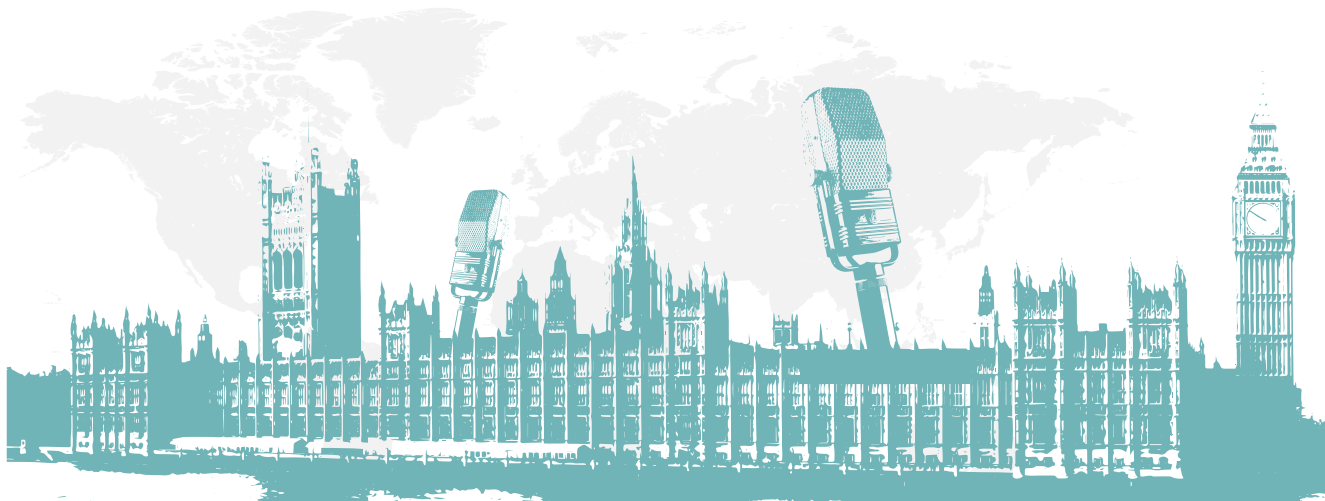
The capacity of Britain’s institutions to play this role depends on their support at home as well as integrity overseas. While the attempt to define British values has sometimes been mocked, this report usefully reminds us of their purpose in underwriting the central moral authority of our institutions.

ResPublica has provided a series of recommendations that could facilitate the kind of funding, coordination and communication vital to the long-term sustainability of organisations like the British Council and the BBC. The question of funding is perhaps the most of important of all, and I welcome the report’s argument that our public

expenditure should be restructured to allow British institutions to encourage and promote stability in crisis-hit areas across the world.

This report is clear that government needs to understand better the value of soft power, not just as an instrumental matter of cultural exchange but also a vital component of Britain’s vision for a more stable, equitable, accountable global politics.

This is an important and timely contribution to the debate about the future role and presentation of the United Kingdom on the world stage.



Introduction

“As our country charts its future, it is clear that a new approach is needed. No longer can we afford to engage in the costly military interventions or fragmented formal diplomacy of our recent past. Instead, we argue the concept of soft power must now be placed at the heart of government thinking.”

Britain is at a diplomatic crossroads.

As the country looks to turn the uncertainty of Brexit into opportunity, it is faced with multiple global challenges: the task of building new trading relationships; the rise of extremism in both religion and politics; the management of migration from conflict zones; the maintenance of relations with Russia and China, as well as with the United States under an unpredictable Presidency; and the effects of an information revolution which has seen the expansion and radical polarisation of public debate.

Moreover, Brexit has added a new level of scrutiny to our global reputation. As our country charts its future, it is clear that a new approach is needed. No longer can we afford to engage in the costly military interventions or fragmented formal diplomacy of our recent past. Instead, the success of Global Britain will depend on a diplomatic mindset that can integrate our national interest with enhanced public diplomacy and cultural relations. We believe that this is the essence of soft power, a concept which we argue must now be placed at the heart of government thinking.

In this paper, we argue that Global Britain needs a renewed sense of its reputation and relationships. Too often, soft power has been understood in instrumental terms: through exercises of ranking and nation-

branding, measured in terms of exposure and familiarity. In the context of the conflicts of the present geopolitical climate, these metrics are insufficient. Mere exposure to our culture does not make our enemies love us.

In such a climate, the old mantra of the “power of attraction” – reiterated by soft power theorists since Joseph Nye – becomes only half of the story. Soft power can no longer be reduced to the language of cultural outreach, or seen as peripheral to politics or a mere alternative to war. It needs to be understood as integral to our approach to diplomacy and foreign policy, derived from the way in which Britain behaves both towards its own citizens and towards others overseas.

In other words, the “power of attraction” depends on what some scholars have called the “power of example”.¹ A country’s soft power thus becomes a reflection of how its character and beliefs are seen abroad. No number of Premier League football shirts worn by children in Baghdad can compensate for the damage done by our allies at Abu Ghraib. The Americans have learnt this to their cost, despite their impressive investment in the research and governance of soft power initiatives.

If Britain is to play a positive role in the world today, its leaders must identify and understand the values that underpin

why others are – or are not – attracted to us. Instead of asking how many foreign students come to Britain, we should be asking, why do they choose this country to study? And, by the same token, what exactly about our intervention in Iraq hurt our reputation so much? The rest of the world does not judge Britain in a vacuum. The relationship between other countries and the United Kingdom is based on shifting perceptions of British attitudes, behaviour and values.

Simply mapping Britain's soft power assets prevents us from understanding the complexities of this dynamic. Providing figures of the number of international students tells us nothing about how their experience in the UK influences their worldview when they return to their home countries. The importance of an institutional bedrock of "British values" is widely acknowledged, but too often strategists avoid the values debate in practice; it has become so contested that they switch to measuring outputs rather than impacts.

What is less contested is the value of some of the most prominent British institutions: the monarchy and parliamentary democracy, including Westminster's willingness to devolve to both the home nations and the city regions; but also universities, museums, professional societies, trade unions, and the free press. We have an institutional ecosystem that remains particular to this country and which, broadly speaking, encapsulates much of its political, social and cultural landscape.

When these institutions flourish, they enable a public space to emerge that functions beyond the constraints of both market and state which, we believe, has allowed the United Kingdom to enjoy a degree of resistance to the kind of widespread social extremism that has threatened many of its friends and neighbours. The strength and value of this framework has been demonstrated even in recent months: while terror attacks have shaken our society, they have not fundamentally jeopardised our social order or system of government. In a world of increasing instability and fragmentation, the soft power potential of this success should not be overlooked.

Yet this potential depends precisely on support for these institutions at home as well as their activity and integrity overseas. We therefore welcome the pledge in the Conservative Party election manifesto to promote and support institutions like the British Council and the BBC to "amplify Britain's voice on the world stage and as a global force for good", and urge that this focus not be lost in government.² This paper provides policy recommendations that seek to facilitate the funding, coordination, and capacity to communicate that is critical to the long-term sustainability of these and other vital institutions.

Yet this soft power potential of domestic institutions does not provide the UK with carte blanche in other areas of policymaking: attempts to hide or "spin" decisions which might otherwise run counter to the UK's soft power narrative are as likely to damage as to improve the UK's standing. This point remains misunderstood by major powers including China: as we demonstrate, opinion polls suggest that there is little correlation – particularly in Western nations – between vast Chinese expenditure on soft power activities and positive attitudinal changes towards China itself.

We make three key points in this report. First, we argue that it is only through an institutional approach to soft power that Britain can play a positive role in stabilising other countries. Government has already recognised this: in 2011, a joint DFID, FCO and MoD report made the case that:

"In fragile states the complex web of institutions that provides the basis for trust and confidence – from the police and legal system, to civil society organisations, religious groups, government departments or banks – is too weak or poorly functioning to cope. The political system may lack the strength and legitimacy to manage the crisis peacefully. People may lack confidence in key institutions, especially those responsible for security and justice".³

That report was written early in the Arab Spring. Today, in a world of social media and the self-proclaimed Islamic State, of "fake

news" and fear over political uncertainty, as well as the breakdown of relationships between some governments, the media and the judiciary, we believe that the role of institutions as agents of "trust and confidence" is more important than ever.

Second, we argue that enabling these institutions to play their role requires understanding and advancing the values that underpin them. Through programmes of education, communication and creativity, British institutions can help encourage a climate of cultural expression, political liberty and civil society to grow in parts of the world where, for various reasons, instability and autocracy have for too long taken hold.

Again, we welcome the clarity of the Government's election manifesto on this point, with the pledge that Britain and British institutions will "continue to promote democracy, the rule of law, property entitlements, a free and open media, and accountable institutions" around the world. We are however aware of the contentions that surround the values debate, and the accusation that Britain has failed to uphold its own values in many of its recent foreign policies and interventions.

That is why this report prioritises the "power of example" within an institutional framework. British institutions, from universities and the British Council to the BBC have frequently served the role of non-corruptible exemplars in parts of the world where states have failed to provide the conditions needed for a flourishing civil society. The British government must recognise this role, both at home and abroad, and uphold the work of such institutions as it looks to express the values of Global Britain.

Third, because these institutions relate the roles and activities of different ministries and departments, we advocate a concerted "whole government" approach to soft power – one which incorporates defence and development, education and immigration, culture and creativity. There is a need in government to strengthen not only its support of institutions but also the coordination of its own internal structures

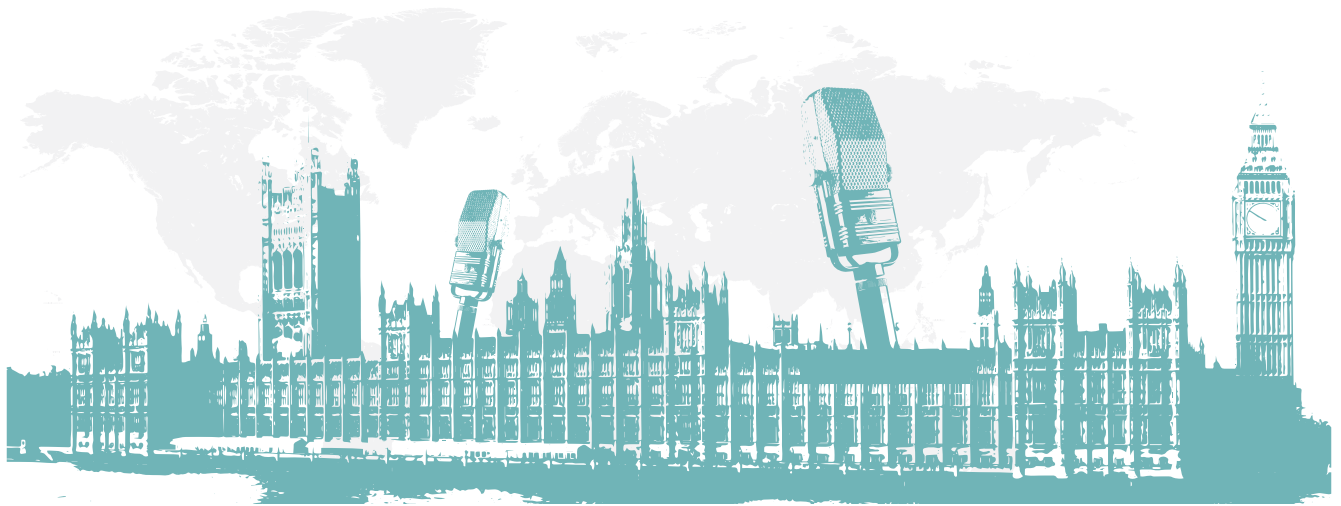
and funding mechanisms. Government must improve how it measures Britain's soft power globally, moving away from reductionist measurements of outputs rather than outcomes. This report makes specific policy recommendations to that end.

We therefore make the case for confidence in the values that underpin British soft power, for renewed efforts to maintain the domestic integrity of those British institutions we seek to promote abroad, and for a better understanding in government that - as Crispin Blunt MP writes in the foreword to this report - soft power "is not just an instrumental matter of cultural exchange but also a vital component of Britain's vision for a more stable, equitable, accountable global politics".

1 C. Hill and S. Beadle, *The Art of Attraction: Soft Power and the UK's Role in the World* [March 2014]. Available online at: <http://www.britac.ac.uk/publications/art-attraction-soft-power-and-uks-role-world> [Accessed 28th June 2017]

2 The Conservative And Unionist Party Manifesto 2017 [May 2017]. Available online at: <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/manifesto2017/Manifesto2017.pdf> [Accessed 28th June 2017]

3 Department for International Development, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence, *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* [July 2011]. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67475/Building-stability-overseas-strategy.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]



1. Soft power: its definition and relevance

"Shared international problems cannot be addressed at a domestic level, but require concerted action from nations acting in collaboration. In this context, the strategic value of an effective soft power strategy, building reserves of trust and good will towards the UK through our global engagement, is indisputable."

Understanding soft power

The term soft power, as originally coined by Joseph Nye, identifies that "a state may achieve the outcomes it prefers in world politics because other states want to follow it".⁴ It is distinct from "hard power", whereby states rely on economic or military force to achieve their preferred outcomes. Soft power can be thought of as a stock of good will and trust towards a country and its people, traditionally seen as arising from attraction towards its culture and values, which can be called upon and drawn from in order to apply pressure and influence in dialogue with other countries and thereby secure more favourable outcomes than would otherwise be the case.

Advocates of the importance of soft power argue that, in the post-Cold War world order, geopolitical leverage can no longer be won simply through military superiority over a limited number of competitors. Instead, countries wishing to gain such leverage should take advantage of the accelerating flow of information around the world to establish in the global popular mind the benefits and attractiveness of their own social and political framework, using this as

a hook to shape the preferences (and so the actions) of other actors.

