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An important guide for policy makers on how the UK can best use its soft power on the world stage, Michael Clarke and Helen Ramscar's book has taken on an added urgency since the advent of the pandemic – and given the global challenges ahead

Britain's Persuaders Soft Power in a Hard World

By **Michael Clarke
and Helen Ramscar**
Publisher **I.B. Tauris**

As a country we have so much to offer. We can bring together the public and private sector, use influencers from diaspora billionaires to entertainers and turn soft power into smart power. For this to happen government must show that it understands what we have and demonstrate the ability to use this asset, in a consistent and structured way.

Michael Clarke and Helen Ramscar are building on their earlier book, *Tipping Point: Britain, Brexit and Security in the 2020s*. Written before the full impact of the pandemic had become apparent, *Britain's Persuaders: Soft Power in a Hard World*, not only remains relevant but as much of policy making has had to take a backseat, it has taken on an added urgency.

This decade will be uncomfortable for the middle powers in general and for the Europeans in particular. The big four – America, China, India and Russia – are making the political weather. The

world is getting more complex and changes are occurring at an ever-increasing pace. Middle powers are forced to rely on soft power if they want to have a say in shaping the world. The UK will have to make up lost ground in its reputation of "punching above its weight" or being "quietly effective" in its diplomacy.

Intuitively we associate hard power with the military and soft power with things like diplomacy, the arts and sport. That's too simplistic. What matters is to what use we put something and if they are integrated to achieve a desired outcome. That's smart power. Boycotting the Olympics is using sport as a coercive instrument. Sending an aircraft carrier to host a trade delegation is about

creating an impression and building an image. Soft power is persuasive, attractive and magnetic. By creating a society that is free, prosperous and stable we invite others to join us. If they follow, we can influence what they do. Soft power is about relationships, reputations and perceptions.

At a recent Global Strategy Forum event (YouTube GSF November 2021) Ramscar talked about the AstraZeneca vaccine as a good example. Perceived as a British vaccine, the team embraced 36 nationalities and reflected the country's multiculturalism, the depth of medical research and the benefits of the freedom to innovate. In addition, the MHRA, a highly respected international regulator, set standards shaping global responses.

Coercive power is the prerogative of government. Soft power is something

inherent in society itself. From Captain Tom Moore walking 100 laps to Marcus Rashford and the latest James Bond, all



government can do is create the right conditions and support individual initiatives.

Ours is a vigorous society that has shown itself resilient and optimistic.

But there are big challenges ahead. Government needs to demonstrate

that it was right for the UK to take a different political direction from much of Europe and maintain the integrity of the United Kingdom. Michael Clarke knows how government and Parliament works. This book is a guide for policy makers if they want the UK to be a persuader on a global stage. 🇬🇧

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