



HOUSE OF LORDS

# Library Note

## **Debate on 28 April: Co-ordination between Government Departments on the use of Soft Power**

This Library Note provides background reading for the debate to be held on 28 April 2011:

### **“To call attention to the level of co-ordination between government departments on the use of soft power in the interests of the United Kingdom”**

This Note provides background reading for Baroness Taylor of Bolton’s debate on the level of co-ordination between government departments on the use of soft power. The Note defines soft power, and examines what the current Government has said about the role of soft power in its foreign policy. It also considers how the UK compares to other countries in terms of soft power. The second half of the Note deals with the co-ordination of soft power across Government and examines the effects of specific policies on soft power, including the impact of the Spending Review on overseas aid, the British Council and the World Service.

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this Library Note is to provide background reading for Baroness Taylor of Bolton's debate on the level of co-ordination between government departments on the use of soft power in the interests of the United Kingdom, to be held on 28 April 2011. The Note begins by defining soft power, and by examining what the current Government has said about the role that soft power will play in its foreign policy. It also considers how the UK compares to other countries in terms of soft power. The second half of the Note deals with the co-ordination of soft power across Government. It outlines the difficulties that Governments face in attempting to harness soft power as a policy tool, and examines the role of soft power in the National Security Strategy, the Strategic Defence and Security Review and departmental business plans. It then moves on to examining the effects of specific policies on soft power, including the impact of the Spending Review on overseas aid, the British Council and the World Service; changes to the student visa regime; and plans for the 2012 Olympics.

## 2. What is Soft Power?

The term 'soft power' was coined by the American academic Joseph Nye in the 1990s. Nye argued that in the post-Cold War world, increasing economic interdependence, the rise of non-state actors, growing nationalism in weak states, the spread of technology and the increasingly transnational nature of political issues made it costlier and less effective for great powers to use traditional power resources, such as military might, to achieve their purposes. He suggested that in this changing international political context, states could exercise power in a non-traditional way:

When one country gets other countries to *want* what it wants, [it] might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of *ordering* others to do what it wants.

... Soft co-optive power is just as important as hard command power. If a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow. If it can establish international norms consistent with its society, it is less likely to have to change. If it can support institutions that make other states wish to channel or limit their activities in ways the dominant state prefers, it may be spared the costly exercise of hard or coercive power.<sup>1</sup>

Nye later summed up soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments".<sup>2</sup> He identified a country's soft power as originating from three sources: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)".<sup>3</sup> While the term is relatively new, it has been argued that soft power itself is not. For example, the historian Niall Ferguson claims that "In some ways, the soft power that Britain could exert in the 1930s was greater than the soft power of the United States today".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph S Nye Jr, '[Soft Power](#)', *Foreign Policy*, 80 (Autumn 1990), pp 166–7.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph S Nye Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs (2004), p ix.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph S Nye Jr, '[Think Again: Soft Power](#)', *Foreign Policy* (February 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Colossus* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p 20.

Nye does not argue that soft power has, or should, replace other ways in which a country might exercise power or seek to assert its influence. In his view, it is a mistake to rely on hard or soft power alone; instead he advocates that states make best use of their assets by combining hard and soft power resources, thereby exercising 'smart power'.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Soft Power as Policy

The concept of soft power has gained currency since Nye first articulated it twenty years ago. Although it first emerged as a term used by academics, Governments have come consciously to incorporate it in their foreign policy thinking. For example, in 2007, the then Prime Minister Tony Blair identified the combination of hard and soft power as a defining feature of his Government's foreign policy over the previous decade.<sup>6</sup> Soft power is also an important element of the current Government's foreign policy. In summer and autumn 2010, the Foreign Secretary William Hague made a series of four keynote speeches in which he set out the principles and priorities that would underpin the Coalition's foreign policy. In his third speech, he addressed the subject of Britain's values in a networked world, arguing that "our international influence will bleed away unless we maintain our international and cultural influence as a vital component of our weight in the world".<sup>7</sup> He explained that he saw British values as a tool of international influence, in other words—although he did not specifically use the term—as a source of soft power:

[Our values] are a vital component of our international influence. In today's world countries cannot rely on military and economic might to determine their standing in the world. The UK's standing also rests on the appeal of our culture, perceptions of the openness of our society and of our conduct towards other countries, particularly in a world where others are able to make instantaneous judgements about us. Our standing is directly linked to the belief of others that we will do what we say and that we will not apply double standards. We cannot seek to build up our international influence while neglecting this aspect of our weight in the world.

Providing more detail on how the UK could promote its values, Mr Hague said:

The British Council and BBC World Service play an invaluable role promoting British values overseas, reaching millions of people in the process. Their work helps maintain our country's reputation for openness, transparency and liberty and as a great place to study and do business... It follows naturally from our desire to have a distinctive British foreign policy that builds up our influence in the world and supports our values that we should want to preserve the reach of the British Council and the BBC World Service as much as possible, as well as our overseas network of Embassies.

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph S Nye Jr, '[Think Again: Soft Power](#)', *Foreign Policy* (February 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Tony Blair, [speech to the Royal United Services Institute](#) (11 January 2007).

<sup>7</sup> William Hague, speech on '[Britain's values in a networked world](#)', Lincoln's Inn (15 September 2010).

