

## Written evidence submitted by Emma Sky (INR0044)

### Abstract

The UK's new orientation should be as a medium-sized power, working closely with our European partners and other middle powers, to help build a new international system which reflects modern day realities and addresses 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. We should work closely with the US to develop joint transatlantic approaches. We should actively engage with others – including, and especially, China – to combat climate change and manage pandemics. At the same time, we should ensure we are not dependent on China for technology and supply chains. Soft power is critical for generating cooperation and building coalitions to address global challenges. While other countries are realizing soft power's potential and investing in it, the UK - a recognized soft power superpower – is letting its assets decline. We need to reinvest in and harness our soft power – from across all parts of the UK - to keep Britain safe and prosperous and to contribute to a better world.

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1. The world is rapidly changing. The international system is transitioning from a unipolar to a multipolar world, with Pax Americana ending and China rising. Capitalism has increased inequalities within countries, fuelling populist backlashes against elites and experts. And new technologies have changed fundamentally the relationship between state and society and the way in which states interact.
2. Until recently, the UK sought to be a full member of both the US and EU systems - and assumed that China would integrate into the rules-based international order. The UK constantly touted its 'special relationship' with the US, sought to follow its lead on foreign policy, and assumed US leadership, platforms and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets in defence planning. But the US is no longer the 'city on the hill', nor the global policeman maintaining the stability of the international system. Its global reputation is declining. With Brexit, the UK is withdrawing from the EU system. And China has shown that it will not play by our rules, nor is it intending to move towards liberal democracy.
3. The COVID 19 pandemic has shown what a world without US leadership looks like. And it has revealed how interdependent we are; a virus springing from a wet market in Wuhan has spread to all corners of the globe. This may produce two antagonistic trends: one towards isolationism and self-reliance; and another towards internationalism and global coalitions.

4. The UK's new orientation should be as a medium-sized power, working closely with our European partners and other middle powers, to help build a new international system which reflects modern day realities and addresses 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. We should work closely with the US to develop joint transatlantic approaches. We should ensure we are not dependent on China for technology and supply chains. We should actively work with others – including, and especially, China – to combat climate change and manage pandemics. To be an effective middle power, we need to more effectively harness our soft power.

### **Soft Power**

5. As Henry Kissinger observed, a country's ability to shape and lead world events stems from its 'power' in terms of its military and its economy, as well as from its 'legitimacy', the recognized success of its own model of governance. Joseph Nye coined the term 'soft power' to describe the ability to influence others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment. A country's soft power rests on its culture, values and policies. "A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it."<sup>1</sup> A country's soft power can inspire others to take collective action. When used effectively with hard power, it can be a force-multiplier, and can help deliver 'smart' and more effective strategy.
6. Soft power can be measured and observed. Portland Communications has developed the SoftPower30 which combines both objective data across six categories (Government, Culture, Education, Global Engagement, Enterprise, and Digital) and international polling, to rate a country's soft power<sup>2</sup>. According to this index – and to others - the UK is a soft power superpower. The UK performs well across the Engagement, Culture, Education, and Digital sub-indices. Our greatest soft power strengths are in Culture and Education: our music, film, art and sport are popular around the world; our museums, galleries, and theatres attract millions of tourists; and our universities draw hundreds of thousands of international students each year.
7. It takes years to build up soft power – but it is easy to lose. Soft power requires constant cultivation. Despite our current strength in these areas, the UK's relative rankings are declining. We are ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the UNDP Human Development Report, 9<sup>th</sup> in the World Economic Forum Competitiveness Report; 8<sup>th</sup> easiest place in the world to do business.
8. Other countries are realizing soft power's potential and are investing in it. China has expanded its Confucius institutes, rebranded China Global Television Network, established a new Ministry of Overseas Aid, increased its commitment to UN peacekeeping with Chinese troops in international command structures. Russia has doubled the number of Russkiy Mir

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<sup>1</sup> Nye, Joseph. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> <https://softpower30.com/what-is-soft-power/>

Foundation centres. However, China and Russia damage their soft power through the deceptive use of information to undermine Western democracies. Brazil and South Korea have increased their investment in soft power activity. France and Germany also invest significantly in cultural diplomacy. In contrast, Britain has been steadily decreasing funding to those institutions that project soft power. This trend needs to be reversed.

