

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a busy city street at night. The street is filled with cars, including taxis and vans, and a large crowd of pedestrians. The scene is illuminated by streetlights and building lights, creating a vibrant, urban atmosphere. The text 'THE SOFT POWER 30' is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

# THE SOFT POWER 30

A GLOBAL RANKING OF SOFT POWER

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# FOREWORD BY JOSEPH S. NYE, JR.

Global power is shifting and the old certainties are disappearing fast. Political and economic power is moving from West to East and from governments to non-state actors. Challenges and opportunities are rarely contained within national borders, demanding collaboration not coercion.

In this more confused, complex and multi-polar world, the limits of hard power - the use of force, threats, sanctions or payments - are becoming more obvious. It has also seen the concept of soft power - the use of attraction and persuasion to achieve goals - move from the world of academia to the front-page of newspapers and the speeches of our political leaders.

However, wider usage has not always meant wider understanding. Soft power is too often misappropriated to cover all courses of action outside military force and, as such, is often embraced as the ethical alternative. Yet soft power can be wielded for bad purposes as well as good, as Hitler, Stalin, and Mao each demonstrated. It is not a choice between hard realism and idealism but simply another form of power which can be used to get desired outcomes.

Soft power also finds itself dismissed by sceptics as little more than a fashionable academic theory. But while the name may be recent, it is as old as human history. It is implicit in Lao-tsu's comment that a leader is best not when people obey his commands, but when they barely know he exists. The centuries' old efforts to spread French language and culture have enhanced France's power and explains why, even though it is no longer deserved, French remains known as 'the language of diplomacy'. More recently, American 'Jazz Diplomacy' in the post-WWII era complemented Marshall Plan efforts as an implicit nod to the power of being liked.

Even those who accept the role that soft power can play to help achieve foreign policy goals often underestimate the difficulties of incorporating it effectively into a national strategy. Soft power may appear a better, less risky option than economic or military power, but it is often hard to use, easy to lose, and costly to re-establish.

## “...the clearest picture to date of global soft power.”

Soft power outcomes have to be coaxed into fruition, not forced like hard power approaches. The results of leveraging soft power can take a long time when the imperative is for a prompt return on investment. Nor, crucially, are the instruments of soft power fully under the control of governments. Culture and values belong to societies. The successful use of soft power also rests on credibility. When governments are perceived as manipulative and information is seen as propaganda, credibility is destroyed. The best propaganda is not propaganda.

We must also be careful to recognise the limits of soft power. It is hard to see how it can be deployed, for example, to solve the ongoing Syrian crisis. But this does not mean, as some critics suggest, that soft power really is not power at all. All forms of power have limitations. When foreign policy goals include the promotion of democracy, human rights, and freedom, soft power turns out to be superior to hard power. In an era marked by increased information and a diffusion of power, it will become an increasingly important part of effective foreign policy strategies.

But in order to deploy soft power to achieve their wider foreign policy goals, governments must first understand the resources they can deploy and understand where they might be effective. Up to now, this has too often relied on guess work and intuition with little chance for countries to compare either resources or capabilities, let alone performance. This project does an admirable job in working to overcome these barriers.

It builds upon my own work in developing the concept of soft power by assessing each country against a carefully considered set of objective metrics as well as new international polling data. The result is the clearest picture to date of global soft power. It is a useful addition to the field of research on soft power, and I suspect it will provide food for thought in capitals around the world.

***Joseph Nye***

July 2015

# INTRO- DUCTION

The distribution of global power is rapidly evolving, precipitating far-reaching economic and political changes affecting nations of every size and standing. Traditionally, power in international relations has been defined and assessed in easily quantifiable 'hard' terms, often understood in the context of military and economic might. Hard power is the exercise of influence through coercion, relying on tactics like military intervention, coercive diplomacy, inducements of payment, and economic sanctions.<sup>i</sup>

Soft power, on the other hand, is the 'ability to affect others to obtain preferred outcomes by the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuasion and positive attraction'.<sup>ii</sup> Soft power strategies eschew the traditional foreign policy tools of the carrot and stick, working instead to persuade by using networks, developing and communicating compelling narratives, establishing international norms, building coalitions, and drawing on the key resources that endear one country to another. In simple terms, 'hard power is push; soft power is pull'.<sup>iii</sup>

'Soft power' was first coined in 1990 by Harvard professor Joseph Nye, though Nye himself cites examples of soft power that go back centuries and span cultures. Soft power is neither new, nor is its use limited to the Western world. Nye used the term to describe the ability of a country to use attraction and persuasion in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives, as opposed to force or financial payments. The appeal of soft power rests in its promise to deliver key international objectives without the high costs associated with the exercise of hard power. As a result, savvy governments have latched onto the concept, hoping to use it to achieve foreign policy goals. They are right to do so. Indeed, the ability of a country to engage with and attract global audiences has never been so critical to prosperity, security, and international influence.

This has seen the concept of soft power make a swift transition from university lecture halls to the corridors of power. In the first half of this decade, the term has come to populate news stories, op-ed pages, the speeches of world leaders, and foreign ministry strategy documents. Yet despite this familiarity, there remains a significant gap between the enthusiasm governments have displayed for soft power and their corresponding ability to leverage it effectively.

There are, however, patchy signs of improvement. A growing number of successful one-off initiatives are serving to demonstrate the value of soft power in pursuit of a specific cause or objective. Examples can be found in the Ottawa Process to ban landmines, the UN small arms trade treaty,

**The ability of a country to engage with and attract global audiences has never been so critical to prosperity, security, and international influence.**



or even the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Yet governments constantly show they lack the ability to build soft power into their overarching national strategies. There are many reasons but near the top of the list of inhibitors is their failure to understand and account for the resources that determine the extent of the soft power at their disposal.

Without a full and clear picture of these resources, there can be little hope of deploying soft power in a strategic, coordinated, and - ultimately - effective way. It is why a national inventory of soft power assets is essential. This challenge is easy enough to identify, but much more difficult to address. Soft power is notoriously difficult to measure for three main reasons. First, it is inherently subjective and its influence is often dependent on the target in question. As Nye has previously argued, what attracts in Paris might repel in Riyadh.<sup>iv</sup> Second, it can be ephemeral. Soft power reserves that have been built up over decades can vanish overnight with a few bad decisions. Finally, the sources of soft power are numerous and can be difficult to measure. In short, categorising and quantifying soft power at the national level is a complex and demanding task with few methodological precedents on which to build.

**Without a full and clear picture of these resources, there can be little hope of deploying soft power in a strategic, coordinated, and – ultimately – effective way. It is why a national inventory of soft power assets is essential.**

The purpose of this report is to provide a new, comprehensive framework for measuring and comparing the factors that underpin and determine a country's soft power. It seeks to give an accurate

account of their potential for international influence. The new composite index builds on the existing field of research, while taking a practical approach to addressing the long standing 'measurement challenge' of soft power. The Soft Power 30 country rankings, based on the index, are the result of a research collaboration between Portland, Facebook, and ComRes.

The report includes a discussion on the wider context of soft power and why it merits greater attention. It assesses the measurement challenge and argues that despite the difficulty in producing accurate metrics, understanding what soft power a country has at its disposal is essential for its effective use. Sections on the methodology and results follow, as well as a full breakdown of the results of the index and an analysis of the rankings. Following a discussion of the results, we turn to the growing importance of digital diplomacy as both a generator of soft power and a means to deploy it. Finally, the report concludes with some thoughts on the challenge of converting soft power resources into influence and opportunities for future research.

Regardless of the subject, no composite index is perfect and this winitial effort is no exception. However, as the first index of soft power to combine objective metrics with international polling, we feel it represents significant progress in the effort to build better evidence and metrics. We see this inaugural index as a living project and intend to strengthen it in future. As a result, we welcome all comments, critiques, and feedback.

Whatever shortcomings this first index may have, we are confident that it is a major advance on what existed before and will prove to be of value to researchers and particularly leaders, policy makers, and diplomats. We hope the index serves as a catalyst for further improvements in measurement, the building of better evidence, and more effective soft power strategies, policies, and initiatives.

# WHY DOES SOFT POWER MATTER?

- [A A Networked, Digital World](#)
- [B The Challenges Ahead](#)
- [C Soft Power's Growing Importance](#)

**T**he growing weight and importance given to the concept of soft power is a natural response to a rapidly changing global context.

While it is hardly a new insight, it remains true that global geo-politics are in the midst of a fundamental transformation, throwing up a host of new challenges for leaders, policy makers, and diplomats. In terms of the importance of soft power, this shifting landscape is being driven by two megatrends. The first is the rise of networks as the driving force in global affairs. The second, and closely related trend, is the digital revolution, which means world events – large and small – increasingly play out online.

**With more actors crowding the world stage and vying for influence, networks offer a means to coordinate interests, pool resources, and ultimately shape global outcomes**

## **A** A NETWORKED, DIGITAL WORLD

There are three main factors that are driving global affairs away from bilateral diplomacy and hierarchies and toward a much more complex world of networks. The first factor is the rapid diffusion of power between states. This century has seen the start of the global centre of economic and political power transfer from West to East. Whether it is the BRICs, MINTs, CIVETs, VISTAs or whatever trendy acronym might come next, the 'rise of the rest' has helped create a genuinely multi-polar world. The period of post-Cold War American hegemony began fading almost as soon as it arrived.

We have also seen the erosion of traditional power hierarchies. The nation state is no longer the only

relevant actor in global affairs. At the same time power is moving from West to East, it is also shifting away from states altogether, as non-state actors – NGOs, multi-lateral organisations, corporations, civil society groups or even individuals – play increasingly significant roles and wield greater influence in world affairs.<sup>v</sup>

The third agent of transformation is the mass urbanisation of the world's population. Only in the last few years has human history reached a point where the majority of people around the world live in cities.<sup>vi</sup> This trend will continue with the proportion of urban dwellers rising ever higher. Global urbanisation has implications for how information is shared, the diffusion of technology, cross-pollination of ideas, innovation, and the development of political movements. Moreover, cities themselves are becoming more assertive global actors in their own right.<sup>vii</sup> This trend challenges the primacy of the nation-state as the sole government actor in international relations. The rise of the city presents opportunities, but also illustrates the drift of power away from the nation state.

With more actors crowding the world stage and vying for influence, networks offer a means to coordinate interests, pool resources, and ultimately shape global outcomes. Border-spanning networks may comprise a diverse set of actors, drawing together governments and a range of non-government actors. They may form to tackle complex collective-action problems like climate change, or take up single issues like ending sexual

violence in conflict zones. The life-span of such networks will vary by issue, but the speed with which they form and the ease with which they can now coordinate has made them a major factor in driving global change.

The second interlinked megatrend driving global change is that the world increasingly lives online. There are now over three billion internet users across the world, nearly half of the global population. In economic terms, the internet economy will be worth £2.7 trillion (\$4.2 trillion) by 2016 in the G-20 economies alone.<sup>viii</sup> Millions of transactions take place online every day, with news and entertainment increasingly delivered via web-based channels. More of day-to-day life has gone digital. There are now over two billion active social media accounts.

