

Institute for Cultural Diplomacy

**The E- Learning courses in Cultural Diplomacy
(With concentration on the Media)**

**Promoting a culture of debate across the Arab region
(since the Arab uprising); how can the UK play a role in
encouraging young Arab debates across the region?**

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August 2013

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Promoting a culture of debate across the Arab region (since the Arab uprising); The UK's role in encouraging young Arab debates across the region.

Change is not about Western agendas, it's about the Arab people themselves standing up and saying what they want to happen. And it's about governments engaging in dialogue with their people to forge a way forward, together.¹

With the world constantly changing, the way developed countries engage with other countries and their citizens has to be updated and adapted all the time to find new ways to connect with public opinion in emerging powers around the world in support of human rights and freedom, and to stimulate innovation. This is where cultural diplomacy plays a major role in building trust between countries and their people. Today, power in the world is perceived differently and perhaps distributed in a pattern that resembles a complex three-dimensional board game. On the first block comes the largely unpopular military power, and then comes the economic power in the middle, which has been multipolar for more than a decade. The last block is the realm of transnational relations that cross borders outside of government control and includes diverse non-state actors. These types of relations have been largely adopted by most countries if not all in the new age of cultural diplomacy and media where citizens are constantly witnessing and calling for change.

In a world where people need to learn about others far more than they need to project themselves, governments around the world need a fresh understanding and a revised agenda for cultural relations. 'Such an agenda would take account of the new reality of mass peer-to-peer global cultural contact.'² As the changes in international cultural relations happen, the rationale shifts and the technological capabilities change; we can expect to see innovation in cultural relations. This ongoing change has profoundly shifted the landscape, particularly in the Arab region, and had implications far beyond. There is now a renewed sense of people's confidence and pride in the region, strongly connected to a renewed sense of their own multiple and co-existent identities and possibilities in the contemporary world. There is an appetite to build on this new sense of energy and the opportunity to build trust through cultural exchange. For such coherent relations there is a direct related question of language. For this reason, among many others, there is a strong predictor of trust and easier acceptance towards the UK. Maintaining and increasing levels of trust is vital for the UK's long-term future; 'when people of different countries trust each other more, they trade and invest in each other more'³

¹ UK Prime Minister's speech to the National Assembly Kuwait, 22 February 2011,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-to-the-national-assembly-kuwait>

² Influence and attraction report, Culture and the race for soft power in the 21st century, published by the British Council, Author: John Holden, Associate, Demos, and Visiting Professor, City University, London, assisted by Chris Tryhorn, Associate, Demos

³ Knack, Sand Keefer, P (1997), 'Does Social Capital Have an Economic Payoff? A Cross-Country Investigation' The Quarterly Journal of Economics 112:4, pp.1251-1288

The UK, with its world-renowned cultural and creative institutions, now has a historic opportunity to take a leading role in the understanding of, and action in, zones of conflict and post-conflict in the Arab region. The UK needs to take action to properly accompany the MENA region on its journey of transition. Whilst the trust in Western governments is low in the Arab region, people's respect for international values is high. The uprising in the region has renewed people's sense of confidence to build on mutual trust through telling of stories of change in the region. The UK's creative and cultural sector has a strong potential and supporting role to play in enabling people of the region to create, amplify and share a fresh image of them in the world. However, it remains unclear whether the dramatic rise of ultraconservative movements across the region might result in new restrictions placed on freedom of expression. This is reflected in the overwhelming victory of Islamic parties in Tunisia and Egypt, which also indicates a change in the cultural landscape. Now more than ever, there is an opportunity for the UK to engage with the creative sector within the Arab region.

This paper will look into the developments of cultural diplomacy towards the Arab region in particular, and will focus mainly on the UK's role in bringing international opportunity to life by looking afresh at its entire engagement with the region, through development programs and cultural exchanges. By using the British Council and its programs as a vehicle to promote a culture of debate across the Arab region, the UK is encouraging youth engagement in leading democracy there, post-Arab uprising. The paper will also illustrate that the UK has the unique chance now to participate and assist without being seen as dominating or imposing.