The House of Lords Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence takes up this theme, arguing soft power manifests itself through countries "gently framing the international agenda".⁵

"Persuading nations, leaders and populations to trust a country's people and government, to feel sympathy with a country's position and experience, to share its norms and values, to understand that country's interests and aspirations, and to value its contribution to the international community, should lead other countries to be more likely to support and pursue that country's agenda, to support it in international disputes ... [and] to agree to the establishing or modification of international rules that accommodate that country's interests"

There are two necessary conditions for the process of preference-shaping which is at the heart of soft power to take place, as identified by Christopher Hill and Sarah Beadle.⁶ First, a state "must be able to generate an image that the rest of the world considers desirable and worth emulating" – that is, the development



and exercise of soft power is dependent on an associable set of social and political values which influence a state's domestic and foreign policy, and which are regarded by outsiders as possessing moral authority.

Second, "others must be aware that the state possesses these qualities", placing great importance on the effectiveness of how this image is communicated. However, as information becomes exponentially more accessible through social media and other means, the relevant audience for such communication has expanded beyond national elites to also include ordinary citizens.⁷ This creates a vital role not just for formal diplomacy but also a state's informal representation abroad, via its own citizens and civil society institutions, a theme we explore in more detail in Chapter 2.

Why soft power matters for Britain

As argued in the Introduction to this paper, a number of global challenges threaten the UK's future security, prosperity, and influence in the world. Shared

international problems such as terrorism, climate change, global health risks, and mass migration, cannot be addressed at a domestic level, but require concerted action from nations acting in collaboration rather than opposition.

In this context, the strategic value of an effective soft power strategy, building reserves of trust and good will towards the UK through our global engagement, is indisputable. Focusing on soft power allows for the pursuit of objectives we share with our international allies without resorting to hard power, which carries a high cost not only financially but also in terms of international reputation and domestic legitimacy.

For example, it has been argued that the United States' pursuit of a hard power strategy in the Middle East after 2001 has resulted in a loss of credibility and prestige on the international stage "that are difficult to recover", and that Britain's support for the US in this approach has inflicted collateral damage on the UK.⁸ The aim of promoting stable, open societies remains the right one to pursue – especially in a climate where

there is increasing international concern about global instability fuelled by social polarisation within nations⁹ – but past experience demonstrates the importance of soft rather than hard power in this regard.

In particular, cultivating Britain's soft power in countries like China, India, and Brazil has the potential to reap long-term benefits if this can be used to persuade them to help to lead the effort to promote global stability and address the challenges outlined above. As noted by the House of Lords, there is increasing international interest in "non-Western norms in governance", and developing countries and their populations are looking to countries like Brazil and China as models of development.¹⁰ This gives them tremendous influence in the future direction of those countries, and it is in Britain's strategic interest to encourage them to use this to promote outcomes which serve truly global interests.

This logic, supporting the development of an effective British soft power vision and strategy, is only reinforced by the UK's impending withdrawal from the EU. This makes it imperative that the UK engages

with a global audience beyond Europe's borders and in its own right, encouraging them to buy into our vision for global prosperity and security.

Moreover, a strong projection of soft power globally will provide fertile conditions for Britain's efforts to renew its trade partnerships after Brexit. Research has established that "countries that are admired for their positive global influence reap the benefit of higher exports", with a 1% increase in soft power converting to a rise of around 0.8% in exports.¹¹

Defining and measuring soft power

The importance of soft power makes it vital to understand how it is generated and how to judge the effectiveness of a soft power strategy. Indices developed to measure a country's soft power often include useful metrics of national democracy, Official Development Assistance expenditure, and press freedom. However, they also tend to focus on the cultural instruments that governments use as part of broader public relations or nation-branding strategies. This approach to soft power is most evident in Monocle's annual survey and ranking of nations, which speaks to the idea that soft power marks a new form of global competition between nation states.¹²

We believe that ranking soft power in this way risks becoming a distraction. Viewing soft power as a competitive ranking exercise places too much emphasis on measuring outputs rather than impact. The proportion of international students at British universities, audience figures for the BBC World Service, or the numbers learning English at the British Council, tell us little about the perception of and engagement with Britain these activities develop. The successful exercise of soft power depends on building credibility and relationships with audiences over the long-term, rather than the short-term creation and maintenance of a high national profile and cultural familiarity.

In response to this gap in our understanding, a coordinated evaluation of the UK's global communication, outreach, and engagement activities should be undertaken to determine the impact of such activities on their target audiences, and to build comprehension of the local social, cultural and political contexts of those target audiences and their societal value systems. Its findings should be fed into the domestic and foreign policy process, to ensure the most effective possible allocation of resources.

By way of comparison, the United States commissions multiple research projects and reports into the subject of international engagement and reorganises its structures accordingly. For example, as the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Judith McHale launched the International Information Programs Bureau's Office of Audience Research and Measurement (ARM, now known as the Analytics Office or IIP/Analytics). This unit is tasked with researching the audiences of the US's information campaigns, including their cultural, political, and social contexts, and then feeding this information back to relevant policymakers within the State Department.¹³

In the same role, her predecessor Karen Hughes created the Mission Activity Tracker (MAT) to track the US government's spending on public diplomacy, and Advancing Public Diplomacy's Impact (APDI) to measure the effect of programmes.¹⁴

The cost of the 2011 APDI report has been estimated at \$3 million;¹⁵ we believe that an equivalent annual expenditure of around £2.5 million is a prerequisite to the development of a genuinely effective soft power strategy.

The power of example

This paper argues that soft power is a resource first, and an instrument second. It cannot be "deployed" or "wielded", but rather is generated by government and other agencies in the form of cultural capital, based on the attractive qualities – the ideas and values, together with the behaviour, credibility and moral authority – of the agent.

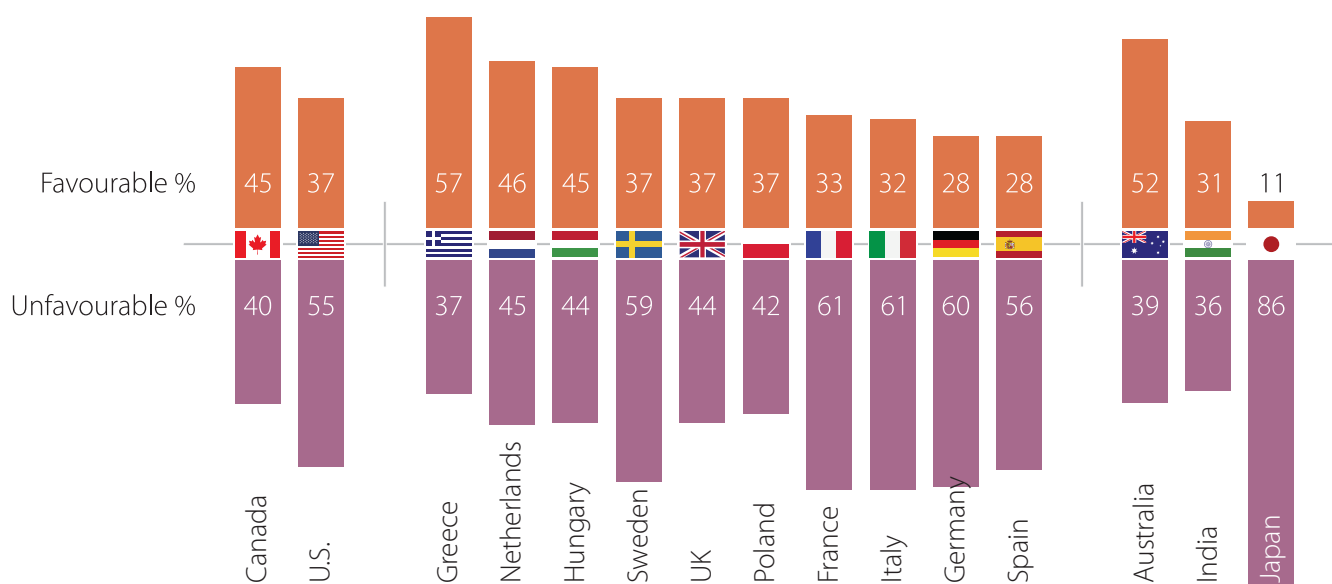
In this way, questions such as how British society is organised, its fundamental value system, and the (foreign and domestic) policies its Government pursues, all affect the UK's capacity to generate soft power and the quality of its global relationships.

The evaluation we recommend above will allow government to more clearly establish what is working and what is not in building the long-term credibility and relationships with other nations and their citizens which we argue soft power is predicated upon. However, for any such activity to be maximally effective, it is vital that government recognise that, since soft power arises from attraction to a country's values and moral authority, the actions it takes at home and abroad will be seen as a reflection of the values the UK upholds, and so will have a real effect on the UK's soft power.

Government is the major ambassador for its country on the world stage, so soft power can be generated as a natural by-product of consistency between the attractive principles the government claims to represent and its behaviour at home and abroad. By contrast, as Hill and Beadle put it, a country's soft power reserves are "susceptible to collateral damage when the values and practices celebrated at home appear at odds with the country's behaviour on the world scene".

This also means that more exposure or familiarity, for example through the export of cultural products, does not necessarily translate into more power and influence. A country like China, for instance, risks suffering from soft power deficits because it confuses more communication (aiming for greater familiarity, through more international television channels or inserts in international newspapers) with genuine understanding and empathy for its policies and values.

Figure 1: Favourable vs. Unfavourable views of China in the United States, Europe and elsewhere



Source: Pew Research Center, Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey

Negative external impressions limit China's soft power

China operates a significant and centrally-driven soft power strategy: experts at George Washington University have estimated that the Chinese state spends around \$10 billion per year on "external propaganda".¹⁶ However, the credibility of this strategy, particularly in the West, is undermined by perceptions about the Government's domestic behaviour and its responses to questions of human rights, democracy and freedom of speech.

For example, BBC World Service polls found a considerable drop in the number of countries who felt China was a positive rather than negative influence in the world over the period 2005-2009.¹⁷ It is important to note, however, that this view is not shared in many developing nations – although China's often significant financial investments in these nations' economies is arguably a facet of hard power rather than soft power.¹⁸

One prominent example of how China's behaviour diverges from its soft power ambitions is its treatment of Nobel laureate, Liu Xiaobo. Liu was the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 while serving an eleven-year prison sentence for subversion (he was granted medical parole, suffering from terminal cancer, in June 2017). The Government immediately censored news of the event, including coverage by the BBC and CNN. The Foreign Ministry complained to the Norwegian Ambassador, and Liu's wife was placed under house arrest.

A state is judged less by what it says about itself than by what it does and the company it keeps. The pertinent question for government is not, 'How can we make them like us more?', but 'How do we wish others to see us?'. As Admiral Mike Mullen of the US Navy has observed:

*"Each time we fail to live up to our values or don't follow up on a promise, we look more and more like the arrogant Americans the enemy claims we are ... to put it simply, we need to worry a lot less about how to communicate our acts and much more about what our actions communicate."*¹⁹

The lesson for the British Government, as it develops a post-Brexit narrative of a Britain positively engaged with the world – outward-looking rather than insular, interested in global development rather than pulling up the drawbridge – is that reaffirmed trade links alone are not sufficient. Instead, if Britain is serious about building its soft power, it should focus on the "power of example", choosing its actions to demonstrate the moral authority of its democratic institutions, processes, and decisions, so as to enhance its authority and influence more generally.

Even if trade is seen as the immediate international priority by Government, the research cited above suggests that such trade links may not fully develop without the foundation provided by a positive international reputation. Our economic engagement is closely tied to our formal and informal global outreach; the latter cannot be neglected without detriment to the former.

The UK must show a continued interest in the political and cultural prosperity of other nations, demonstrating our concern not merely for economic exchange but also the conditions under which society and government operate in other countries. Promoting open, stable, and tolerant political systems around the world is of advantage to the UK not only through its potential to reduce security threats, but also because it allows us to demonstrate consistency in the expression of our belief that this is the

best societal model, and so avoid charges of double standards which could otherwise harm the UK's soft power capacity. This is especially important in the context of the information revolution shifting power away from national elites towards ordinary citizens globally noted above.

Seizing the soft power moment post-Brexit

As Britain prepares to both bolster its existing relationships and forge new partnerships, there is an opportunity to position soft power at the heart of the UK's foreign policy, and deliver on the ambition set out in the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015 "to be the leading soft power nation, using our resources to build the relationships that can project and enhance our influence in the world".²⁰

Brexit has thrown Britain's moral authority into the global spotlight. Our political culture has been subject to a level of scrutiny that has challenged many of the ways in which our country thinks about itself; nevertheless, it has also highlighted a unique set of practices that are found in few other places. A commitment to major constitutional change was achieved, without the threat of large-scale unrest, via a combination of direct and Parliamentary democracy, with the independence of the judiciary demonstrated by the Supreme Court's deliberations on Parliament's role in subsequent stages of the withdrawal process.²¹

A British Council survey measuring attraction to the UK among the G20 countries following the June 2016 vote found that, outside Europe, international perceptions of the UK were in fact positively impacted by the referendum.²² While "attraction" remains a vague concept that tells us little about soft power *per se*, these results suggest that this example of democracy in action may have contributed positively to the UK's reputation on the world stage.

The survey found that, outside of EU countries, more citizens of G20 countries say that the UK's vote to leave the EU has made it more likely that they will study in or visit the UK, or consume the UK's art and culture, than who say the vote has made this less likely.²³ Interestingly, this effect is reversed – even outside of EU countries – for the likelihood of doing business and trade with the UK, again pointing to the importance of developing ties which extend beyond the economic.

The UK can point to other examples of these practices in action. For example, few states across the world televise their leaders appearing before their peers for questioning and scrutiny, yet the British Prime Minister stands before the elected House of Commons each week to answer questions from MPs in the knowledge that the session is being broadcast live to the nation. Similarly, we can identify the Chilcot Inquiry into Britain's involvement in the 2003 war in Iraq – a major undertaking that called Cabinet ministers, senior civil servants, diplomats and ambassadors, high-ranking military commanders, and the Prime Minister, to give evidence in public.

