



**House of Lords
Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence**

Written evidence from the British Council

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About the British Council

The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We are on the ground in over 100 countries. We connect the UK with people around the world, sharing the UK's most attractive assets: the English language, the arts, education and our ways of living and organising society. We have over 75 years' experience as the UK's leading soft power agency.

1 Summary

1.1 The UK has emerged as the world leader in soft power, overtaking the Hollywood fuelled might of the United States and leaving other European competitors trailing. Yet even as we celebrate coming first in Monocle's 2012 soft power league table, the UK's supremacy may already be a thing of the past. China, Turkey, Brazil, Russia, South Korea and other leading economies are all developing soft power strategies and investing in cultural institutes, scholarship programmes and broadcasting. Influence and attraction, how a country wins the support and good will of other nations, are becoming increasingly important as the power structures of the 20th century give way to an increasingly volatile present where that influence and attraction is increasingly dependent on people rather than governments. Trust and reputation are critical to international success and prosperity.

1.2 The UK is a soft power superpower with unique assets - in the English language, our arts and culture and our education and ways of living - that are immensely attractive to people around the world. How we have deployed these assets has been critical to our success to date but we cannot take that success for granted and must learn and adapt to an ever changing world.

2 The spectrum of international engagements

Giving		Attracting		Forcing	
Aid	English	Relationship building	Cultural diplomacy	Messaging	Military Action
Development	Education	Cultural exchange	Showcasing	Diplomacy	Sanctions
	Skills	Convening & networking	Broadcasting	Advocacy	Coercion
	Qualifications	Partnerships & links	Trade promotion	Campaigns	
	International experiences	Trade			

2.1 The UK is one of a handful of international players to have the capacity to project power in all its forms anywhere. It has unique strengths in the soft and hard power stakes, as well as being a world leader in international development. The UK's physical presence globally through the diplomatic network, DfID and the MoD, agencies like the British Council and UKTI and international NGOs and businesses gives the UK a powerful platform for influencing and engaging internationally. The UK is able to work across the spectrum of international interventions, from the giving end of aid and development assistance through soft power to the forcing end of military action. Soft power is an essential plank of the UK's

international relations strategy, complementary to our military forces and development assistance.

2.2 The spectrum is not rigidly divided. It is easy to identify the extremes but the space occupied by soft power is much harder to delineate. Trust and attractiveness can be built through aid projects that focus on good governance, education reform and the sharing of the UK's values. The capacity to work across the spectrum strengthens the UK's hand, each element reinforcing the potential impact of the other. At its most successful, the UK's foreign policy engages across the spectrum in multiple ways simultaneously. Sierra Leone might be a textbook example of what can be achieved by the co-ordinated engagement across the spectrum with the UK's military power needed to create the environment where development assistance, education reform, capacity building and reconciliation work could be taken forward. The world is though a complicated place, often the UK will find itself engaging in multiple, potentially contradictory interactions across the spectrum of international relations. This may be a deliberate carrot and stick approach to a country or simply reflect the multitude of contacts between peoples in a hyper-connected age.

2.3 Soft power is not a replacement for hard power; those looking to soft power to make up for the impact of defence cuts on the UK's influence internationally are being unrealistic. No one wants to be in the position where the answer is a naval deployment or boots on the ground but hard power remains vital to our international security in an uncertain, volatile world. While the recent Parliamentary vote on Syria reflects the fact that the UK's appetite for "foreign adventures" has been diminished by our experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, British military interventions in the former Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone have delivered positive outcomes that soft power or development assistance could not possibly have achieved. Soft power sits alongside hard power and development assistance and has a key role to play in fragile and post-conflict states looking to rebuild and reconcile, as has been the experience in Kosovo for example, but it cannot force peace on warring peoples.

2.4 The UK draws international clout from its status as a Permanent Member of the Security Council and its membership of other international organisations including the EU and Commonwealth. The EU and the Commonwealth in particular are bodies with considerable soft power strengths. Both are reliant on soft power levers to exert influence in international affairs. Their strength comes from the focus on shared human values of decency, respect, tolerance and equality, they stand up for the rule of law and human rights and as communities with collective decision making, they are less easily portrayed as pursuing selfish strategic aims than individual nation states.

2.5 Soft power is a powerful tool for governments looking to improve relations and keep channels open when international tensions arise. The Security Council maybe deadlocked or the UK marginalised at the EU Summit, but through soft power the UK can bring nuance, depth and renewal to government relations and continue to build trust despite political difficulties. While relations with Russia can be difficult – the British Council was forced to

close our offices in St Petersburg and Ekaterinberg in 2008 following diplomatic disputes between the British and Russian Governments – the Russian people remain interested and open to engagement with their British counterparts. The UK-Russia Year of Culture 2014 will capitalise on that interest and will present multiple opportunities for the British Government to engage with Russian ministers and officials

2.6 The UK's capacity to work across the spectrum distinguishes it from much of the rest of the world. It gives credibility, generates respect - and a little envy - and comes with a responsibility to be activist, outward looking and engaged in the challenges of the day.

3 The meaning and importance of soft power

3.1 A country's soft power is its ability to make friends and influence people not through military might, but through its most attractive assets, notably culture, education, language and values. It's the things that make people love a country rather than fear it, things that are often the products of its people, its culture, its values, and its education institutions. Put simply a country's soft power is its attractiveness to others. According to Monocle the UK is currently first in the world for soft power, thanks in part to the global audience captivated by the Diamond Jubilee and the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

3.2 Sir Anthony Parsons explained the value of soft power to state actors:

It is really dazzlingly obvious ... [i]f you are thoroughly familiar with someone else's language and literature, if you know and love his country, its cities, its arts, its people, you will be instinctively disposed ... to support him actively when you consider him right and to avoid punishing him too fiercely when you regard him as being wrong.

3.3 Reputation and trust are critically important to a country's success as the certainties of the 20th century give way to a more fluid, volatile world. With multiplying players on the international stage seeking to make their mark and challenge established power structures, military power is no longer a guarantor of success internationally. International challenges like the Syria crisis and global poverty create new alliances and bring new voices to the fore. Soft power has a key role to play in establishing the UK as an honest, trusted broker in such contexts. The revolutions convulsing the Arab world require co-operation between state and other actors and interventions across the spectrum of international relations with development assistance, diplomacy, soft power and military capacity all crucial elements in delivering a safe and prosperous future across the region. To succeed in this world, the UK must act in partnership with old friends, attract new allies and persuade and win over doubters to achieve its strategic objectives. In the shifting, volatile dynamics of the 21st century, soft power is more important to the UK's success than ever before.