The first keynote speech also touched upon soft power. Mr Hague spoke of the UK's rich endowment with "the attributes for success", which could also be read as a list of soft power attributes:

We are a member of one of the world's longstanding global networks—the Commonwealth—which spans continents and world religions, contains six of the fastest growing economies and is underpinned by an agreed framework of common values... We are also the world's sixth largest trading nation even though we comprise just 1 per cent of the world's population; second only to the USA in the amount of money we invest abroad and always outward looking and intrepid in nature. One in ten British citizens now lives permanently overseas. We have unrivalled human links with some of the fastest growing countries of the world, whether it is the millions of our own citizens who boast Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage, our close links with Africa, or the 85,000 Chinese students currently being educated in Britain or at UK campuses in China. This is giving rise to a new generation with contact with the UK, with its language, culture and norms, and growing networks that we should cherish and build on. The English language gives us the ability to share ideas with millions—perhaps billions—of people in the biggest emerging economies and—if we so choose—to build networks across the world. It is staggering that in India 250 million school and university-aged students—four times the entire population of the United Kingdom—are now learning English. This underlines the essential importance of the work of the British Council and the BBC World Service, which give Britain an unrivalled platform for the projection of the appeal of our culture and the sharing of our values.<sup>8</sup>

More recently, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, has spoken specifically of the role that soft power can play in the UK's policy towards the pro-democracy uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa:

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con): On the broader point about the changes that we are seeing in the Middle East, does the Prime Minister agree that it is in Britain's national interest to pursue a soft power policy, along the lines that he has described, to promote democracy and support opposition movements where people are moving towards a desire for greater democracy in these countries?

The Prime Minister: I very much agree with that. In terms of the soft power to which my hon. Friend refers, this country has incredible assets, be it the British Council, the BBC or political relations. All those things should be brought to bear and we should recognise, as I said in my statement, that building democracy is painstaking and patient work. Alongside hard power, those soft power assets can sometimes achieve the greatest success.<sup>9</sup>

During the Commons debate on the UN Security Council resolution establishing a no-fly zone in Libya, Mr Cameron said:

There is no doubt in my mind that in this situation soft power has had an enormous effect on giving people a sense that a better future is available to them and that they do not have to put up with the regimes that they have had to put up with for so long. Despite the fact that there may be difficult days ahead, as we

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<sup>8</sup> William Hague, speech on '[Britain's foreign policy in a networked world](#)', Foreign and Commonwealth Office (1 July 2010).

<sup>9</sup> HC *Hansard*, 28 February 2011, col 41.

grapple with implementing this UN Security Council resolution, we should lift our heads up and believe that there is a more hopeful future for this region and, therefore, for our world.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. Measuring the UK's Soft Power

Research has been undertaken to attempt to measure the UK's soft power. In 2009, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Public Diplomacy Group reviewed all available research into the UK's reputation amongst international audiences:

We concluded that the UK's overall reputation worldwide was strong—ranking 4th out of 50 countries in the 2010 Anholt Nation Brand Index. The UK was seen as fair, innovative, diverse, confident and stylish. However, negative images still persisted which painted Britain as arrogant, stuffy, old-fashioned and cold.<sup>11</sup>

In December 2010, the Institute for Government (IFG) and *Monocle* magazine developed a soft power index, which used a mixture of objective and subjective indicators to measure 26 countries' soft power across five categories (business/innovation, culture, Government, diplomacy and education). Using this framework, the IFG ranked the UK and France jointly as the two countries with the greatest soft power, with the USA coming a close third.<sup>12</sup> The box on the right gives a snapshot of the UK's performance against some of the 29 individual indicators that make up the IFG-*Monocle* index.

The IFG report argued that the convergence of several recent trends made it important for the UK to capitalise on its soft power advantage at the present time. Firstly, cuts to public spending, and particularly those to the diplomatic and military budgets meant that:

<b>UK in numbers</b>	
<b><i>A snapshot from the IFG-Monocle index</i></b>	
<b>Film exports:</b>	€1.45 billion
<b>Foreign correspondents in country:</b>	1,500
<b>Audience figures for state-sponsored media:</b>	241 million (BBC World Service)
<b>Number of schools and universities abroad:</b>	2,100
<b>Olympic gold medals 08/10 (summer and winter):</b>	20
<b>Percentage of GDP spent on aid:</b>	0.52
<b>Cultural mission offices:</b>	200
<b>Foreign languages spoken by Prime Minister:</b>	0
<b>Panel comments:</b>	Eclectic mix of world-beating soft power icons, including David Beckham and the Queen
(Source: <i>Monocle</i> , 'Soft Power Survey', Dec 2010/Jan 2011, vol 39:4, p 43)	

Britain's sources of traditional international influence are looking diminished. With fewer hard power and diplomatic resources to deploy, soft power tools—especially those not financed by the Government—will need to be employed with more regularity and intelligence.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> HC *Hansard*, 18 March 2011, col 626.

<sup>11</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, [FCO Public Diplomacy: The Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012](#), HC 581 of Session 2010–12 (February 2011), Ev 20.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan McClory, [The New Persuaders: An International Ranking of Soft Power](#), Institute for Government (December 2010).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p 1.