Governments are joining the online conversation as well. Looking at the two most popular platforms, Facebook and Twitter, there has been a huge uptake from governments to social media. According to initial internal estimates, there are currently 155 countries that have a world leader or ministry of foreign affairs with an active Facebook page. Over 190 countries now have some presence on Twitter with more than 4,000 embassies and ambassadors boasting active accounts.<sup>ix</sup> Many major NGOs and multilateral organisations have followed suit, or in many cases led the way.

The growth in computing power, the speed with which information is disseminated around the globe, and the spread of the smartphone has transformed the way information is shared. The subsequent democratisation of access to information has created a more informed - and increasingly activist - global public. The combined effects of rapid technological advances on global events have been demonstrated in the Arab Spring, the rise of Wikileaks, the #Occupy movement, citizen-journalism, and even the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. The rapid movement of information across borders, and the proliferation of platforms to share that information, has made individuals more powerful than they have been at any point in history.<sup>x</sup>

One important aspect of the digital world has been difficult for many heads of government, foreign ministries, and over-zealous state-broadcasters to accept: propaganda as we know it is dead. Governments and their various interlocutors no longer have the luxury of offering domestic audiences one message whilst feeding another to the international community. Moreover, any discrepancy between a country's international messaging and its corresponding conduct is leapt on by media, governments, pressure groups, and individuals. With information speeding across borders, the inconsistencies between a state's policy and messaging are more conspicuous. In today's networked world of instant information, global publics are smarter, more engaged, and likely to dismiss propaganda when they see it.<sup>xi</sup>

Rather than maximising the opportunities this provides for genuine dialogue, we have unfortunately seen some governments respond to the threat to propaganda by creating a state-backed 'troll army'. The practice of employing people to create fake social media accounts to both harass dissenting opinion and try to shape debate on digital platforms, is receiving increasing attention in Western media.<sup>xii</sup> There has, however, yet to be a comprehensive assessment of the effect such practices have on their target audiences.

## **One important aspect of the digital world has been difficult for many heads of government, foreign ministries, and over-zealous state-broadcasters to accept: propaganda as we know it is dead.**

For most Western governments, these two megatrends - and the challenges they present - have come at a time when the resources available to adapt to them have been reduced. Foreign ministries have not managed to avoid deep spending cuts as governments struggle to get

their public finances back under control. The UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office has suffered a 41% reduction in the department's total annual budget from 2010/11 to 2015/16.<sup>xiii</sup> The U.S. State Department's annual appropriations have fallen by 21% from 2010 to 2014.<sup>xvi</sup> Even the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has seen its annual budget drop by 8% from 2011 to 2014, according to figures in a 2014 speech by French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius.

Similar reductions have been demanded of other public institutions that play a role in generating and projecting their country's soft power. The BBC World Service, for example, has undergone a total restructuring of its funding mechanism and now faces a less than certain financial future. The British Council, another pillar of British soft power, has seen its government funding cut by 25% from 2010/11 to 2013/14.<sup>xv</sup>

This is worrying as the above trends will make the tools and approaches of soft power more, not less, important to achieving foreign policy objectives. Reducing soft power capabilities at a time when they are increasingly critical to achieving both security to prosperity objectives may well prove to be a false economy.

## **B** THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

These trends are rewriting the rules of global power politics and reshaping the map countries must navigate in pursuit of their foreign policy objectives. The effectiveness of traditional, state-to-state diplomacy is being rapidly eroded and new approaches to both strategy and tactics are required. This extends not only to the major global challenges of our time, but also the more narrow issues countries face in pursuing their respective national interests.

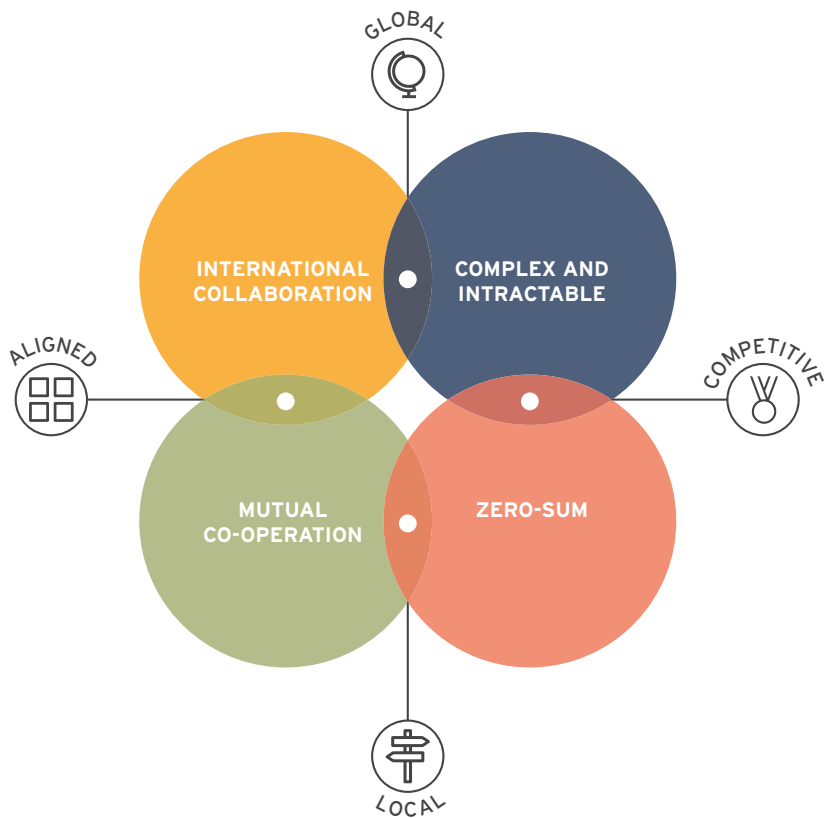
To understand the impact of the factors driving a networked and digital world on all countries, it is important to set them in the context of foreign policy. This requires an attempt to provide

structure to the analysis of issues in international relations. Foreign policy challenges facing states today can be roughly ordered using criteria to gauge a given issue's geographic impact and its relative complexity. While recognising this exercise involves a degree of oversimplification, these two criteria can be used to form a 2x2 matrix (illustrated in Figure 1), which provides a useful framework for categorising foreign policy challenges.

The Y-axis of the matrix uses a Global vs Local spectrum, capturing the extent to which a given challenge or issue affects the whole of the world or is limited to a single region or state. All local or regional events, of course, can have wider consequences that stretch beyond their immediate area. In a sense, everything is global now. However, the spectrum attempts to differentiate between issues and challenges that are primarily localised, having a much greater effect on the immediate parties involved, as opposed to those issues with a truly global impact.

The X-axis of the matrix uses a spectrum of Aligned vs Competitive, attempting to reflect the relative diversity and complexity of views and interests involved in a given foreign policy challenge. For the purposes of simplification, and because this research project is primarily concerned with governments, the various interests around an issue relate only to states. At the Competitive end of the spectrum, there are conflicting interests that cannot be easily reconciled. At the Aligned end, the interests of the actors involved may overlap - or at least are not mutually exclusive. Agreement on action - collective or unilateral - at this end of the spectrum is achievable.

Using this matrix we can create a simplified typology of current foreign policy challenges corresponding to the four resulting quadrants. Starting with the most difficult type in the north-east quadrant of the matrix, Complex and Intractable challenges are the ones that loom large over the global community. These challenges are inherently global. They often affect



every country and region, and have implications and consequences that stretch across borders, populations, interest groups, and economic sectors. They also involve a multitude of conflicting interests jockeying for position.

Complex and Intractable problems can only be addressed through long-term collective action. Developing and delivering workable solutions to such challenges requires cooperation and collaboration between multiple actors, meaning governments, NGOs, multi-lateral organisations, companies, foundations and other institutions. Perhaps most importantly, solutions will require countries to make different levels of contribution and sacrifice. Examples of Complex and Intractable challenges include climate change, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, water and food security, international terrorism, cyber security, and - the Holy Grail - effective and equitable global governance.

Remaining in the top half of the matrix, the North West quadrant captures International Collaboration challenges. These problems are global in nature,

but in contrast to Intractable and Complex, addressing them should result in a net gain for all states. Examples of International Collaboration challenges include controlling the spread of epidemics, maintaining safe and opening trading lanes in international waters, governance of the internet, and even meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These types of challenges are expansive in their impact on the world, but they are not plagued by various competing interests between states, e.g. no government has the expressed policy of spreading pandemics. This is not to say meeting these challenges is easy, but finding a path towards collaboration that results in mutual global benefit should be possible.

Rationally, states, should always aspire to more collaboration in an effort to meet the most pressing challenges affecting the wider global community. In reality, this ambition can be deflected by the need for governments to deliver security and prosperity for their citizens in a shorter time-frame than global co-operation will allow. At times, meeting these objectives could well force governments to put the narrow national interests of their state

against those of others. Whether in conflicting or collaborative circumstances, the bottom half of the matrix looks at issues that are primarily local or regional.

Looking first at the Competitive end of localised challenges, the South East quadrant of the matrix, Zero-Sum, captures foreign policy scenarios that pit the interests of one state directly against another. While these issues may not necessarily have an impact beyond the region or even countries in question, they will be acutely felt by the actors involved. Quick and equitable solutions do not exist. Territorial disputes, like that between India and Pakistan, are one example of Zero-Sum challenges. Another would be the 55 year-old US trade embargo imposed on Cuba - though that could be coming to an end soon. In a sense, Palestine's efforts to achieve recognition as a state could also fit into this category. Zero-Sum issues are defined by a trade-off with a clear winner and loser.

## **Rationally, states, should always aspire to more collaboration in an effort to meet the most pressing challenges affecting the wider global community.**

The fourth and final quadrant bucks the notion of conflict and describes foreign policy issues that are both localised and often positive-sum in nature. The Mutual Cooperation quadrant captures issues where bilateral cooperation can result in gains for all actors involved. Examples include establishing bilateral trade agreements, formal cooperation in science and technology research, attracting new foreign direct investment, and even securing growth in tourism. The Mutual Cooperation quadrant reflects those elements of international relations that involve mutually beneficial exchange between two parties. The issues are less complex and all involved parties stand to gain from the eventual outcome.



## **SOFT POWER'S GROWING IMPORTANCE**

Developing and delivering effective foreign policy is a core obligation of the state, but given the shifts outlined above, this task is growing in complexity. Foreign policy has never been simple, but in an increasingly multi-polar world - with more actors, more platforms, and more interests all vying for global influence - international relations have become a fast-changing labyrinth. Opportunities still exist for states of every size to achieve their aims, but success depends more than ever on the ability to attract, persuade, and mobilise others. In this new complex world, a critical foreign policy lever is soft power.

As the conduct of foreign policy increasingly operates not along traditional state-to-state lines, but through complex, multi-level, interdependent, and fluid networks, governments and their diplomats must adapt.<sup>xvi</sup> Those countries with the ability to form and mobilise networks will be the ones driving change and shaping the key outcomes of global affairs.