Hyper-connectivity

3.4 At the same time the tectonics of power are in flux, influence is moving away from governments towards individuals and civil society groupings. People-to-people contacts are growing in importance at a dramatic pace. 24 hour broadcasting, social media and mobile services mean people are better informed than ever before and can interact directly with each other across national boundaries with limited governmental interference – even in places where government seeks to impose barriers upon the flow of information and opinion. With 6 billion mobile phones around the world, 75% of which are in developing countries, the explosion in people-to-people contacts is far from being a purely Western phenomenon. Shared interests, passions and beliefs bring people together in chat rooms, the blogosphere and other online fora, creating a platform for people to organise themselves – with everything from Pussy Riot supporters to Twilight Fanfic to be found in the undergrowth of this rich, wild new digital jungle. Businesses and institutions looking to expand rely increasingly on the internet to reach and influence new audiences as well as to invigorate and grow their presence in existing markets. Governments and agencies have recognised the growing importance of media like Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook though they have had mixed results from their attempts to exploit it for their own messaging and influence, partly because of social media users scepticism of Governmental “propaganda”. UK cultural and educational institutions are developing their digital offer to extend their reach, offering access to their collections, promoting their study opportunities, exploiting their intellectual property and sharing knowledge.

3.5 The British Council is developing its online presence to take advantage of the opportunities available in this new hyper-connected age. We benefit from our arms-length relationship with the UK Government and are viewed as a reliable, trusted player in the online world. We have an expanding online global presence, using digital services to reach millions of young people. Digital participation rose from 73 million in 2011-12 to 90 million in 2012-13. The number of people taking part in our online learning and social networks has doubled over the same period to 8.4 million. We expect this growth to accelerate further as we invest in our range of online tools and mobile apps. Our award-winning English language services on China’s leading micro blogging site Sina Weibo; our Middle East and North Africa Facebook page that is supporting 1,200,000 learners of English; and our Study, Work, Create web portal that brings together all the international opportunities available to young people in the UK in a one stop shop, are all examples of our global digital offer. We are also working with Intel to provide English language learning materials on 100 million computers by 2020 for schools, teachers and individuals to increase access to English language skills and improved technology-based learning worldwide.

Trust

3.6 Where it is successfully deployed, a nation's soft power builds trust, strengthening ties between peoples and increasing the likelihood people will consider a country as a place to visit, study or invest. Our Trust Pays¹ research has found the increased willingness to look positively on a country can be marked, both in places with which we have traditional ties but also places with no historic or cultural links. For example in India the percentage of respondents surveyed that looked to the UK more positively after engaging with the UK's great cultural assets rose by 24% while in Russia it rises to 29% and Saudi Arabia 19%. The research also shows that the UK benefits significantly from its historic links through the Commonwealth with much higher levels of trust than the USA or Germany in countries like Pakistan and India. The other critical finding of the research is that trust in the people of the UK usually runs ahead of trust in the UK Government, perhaps unsurprisingly so in Russia and China but also in Spain and Saudi Arabia where there is 20% difference in levels of trust. The research is clear, exposure to a country's culture and values can improve perceptions, counter negative impressions and open up opportunities for further engagement. Successful, non-Governmental people-to-people engagement increases the likelihood an individual will choose and/or recommend the UK as destination for visiting, study and investment. Crucially for Governments, our research has found that cultural engagement - soft power - successfully deployed, measurably increases the trust in Governments, generating opportunities for diplomacy and trade.

Reciprocity

3.7 Soft power is most effective where the focus is on sharing and reciprocity rather than simply selling a message. It parallels how people behave in their everyday life – friendships develop through communication, shared experiences, understanding and mutual interests. Hard power intimidates, soft power engages. By sharing the best of our culture, language and education and being interested and accepting of what others have to offer trust is built up. At its simplest, the key to soft power is old fashioned good manners.

4 The UK's soft power assets

4.1 The UK has exceptional soft power assets in its culture, language and education; it's long, rich and uniquely outward-looking history; and the powerful attractions of a modern, vibrant, creative, ultra-connected, open, tolerant, stable, democratic society.

English

4.2 Our single greatest soft power asset is the English language. The value of English to the UK cannot be overstated; it is the international language of the world and gives the UK and other Anglophone countries a very real edge in international affairs. It is one of the six

¹ Trust Pays, British Council, 2012

official languages of the United Nations, the working language of the World Bank and one of three procedural languages of the EU. The long-term economic benefit to the UK of the English language has been estimated at £405bn by consultancy firm Brand Finance with the Intellectual Property asset value of the language to the UK estimated at £101bn.² It is one of the key elements in the success of international financial centres like London, New York and Hong Kong. Our research has consistently found English to be the UK's most attractive soft power asset globally, with the implication that the strongest assets are those offering practical, economic advantage. Research undertaken by Euromonitor for us found that proficiency in English significantly increases the earning potential of young people in the Middle East and North Africa, varying from 5% in Tunisia to 95% in Iraq. Proficiency in English is a valued skill globally, sharing our language and creating opportunities to learn and practice speaking it is the most potent soft power deployment available to the UK.

4.3 But English is a critical element in the soft power of the UK and other states not only as an immensely attractive asset in its own right but also because it is vital to the accessibility of other key cultural assets – our education, culture and values. The UK's global influence draws on its reputation as a place of excellence, creativity, ingenuity, a world leader in finance, the Law, science, research, the arts and creative industries.

Education

4.4 The UK's education institutions are highly regarded internationally and are an essential element of our soft power offer. Our schools and universities attract international students through the English language and the quality of the educational experience on offer. There is a significant advantage to an international student of having qualifications from a globally recognised institution like Cambridge University; it greatly enhances an individual's career prospects in much the same way that proficiency in English offers potentially significant economic advantages. The UK higher education sector is one of the most internationalised in the world: 18 per cent of our student base is international, over 25 per cent of faculty are non-EU, and more than 80 per cent of UK institutions are involved in international partnerships. BIS estimates that in 2011 the value of education exports to the UK was £17.5 billion with the UK the second most popular destination for international students with 13% of the international market.