These cases serve as part of a grand soft power narrative of democratic process, accountability, and transparency. These latter two are two particularly important attributes of British democracy, and allow the UK to differentiate itself from other "democratic" governments that define themselves as such simply by holding elections for political office. This presents enormous soft power potential for Britain, and we should look to capitalise on this by putting in place policies which can build our soft power further. The following chapters offer our recommendations on how this can be achieved.

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- 5 House of Lords Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence, *Persuasion and Power in the Modern World* [March 2014]. Available online at: <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldselect/ldsoftpower/150/150.pdf> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 6 C. Hill and S. Beadle, *op. cit.*
- 7 For a broader discussion of this theme, see the final report by the House of Lords Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence.
- 8 C. Hill and S. Beadle, *op. cit.*
- 9 For example, the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Risks Report highlighted "rising political discontent and disaffection" and "evidence of a growing backlash against elements of the domestic and international status quo" in countries across the world. See World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2017, 12th Edition* [January 2017]. Available online at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GRR17_Report_web.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 10 House of Lords Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence, *op. cit.*
- 11 A. K. Rose, *A positive international image helps countries export more* [12th October 2015]. Available online at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2015/10/12/a-positive-international-image-helps-countries-export-more> [Accessed 28th June 2017]. Furthermore, Dekker et al's 2007 study of the effect of mutual trust on bilateral trade within the EU estimated that if trust levels between every pair of countries were the same as the highest level enjoyed between two member states, exports would grow by 56%. See also the British Council's 2013 report *Culture Means Business*.
- 12 See for instance Monocle's *Soft Power Survey 2016/17*. Available online at: <https://monocle.com/film/affairs/soft-power-survey-2016-17/> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 13 US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, *Data-Driven Public Diplomacy: Progress Towards Measuring the Impact of Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting Activities* [16th September 2014]. Available online at: www.state.gov/documents/organization/231945.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]
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- 18 See for example Chinese President Xi Jinping's announcement in December 2015 of a \$60 billion programme of loans, infrastructure projects, and other economic assistance to Africa. BBC News, *China pledges \$60bn to develop Africa* [4th December 2015]. Available online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35005048> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 19 M. Mullen, *Getting back to basics*, Joint Forces Quarterly, Issue 55 [October 2009]. Available online at: <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-55.pdf> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 20 HM Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015* [November 2015]. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 21 The criticism of the judiciary in some quarters of the media presented an interesting dilemma for government, forcing Ministers to choose which of two principles with potential soft power value for the UK to defend – the freedom of the press and the independence of the judiciary. This speaks to the need for high-level coordination within government to ensure an appropriate balance is struck, a theme we return to in Chapter 2.
- 22 British Council, *British Council releases new G20 post-Brexit survey* [15th December 2016]. Available online at: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/press/british-council-releases-new-post-brexit-g20-survey> [Accessed 28th June 2017].
- 23 British Council, *From the Outside In: G20 views of the UK before and after the EU referendum* [June 2017]. Available online at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/from_the_outside_in.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]



2. An institutional account of soft power

“An internationally-engaged Britain should look to tap into the networks of British institutions and civil society groups abroad and their relationships with foreign citizens and elites, in order to foster dialogue with a range of civic and political audiences.”

Institutions as the drivers of soft power

We have argued that the British Government must plan and execute policy at home and abroad with a greater appreciation of a global audience that is watching and evaluating its behaviour. At a time when trust in politicians and governments is falling however,²⁴ a decline in the credibility of state-led soft power initiatives based on the “power of example” is inevitable. Soft power can no longer be exercised solely by or on behalf of governments. This presents a difficulty for states who wish to give priority to a soft power strategy – as we have argued the British government must do.

To square this circle will require making use of the UK’s informal as well as formal diplomatic presence abroad. Institutional partners to Government such as charities, the BBC World Service, the British Council, arts and cultural institutions such as museums, and British universities, all represent powerful agencies of British soft power, because their independence from government and their personal relationships with local stakeholders allow

them to be perceived as trustworthy and their outputs as credible – a perception which can be backed up with knowledge of their charters or founding principles.

A recent British Council survey found that international trust in UK institutions exceeded trust in the UK government: among all G20 countries, 59% of respondents trusted, and only 15% distrusted, UK institutions, whereas the equivalent figures for the UK government were 53% and 21%. Moreover, the same survey found that trust in the UK government had fallen, and distrust risen, since the EU referendum, while the figures for UK institutions were unchanged over this period.²⁵

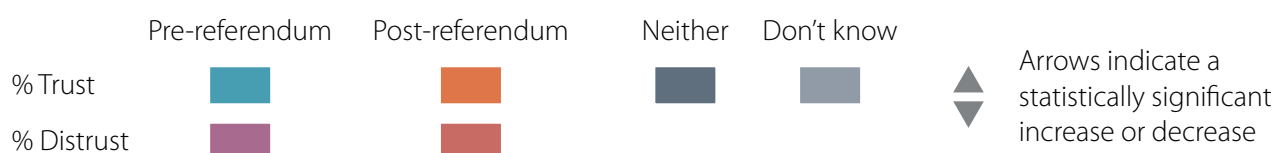
Locally-embedded but UK-administered institutions are on the front line of the battle for the UK’s reputation abroad. At a fundamental level, in addition to the direct benefits derived from the good work these institutions undertake on the ground (explored in more detail in the following two chapters), they also embody the accountability and transparency we suggest characterises British democracy. Consistency of their actions with these and other “attractive” British values will channel

Figure 2: Trust in UK institutions vs. UK government in G20 countries and change since EU referendum

Institutions



Government



Source: British Council, *From the Outside In*

the UK's power of example far more credibly than can be achieved by government.

Research has identified that trust in British people and institutions among foreign nationals is associated with an increased willingness to study, work, visit, or invest in the UK.²⁶ In other words, exposure to the idea of the UK as averse to corruption or "foul play", as we argue these institutions help to promote, contributes positively to Britain's global reputation and offers the potential for the accumulation of soft power in a way which mere cultural familiarity does not. The same research also indicates that the UK starts from "a competitive position of trust" relative to other countries.

The UK should look to derive maximum benefit from this advantage by investing in the civil society organisations which embody this perception. An internationally-engaged Britain cannot afford to neglect these institutions, but should instead look to tap into the networks into which British institutions and civil society groups abroad are connected and their relationships with foreign citizens

and elites, in order to foster dialogue with a range of civic and political audiences.

This is what a country like China has got wrong in its approach to soft power. It places responsibility for international outreach, communication, and engagement with agencies and institutions that are either embedded within the state or are answerable to China's political authorities (for example, Xinhua, China's news agency, and China Global Television Network or CGTV), weakening Chinese international communication by leaving it open to allegations of propaganda. While surveys such as the one displayed in Figure 1 in the previous chapter suggest this has been most detrimental to China's soft power push in Western countries and its immediate neighbours, it is possible to avoid this pitfall altogether through the civil society-driven approach we advocate.

However, the value – and values – of institutions cannot be communicated abroad if awareness of their underlying principles is merely superficial and the process for formalising the abstract ideals of

accountability and transparency is obscure. The less well understood these institutions are, the less effectively they will be able to contribute to the UK's soft power.

Britain must confidently articulate the benefits of the structures and principles of parliamentary democracy and its vibrant civil society organisations. This includes informing global audiences about the role of a constitutional monarchy, the purpose of the BBC Charter, and the independence from government of the judiciary and the universities. Organisations like the British Council and the BBC are ideally placed to take the lead in this process, and government should be clear that a greater emphasis on explaining their own values and the worth of a strong independent civil society to both domestic and foreign audiences is expected in return for any new public funding.

The peer-to-peer interactions facilitated by recent technological advances and the torrent of information being transmitted globally daily mean that governments the world over are at risk of redundancy in terms

of their capacity to project a national image or message. Investment in institutions of the kind we discuss here which, through their activity, naturally promote a positive image of this kind and whose work supplements or replaces alternate sources of information about the country, is one of the few ways governments can resist this change. Further collective consideration must be given to how such institutions can be made more resilient in the face of digitalisation to ensure they maintain their relevance as technology advances even further.

The relationship between government and institutions

Since these institutions represent such potentially powerful vehicles of British soft power, it is imperative they are protected and backed by government. However, ministers must bear in mind that such institutions often see themselves as contributing to soft power indirectly, rather than as part of their core purpose (projecting a positive example internationally despite what may be a primarily domestic or otherwise unrelated focus), and – crucially – at arms' length from government.

Comparison with China is again illustrative. Since 2004, China has established 500 government-backed Confucius Institutes, offering language classes and cultural activities in 140 countries. It has also set up over 1000 "Confucius Classrooms" in schools overseas, providing resources including teachers and money for children to learn Mandarin. However, these bodies have been subject to allegations that they do not engage with politically sensitive topics which embarrass the Chinese government and propagate state views on geopolitics.²⁷ This harms their credibility and reduces their capacity to generate soft power for the country: as RUSI has concluded, "such controls cannot help the wider purpose of building sympathy and admiration for China".²⁸

The actions government takes to support and cooperate with these institutions in pursuit of soft power must be suitably "hands off" so as not to either push them away or taint their activities through an association with state interference. As Hill and Beadle conclude, governments should not consider (institution-derived) soft power as a tangible resource "on tap"; rather "a balance must be struck that avoids overt interference while ensuring cultivation rather than neglect".²⁹ It is however critical that government is able to coordinate its soft power ambitions and strategy with the institutions tasked with delivering these, allowing it to offer the necessary support for the effective accrual and exercise of soft power without compromising the independence of those institutions.

We therefore recommend an annual gathering, convened by the Foreign Secretary, of the main agents of British soft power such as the BBC World Service, the British Council, Universities UK, arts and cultural institutions including museums and galleries, charities promoting justice and humanitarian efforts abroad, and others; but also involving government departments including the Ministry of Defence, DFID, and the Home Office. We recommend that the secretariat for this group is provided on a rotating basis by a cultural or educational institution such as the British Council, or a leading museum or university.

The purpose of this gathering would be threefold: to provide a forum for sharing experience and knowledge between institutions; a platform for institutions to communicate their needs and concerns to government to help them overcome obstacles to their work abroad; and a mechanism allowing government to clearly communicate its soft power ambitions to institutions, and its recognition of the vital role they have in generating soft power through the natural course of their work, while allowing them to retain their invaluable operational independence from government.

The gathering should result in two key outcomes. First, an annual institution-led review of the work of the civil society sector abroad, to be submitted for formal consideration in the government's work

devising its soft power strategy. Second, a series of clearly quantifiable and measurable soft power objectives, collectively set by the gathering as a whole; these should be based not on cultural familiarity but instead on long-term relationship-building and qualitative changes in attitudes, behaviour, and macro-level outcomes. Progress against these objectives should be tracked as part of the equivalent to the American APDI programme we recommend be established in the UK.

Coordination within government

Whilst we believe a successful British soft power strategy must be led by the UK's autonomous institutions abroad, this does not mean that government is irrelevant to the soft power landscape. As we have already stated, all government departments need to understand how their decisions and policies – both foreign and domestic – have direct consequences for how the UK is seen abroad.

To effectively coordinate the government's approach to soft power, a single entity at the heart of its policymaking process should take responsibility and powers of oversight for that activity, facilitating closer collaboration between government departments, consistency of message, and managing the flow of information on global public opinion into the policymaking process. This is the same thinking underlying the creation of the Gulf Strategy Unit, one of "a number of new issue-focused cross-government teams to remove duplication, consolidate national security expertise and make the most efficient use of it across government".³⁰

The present equivalent Minister, who has responsibility for communications, the British Council, public diplomacy and scholarships among other duties, is a Minister of State,³¹ a role which we feel is insufficiently empowered to effectively coordinate and deliver the UK's soft power vision in this way. This conclusion is supported by the work of the House of Lords Committee on Soft Power, which revealed considerable confusion within



Government as to where responsibility for soft power lies within Government: a junior Minister at the Ministry of Defence told the committee it was in the remit of the Foreign Office, while Foreign Office officials believed it ultimately rested with the National Security Council (NSC), chaired by Prime Minister.³²

The Committee recommended that a coordinated soft power policy vision be developed through the establishment of a unit within the Prime Minister's Office to reinforce a consistent public diplomacy narrative across government, supplemented by a session on soft power at least once every six months within the NSC. However, we are concerned this offers too little opportunity for "real time" consultation between relevant Ministers on how their actions affect the UK's soft power story to achieve genuine consistency across departments.

While endorsing the Committee's recommendation that "an understanding of how soft power is generated, and how the UK should behave if it is to be attractive and influential should become mainstream in Whitehall thinking", we also recommend ultimate responsibility for the UK's soft

power strategy and coordination should sit with the Foreign Secretary. This would allow public diplomacy not only to be fully integrated into the foreign policy machinery but also represented at Cabinet level. We welcome the appointment of two junior ministers to serve jointly in DFID and the FCO as of June as an important first step towards this end.³³

The lack of clarity over lines of accountability highlighted above speaks to the value of a clear allocation of responsibility for the implementation of all soft power-related strategies and policies, and we believe the Foreign Secretary is best placed to take on this role.

However, to ensure consistency of narrative across government and provide the opportunity for all relevant Ministers, including those with a primarily domestic rather than foreign policy remit, to proactively feed into a whole-government soft power strategy on an ongoing basis, we recommend a permanent NSC sub-committee on soft power be formed, chaired by the Foreign Secretary. The membership of this body should specifically include the

Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to ensure these sectors and their soft power potential are heard in the formation of the Government's soft power strategy.