If networks are now the engines of global change, then soft power is the fuel that powers them. Only through soft power can states hope to marshal trans-national networks towards action. The ability to shape a compelling narrative, maintain the connections required to assemble an international network, and radiate the attractive pull needed to inspire others to collaborate towards a shared objective, all rests on soft power.

Whether intractable or solvable, the defining global challenges of today are essentially collective action problems, though solving those does not always require new action as such. In some cases, an issue is resolved by arriving at a global agreement on new binding rules around a given issue. Cyber security - which has the potential to bring the critical infrastructure of nations to a grinding halt - illustrates such a challenge. Ideally, it should sit squarely in the International Collaboration

quadrant, though it would be foolhardy to discount the malicious intent of some actors when it comes to cyber espionage and even warfare.

As an emerging issue lacking clarity, definition, and rules, the world's major powers are in desperate need of a comprehensive code of conduct on cyber security and electronic warfare. Building a universally accepted set of rules of engagement - as well as a system to deter cyber terrorism and crime - is a global imperative. The recent hacking of the US Office of Personnel Management's records of four million federal employees has been described as the American 'Cyber Pearl Harbor'.<sup>xvii</sup> Meeting this challenge, which grows more perilous by the day, will require leadership, collaboration, and a great deal of soft power to shape and secure global agreement.

While foreign policy challenges certainly require soft power to grease the wheels of collaboration and collective action, the attraction afforded by soft power is also increasingly crucial in meeting the more localised challenges that countries face. Looking at the Zero-Sum challenges, nations need to rally others to their cause even when it is ultimately a bilateral conflict.

## The world's major powers are in desperate need of a comprehensive code of conduct on cyber security and electronic warfare.

In the South China Sea, competing territorial claims between China and a group of nations including Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Brunei, have led to escalations in political rhetoric, nationalism, posturing, and a larger military presence in the region on all sides. The most sensible policy response from the largest group of countries affected has been to use the multi-lateral organisation, the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). With its ten member states, ASEAN is the most well-established and influential network in the region. China and ASEAN reached a code of conduct agreement in 2002 to establish a framework for maritime comportment in the region. There is still much to be done to solve the South China Sea dispute, but ASEAN working in congress will be crucial if the interests of the smaller states in the dispute are to prevail. Moreover, the states in question could benefit from leveraging soft power to appeal to outside powers and multi-lateral organisations. The classical bi-lateral approach to solving each states' dispute with China will not work.

When dealing with foreign policy in the broadest sense, it is easy to think only in terms of the major global challenges and intractable regional conflicts. Yet foreign policy goals go far wider than the defence and security sphere. Indeed, the foreign policy priorities of most governments also focus on delivering prosperity and economic development. In many ways, this moves us away from a framework of competing interests towards a context of identifying and promoting mutual gains through economic partnership, exchange, and investment.

Economic diplomacy is hardly new, but a number of governments are putting greater emphasis on prosperity-linked objectives. Many foreign ministries are working to improve their capabilities in economic and trade analysis as well as developing a more commercial approach to activity in diplomatic missions abroad. We can also see this trend in the growing number of new agencies and departments geared towards promoting prosperity. Departments for trade, inward investment promotion agencies, economic development authorities, and culture and tourism ministries are taking up a larger share of international engagement efforts.

While each pursue their own specific objectives, the relatively new set of economically minded international engagement agencies - whether focusing on tourism, investment, or export - are



all working to cultivate and leverage soft power. The successful pursuit of economic objectives in the international arena requires an understanding of soft power and how to use it to deliver positive outcomes. Soft power is the critical factor in the ability of all countries – with the possible exception of those with rich natural resources – to attract economic partners and achieve prosperity-linked foreign policy objectives.

Whether a state is facing a zero-sum conflict, concerned about a major global issue, or simply looking to increase levels of foreign direct investment into the country, soft power's role is crucial to success. It clearly is the most important factor in those challenges which fall within the International Collaboration and Mutual Cooperation quadrants of our foreign policy matrix.

Even in those where hard power is likely to win the day, soft power has a growing role to play.

The Arctic Council, which was established in 1996 to deal with multilateral issues in the Arctic territory, is a good example. With new shipping routes and untold resources slowly becoming accessible, territory disputes would seem inevitable. However, the Arctic Council's collaborative network approach to balancing the interests of member states has so far staved off any major security issues or geopolitical escalation in the Arctic. As soft power's role in all types of foreign policy challenges continues to grow, those states that can master their soft power will be at a distinct advantage to their peers.

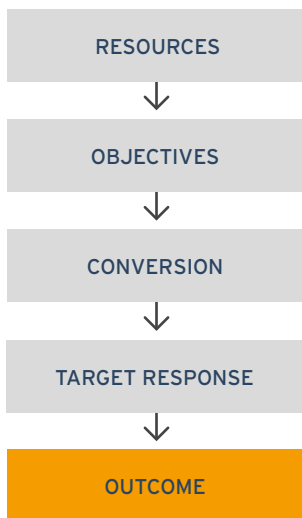


# BUILDING A FRAMEWORK

- A** Objective Data
- B** Subjective Data
- C** Limitations and Shortcomings

If the combined effects of the major global shifts outlined above are shaping a world better suited to the exercise of soft power, then those countries most adept at its use will enjoy a significant advantage over their counterparts. This leads to the question of how can a country effectively use soft power? Joseph Nye’s own model for the conversion of soft power into a desired outcome comprises five steps.<sup>xviii</sup> As shown in Figure 2, the first step in the process of converting soft power into a successful outcome is identifying the resources that will affect the target(s) in question.

**Figure 2 - Soft Power Conversion Process**



Nye, J. (2011) *The Future of Power*, New York: Public Affairs

As argued in previous sections, and in line with Nye’s own model for deploying soft power, the use of attraction must begin with a clear account

of available resources and an understanding for where they will be effective. It is at this first hurdle of using soft power that most governments fall. But this is understandable as the difficulty of measuring soft power is well documented.<sup>xix</sup> The first efforts to measure soft power - whether they were explicitly designed as such or not - were international polling projects. Research like the Pew’s Global Attitudes Project, the BBC World Service’s Country Ratings Poll, or the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brand Index, all aim to capture the overall attractiveness of or favourability towards a country. Even if these polls were not designed with the explicit purpose of measuring soft power, they serve as a helpful proxy.

The first attempt at measuring soft power by assessing the specific resources that determine it was undertaken by the Institute for Government and Monocle magazine with the creation of the IfG-Monocle Soft Power Index.<sup>xx</sup> This index was the first of its kind in that it identified and categorised the various sources of soft power that determine a country’s potential ability to convert soft power into influence in foreign policy. It was also the first to combine objective metrics with subjective data - the subjective data being provided by an expert panel that assessed countries according to seven different factors.<sup>xxi</sup>

The IfG-Monocle Soft Power Index broke new ground both as the first to attempt to explicitly quantify soft power, but also in the methodology it employed. Before the first iteration of the IfG-Monocle Soft Power Index was published in

2010, public perception was the only means of measuring and comparing the soft power of states. While it certainly has its uses, polling can only capture perceptions. It cannot provide an objective assessment of the reality of resources, values, and actions that ultimately constitute a nation's soft power.

Prior to the IfG-Monocle Soft Power Index, research on soft power measurement was scant. However, the literature on soft power does contain ample discussion on the constituent parts that lead to its creation. Nye has previously pointed to three primary sources of soft power: culture, political values, and foreign policy.<sup>xxii</sup> In a soft power context, culture is defined as the 'set of practices that create meaning for a society'.<sup>xxiii</sup> This includes high culture like literature, visual art, and theatre, which is more likely to appeal to an elite audience. It also includes television, cinema, and pop music aimed at mass entertainment markets. The political values, laws, and institutions that govern a nation strongly impact global perceptions of that country. When government institutions effectively uphold values like transparency, justice, and equality at home, they are naturally more attractive to publics abroad. As a soft power resource, foreign policy captures the extent to which a state is seen as operating with moral authority in its conduct abroad, i.e. is a country acting as a global force for good or ill?<sup>xxiv</sup>

The Soft Power 30 framework takes Nye's three pillars as a starting point and builds on them. We have also taken a great deal of inspiration from the IfG-Monocle Soft Power Index. Maintaining a similar framework, our composite index assesses the soft power of countries by combining objective and subjective data. However, in addition to a number of differences in approach and individual metrics, there are three fundamental differences between the IfG-Monocle Soft Power Index and the rankings produced by The Soft Power 30.

The first difference is a new 'digital and digital diplomacy' component. Digital platforms and social media form an ever-larger part of both

state-to-state diplomacy and public diplomacy as well. As we felt that digital diplomacy now plays a significant role in international dialogue, media, public diplomacy, and campaigning, an accurate measure of soft power had to include a digital element.

The second major difference is the inclusion of specially commissioned international polling from twenty different countries that provide coverage of every major region of the globe. Polling has been carried out in partnership with London-based research and polling firm ComRes.

The third fundamental difference rests in the methodology of the index, particularly a more nuanced approach to the normalisation of the data, as well as a regression analysis-based rationale for a system of weighting each category of the international polling differently. The combined effect of these three advances is the creation of the most accurate assessment of global soft power to date. The final score for each country is calculated by adding the combined scores of the objective sub-indices (which, together, are given a combined weight of 70%) and the combined weighted score of the polling categories (which, together, are given a combined weight of 30%). The 70-to-30 objective-to-subjective weighting was done because the index prioritises the soft power resources that exist in reality. Opinion is important, but The Soft Power 30 aims to measure objective, tangible assets that contribute to a country's soft power. In total there are 65 metrics across the objective and subjective data. A more detailed discussion of the methodology used to build and calculate The Soft Power 30 rankings can be found in Appendix A.

**The combined effect of these three advances is the creation of the most accurate assessment of global soft power to date.**

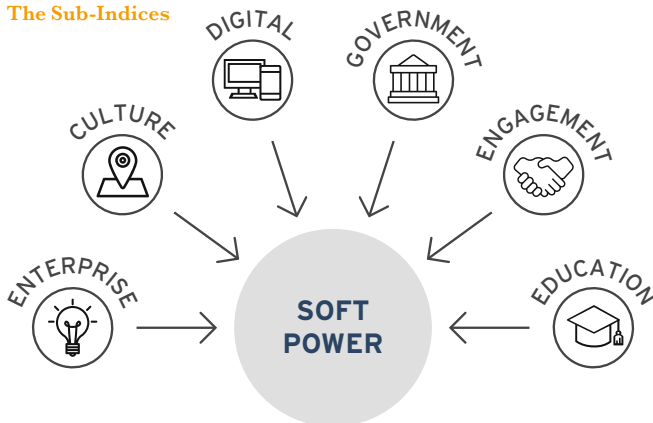
Countries for the index were not selected according to rigid formula or set criteria, but chosen to give a representative sample of the world's major powers, including countries from every geo-political region. The selection process included major OECD countries, the emerging BRIC nations and several smaller countries that have achieved an outsized level of influence. Data was collected for

50 countries in total, and we have published the top 30 ranking countries. This was done so as to keep the presentation of results and information to a manageable scale.