4.5 The British Council supports the UK's educational institutions internationally, bringing together partners in research collaborations like the BIRAX Regenerative Medicine initiative that is deepening collaboration between the UK and Israel in regenerative medicine. The scheme is supporting high-quality and ground-breaking UK–Israel research projects to develop treatments for multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease and a regenerative therapy for type 1 diabetes. We promote the UK's higher education institutions overseas to attract international students through exhibitions and services like the Education UK

² The English Effect, British Council, 2013

website that lists more than 150,000 UK courses and our Transnational Education (TNE) service which helps UK institutions develop and effectively promote international programmes. Our dedicated staff in-country provide bespoke support to identify the best opportunities to promote courses, broker relevant partnerships, develop and execute marketing plans and establish a clear route map through the local legal and regulatory processes including quality assurance frameworks.

4.6 The successful expansion of the UK international higher education market is vulnerable to the consequences of UK Government policy. The UK is the second most popular destination for Indian nationals looking to study overseas – a total of 40,890 students in 2010–11, contributing over £850 million to the UK economy but Indians are now rejecting the UK as a result of recent developments in visa policies. Since 2011 we have seen a 20% drop in the number of students coming to the UK from India. It is a very human response to the local press coverage of the UK's recent policy changes.

4.7 Higher education is by far the biggest part of the international education market but there is massive scope for expansion across the sector. Transnational education is set to grow dramatically as schools, colleges and other entrepreneurial institutions follow the trail blazed by Nottingham University in Malaysia and open up campuses in the high growth economies of Asia, the Middle East and the emerging Southern hemisphere powers. The market for English language teaching is huge and demand far outstrips the capacity available from current providers including the British Council and the leading private sector providers like Pearson. The scale of the opportunities available are immense and we work with private sector providers through market intelligence and networking opportunities to grow their own businesses overseas.

Culture

4.8 The UK's arts, heritage and creative industries continue to play an important role in the UK's attractiveness, with institutions such as the British Museum and Tate Modern continuing to draw millions of visitors every year. Visit Britain estimated the value of tourism to the UK economy in 2009 at £115 billion, the equivalent of 8.9% of UK GDP. Museums, galleries and the historic environment are essential attractions for visitors to the UK but so too are the UK's performance spaces and arts companies. 2012 saw record ticket sales figures for London's Theatreland of £529.7 million. The 2011 Edinburgh Festivals Impact Study estimated the economic impact of the festivals at £262 million to Scotland annually with the Fringe worth £142 million to Edinburgh. Public investment in cultural assets has a very real dividend for the UK economy.

4.9 The global pervasiveness of US and UK pop culture owes much to the international success of the English language. In an age where social media is increasingly significant in

shaping opinions and sharing views, English is the premier language of the internet with a 54.9% share. Globally UK artists and cultural exports are enjoying success at a level not seen in many years with the James Bond franchise, Adele and One Direction all enjoying very significant sales. Global album sales of UK artists were a record 13.3% of the worldwide total for 2012. The output from Hollywood is studded with UK talent – our actors, directors, screenwriters, technicians and studios are major players in popular culture globally. British talent dominates the publishing industry with Shakespeare followed closely by Tolkien and J K Rowling in numbers of sales. In 2011 exports by UK publishers were valued by the Publishers Association at £1,223m. Many of the world's most popular literary icons are British – Sherlock Holmes, Elizabeth Bennett, Winnie the Pooh, Frankenstein's Monster – creating great interest and passion for the UK.

4.10 Elite culture has long played a role in soft power. The UK's cultural institutions are globally recognised with tours of our orchestras, theatrical and dance companies and museums and galleries always immensely popular. Our architects, artists and designers are in demand around the world with Lord Foster, Zaha Hadid, Thomas Heatherwick and other leading figures transforming cityscapes and public spaces with the best in British design. Our influence in the world of fashion is immense with our designers playing leading roles in the great fashion houses as well as masterminding the success of their own labels under the watchful eye of Anna Wintour.

4.11 The British Council manages the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and supports the devolved administrations' participation at the festival, showcasing the best of British art. We also support and help to co-ordinate the international activities of the UK's great arts institutions to ensure maximum impact for the UK, through programmes like our four year Transform season in Brazil where we are collaborating with the Southbank Centre, the ICA, the BFI, the Roundhouse and the V&A to take the very best of British arts and creativity to new audiences across Brazil.

4.12 Sport has a universal appeal that crosses language and cultural barriers making it the most accessible and exportable of the UK's soft power assets. And the UK is a world leader. The sporting elite are every bit as popular internationally as movie and pop stars – Andy Murray and Gareth Bale are hugely popular figures around the world. The global following of Premier League Clubs is staggering. Chelsea has supporters' club branches in Mongolia, Japan, Chile, Nigeria, Brazil, Singapore, Russia, Uzbekistan and even Iran. Football is a global game with universal appeal. The British Council recognises the global appeal of the Premier League, our partnership with the Premier League on Premier Skills has helped us train more than 2,300 coaches since 2007 and reached a further 400,000 young people around the world.

4.13 The commercial success of many of our modern stars owes much to the UK's pragmatic mixed economy approach to funding for culture. Public funding underpins the local and regional infrastructure that fosters talent – the local theatre where the next Ian McKellen learns his craft, the music programme that gives the next Emeli Sandé the creative space to practice and grow. Public support has been critical to UK artists' global impact. Equally significantly, it enables our great national companies to take creative risks instead of always producing the popular show that is guaranteed to sell out, to enable directors, composers, choreographers and playwrights to experiment and develop the skills and experience to make the new classics of the 21st century. However, it is not all about taxpayer funding. Our theatres, galleries and arts companies are incredibly entrepreneurial, they must maximise their own income if they are to thrive. Entrepreneurialism drives ambition and innovation – the Tate Gallery receives 40% of its funding from the Government with the rest coming from foundations, corporate sponsors, individual and international supporters, a 100,000 strong Membership scheme and a £4.9m profit from the Catering and Enterprise team.

4.14 The UK's heritage casts a powerful spell over much of the globe. The Royal Wedding was not just a UK or even Commonwealth event it drew a truly global audience with an estimated 2bn people in more than 180 countries following newspaper reports, photos and TV. In the build-up to the big day Twitter recorded 237 tweets about the wedding every second. The Royal Family are a soft power magnet, for many people around the globe the Queen is one of life's few constants, a pole star in an ever changing world. The value of the UK's stability, history, pomp and ceremony as a soft power asset is difficult to quantify, there are visitor numbers for the castles and palaces and viewing figures for the Diamond Jubilee regatta but the importance of history, roots, of belonging is intangible. It is nevertheless an inspiration to those countries emerging from periods of instability and conflict. The Commonwealth is also a critical component of the UK's soft power, it brings countries together and celebrates and promotes shared values and experiences. Those in the UK that dismiss it fail to recognise the value placed in it by the governments of other member countries or the soft power benefits to the UK of the education, cultural and sporting links that it promotes.