In addition, the creation of a Parliamentary Joint Committee on Soft Power, with membership drawn from both Houses of Parliament, would provide valuable oversight and accountability, while demonstrating again the importance attached to soft power in our political debate.

Reallocating funding to capitalise on Britain's soft power strengths

Soft power carries a smaller financial burden than hard power. Yet it must not be thought of as a low-cost alternative: it requires continuous financial investment over the long-term if it is to see results. To effectively pursue the more focused institution-led soft power strategy we believe is necessary post-Brexit, these institutions must be adequately resourced. We therefore welcome the

pledge in the Conservative manifesto to “place the BBC World Service and the British Council on a secure footing”, and urge the Government to implement this promise as soon as possible.³⁴

Providing these institutions with the funding they require at a time of fiscal restraint obviously presents a challenge to government. To achieve this, we advocate a “smarter” international aid policy, using funds allocated for Official Development Assistance (ODA) to support the work of these institutions to promote learning, provide independent and trusted sources of information, and promote stability in ODA-recipient countries. We welcome the Government’s recently-announced “empowerment fund” to help developing nations to combat political and religious extremism as an example of this thinking.³⁵

We applaud the Prime Minister’s robust and consistent defence of the UK’s commitment to spend 0.7% of its Gross National Income on ODA.³⁶ The UK is one of only six developed nations in the world to meet this target,³⁷ and Britain should continue and indeed step up its efforts to encourage other countries to raise their own aid contributions and to meet the 0.7% target, so that the global aid budget continues to rise as a whole.

However, we also believe the UK should ensure that its aid spending reflects the potential international impact of its strongest domestic institutions. Higher education and civil society provide two sectors where we see a particular opportunity for UK institutions to have impact of this kind.

Opening educational opportunity, and higher education specifically, to citizens in less developed countries is an important global ambition; indeed, access to higher education was adopted as part of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.³⁸ Education also drives economic growth – especially as more economies seek to transition towards increasingly knowledge-based, high-skilled employment, in turn making access to higher education even more valuable – and so has a key role to play in alleviating global poverty.

The UK’s international advantage in HE is clear. In the latest QS World University Rankings, 16 of the top 100 institutions were UK-based;³⁹ the 2014 Research Excellence Framework found that 30% of research from UK HEIs was “world-leading”,⁴⁰ and the UK is behind only the United States as the most popular destination for international students.⁴¹ A recent survey found that, among citizens of G20 countries, 71% agreed with the statement “the UK has world-leading universities and academic research”.⁴² Given the UK’s reputation in this field, few if any countries are better-placed than Britain to take the global lead in spreading access to higher education in this way; we explore how this can be achieved in Chapter 4.

We therefore welcome the International Development Committee’s recommendation that the UK spend 10% of its aid budget on education,⁴³ but also urge government to concentrate any uplift in aid spending on education on promoting access to higher education for students around the world: at present DFID spends only around 4% of its education budget on post-secondary education, compared to 43.5% on primary education and 18.5% on secondary education.⁴⁴

We have argued a strong civil society is intrinsically linked to the stability of countries and accountability of their power structures. We are pleased to see this view is shared by Government; as Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan said in a Westminster Hall debate in January, “a free and vibrant civil society not only helps safeguard individual human rights but contributes to a country’s security and prosperity”.⁴⁵

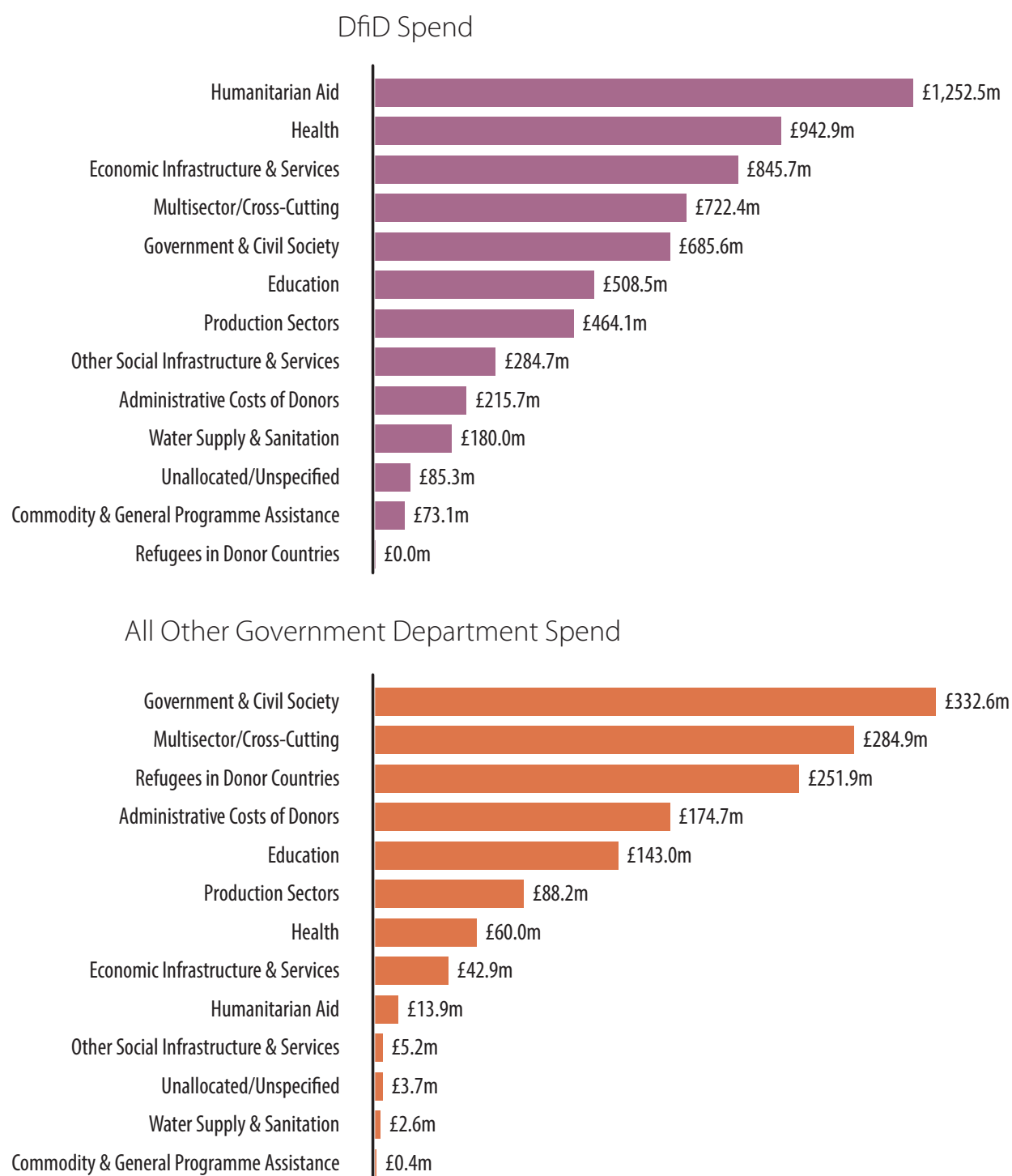
As was highlighted in the same debate however, there is increasing international concern about state-led restrictions on funding and interference in the internal affairs of civil society organisations in countries such as Russia and Egypt, and fear of a contagion effect whereby repressive practices spread across national boundaries. It has been suggested that organisations working on issues such as women’s rights and freedom of religion may be particularly vulnerable to such pressure abroad.

It is incumbent on more open societies such as the UK to ensure that civil society abroad is not suffocated, by continuing to value its own domestic civil society institutions and ensuring their international outposts receive clear government backing. UK-administered institutions such as the British Council and BBC World Service form a critical part of the social fabric of many nations abroad, and offer a valuable example of institutions thriving independent of government control; they must be properly funded to undertake their activities and contribute to the growth and development of other civil society institutions in the countries where they are present.

We recommend reallocating ODA funds to rebalance spending towards the “education” and “Government and civil society” categories.⁴⁶ As shown in Figure 3, current spending in these two categories is around £1.7 billion;⁴⁷ we believe this should rise to at least £2 billion. We believe this would be of significant benefit to international development outcomes (for the reasons set out above), but would also allow the institutions whose work could be expanded as a result of this new funding to generate considerable soft power for the UK as a natural by-product of that work, as we have argued throughout this chapter.

Such investment to support the capacity of British institutions to promote education and civil society abroad should not be limited solely to ODA-eligible countries however. Britain’s post-Brexit global outreach must include engagement with a range of countries across the development spectrum, and our civil society and education institutions are no less well-placed to lead that engagement in more economically developed nations. The Government should demonstrate its commitment to Britain’s global engagement and building the UK’s soft power capacity by offering the FCO new money with which to facilitate this engagement outside of ODA-recipient countries.

Figure 3: DfID and other Government department expenditure on ODA by sector (2015, £millions)



Source: DfID, Statistics on International Development 2016

- 24 Edelman, 2017 *Edelman Trust Barometer* [15th January 2017]. Available online at: <http://www.edelman.com/news/2017-edelman-trust-barometer-reveals-global-implosion/> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 25 British Council, *From the Outside In: G20 views of the UK before and after the EU referendum*
- 26 British Council, *Trust Pays* [May 2012]. Available online at: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/policy-insight-research/research/trust-pays> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 27 See for instance BBC News, *Confucius institute: The hard side of China's soft power* [22nd December 2014]. Available online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-30567743> [Accessed 28th June 2017]. See also The Economist, *China is spending billions to make the world love it: Can money buy that sort of thing?* [23rd March 2017]. Available online at: <http://www.economist.com/news/china/21719508-can-money-buy-sort-thing-china-spending-billions-make-world-love-it> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 28 Royal United Services Institute (O. Sayama), *China's Approach to Soft Power: Seeking a Balance between Nationalism, Legitimacy and International Influence* [March 2016]. Available online at: https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201603_op_chinas_soft_power.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 29 C. Hill and S. Beadle, *op. cit.*
- 30 House of Commons Library, *The UK National Security Council* [11th January 2016]. Available online at: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7456> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 31 Gov.uk, *Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office*. Available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/minister-of-state-for-asia-and-the-pacific-at-the-foreign-commonwealth-office> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 32 House of Lords Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence, *op. cit.*
- 33 The Times (H. Zeffman), *Boris Johnson gets hands on foreign aid portfolio* [14th June 2017]. Available online at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/boris-johnson-gets-hands-on-foreign-aid-portfolio-wvtdcfmc8> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 34 The Conservative And Unionist Party Manifesto 2017 [May 2017]
- 35 BBC News, *Overseas aid: UK plan to 'empower' poor nations* [13th February 2017]. Available online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-38959997> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 36 Financial Times, *Theresa May says Tories will keep 0.7% overseas aid target* [21st April 2017]. Available online at: <https://www.ft.com/content/14ab16a8-2695-11e7-a34a-538b4cb30025> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 37 The Guardian (B. Quinn), *UK among six countries to hit 0.7% UN aid spending target* [4th January 2017]. Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/04/uk-among-six-countries-hit-un-aid-spending-target-oecd> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 38 Sustainable Development Goal 4 includes a target to "By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries". See United Nations, *Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*. Available online at: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 39 BBC News, *Universities challenged on top 1% advert* [8th June 2017]. Available online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-40187452> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 40 Research Excellence Framework 2014. Available online at: <http://www.ref.ac.uk/> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
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- 46 These sectors are defined as follows. Education: expenditure on "primary education, secondary education, postsecondary education and teacher training". Government and civil society: expenditure on "public administration, financial management, elections, human rights, democratic participation and civil society, conflict prevention and resolution, peace and security". See Gov.uk, *Statistics on International Development 2016: Annex 1: Understanding Aid Expenditure Statistics*. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570157/annexes.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 47 DFID, *Statistics on International Development 2016* [November 2016]. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/572063/statistics-on-international-development-2016a.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]



3. Culture

"Many of the cultural institutions of British soft power are widely considered to be leaders in their field. British culture is an important factor in diplomatic relations and conflict resolution, as it enables the UK to maintain ties with countries even when political relations are strained."

British culture in a global world

British culture is widely recognised and valued around the world. Our museums, galleries, theatres, concert halls, film and fashion studios, and heritage sites consistently bring international visitors into our major cities. At the same time, we export our culture to other countries, from formal tours of our exhibitions and concerts to informal audiences of our music, film and TV shows.

In 2015, 71 million people visited British museums. The same year, the ratings for Downton Abbey in the United States were second only to the Super Bowl, and attracted a global audience of over 150 million people.⁴⁸ These kinds of figures have ensured that Britain remains one of the biggest global players in terms of cultural reach, matched only by America, Canada, Germany, Japan and France – a platform of cultural capital from which soft power can be generated.⁴⁹ A recent survey conducted by Ipsos Mori and the British Council found that 67% of respondents in G20 countries agreed that "the UK has world-leading arts and cultural institutions and attractions".⁵⁰

The British Government has recognised the importance of the cultural sector to diplomatic and economic global networks. Many of its efforts in recent years have been channelled through the GREAT Campaign,

where cultural activity saw returns of £1.8 billion on the £113.5 million provided between 2012 and 2015 to increase investment, exports and trade following the London Olympics.⁵¹ This campaign has focused much of its attention on ties between the UK and strategically-important countries like China, using the creative industries as a vehicle for dialogue.

Campaigns like GREAT have demonstrated the extent to which Britain's cultural reach extends beyond the arts to encompass opportunities of research, trade and diplomacy. Many of the cultural institutions of British soft power are widely considered to be leaders in their field. International models of conservation in art, artefacts and heritage sites are pioneered by museums such as the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Kew Gardens has one of the largest herbariums in the world, and uses its collection of plant specimens to enable international scientific research on the environment, agriculture and climate change. The Science Museum Group is recognised as a leader in informal STEM learning.

