



ate he is leading today on the role of soft power and non-military

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My Lords, I am most grateful for the opportunity to introduce this debate on a subject of great importance to the role of the United Kingdom in a world increasingly characterised by conflicting values which end in violence. I am particularly grateful for the interest shown by so many here today and to those Noble Lords who have put their names down to speak and I look forward very much to hearing them.

It is perhaps appropriate to remember that it is, I believe, a year to the day since the death of Nelson Mandela, and there you have an illustration of soft power executed through virtue (something to which I would not claim) but nevertheless demonstrates the potential impact of great figures in changing history.

There have been two particularly significant aspects my own preparation today. The first has been to read the report of the Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence for session 2013/2014 entitled, *'Persuasion and power in the modern world'*, published at the end of March 2014, and the second has been the experience since April 2013 of travelling with my wife to all 37 other Provinces of the Anglican Communion. One of the most difficult and dangerous was finished last week when I was in Edinburgh. [Laughter]

The Select Committee report was the result of significant evidence taking and much reflection by a remarkably experienced and expert number of your Lordships' House. Particular tribute should be paid to Lord Howell of Guildford, who chaired the committee. I was especially struck by three aspects.

First, the report makes it clear that there is no avoiding the need for the exercise of soft power, and in fact the exercise of hard power (from sanctions to the use of violence) is itself only effective as an addition to the impact of soft power. It is soft power in its many ramifications that makes it possible for this country to exert a benevolent and beneficial influence in the world around.

I saw an example of that when at the degree awards ceremony for Coventry University some two or three weeks ago, one of the best modern universities: 60 per cent of students were from overseas; they are a powerful source of earnings, and they will return home with a brilliant education and an exceptional experience of the UK, in most cases they will be our friends for life.

Secondly, the report points especially to the rapid increase in complexity and what it calls hypersensitivity in the modern world. There has been an introduction of information technology, with more than five billion mobile telephones around the world; we have the growth of access to the world-wide web, which means you can sit in Kaduna and look at what is happening in London, you can look at the shops in New York, you have access to cultural influences of the most extraordinary kind; and the possibilities of this both for governments and for non-state actors are ever more powerful with the advent of the sophistication of modern computers.

Thirdly, the report highlighted that power is in three levels, three dimensional chess they call it: at the top, force, in the middle economic actors, and at the third level civil society with NGOs (principally, of course – and I will return to this, as you might expect - churches, the world's greatest and most beneficial multinationals. I might declare an interest there).

Since the report was published, there has been added to the mix the recognition of international, and often religion-linked, terrorism and the growth of ISIS, of Boko Haram, Al Shabab and of numerous others. There is a continuity between the Select Committee report and the needs of a world in which international terror and localised conflict seem ever more dangerous.

The clear conclusion of the last few months of reflection on the advent of ISIS and of our renewed involvement in the use of armed force in Iraq, has been that this is an ideological, and even theological struggle principally, that cannot be won by violence but has to be by the development of a fresh narrative which provides a peaceful, humane, viable, motivating and effective alternative to the terrible visions of ISIS and Boko Haram, to violence in India, in Myanmar and in many other areas of the world, in which we have been recently.

Such a narrative will only be developed with soft power, in collaboration with allies and partners around the world. It is the only way of avoiding the alternative: a long descent into the dark and fear filled ways of anarchic, networked conflicts - perhaps never critical, but always a frightening and deeply draining demand.

The key institutions that are capable of exerting soft power for the common good of the countries with which we have contact (rather than merely to our own advantage) will be those that represent most adequately this generous hospitality that so characterises this country.

In 1867, in an inscription on the door of the 16th century, temporary but still existing Huguenot Chapel in Canterbury Cathedral – still used every Sunday by the French Reformed Church - the author Samuel Smiles spoke of the history of the hospitality of church and nation to those in need. His words bear quoting. He says: “still that...eloquent memorial of the religious history of the middle ages survives, bearing testimony alike to the rancour of the persecutions abroad... the large and liberal spirit of the English church, and the glorious asylum which England has in all times given to foreigners flying for refuge against oppression and tyranny.”

In our 21st century, such a sentiment must still apply. My Lords, it is who we are.

Apart from the Church, those generous and hospitable institutions are listed in the Select Committee report. They include the BBC, the Commonwealth, DfID, the brilliant diplomats – often profoundly courageous – of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the armed services, the monarchy, the universities and so on. The common characteristic is clear British identity without being wrapped in the flag, a powerful ethos of service, and a self criticality. They are the institutions of the top level of power and of the bottom of the three dimensional chess board.

In the middle level - the economic - there is remarkable and frequently neglected potential, both of benefit to us and to those with whom we deal.

In the 37 Anglican Communion Provinces we found that in the majority which are hit by war from fear or from economic under-development there is almost invariably a great desire for British presence, British presence especially in trade and investment, as well as in presence and engagement in other ways. We are much trusted, as the Select Committee report also shows, but little present and we seem in many places to have lost our nerve, commercially and in engagement. Others come in with more self interest and less ethics, and we seem far away, at a time when it is in our interest in terms of manufacturing and employment, and in the interest of those overseas, to have ethical, committed long-term economic partners.