London

4.15 London is undoubtedly one of the world's most attractive cities and is an integral part in the UK's soft power. It is an irresistible magnet for people from all corners of the world, not just those with historic or cultural links. The City is an immense asset. London's global position as a leading financial hub is a massive global draw. That hub status is not simply a result of our history; other once-great centres of commerce have faded into relative obscurity. It depends on the UK's attractiveness – the English language; our convenient time zone between the USA and the Far East; a stable, open, tolerant country; an economy with transparent legal, tax and regulatory regimes; the talented people who live and work here; and the quality of life on offer: the shops and restaurants, theatres, museums and

international sporting venues, the parks and architecture, the schools and infrastructure. The concentration of financial, legal and other key services and international institutions in one place, together with the capital's great cultural assets form a unique and rich offer to investors, entrepreneurs, writers, artists, academics and students.

4.16 London has a reputation for offering the best in fashion, luxury goods and services with internationally lauded hotels and restaurants. London has been the playground for the wealthy for centuries both as a showroom for the best British brands like Burberry and Rolls Royce but also as the world's auction house for everything from Old Masters to fine wines. London, and the wider UK, benefit from brand Britain, from the legendary "cool" of '60s Carnaby Street to the 21st century ubiquity of Cara Delevigne's eyebrows. London appeals to the rich and the fabulous, to the young and the fashion forward, to the mature and nostalgic. The London Underground sign is every bit as iconic as McDonalds golden arches or Apple's apple.

Values

4.17 Much of London's global success can be traced to the UK's values. The freedoms and security we take for granted are hugely attractive to people living in less open and tolerant places. Other countries look to the UK for advice and support on how to strengthen their civic institutions and build a safer, more prosperous future. The Foreign Office's work promoting Human Rights is also incredibly important to the UK's reputation – speaking out against repression, intolerance and criminality builds trust with the isolated, oppressed victims of abuse and the "silent majority" that despise injustice and want only peace and a better future for their children. Government sponsored campaigns like the work on violence against women and girls are building trust for the UK and enhancing our reputation as a just, caring and reliable ally. The UK has far more internationally focussed NGOs than other countries in Europe. The advocacy work of Amnesty International, the life-saving development work of Oxfam and Save the Children and the numerous other NGOs that strive to build a better world give the UK a massive boost in credibility and trust. Sharing our way of life, showing solidarity with the citizens of the world, caring enough to want to help and knowing to ask how we can help, are all reasons the UK is taken seriously, respected and listened to internationally.

4.18 The British Council manages the Justice for All programme in Nigeria that aims to build the capacity, accountability and responsiveness of key policing, justice and anti-corruption institutions to improve access to security and justice for all Nigerians. In Burma, we offer uncensored access to the internet, with a quarter of a million users coming to our libraries each year. People can learn English and experience UK and international culture and freedom of expression in a safe, open environment. We have initiated a programme to train 10,000 English teachers a year in partnership with Burma's Ministry of Education – this will improve the teaching of English for two million young Burmese each year.

5 Learning from others

5.1 Our report, *Influence and Attraction: Culture and the race for soft power in the 21st century*, explores global approaches to soft power in depth. Many countries are recognising the importance of soft power and are developing their offer. There are long established players like the French and Germans. Much is made of China's enormous investment in international English language broadcasting and its rapidly expanding network of Confucius Institutes. There are newer entrants into the soft power "market": Thailand, South Korea, Brazil, Turkey, Iraq, the Gulf States and many others who are developing soft power strategies and investing to grow their international reputation and clout. For most, investment in soft power is viewed as a national PR operation, a marketing campaign to shift perceptions of a country, attract potential investors, students and tourists, and/or counter the "negative propaganda" of rival states. It is about winning the "battle for hearts and minds" and the "Global Race". This is evident in the approach of the Chinese whose massive investment in international English language TV and its global network of Confucius Institutes is designed to deliver former President Hu Jintao's aspiration to make "the voice of China better heard in international affairs".

Soft power strategies

5.2 Countries around the world are adopting strategies for their soft power, investing in infrastructure like cultural institutes and programmes like scholarship schemes and marketing campaigns. There are different models for deploying a nation's soft power. Western countries' cultural institutes tend to take one of two broad approaches - an arm's length governance structure that is aligned with their government's broad strategic priorities but are empowered to act autonomously, or else as a unit embedded in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and functioning very much as an arm of government. Our research suggests the former approach is more successful at generating trust as people tend to be less trusting of government "propaganda".

5.3 The lesson for the UK is that we cannot rest on our laurels, other countries are looking at what the UK has done to secure its top spot in the soft power league table and are developing their own offer. The scale of China's ambitions is reflected in the level of investment in its network of Confucius Institutes, spending rose from ¥350 million in 2006 to ¥1.23 billion in 2009 and a network of 122 classrooms and institutes in 49 countries in 2006 to a network of 826 in 104 countries in 2011. Vast resources are also being invested in English language broadcasting by China.

5.4 The UK will need to continue to innovate, to support its soft power assets. In age of limited public resources, the UK cannot simply compete £ for ¥ with China and other competitors. We will need to think strategically about how we invest, supporting organisations like our universities and museums to be more entrepreneurial and to be ambitious internationally. Knowing when to get out of the way and avoiding undermining

the UK's soft power is a key challenge for Government. Governments are not as effective at building trust as people, striking the right balance between central control and an ineffective, uncoordinated approach to soft power is critical. The UK has been getting the mix broadly right but there are certainly lessons to be learned from our soft power competitors.

Les Saisons Culturelles

5.5 The long success of the French Cultural Festivals, Seasons and Years over the last quarter century, developed in collaboration between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture and the Institute Français, is one the UK has adopted to great effect recently. The approach targets the places that are strategically important to the UK's prosperity and deploys the soft power assets that will hold the strongest appeal to that place to build bridges, challenge preconceptions and develop further opportunities for the UK. The role of Government is significant, the announcement of the Season brings political leaders together, opening channels for diplomacy and engagement, and over the course of the Season politicians, businesses and other partners have countless opportunities to engage – parallel events are almost inevitably scheduled to discuss education, the creative industries, for networking and to explore commercial opportunities.