Similarly, following the destruction of cultural heritage by so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria since 2014, Britain has followed international calls to protect and restore artefacts and museums in conflict zones, by finally ratifying the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural

How British culture can inform a growing economy abroad

Since the publication of the DCMS Culture White Paper in 2016, Britain's cultural institutions have been encouraged to foster innovation and investment opportunities, both in the UK and in strategic parts of the world. An example of this can be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum's contribution to the building of China's first design museum near Shenzhen.

China has ambitions to become a global leader in design, moving beyond its reputation for low-cost manufacturing. Since the premiership of Hu Jintao, it has developed an industrial strategy that puts the creative industries at the heart of its economic vision – a strategy that has been reflected in Britain's own Industrial Strategy since George Osborne's tenure. For the Design Museum project, the V&A were invited by Chinese Merchants Shekou, a Shenzhen construction company, to assist in creating a new cultural hub called "Design Society" at the heart of a city otherwise known for its large-scale industrial output.

This is an important example of soft power in action: it demonstrates a major actor in a growing industrial economy approaching a British cultural institution, drawing on and attempting to replicate the example of Britain's own industrial and creative legacy.

Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and by pledging a £30 million Cultural Protection Fund. This demonstrates the UK's commitment to protecting (and where possible enhancing) cultural assets and access to these at an international level.

In this way, British culture becomes an important factor in diplomatic relations and conflict resolution, as it enables the United Kingdom to maintain ties with countries even when political relations are strained. This has been increasingly evident in recent years. Institutions like the British Council have been among the last organisations to leave countries like Libya and Syria during the unrest of the past six years, and they continue to look for ways to sustain their work in those parts of the world.

Despite a period of declining relations between the UK and Russia, the British Museum has loaned one of the Parthenon Sculptures to Saint Petersburg's Hermitage Museum to mark the latter's 250th anniversary, and the Science Museum has put on a landmark exhibition – *Cosmonauts: the Birth of the Space Age* – described by one FCO official as "the only light during a

very dark time". Similarly, the Hermitage has lent its own collection of 18th-century art to Houghton Hall in the East of England, enabling Sir Robert Walpole's art to be seen in its original setting.

In each of these areas, British cultural institutions aim to improve global standards in their sector, strengthening and building on a range of international partnerships which, in most cases, preserve their independence from government and geopolitics. Such partnerships build trust and resilience during times of uncertainty.⁵² In doing so, they facilitate a network of exchange that establishes the kind of long-term relationships necessary to an effective soft power. In the words of the National Museums Directors' Council, this creates:

"Channels of communication, a positive impression of the UK and the conveying of different perspectives which may not be achieved through more conventional forms of diplomacy. The position of UK museums as working at arms-length from government allows them to create mutually beneficial relationships and build trust based on institutions' shared interests."

British museums as agents of exchange

In this report, we have argued that institutions such as the British Council and BBC World Service are vital agents of British soft power abroad – and that, when funded and supported properly, these British institutions contribute to the growth and development of the civil society in the countries where they operate. We have also argued that soft power depends on the credibility of long-term investment and exchange between countries. Institutions that do this effectively are those which understand the power of example, and not just the power of attraction.

This kind of soft power requires a level of exchange that becomes transformative for all partners, and which goes beyond mere nation-branding exercises measured by a numbers game of exposure and popularity, instead articulating and advertising valuable (and values-led) practices in sectors from the media to education, including in unstable parts of the world. The same is the case for British cultural institutions.



Museums in particular have experience of engaging in exchange of this kind which government should look to build on.

British museums are different to those of other countries. Entrance to their world-class collections is free to visitors, and they have a social vision of the role they play and the work they do. Because of this, there is a broad consensus that they operate in a distinct way from those of other countries. As noted by journalist Charlotte Higgins, this difference can be seen both practically and symbolically in their relationship with government and society: since the 18th century, French museums have been part of state policy, while American museums are typically endowed by philanthropists and run as private institutions; whereas the major British museums – including the British Museum itself – have been private collections left in trust to the nation.⁵³

The British conception of the museum as a laboratory of ideas and a place for information exchange, open to redefinition and free in its access to the public, are the very things that, in the words of Neil

MacGregor, “allow the citizen to be a better citizen”, creating cultural literacy among people and using exhibitions to “address big societal challenges”.⁵⁴

Senior professionals in the cultural sector, interviewed in research for this report, when asked to describe what a “British” type of museum looks like, provided us with a list of adjectives describing an approach to cultural exchange that is popular because it is “informal”, “collaborative”, “open”, “messy”,



“creative”, “rebellious” and “free”. In the words of one of our interviewees: “France and Italy are great cultures with a classical approach to their soft power. But British cultural exchange is rock and roll”.

This is the kind of thinking that saw Neil MacGregor reconceptualise the British Museum as “the museum of the world, for the world” – a vision that led to an important online interactive project with the Google Cultural Institute. Similarly, it has been echoed by the Science Museum’s “Blueprint” model of touring exhibitions: a USB “pack” that provides content, concept, designs and research to enable other institutions to reproduce exhibitions in a range of different ways under the broad guidance of the Science Museum.

It is also seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum’s approach to the digitisation of their collection of photographs – the largest collection in the world – which will see one million items made available as part of a new International Photography Resource Centre. The Centre will provide opportunities for collaborative research

and access; key to this will be providing information on the background to many of the photographs, and the V&A is encouraging people from around the world to contribute to the process.

This is a vision of custodianship and cultural exchange that is, at its heart, both popular and democratic. Yet despite the importance of this vision both at home and abroad, the work of British museums remains jeopardised by a continued reduction of resources in the sector. The annual survey of the Museums Association has found that museums are reducing their services in response to cuts since 2011: despite year-on-year rise in visitor numbers, publicly-funded museums are seeing a decrease in staff numbers and over 60 museums in the UK have closed.⁵⁵

The National Museum Directors' Council report states that between 2010 and 2015 public investment in national museums was reduced by 30%, often at short notice, forcing many to adapt into "cultural enterprises" that are required to place increased importance on catering, retail and venue hire. The report concludes that:⁵⁶

"The UK museum sector is more vibrant, popular and internationally respected than it has ever been, but this position is now at risk ... If there are further significant and swift cuts to the public investment in museums ... (and) if museums reduce the extent to which they curate, acquire, conserve and engage with the public, the collections and cumulative knowledge wither and the many positive impacts museums have disappear."

In this report, we have argued that soft power depends on the "power of example" within an institutional framework. If these institutions are undermined at home – through cuts to funding, or a lack of coordination or political support – their ability to engage in cultural exchange abroad is diminished, along with their democratic vision and economic benefit. We call on Government to conduct an urgent review into the resources available to the museums sector, to ensure the sector is capable of maximising its

potential outreach, as well as in light of the considerable returns seen from the GREAT campaign, which are suggestive of the considerable value for money represented by investment in cultural institutions.

Communication and coordination

British cultural institutions value their political independence, but that does not mean that they do not seek to have their message acknowledged or articulated at a political level. In 2016, the Culture White Paper and the emphasis placed on the Creative Industries within the Industrial Strategy both gave cause for encouragement in this respect. With the triggering of Article 50 and the future uncertainty of Brexit, it is crucial that this vision is not now lost.

The evidence shows that cultural exchange is of significant value to both the local and national economy, as well as of benefit to the wellbeing of individuals and communities both domestically and abroad.⁵⁷ Cultural institutions seek better engagement with Government to articulate this message, and a greater understanding among policymakers of the role that they play as agencies of soft power.

This depends on better communication both within and across government departments. First, it requires giving the soft power work of cultural institutions a more prominent voice in the strategic thinking of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Second, it requires giving DCMS a more prominent voice in the strategic thinking of Government on wider policy areas.

Better communication depends on greater coordination – both between cultural institutions and Government, and between cultural institutions themselves. Various networks already exist that perform a coordinating role, from local peer groups in cities like London and in rural areas, to national networks and, on the international level, organisations like the International Council of Museums. But despite the good

work of these networks, more needs to be done to align the various angles and localities of the cultural sector within the wider priorities of Government.

There remains a need for a more concerted "whole government" approach – one which understands better the links between culture and creativity, education and immigration, development and defence, and which extends this understanding to the role of soft power both at home and abroad. In this report, we have provided recommendations for a blueprint of how this kind of communication and coordination can be achieved.

Crucially, we argue that while the Foreign Secretary should assume ultimate responsibility for the UK's soft power strategy, this cannot be developed in isolation from domestic policymakers including the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. We also recommend that cultural institutions take a leading role in our proposed annual gathering of soft power stakeholders, by being part of its rotating secretariat.

We have outlined a particularly "British" approach to cultural exchange, expressed in methods of exhibition and curation. This distinct approach to cultural exchange must be recognised by Government and promoted as an opportunity for global engagement that underpins our nation's soft power. There is a need to listen more to the cultural sector as we move beyond outdated ideas of heritage custodianship, and explore new visions for cultural institutions as laboratories of creativity and repositories of civic engagement.

Britain has the resources to achieve this. We are blessed with world-class institutions of cultural heritage that are popular around the world, led by a vision of open collections and engaged custodianship. This vision can be channelled into demonstrating Britain's commitment to the spread of culture at a global level, opening its collections and exhibits to citizens of other nations, and affording them the same kind of access and cultural exchange overseas as we enjoy at home.

To position Britain as a leader in the future of open world heritage, we recommend reinstating government support for the World Collections Programme (WCP), a scheme to establish two-way partnerships between UK and non-UK museums.⁵⁸ DCMS provided funding of £1 million per year to the WCP between 2008 and 2011; we recommend funding be restored at no less than double this level, to ensure participation from a wide range of UK museums, including not just leading institutions but also local, regional, and less well-known establishments (supported where appropriate by larger national museums).

The countries with which such partnerships are developed under the renewed WCP should be selected by the museums themselves, but strategic consideration should be given to where such partnerships could best foster important the long-term relationships which we have argued underpin genuine soft power. The views of government could be sought in this process without compromising the museums' independent agency as part of the annual gathering of state and institutional stakeholders we recommend in Chapter 2.

As well as tangibly improving access to UK expertise in museology, advertising the UK's global leadership and engagement within the sector, the renewed WCP should also place weight on opening access to UK collections to a wider audience. Overseas exhibitions should therefore be considered a critical element of the renewed WCP; along the lines of the British Museum's conception of itself as a "world museum", the UK should promote an image of itself as a global custodian of its museums' items and displays, proactively sharing – both physically and digitally – access to these exhibits across borders, rather than appearing to restrict such access to its own citizens.⁵⁹

This programme would require the kind of communication, coordination and political support that we have argued is essential to effective cultural contribution to soft power, and would also serve as a vital diplomatic tool between Britain and the rest of the world.

48 Forbes (H. Cuccinello), *Downton Abbey by the numbers: Farewell to a multimillion-dollar dynasty* [6th March 2016]. Available online at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hayleycuccinello/2016/03/06/downton-abbey-by-the-numbers-farewell-to-a-multimillion-dollar-dynasty/#157f50bf3bad> [Accessed 28th June 2017]

49 See, for example, the Portland Soft Power 30 ranking for 2016. Available online at: <http://softpower30.portland-communications.com/ranking/> [Accessed 28th June 2017]

50 British Council, *From the Outside In: G20 views of the UK before and after the EU referendum*

51 Department of Culture, Media and Sport, *Culture White Paper* [March 2016]. Available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-white-paper> [Accessed 28th June 2017]

52 National Museum Directors' Council, *Museums Matter* [2015]. Available online at: http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/museums_matter/museums_matter_web.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]

53 The Guardian (C. Higgins), *The uniqueness of British museums – and the British Museum* [15th January 2009]. Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2009/jan/15/museums-france> [Accessed 28th June 2017]

54 National Museum Directors' Council, *op cit.*

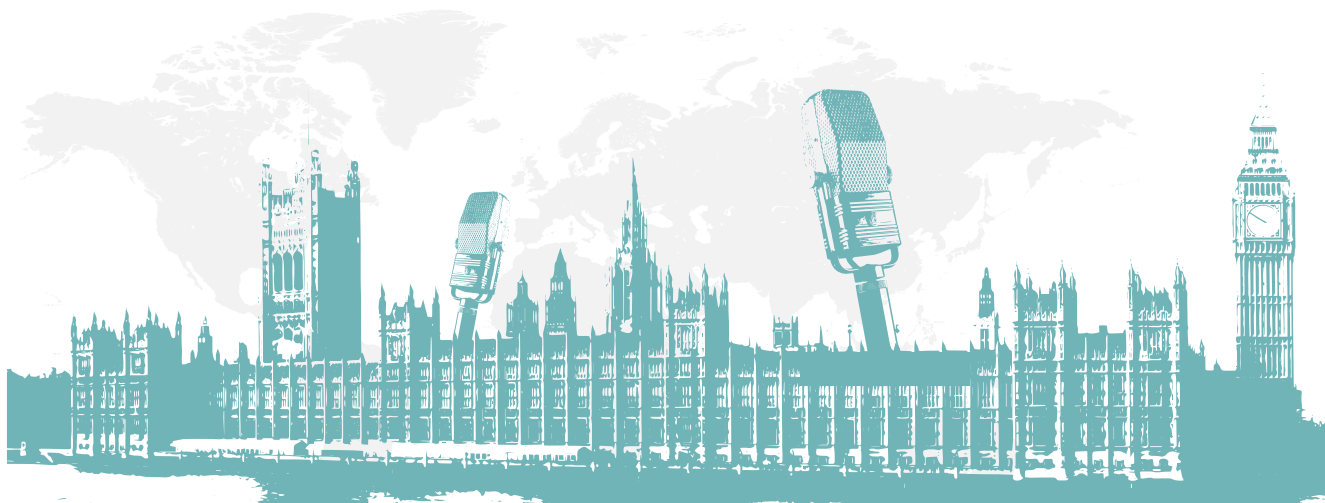
55 Museums Association, *Museums in the UK: 2017 Report* [April 2017]. Available online at: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1219029> [Accessed 28th June 2017]

56 National Museum Directors' Council, *op cit.*

57 See figures for 2014-2016 provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, showing that the Creative Industries saw a growth rate of almost double the rest of the UK economy and, in 2015, generated nearly £10 million an hour. On wellbeing, see the 2014 DCMS report, *Quantifying and Valuing the Wellbeing Impacts of Culture and Sport*.