Secondly, the IFG argued that although soft power is not new, the conditions for projecting it have transformed rapidly in recent years:

Soft power transcends the elitism of classic diplomacy by putting the increasingly well-informed global public into play. In today's networked world of information, global politics are smarter, more engaged and more active than ever. With more citizens serving as both independent observers as well as active participants in international politics, rapid swings in public opinion are more frequent and potentially more serious. As a result, the public diplomacy initiatives of today need to reach larger, more sceptical publics. And with soft power serving as the primary currency of public diplomacy, the health of Britain's soft power infrastructure is more relevant than ever.<sup>14</sup>

The report highlighted that rising global players, such as China and Turkey, are consciously mobilising and investing in their soft power resources, whereas "To date, the new Government has not made soft power a priority in terms of resource allocation".<sup>15</sup> Given that "soft power is much easier to lose than it is to gain," the IFG argues that "there is a dangerous false economy in cutting soft power capabilities".<sup>16</sup>

## 5. Co-ordinating Soft Power

Although Governments increasingly recognise the potential benefits of building and using soft power, it is not necessarily straightforward to do so, because in many ways soft power is not something which Governments can fully control. Firstly, as Joseph Nye has pointed out, Government policy has only a limited effect on popular culture:

Governments can control and change foreign policies. They can spend money on public diplomacy, broadcasting and exchange programs. They can promote, but not control, popular culture. In that sense, one of the key resources that produce soft power is largely independent of Government control.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, soft power is in the eye of the beholder. The IFG study described it as "by its very nature... a relative and intangible concept".<sup>18</sup> The "relational nature" of soft power means that a country is not uniformly attractive to all other nations—"what is loved in Paris might repel in Riyadh", as the IFG puts it—and therefore the pull of a country's soft power will depend on where one is measuring it from. For this reason, "translating soft power into foreign policy outcomes can be difficult for Governments to do, as soft power depends more on the subject than is often the case with hard power".<sup>19</sup> Thirdly, "sustaining and strengthening a country's soft power is a cumulative process, with long-term benefits appearing gradually".<sup>20</sup> It may be difficult to map the long-term benefits from cultural ties and national reputation that have built up over generations on to the short- or medium-term foreign policy objectives that arise within the lifespan of one Government.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p 7.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph S Nye Jr, '[Think Again: Soft Power](#)', *Foreign Policy* (February 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan McClory, '[The New Persuaders: An International Ranking of Soft Power](#)', Institute for Government (December 2010), p 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p 7.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Harvey, 'Smart on soft power', *The World Today* (November 2010), p 8.

However, Simon Anholt, a policy expert in 'nation branding', believes that there are actions that Governments can take to understand and enhance the reputation of the nation:

- They can understand and monitor their international image in the countries and sectors where it matters most in a rigorous and scientific way, and understand exactly how and where this affects their interests in those countries and sectors.
- If they collaborate imaginatively, effectively and openly with business and civil society, they can agree on a national strategy and narrative—where the country is going, and how it is going to get there—which honestly reflects the skills, genius and will of the people.
- They can ensure that their country maintains a stream of innovative and eye-catching products, services, policies and initiatives in every sector, which will keep it at the forefront of the world's attention and admiration, demonstrate the truth of that narrative and prove the country's right to the reputation its people and Government desire to acquire.<sup>21</sup>

### 5.1 Co-ordinating Public Diplomacy

One way in which Governments try to promote and harness their nation's soft power is through public diplomacy activities, which have been defined as "work aiming to inform and engage individuals and organisations overseas, in order to improve understanding of and influence for the United Kingdom in a manner consistent with Governmental medium and long term goals".<sup>22</sup> Under the previous Government, steps were taken to try to improve the cross-departmental co-ordination of public diplomacy activities. In 2005, a review of public diplomacy carried out by Lord Carter of Coles concluded that, while public diplomacy efforts had improved since a previous review in 2002, "there is no effective central accountability for public diplomacy".<sup>23</sup> The Review therefore recommended the establishment of a new Public Diplomacy Board, responsible for agreeing strategy and managing performance, to be chaired by an FCO minister, with representatives from the British Council, the BBC World Service and an independent member.

In 2009, the Public Diplomacy Board was replaced by a new Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy Forum. Chris Bryant, then the FCO Minister with responsibility for public diplomacy, said that "The fact that our cross-Government, converged approach has proved of such interest to other foreign ministries is testament to its growing reputation".<sup>24</sup> The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee concluded that these new arrangements, "with the relevant high-level body now chaired by the Foreign Secretary rather than a more junior minister, appear to be in accord with the more central place that public diplomacy is taking in the FCO's work".<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Simon Anholt, '[Branding places and nations](#)' in The Economist, *Brands and Branding* (London: Profile Books, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Lord Carter of Coles, [Public Diplomacy Review](#) (December 2005), p 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p 5.

<sup>24</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, [Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2008-09](#), HC 145 of Session 2009–10 (March 2010), Ev 86.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p 103.

## 5.2 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review

Since coming into power, the Coalition has reviewed the way that foreign policy more broadly is co-ordinated across Government. This process has focused on security and defence, but it has implications for public diplomacy and soft power. William Hague observed in his first keynote speech that “we are not yet organised or orientated” to pursue effectively the Coalition’s “distinctive British foreign policy”. Firstly, he said, the Coalition had “inherited a structure of Government that had no effective mechanism for bringing together strategic decisions about foreign affairs, security, defence and development or to align national objectives in these areas”.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, while many government departments have an international aspect to their work and have staff posted in UK embassies around the world, Mr Hague said that this work was not as coherently brought together as it could be. He announced that:

It is our intention to transform this, using the National Security Council where appropriate to bring together all the Departments of Government in the pursuit of national objectives, so that foreign policy runs through the veins of the entire administration and so that it is possible to elevate entire relationships with individual countries in a systematic fashion—not just in diplomacy but in education, health, civil society, commerce and where appropriate in defence.

