

## Written evidence submitted by Professor Stone and Dr Cunliffe (INR0034)

### 1.0 Executive Summary

- Poor integration of cultural property (CP) and its protection into FCO strategy and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) achievement presents risks, but CP also offers opportunities. (We include cultural heritage and its tangible subset, cultural property.)
- Culture impacts UK defence, security, economic growth, international relations with Europe and the Commonwealth (and more widely), soft power achievements and perceptions, and achieving our SDG targets, but is currently poorly integrated into FCO Foreign Policy Priority Outcomes (FPPOs).
- National and international perception of the high importance of culture is disproportionate to UK policy investment in it, despite the clear benefits of promoting it and the reputational loss accompanying failures.
- CP – and its protection – relate to several defence and security FPPOs, (FPPO2, FPPO7, FPPO9), SDGs (in particular 11.4 and 16), and UN Security Council Resolutions<sup>8</sup>. In 2017, the UK ratified the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and its two Protocols of 1954 & 1999 (together HC54) through the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Act. UK obligations require coordination between FCO, MoD, DFIF and DCMS to protect CP at home and abroad. Cultural property protection (CPP), and support for CP institutions, is vital in combatting domestic terrorism, illicit trafficking of looted CP, and supporting key groups (e.g. in MENA, Rohingya, Western Balkans) during and post-conflict.
- CP contributes significantly to economic prosperity nationally and abroad (FPPO goal; SDG1, 8, 9), but this currently at high risk due to Brexit and Covid-19. A coordinated response to these threats involving the FCO is crucial.
- Internationally, CP is threatened in our Overseas Territories by natural disaster and climate change. Few Commonwealth countries or overseas territories have ratified HC54, citing concerns about cost and capacity, hindering CPP following disasters with long-term socio-economic implications.
- The FCO leads delivery of the UK's first Soft Power strategy (FPPO4). Cultural trust is key in soft power; yet UKBS experience suggests cultural trust of the UK is decreasing.
- The integration of culture, and its international protection, into FCO strategy, and FCO support for international HC54 ratification and implementation (via good heritage management and institutional capacity building), would contribute to achieving SDGs and FPPOs, promoting a positive perception of the UK and supporting UK soft power (enhancing trust in all areas), contributing to the multiple positive outcomes of CPP, strengthening good governance, economic resilience and crisis reliance through culture, and promoting and prosperous communities.
- This report concludes with specific recommendations for FCO strategy to facilitate the UK's global leadership in key areas.

## 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The UK has the clear opportunity to be a world leader in its foreign policy, articulated in its Foreign Policy Strategy. We express concern that UK foreign policy is poorly integrated with the cultural sector, led by DCMS. Stone attends the annual Cross-Government Cultural Protection Working Group, which is a small, positive step indicating the benefits of collaboration. Failing to capitalise on the opportunities presented by greater cultural integration, or account for the problems resulting from cultural issues, minimises opportunities to achieve FCO goals. This response highlights the problems and opportunities presented by CP and its protection, and the risks to FCO policies posed by failure to integrate culture. It builds upon a 2017 paper submitted to the FCO, *UK Leadership In Countering The Global Threat To Cultural Property*<sup>1</sup>, which highlighted four key areas for UK leadership: combatting the trade in illicit cultural property, supporting the development of good-practice heritage management, utilising cultural heritage for peace and reconciliation, and cooperation with the Blue Shield. These areas remain vital to achieving FCO goals today.
- 2.2 We also highlight the UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) report: *Cultural Heritage Innovation. Opportunities for International Development*<sup>2</sup>, which has important implications and opportunities for FCP strategy. It demonstrates innovative models to utilise culture to help promote sustainable development in ODA eligible countries and contribute to UK government priorities.
- 2.3 Our culture is expressed through our CP – the physical remains of cultural heritage (including intangible aspects of culture): this paper encompasses both. The protection and promotion of CP contributes to upholding cultural rights<sup>3</sup>, compliance with international law, international norms relating to collective memory and community identity, assists in the development of community cohesion and wellbeing, and supports sustainable economic development,<sup>4</sup> and soft power.
- 2.4 The UK's cultural policies impact its defence, security, economic growth, international relations with Europe and the Commonwealth (and more widely), soft power achievements and perceptions, and achieving our Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets. Many SDGs mirror current FCO policies, and the FCO has stated it “work[s] internationally to support delivery of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals”<sup>5</sup> but the UK's 2019 *Voluntary National Review (VNR)* response<sup>6</sup> demonstrates culture is poorly integrated.
- 2.5 These challenges and opportunities clearly impact FCO Foreign Policy Priority Outcomes (FPPOs), but have received no direct or indirect mention in the Foreign Policy Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> [UK Leadership In Countering The Global Threat To Cultural Property](#), 2017