## A OBJECTIVE DATA

The objective data is drawn from a range of different sources and structured into six categories, with each category functioning as a sub-index with its own individual score. The six sub-indices are: Government, Culture, Engagement,

Figure 3-  
The Sub-Indices



Education, Digital, and Enterprise. The framework of categories was built on a survey of existing academic literature on soft power. Figure 3 below illustrates the six sub-indices that constitute The Soft Power 30. A list of the indicators and data sources is given in Appendix B.

The Government sub-index is designed to assess a state's public institutions, political values, and major public policy outcomes. A successful model of domestic government is an important feature of a nation's overall attractiveness. By including measures like individual freedom, human development, violence in society, and government effectiveness, the Government sub-index assesses the extent to which a country has an attractive model of governance and whether it can deliver

good outcomes for its citizens. When it comes to international collaboration in foreign policy, an attractive partner is one that has its own house in order.<sup>xxv</sup>

When a country's culture promotes universal values that other nations can readily identify with, it makes them naturally attractive to others.<sup>xxvi</sup> The reach and volume of cultural output is important in building soft power, but mass production does not necessarily lead to mass influence. As a result, our index includes measures of culture that serve to capture both the quality and the international penetration of a country's cultural production. The Culture sub-index includes measures like the annual number of visiting international tourists, the global success of a country's music industry, and even a nation's international sporting prowess.

The Engagement sub-index aims to measure a country's diplomatic resources, global footprint, and contribution to the international community. Essentially it captures the ability of states to engage with international audiences, drive collaboration, and ultimately shape global outcomes. The Engagement sub-index includes metrics such as the number of embassies (or high commissions in the case of Commonwealth countries) a country has abroad, membership in multilateral organisations, and overseas development aid.

In his own analysis, Nye includes education in the 'cultural' category of soft power sources, but owing to the number of studies documenting the impact of higher education on soft power, we felt a separate Education sub-index was necessary. The ability of a country to attract foreign students, or facilitate exchanges, is a powerful tool of public diplomacy, even between countries with a history of animosity.<sup>xxvii</sup> Prior research on educational exchanges gives empirical evidence for the reputational gains that accrue to a host country when foreign students return home.<sup>xxviii</sup> Foreign student exchanges have also been shown to have positive indirect 'ripple effects' when returning students advocate on behalf of their

host country of study.<sup>xxix</sup> The Education sub-index aims to capture this phenomenon as well as the contribution countries make to global scholarship and pedagogical excellence. Metrics in this sub-index include the number of international students in a country, the relative quality of its universities, and the academic outputs of higher education institutions.

Though elements relating to the economy may seem more of a hard than soft power concern, the Enterprise sub-index is not a measure of economic power or output. Rather, this sub-index aims to capture the relative attractiveness of a country's economic model in terms of its competitiveness, capacity for innovation, and ability to foster enterprise and commerce. Economic might is more associated with hard power, but economic factors can contribute to soft power as well.

In practice it can be difficult to distinguish between the hard and soft elements of economic power, but we have worked to incorporate measures of value, quality and outcomes, as opposed to volume of economic output.<sup>xxx</sup> One of the best examples of the pull of an economic model has been the European Union's eastward expansion into the former Soviet Bloc. Of course the expansion had a great deal to do with politics, but the attractive free-market economic model of Western Europe has been cited as an example of a soft power success.<sup>xxxi</sup> Taking account of softer economic factors, we included metrics for innovation, entrepreneurship, and competitiveness.

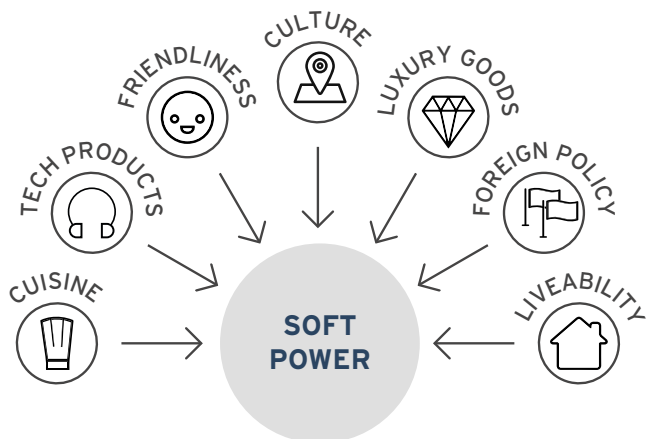
The Digital sub-index brings an important new component to the measure of soft power. The ways that technology has transformed everyday life over the last two decades is hard to over-exaggerate. Media, commerce, government, and our daily social interaction have all changed with technology. The same can be said of foreign policy, the practice of public diplomacy, and soft power. The inclusion of a Digital sub-index aims to capture the extent to which countries have embraced technology, how well they are connected to the digital world, and their use of digital diplomacy through social media platforms.

## B SUBJECTIVE DATA

One of the biggest challenges of measuring soft power is its inherently subjective nature. Rather than attempt to design against subjectivity, our index embraces the subjective nature of soft power. Our index represents a first in the measure of soft power in that it incorporates international polling from twenty different countries. The specially commissioned polling, carried out by ComRes, serves as the subjective data for the index.

Using an overview of existing soft power academic literature, we developed a series of short questions covering its sources. The polling provides data on international perceptions based on the most common mediums through which people interface with foreign countries. The list of questions can be found in Appendix A on the methodology of the Index. Figure 4 below gives a summary overview of the subject of the polling questions asked and shows what they were designed to measure.

Figure 4- Polling Data Categories



ComRes first designed a sample structure for the survey which allowed for broad coverage across a range of the world's major regions and cultures:

Region	Countries	Sample
Latin America	Brazil	500
Latin America	Argentina	250
Latin America	Mexico	250
North America	USA	500
Middle East & North Africa	Egypt	250
Middle East & North Africa	UAE	250
East Asia	China	500
South Asia	India	500
East Asia	Japan	250
East Asia	South Korea	250
South East Asia	Indonesia	250
Australasia	Australia	250
Western Europe	France	500
Western Europe	Germany	500
Western Europe	Italy	250
Western Europe	UK	500
Eastern Europe	Poland	250
Eastern Europe	Russia	500
Sub-Saharan Africa	Nigeria	250
Sub-Saharan Africa	South Africa	500

**Total Sample: 7,250**

The samples within each country were representative by age, gender, and region. Levels of online penetration vary across countries, so mobile and computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) were used to improve reach in countries with less than 50% online penetration. The levels of online penetration are reflected in the make-up of panels in each country. The full sample was designed for broad coverage of a diverse range of cultures, rather than to be precisely representative of global opinion.

The survey consisted of a series of questions translated into the main language(s) of each country by native speakers, using an 11-point numeric answering scale (0 to 10) to avoid the

ComRes  
sample  
structure

risks associated with translating verbal answering scales. Different cultures have been found to have different approaches to answering numeric scales (e.g. tending towards central or extreme scores), but the normalization of the data mitigated against this. Further details can be found in Appendix A.



## LIMITATIONS AND SHORTCOMINGS

As with every composite index, ours is not without its limitations and shortcomings. The subjective nature of soft power makes comparison across all countries difficult. Moreover, the full complexity of the dynamics of inter-state relations - where soft power is brought to bear - cannot be fully rendered by a comparative global index. Finally, the index is unable to capture flashpoint events in real-time.

However, the index marks an important step forward in the development of better and more accurate soft power metrics. It is our hope that future versions of this index will improve incrementally in both depth and breadth. Building a larger data set, establishing a stronger case for the weighting of indicators, and increasing the reach and scope of the international polling will all be priorities for future iterations. We recognise that reaching the ultimate goal of a definitive measure of soft power will be a long and iterative process. The creation and launch of this index was done in the hopes of moving closer towards that goal.

# RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

[Breaking Down the Results](#)



# INDEX

# RESULTS

Rank	Country	Index Score
1	United Kingdom	75.61
2	Germany	73.89
3	United States	73.68
4	France	73.64
5	Canada	71.71
6	Australia	68.92
7	Switzerland	67.52
8	Japan	66.86
9	Sweden	66.49
10	Netherlands	65.21
11	Denmark	63.20
12	Italy	63.09
13	Austria	62.00
14	Spain	61.70
15	Finland	60.19
16	New Zealand	60.00
17	Belgium	58.85
18	Norway	57.96
19	Ireland	55.61
20	Korea, Rep.	54.32
21	Singapore	52.50
22	Portugal	48.97
23	Brazil	46.63
24	Poland	46.50
25	Greece	45.73
26	Israel	44.51
27	Czech Republic	43.26
28	Turkey	42.55
29	Mexico	42.52
30	China	40.85

After normalising the raw data for each metric, computing sub-indices, adding in the international polling data, and calculating the final scores for each country, the UK finished in the top spot of The Soft Power 30 with a total score of 75.61. Rounding out the top five, Germany finished second, USA third, France, fourth, and Canada fifth.

The UK topping the table is not a huge surprise when considering the soft power resources that Britain commands. The UK is a strong performer across all of the sub-indices that comprise the index. Publicly funded and state controlled resources include major institutions like the BBC World Service, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Department for International Development. Additionally, the British Council, publicly funded cultural institutions and the UK's high education system are all world class. These public funded institutions provide a tremendous source of attraction and admiration around the world.

Of course, governments only have limited control over the sources of soft power, and those in the UK's private sector are far too numerous to list exhaustively. However, important examples include Britain's creative industries, from art, film, and music, to architecture, design, and fashion. Major sporting institutions like the Premier League, as well as highly respected business brands like Rolls Royce, Burberry, and British Airways also have a positive impact on perceptions of the UK.

The UK's soft power also benefits from a very strong civil society. Like the private sector in the UK, British civil society is extremely diverse, including a range of organisations from charities, NGOs and the religious community, through to cultural institutions and even trade unions. Major global organisations that contribute to development, disaster relief, and human rights reforms like Amnesty International, Oxfam or Save the Children, are based in the UK and form an integral part of British soft power. This holds true even when organisations are not operating in lockstep with the government. Some civil society organisations are clearly more international facing than others, but the whole of civil society is crucial source of soft power.

Perhaps the main reason one might question the UK's finish at the top of the table is the move to a more inward looking politics and the very real threat of Britain leaving the European Union. The

UK holds an enviable position at the heart of a number of important global networks and multi-lateral organisations. From the G-7 to the UN Security Council to the European Union, Britain has a seat at virtually every table of international consequence.

Germany's strong finish at second in the rankings follows a trend that has gained pace over the last decade or so. Its role as the driving force in European affairs is unimpeachable. It is roundly admired for the quality of its advanced manufacturing goods, engineering prowess, its opposition to military adventurism, and an economy that seems to translate growth into well-being better than most.<sup>xxxii</sup> Moreover, there is a strong feeling that Germany will 'do the right thing in international affairs' according to our international polling. On the cultural side, the transformation of Berlin from divided capital to global hub of culture and creativity has been remarkable. And despite being at a relative linguistic disadvantage, German culture still has global appeal - helped significantly by sport. As Europe's indispensable actor, Germany's steady hand and agreeable approach to its conduct at home and abroad generates tremendous stores of soft power.