It ought to be the case that a decision to elevate links with a particular country will lead to a whole series of tangible developments: the establishment of a British higher education campus there or new education initiatives, diversified sporting and cultural links, new forms of exchange between Parliament and civil society to fit the circumstances of that particular country, cooperation sometimes on military training and exercises, a visa regime that reflects the totality of UK interests including the importance of the relationship, and British Ministers working with British businesses on aspects on that relationship.<sup>27</sup>

The National Security Council (NSC), formed as soon as the Coalition took office in May 2010, was responsible for developing the National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), which were both published in October 2010. David Cameron described these reviews as being “about how we project power and influence in a rapidly changing world”.<sup>28</sup> As their titles suggest, the NSC, the National Security Strategy and the SDSR are concerned with security, but the projection of soft power abroad is an element of this. Neither the National Security Strategy nor the SDSR specifically uses the term ‘soft power’ but both of them allude to the UK’s soft power assets and the way that they should be brought together with other tools of diplomatic and military policy in “a ‘whole of Government’ approach, based on a concept of security that goes beyond military effects”.<sup>29</sup>

Section 2 of the National Security Strategy outlines Britain’s distinctive role in the world, identifying characteristics which contribute to the UK’s soft power, such as the ease of doing business in the UK, the fact that English is a global language, or the way that the UK shapes international institutions such as the G20 and the UN Security Council. In an allusion to soft power, David Cameron and Nick Clegg write in the Foreword that “We are

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<sup>26</sup> William Hague, speech on ‘[Britain’s foreign policy in a networked world](#)’, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (1 July 2010).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> HC *Hansard*, 19 October 2010, col 797.

<sup>29</sup> HM Government, [A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy](#), Cm 7953 (October 2010), p 10.

a country whose political, economic and cultural authority far exceeds our size”.<sup>30</sup> The National Security Strategy makes a commitment to “use all the instruments of national power to prevent conflict and avert threats beyond our shores: our Embassies and High Commissions worldwide, our international development programme, our intelligence services, our defence diplomacy and our cultural assets”.<sup>31</sup>

The SDSR is intended to provide further detail on delivering the priorities set out in the National Security Strategy. Its focus is on “identify[ing] risks early and treat[ing] the causes”.<sup>32</sup> Much of the detail centres around the use of military and diplomatic tools to tackle instability, protect the UK, resolve conflicts, provide resilience and work in alliances and partnerships, but it also mentions using soft power assets, such as continuing to “support the BBC World Service and British Council which play unique roles in promoting our values, culture and commitment to human rights and democracy”.<sup>33</sup>

Professor Michael Clarke, Director of the Royal United Services Institute, has expressed criticism of what he sees as a mismatch in the relative emphasis given to soft power in the National Security Strategy and the SDSR. While he believes that the SDSR “will put more ‘soft power’ effort into heading off problems before they turn military”, he argues that the National Security Strategy does not dedicate corresponding resources to soft power:

If we are to take the National Security Strategy really seriously, we might logically be looking at a much greater shift of resources from military “hard power” towards diplomatic, economic or cultural “soft power”—playing our role in the world in more subtle ways.

But the Government feels instinctively that this would be too much of a risk, so the strategy has been to interpret “punching above our weight” essentially in conventional military terms; and terms that we think matter to the United States... This is why the two parts of the strategy do not match very well. The review has really struggled to get over the short-term pressures and has gone for the cuts that are possible, as opposed to those that might make a real difference to Britain’s long-term strategy.<sup>34</sup>

### 5.3 Departmental Business Plans

In November 2010, the Government published business plans for each government department, setting out priorities for the next four years. Both the FCO and the Department for International Development (DfID) have specific objectives relating to soft power. For the FCO, using soft power “to promote British values, advance development and prevent conflict” is listed as one of the department’s five priorities for structural reform.<sup>35</sup> This is broken down into three main actions:

- Develop a long-term programme to enhance UK soft power, co-ordinated by the NSC

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p 4.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p 10.

<sup>32</sup> HM Government, [Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#), Cm 7948 (October 2010), p 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p 67.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Clarke, ‘Can we still pack a punch?’, *Daily Telegraph* (20 October 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Business Plan 2011–15](#) (November 2010).

- Assess the merits of a quadrennial diplomacy and development review
- Work closely with other departments and agencies to ensure the successful implementation of detainee measures.

A number of other, more specific, actions are listed beneath these three main headings, including a commitment to “work with other government departments to agree a joint approach to enhance British ‘soft power’ that uses all our national instruments, including a world-class programme of aid”. The same action point is included in DfID’s Business Plan, under an overarching structural reform priority to “Honour international commitments”.<sup>36</sup> For further details of other specific actions assigned to the FCO, please see the Annex to this Note which contains the relevant pages from the FCO Business Plan, listing all actions and the progress made towards them as of November 2010.

## 6. Spending Review

### 6.1 Aid

The Coalition announced in its Programme for Government that it would honour the commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national income on overseas aid from 2013, effectively ring-fencing the aid budget from cuts that have been applied to other areas of Government spending.<sup>37</sup> In the October 2010 Spending Review it was announced that DfID would increase resource spending by 35 per cent in real terms, over the course of the Spending Review period (2011/12 to 2014/15), although its administration budget would be decreased by a third.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the FCO’s expenditure on overseas development assistance would increase from around 2 per cent in 2010/11 to around 2.4 per cent the following year to help meet the aid commitment.<sup>39</sup> Andrew Mitchell, the Secretary of State for International Development, has stated that he sees a clear link between development aid and soft power:

It is important to make it clear that one of the reasons why we have stood by our commitments on international development, increasing substantially the amount we spend is not just that we think it is morally right—it is about the values we have as a Government and as a country. It is also because it is in our national interest to do so.

... We agreed early on in the National Security Council that by 2014 we would double the element spent in conflicted states, difficult parts of the world, and increase it from £1.8 billion a year to £3.6 billion a year. I want to emphasise that this is often the projection of soft power—it is aid not just from Britain, but for Britain, and strongly for Britain’s interest.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Department for International Development, [Business Plan 2011–15](#) (November 2010).