A Changing world

From humankind's earliest beginnings, groups of people, whether tribes or nations, have expressed themselves through cultural forms and have sought to show their values, skills and knowledge to others through cultural display and the exchange of gifts. Early diplomacy meant relations not between nation/States but between cultures, and in a changing world, citizens encounter a greater range of cultures than ever before.

Today, it is far from clear how we measure a balance of power. Like many basic ideas, power is a contested concept; no one definition is accepted by all who use the word, and people's choice of definition reflects their interests and values. We must specify who is involved in the power relationship including the scope of power as well as what topics are involved which reflect the domain of power. Still, any attempt to develop a single index of power is doomed to fail because power depends upon human relationships that vary in different contexts. The concept "power" is surprisingly elusive and difficult to measure, but such problems do not make a concept meaningless. Hard power in its military shape remains important and a vital source of power in this century as it provides a degree of security. However, as military power remains a crucial component of power in world politics, it will not have the same utility for States that it had in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In an age where globalization will spread technical capabilities and allow broader participation in global communications, the combination of hard and soft power including cultural preponderance is required. Essentially, hard power will become less dominant and there will be a need to discover how to become a smart power.

In the same context, the success of soft power efforts will depend upon the ability to attract and create credibility and trust. The soft power of a State rests heavily on its culture, political values when it lives up to them at home and abroad and its foreign policies being legitimate and having moral authority. With soft power, what the target thinks is particularly important, and the targets matter as much as the agents. Cultural diplomacy is the prime example of soft power. It has the potential to create a unique atmosphere of openness often through a shared experience of a cultural event. This type of power may appear less risky than military power for instance, but it is often hard to use, easy to lose and costly to reestablish. As soft power depends upon credibility, when a State is perceived as manipulative and information is seen as propaganda, its credibility is destroyed. While cultural initiatives can never compensate for opposition to policies, they can help to keep alive appreciation for values and contributions to culture and learning. Despite the opposition to Western policies by most Arabs for example, populations still believe a Western style democracy would work in their country.

Cultural diplomacy, in the widest sense, has increased in importance. It forms an important component of the broader endeavor of public diplomacy, which basically comprises all a nation does to explain itself to the world. Conventional wisdom has always held that the State with the largest military prevails, but in an information age it may be the State or non-States with the best story that wins. In the aftermath of 9/11 foreign policy measures were significantly shifted. Photographs captured

aspects of the devastation and the rescue were instantly shared and broadcasted around the world, generating an overwhelming response of empathy and sympathy. Soon after, policymakers appear to believe that military force is the sufficient response to radical terrorism. The credibility of Western States, the UK and United States in specific, was greatly compromised and declined. There were practical causes of the widespread discontent in the Middle East. Ever since, the region and the whole world have been watching to see if the military force of the United States in particular will match its efforts to repair damaged societies, insuring the utmost is done to fulfill its humanitarian responsibilities. Building understanding, respect and trust to alleviate the feeling of being damaged will require time, as well as cultural diplomacy, because no amount of cultural diplomacy, however skillfully deployed, can win back world opinion in the face of policies that are resented and despised, if not tailored and deployed based on common values shared by all citizens of the world. It is rightly recognized that vigorous cultural diplomacy can sustain appreciation for the values and ideals. In the same context, the Arab upspring comes as a peak opportunity and the time to build bridges and open up again. This is where cultural diplomacy can be deployed to win the hearts and minds of these vulnerable societies. In that sense, cultural diplomacy should be a process of building bridges, not a one-way street. States must invest in developing respect for others and their way of thinking to increase mutual understanding and acceptance. Public and cultural diplomacy will be successful only if executed by skilled and committed people willing to invest their efforts for this purpose and are aware that diplomacy is always a two-way street.