58 British Museum, *World Collections Programme*. Available online at: http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/skills-sharing/world_collections_programme.aspx [Accessed 28th June 2017]

59 Examples of good practice in this regard include the British Museum's Chinese display of its "History of the World in 100 Objects" exhibition in the first half of 2017. See The Telegraph / China Daily, *A History of the World in 100 Objects Comes to China* [21st March 2017]. Available online at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world/china-watch/culture/british-museum-roadshow-at-beijing-museum/> [Accessed 28th June 2017]



4. Knowledge

“How citizens think, and the information they can access, fundamentally affects the capacity for other countries’ international engagement to convert to soft power. The endeavour to increase the stock of human knowledge meanwhile demands interaction between citizens of different nations, creating multiple opportunities for countries to build their soft power.”

The connection between knowledge, information, and soft power

In discussing “knowledge” in this chapter, we are referring to both academic education and research, and the information available to a population about their own and other societies around the world. These factors are closely connected to the concept of soft power.

How citizens think, and the evidence they can bring to bear in doing so, will fundamentally affect the transmission mechanism through which other countries’ international engagement converts to soft power. This is illustrated for example by Chatham House’s finding that increasing access to more advanced education and information in the Gulf states is encouraging Gulf citizens “to participate more freely and actively in both local and global conversations about changing politics and societies.”⁶⁰

This suggests that promoting knowledge (broadly understood) abroad is linked to additional opportunities for other countries to demonstrate to citizens globally the attractiveness of their social values and structures, and to be seen to uphold these in the way we have argued is fundamental to the generation of soft power.

Encouraging analytical skills and accurate information is a vital prerequisite for citizens of other countries to be influenced by the power of example channelled by British institutions, rather than having traditional ways of thinking reinforced.

It is also worth noting that this process is inherently pro-democratic – that is, by making high-quality education and information more widely available, citizens are empowered to form their own judgements about their own and other societies. As such, they gain power as a relevant audience for both domestic governments and international outreach by other countries. In implementing its manifesto promise to promote democracy globally,⁶¹ the importance of investing in knowledge must not therefore be overlooked by Government.

The endeavour to increase the stock of human knowledge meanwhile is one shared across all countries, and so demands interaction between citizens of different nations, in a way which creates multiple opportunities for countries to build their soft power. The international nature of the UK’s higher education and research structures brings benefits not only by improving the quality of work undertaken as a result but also by facilitating the exchange of expertise and people between countries in a manner which can redound to the UK’s favour, if



properly harnessed. We explore in more detail below how this can be achieved.

The importance of language(s)

Before turning to the institutional vehicles through which the UK can contribute to the global dissemination of education and information, it is worth noting perhaps the UK's greatest "knowledge" asset: the global reach of the English language. It is estimated that English is spoken by more than half of the population in 45 countries worldwide, including Germany, Nigeria, and the Scandinavian nations, as well as obvious examples like Australia and the United States.⁶² This allows the UK a "foot in the door" in these countries, facilitating the exchange of information and ideas.

However, if we wish to build our soft power in countries like China, Russia and Brazil, where fewer than 10% of the population speak English⁶³, language learning among UK citizens will have to be given greater priority. Just over one third of UK population claim to speak another

language; this compares to an EU average of 56%. Britain trails behind other countries in language learning at both primary and secondary level, and study of languages in HE is declining.⁶⁴

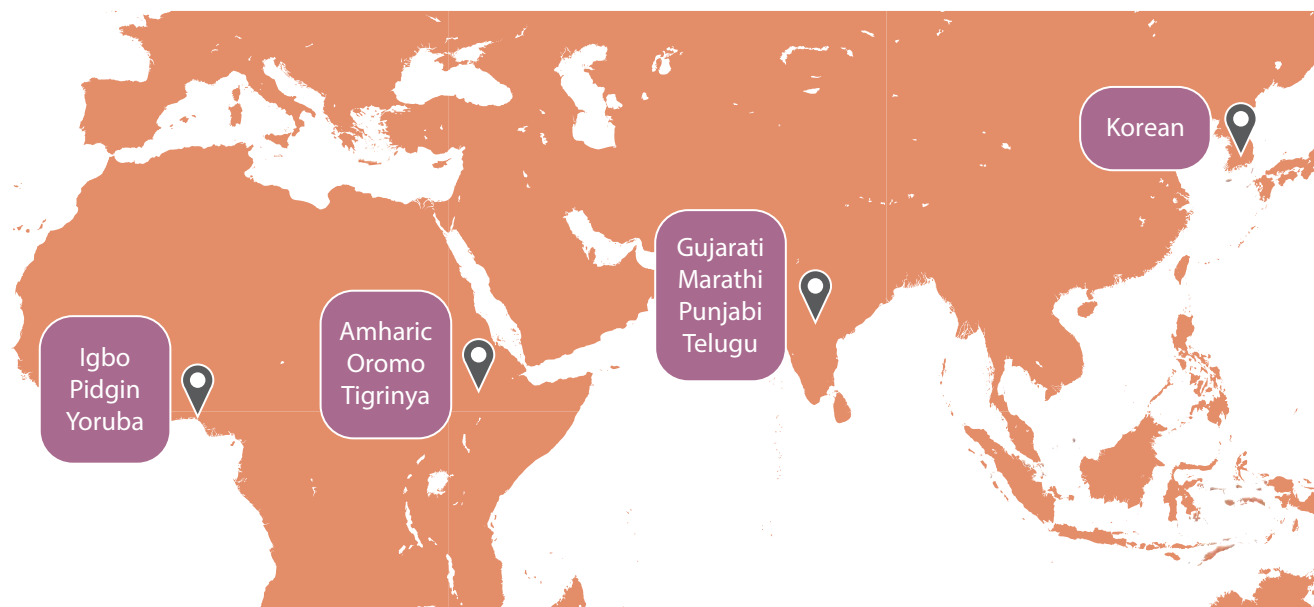
Promoting knowledge of other languages will demonstrate the UK's commitment to global engagement, especially important in a post-Brexit context. While English may be the international language of trade, it is not enough in either a quantitative or a qualitative sense to rely on existing global knowledge of the English language in building our soft power strategy: it will restrict the countries with which we can interact, and make it harder to form the meaningful, deeper long-term relationships which we believe are the basis of genuine soft power, if British citizens continue to lag behind the rest of the world in linguistic proficiency.

The Government must build on recent changes to language learning in schools, including mandating language learning at Key Stage 2 and the inclusion of languages in the EBacc, by doing all it can to tackle the "reluctance" of pupils to

study languages at GCSE level and beyond identified by the British Council and Education Development Trust's Language Trends 2015/16 survey.

This should include a public campaign, in partnership with universities and business, highlighting the benefits of studying languages for pupils' chances to attend highly-respected universities and employment prospects; but it should consider adopting the model of many European countries including Norway, Finland and France, where pupils are required to study multiple languages simultaneously during primary education,⁶⁵ to build a more language-focused educational ecosystem. Building on these changes, Government should also consider funding universities to offer free language courses to undergraduates studying for any degree, along the model followed by the University of Bath and others.

Figure 4: New languages to be offered by BBC World Service from 2017/18



Source: BBC News

The global BBC – consolidating a valuable asset

The BBC World Service's commitment to impartial reporting around the world is a hallmark of trusted information, with real benefits for the promotion of open political societies and opposition to extremism and propaganda. However, the loss of a dedicated Foreign and Commonwealth Office grant means that the World Service has had to compete with the rest of the BBC's output for finance since April 2014.⁶⁶ This is at a time when governments around the world are expanding their global broadcasting capacity: for example, Xinhua, the Chinese Government's main news agency, opened nearly 40 new foreign outposts between 2009 and 2011, adding to a pre-existing 122.⁶⁷

In the UK, cutbacks since 2010 have included the closure of five language services, radio broadcasts stopped in seven others including Mandarin, Russian, and Turkish, and the decommissioning of strategically important programmes such

as Europe Today.⁶⁸ This has increased the vulnerability of foreign citizens to state censorship and "fake news".

However, more recently government has made investments which have helped to offset this effect: as part of its November 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review, the Government committed to investing £85 million per year as of 2017-18 to bolster BBC services around the world, including in Russia, the Middle East and Africa, and allowing for the opening of eleven new foreign language services.⁶⁹ The next review of this funding arrangement is due in 2020. We urge the Government to continue to expand its support for the work of BBC foreign language news services, and guarantee that the recently-allocated extra funding will not be reduced beyond 2020.

As a provider of open source intelligence, the BBC Monitoring Service is a valuable asset for government in its oversight of the UK's position in the international community; this intelligence has played a crucial role in the formulation and execution of British and

American foreign policy, and could usefully inform the development and evaluation of government's future soft power activities.⁷⁰

Steps should be taken to build awareness in Government departments of the value of the Monitoring Service, and departments must be strongly encouraged to commission and use its services in the formation and execution of policy.

Finally, Government should do more to acknowledge the value of the work undertaken by BBC Media Action, a BBC-affiliated international development charity working to build public service broadcasting capacity and support free and open media in the developing world. A multi-year funding arrangement between DFID and the charity, consisting of a single centrally-consolidated grant worth almost £15 million in 2015/16, is shortly due to expire. Projects funded through this grant reached almost 144 million people globally in 2015/16, and DFID's internal project scoring system indicated the grant's outcomes exceeded the Department's expectations.⁷¹

The work of BBC Media Action

In 2011 DFID awarded BBC Media Action a £90 million grant to support its media development and related work in the areas of governance; health; resilience; and humanitarian response in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.

Over the duration of the grant, the charity has reached more than 283 million individuals in these 14 countries with TV, radio and digital programmes, broadcast on BBC World Service and over 500 partner stations worldwide. The impact of these outputs included: improving the health of mothers and their children; supporting people to understand their rights and hold those in power to account; and increasing individuals' resilience to natural disasters. This was achieved at an average cost of 29p per person reached.

During the Ebola crisis of 2014/15, the charity worked with over 40 local radio stations in Sierra Leone to give people information on how to keep themselves and their families safe from the disease, reaching over 1 million people (68% of the adult population in Sierra Leone). Similarly, in Nepal, training provided to local radio stations meant they could respond with life-saving information within hours of the 2015 earthquake.

Government should commit as a matter of urgency to renewing this grant for a further five years at the same funding level, to ensure the charity can continue to build and capitalise on the long-term relationships it is developing through its work. This funding could be drawn in part or fully from the reallocation of funds towards the "government and civil society" category of ODA spending we recommend in Chapter 2.

The role of higher education and research in building soft power

The UK's domestic institutions of education and research have a vital role to play in building Britain's soft power. The UK's status as a world leader in education (higher education in particular, as highlighted in Chapter 2) and academic research contributes significantly to our national prestige and provides many opportunities to reach out to equivalent individuals and institutions abroad to form the meaningful long-term relationships which underpin soft power. For example, 46% of academic papers with a UK author are co-authored with at least one non-UK

researcher, collaboration which is critical to Britain's informal diplomatic links and its image as an outward-looking, globally-engaged country.⁷²

It is clear to outside observers that the UK places a high value on advanced education and research opportunities for its citizens. We have made the case that the power of example is critical to the UK's soft power, and that Britain cannot differentiate between what it values at home and what it seeks to promote abroad. This means the UK must reach out, expanding such opportunities in the rest of the world and engaging with HEIs and researchers abroad, if it is to avoid that power of example being undermined by charges of a lack of concern for other countries and their citizens.

Moreover, the apolitical principles which must underpin academic and scientific research mean that this work is able to reach places where formal diplomacy cannot. A good example of this is the Royal Society's work in establishing a research partnership with scientists in North Korea to monitor and better understand the activity of Mount Paektu, a volcano on the Chinese-North Korean border.⁷³

There is potentially an especially important role for science in informal diplomacy of this kind. Again, Britain can legitimately claim to be a world leader in scientific research and advancement: the UK accounts for only 3.2% of the world's R&D spend but has produced 16% of the most highly-cited scientific research articles.⁷⁴ This will allow the UK to take the lead in building STEM-literate societies at home and abroad (with considerable potential soft power benefits), and we welcome initiatives such as the Newton Fund with this aim.

Projecting an image of the UK at the cutting edge of new scientific knowledge, driving advances which will shape the world's future and inspire the next generation, will both enhance our national prestige and facilitate further research collaborations of the type noted above. The work of organisations like the Science Museum Group who are leading efforts to achieve this, in particular through their work proactively building STEM literacy among young people at both a domestic and international level, is therefore to be welcomed.⁷⁵

Science may prove an especially useful diplomatic tool in building relationships with countries like China where a greater proportion of government positions are occupied by former scientists and engineers than is the case in many Western governments. For example, under the administration of the 17th Politburo Standing Committee (2007-2012), 8 out of the top 9 Chinese government officials had a scientific background.⁷⁶

We suggest that the UK should concentrate its activity in promoting global education at the more advanced end of the educational spectrum, including academic and scientific research. The following sections set out our vision of how the UK can best use its assets in these fields to both achieve this goal but also increase its soft power as a result.