5.6 In 2012 we organised UKNow which saw events take place in 29 cities across China, including Hong Kong and Macao, and featured 780 UK artists performing across 170 venues. More than four million people attended events and millions more participated through the website and social media channels. Last year we launched Transform, a four-year programme of cultural exchange and collaboration between the UK and Brazil. The UK is viewed by Brazilian stakeholders and cultural organisations as a leader in terms of arts and cultural management, and policy development and implementation - particularly in articulating and linking cultural policy to economic policy. Transform is using our established reputation to develop and deepening links between Brazil and the UK to build trust and generate further opportunities for the UK. In 2014 we are looking forward to the UK-Russia Year of Culture and to ZA/Connect, our UK-South Africa Season. The great strength of the Season approach is in the magnifying effect of a series of events, a single exhibition or performance may attract rave reviews but the impact on the UK's standing and reputation will be limited as the focus will be on the event itself. A co-ordinated programme of cultural events can powerfully demonstrate the attractions of the UK. They work so well as they are built around reciprocal arrangements. For example, the British Council's programme for the 2014 UK-Russia Year of Culture will bring the best of Russian arts and culture to audiences across the UK as well as taking the best of British creativity to audiences in Moscow, St Petersburg and other major Russian cities.

Scholarships

5.7 Scholarship programmes like Chevening bring the brightest and best international students to the UK, creating a pool of alumni who should look positively to the UK after spending a long period in the country submerged in the culture and surrounded by its people. It is a model replicated around the world. The Chinese are investing heavily in expanding provision – there are an unprecedented 12,000 African students currently studying in China a figure that dwarfs that of all the other programmes open to young Africans. It has the potential to have a very significant impact on China’s future influence across the continent. By way of illustration of the potential of this investment by China, the Heads of State of Denmark, Portugal, Iceland, Norway and Turkey have all studied in the UK; a 2011 report by the Home Affairs Select Committee identified 27 such Heads of State. The UK does exceptionally well in attracting young people to study in the UK but the numbers of scholarships on offer are limited which could leave the UK lagging far behind China in terms of influence in Africa as the African economy picks up pace. There may be a role for Government to provide additional, targeted scholarships for the leaders of the tomorrow. At present we rely on attracting young people with the means to fund their own studies to choose the UK but those unable to afford the fees and living expenses of studying here will turn to China and other providers to get the education they want at a price they can afford enabling China to build trust and develop the contacts that will give them influence in the future. We will need to be much more proactive if we want to build up trust and influence and secure our market position in the “African lion” economies of the 21st century.

5.8 Engaging in schemes like Brazilian President Dilma’s Science Without Borders programme and supporting UK higher education institutions to attract more of the brightest and best international students or to open up new campuses in overseas markets are models for what might be done in Africa and other places of strategic importance to the UK’s future security and prosperity. With the UK’s traditional strengths in higher education, links through the Commonwealth and the growing recognition of the commercial advantages of the English language in Francophone Africa and elsewhere, the UK has a strong appeal to young people but Government intervention is needed to ensure opportunities are made available to the people the UK most needs to engage with to meet its strategic needs, rather than just the ones wealthy enough to self-finance their studies.

Broadcasting

5.9 In the BBC World Service the UK has a unique asset. The trust it has built around the world for the UK since its foundation has been huge. For many people it has been their only link to the wider world. For many years it was unrivalled in its reach and impact. Technology and the ambitions of other states has seen an explosion in competitors. The rise and rise of Al-Jazeera and the massive investment in China Central Television have been well documented but the internet and mobile services are “voices” speaking to the world, informing and colouring opinion, influencing and shaping reputation and trust. This new

crowded market is one the UK is well placed to compete and thrive in. The BBC has been at the forefront of innovation in online and broadcast news and will continue to do so while the UK's globally recognised creativity and expertise in digital services will continue to combine to produce the kind of vibrant content for radio, television and the internet that people want to see and hear. Services like the British Council's award winning Selector which shares the best of new British music with audiences all over the world attracts international audiences as well as awards. More subtly, the independence of the BBC will see it continue to be recognised and trusted as an unbiased reporter. Al-Jazeera's success comes in no small part from its freedom to report while CCTV's influence overseas will continue to be undermined as long as the suspicion that it is the voice of the Chinese authorities persists in the minds of audiences. The UK will though need to avoid being too heavily reliant on the current international supremacy of English as other languages grow in importance, our competitors in Europe and the Far East are investing in Arab language TV channels for example.

Film, video games & superbrands

5.10 The free-market Americans have in Hollywood the true global Behemoth of soft power. The film industry is the reason the USA is a consistent leader in soft power and at apparently little cost to the American people. From Tehran to Taipei the blockbuster and A-list star exerts an attraction with very few rivals. Hollywood is a critical element in the USA's soft power, James Bond and Harry Potter may be quintessentially British icons but they sit alongside Superman, G I Joe, the Terminator, Indiana Jones, Captain James T Kirk, Jason Bourne, Mickey Mouse, and Han Solo. The attractive power of these icons is huge. But it is a myth that the movie industry is free soft power for the USA. Hollywood's great commercial success depends on the tax credits, movie production incentives, cash rebates, grants, tax exemptions and fee waivers and other kickbacks offered by US state legislatures, and international players – including Canada, the UK, New Zealand, Hungary and the Czech Republic, that can offset 25-30% or more of the production expenditure. It is more heavily subsidised than the UK's national arts institutions.

5.11 Alongside the UK and the USA, Japan has produced some of the greatest pop culture icons of recent years. Video games and anime icons like Mario, Zelda, Sonic the Hedgehog, and the world's second most famous mouse, Pikachu, are all significant contributors to Japan's soft power. The Pokémon phenomenon was a master class in creativity, branding and marketing by Nintendo, one of the few global rivals to Disney, Marvel and George Lucas in the creation of enduring, pop culture icons. Gaming, gadgets and Tokyo's soaring architecture and neon lights project an image of an ultra-modern, high tech, innovative, creative, fun and exciting nation.

5.12 But icons are not the preserve of movies, games and comic books, the US's instantly recognisable super brands are also iconic – McDonalds, Coke, Pepsi, Nike – and a crucial element in its global attractiveness. The UK has its share of super brands and iconic figures

but there has been a tendency for the UK to export its creativity rather than harness it – British ingenuity can be found at the heart of the success of Apple, Marvel and all the other soft power pop culture powerhouses. Fostering that talent at home and building the businesses that can compete on equal terms with Square Enix, HBO and Sony should be a goal of a government looking to rebalance the UK economy.