## There is a strong feeling that Germany will 'do the right thing in international affairs'

Some researchers and commentators may find it strange that the US did not come top of our rankings. Indeed there are many elements of soft power where the US is unrivalled. America attracts more international students than any other nation, American culture is globally ubiquitous, and the US sets the pace in in tech and digital. If The Soft Power 30 rankings were calculated on objective metrics alone, the US would have just beat the UK to the top spot. However, the US finished sixteenth across an average of the polling categories. In many ways the American government and

perceptions of US foreign policy tend to be a net detractor for American soft power.

Given that this is our inaugural index, we cannot make any comparisons to past performance or changing in the country rankings. However, we can look at the most recent Anholt-GFK Roper Nation Brand Index as a reasonable point of comparison. Table 2 below provides a comparison of the top ten across the two rankings. Looking at the top ten across both The Soft Power 30 and the Nation Brand Index, there is a similar top ten ranking. The top five contain all of the same countries with a slight re-ordering of ranking. Moreover, the top ten contain all of the same nations, with the exception of an exchange of Italy for the Netherlands.

Table 2- SP30 & Anholt NBI

PORTLAND SOFT POWER 30		ANHOLT-GFK ROPER NATION BRAND INDEX	
Rank	Country	Rank	Country
1	UK	1	Germany
2	Germany	2	USA
3	USA	3	UK
4	France	4	France
5	Canada	5	Canada
6	Australia	6	Japan
7	Switzerland	7	Italy
8	Japan	8	Switzerland
9	Sweden	9	Australia
10	Netherlands	10	Sweden

It would, of course, be strange if the results of both rankings were perfectly correlated, and the difference between the two reflects both the different methodologies and different objectives of the two indices. However, that there is a recognisable alignment between the results of the two rankings should be taken as a sign of mutually reinforcing accuracy.

Looking down the length of the overall rankings table there are a few interesting results that warrant a closer look. Both Ireland and New Zealand, as two relatively small countries, have put in particularly strong showings in The Soft Power rankings. While

the UK is often said to ‘punch above its weight’, perhaps Ireland and New Zealand are the most effective soft power states pound-for-pound. Of course influence cannot be measured on a per capita basis, but these two nations have an outsized influence given their relative size. That outsized influence is undoubtedly due to their soft power.

South Korea’s transformation both economically and political over the last three decades has been impressive. It was an early adopter of soft power among Asian nations, and after Japan it is the only other Asian country in the top 20. Korea has invested heavily in its culture and creative industries and is a consumer electronics powerhouse. K-Pop, Samsung, and LG can all attest to its progress in these areas. South Korea will be among the most interesting countries to track in the future iterations of this index.

Another rising power that will be particularly interesting to track going forward is Brazil. South America’s largest country has much going for it and the best soft power resources in the region. In fact Brazil is the best performing ‘BRIC’ state in our index. Brazil recently played host to the world for the 2014 World Cup and will do so again for the 2016 Rio Olympics. But Brazil also struggles with corruption - illustrated in the on-going Petrobras scandal - as well as issues around inequality.

Perhaps the biggest surprise in the results of the index is the fact that China finishes last in The Soft Power 30 rankings. China’s investment in soft power assets is well documented.<sup>xxxiii</sup> China launched a soft power blitz following a directive from the Chinese Premier Hu Jintao in 2007 and the government has since invested tens of billions of dollars into soft power efforts like the global Xinhua news agency, hundreds of Confucius Institutes, and a broad range of aid and development projects. At a time when many countries are cutting back on the funding of such institutions, China has been pressing ahead to expand its soft power resources. However, the results of our composite index suggest China has not achieved much of a return on its investment.

This is not to say China has not had some soft power success. The hosting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics was a triumph, and the 2010 Shanghai Expo that followed was a further boost to China's global brand. But at the same time, the jailing of activist and Nobel Peace Laureate Liu Xiaobo, arrests of artist Ai Weiwei, the issues around minority rights, and building the largest programme of censorship in the whole of human history have all undercut China's efforts.

Looking at the objective metrics, China performed well on the Culture and Engagement sub-indices. However, China's curbs on individual rights, lack of a free press, and an aversion to any form of political criticism, resulted in very low score on the Government sub-index. China's performance on the Education and Digital sub-indices was comparatively weak as well. As digital diplomacy measured through use of social media was a significant portion of our Digital sub-index, China was expected to struggle. With every major international social media platform banned in China, the Chinese government has not seen social media engagement with international audiences as a priority.

Turning to the international polling data, China did not perform very well, finishing at the bottom. The poor performance on polling was particularly acute on perceptions of China's foreign policy. Respondents to our international polling did express confidence in China to 'do the right thing in international affairs'. Thus despite some obvious soft power advantages, there are a number of fundamental weaknesses that undercut China's considerable efforts to build a more attractive global brand.

**Despite some obvious soft power advantages, there are a number of fundamental weaknesses that undercut China's considerable efforts to build a more attractive global brand.**

## BREAKING DOWN THE RESULTS

The design of the composite index allows us to treat each category as a separate sub-index, allowing us to provide a deeper look at the relative strengths and weaknesses across the factors that contribute to a nation's soft power. Breaking down the results of the overall index by each of the six sub-indices affords more specific comparisons.

As explained above, the six sub-indices are:

[Government](#)

[Engagement](#)

[Culture](#)

[Education](#)

[Enterprise](#)

[Digital](#)

The table overleaf reports the top 10 scoring countries for each objective category of The Soft Power 30.



**ENTERPRISE**

Much like the Government sub-index, there are few surprises to be found in the Enterprise sub-index top ten. Metrics for this sub-index aim to capture the attractiveness of a country's business model, capacity for innovation, and regulatory framework. Switzerland often finds itself atop similar rankings and indices measuring economic competitiveness, but it also does very well on measures for innovation. Switzerland's attractiveness around all things commerce is definitely its most significant soft power strength. Likewise, Singapore is often praised for its business-friendly environment, fair regulations, and highly skilled workforce.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Enterprise top ten countries is another appearance from South Korea. Again, building on the huge gains South Korea has made in economic development, South Korea is making a very real impact on innovation, which is borne out in the Enterprise sub index.

**CULTURE**

As noted above, when it comes to culture, America's cultural and creative industries, which according to UNESCO account for 11% of GDP, have tremendous global reach. Culture is the most potent of America's soft power resources. The UK is not far behind, particularly the success of the UK's recording industry in global sales. The international success of One Direction, Adele, and Sam Smith have kept global heads nodding along to the sounds of British soft power. France, Germany, and Spain round out the top five in the Culture sub-index.

**French has long been known as the 'language of diplomacy' and with good reason it would seem.**

**DIGITAL**

Despite being a relatively new addition to the elements of soft power, digital resources have proven themselves an incredibly useful means to reach much larger international audiences than has ever been possible for practitioners of public diplomacy. It also allows individuals, companies, media outlets, and civil society groups to reach people across boundaries, and build international links. The Digital sub-index comprises a mix of metrics that capture both access to the internet in a given country, the effectiveness of the government's provision of online services, and measures of digital diplomacy via social media .

The results of the Digital sub-index put the US on top followed by the UK. Both the US and UK have well-developed digital and communications infrastructure. Their populations are extremely connected and each have two of the higher rates of internet usage. But in addition to strong digital infrastructures, they are two of the more successful nations when it comes to digital diplomacy. Though it should be said, as the first mover in digital diplomacy, the US's capability does outstrip the UK's, and all other countries included in the index.

Moving down the top ten countries in the Digital sub-index, Israel and South Korea stand out as high performing. It is also worth noting, Digital is the only sub-index where Israel places in the top ten. Israel and South Korea both have gained strong reputations for their capacity for innovation in various sectors of technology. Moreover, they both have solid track-record of digital diplomacy, using social media to engage with international audiences.

The digital diplomacy metrics, which have been developed in partnership with Facebook's data-science team, help capture the impact social media has on soft power. Data sourced from Facebook accounts for 40% of the Digital sub-index. Analysing the Facebook pages of both national leaders and foreign ministries, we looked at two types of data: followers and engagement. Importantly, Facebook's data-science team was able to disaggregate data for both of these metrics, allowing us to separate domestic and international interactions. As a result, we could focus our data collection on instances of governments using Facebook to engage with people internationally. This was hugely important as we wanted to assess the interactions between governments and people living in other countries. For example, our data would only count followers of US President Obama's page if they were based outside of the US.



## GOVERNMENT

The Government sub-index uses a range of metrics that capture political values like freedom, human rights, democracy, and equality. It also includes measures of government effectiveness and broad metrics on citizen outcomes like Human Development Index scores. Given that they tend to top all composite indices on government, well-being, and prosperity, it is no surprise to see the Nordic and Northern Europeans topping the Government sub-index. An attractive, functioning, and free political system is definitely a draw to international audiences and it serves the Nordics and Northern European's well as a source of soft power.



## ENGAGEMENT

French has long been known as the 'language of diplomacy' and with good reason it would seem. France tops the Engagement sub-index, which aims to measure the reach of states' diplomatic network and their commitment to major challenges like development and the environment. In terms of influential reach, France is the best networked state in the world and is member of more multi-lateral organisations than any other country. When it comes to embassy networks, only the US has more diplomatic missions abroad than France. Looking at the top ten states in the Engagement sub-index, it is interesting to note that all but three, Canada, Japan, and the US, are members of the European Union.



## EDUCATION

Education is the soft power resource where the United States outperforms the rest of the world by some margin. The Education sub-index focuses heavily on higher education and the extent to which universities are engaged and contributing internationally. The US attracts more international students than the next two highest countries combined. America's top-tier universities are the gold standard for international scholarship and the US has more top universities than any other country in both the QS Global University Rankings and Times Higher Education World University Rankings. The output of American academic research is also the largest. Of course Britain's top universities follow close behind the US in these measures.

**The US attracts more international students than the next two highest countries combined.**

# DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

**A** Transforming Diplomacy

**B** Digital Soft Power



It seems like generations ago but it is, in fact, only five years since the arrival of two young 'digital natives' was supposed to change forever the traditionally-minded world of international diplomacy. The set text for the coming revolution was the 2010 New York Times piece in which Jared Cohen and Alec Ross were profiled as the driving force of a transformation that brought technology to bear on foreign policy. The piece gave an overview of their efforts to reinvent public diplomacy at the US State Department one Facebook post or tweet at a time.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

However, the concept of 'digital diplomacy' is not entirely new. In 1984, under the then United States Information Agency (USIA) Allen C. Hansen penned an analysis on Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age. Henning looked at the U.S. public diplomacy mission from the lens of an increasingly computerised world. At the time, technology was less of an everyday aspect of life and the topic itself was far less relevant. Technology and government have often come together, but only in recent years has the combination garnered wider interest.