<sup>37</sup> [The Coalition—Our Programme for Government](#) (May 2010), p 22.

<sup>38</sup> HM Treasury, [Spending Review 2010 Press Notices](#) (October 2010)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> [Uncorrected transcript of oral evidence](#) to the House of Commons Defence Select Committee on the Strategic Defence and Security Review and the National Security Strategy, to be published as HC 761-ii of Session 2010–12, 9 March 2011, Q85.

## 6.2 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, British Council and BBC World Service

Funding for other areas of Government policy which relate to soft power has been reduced, however, as part of the Government's deficit reduction programme. William Hague announced in June 2010 that the FCO's public diplomacy programme would be cut by £1.6 million for the financial year, and £10 million would be cut from the Chevening Scholarships programme (a scheme which brings future decision-takers and opinion formers to the UK for postgraduate study).<sup>41</sup> Lord Howell of Guildford, FCO Minister of State, asserted that: "Through rigorous prioritisation, we will be able to derive necessary efficiency savings from the overall existing public diplomacy programme and maintain our important work to influence international public opinion".<sup>42</sup>

The British Council and the BBC World Service are both funded by the FCO. In 2009/10, the British Council received £201 million of its £705 million turnover from the FCO (the bulk of the rest of its income comes from commercial activities such as English language tuition).<sup>43</sup> The BBC World Service is funded by a grant-in-aid administered by the FCO, which totalled £268 million in 2009/10.<sup>44</sup> The Spending Review document noted that "the BBC World Service and the British Council will continue to make a major contribution to the UK's international presence", but in line with the requirement for the FCO to make overall resource savings of 24 per cent in real terms, both would be required to "find savings by making greater efficiencies and enhancing the commercialisation of their operations".<sup>45</sup> Over the four-year Spending Review period, the World Service will experience a real-terms cut of 16 per cent, and the British Council of around 25 per cent.<sup>46</sup> It was also announced in the Spending Review that from 2013–14, responsibility for funding the World Service will pass to the BBC. However, the BBC will remain in the same relation of governance to the FCO as at present; for example, no language service can be closed without the written approval of the Foreign Secretary.<sup>47</sup>

In view of these cuts, Lord Soley (Labour) asked the Government what discussions had taken place between the FCO, the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Defence on how to "enhance and protect soft power" whilst budget cuts were being made. Lord Howell of Guildford responded on behalf of the FCO that:

We have a lot of discussions all the time with the other departments concerned, including the Treasury. The broader question of co-ordination of our soft power projection and our positioning in the world is, of course, a central part of the agenda of the National Security Council, where it is discussed frequently. The noble Lord is right to talk about our soft power as an overall effort involving all overseas departments. We have the co-ordination in place to do that and it is working extremely effectively.<sup>48</sup>

Having examined the terms of the Spending Review, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee concluded that "the FCO is one of the major departmental losers" and that "a greater share of the pain [is] being borne by the other 'family'

<sup>41</sup> HC *Hansard*, 29 June 2010, col 38WS.

<sup>42</sup> HL *Hansard*, 26 July 2010, col WA274.

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/about-us/how-we-are-run/folder\\_how-we-are-run/how-we-are-funded/](http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/about-us/how-we-are-run/folder_how-we-are-run/how-we-are-funded/)

<sup>44</sup> BBC press release, 'BBC World Service attracting millions in new audiences to TV, online, mobile and FM in changing media climate, says 2009/10 Annual Review' (5 July 2010).

<sup>45</sup> HM Treasury, *Spending Review 2010* (October 2010), Cm 7942, p 59.

<sup>46</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, *FCO Performance and Finances*, HC 572 of Session 2010–12 (February 2011), p 15.

<sup>47</sup> HL *Hansard*, 21 October 2010, col 884.

<sup>48</sup> HL *Hansard*, 21 October 2010, col 885.



members, the British Council and the World Service”.<sup>49</sup> Although the Committee took note that the World Service and the British Council had enjoyed ring-fenced budgets in previous spending settlements when the FCO core budget had been cut, and that both organisations could supplement their budgets with commercial activities, it expressed concern that the real-terms cuts would “pose severe challenges” to both organisations. In the case of the British Council, the Committee suggested that the funding cut and the necessity to increase commercial activity could have an impact on the Council’s ability to fulfil its core purpose:

A 25 per cent reduction over this period may well trigger some fundamental rethinking of the role and work of the Council. We appreciate that the Council, like other public-sector bodies, has had very little time to prepare its response to proposed reductions in expenditure. Nonetheless, we note that there was a lack of clarity from our British Council witnesses on the important issue of whether cuts would necessarily entail service reductions. It is difficult to conceive that some service reductions will not be necessary. We further conclude that the extent to which the British Council can maintain anything like its current levels of service and geographic coverage will depend on its ability to increase its income from commercial activity and partnership. That in turn will entail a difficult balancing act in which the Council must seek to maximise its income from the sale of English language teaching and other services, whilst not compromising over the pursuit of its primary purpose, to “build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide”.<sup>50</sup>

The BBC World Service announced in January 2011 that it was carrying out a fundamental restructuring to meet its 16 per cent savings target. The World Service plans to make savings of £19 million this financial year by closing five full language services (Albanian, Macedonian, Portuguese for Africa, Serbian, English for the Caribbean); ending radio programmes in seven languages (Azeri, Mandarin Chinese (not Cantonese), Russian, Spanish for Cuba, Turkish, Vietnamese and Ukrainian), and focusing those services instead on online and new media content and distribution; and a phased reduction from most short wave and medium wave distribution of remaining radio services.<sup>51</sup> The World Service calculated that audiences would fall by more than 30 million as a result of the changes. Peter Horrocks, BBC Global News Director, described it as “a painful day for BBC World Service and the 180 million people around the world who rely on the BBC’s global news service every week”.<sup>52</sup> However, he said that the World Service would “continue to bring the BBC’s expertise, perspectives and content to the largest worldwide audience, which will reflect well on Britain and its people”.