### **The UK: attractive, trusted and connected**

9. The vision is for a secure and prosperous United Kingdom, which lives by its values, serves as a model to others, and contributes to solving global challenges.
10. Others find us attractive due to English as the global language; our democracy, our institutions, our rule of law; our safety and security; the quality of our education and health services; our freedoms which enable human flourishing and prosperity; our creativity and entrepreneurialism; our sports and our arts.
11. Our beliefs in freedom, justice and inclusion are embodied in our institutions and governance. The UK is recognized as a society that is open, free and fair, where the rule of law is respected, and where you can do business.
12. Trust is the bedrock of relationships. Strong trust-based relationships are essential for forging alliances, reaching agreements, and helping resolve global challenges. Soft power can build the mutual respect and trust that is critical for generating cooperation and building coalitions across governments, corporations and civil society.
13. Post pandemic, and with Brexit, there is the opportunity for government to improve public services, address inequalities in health, education and welfare outcomes, and increase its legitimacy. If the UK succeeds in driving a new wave of public sector innovation – as it did in the 1990s with the adoption of managerial practices from the private sector – then the UK can serve as a model for transformation of governments around the world.
14. The UK needs to increase resources to those organizations that are best placed to build trust, that forge international connections, that tell our story, and that listen to the anxieties and ambitions of others. With the ‘levelling up’ throughout the UK, there are increasing opportunities for the paradiplomacy of our cities and regions to contribute to soft power projection.

## Strategy

### ***Soft Power Objective 1: Investing in our soft power assets***

15. By attracting the brightest and best students from around the world, we not only enrich our universities intellectual life, we also create long lasting partnerships with people positively pre-disposed towards us. This can be beneficial in the future in working together to solve problems, drive innovation, and conduct business.
16. According to the Higher Education Policy Institute research, in 2019 **59 leaders in 53 countries** were educated in the UK compared to 62 leaders from 55 countries who were educated in the US and 40 leaders of 32 countries had studied in France.
17. Oxford and Cambridge remain in the top ten universities globally, and 18 of the world's top 100 are in the UK. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, 485,645 international students pursued their degree in the UK in 2018/2019. However, the UK's primacy is being challenged. Australia has strongly promoted its education with 720,150 international students in 2019, second only to the US.
18. Erasmus+ enables EU nationals and students from the EU neighbourhood to study in the UK. The UK needs to negotiate a deal so that it continues to participate in this programme post-Brexit so that Brits have the opportunity to expand their understanding of the world and build connections. We should also develop a similar scheme for the Commonwealth.
19. While UK higher education is still highly valued, academics and research staff have been leaving since 2016. The greater growth in the number of students has been hindered due to restrictive visa stipulations. Operating a visa regime that actively encourages people to spend time in the UK studying or working on a time-limited basis is vital. COVID-19 will mean a dramatic drop in numbers of international students for 2020/2021.
20. Our cultural assets and history are central to the UK's appeal. Our museums, theatres, galleries and festivals attract millions of tourists every year. Post-Brexit, British cities are no longer eligible to be selected as European capitals of culture<sup>3</sup>. However, we need to increase investment in institutions and in people not only in our cities, but also in local and regional cultural infrastructure.
21. British music is world class and with global reach, from Harry Styles and Ed Sheeran to the London Philharmonic. Our festivals, bands, concerts appeal to vast audiences from around the world.

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<sup>3</sup> Liverpool estimated it generated a return of 750 GBP to the local economy from a spending of 170 GBP from its designation as 2008 European Capital of Culture.

22. Sports is integral to British identity and a key contributor to the UK's attractiveness. Sports is accessible to all – and loved around the world. The Premier League players come from all over the world and different backgrounds. The game is governed by rules. Sportsmanship is valued. Success comes from hard work, talent, and team work. The UK should put together an impressive bid to host the World Cup in 2030. Brits also have a well-earned reputation in rugby, cricket, cycling and athletics. Recent Olympic hauls are evidence that investment pays off.
23. Innovation drives the UK's economic strength, productivity and competitiveness. The UK conducts world-class innovation across all the major commercial technology sectors with national security applications, including aerospace, biotechnology and medical sciences, big data, cyber security, satellites, robotics and advanced materials.
24. The creation of a “blue skies” science research agency has the potential to make the UK the global capital of science and technology. This will take time and needs funding from the government as well as venture capitalists. Investment in research and development can strengthen UK potential in artificial intelligence and data and ensure that the UK develops cutting edge technological capabilities. It could apply science and technology to public policy needs. For instance, mitigate climate change by reducing the cost of carbon capture.
25. The GREAT Britain campaign showcased the best of what Britain has to offer so as to encourage people to visit, study and do business with the UK. The campaign involves 17 Government departments and 350+ private and public partnerships in 144 markets around the world. According to the government, GREAT has achieved a confirmed economic return of over £1.2 billion from its activities since 2012 and is currently delivering a further £500 million. The campaign has changed target customer behaviour in key overseas markets, increasing audience intention to trade, invest, study in or visit the UK by between 10% to 16%. Private sector support to date is estimated to be worth £68 million. Post pandemic and Brexit, there needs to be a different campaign with stronger focus on EU countries to mend fences and build relationships to show we are still very much part of Europe; and to bring back international students, increasing the numbers, in particular, from India.