When Cohen and Ross came to the fore it was a much different world. Tech and digital savvy had become newsworthy. Personal use of various communications technologies had become mainstream. Applying these tools to government appealed to the masses and even appeared to make government more relatable. The fact that Cohen and Ross built entire strategies around Facebook and used Twitter, both from their Blackberries, earned them grudging admiration, peppered with

a healthy dose of apprehension from long-serving diplomatic senior diplomats.

Underpinning the push towards a reimagined approach to foreign policy was the belief that public diplomacy should be expanded. More of diplomacy should take place on a transparent and inclusive stage. Digital diplomacy was seen as both a powerful tool to expand soft power reach in public diplomacy while also a means to move foreign policy out from behind closed-door rooms where only those with a security pass and an invitation could hope to express their views.

Five years later, digital diplomacy's promise of increased public engagement has seen many fruitful examples. However, much of the promised transformation has yet to be fulfilled. Done well, digital diplomacy ought to be the use of technology to engage in meaningful dialogue between states and peoples, where views are exchanged and understanding is gained. Digital platforms allow governments to broadcast messages to larger audiences, but that does not equate to dialogue, nor is it any guarantee of influencing those audiences.

Ideally, digital diplomacy should allow diplomats to engage directly with wider audiences of both state and non-state actors to improve understanding and, eventually, to deliver better policy. Instead, the early rush to inhabit third party platforms and develop the institutional mechanics has resulted, at best, in the occasional delivery of meaningful content and worthwhile engagement.

**Ideally, digital diplomacy should allow diplomats to engage directly with wider audiences of both state and non-state actors to improve understanding and, eventually, to deliver better policy.**

The use of the technology is restricted too often to amplifying offline events, rather than making a real impact on audiences online. The content on various social media channels is consistently talking about what happened elsewhere - the meeting to which the public were not invited, the conference that took place without input from wider audiences online. The record of two diplomats shaking hands in front of an oil painting or of an exhibition of an approved artist is not digital diplomacy. It is simply a concession to modernity without the risk that greater engagement or transparency entails.

A

## TRANSFORMING DIPLOMACY

There are, of course, those who do not confuse the adoption of a platform with progress. These shifts in approach remain scarce and must be regarded as moments rather than trends but they are, nonetheless, significant. They include US President Obama's 2013 Twitter exchange with Iran's President Rouhani. Twitter is, of course, blocked in Iran and the messages were deleted but were still seen as major moment in the delivery of public diplomacy. There is also power in capturing important moments and first in diplomatic relations, such as when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's selfie with Chinese premier Li Keqiang was said to 'break China's 'Great Firewall''.<sup>xxxv</sup>

The need now is to turn these flashes of useful digital engagement into a pattern so they become the norm rather than the exception. There are already examples of countries, or even individual leaders and Ambassadors, learning from the corporate world how digital technologies can be used to build brands, affirm values, and interact with consumers and influencers alike. It is worth reflecting on a few successful initiatives, on which more strategic approaches can perhaps be built.

Estonia's model of e-Residency, where anyone can become a digital citizen of a country they may never visit, is a deliberate attempt to create a point of differentiation. The country that gave us Skype,

## THE MODI EFFECT

### How the Prime Minister of India uses Facebook and other digital tools to engage with the world and improve outcomes for citizens

According to some political commentators, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi ran one of the most effective national election campaigns in history. Modi's use of digital tools has been central to his success as both a politician and a global advocate for India. The Prime Minister has made greater access to digital technology a priority and his government is using it as a means to deliver better public services and inspire citizen participation in new civic and public health initiatives. In short, Modi is the archetypal digital-savvy world leader.

Social media has been the cornerstone of Prime Minister Modi's communication strategy - both at home and abroad. Modi's use of Facebook and other platforms around his official state visits has been particularly effective and provides a useful case study of digital diplomacy. State visits have always been powerful platforms for leaders to build stronger bilateral relations and showcase their respective cultures. With Facebook, Modi has been able to leverage state visits to great effect, giving his fans and the fans of foreign heads of state the chance to see more of each other's country and culture.

The Prime Minister's Facebook page has more engagement than any other world leader. Even President Barack Obama - who boasts over 14

million more fans than Modi – has about half the amount of engagement on his page as Modi. The higher levels of interaction can be attributed to Modi’s innovative content across a variety of mediums before, during, and after state visits. Overall, posts about state visits are slightly more popular than other posts on Modi’s page, earning 7% higher reach and 10% higher engagement than the average post.

Modi’s page uses an effective mix of light-hearted content and serious information. 4 million people on Facebook saw a photo of the PM welcoming President Obama to India with a hug. At the same time, Modi’s Facebook page offers a behind-the-scenes look at the business of diplomacy. During Obama’s three-day visit to New Delhi, Modi posted a photo of the two leaders talking along with a link to information about a joint press conference in which the two discussed US-India relations and climate change. The post reached about 16.5 million people and engaged more than 2.1 million people.

One of the most interesting trends on Facebook surrounding Modi’s state visits is the boost that other world leaders receive on their pages following a visit with the Indian PM. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s video about Modi’s visit, shared via Facebook, is his top post for this year, garnering more than 311,000 views. The major factor behind the post’s popularity was its connection to Modi. Harper tagged Modi in the post, giving it instant transnational Facebook exposure.

In addition to Modi’s use of social media, he has made digital a cornerstone of his policy initiatives. One of the first things Modi did when coming to office was to launch his MyGov platform for citizens in July 2014. This website allows Indians to contribute to governance by providing their ideas and opinions on important issues such as Clean India, Girl Child Education and job creation.

A year later in July 2015 Modi also launched his Digital India initiative. This programme focuses on three core objectives:

[The creation of digital infrastructure](#)

[Delivering services digitally, and](#)

[Digital literacy](#)

In both foreign relations and domestic policy, Modi has used social media to engage, inform and encourage participation. For the government’s ‘Clean India’ initiative, Modi has encouraged citizens to share pictures of the areas they cleaned on social media. This encouragement extends to campaigns like #incredibleindia, #selfiewithdaughter and #YogaDay. The last of which garnered global attention as the Prime Minister led thousands of people from 84 nations in Yoga session – setting two world records in the process.

The Prime Minister has four more years until his next national election and a lot of programs that are just starting to get off of the ground. So while India did not finish in the top 30 of our index this year, Modi’s India is definitely a soft power player to watch in the years ahead.

Estonia has embraced digital technology in a way that marks it out among its peers among the post-Soviet nations. As a brand statement, it is bold - while as a mechanic to get people to create virtual, and even real, business based on their new 'citizenship' and Estonian domains - it helps to build a digital economy. It represents a commitment to inclusiveness and openness, using technology as a means to invite the world to collaborate.

Wittier foreign ministries are also showing that they are not afraid of the occasional opportunity to crack wise on social media. Canada's NATO delegation made waves with a widely shared 'trolling' of Russia during the invasion of the Ukraine. In posting an 'educational' map to help 'confused' Russian soldiers refrain from wondering into Ukrainian territory, Canada launched a rather comical broadside with heavy political overtones.<sup>xxxvi</sup> This then led to Russia responding with a revised map of its own and pictures of toy tanks portrayed ironically as new 'NATO evidence' of Russian involvement in Ukraine. It is impossible to imagine such goading taking place under the chandeliered ceiling of traditional diplomatic exchanges. It heralds a new public tone to diplomacy, opening up a new front where certain acts of diplomacy are 'performed' for an audience rather than aimed at those directly involved.

It can, of course, also be dismissed as semi-adolescent posturing, the diplomatic equivalent of playground name-calling. But as Russia showed in responding to - rather than ignoring - Canada's jibe, such trolling is likely to become increasingly common. While at heart it was done in jest, Canada's 'educational map' scored a public diplomacy hit on Russia. It certainly expanded the boundaries of diplomacy via social media. It also reminded public audiences in NATO-allied countries that Canada is an important and active NATO member.

At the individual level there are several world leaders and high profile foreign ministers who have used social media to good effect, as the case study on Narendra Modi illustrates. Looking at those practitioners at the coalface of diplomacy - Ambassadors - few have used social media as

**Harnessing the power of the digital media to cultivate and project soft power cannot happen in a vacuum; it requires large audiences and connected communities.**

effectively as the UK's Ambassador to Lebanon, Tom Fletcher. As a country defined by sectarianism, there are fewer diplomatic postings offering more opportunities to upset, offend, or simply be misunderstood. Every chance to engage one audience is an opportunity to offend another. Yet, in a post where many diplomats would choose to 'talk without actually saying anything', Fletcher has used social media to engage in conversations and debates with vigour. The Ambassador's willingness to engage in dialogue, rather than simply document his daily schedule, has set the standard for digital diplomacy at the embassy level.

Often the simplest digital diplomacy efforts are the most effective. Ministerial or senior official level public Q&As on Facebook or other social media platforms are an easy, but powerful way to have a straightforward dialogue with a large, international audience. Accessibility, credibility, and authenticity are the key elements of effective digital diplomacy efforts. When senior government ministers, officials, or Ambassadors engage in genuine dialogue on key global issues, that is what international audiences will see.



## DIGITAL SOFT POWER

Harnessing the power of the digital media to cultivate and project soft power cannot happen in a vacuum; it requires large audiences and connected communities. Reaching them means leaders, foreign ministries, and digital diplomats must first understand them. Mobility and sociability have to become the rules of modern diplomacy. Countries will have to become much more effective at listening to what global audiences are saying about them, their culture, their actions, and their policies.

Keeping abreast of what is being said in the social media space is now a crucial tool for countries in understanding how they are perceived internationally. In the corporate world, companies listen to their customers to give them better products. With foreign ministries, the delivery of

a better 'product' (policy and its implementation) would need more nuance, wider influences, and a longer timescale.

Effective communication is paramount. The ubiquity of digital means that communication around topics and policy can be devolved to those who are expert in the issue, rather than expert in communications. In the digital era, all our jobs have just become public facing. Digital has broadened soft power reach, created new actors and reshaped both external facing work and internal workflows. Everyone must be prepared to communicate externally. However, there must be a unifying strategy which enables and encourages diplomats to engage directly with the public and their peers.

Some governments are adapting to the new age. However, many challenges remain. Excuses to avoid change are rampant. Security, often cited as a block to progress, cannot be taken lightly, but it is simply another risk to manage. Further, the loss of information control remains daunting to many in government. However, digital diplomacy as a soft power means is more than the sum of its measured individual successes or perceived challenges.

As laid out earlier in this report the two megatrends shaping our changing world are the digital revolution and the rise of networks. Digital diplomacy is a natural response to both of these trends and the major shifts driving them. Where power is diffuse, communications are instantaneous, world events are playing out online, and networks are the drivers of change, digital diplomacy is a naturally effective tool for wider international engagement of the public.