Culture diplomacy, aptly described as the exchange of ideas and other aspects of culture among nations and their people to foster mutual understanding, provides a critical, maybe even the best, tool to communicate the intangibles that make States great: individual freedoms, justice, and opportunity for all; diversity and tolerance. To be successful, States' cultural diplomacy must contain communicating aspects of values of diversity, opportunity, freedom of expression and so on. It should cater to the interest of the host country or region by also offering expertise in the spirit of exchange and mutual respect in order to open doors and form part of a long-term relationship. In other words, understanding the environment is a pre-requisite for effective diplomacy, in which cultural initiatives that become integrated into the life of the host country have the strongest and most lasting impact. As always, programs that fit the local climate will work best. The UK's 'Young Arab Voices' regional program presents a key evidence of such approach, by firstly recognizing the needs of citizens of the Arab region, conducting activities based on each country's concerns and challenges and implementing events in an environment that best fits the local people. The success of such a program will be demonstrated later on throughout this paper.

In a world made smaller by globalization, and one in which non-governmental actors and organizations exert increasingly greater influence, public opinion matters more, not less. That is an important fact for governments to take note of. The speed and frequency of global communication – both physical and virtual – is growing exponentially, and the content of that communication is often cultural. The resources that governments are prepared to devote to cultural activity and cultural diplomacy are clearly a major factor. Launching a forceful, energetic policy of cultural diplomacy would require leadership from the Governments and States' Departments as well as

partnerships with the private sector, not to mention adequate funding. These actors are most visible and important in terms of formal cultural relations. The UK's British Council is a paradigmatic example of cultural agencies involved in this field. The British Council represents the cultural diplomacy agency for Great Britain and is subsidized by government but exists as an autonomous agency.

*In the United Kingdom we are fortunate to have some immense assets and advantages in this area: the English language, connecting us to billions of people; links to almost every other nation on earth through our history and diverse society; skills in financial services, engineering, science and technology that are second to none; and fine institutions like the British Council, BBC World Service and our historic universities which are beacons for democratic values around the world.*⁴

Britain remains a modern day cultural superpower, and commits today more than any other time to play a full part in helping to liberate ingenuity and talent and champion it all over the world. It is evident that there is a growing seriousness about, and expenditure on, cultural relations in countries across the Middle East. Cultural diplomacy and 'national projection' came to occupy an important place in British policy towards the Middle East. 'The British Council and the official overseas information services sought to mobilize pro-democracy committees, education and exchange programs, commercial magazine publishing and book distribution as well as the British film industry in a bid to bolster British prestige and facilitate the wider policymaking process.'⁵

Can the West, the UK in particular, play a role in helping to ensure that change delivers as peaceful and stable outcome as possible?

As recent events have confirmed, denying people their basic rights does not preserve stability, rather the reverse. '*Our interests lie in upholding our values - in insisting on the right to peaceful protest, in freedom of speech and the Internet, in freedom of assembly and the rule of law. But these are not just our values, but the entitlement of people everywhere; of people in Tahrir Square as much as Trafalgar Square.*'⁶ The rapprochement of people is only possible when differences of culture and outlook are respected and appreciated rather than feared and condemned. In this way, the UK can bring the best of itself to participate in building a richer world community, supported not by diplomatic patronage but by joint creativity, the interchange of opportunities, artistic friendship and mutual cultural inspiration. The UK arts and cultural sector has a clear opportunity to play a supportive role and work on helping to span the gap between the established and the emergent, the institutional and innovative, to support the negotiation of emerging ideas and to offer ongoing opportunities for people to play their full part as active citizens. This is an opportunity to initiate an international collaboration and conversation between the region and the rest of the world on cultural diplomacy during, and in the aftermath of,

⁴ RT Hon. William Hague MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Influence and attraction report, Culture and the race for soft power in the 21st century, published by the British council

⁵ 'A Certain Idea of Britain': British Cultural Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1945-57, Vaughan, James R., Summer 2005, Vol 19 Issue 2

⁶ UK Prime Minister's speech to the National Assembly Kuwait, d 22 February 2011, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-to-the-national-assembly-kuwait>

periods of conflict and upheaval. This international collaboration involves debates organized for youth debaters from the MENA region to team up with other youth debaters from the UK for instance, to share their different arguments and opinions. Moreover, the development of a lasting and deep engagement with this approach will deliver clear and mutual benefit, at a time when cultural diplomacy and the exchange of ideas are increasingly at the heart of the wider process of social and political change.