Several commentators have argued that the cut in the World Service budget will diminish Britain’s soft power. The *Financial Times* proclaimed that: “One of the most potent tools of British diplomacy is about to be blunted”. Although it accepted that cuts had to be made, it argued that “Starving one of Britain’s principal sources of soft power is not in the national interest”.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, *The Times* commented that the cuts would hurt Britain as well as the World Service’s listeners, since “As a tool of soft power, few marry softness

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<sup>49</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, [FCO Performance and Finances](#), HC 572 of Session 2010–12 (February 2011), p 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p 33.

<sup>51</sup> BBC World Service press release, ‘[BBC World Service cuts language services and radio broadcasts to meet tough Spending Review settlement](#)’ (26 January 2011).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>53</sup> *Financial Times*, ‘Keeping Britannia on the airwaves’ (29 January 2011).

with such power”.<sup>54</sup> However, others have seen the changes as an opportunity for the World Service, rather than a threat. Richard Sambrook, a former BBC Global News Director, saw the imposition of cuts and the move to licence fee funding as a “transformational moment” which would allow the World Service “scope for genuine efficiencies, the chance to deploy new technology, and to pool resources and expertise”, whilst escaping from “Whitehall infighting over budgets”.<sup>55</sup> William Hague has spoken of “some degree of excitement in the BBC Trust... about the potential in being able to bring together more easily the resources of the BBC and the experience of the BBC World Service”.<sup>56</sup> He also felt that underlining the World Service’s independence, by removing it from FCO funding, would strengthen its voice.<sup>57</sup>

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee conducted an inquiry into the implications of the cuts to the World Service. It concluded that:

The BBC World Service is of such value to the nation that its income should be ring-fenced against spending cuts. The recent dramatic events in North Africa and the Middle East have shown that the “soft power” wielded through the World Service is likely to bring even more benefits to the UK in the future than it has in the past, and that to proceed with the planned cuts to the World Service would be a false economy. We recommend that the decision to reduce World Service spending by 16 per cent during the SR2010 period should be reversed.<sup>58</sup>

On the subject of co-ordination between government departments, the Committee noted that:

There is a discrepancy between the relatively small amounts of money needed to avoid the most damaging cuts to the World Service and the scale of the Department for International Development Spending Review settlement. Some of the activity of the World Service contributes to the wider aims of DfID and it would be appropriate to consider how an additional small element of the DfID budget might be spent on specific activities and projects of the World Service which are consistent with the terms of the International Development Act 2002. A transfer of just 0.35 per cent of DfID’s resource budget over the next three years would compensate for the proposed 16 per cent reduction in World Service funding. There is no reason why such a transfer should not be made if the political will to carry it out is present.<sup>59</sup>

Responding to the Committee’s report, William Hague said that “in line with all other publicly funded bodies, [the World Service] must play its part in reducing the deficit. We have spent many months working with the BBC World Service to make sure the budget reductions are manageable and the BBC has been clear that the transfer of funds from the licence fee in 2014/15 will not make the World Service’s funding less secure.”<sup>60</sup> With regard to using DfID funding to support the World Service, Mr Hague had previously stated that “DfID is already in the process of setting its own priorities, which do not

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<sup>54</sup> *The Times*, ‘This is London: The voice of the BBC World Service still needs to be heard clearly around the world’ (27 January 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Richard Sambrook, ‘It’s an opportunity for a new world order’, *Guardian* (31 January 2011).

<sup>56</sup> HC *Hansard*, 26 January 2011, col 297.

<sup>57</sup> HC *Hansard*, 26 January 2011, col 299.

<sup>58</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, [The Implications of Cuts to the BBC World Service](#) (13 April 2011), HC 849 of Session 2010–12, p 3.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> John Plunkett, [BBC World Service cuts must be reversed, say MPs](#), *Guardian* (13 April 2011).



normally include supporting the operations of the BBC World Service” and that “I cannot promise a large part of the DfID budget for this cause”.<sup>61</sup>

## 7. Student Visas

In compiling its soft power index, the Institute for Government noted the importance of foreign students as a component of soft power:

The ability of a country to attract foreign students, or facilitate exchanges is a powerful tool of public diplomacy, even in the most adversarial of countries. Prior research on educational exchanges gives empirical evidence for the reputational gains for a host country when foreign students return home. Foreign student exchanges have also been shown to have beneficial ‘ripple effects’ on indirect participants.<sup>62</sup>

There has been some debate over whether new rules for student visas would have an effect on the UK’s soft power. In November 2010, the Home Secretary Theresa May announced plans to “tighten up our immigration system, focusing on tackling abuse and supporting only the most economically beneficial migrants”.<sup>63</sup> She said that students represent almost two thirds of the non-EU migrants entering the UK each year, and that it would therefore be impossible to achieve the Government’s aim of significantly reducing net migration without reforming the student visa regime. She pointed particularly to the fact that “Too many students at lower levels [ie on courses below degree level] have been coming here with a view to living and working rather than studying, and we need to stop that abuse”.<sup>64</sup>

In response to the Government’s consultation on student visas, representatives of the higher education sector expressed concerns that making it harder for foreign students to attend British universities would have a negative impact on the UK’s soft power. Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive of Universities UK, argued that:

International students add greatly to the cultural diversity and global perspectives on our campuses. Our graduate network of international alumni extends our “soft power” abroad. However you look at it, this is exactly the sort of activity that our Government should be supporting and encouraging in difficult economic and geopolitical times.