***Soft Power Objective 2: Projecting our soft power***

26. Soft power can promote understanding, prevent conflict, and build the trust necessary for people to coexist and co-operate to solve global challenges. Facilitating engagement with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, and conferences serves to build lasting relationships. By listening to others and seeking to understand them, we display humility and show we can be a valued partner.
27. The two most important institutions for projecting our soft power are the British Council and the BBC World Service.

28. The British Council, founded in 1934 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1940, is the UK's leading international cultural relations organization. The British Council has had its funding cut back, its staff downsized, and its role diminished over the past decade as it has struggled to articulate its purpose and its contribution. The British Council enables people across the globe to learn English, to study in the UK, to experience the best of British society. Through international exchanges, Brits - from England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, from across our countryside, towns and cities - build relationships, share expertise, and learn from elsewhere, contributing to the dynamism of our country. It works in over a 100 countries, reaching 80 million people directly and 791 million people overall, including online, through broadcasts and publications.
29. The British Council should be given responsibility for administering the Chevening, Marshall and Commonwealth scholarship schemes (funded through DFID and FCO), which provide the opportunity for young people of high ability, identified as future leaders, to study in the UK. The funding for these scholarships should be doubled. The British Council should be responsible for managing engagement with alumni of these schemes, organizing exchanges to ensure enduring relationships, and maintaining a strong international network of individuals who are friends of the UK.
30. The BBC World Service remains a byword for accurate and honest news, illuminating the lives of people across the globe, and helping them make sense of the world they live in. It reaches a weekly audience of around 279 million people around the world, a quarter of whom is aged between 15 and 24.
31. A Cultural Relations Fund could help re-engineer the British Council and the BBC World Service into a new configuration, along with higher education and museums, to harness UK innovation and creativity from across all parts of the UK, and more effectively project UK soft-power.

***Soft Power Objective 3: Strengthening contribution to addressing global challenges***

32. Pandemics, climate change, refugee flows, piracy, terrorism and cyber warfare, affect British citizens and require us to work with others to find solutions.
33. By strengthening the FCO, the UK can improve its contribution to resolving global challenges and keep our people safe. The FCO is a relic of its former self<sup>4</sup>. It has witnessed a massive reduction in resources, expertise, linguistic skills and analytical capabilities; the responsibilities that the FCO once held have moved to separate departments for aid and trade; and there is competition with the Cabinet office over certain policies. Its premium

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<sup>4</sup> <https://bfpg.co.uk/2019/06/running-out-of-credit/>

properties around the world serve as testimony to Britain's imperial past - and as a reminder of the lack of clarity of Britain's role in the world today.

34. Our diplomats should help conceive a new international system, preserving what is best about our 20<sup>th</sup> century order and developing new mechanisms and norms to deal with 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.
35. UK can exert greater leadership in convening others, using assets such as Wilton Park to bring together experts and policy makers working on global issues – and for Track II diplomacy.
36. DFID should be viewed as a key element of UK engagement in the world and the building of alliances. The UK has enshrined into law our commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on Official Development Assistance. By maintaining a large development budget, we are showing that the UK post-Brexit is not withdrawing from the world. COVID-19 provides the impetus for global solidarity and global public investment. DFID should lead on a new conceptualization of the philosophy, framework and architecture for aid. It should also re-evaluate working not only in the poorest countries but also in mid-income ones as well.
37. The UK is the first major economy to pass laws to bring greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Our international credibility depends on the actions we take domestically. Emerging from COVID19, the government can adopt policies for cleaner air, improved health, and new green jobs. The UK has agreed to double its international climate finance to help developing countries adapt to climate change and promote cleaner, greener growth, pledging at least £11.6 billion over the next five years, between 2021/22 to 2025/26. As part of this, the new £1 billion Ayrton Fund supports British scientists and innovators to create new technology to help developing countries reduce their emissions and meet global climate change targets.

## **Conclusion**

38. The UK has been hit hard by COVID19. It has exposed our lack of preparedness to manage such crises - and the limitations of our economic model. The focus on efficiencies, cost reductions and just-in-time supply chains has resulted in inadequate resilience in our systems and increasing inequalities in our society. COVID has also revealed the need for more effective international cooperation and institutions to find global solutions to global challenges.
39. The pandemic – and Brexit – provide the opportunity to reconceptualize Britain's place in the world as a middle power, working closely with European countries and other middle powers, to find common ground with the US, and to develop an agenda for managing China and addressing climate change.

40. To be a respected and effective middle power, the UK needs to build more resilience into our systems and improve our own governance, developing a model that others might seek to emulate. Influence abroad grows from strength at home. We need to invest in and harness our soft power more effectively to keep Britain safe and prosperous and to contribute to a better world.

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