Immigration

5.13 The UK Government's approach to immigration has significant implications for the UK's attractiveness. What is often regarded as a domestic issue is followed closely in Kolkata, São Paulo and many other cities round the world. UK politicians and the Home Office have at times displayed a naivety over the UK's national interests in building trust in key markets through its handling both of policy but more particularly the messaging around policy changes. Whatever the intention, the message being received overseas is that the UK is closed for business. With the very significant inward investment made into the UK economy by the Chinese, the Indians and the Gulf States, and the high volumes of students choosing the UK for study for 1-3 years before returning home, much greater effort should be made to ensure the efforts of the Foreign Office, BIS and the Prime Minister himself are not undermined by poor communications. Our international competitors are looking to encourage and make it easier for brilliant researchers, wealthy tourists and potential investors to visit and enrich their countries at the very time we are perceived as raising the drawbridge to deter people from coming to the UK.

6 Recommendations

6.1 We are now entering an entirely new world where influence is increasingly diffuse, and the prevalence and speed of connections created by new technology are fundamentally changing the way in which people relate to each other. Relationships between countries are changing fast. Soft power has always been important, but in this new environment it is now indispensable for countries that want to prosper and remain secure.

6.2 This fundamental change in the international landscape is increasingly placing individuals, civil society organisations and businesses as key actors in international relations. The challenge for governments is how to create the conditions whereby the people of their countries can effectively participate in this globalised international community, maximising benefits in trade, investment, security, knowledge and mutual learning and connections.

6.3 To date, the process of globalisation and growth of hyper-connectivity has been a very positive development for the UK. We have a long proud history as an outward facing nation, and the rise of the English language as the de-facto language of global business and higher education has given the UK a huge competitive advantage. The UK population is widely regarded as diverse, tolerant and accepting of difference – vital attributes in a globally connected world.

6.4 However, the UK cannot rest on its laurels as other countries are developing soft power strategies and investing heavily to compete with the established soft power superpowers. They are assimilating the lessons of the UK's success and are also innovating – for example Thailand's ambition to become the 'kitchen of the world' or Brazil's Science Without Borders programme. Monocle's reigning soft power champion is vulnerable in a number of key areas and will need to take action to remain competitive.

The relatively weak level of international skills in the UK population

6.5 As country we are far too dependent on the dominance of the English language. English has been hugely advantageous to the UK and 1 in 4 people globally speak the language but that leaves 3 in 4 who do not. Many of those are in key growth markets with large populations like Brazil, Indonesia, China, countries whose languages are going to be increasingly important as their economic power continues to grow. With Asian economies growing fast, our competitors in Western Europe and around the world are learning Mandarin and other languages in increasing numbers while the UK continues to lag behind.

6.6 According to the Education and Employers Task Force, poor language competency is resulting in a direct loss of at least £7.3 billion per annum to the UK economy – that's 0.5% of GDP. As international trade grows, this is only likely to increase. In addition, if UK citizens cannot speak other languages they will miss out on opportunities for international learning and knowledge exchange, and risk being seen as internally focused and disinterested in other countries – the opposite of what makes for successful influence in a global age.

6.7 In a world where individuals connect more and more across international boundaries, and knowledge and networks are increasingly the key sources of attraction and influence, promoting the value of modern languages to young people is going to be critical. Yet the current trend is in exactly the opposite direction.

6.8 A 2012 European Commission study found that only 9% of English pupils surveyed at age 15 were competent in their first foreign language beyond a basic level, compared to 42% of their peers across the EU.

6.9 Language learning in UK schools has seen a sharp decline from 78% of GCSE students in 2001 to 40% in 2011 (Language Trends Survey) and although the results this year may finally mark the turning point in this trend, the 2013 A-level results continue to be a source of serious concern with a 10% fall in the number of students taking French in 2012 and falls in Mandarin, Arabic, German and Italian. This decline is also apparent in higher education. Despite a 3.5% increase in the number of students applying to university in 2013, applications to study modern languages fell by 6.7% and many institutions are looking to downsize or close their language departments.

6.10 In 2013, our Culture at Work research showed that businesses in 9 key countries (including India, China, Brazil and South Africa and the UK), place a high value on

intercultural and language skills for bringing in new clients, building trust and protecting reputation. Our research has also revealed the significant disparity between the very high value placed by UK employers on modern languages and international skills, and the low value placed on these skills by UK young people.

6.11 While the government's recent reforms to the school curriculum that have placed a greater emphasis on language learning are to be welcomed, we believe that much more needs to be done in this area to deliver the kind of step change that the UK requires.

6.12 Possible options for increasing take up might include:

- Compulsory language learning, though this would not necessarily alter young people's attitudes to language learning.
- A vigorous campaign to inform parents and young people of the career benefits of language learning.
- Curriculum reform to make languages a more accessible and attractive subject to young people.

The low number of UK young people who study overseas

6.13 Equally important to language learning is the cultural understanding and familiarity that a period of studying or living overseas brings. The UK is a global leader in the international student recruitment market, attracting young people from around the world. However, it performs very weakly in terms of the outward mobility of students with only around 22,000 UK students studying overseas, while the UK attracts over 400,000 students to study in UK higher education Institutions each year, as well as several hundred thousand more in pre-HE education, vocational training, Further Education or English language training.

6.14 The critical importance of international skills and experience to the UK economy has been highlighted by the British Chambers of Commerce in a survey of over 8,000 businesses. The findings suggested that "providing firms with more training in foreign languages, and increasing their exposure to international companies would encourage more business owners to export". We believe that ensuring that a higher proportion of the future workforce has studied and experienced life abroad would make a significant impact in this area.

6.15 As well as the clear gain for businesses through a better skilled workforce, there is significant evidence that people forming connections and friendships with people from the UK – including with UK students studying overseas - has wider soft power benefits. This is demonstrated, for example in higher levels of trust towards the people and government of the UK and an increased propensity to want to do invest, visit or study in the UK. Our brilliant young people are among the best ambassadors the UK has.

6.16 The British Council has recently launched a major new programme - Generation UK - which aims to enable 15,000 young people to undertake a fully funded study or work placement in China by 2016. Later this year we plan to extend this scheme to also offer opportunities in India. We would very much like to further extend this scheme, both in terms of numbers and countries covered in the future, and are working with private sector partners to secure funding.

6.17 Again a key challenge is getting young people to recognise the benefits of living, working or studying abroad. More work needs to be undertaken to understand the barriers to young people's outward mobility. Poor language skills and a fear of the unknown are likely possible factors but it may also partly be a result of the UK's own attractions – if you want to work and live in the greatest city in the world why would you choose anywhere other than London to study for your MA?

6.18 Understanding the barriers and identifying the policy responses to address the barriers are a key challenge. The UK government, the devolved governments, the education sector, the British Council and major UK businesses all have a role to play in increasing outward mobility for UK students and young people. There are plentiful opportunities for UK people to live, work and study abroad but we need to inform young people about the benefits of doing so.