Instead, the Home Office’s proposals outlined in *The Student Immigration System: A Consultation*, if implemented, will do great damage in significantly constraining the flow of international students into our universities.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> HC *Hansard*, 26 January 2011, col 300.

<sup>62</sup> Jonathan McClory, [The New Persuaders: An International Ranking of Soft Power](#), Institute for Government (December 2010), p 4.

<sup>63</sup> HC *Hansard*, 23 November 2010, col 169.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, col 170.

<sup>65</sup> Nicola Dandridge, [‘Cutting foreign student visas is the wrong move at the wrong time’](#), *Times Higher Education* (3 February 2011).

Simeon Underwood, the Academic Registrar of the London School of Economics (LSE), told the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee that:

There are certain countries around the world... where actually graduates of the LSE dominate public life. This is very much part of what an LSE or an Imperial is about. Our concern obviously is that that dries up over time. It is not just about, if you like, the drying up of the students we recruit, or the drying up of alumni donations, but the drying up of influence.<sup>66</sup>

However, when Jeremy Browne, FCO Minister of State with responsibility for public diplomacy, was questioned by the Home Affairs Committee, he rejected the idea that tightening immigration controls for foreign students would diminish the UK's soft power in education:

Bridget Phillipson: With regards to soft power, we have received a great deal of evidence about the importance of British students [sic] being able to come and study in the UK in terms of our soft power overseas; that those people will often go on to become the leaders in business, in civil society, and in politics. What is your view on that?

Mr Browne: I am an extremely enthusiastic supporter of the premise that you have just put... we have all kinds of influence, which is beyond our economic strength, and one of those, possibly the greatest of all, is the reputation of our universities and broader education sector, and this gives us a huge amount of influence and goodwill and friendship and we must—

Chair: We must not put that at risk.

Mr Browne: I don't wish us to put it at risk, but that is not incompatible with having a properly enforced and rigorous immigration system, and so, if the premise of your question was that a rigorous immigration system would put it at risk, I don't accept that premise.<sup>67</sup>

Earl Attlee, Government Spokesperson for the Home Office in the House of Lords, made the point that tighter immigration rules were not intended to exclude genuine students from the UK:

We are clear that we are not targeting genuine students at universities. The measures that we propose will ensure that the system is more selective for the brightest and the best. We will protect the areas that pose the least risk, including the universities sector, target the areas where risk of abuse is highest and ensure that genuine students will still be able to study at our world-renowned universities... International students are vital for our trade position and for our soft power position.<sup>68</sup>

Theresa May announced on 22 March 2011 that in future, any institution wishing to sponsor students would have to be accredited as a Highly Trusted sponsor; students on degree-level courses would need to prove a higher level of English language achievement than previously; students studying at institutions other than universities and

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<sup>66</sup> House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, [Student Visas](#) (17 March 2011), HC 773 of Session 2010–12, p 9.

<sup>67</sup> House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, [Student Visas](#) (17 March 2011), HC 773 of Session 2010–12, Ev 58.

<sup>68</sup> HL *Hansard*, 15 February 2011, cols 575–6.

publicly funded further education colleges would have no entitlement to work; and the post-study work route would be closed (although students with an offer of a skilled job from a sponsoring employer could apply for a different type of visa to stay in the UK).<sup>69</sup> Mrs May said that this package of measures was expected to reduce the number of student visas by 70–80,000 (more than 25 per cent), but that: “The message to the brightest and the best students around the globe is clear: Britain’s world class universities remain open for business”.<sup>70</sup>

According to press coverage, “universities, English language schools and the National Union of Students acknowledged that the Government had responded to their concerns in its final package” as the measures set out were not as restrictive as those in the consultation paper.<sup>71</sup> However, some in the higher education sector are concerned that the uncertainty over the forthcoming changes has already had a negative impact on the appeal of British universities to foreign students:

Perhaps the most serious problem, however, is image. “What damage has this limbo period done to the reputation of the UK? That broader concern is the real issue,” says Lees [Executive Director of the MBA programme at Warwick Business School]. Bamford [Chief Executive of the Association of MBAs] expresses concern that the message out there is that the UK is closed. Although they are reluctant to be specific, many business schools say that applications for overseas students are down on the same period as last year.<sup>72</sup>

## 8. London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the FCO have identified the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics as a soft power opportunity. In a document setting out the Government’s plans for the legacy from the Games, the DCMS states that:

As well as the hard economic outputs the Games provide the opportunity to create a ‘soft power’ legacy, building a wide network of influential relationships which will have a lasting effect by increasing British influence. A global public diplomacy campaign, involving specially commissioned films, events and activities, and online, digital tools, has been developed to invite foreign audiences to take a fresh and positive look at the UK.<sup>73</sup>

The FCO’s objectives for public diplomacy work connected to the Games aspire to use the Olympics as an opportunity to build soft power:

*National interest:* To contribute to UK foreign policy goals by using the profile of the Olympics to promote British culture and values at home and abroad. To cement Britain’s reputation as a valuable bilateral partner and a vibrant, open and modern society, a global hub in a networked world.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> <http://ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/2011/march/54-student-visas>

<sup>70</sup> HC *Hansard*, 22 March 2011, cols 857–8.