Looking at the results of The Soft Power 30 rankings, the digital component had a significant impact for a few high-performing countries. As mentioned above, Israel and South Korea performed particularly well on the Digital sub-index. Israel's start-up sector around software development is particularly strong and the country boasts more tech start-up firms per head than any other country.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Likewise South Korea has

## GERMAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

**How, in practice, do Foreign Ministries approach the ever-changing digital space? In recent years, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs has thought seriously about this question.**

With headquarters in Berlin and a network just under 230 missions abroad, the German Foreign Service currently has over 11,000 members of staff. Because Germany and German society are enmeshed in ever-growing international networks, the German MFA is involved in more priorities than building political contacts abroad: it promotes intensive interaction and exchange with the world in the fields of business, culture, science and technology, the environment, development issues and more.

As such, the relevance of digital diplomacy is growing day by day. Just a year ago, in 2014, the German MFA's Facebook page had 28,000 fans. Today, it has more than 77,000 fans, most of whom are between the ages of 17 and 34. The purpose of the Facebook page is to give people a broad overview of German foreign policy in an informative and entertaining way. So direct interaction is critical. Facebook page administrators will regularly respond to people who leave questions as comments or messages on the Facebook page. 'Live chats' with people on a variety of issues are also an

effective format. Senior members of the Foreign Service themselves are getting directly involved: The Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, himself hosted a Facebook Q&A through his own Facebook page, attracting a range of questions from people who would not normally have the chance to sit down with the Foreign Minister for a tête-à-tête.

As a result of the Foreign Ministry's digital strategy, direct dialogue with the public has intensified. This opens opportunities to reach new audiences, to foster conversations between Foreign Service representatives and people around the globe, and to bring foreign policy issues closer to people's agendas. Quality community management and content created specifically for digital channels makes a difference in the success of the Ministry's digital strategy, which continues to grow as the traditional communications environment globally shifts to more interconnected models. The German MFA's Facebook page has provided a good mix of information, content, and media to engage audiences in different ways. As we aim to expand and improve our study each year, we will look to track progress of foreign ministries' use of digital diplomacy through social media. Germany will definitely be an interesting case to follow going forward.

invested heavily in its digital infrastructure and is reaping the rewards.

On the digital diplomacy side, South Korea's government has also good progress in building up a presence on social media. Israel - no stranger to information wars - has taken to social media and digital diplomacy enthusiastically. The success of that digital engagement is up for debate, but when many leaders shy away from the lack of control that can come with social media dialogue, Israel has actively embraced it.

Singapore, which finished just behind South Korea in the overall rankings, also performed well on the Digital sub-index. Singapore has made both human capital and digital infrastructure a priority in its economic development strategy. The results are a very well-connected and digital savvy population. Moreover, the government has done well in digital diplomacy, engaging with audiences via social media platforms.

Looking at the Digital sub-index's impact on the overall rankings of The Soft Power 30, Israel, South Korea, and Singapore benefitted the most. The three country's performances on Digital added 3.2, 1.9 and 2.0 points respectively to their total overall Soft Power 30 score. These three countries have gained the most in terms of their soft power through building a high-functioning and equitable digital infrastructure, as well as engaging effectively in digital diplomacy. The top three countries in the overall rankings, UK, Germany, and USA also gained through a strong score on the Digital sub-index. Australia too picked up an additional 1.58 points to their total Soft Power 30 score.

Going forward, those countries that can better connect their citizens to the digital world, as well as engage with international audiences through effective digital diplomacy will find it easier to both generate and leverage their soft power.

# CONCLU- SIONS AND NEXT STEPS

**T**he purpose of this project, and the creation of our new composite index of soft power, was to develop an accurate framework to measure and compare the soft power resources - including the increasingly important new tool of digital diplomacy - of the most influential countries in the world. Bringing together a range of objective metrics with international polling data, we believe we have created the clearest picture to date of global soft power.

As the report has underlined, this is more important than ever. The global political and economic landscape is undergoing a fundamental shift driven by the diffusion of power, the digital revolution, increasingly empowered global citizens, and the rise of networks. The collective impact of these changes means that addressing the world's major challenges - increasingly multi-lateral rather than bi-lateral - will require collaboration between not just states, but non-state actors as well.

Soft power is essential to building and marshalling the networks needed to achieve these goals. It is why the ability of a state in the 21st Century to achieve its foreign policy goals will rest increasingly on its ability to generate and leverage soft power. But the first step to getting this right is to

understand what soft power a country has. We hope The Soft Power 30 framework provides a much more rigorous way of identifying these resources.

So while the country rankings of The Soft Power 30 may grab the initial headlines, our overriding goal was to provide a stronger evidence base for the use of soft power. The real value of The Soft Power 30 lies in the insights to be gained from breaking down performance of a country by sub-index. This allows a clearer picture of the relative soft power strengths and weaknesses, hinting at ways a country could work to improve its global influence.

Soft power forms the essential building blocks that underpin a country's reputation and its potential for influence. As our framework illustrates, the sources of soft power are diverse, but they all have an impact on how a country is perceived. Global public opinion is largely informed by a country's soft power resources, or simply put, what a country contributes to the world.

**A reliable framework of measurement allows a government to better understand the nation's soft power strengths and develop strategies to use them.**

and negative. They often struggle to find an effective platform to communicate progress and development to potential international partners, investors, and markets. This leaves a gap between a country's soft power and the true extent of its influence, as global public opinion fails to keep up with reality. While an uptick in soft power resources certainly gives a country a higher potential for influence, it does not guarantee it.

The third challenge, which affects all countries regardless of size and standing, is to leverage existing soft power strengths to the greatest possible effect. Again, a reliable framework of measurement allows a government to better understand the nation's soft power strengths and develop strategies to use them. Governments also need to ensure that resources are deployed where they will be more effective, as different soft power assets will elicit different responses according to the audience in question.

## THE CONVERSION CHALLENGE

For many nations - particularly those based outside of our top 30 ranking - the challenge of converting soft power into influence is threefold. First, there is likely to be remedial work required to improve performance on the factors that determine soft power. This could mean anything from expanding human rights, improving economic competitiveness, or investing in the nation's cultural infrastructure. Whatever the necessary steps might be, a soft power analytical framework helps identify where action should be taken.

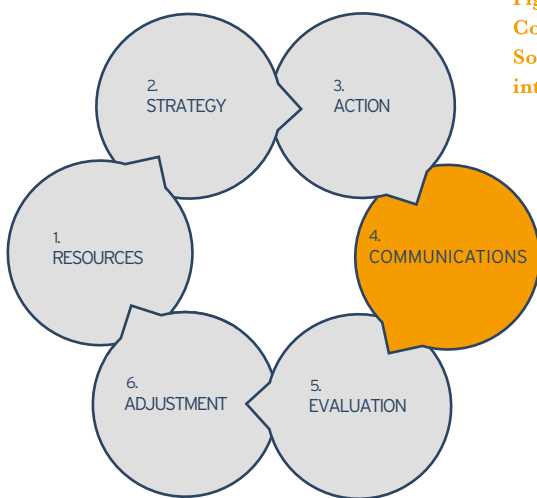
The second challenge is to ensure that progress made in generating and strengthening soft power resources is translated into positive changes in global perceptions. Again, for smaller and middle-sized nations without a large global profile, this challenge can be especially acute. Most suffer from either low overall awareness and/or pre-existing stereotypes, which are almost always out-dated

## SOFT POWER, COMMUNICATIONS, AND INFLUENCE

As power becomes more diffuse and networks become more important to achieving global outcomes, the currency of soft power will continue to appreciate. This makes the challenge of converting soft power resources into influence all the more critical. Having those resources is, of course, essential but it is of little use without the effective communications strategies needed to reach and engage target audiences. The relationship between soft power, communications, and influence is interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Soft power resources are the building blocks of reputation; communications strategies bring those resources to the fore; and when done effectively, the result is greater international influence. Without the ability to shape soft power resources into a compelling narrative, or leverage them in pursuit of a specific objective, they will have little impact on a country's influence.



Recognising the relationship between soft power and communications, we see the process of converting resources into influence following a six-step process, as illustrated in Figure 5 below.



**Figure 5 -  
Converting  
Soft Power  
into Influence**

First, an analysis of a country's soft power resources is essential. As argued throughout this report, soft power cannot be deployed effectively without a clear picture of the resources available. An initial analysis of soft power resources - using the framework we have built - provides a government with an overview of strengths and weaknesses and an evidence base on which to shape a strategy.

This then allows the development of a strategy that will make the best possible use of those resources. A good strategy will focus on how a country can contribute to the global community, establish clear national priorities, and appropriately matching soft power resources to chosen objectives.

For most countries, turning soft power into influence will require action, which will likely come in the form of new policies and initiatives. If the initial analysis of soft power resources identifies significant areas of weakness, these will need to be tackled. Credibility and reputation stem from action and behaviour. Turning soft power into influence will often mean incorporating new actions into a strategy.

**For most countries, turning soft power into influence will require action, which will likely come in the form of new policies and initiatives.**

Action will be critical for many countries to build credibility and strengthen their soft power resources. However, communications is where these assets are converted into influence. This is the point in the process where resources are deployed and target audiences are engaged, with the aim of affecting behaviour. **Communications, in whatever form it may take, is the moment of truth in the conversion process.** It is ultimately how a country begins to express - explicitly or implicitly - what it wants from a target and attempts to convince them accordingly.

It may come in the form of direct appeals through public diplomacy, a campaign around a specific issue, or demands for a new structure of global governance to overcome challenges. Whatever the issue in question, bringing soft power to bear on its ultimate resolution requires effective communications. And the digital component of communications will only grow in significance going forward - making digital diplomacy a crucial tool for building and converting soft power.

The final two steps of the conversion process are inter-related: evaluation and adjustment. The use of soft power as a means to wield influence must be rooted in evidence. An analysis at the beginning of the process is used to inform strategy, while at the end a robust evaluation methodology needs to be employed to measure impact. This impact evaluation should then be used to adjust strategy, action, and communications as necessary.

**The Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs' public diplomacy initiative, Presence Switzerland, provides a well-executed model of evaluation and adjustment.** The programme was launched in the early 2000s as a response to a rash of negative media stories linking Swiss banks and Nazi gold from World War II. The Swiss MFA developed a public diplomacy strategy to combat misconceptions and negative press arising from these stories. They used polling in range of countries to understand and track sentiment towards Switzerland, which was used to refine and improve the MFA's approach to public diplomacy.

This example stands out as best practice in using evaluation and adjustment in managing global reputation.

Working through this process effectively requires governments to take a truly comprehensive approach. Coordination across the whole of government is crucial to generate soft power and translate it into influence. The sources of soft power, of course, are not entirely in the control of government. But government has an important role to play in creating the right framework that allows institutions, companies, organisations, and individuals to contribute to a nation's soft power. In a much more direct way, government is responsible for setting and upholding political values at home and foreign policy abroad, both of which have a significant impact on soft power.

Because the sources of soft power are so diverse, coordination across all relevant areas of government is critical in both the generation of resources and their deployment. Many departments and agencies within a given government have a role to play, but such efforts are usually most effective when directed from the centre, i.e. a President or Prime Minister's office. Such an example actually comes from the top spot of The Soft Power 30.

