



# HOUSE OF LORDS

## SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOFT POWER AND THE UK'S INFLUENCE CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The House of Lords Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence, chaired by Lord Howell of Guildford, is conducting an inquiry into the ways in which Government, companies, individuals and other non-state actors might develop and improve the UK's use of soft power in furthering its global influence and protecting its interests. The Committee invites interested organisations and individuals to submit written evidence as part of the inquiry.

**Written evidence is sought by 18 September 2013.** The submissions we receive will guide the Committee's deliberations in oral evidence sessions later this year, and also inform the Committee's final conclusions and recommendations. Public hearings have been held since June 2013, and will continue until the late autumn. The Committee will report to the House in March 2014. The Report will receive a response from the Government, and is likely to be debated in the House.

### Background

The Committee was set up on 16 May 2013 'to examine the use of soft power in furthering the United Kingdom's global influence and interests, and to make recommendations'.

Professor Joseph Nye, who has written extensively about soft power, summed it up as 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments'.<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that the information revolution has expanded soft power potentialities, while recent military engagements have shown the limitations of hard power. The concept of soft power has also gained currency in the UK Government in recent years. The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review and National Security Strategy stressed the value of soft power in response to the challenges facing defence funding. The Foreign Secretary argued for the importance of soft power as a 'vital component' of the UK's international influence in a key 2010 speech.<sup>2</sup> To that end, the 2010 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Business Plan contained a commitment to 'develop a long-term programme to enhance UK 'soft power', co-ordinated by the National Security Council'.

The Committee's inquiry will consider how the UK Government might in the future develop and employ better the country's soft power resources to strengthen the UK's influence abroad – but also how the UK's soft power is extended and used by organisations in the private and civil society spheres, as well as the public sector, and how it inter-relates with the role of the Armed Forces.

The Committee is keen to take evidence from a wide range of stakeholders working in a variety of sectors. These include, but are not limited to: businesses, and their representative organisations, which are engaged in foreign trade or are working to attract foreign direct investment to the UK; the culture, sport, design, research and universities sectors; the media and communications sector; the tourism sector; Government institutions and publicly-funded bodies; foreign policy research institutions and think-tanks; the security and defence

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph S Nye Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004), p ix.

<sup>2</sup> William Hague, speech on 'Britain's values in a networked world', Lincoln's Inn (15 September 2010)

community; those working with, or who have a research focus on, the Commonwealth, EU, UN, NATO and other international networks and institutions such as the World Bank and IMF; the humanitarian and international development sector; political, religious and constitutional bodies and institutions; and those with knowledge of or an interest in how other countries seek to promote and use soft power, and in how other countries and their peoples view the UK.

## Issues

*The Committee would welcome submissions of written evidence that consider any of the following questions (not listed in any particular order of importance).*

### The meaning and importance of soft power

- What is your understanding of ‘soft power’? What does it mean for the work that you do?
- How important is a country’s soft power? What is the evidence that soft power makes a difference?
- How do deployments of soft power inter-relate with harder and more physical exercises of the nation’s power, ranging from trade sanctions up to the full use of force through military means?
- In a digitally connected world, is soft power becoming more important? If so, why, and will this trend continue?

### The extent and use of the UK’s soft power resources

- What are the most important soft power assets that the UK possesses? Can we put a value on the UK’s soft power resources?
- Are the Government doing enough to help the UK maximise the extent of, and benefit gained from, its soft power? What more – or less – should the Government do to encourage the generation and use of soft power?
- How can non-state actors in the UK, including businesses, best be encouraged to generate soft power for the UK, and be discouraged from undermining it?
- How can non-state actors in the UK, including businesses, best be encouraged and assisted to benefit from the UK’s soft power? How can the UK mobilise its soft power resources to boost trade with other countries and foreign direct investment in the UK?
- Who should be the target audiences, and what should be the aims, of the application of the UK’s soft power? Is the UK using its soft power well and to the right ends?
- Is there sufficient return for the Government’s investment in soft power? Is the Government’s investment adequate?

- Are there spheres of influence in which the Government should do more to promote the UK? Are there spheres in which the Government should do less?
- Given the soft power resources at the UK's disposal, how can the UK Government, companies, individuals and other non-state actors do better at getting soft power to deliver, in terms of the UK's interests? Can you give examples of where attempts to employ soft power have been unsuccessful, for instance because they delivered counter-productive results?
- What should the UK be aiming for in five years' time in its possession and deployment of soft power and influence?