6.19 Possible options include:

- Developing a strategy to promote the very significant economic benefits of international skills and language learning are likely to be an important part of any co-ordinated activity to increase take up.
- A brokerage service to match graduates and current students with UK businesses who would like to develop their export potential to develop funding and training opportunities for young people to acquire the international skills their sponsoring partner needs.
- Given the high levels of youth unemployment in the UK the value for money possibilities for a Government sponsored scheme to enable suitably qualified young people to undertake voluntary international study or work placements that will then enhance their employability and up skill the workforce are worth exploring.

Scholarships

6.20 Providing future leaders the opportunity to study in the UK has proven immensely valuable for building trust. Chevening and Fulbright alumni have retained strong links with the UK and are assets for our international influence and reputation. Scholarships are a unique way of attracting the brightest and best to the UK and to build lasting relationships. The UK is already a leading destination for international students yet more could be done to target young people who cannot afford to fund their own studies but who are likely to rise to positions of importance and influence in future. Scholarships offered on merit to

outstanding young academics in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa would enable the UK to engage the young people who will hold key roles in strategically important countries in future.

6.21 Possible options:

- Expand existing scholarship programmes like Chevening by increasing the number of funded places available.
- Develop international public-private partnership programmes bringing together UK firms that are looking to develop a presence overseas using a model similar to the British Council's partnership with Tullow Oil. The Tullow Group Sponsorship scheme aims to build capacity in areas where Tullow's host countries experience significant skills gaps, especially, but not exclusively, around their oil and gas industries.
- Invest in the interchange of students and academics between UK and partner countries through programmes like UKIERI that has already created 600 partnerships between UK and Indian education institutions.

Visa policy

6.22 Following the introduction of new visa requirements in 2011 there has been a drop of almost 25% in the number of students coming to the UK from India and a 13% drop from Pakistan. The biggest impacts have been in Further Education and the English Language Teaching Sector. The ONS quarterly report for April 2013 showed a 46% fall in applications from international students to further education colleges and English language schools.

6.23 While some of the fall in applications has been offset by growth in the number of students coming to the UK from China, the UK's overall growth in international student numbers of 4,570 in 2011-12 is tiny compared to recent US figures of a growth of 41,000 students over the same period.

6.24 Where our competitors are continuing to show strong growth in the numbers of international student applications, the UK's market share is slowing and the current visa arrangements are a critical factor in the decline in growth. There are real risks to the UK's research base as pioneering programmes in engineering and life sciences depend upon international students and researchers. In the longer term a fall in international student numbers could have significant costs to the UK's economy. About 90% of full time postgraduate taught students in biotech and some engineering programmes are international – long term reduction in the number of these students would threaten the UK's research base. Put crudely, the income from international students taking Masters courses is underpinning the advanced research programmes the UK depends upon to be internationally competitive.

6.25 The British Council fully supports the Government's intention to attract genuine students to the UK and we have been working very hard with the UK Government to get the right messages out to key countries, especially India. However, given the long term

economic, soft power and other benefits from international student recruitment we believe that there should be a much greater awareness of the impact of domestic policy issues such as immigration policy and their impact on soft power.

6.26 It is a fact that the vast majority of students return home at the end of their course or else after gaining an extra 6 – 18 months of professional experience. They are not migrants, they are temporary visitors - paying guests – they should be excluded from the net-migration figures.

6.27 Alongside student visas, delivering a flexible, affordable, fast and effective service for visitor visas for international artists, sportsmen and –women and politicians and other leaders is key to the UK's soft power. Needless bureaucracy and red tape should not be allowed to jeopardise important intercultural engagement.

6.28 The two aspects of the visa regulations that have the potential to do the most damage to the UK economy and cost the most UK jobs are the restrictions to 'pathway' visas and the post-study work visas. We would support a review of these policies which we believe have a detrimental impact on the UK's soft power.

6.29 Possible options:

- Government should consider how to better co-ordinate work across departments to ensure a joined up approach that takes account of the international implications to the UK's influence and reputation of policies like immigration.
- Government should consider separating international students from the migrant statistics
- Government should assess the impact of visa reforms on the UK's economy and international influence and reputation and consider reviewing policy accordingly.

Maintaining a vibrant 'mixed economy' soft power model

6.30 At a time of financial austerity there is a real risk that government departments and wider public and third sector bodies will deprioritise international work to focus on their 'core' domestic roles. Whilst such programmes are relatively easy to cut, this could have long term soft power implications for the UK.

6.31 Given the growing importance of soft power, we believe Government should consider introducing mechanisms to incentivise the protection of spending on international activity by departments. In addition, to encourage more international outreach, we would suggest consideration is given to how government could incentivise public bodies linked to the arts, education and culture to increase the proportion of their work undertaken internationally and examine the potential to use tax incentives to encourage businesses to support or sponsor international cultural programmes which support UK soft power, like student exchange programmes and support international events like Expos and tours by UK arts companies.

6.32 Many of the UK's soft power assets are extremely valuable contributors to the UK economy and should be nurtured and supported by Government for that alone. While our universities and national cultural institutions – including the British Council – are demonstrating increasing entrepreneurialism in developing and growing their own income, public funding remains crucial to the fostering of young talent, the pursuit of excellence and the continual renewal of the UK's creative base. Government should be wary of cutting the relative modest funding for the arts and HE sectors as the limited short term impact on the Exchequer could have very serious implications for the economy in the long term if it damages the UK's research base or starves the creative industries of the talent necessary to drive innovation or dims the light of the country's cultural fires that does so much to lure tourists, students and investors to the UK. Further research on the value of the arts and education to the UK's soft power could be illuminating, potentially adding a significant premium to the existing economic case for investment.

6.33 Apart from the domestic economic arguments for public subsidy for arts and education, in terms of soft power, public money is also the lever by which Government can influence and co-ordinate the international activities of a vibrant, diverse creative economy to maximise impact for the UK's influence and attraction. Seasons need to be co-ordinated and the FCO and organisations like the British Council need to have the resources to administer and organise complex programmes and be able to support other participants' involvement.

6.34 Public money is needed to ensure the UK's soft power is deployed where it needs to be rather than just where it is profitable to be. It is essential to the British Council's work and presence in strategically important but fragile states where it would be impossible to generate an income to support our activities. If the UK wants to continue to operate across the whole spectrum of international relations on a global scale it will need to continue to invest public money on its soft power assets as well as on military hardware and development assistance.