**The UK launched a cross-governmental promotion campaign called GREAT in 2011.**

Designed to leverage the international spotlight that accompanied the 2012 Olympic Games, the GREAT campaign pooled budgets from multiple departments, coordinated messaging across government, and brought a coherent approach to the global promotion of Britain. GREAT created a single, consistent brand that provided direction for global public engagement across all international-facing departments and agencies.

The GREAT campaign was conceived and coordinated out of the Prime Minister's Office in No. 10 Downing Street. By operating from the centre of government, GREAT was able to set and pursue a range of different objectives across investment, export, tourism, and political goals.

GREAT's strength has been the coordination across a range of different departments, shaping multiple priorities into a coherent single campaign, and providing a unified global platform for promoting the UK. Debates on the effectiveness of GREAT or various tactics used have already started and not all elements went as well as hoped. However, the UK's National Audit Office (the British Parliament's spending watchdog) recently endorsed the progress of the GREAT campaign and reported a return on investment so far of £1.2 billion.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

As a communications campaign, GREAT has shaped Britain's soft power resources into a compelling narrative around what the UK has to offer the global community, largely with a strong economic and tourism focus. In basing GREAT's operations in the Prime Minister's Office, the government has given the campaign the best chance at success through effective coordination across departments. However, the challenge for the UK will be maintaining the soft power assets that have underpinned the success of the GREAT campaign so far.

# GOING FORWARD

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The results of the inaugural Soft Power 30 will hopefully spark a wider debate on and the importance of metrics and evidence in the use of soft power. We see the publication of The Soft Power 30 as a first step, and hope to expand and improve both the objective metrics, as well as the international polling in the future. On the objective metrics we will continue to work to expand and strengthen data that can capture capabilities around digital diplomacy. As global public debate continues to move to the digital realm of social media, it is critical to understand how governments can make better use of platforms to engage publics meaningfully. We also recognise that another metric capable of capturing the international influence of a country's media would improve the next iteration of The Soft Power 30.

In terms of how the objective sub-indices relate to one another, we are determined to continue to work towards a better understanding of the effect certain soft power resources have on the overall reputation and influence of a country. While we felt confident in assigning different weighting to the seven categories of public polling in our index, we were less confident in extending weighting to the objective sub-indices. This is something we aim to improve through expanded polling and more work on multiple regression analysis.

There is also a need for future research that can help establish causal links between the use of soft power and eventual outcomes. Better measures of cause and effect would be of great use to policy planners and practitioners in the field. At present, success or failure of a soft power initiative is too often judged - as in the case of the GREAT campaign - according to a return on investment figure. While this may satisfy the narrow focus of finance ministries, it cannot capture the entire picture.

For our part, we will continue to work towards developing better key performance indicators for the use of soft power. However, as our conversion model above outlines, the first step to using soft power is understanding the resources at one's disposal. The framework used in calculating The Soft Power 30 finally provides a tool to achieve this first step. With better evidence, converting soft power into international influence - while still a complex challenge - becomes much more achievable for governments of all countries.



# APPENDIX

- [A Appendix A - Methodology](#)
- [B Appendix B - Metrics](#)
- [C Footnotes](#)

## A

## APPENDIX A - METHODOLOGY

The index compares the relative strength of countries' soft power resources; assessing the quality of a country's political institutions, the extent of their cultural appeal, the strength of their diplomatic network, the global reputation of their higher education system, the attractiveness of their economic model, and a country's digital engagement with the world. Only where absolutely necessary metrics are controlled for population or GDP. But this is not done often as there is ultimately no such thing as 'soft power per capita'.

For some composite indices, whether the measure is government effectiveness, quality of life, economic competitiveness or prosperity, there is usually a single, objective outcome measure, against which an index can be structured. This is usually done by using multiple regression to test the relative contribution of metrics towards the single outcome measure. Unfortunately, there is no single objective outcome measure for the successful leveraging of soft power. Without an objective outcome measure, using a regression analysis for variable selection is impossible for our index. As a result, the indicators across all the objective data had to be selected based on an analysis of existing literature on soft power.

In calculating the index, all data was normalised in order to ensure that each variable was on a single scale. This allows for the comparison of

data across a diverse set of metrics that would otherwise be incomparable. Normalisation was calculated according to the min-max method, which converts raw data to a figure between the range of 0 to 1. The formula for normalising data according to this method is given in an OECD publication on constructing composite indicators and is as follows :

$$I_{qc}^t = (x_{qc}^t - \min_c(x_q^{t0})) / (\max_c(x_q^{t0}) - (\min_c(x_q^{t0})))$$

However, some variables we also binned into quartiles or deciles where the range of the scale was too large to warrant a standard approach to normalising the data. When a variable was deciled, countries in the bottom 10% were given a score of 10% and countries in the top 10% were given a score of 100%. There were only a few cases where a given metric was so skewed by outliers that a decile or quartile approach to normalisation was deemed appropriate.

Within each sub-index, metrics were given equal weighting in the calculation of the sub-index score. This was done as no justification could be found in the literature for weighting some variables more than others. The calculated score for each sub-index was then combined with the normalised scores of the seven polling categories to form a final score for each country. In calculating the final score, the objective sub-indices were weighted 70% of the final score and the average polling scores 30%. The 70-to-30 objective-to-subjective weighting was done because the index prioritises the soft power resources that exist in reality. Opinion is important,

but The Soft Power 30 aims to measure objective, tangible assets that contribute to a country's soft power

For the subjective data, ComRes designed and ran new international polling to give an accurate assessment of favourability towards specific aspects of countries that international audiences would find attractive. It was essentially designed to provide a subjective account of key soft power assets of countries. ComRes conducted the research online between the 21st May and 8th June

The following questions were asked (each rated on a 0-10 scale, where 0 represented a very negative opinion, and 10 represented a very positive opinion):

**Favourability towards foreign countries;**

**Perceptions of cuisine of foreign countries;**

**Perceptions of how welcoming foreign countries are to tourists;**

**Perceptions of technology products of foreign countries;**

**Perceptions of luxury goods produced by foreign countries;**

**Trust in foreign countries' conduct in global affairs;**

**Desire to visit foreign countries for work or study;**

**Perceptions of foreign countries' contributions to global culture.**

These eight metrics were used to develop a regression model, where 'favourability towards foreign countries' was the dependent variable, and the remaining questions were independent variables. This measured the extent to which the remaining perceptions predict favourability towards a country in the dataset. The regression model allowed each metric to be appropriately weighted, to minimise the impact of any bias in the choice of questions.

Countries for the index were not selected according to a rigid formula or set criteria, but chosen to

give a representative sample of the world's major powers, including countries from every geopolitical region. The selection process included major OECD countries, the emerging BRIC nations and several smaller countries that have carved out a reputation exceeding their size. Data was collected for 50 countries in total, and we have published the top 30 ranking countries.

## B

## APPENDIX B - METRICS

Data Category	Metric	Source
Digital		
	The Web Index Value	Web Index
	The Web Index Access	Web Index
	Number of Internet Users per 100 Inhabitants	World Bank
	Mobile Broadband Monthly Subscription per GDPC	Web Index
	Government Online Services Index	Web Index
	E-participation Index	Web Index
	Facebook Followers for Ministry of Foreign Affairs (outside of country)	Facebook
	Facebook Followers for Heads of State (outside of country)	Facebook
	Facebook Engagement Score for Ministry of Foreign Affairs (outside of country)	Facebook
	Facebook Engagement Score Head of State/Government (Outside Country)	Facebook
Culture		
	Total Number of International Tourists	UN World Tourism Organisation
	Average Spend per Tourist (total tourism receipts/ # of tourists)	UN World Tourism Organisation
	Number of Films Appearing in Major Film Festivals	Various
	Number of Foreign Correspondents in the Country	Gorkana Media Database
	Number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites	UNESCO Statistics
	Language Index Score	Weber, G., 'The world's 10 most influential languages'. Language Monthly, 3: 12-18, 1997
	Annual Attendance at the Global Top 100 Museums	The Art Newspaper 2014
	Number of Top 5 Albums in Foreign Countries	IFPI Recording Industry in Numbers 2014
	Creative Goods Exports	Observatory of Economic Complexity
	Olympics: gold medals (Summer 2012/Winter2014)	BBC
	FIFA Ranking (Men's)	FIFA/Coca Cola World Rankings
Enterprise		
	Global Patents Filed/ GDP	World Intellectual Property Organization
	WEF Competitiveness Index Score	World Economic Forum
	FDI as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Statistics / Various
	Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom	2015 Index of Economic Freedom
	Transparency International Corruption Index score	Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2014
	R&D Spending as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product	The World Bank
	Global Innovation Index score	The Global Innovation Index 2014
	Number of SMEs (Percentage of Labour Force Working in SMEs)	International Finance Corporation
	World Bank Doing Business Index Score	The World Bank



Engagement		
	ODA from DAC Countries to Multilateral Organisations	OECD / World Bank
	ODA/GNI	OECD / World Bank
	Number of Embassies Abroad	Various
	Number of Embassies in Country	Various
	Number of Permanent Missions to Multi-lateral Organizations	Various
	Membership of International Organizations	CIA World Factbook
	Number of International Environmental Treaties Signed/Enforced	United Nations Treaty Collection
	Asylum Seekers per 1000 People	The World Bank
	Number of Cultural Missions Abroad (e.g. British Council)	Various
	Number of Countries a Citizen Can Visit Visa-Free	Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index 2014
Education		
	Number of Think Tanks in a country	McGann, J. (2014) The Go to Think Tank Index
	Tertiary Educational Attainment	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
	Number of Universities in QS Global Top 200	QS World University Rankings
	Number of Academic Science Journal Articles Published	The World Bank
	Number of International Students in Country	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
	Literary Rates	The World Bank
	Spending on Education as Percentage of GDP	The World Bank
Government		
	HDI Score	UNDP Human Development Report 2014
	Freedom House Index Score	Freedom House
	Gender Equality Index Score	UNDP Human Development Report
	Economist Democracy Index Score	Economist Intelligence Unit
	Size of Shadow Economy (as % of GDP)	Buehn, B. & Schneider, F. (2011) 'Shadow Economies Around the world: novel insights, accepted knowledge, and new estimates'. International Tax and Public Finance
	Homicide Rates	World Bank
	World Bank Voice and Accountability Index	World Bank
	Use of Capital Punishment	Amnesty International/Variou
	Income Inequality (Gini Coefficient)	World Bank/Variou
	WEF Trust in Government Index Score	World Economic Forum
	Press Freedom	Reporters Without Borders
	Government Effectiveness - World Bank Good Governance Indicators	World Bank
Subjective Data		
	Polling Question	Source
Global Polling		
	Cuisine	ComRes
	How Welcoming?	ComRes
	Tech Products	ComRes
	Luxury Goods	ComRes
	Trust to do the right thing	ComRes
	Visit, work or study?	ComRes

## C FOOTNOTES

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