“Hard Vs. Soft Power” is an international congress that will explore the balance between hard and soft power in contemporary international relations and consider the future of the two approaches. The congress is a four day program of lectures, seminars, and panel discussions, being organised by the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in cooperation with the Cambridge Union Society.

Since the end of the Cold War and the subsequent opening of the international environment, the pursuit of national interests abroad through hard power has come under increasing examination. The use of military force on foreign soil has in particular been criticised. The high profile examples of Iraq and Afghanistan providing fuel to arguments that such an approach cannot succeed in the complex tasks of nation building and fighting terrorism. Within this context, the concept of soft power and the use of cultural diplomacy have increasingly been put forward as alternative or complementary approaches.

“Hard Vs. Soft Power” will begin by exploring the origins, development, and contemporary understanding of the terms “hard power”, “soft power”, and “smart power”, and the extent to which they can be viewed as distinct concepts. Having explored the definitions of these terms, the focus of analysis will then be on the balance of hard and soft power in the contemporary foreign policy strategies of nation states. Under particular consideration here will be the changing nature of foreign policy priorities; the increasing importance of global public goods and the challenges of pursuing objectives in an interdependent world. During the second part of the program case studies of soft power and cultural diplomacy will be considered, and speakers will be asked to reflect on the future of foreign policy strategies.
Conference Agenda

“Hard vs. Soft Power” will be split into three complementary parts. The program will begin by looking in detail at the concepts of “hard power”, “soft power”, and “smart power” – where they have come from, how they have developed, and their application in contemporary international relations. Case studies from across the world will be used to provide practical examples of these approaches.

The second part of the program will focus on the foreign policy strategies of the United Kingdom at present and in the coming decade. Speakers will consider the evolution of British foreign policy priorities, the strategies that are being used to pursue these objectives, and the role of the media in interpreting and shaping government activity.

The third and final part of the conference will consider the future of international relations at the global level. It will explore the changing nature of global politics, the emergence of global public goods and other trans-national challenges, and will provide case studies through which the strategies of hard and soft power can be assessed.

“Hard vs. Soft Power” will be split into the following three parts...

“Hard and Soft Power: Identification and Application”
(23rd – 24th June)

The first part of the conference will look in detail at the concepts of “hard power” and “soft power” as well as focusing on the more recent strategy “smart power”. Academic experts and cultural practitioners will consider the history and developments of these terms – where they have emerged from and how they can be understood and identified in contemporary international relations. Theoretical components will be complemented by case studies presented by renowned figures from international politics and civil society. The theoretical components and case studies will allow the participants the opportunity to explore how hard and soft power are employed by different actors across the world. Seminars, lectures, and panel discussions will be held that focus on:

• The meaning of the term “hard power” and the strategies that can be included under this term, ranging from economic sanctions to the threat and use of military force.
Hard Vs. Soft Power: Foreign Policy Strategies in Contemporary International Relations
23rd – 26th June 2010, Cambridge University

• The emergence of “soft power” into the foreign policy debate – its origins and its evolution over the past two decades.
• The changing nature of military warfare and the distinction between “old” and “new” wars.
• The impact of globalization on the ability of states to accumulate and employ hard power.
• The challenges and opportunities of generating soft power on an international level.
• The impact of the technological revolution and the “democratisation” of the media on the interpretation and expression of foreign policy goals and strategies.
• The exploration of selected case studies from across the world that reflect on the application of hard and soft power, and the challenges and opportunities of each approach.

“The Present and Future of British Foreign Policy: Development Aid, Democracy Promotion, Demilitarisation?” (25th June)

The second part of the conference will focus on the UK’s foreign policy goals, strategies, and international partners, as well as the formulation and interpretation of policy by the government. Expert speakers from British politics and diplomacy, the media, the armed forces, and civil society will reflect on the role that the UK can and should play in the global arena in the coming decade, the key challenges it faces, and the strategies that can be used to address these challenges. The role of the media in interpreting and shaping British foreign policy, and the impact of globalisation on this process, will also be under consideration. Under consideration during this part of the program will be the following issues:

• The formulation and execution of British foreign policy: The roles of the Government and the Foreign Office.
• The bi-polarity to multi-polarity: The development of Britain’s role in international relations since 1989.
• The British approach to international aid and development support.
• Britain’s role in international organisations: The United Nations, NATO, and the European Union.
• The role of the media in interpreting and shaping the style and content of British foreign policy: A case study of the Iraq war.
• Britain’s approach to the prevention of international terrorism at home and abroad.
• Balancing national priorities and global public goods: British foreign policy in the coming decade.

“International Relations in the Coming Decade: Changing Priorities, Changing Strategies?” (26th June)

The third and final part of the program will focus on the changes that have undergone international relations over the past two decades, in particular the growing interdependence between nation states, the emerging role of non-state actors in international relations, the process of globalisation, and the technological revolution. Furthermore, the program will consider the emerging challenges facing nation states, in particular climate change, international crime and terrorism, global health pandemics, and immigration. The developments will be considered through case studies that will provide an opportunity to consider the roles of hard, soft, and smart power in addressing contemporary challenges. The final part of the program will focus in particular on the following issues:

• From the Cold War to interdependence: The development of international relations since 1989.
• The rise of non-state actors in the conduct of international relations: Private military companies, NGOs, the private sector, and civil society.
• The technological revolution and the democratisation of the media: A new context for foreign policy formulation and expression?
• Large scale population movements: The challenges of immigration and integration.
• New approaches to nation building and guaranteeing stability.
• The emergence of global public goods into the foreign policy debate.
• Regional vs. global organisations and the future of global affairs.
• The potential role of hard and soft power in the future of international relations.

Speakers
The conference speakers will include leading figures from international politics and diplomacy, academia, civil society, the armed forces, the media and other related fields.

Participants
Participants will include students and young professionals, journalists, political and diplomatic representatives, and other individuals with an active interest in international politics and the drivers of foreign policy.

Location
“Hard Vs Soft Power” will be based in the Cambridge Union, home of the university’s largest student society and the oldest student debating society in the world. The Union is located in the heart of Cambridge, surrounded by the city’s historic colleges and a short walk to the River Cam.