Especially for the SME sector in this country, one that I grew to know well in Durham and in Liverpool, grossly under-supported, it comes down to simple measures recommended in the report like one stop shops for exports, good advice on agents, and reliable export finance. Many others provide this; we seem to find it difficult. All this lies within the grip of Government, and has done these 20 last years or more.

The institutions at all three levels that live out the narrative we need demonstrate how it is possible to operate internationally in a way that increases understanding and hence reduces the likelihood of armed conflict, while maintaining a generosity of spirit that enables those with whom we cooperate to maintain their autonomy, their independence and their self-respect. And we can do all that to mutual advantage.

This benefit is especially evident at present through the commitment of the medical teams fighting Ebola who come with support from DFID and have set an example of courage and sacrifice that is drawing attention across the whole of West Africa. We cannot be anything but overwhelmed by what they are doing.

Following the election next year, it seems likely that there will be a Strategic Defence and Security Review that should consider both soft and hard power – not merely hard power. My Lords, I suggest that this is the moment for an exceptionally serious commitment to this review, and not merely using it as an adjunct as that of 2010, and that the seriousness should be especially in the interface between soft power and hard power.

The review should set out clearly the ways in which foreign policy will support and develop the generous hospitality of soft power, in particular in order to provide the convincing narrative of which I have spoken as an alternative to the malevolent and evil claims of violent religion, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere around the world, and secondly as a means of conflict mitigation and prevention.

The new narrative must operate at all three levels of power. It requires the next Strategic Defence and Security Review to involve a national debate that draws in all three levels, and enables us as a country to find afresh the vision of who we are. It cannot be simply an armed forces versus the Treasury rumble in the jungle of Whitehall, out of which emerges something unconnected to the vision of our role in the world.

An example of the nature of a good inclusive review brings in the questions of visas, the role of universities, the future of the BBC World Service

and so forth. Visas were highlighted in the Select Committee report – and I mention them simply because everywhere we go the first thing anyone says to me is ‘visas’ and how difficult that system is. It was highlighted in the report that the apparently random and invariably extremely expensive way in which those coming here apply, or are refused, or are accepted is deeply damaging to the exercise of soft power.

You only have to look at the number of students coming from India, which has fallen precipitously. It appears that this policy is unconnected to our wider interests, and in my experience of more than 35 years of visiting Africa especially, that that has been true for much of that period.

At the third level there is, crucially, the use of intervention through reconciliation and mediation work, something that I have worked on for over 10 years, including in its economic and investment aspects, as well as the use of stronger levels of force at the early stages of development of conflict. It is both economically more effective than hard power, reconciliation and mediation, by several orders of magnitude, and in humanitarian terms transformative.

This reality is acknowledged in the Government’s 2010 Building Stability Overseas Strategy. Yet the application of this strategy in terms of developing the tools for intervention through reconciliation and mediation is still absent.

The exceptional skills and courage of the diplomatic service, which we have seen in our travels around the world, and the credibility of the BBC and the British Council, the Commonwealth and the extraordinary collaborative, autonomous but interdependent networks of the Anglican Communion provide unrivalled networks for conflict mitigation. Other countries look at them with envy and are unable to emulate them.

A clear policy for conflict mitigation is called for in any Strategic Defence and Security Review, and it will require investment. But when one considers the Institute for Economics and Peace research figure of violence containment costing up to \$9.4 trillion dollars a year, the contrast is a stark one. Conflict prevention seems quite a good investment.

Coventry University is working with the Church of England on the Faith-Based Conflict Prevention Scoping Project, reflecting the reality that the church, the Anglican Communion globally, is consistently at the forefront of conflict prevention, above all currently in the Great Lakes of Africa, in the South Sudan and in the Central African Republic.

Standing by a mass grave that I had just consecrated for the bodies of clergy and lay leaders of Bor Cathedral, last January, and then hearing the Archbishop of the Sudan, whose home town it was, call for reconciliation, and to know that he is working with us on that now, was one of the most powerful moments of my life.

I might, if your Lordships will permit another slight dig, comment that the Anglican Communion, as far as my search and my reading found, was unmentioned in the otherwise excellent Select Committee report - I couldn’t find bishop, Archbishop, church, Church of England; which, as we

are in 165 countries or more, far more than the Commonwealth, seems, if I may put it at its most polite, a little surprising. The Anglican Communion enables better communication of information than anything that can be arranged through government agencies, but it does it with an end of blessing rather than advantage.

Soft power is far cheaper to exercise than hard power. One day of deploying a battalion will cost more than years of conflict prevention work by NGOs. In the Other Place they are debating today a Bill to enshrine in law the 0.7 per cent of GDP target for overseas aid. This Government has, with strong cross-party support, superbly reached and maintained that target. It is not only right but it is also extremely cost effective in the best sense for deploying our values, for showing our generosity. And DFID is, incidentally, one of the world's best agencies in this field.

My Lords, to conclude, I hope that in this debate we will see how the different strands of soft and hard power can be better combined, and there can be a clearer sense of the narrative which sustains this wonderful country, which has in the past given so much to the world when at its best, and has the potential to give even more, if the advantages of our history, the skills of our institutions and the courage of our people are combined with a clear aim in view.

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