6.35 Possible options:

- Further research on the effectiveness of different international strengths in soft power would enable the UK to learn from the experiences of others and take action to mitigate the risks of losing influence and reputation.
- Government should explore the potential of tax breaks and other incentives to encourage private sector support for international soft power programmes like scholarship schemes and international arts showcases and festivals that support the UK's strategic objectives.
- Government could consider funding models to support the expansion in the international activities of our great cultural institutions, potentially involving private as well as public money. For example: National Lottery money might be used to support international partnerships to bring new work to UK audiences and share the best of the UK's cultural assets overseas; Government could set up a challenge fund administered by a body like the Arts Council or the British Council to encourage organisations to develop more ambitious international touring programmes; and/or

Government could bring forward targeted support to enable more institutions to take part in Cultural Seasons in strategically important countries.

- Government and agencies need to consider the potential opportunities and challenges of the explosive growth in social media and other people-to-people contacts in terms of the UK's soft power to maximise the benefits in terms of reach and impact.

7 Appendix – the British Council

About the British Council

7.1 The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We are on the ground in over 100 countries. We connect the UK with people around the world, sharing the UK's most attractive assets: the English language, the arts, education and our ways of living and organising society. We have over 75 years' experience as the UK's leading soft power agency.

7.2 We stand beside and complement the work of the Diplomatic Service, HM Armed Forces, DfID, UKTI and the BBC World Service, in representing the UK to the wider world. We are closely aligned with the FCO through our NDPB status and Board-level representation but, crucially, are operationally independent. Our key strength is that we work in the spirit of reciprocity – we not only take the UK to the world but we also help bring the world to the UK. We share rather than broadcast and discuss rather than lecture. In a very human way, we build trust between the people of the UK and the peoples of other nations.

7.3 We work with three main groups of people - young people in education, or starting out on their careers, the leaders of the next generation; those who are practitioners in their field, such as teachers, academics, artists and community leaders; and a smaller number of people who are leaders in their societies: in politics, business, education or the arts.

7.4 We act on behalf of the whole of the UK and have offices in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, London and Manchester. We work closely with the devolved administrations as well as with the UK Government. We share the great cultural assets of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales with the rest of the world. We support the UK's higher education institutions to attract international students, promoting our universities globally. We work closely with partners like the Premier League, Arts Council Northern Ireland, the National Museums of Scotland and National Theatre Wales on projects in the UK and overseas, like Premier Skills, Derry-Londonderry 2013, the Edinburgh Festivals and the Dylan Thomas 100 Festival.

7.5 We work with the UK Government and international partners to deliver life-changing projects with truly global reach. With funding from DfID we are delivering training for 1650 teacher training college tutors in Tanzania to improve the training of 70,000 student primary and secondary school teachers. Through Badiliko, a programme run in partnership with Microsoft, we are establishing 90 solar-powered digital classrooms in six countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, training 3,000 teachers to use IT equipment and helping 100,000 students gain new employment skills. Our UK Now Festival in China brought 780 UK artists to 170 venues across 29 cities to reach more than four million attendees and was made

possible through support from Government and private sector sponsors like Jaguar and Diageo.

7.6 Although the British Council has retained the same mission for which it was founded in 1934, it has transformed its delivery model to become an exemplar of the entrepreneurial public service approach that mixes public funding with self-generated income to deliver maximum impact at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers. In the current financial year the Foreign Office grant to the British Council is £162m out of total projected income of £833m. Government grant now represents less than 20% of the British Council's turnover; entrepreneurship delivers the rest through 'paid for' services, partnerships and work under contract. The grant-in-aid element of our funding model nevertheless remains vital, it underpins our presence and activity in countries that are strategically important to the UK's national interests but where there are very limited opportunities to generate income, for example in fragile and post-conflict states. It also supports the core infrastructure of our global network and enables the organisation to develop world-class content for our projects in English, education and the arts worldwide.

7.7 Our performance last year in figures:

- We reached over 553 million people worldwide;
- We worked with 10.8 million people face-to-face;
- 12.7 million people attended our exhibitions, fairs and festivals;
- In English we worked with 1.7 million policy makers, Government ministers, teachers and learners, 2.37 million exams candidates, 55.9 million website users and 143.8 million viewers, listeners and readers;
- In the arts we worked with 532,000 artists, art lovers, cultural leaders and ministers, 9.5 million exhibition, festival, event and performance attendees and 142.3 million viewers, listeners and readers; and
- In education and society we worked with 2.9 million education and citizenship exhibition and fair attendees, 5.9 million teachers, academics, education and youth sector leaders and young people and 14.7 million website users

How the British Council evaluates impact

7.8 The British Council's evaluation framework is grounded in a theory of change. Within the context of our overall strategy and purpose it sets out logically how our work in Arts, English, and Education and Society achieves positive change for our UK and overseas stakeholders. Such an approach is widely used by charities, social enterprises, government departments such as DFID and the private sector.

7.9 To measure the impact of our work we use a range of tools:

- We commission independent research. In the last year this has included the value of cultural relations activities to the UK business community: *Culture Means Business* and the impact of cultural relations in building trust for the UK: *Trust Pays*. The Trust research demonstrated that those people who had engaged in cultural activity with the UK had a higher level of trust in the people and government of the UK than those who had not. It also found that those who had engaged in cultural activity run by the British Council had a higher level of trust than those who had participated in activities provided by any other organisation.
- We conduct an annual impact survey of our global stakeholders to assess how our work contributes to professional development, institutional development, and to awareness of and sustainable links with the UK. Whilst these are not exact measures of soft power, they do indicate the extent to which people value the experience of participating in our programmes. This clearly is an important factor in determining whether they are likely to have an enhanced view of the UK after participating in these activities. In the last year we surveyed and received data from 5000 people who have participated in our programmes within the last 6 – 24 months. The results have confirmed that as a result of our work almost 80% of our overseas participants in our programmes have strengthened or created new links with the UK and 85% have increased their awareness of the UK contribution to their sector.
- We commission independent evaluation reports for our main programmes and have a system of internal reporting to understand how effectively our portfolio is delivering to its planned outcomes and delivering impact.
- We are subject to the scrutiny of government and parliament. In June, the Independent Commission on Aid Impact reported, *“The British Council’s response to the Arab Spring has been considered, strategic and a good complement to the FCO’s. It has a strong delivery model based on good local partnerships and beneficiary engagement and has proved effective at its core goal of skills development and individual empowerment, with some wider impact through social mobilisation.”*