Higher education and international mobility

One widely recognised route through which higher education and research can become soft power assets for a country is through the international mobility of students, staff, and researchers. In the HE sector in particular, a great many countries have programmes to encourage students from abroad to study at their universities and domestic students to study overseas. Perhaps the best-known example of this are the United States' Fulbright and Rhodes programmes, but Australia also spent the equivalent of over £200 million in 2012 on its own mobility programmes, and Germany supported over 17,500 individuals in this way in 2011.⁷⁷

The UK also encourages both inward and outward mobility from students. UK students going abroad to study primarily do so via either the Erasmus programme or provider-led schemes.⁷⁸ Erasmus is also a significant source of inward mobility helping foreign students study at UK universities; in addition to this, the UK has three major government-affiliated scholarship schemes to help international students study in the UK, at a combined annual cost to government of £73 million:

- Commonwealth Scholarships (900 scholars supported in 2015/16);
- Marshall Scholarships (30 scholars supported in 2015/16);
- Chevening Scholarships (1700 scholars supported in 2015/16)

Mobility promotes a deeper understanding of different cultures and values, going beyond mere familiarity to encourage personal friendships across national boundaries, and demonstrates a country's interest in achieving a reciprocal relationship with the rest of the world. It therefore represents a key vehicle for the power of example we have offered in this report as the critical determinant of a country's soft power, as well as an opportunity for countries to build sympathy for their values abroad.

This reasoning is backed up by the findings of academic research, which shows that accepting students from more authoritarian states onto exchange programs in more liberal countries not only advances their understanding of Western values but can also produce spillover effects, with students advocating on behalf of their host countries when they return to their country of origin, helping to change patterns of thinking in those states.⁷⁹

The UK already has a significant share of the global international student market, as demonstrated in Figure 5 (though this could be increased). In a 2013 BIS survey, 90% of international students studying in the UK agreed that their perception of the UK had changed – all in a positive direction – as a result of studying here,⁸⁰ demonstrating the potential for this inward mobility to translate into long-term influence and soft power.

However, the UK does less well on outward mobility. Among the 2014/15 cohort of graduating UK undergraduates, approximately 1 in 14 students had a period of mobility during their studies.⁸¹

If the UK wishes to use student mobility to develop its soft power, it cannot simply look to bring the world to Britain; it must also demonstrate that it is serious about the

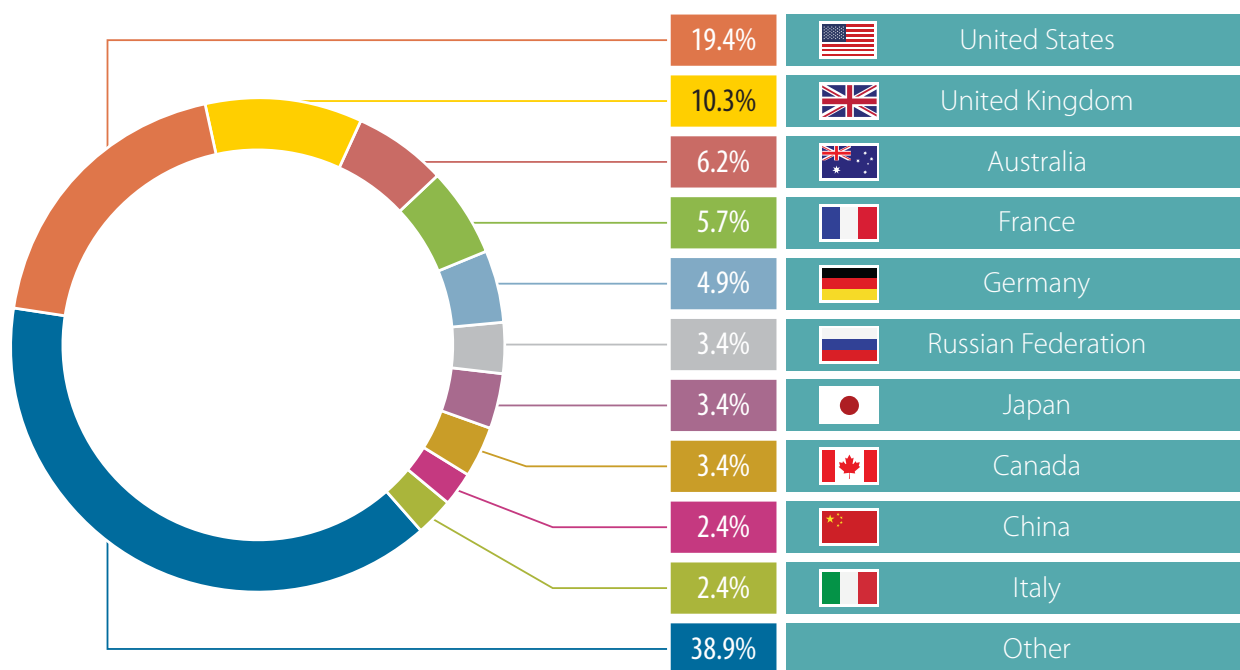
mutual nature of that exchange, if it is to avoid charges of arrogance or engagement only on its own terms. At a more general level, UK citizens must look to become more internationally aware and interculturally competent, in a way which outward mobility can help to develop, in order to keep up with their peers in the developed world and succeed in a global society and economy which continues to become increasingly interlinked, despite recent political trends.

Two important steps in changing this situation and encouraging outward mobility will be additional support for language learning (as explored above – giving students the confidence to immerse themselves in other cultures more freely), and a proactive campaign from government and universities to raise students' awareness of the benefits of undertaking studies abroad, along the lines of the US Generation Study Abroad scheme.⁸²

In addition, a rebranding and expansion of existing scholarship schemes could also help to increase rates of both outward and inward mobility from and to UK HEIs. We suggest a single overarching Global Britain Scholarships brand be created, a name that will be instantly recognisable and consistent with the Government's post-Brexit strategy. This label should encompass both the three individual inward scholarship programmes noted above (but allow them to retain their individual names and identities), but also newly-created scholarships for UK students to study abroad.

The Government's own review of the existing scholarship programmes found in 2015 that "the individual UK schemes are very well respected, but their brands are less well known than competitors such as Fulbright and Rhodes".⁸³ Creating a single overarching brand while retaining the individual identities of existing schemes represents the best way to resolve this dilemma. This change also speaks to the need identified by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (who provide the secretariat and administrative functions for all three existing scholarship programmes) for the three existing programmes to be seen as a "coherent package".

Figure 5: Where International Students Study



Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance (2015)* / Universities UK

The Global Britain Scholarships should provide the funds each year for 5,000 international students to study in the UK (roughly double the provision made by the Chevening, Marshall, and Commonwealth schemes at present), and a further 5,000 UK students to study in other countries. Specifically on outward mobility, Government should through the rebranding process seek to attract students who would not otherwise have studied abroad rather than substituting for existing provision through Erasmus or other schemes (we recommend continued participation in Erasmus be seen as a priority for the Government in Brexit negotiations, as we explore further below).

The International Development Committee has argued that providing domestic scholarships for international students does not constitute spending education aid money where it is “most needed.”⁸⁴ However, the inclusion of access to higher education in the Sustainable Development

Goals identifies this as an important global ambition, and such scholarships should be seen an important tool – though certainly not a panacea – in achieving this. Moreover, the UK’s experience of taking students from abroad and the internationally-recognised quality of its HEIs make it a natural choice to offer such scholarships from a global perspective.

The 2015 US Federal Budget allocated almost \$240 million to the Fulbright Program,⁸⁵ and around 8,000 Fulbright grants are made annually.⁸⁶ An equivalent level of investment per grant at the current exchange rate, with 10,000 grants to be made, places the cost of the Global Britain Scholarships programme at around £235 million, over three times the combined size of existing programmes.

We suggest that the majority of the 5,000 students coming to the UK under this scheme be selected from developing, ODA-recipient nations, in order to clearly

demonstrate the UK’s interest in their flourishing now and in the future. This will also allow the expenditure required to fund these grants to be counted as ODA-eligible, and so to be drawn from the reallocation of ODA spending we recommend in Chapter 2.

The remaining cost of this scheme, over and above the budget presently allocated to the Chevening Scholarship programme, should be included as part of the overall FCO budget, in line with our recommendation in Chapter 2 to make new funding available to the FCO to invest in the UK’s institutional capacity in more economically developed countries. This funding would be used to pay for the grants which will allow UK students to study abroad, or students from non-ODA recipient countries to come to study in the UK.

In addition to the above, the Government must ensure that there is consistency between words and actions post-Brexit.

While claiming to want the brightest and best students to come to the UK, changes to visa policy like the removal of the Tier 1 Post-Study Work Visa for overseas students have sent a very different message internationally which risks long term damage to the UK's reputation. The Government's continuing refusal to remove students from net immigration figures, or to guarantee the rights of EU nationals teaching at UK HEIs, will only compound this damage.

We suggest the UK Government launches an independent review into the UK's student visa system similar to the Knight Review recently undertaken by the Australian Government to ensure the UK remains an attractive destination for the brightest and best international students. We also recommend that it remove international students from its net migration target; and that it guarantee the rights of EU higher education staff working in the UK as quickly as possible in the Brexit negotiations.

Beyond mobility – transnational education

Looking beyond mobility into and out of the UK, technological advances mean that opportunities to study with a UK university can now be opened up to a wider network of students across the world who do not have to be present in the UK. This is the thinking behind transnational education (TNE), defined as "higher education institutions delivering their educational services in another country rather than the students travelling to the foreign university to study."⁸⁷ Methods of TNE include overseas or branch campuses, and distance learning including online provision such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), specialist online courses, and electronic libraries.

The UK's TNE provision is already well-established: there are only 15 countries in the world where the UK does not offer any HE TNE, and 80% of UK HEIs intend to expand their TNE provision over the next 3 years. However, there remain crucial challenges to overcome in a variety of areas.

Setting up TNE programmes, including gaining an understanding of local regulatory

and legal requirements, is a time-consuming and expensive task. Studying via TNE is often expensive relative to domestic alternatives. And concerns around quality assurance – ensuring the integrity of distance learning courses, and that overseas campuses retain their specifically British culture and practices including freedom of thought and expression – risk undermining the power of example the UK can project via TNE.⁸⁸

Government should look to help HEIs meet these challenges. It should provide funding to assist HEIs establish additional TNE programmes in parts of the world where this could generate additional soft power for the UK, drawing from the funds we recommend be reallocated within DFID where the host country is ODA-eligible. We particularly recommend support be provided to establish further UK TNE in the Middle East, where (as noted above) the UK's hard power interventions of recent years have done particular reputational damage, and where currently only 1 in 8 UK TNE programmes are delivered.⁸⁹

Alongside this, it should also allocate funding to UK TNE providers to fund bursaries for students in parts of the world where UK TNE might otherwise be prohibitively expensive, as part of the broader Global Britain Scholarships programme we recommend above, again drawing from the funds reallocated within DFID in ODA-eligible countries. In line with the 10,000 scholarships we recommend to encourage student mobility, we recommend the creation of 10,000 such bursaries, at an approximate cost of £15 million.⁹⁰ As part of the conditions of receiving this funding, HEIs should be expected to share best practice around quality assurance and other challenges at an annual conference of TNE providers to be convened by Government.

Beyond mobility – promoting higher education and research capacity abroad

The UK can also capitalise on its expertise and reputation in helping to build up higher education infrastructure in less developed and more politically unstable countries.

Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown has endorsed this approach, arguing that the UK must "consider how we build up the higher education institutions in Africa and Asia."⁹¹ As argued above, focusing on the power of example, this powerfully signals the UK's commitment to securing similar opportunities to those it provides for its own citizens to citizens of other countries, bolstering Britain's soft power.

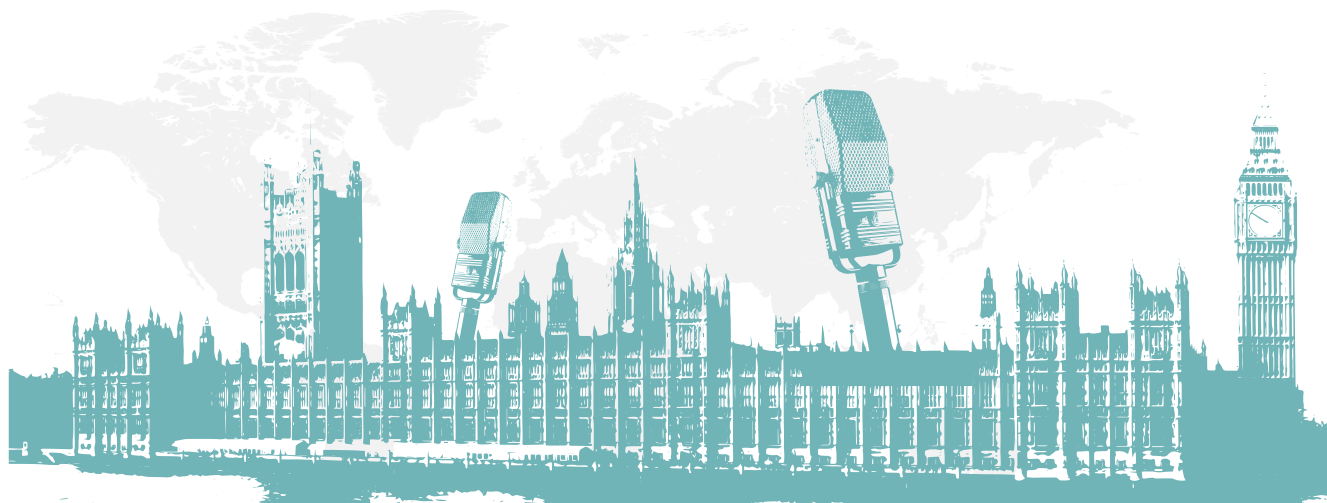
The UK has participated in a number of EU-run programmes with this aim in recent years, including Tempus, which supported "the modernisation of higher education systems in EU neighbouring countries". Research has found that this programme "has become an appealing cooperation device from which all participating institutions, both from EU and non-EU countries, benefit".⁹²

Tempus has since been rolled into the broader Erasmus+ programme; as it approaches Brexit negotiations, the Government should look to prioritise its continued participation in Erasmus+ and other research and capacity-building collaborations with the EU (including looking beyond HE, to programmes like Horizon 2020).