Given the unprecedented changes taking place, now is the time to ask: how can the UK recalibrate its ties in this region? How can it build trust with the new generation of young people with so much ambitious ideas for a better future? How can the UK promote its values of freedom of expression and dialogue in a region where its credibility has been shaken?

A tide of change has surged through the Middle East and North Africa since 2011. There has been an almost constant stream of art journals, conferences, films and art exhibitions focused on representing and interpreting what has happened. Change has not happened simply in terms of violent confrontation and civil uprising. There has been a revolution of thought, of ideas, of behaviors, of images, shared in seconds across the region, and across the world. These changes have renewed people's sense of confidence and perception of their own identity and their potential in the region, and this new sense of national identity will enable the sharing of practical experience about the creation of free and open wider societies. In the light of the changes the region is witnessing, 'non-state associations have begun to proliferate, especially in Tunisia and Egypt, in order to provide support and professional training and opportunities in the region and internationally.'⁷ The role of NGOs and the third sector will increase, and today, institutions have an opportunity and responsibility to work on grounding people-to-people dialogue.

We are living through a time of great change and tremendous potential. Across the Arab region a largely young populace, inspired by past revolutionary histories in their own countries and also by the drive of their generations in other states, are taking to the streets. These young people want what all citizens want: societies that are fair, democratic, supportive, accountable and stable. Protest has not just occurred on the streets but also within the cultural sphere, aided by the digital revolution and the globalization of culture. This generation is determined that the future should not be like the past. After growing up in an atmosphere of injustice, inequality and corruption, many young people have ambitious ideas for a better future. This is the prime point where the UK can and need to engage with them urgently and help them secure and build on the changes the people have helped create. It has been these young people who were at the visible crest of the loud and insistent movements calling for change in the region, alongside mature institutions and individuals. Moreover, it will be these young people, as they establish themselves as active citizens in their communities and nations, who will be shaping social, political and cultural developments in the years to come.

This loud explosion of creative expression, which spread rapidly across the Arab region post-Arab uprising, must be comprehended and guided. Building on this idea,

⁷ Voices of the People, Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit, University of York, published by the British Council, Paul Howson, Peter Jenkinson, Shelagh Wright

and for the UK to make the most of the increasing opportunities for international communication and cultural engagement, the UK needs to stay ahead in the commerce of culture and ensure a continuity of exchange of ideas, research, creativity and sharing knowledge and expertise. Thus, the British Council is one agent that is used to build trust between the UK and other countries worldwide, and drawing on common concerns and values such as freedom of expression through debate and dialogue is a key step in building trust in host countries. In the same sense, people in the Arab world might resent countries of the West but will hardly disagree when it boils down to values of democracy, good education, decent living and so on. The British Council's experience in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and less intensely in Jordan and other Arab countries is evidence of its efforts in building programs that enhance leadership and skills, and give participants personal confidence to succeed in all aspects of their lives. The UK's approach to the Arab uprising is upholding universal values, rights and freedoms, with respect to the different cultures, histories and traditions of the countries in the region. For this reason, along with the supporting factor of partnership with local partners, the British Council's programs proved to be successful.

Regional programs as a vehicle to setting up debating clubs and forums, and organizing a set of training tools that target young Arabs.

The British Council as a UK agent spread across the Arab region aims at developing skills and opportunities for youth-led debate across the Arab region, and supports building better understanding of democracy and youth participation through dialogue in the region. In many ways, such institutions are the most effective formal players in cultural diplomacy, especially when they are independent of government and direct political control, but accountable to the public through funding agreements and governance structures. They are by definition motivated by cultural concerns and believe in the inherent value of the arts and culture. It is in involving the local communities that the British Council can and is leaving a legacy.