<sup>2</sup> UKNC, [Cultural Heritage Innovation. Opportunities for International Development](#), 2019

<sup>3</sup> See the [reports](#) by the UN Special Rapporteur for Cultural Rights.

<sup>4</sup> [The importance of cultural heritage](#), Blue Shield International website

<sup>5</sup> [Corporate report. Foreign and Commonwealth Office single departmental plan](#)

<sup>6</sup> UK SDG [Voluntary National Review 2019](#), and [Annex III](#) (statistical Annex)

### 3.0 Defence and Security

- 3.1 CP – and its protection – relate to several defence and security FPPOs, at home and abroad. FPPO2 is to *ensure a strengthened, expanding, more cohesive NATO, with increased contributions from partners, acts to confront security challenges, including Russia*; and to *Safeguard our national security*, including reducing threats from terrorism and serious crime. FPPO7, *Prevent and resolve conflict*, has specific focus on the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, and the MENA region.
- 3.2 CPP has obvious PR implications – positive and negative. Following the looting of the Iraq Museum during the 2003 invasion, the Coalition received widespread international criticism. Conversely, CP destruction by extremist groups in Mali, Syria, and elsewhere have directly advanced increases in international CPP aid - the British government created the £30 million Cultural Protection Fund, and multiple donors contributed US\$77.5 million to the international ALIPH Fund. Ratifications of international CPP laws have increased, alongside a successful prosecution of cultural destruction at the International Criminal Court (ICC), with another case underway. National and international perception of the importance of culture is disproportionate to UK policy investment in it, despite the clear benefits of promoting it and the reputational loss accompanying failures.
- 3.3 The UK has signed international CPP conventions including the 1972 World Heritage Convention, and the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. Following international criticism of UK CPP in Iraq, and significant lobbying by UKBS, the UK formalised its commitment to cultural property protection (CPP) by ratifying the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and its two Protocols of 1954 & 1999 (together HC54) in the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Act 2017. Through ratification, the UK joined more than 130 other states in declaring to the international community that the UK values CPP, promoting the international rules-based system the UK upholds (FPPO9). Greater promotion and implementation of HC54 and the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur for Cultural Rights<sup>1</sup> to make access to heritage a universal human right would also significantly contribute to SDG16.3, *promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all*.
- 3.4 HC54 places obligations on our armed forces in conflict and peace, e.g., the creation of the British Army Cultural Property Protection Unit (CPPU) (with significant positive PR and soft power opportunities). All but one NATO state have also ratified, committing us collectively to CPP. CPP features in UK Army and NATO Guidance and Doctrine<sup>7</sup>, which highlight responsibilities during operations: these include cooperation with state competent authorities. Creating such relationships is a combined responsibility of the FCO, Defence (especially the CPPU), DFI, and DCMS.

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<sup>7</sup> Note 19/05, NATO BI-SCI Strategic Command Directive 086-005, and AJP-3.19, Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation Annex B.