In promoting international collaborations of this kind, Government should also look to make use of the natural connections offered by organisations such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities, a membership organisation comprised of HEIs from across the Commonwealth countries, offering them support to facilitate greater cooperation between their members.

A similar principle should be applied beyond HE to take advantage of the links inherent to organisations such as the Royal Society (UK-based, but drawing together subject experts from across the world), and Research Councils UK⁹³ (which commissions collaborative work involving both UK and overseas institutions and researchers, and maintains a strong international presence working with local research funders).

- 60 Chatham House (J. Kinninmont), *Future Trends in the Gulf* [February 2015]. Available online at: https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150218FutureTrendsGCCKinninmont.pdf [Accessed 28th June 2017]
- 61 The Conservative And Unionist Party Manifesto 2017 [May 2017]
- 62 The Telegraph (O. Smith), *Mapped: Where to go if you can't be bothered to learn the language* [9th February 2017]. Available online at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/mapped-english-speaking-countries/> [Accessed 28th June 2017]
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5. Conclusion and recommendations

"Civil society is the vital enabler of social, economic and cultural prosperity both at home and abroad, and encouraging this prosperity globally is in the interests not only of other nations but also the UK."

In line with our belief that civil society is the vital enabler of social, economic and cultural prosperity both at home and abroad, and that encouraging this prosperity globally is in the interests not only of other nations but also the UK itself, this paper makes the positive case for a soft power strategy channelled through British institutions.

Soft power offers a middle way between military intervention and foreign aid. No approach focused solely on one or both of those options can deliver civil stability in unstable parts of the world.

We have therefore highlighted the central role that institutions can and ought to play in shaping a more stable and prosperous world, and argue that they must be at the heart of Government's vision for Global Britain.

We make the following five key recommendations:

1. Establish a clear soft power vision and strategy, based around the primacy of civil society and the power of example

Our report has highlighted the rationale for countries to pursue a soft power strategy, and why soft power is of relevance to Britain in the 21st Century, particularly as it begins the process of withdrawing from the European Union. The Prime Minister has outlined her vision for a truly "Global Britain", and the international engagement which will make that vision a reality offers an opportunity for the UK to develop its soft power abroad. We argue that this strategy must be founded on two core tenets.

First, it must be **led by the UK's autonomous civil society**, such as the BBC, the British Council, museums and other arts and cultural establishments, and higher education and academic research institutions. These bodies, capable of reaching into the social fabric of other nations, embody the transparency and accountability of Britain's social and political systems which is well-respected abroad, and their institutional independence from government and religious and special interests is crucial in creating the conditions for social stability.



Second, it must **move beyond the conception of soft power as mere attraction** towards the UK and recognise the **“power of example”** – that is, the soft power generated by being seen to uphold those domestic practices and values other nations see as attractive in all our dealings at home and abroad.

Government risks being fragmented in its approach to soft power, rather than adopting a more effective “whole government” approach; there is confusion about where ultimate responsibility for soft power policy lies within government. We recommend a single coordinating body in the form of **the Foreign Secretary and their staff, to assume responsibility for the UK’s soft power and public diplomacy strategy**. This should be supplemented by the formation of a permanent National Security Council sub-committee on soft power to draw in policymakers with a domestic remit – specifically including the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Education, and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport – to ensure consistency of message across government.

Government should seek input from civil society in the formation of this strategy. The Foreign Secretary should **convene an annual gathering of these institutional stakeholders**, offering them the opportunity to communicate their needs to government and allowing them to act as more effective agents of British soft power abroad by ensuring coordination of their actions with government priorities and strategy. We recommend that the secretariat for this group is provided on a rotating basis by a cultural or educational institution such as the British Council, or a leading museum or university.

2. Develop a clearer understanding at home and abroad of the UK’s soft power ambition, impact, audiences, and institutional drivers

This newly-created annual gathering, supported by the Foreign Secretary, should **collectively set clear soft power objectives**, based not on mere cultural familiarity but instead on long-term relationship-building and qualitative

changes in attitudes, behaviour, and macro-level outcomes. Presently, there is too much attention paid to Britain’s soft power in terms of attraction and ranking, centred on exposure to or familiarity with British institutions. This tells us little about the changes in values systems facilitated by those institutions in the countries where they operate.

We advocate an **impact-led government programme of research** that identifies and assesses relationships between the communication, outreach, and engagement activities undertaken in pursuit of soft power, and the qualitative changes outlined above, with an emphasis on foreign policy, security and stability – similar to the American model of Advancing Public Diplomacy Impact (APDI) and Mission Activity Tracker (MAT). This should also seek to build comprehension of the local social, cultural and political contexts of target audiences and their societal value systems. We estimate the annual cost of such a programme to be in the region of £2.5 million.

We also encourage civil society institutions to place greater emphasis on

articulating the principles – accountability, independence, transparency – on which they are founded. Promoting understanding of the social value which results from these institutions operating in accordance with such principles – and ensuring this is backed up with demonstrable evidence of these principles in action – represents a cross-cultural exchange of ideas of the kind which we have argued underpins the successful accrual and exercise of soft power via the power of example. Communication of the values and founding charters of organisations like the British Council and BBC, to both foreign and domestic audiences, should be viewed as an executive duty by the leadership of these institutions.

3. Reallocate foreign aid spending in line with the UK's institutional strengths

We advocate a “smarter” international aid policy, through which funds administered by the Department for International Development are used to marshal the transformative work of British institutions abroad. Britain is recognised as a world leader in the quality of its higher education and research offer, and the strength and social contribution of its civil society; these assets should be harnessed for the benefit of citizens in some of the least developed countries around the world. Opening access to higher education is not only a crucial driver of economic growth and the fight against poverty but is also included in the UN Sustainable Development Goals; while a strong civil society helps to promote national stability and prosperity, and protects human rights.

We recommend the UK **increases spending on the “education” and “Government and civil society” categories of Overseas Development Assistance to £2 billion or above**, from the current figure of £1.7 billion. This reallocation would mean that Britain could dedicate more resources to supporting the work of organisations whose activity not only provides valuable assistance for individuals and nations the world over but also allows them to act as key agencies of UK soft power.

In parallel with the reallocation of funds we recommend, the Government should also continue its efforts to **encourage other countries to raise their own aid contributions** and to meet the OECD's 0.7% ODA/GNI spending target, so that the global aid budget continues to rise as a whole. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office should also **identify and coordinate additional resources** to support the work of British civil society and expand the UK's institutional presence in countries which are not ODA-eligible.

4. Do more to acknowledge the value of the UK's cultural sector

Britain's cultural institutions provide, through their international popularity, a platform from which soft power can be generated. The cultural sector provides a crucial vehicle through which the exchange of ideas and values essential to soft power can be channelled, especially in light of its extensive global reach which is matched by few other sectors.

British museums represent a particular asset in this process as a result of their uniquely democratic and popular vision of custodianship and cultural exchange, which differs from more classical models seen in other European countries. Yet their work has been undermined by a continued reduction of resources in the sector. We call on Government to **conduct an urgent review into the resources available to the museums sector**, to ensure the sector is capable of maximising its potential outreach, as well as in light of the considerable financial returns seen from the GREAT campaign, which are suggestive of the considerable value for money represented by investment in cultural institutions.

Articulation and acknowledgement of the cultural sector's key messages at a political level is critical to fostering the kind of relationship which can ensure the sector is capable of maximising its international engagement as outlined above. To achieve this, the soft power work of cultural institutions should occupy a more prominent place in the strategic thinking of

DCMS; and DCMS itself must have a more prominent voice in the strategic thinking of Government on wider policy areas, including soft power, through the **Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport's membership of the NSC sub-committee on soft power** we recommend be created.

We believe demonstrating Britain's commitment to the spread of culture at a global level is a surer foundation for British soft power than exercises simply building cultural familiarity. We therefore recommend government **re-establish its financial support for the World Collections Programme**, providing at least £2 million annually (double its previous level). The countries with which institutional partnerships are pursued under this scheme should remain a decision taken independently by the museums sector, with government able to advise based on its own strategic soft power ambitions at the annual gathering we recommend above. Overseas exhibitions of British museums' world-leading collections should be a crucial element of the programme.

5. Use the UK's strength in international broadcasting, higher education, and research to build Britain's soft power

We call on Government to support the work of UK-administered foreign language news services by guaranteeing that the £85 million allocated in the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review to build the BBC World Service's global reach be **continued beyond the next funding review in 2020**. Likewise, government departments must recognise the value of the BBC Monitoring Service, BBC Media Action, and the World Service as networks of information and exchange, guaranteeing the funding necessary for these to continue to perform their work.

The UK's world-leading higher education and research sectors are plugged into vast networks of international exchange of ideas and people. As with the cultural sector, there is increasing interest in how informal knowledge-based diplomacy,

in particular in science, can help to build long-term relationships even when formal ties between countries are strained. More generally, the UK should look to harness the power of example it will be able to bring to bear if it is seen to be extending the same opportunities for advanced education and research available to its own citizens to those in other countries around the world.

We recommend the launch of a large-scale **Global Britain Scholarships programme**, bringing the three major existing scholarship schemes for international students to study in the UK under a single brand and management structure but retaining their individual identities (Chevening, Commonwealth, and Marshall). The programme should annually sponsor 5,000 scholarships for international students studying in the UK, and 5,000 scholarships for UK students to study abroad, at a cost of around £235 million (reallocated foreign aid spending, allowing students from ODA-recipient countries to attend UK universities, should cover a

substantial portion of this). It should also provide for 10,000 transnational education bursaries for foreign students studying with UK institutions in their own countries, at a further cost of around £15 million.

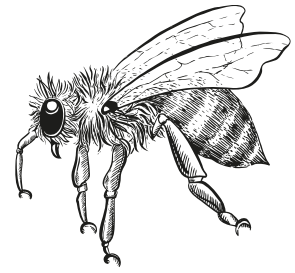
To specifically increase levels of outward mobility by UK students, the Government must **look to raise the UK's levels of language learning**, which are significantly below the EU average, building on recent changes to language learning in schools. The global reach of the English language gives Britain a foot in the door in many countries around the world, but reliance on this will make it harder to form the meaningful, deeper long-term relationships which we believe are the basis of genuine soft power.

The Government must also recognise that its stance on freedom of movement affects both the UK's international standing as a world leader in higher education and research and its global reputation more generally. The Government should

undertake a review into the UK's student visa system along the lines of the Knight Review in Australia; **remove international students** from its net migration target; and **guarantee the rights of EU higher education staff working in the UK** as quickly as possible in the Brexit negotiations.



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Society

The UK has one of the most centralised states in the developed world and one of the most disaffected and politically passive populations in Europe. We hold our leaders in contempt, but despair of doing anything for ourselves or our community. The dysfunction at the highest level of society stems from the collapse of our social and personal foundation. There is little doubt that we are becoming an increasingly fragmented and individualist society and this has deep and damaging consequences for our families, our communities and our nation state.

Starting from the bottom up, the collapse of the extended family and the ongoing break-up of its nuclear foundation impacts on all, but disproportionately so on the poor and on their offspring. Too many children at the bottom of our society are effectively un-parented as too much is carried by lone parents who are trying to do more and more with less and less. We know that the poorer you are, the less connected with your wider society you tend to be. Lacking in both bridging and bonding capital and bereft of the institutions and structures that could help them, too many poorer families and communities are facing seemingly insurmountable problems alone, unadvised and without proper aid.

Based on the principle of subsidiarity, we believe that power should be devolved to the lowest appropriate level. Public services and neighbourhoods should be governed and shaped from the 'bottom up', by families and the communities. These neighbourhoods need to be served by a range of providers that incorporate and empower communities. Moving away from a top-down siloed approach to service delivery, such activity should be driven by a holistic vision, which integrates need in order to ascertain and address the most consequent factors that limit and prevent human flourishing. Local and social value must play a central role in meeting the growing, complex and unaddressed needs of communities across the UK.

The needs of the bottom should shape provision and decision at the top. To deliver on this, we need a renewal and reform of our major governing institutions. We need acknowledgement of the fact that the state is not an end in itself, but only one means by which to achieve a greater end: a flourishing society. Civil society and intermediary institutions, such as schools, faith groups and businesses, are also crucial means to achieving this outcome. We also need new purpose and new vision to create new institutions which restore the organic and shared society that has served Britain so well over the centuries.

About Our Partners

This report is supported by the British Council and the Science Museum Group. All conclusions and recommendations contained in the report are independent of these organisations.

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

The Science Museum Group is the world's leading alliance of science museums, consisting of: The Science Museum, London; The National Science and Media Museum, Bradford; The Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester; The National Railway Museum, York; and Locomotion – The National Railway Museum at Shildon. These museums inspire futures by creative exploration of science, technical innovation and industry, building a scientific literate society and inspiring the next generation of scientists, inventors and engineers.

Society

Society

Society



The UK's decision to leave the European Union will have major consequences for Britain's foreign policy and its strategy for international engagement. In this context, the concept of soft power is more relevant than ever. To build Britain's international influence, and ensure the UK remains at the forefront of discussions on global challenges such as security or migration, will require not only new trade deals but also a focus on our cultural links with other nations and a heightened awareness of how Britain is perceived overseas.

In Britain's Global Future: Harnessing the soft power capital of UK institutions, ResPublica makes the case for an institution-driven approach to building the UK's authority on the world stage. We argue that cultural attraction alone cannot anchor the UK's global influence, and instead seek to reorient the soft power debate around the power of example, derived from British institutions' expression of and adherence to values and principles admired in other countries.

Britain's worldwide institutional presence provides a foundation on which positive perceptions of the UK can be built globally. We therefore call on Government to ensure domestic policy and funding frameworks support these organisations' work abroad. We also advise that Government places a coordinated soft power strategy at the heart of its foreign policy, and make recommendations as to how this can be achieved.



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