'In the very early days of the Arab Spring, the UK established an Arab Partnership, with \$180 million of funding for projects to strengthen fundamental building blocks of democracy like media, like election observers, and legal and judicial systems.'⁸ Also in 2011, the 'Anna Lindh Foundation'⁹ and the British Council jointly launched the 'Young Arab Voices' regional program, a vehicle that aims at providing opportunities, tools and capacity building for the involvement of youth in running and managing effective debating for the purpose of enriching the pluralistic democratic dialogue existing in the Arab world. The Anna Lindh Foundation and the British Council jointly develop and manage the program out of their regional responsibility, co-financed through the 'Arab Partnership Fund'¹⁰ of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the European Union, in addition to receiving the institutional support of the

⁸ The Future of the West: The UK's Evolving Role in the World, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-future-of-the-west-the-uks-evolving-role-in-the-world>

⁹ <http://www.euromedalex.org/about>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/working-for-peace-and-long-term-stability-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa/supporting-pages/the-arab-partnership>

League of Arab States. 'The program depends on establishing partnerships with the education sector, as well as the civil society sector; from NGOs, youth groups, culture centers, schools and universities, as well as the concerned ministries in the targeted countries: Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.¹¹ The core of Young Arab Voices consists of a program of debates implemented by civil society organizations and institutions, for example NGOs, schools, universities and local associations. In the program's first and second year, 'Young Arab Voices supported more than 9,000 Egyptians from across 17 governorates to debate the social and political issues of their choice, and trained 453 young people in debating skills, and ran 27 debates.'¹²

The story of the Arab youth who grew up under the autocracies of Mubarak, Qaddafi and ben-Ali is not a happy one. The year 2011 would change that landscape, as uprisings swept across what had been considered one of the most stagnant parts of the world: the 'waithood' was over and a new era for young Arabs was launched – or so it seemed. A new discourse was born within academic, professional and even policymaking circles in which youth were front and center. Youth thrived on citizen engagement. In the many seasons of the Arab transition, both formal/institutionalized and informal types of civic engagement were growing rapidly, though in a somewhat infrequent manner. In order to sustain momentum and to maximize the impact of youth capital, the active involvement of various stakeholders such as civil society, the private sector, the State and the media are needed.

In many societies and cultures, certain assumptions and popular stereotypes are attached to debating. These can include belief that debate is little more than a platform that distant and unaccountable politicians use to spread their views. Debate may also be seen by some as the preserve of students and intellectuals only; the community in which you want a debate to take place may see debating as a complicated exchange of abstract arguments and dense technical language. Furthermore, and in other instances, other organizations may see debate as a distraction or a waste of time. Hence, convincing audiences and potential participants of the value of public debating can be difficult.

In Egypt, the parliament elected in January 2012 and in which more than 70 per cent of the seats were won by Islamists, barely had any representation of the youth who launched the revolution. In Tunisia, where Mohammed Bouazizi sparked the revolution, young people are now retreating within themselves due to rising unemployment and a declining economy. Old and newly established political parties that do not represent youth interests and which have little representation of the youth themselves are now occupying the political void created by Ben Ali's departure. In Libya, still unstable and groping for a path towards democracy, armed conflict still persists and young people remain uncertain about their future. While the scope of institutional change in Egypt and Tunisia was limited, the change in Libya was drastic. For this reason among others, each program needs to be tailored to the context in order for the people to accept, engage and enhance their belief in values of democracy through debate and dialogue. During the formulation of the new governments and while these countries witness political and economic reforms,