- 3.5 Cultural terrorism – the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage as part of nationalistic and ideological campaigns – has been well-documented across the MENA region, and is of concern to NATO<sup>8</sup>, and the Prime Minister - who wrote articles on the topic in 2015. Concerns include the increasing use of CP and CP destruction in identity politics, destruction as part of ethnic cleansing, and the growing market for illicit CP, all amplified by increasing globalisation (and global sharing of destruction via media), and which must be countered.
- 3.6 Extensive academic scholarship has demonstrated that destruction directly contributed to regional destabilisation<sup>9</sup> and has been used for terrorist recruitment<sup>10</sup>, whilst protection has supported militia mobilisation narratives<sup>11</sup>, and affected Iraqi army strategy<sup>12</sup>. Failure to fully comprehend the vital role of CP in the MENA region poses a direct threat to achieving FPPOs.
- 3.7 Cultural terrorism has reached UK territory, with recent (thwarted) bomb attempts at the British Museum and St Paul’s Cathedral. It is DCMS’s responsibility to identify Britain’s most important (and most at-risk) CP and encourage protective measures as part of implementing the HC54, requiring integration of FCO and DCMS work.
- 3.8 A recent *British Army Review* Special Edition<sup>13</sup> noted, regarding Russia (FPPO2), likely “escalation of the weaponization of culture as part of a long-term strategy” by Russia, whose “ideological influence and cultural soft power has increasingly formed part of a hybrid war waged initially in Crimea, then in Eastern Ukraine, and latterly in Syria”.
- 3.9 In the Western Balkans (FPPO2), CP destruction was integral in the conflict. ICTY judgements recorded genocide “through purposeful eradication of [...] culture and identity resulting in the eventual extinction of the group”<sup>14</sup>. The effects continue to be felt today. Cultural destruction as part of ethnic cleansing (as recorded in the 1992 UN ethnic cleansing classification) is seen today in attacks on Iraqi Yezidi<sup>15</sup> and Rohingya Muslims<sup>16</sup> (FPPO7).
- 3.10 Post-conflict, cultural destruction can prolong societal tension, and affect the reintegration of society: in the Balkans, the 2001 reconstruction of historic mosques sparked orchestrated riots<sup>17</sup>. The significance of heritage destruction on community

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<sup>8</sup> NATO BI-SCI Strategic Command Directive 086-005

<sup>9</sup> For example, Isakhan, [Heritage Destruction and Spikes in Violence: The Case of Iraq](#), 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Cunliffe and Curini, [ISIS and Heritage Destruction: A Sentiment Analysis](#), 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Isakhan. [The Islamic State Attacks on Shia Holy Sites and the “Shrine Protection Narrative”: Threats to Sacred Space as a Mobilization Frame](#), 2018

<sup>12</sup> Cunliffe, Fox, and Stone. [The Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict: Unnecessary Distraction of Mission Relevant Priority?](#) 2018

<sup>13</sup> BAR Special Report: [Culture in Conflict](#) 2019  
[https://www.army.mod.uk/media/6862/bar\\_special\\_culture\\_conflict\\_web.pdf](https://www.army.mod.uk/media/6862/bar_special_culture_conflict_web.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Ethnic cleansing, war crimes and the destruction of cultural heritage: not Syria, but Bosnia twenty years ago, [OpenDemocracy.net](#)

<sup>15</sup> RASHID, EAMENA and Yazda. [Cultural Heritage Destruction during the Islamic State's Genocide against the Yazidis](#)

<sup>16</sup> UN HRC [Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar](#)

<sup>17</sup> Walasek. [Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage](#). 2015

cohesion, and the long-term impact on population return and community reintegration, must be included in peace and reconciliation strategies. CP restoration is crucial in encouraging displaced populations to return, particularly in areas dominated by different ethno-nationalist groups<sup>18</sup>.

- 3.11 In post-conflict Iraq, heritage is used by ethno-nationalist endowments to support sectarian narratives<sup>19</sup>. National heritage law and the State Board of Antiquities are underfunded and ignored. Support to national heritage institutions is vital to promote a cohesive national identity, visible in symbolic CP. SDG16a is *Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime*. Whilst the UK is compliant, there is no evidence of much-needed international support.
- 3.12 SDG16.4 (and numerous UNSCRs<sup>8</sup>) requires states to *significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime*. The UK does not currently report on attainment. Illicit trafficking is an international problem, well evidenced as a contributor to armed conflict, organised crime, and terrorism, noted in multiple UNSCRs<sup>20</sup>, flagged in our 2017 FCO paper, and of concern to NATO<sup>7</sup>. Tackling it requires a coordinated international response, but UK activity is expected to be hindered by Brexit (noted in 7.2): how recent EU illicit trafficking legislation<sup>21</sup> (which the UK signed and has declared it intends to retain) will affect the UK is unclear. The FCO has the opportunity to join other departments and UKBS to lobby for stringent antiquities controls and access to the proposed EU Antiquities database, and to act as a world leader in combatting illicit trafficking of CP.