<sup>71</sup> Alan Travis, ‘Visa curbs will cut overseas students by 80,000 says May’, *Guardian* (23 March 2011).

<sup>72</sup> Michael Prest, ‘The new, tougher rules of the game’, *Independent* (7 April 2011).

<sup>73</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Plans for the Legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games](#) (December 2010).

<sup>74</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, [FCO Public Diplomacy: The Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012](#), (February 2011), HC 581 of Session 2010–12, Ev 19.

The FCO has pledged to take a cross-Government approach to this work, “To work seamlessly with other government departments and partners, mobilising the powerful asset of the FCO’s unique network of Posts to deliver the greatest international impact for our strategy”.<sup>75</sup> The Foreign Affairs Committee has welcomed “the many inventive proposals that the FCO has put forward for capitalising on the Games in its public diplomacy work”.<sup>76</sup> However, it also cautioned that:

Academic research shows that national reputations, especially of countries like the UK which are long-established actors on the world stage, tend to alter only gradually and in response to long-term trends. That being so, the FCO may be somewhat overstating the case when it claims that the Games will have “a profound impact on the UK’s international reputation”. Despite the many commendable specific initiatives, we are concerned that the overall message conveyed by the FCO’s campaign is somewhat ill-defined. The campaign should focus on sending out one overarching message. That message should be the one successfully deployed in the UK’s original Olympics bid, that London is an open and welcoming city, and that the UK is a diverse, inclusive and friendly country—in a word, that both London and the UK are *generous*. Such a message would help to redress some long-standing misperceptions of the UK.<sup>77</sup>

During the ancient Olympics, it was the custom that the Greek city states participating in the games would refrain from hostilities for the duration of the competition. This idea of an Olympic Truce was revived in 1993: in advance of each winter and summer Olympics since then, the United Nations General Assembly has passed a resolution calling on member states to observe a truce during the games. Lord Bates (Conservative) has called for the FCO’s public diplomacy preparations for the 2012 Olympics to place greater emphasis on “being the first Host Government of the Olympic Games in the modern era of the Games to take the Truce seriously”.<sup>78</sup> He argues that this would represent an opportunity to “challenge negative aspects of the UK’s reputation abroad emanating from some recent military engagements” and allow the Government to pursue the aims of the National Security Strategy to tackle the causes of conflict.

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<sup>75</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, [FCO Public Diplomacy: The Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012](#), (February 2011), HC 581 of Session 2010–12, Ev 19.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p 3.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, Ev 43.

## 5. Use 'soft power' to promote British values, advance development and prevent conflict (p.1 of 2)

*Use 'soft power' as a tool of UK foreign policy; expand the UK Government's contribution to conflict prevention; promote British values, including human rights; and contribute to the welfare of developing countries*

<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>
<b>5.1 Develop a long term programme to enhance UK 'soft power', co-ordinated by the NSC</b>		
i. Work with other government departments to agree a joint approach to enhance British 'soft power' that uses all our national instruments, including a world-class programme of aid	Started	May 2011
ii. Align the work of the British Council and BBC World Service with this programme	May 2011	May 2012
iii. Implement the elevation of links with the Gulf, Middle East and North Africa in areas of 'soft power', including education, culture and parliamentary exchanges		
a) Agree an FCO Gulf initiative to strengthen regional security and to improve commercial, economic, cultural and educational ties	Completed	-
b) Set out an Arab Human Development agenda shaping UK and international policy impact across the Middle East and North Africa region	Started	Oct 2011
iv. Develop a long-term strategy of 'soft power' in Afghanistan and Pakistan	Started	May 2011
v. Devise a strategy to enhance: (a) the impact of UK contribution to conflict prevention, (b) the impact of UK educational scholarships, (c) the impact of the British Council and BBC World Service, (d) links with democratic political parties overseas, and (e) the impact of the UK's promotion of human rights	Started	Mar 2011
vi. Promote and project UK values to ensure that the UK models and upholds legal obligations robustly and without scope for abuse, including on universal jurisdiction	Started	May 2015
<b>MILESTONES</b>		
A. Gulf Initiative agreed	Complete	
B. Foreign Secretary's advisory group on human rights appointed	Dec 2010	
C. UK 'soft power' strategy delivered	Mar 2011	
D. Joint programme agreed with DFID to extend British 'soft power'	May 2011	



**5. Use 'soft power' to promote British values, advance development and prevent conflict (p.2 of 2)**

*Use 'soft power' as a tool of UK foreign policy; expand the UK Government's contribution to conflict prevention; promote British values, including human rights; and contribute to the welfare of developing countries*

<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>
<b>5.2 Assess the merits of a Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review</b>		
i. Work with the NSC to assess whether a review is needed to improve the coherence and impact of UK aid and diplomacy overseas	Started	Dec 2011
<b>5.3 Work closely with other departments and agencies to ensure the successful implementation of detainee measures</b>		
i. Put in place clear and strict rules to ensure that the UK upholds its legal obligations and values as a nation	Completed	-
ii. Publish a Green Paper on how intelligence is treated in the full range of judicial proceedings	Started	Jul 2011
iii. Provide comprehensive input into the preparatory work needed to allow the Gibson Inquiry to commence in early 2011 and report within the year	Started	Mar 2012
iv. Begin to implement Gibson Inquiry recommendations	Mar 2012	Mar 2012
<b>MILESTONES</b>		
E. Consolidated Guidance published on detainee measures	Complete	
F. Gibson Inquiry input delivered	By Mar 2012	

(Source: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Business Plan 2011-15](#), November 2010)