#### Soft power and diplomacy

- What roles do international networks such as the UN, the EU and the Commonwealth play in strengthening the UK's soft power and influence abroad and facilitating its application? How could the UK use these networks more effectively to increase its influence?
- How best should the UK's foreign policy and approach to diplomacy respond to the new global communications environment, where social media have rapidly become prominent, where alternative media organisations (such as Al Jazeera) have multiplied in power and reach, and where the grips of traditional elites on the flows of information in their countries have weakened?
- How should the UK best respond to the more prominent role in international affairs played by non-state actors and emerging powers? Can the UK shape this landscape as it develops, or must it take a purely reactive approach?
- How are UK institutions (such as Parliament, the Monarchy, and religious bodies) and values (such as the UK's commitment to the rule of law, human rights, and freedom of speech) perceived abroad? Do other countries have negative opinions of the UK? Do those representing the UK give enough consideration to how the UK is perceived?
- Are there any examples of how its commitment to such values has hindered the UK's influence abroad or damaged its interests?
- How can the UK promote its values abroad without being accused of cultural imperialism, propagandising, or hypocrisy?

#### Soft power and hard power

- How should the UK's generation and use of soft power relate to its generation and use of hard power?
- Has the soft power generated by the UK's Armed Forces increased or decreased in recent years? Can soft power promotion contribute to national security?

### Learning from others

- Are other countries, or non-state actors, performing better than the UK in maximising the extent of, and their benefits from, their soft power resources?
- Are there any soft power approaches used by other countries that are particularly relevant to the UK, with its institutional mix of public sector bodies, private sector enterprises, and civil society organisations?
- Have other countries been able to leverage soft power resources over the long term, and find ways of measuring and demonstrating long-term benefits?
- To what extent have other countries tried to form and project a single strategic narrative about their identity and their place in the world?

### Aspects of soft power

- What roles do sport and culture play in boosting the UK's soft power?
- What is your assessment of the role played by the English language, and English-language publications, in advancing the UK's influence abroad, bearing in mind that English is the working language of the Commonwealth, which embraces roughly a third of the world's population? What more can be done to leverage this?
- What more can be done to encourage British people to learn foreign languages and acquire deeper understanding of foreign cultures?
- What is your assessment of the role played by UK universities and research institutions in contributing to the UK's soft power? Does the global influence of UK universities and research institutions face any threats?
- What soft power gains can the UK expect from its overseas aid and humanitarian commitments? Should aid be used to advance the UK's influence abroad?
- Do UK companies working abroad get the support that they need from the Government, particularly when they face competitors from other countries?
- What should be the UK's role in setting rules, norms and standards for international trade? Does the UK's commitment to upholding international standards help or hinder the UK's commercial activities overseas?
- What will be the long-term impact of budgetary cuts to publicly-funded bodies involved in promoting British culture overseas?
- To what extent should the UK Government involve the devolved administrations in its work on soft power? Does the UK have a single narrative or should it project a loose collection of narratives to reflect the character of its regions?

## **Instructions for submitting written evidence**

Written submissions should be provided in an editable electronic form as a Microsoft Word document by e-mail to [HLUKinfluence@parliament.uk](mailto:HLUKinfluence@parliament.uk). **Please do not submit PDFs.** If you do not have access to Microsoft Word or to the internet you may submit a paper copy to Bina Ravaliya, Committee Office, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW, fax 020 7219 6715. Submissions sent in paper form must be clearly printed or typed on single sides of A4 paper, unstapled. **The deadline for written evidence is 18 September 2013.**

Short submissions are preferred. A submission longer than six pages should include a one-page summary. Paragraphs should be numbered. Submissions should be dated, with a note of the author's name and status, and of whether the author is acting on an individual or corporate basis. All submissions will be acknowledged promptly after the deadline, though, of course, early submissions are appreciated.

Submissions become the property of the Committee which will decide whether to accept them as evidence. Evidence may be published by the Committee at any stage. It will normally be published online and will be deposited in the Parliamentary Archives. Once you have received acknowledgement that your submission has been accepted as evidence, you may publicise or publish it yourself, but in doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the Committee. Parliamentary privilege will not apply to your own publication.

Personal contact details supplied to the Committee will be removed from evidence before publication, but will be retained by the Committee Office and used for specific purposes relating to the Committee's work, for instance to seek additional information.

You should be careful not to comment on individual cases currently before a court of law, or matters in respect of which court proceedings are imminent. If you anticipate such issues arising, you should discuss with the Clerk of the Committee how this might affect your submission.

Persons who submit written evidence, and others, may be invited to give oral evidence. Oral evidence is usually given in public at Westminster and broadcast in audio and often video format on the internet, and transcripts are published online. Persons invited to give oral evidence will be notified separately of the procedure to be followed and the topics likely to be discussed.

Substantive communications to the Committee about the inquiry should be addressed through the Clerk or the Chairman of the Committee, whether or not they are intended to constitute formal evidence to the Committee.

This is a public call for evidence. Please bring it to the attention of other groups and individuals who may not have received a copy directly.

You may follow the progress of the inquiry at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/soft-power-and-the-uks-influence/>.

23 July 2013