#### **4.0 Promote Economic Prosperity**

- 4.1 Culture can play a key role in sustainable economic development, supporting SDG1, *No Poverty*, SDG8 (*sustainable economic growth ... and work for all*), and SDG9 (*sustainable tourism promoting local culture*). The UK VNR<sup>6</sup> noted that culture and art contribute to economic growth: however, there is no plan to capitalise on them.
- 4.2 In 2018, 37.9 million tourists visited the UK<sup>22</sup>. Since 2010, tourism has been the fastest growing employment sector in the UK, predicted to grow faster than the overall UK economy (3.8% annually vs. 3%). Britain could have a tourism industry worth over £257 billion by 2025 – almost 10% of UK GDP, and supporting around 11% of the total UK workforce. Deloitte estimates that for every £1,000 generated in direct tourism

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<sup>18</sup> See accounts from Stolac in [Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage](#); from Gernika in Viejo-Rose, [Reconstructing Heritage in the Aftermath of Civil War: Re-Visioning the Nation and the Implications of International Involvement](#), 2013; and Balkans examples in Bevan, [The Destruction of Cultural Heritage: Architecture at War](#) 2016

<sup>19</sup> Mehiyar, [Why Iraq's archaeology and heritage will continue to crumble](#) (blog post based on [Cultural \(dis\)continuity, political trajectories and the state in post – 2003 Iraq](#))

<sup>20</sup> UNSCRs 1373 (2001), 1483 (2003), 2199 (2015), 2253 (2015), 2347 (2017), 2368 (2017)

<sup>21</sup> The [Fifth Anti-Money Laundering Directive](#), 2018

[EU Regulation on the Introduction and the Import of Cultural Goods](#), 2019

<sup>22</sup> [ONS](#), [VisitBritain](#), [VisitBritain](#), [Wikipedia](#), [UKinbound](#)

spending, £1,800 more is supported elsewhere in the economy through the supply chain and consumer spending<sup>23</sup>.

- 4.3 However, the UK tourism industry is reliant on transient EU nationals, and the sector faces a potential major skills gap due to uncertainty about Brexit<sup>24</sup>. This has a clear relation to the UK's European foreign policy.
- 4.4 Internationally, CP is at risk in our Overseas Territories from natural disaster and climate change. The cultural heritage sector is already actively contributing to sustainable development in ODA countries, but challenges include<sup>2</sup> the low profile of the cultural heritage sector in international development, assessing impact, and access to funding. Greater integration into FCO strategy would develop and promote development work to maximum potential, contributing to the above SDGs and to FPPO8 2.5 (*build resilient Overseas Territories with good governance, increasingly diversified economies and prosperous communities, able to better prepare for and recover from crisis*). Supporting the development of good practice heritage management and state capacity remain key.
- 4.5 The problems highlighted will be heavily exacerbated by Covid-19. The UN World Tourism Agency notes the resilience of the tourism sector, but emphasises the need for a coordinated international response<sup>25</sup>, in which the FCO should play a key role.

## **5.0 The Commonwealth and Overseas Territories**

- 5.1 SDG11.4 requires efforts to protect cultural heritage. SDG reporting data<sup>4</sup> uses national examples: the UK has poor national attainment<sup>26</sup>, and the SDG wording indicates CPP should be global.
- 5.2 FPPO5 calls on the FCO to support the Commonwealth. Globally, of the countries still to ratify HC54, almost half are Commonwealth countries (only 19 of 54 Commonwealth countries have ratified). In a 2019 Symposium with Commonwealth representatives, the Blue Shield lobbied for ratification: many expressed interest but were concerned about resources.
- 5.3 FPPO8 calls for resilient Overseas Territories with good governance and diversified economies. Many Overseas Territories have yet to ratify HC54; FPPO8 recommends measures to protect cultural sites that are equally applicable to conflict and natural disasters, such as inventories of cultural sites to better protect them and prioritise disaster response. However, their cultural institutions require support and CPP measures expensive. UKBS was involved in the UK's 2017 hurricane season disaster response in some of our overseas territories: cultural support failed as many have no CP inventories, hindering our response, and delaying crisis recovery.

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<sup>23</sup> Visit Britain website: <https://www.visitbritain.org/visitor-economy-facts>

<sup>24</sup> Visit Britain report: [The UK tourism productivity gap. Challenges and potential for tourism productivity](#), 2019

<sup>25</sup> UNTWO, [Impact Assessment Of The Covid-19 Outbreak On International Tourism](#)

<sup>26</sup> UK data does not meet SDG reporting requirements; however, the VNR2019 cites 6% (of 5478 properties) removed from the English Heritage at Risk register over three years as our example of safeguarding.

5.4 The FCO has a clear opportunity to work with DFID to encourage and support HC54 ratification and implementation amongst Commonwealth states and Overseas Territories, support state institutions to develop good practice heritage management. Demonstrating a commitment to culture promotes a positive perception of the UK, supports UK soft power, and contributes to the multiple positive outcomes of CPP, strengthening good governance, economic resilience through culture, and contributing to multiple FPPOs and SDGs.

## **6.0 Soft Power**

6.1 The FCO aims to lead delivery of the UK's first Soft Power strategy (FPPO4). Recent reports<sup>27</sup> highlight culture as key to this (and see 4.8). Soft power has significant impacts on foreign direct investment, overseas student recruitment, tourism, and international influence. A high culture rank<sup>28</sup> in the Good Country Index, for example, has a greater impact than any of other factor in the model for voting in the UN General Assembly – including a state's economic strength (measured in GDP); the UK ranks 11th (of 153).

6.2 A vital dimension of soft power is trust<sup>29</sup>: the British Council highlighted a connection between cultural relations and trust. UKBS experience of advising on CPP at the European level indicates a growing lack of trust in the UK. UKBS advice to EU members about new EU illicit trafficking regulations was dismissed due to "Brexit". In an internal UKBS paper on UKBS support for EU illicit trafficking prevention, the author, based on her experience, assumed "influence at EU level going forward is going to be extremely low"<sup>30</sup>.

6.3 FCO policy should integrate culture, and its international protection, as part of UK soft power, enhancing trust in all areas.

## **7.0 Recommendations:**

7.1 Culture and CPP should become an integrated part of FCO strategy. The FCO should explicitly develop its relationship with DCMS and DFID to enhance mutual strategic outcomes.

7.2 Specific goals should include:

- i. Developing and coordinating relationships with heritage agencies in other countries to benefit FCO FPPOs and maximise international development.
- ii. Work with, and acknowledge the role of, DCMS in combatting domestic terrorism.
- iii. Integrate the importance of, and weaponization of, culture in policy relating to Russia, the Western Balkans, the MENA Region, and the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, with particular attention to the role of CP destruction and protection in

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<sup>27</sup> British Council & University of Edinburgh, [Soft Power Today. Measuring the Influences and Effects](#) 2017  
British Council [Sources of Soft Power](#), 2019

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.goodcountry.org/index/results/#GBR>

<sup>29</sup> British Council report [The Value of Trust](#), 2018

<sup>30</sup> Rogers. UKBS Draft Proposal for Assisting the UK Government, EU National Committees and BSI on the lobbying and implementation of the EU Cultural Property Regulations. 2019

- the stabilisation and destabilisation of communities during and following conflict.
- iv. Promote and support international ratification and implementation of the HC54 amongst Commonwealth countries and Overseas Territories.
  - v. Strengthen support to cultural institutions in areas of conflict, our Overseas Territories, and Commonwealth countries as part of supporting security, stability, good governance, disaster resilience, and stronger economies.
  - vi. Develop the UK's involvement countering illicit trafficking, both through European responses and globally.
  - vii. Noting its clear impact on government perception and policy, develop CP management and protection as a key aspect of UK soft power strategy.

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