¹¹ <http://www.youngarabvoices.org/about-young-arab-voices>

¹² <http://www.youngarabvoices.org/about-young-arab-voices>

young citizens must bridge over the challenges through accepting a culture of civilized debate based on the exchange of ideas and information. Prior to the changes that the Arab world had witnessed, young Arabs were not integrated into the government and were not empowered to participate. Meanwhile, the general society still does not believe that the youth are capable of playing key roles in their societies. There is no general consensus across people over the fact that there was a revolution, as some suggest calling it an uprising, awakening and/or other choice of vocabulary. However, these same people express the same needs, desires and worries about the unclear direction of where the new democratic transition is heading. Therefore, these societies are becoming more accepting of an increased participation of youth in politics. Institutions sharing similar values and common interests must partner with young citizens to share expertise and help them develop into active citizens. There is a collective sense of the need to build a new culture of debate and dialogue to empower young Arabs, eliminate the feeling of exclusion and marginalization, allow them to express their frustrations and help them exchange ideas.

In the same context, the 'Young Arab Voices' regional program aims to build on the collective sense by training people to be more effectively understood, build habits and behaviors that compel people to continue learning about the world and expand their skills on their own initiative. When addressing a diverse range of audience, members of a debate have the opportunity to develop active listening skills as well as to be introduced to new and disruptive perspective on subjects that they may have had limited awareness of. In addition, the learning process of how to analyze, criticize and advocate ideas to reason inductively and deductively, help reaching conclusions based on sound inferences. This kind of exchange encourages participants to investigate and re-examine their own views. Building on this note, the Young Arab Voices program offers a training of trainers from different countries of the Arab region such as Jordan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco to develop a cohort of trainers to enhance the training part of the program. The trainers develop the needed skills to organize debate sessions in their countries and play an active role in spreading a culture of debate and dialogue in their communities. In this way, Young Arab Voices provides a platform for young Arabs to voice their opinions and understand others' point of view.

The wave of youth-led transformational change processes in the Arab region has highlighted youth as a positive asset for peace and development. Many young Arabs want to speak out about the cultural and political issues affecting their lives, but may lack the opportunity or know-how. Since 2011, the Young Arab Voices program is considered one of the main initiatives that address the needs of young Arabs and increase their appetite for debate and dialogue. Through this regional program, the British Council jointly with the Anna Lindh Foundation, give young Arabs the opportunity and skills to debate and contribute to building democratic and pluralist societies. 'To date, the project has engaged thousands of young people (and hundreds of thousands more online) in Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, partnering with civil society organizations and the education sector,'¹³ which makes it more active in reaching out to diverse and wide audiences.

13 See more at: <http://www.youngarabvoices.org/blog/young-arab-voices-feeding-jordans-appetite-debate#sthash.AkRUJgCe.dpuf>

While the journey is still long, many Young Arab Voices program's initiatives are under way to further spread this culture in Jordan and elsewhere in the region through schools training and competitions, TV programs, training more political parties on debate and so on. It is evident that the UK has increased efforts in using new means of communicating with and understanding other countries to make sure UK diplomacy remains highly effective in the 21st century, and the Arab region is no doubt an attraction following years of excluded and marginalized youth. '[The] prosperity of this region will come hand-in-hand with development towards more open, fair and inclusive societies.'¹⁴

14 UK Prime Minister's speech to the National Assembly Kuwait, d 22 February 2011, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-to-the-national-assembly-kuwait>

Conclusion

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.” — Nelson Mandela

Quoting Nelson Mandela in the context of this paper links to the key element of cultural diplomacy, which is the exchange of ideas of common values. Cultural initiatives that become integrated into the life of the host country have the strongest and most lasting impact. This impact is due to bridging over any resentments or resistance by host countries, hence creating a culture of common values of dialogue and democracy. When cultural diplomacy addresses the people of the host country by their own language, culture and background, it is most effective and successful.

Successful cultural diplomacy also taps into local cultural or historical traditions, pointing up the connections between a country and another. It is a key element in cultural diplomacy to engage local partners. It is when people speak their own voice and language about the positives and negatives of their lives that cultural diplomacy's agenda is best achieved and accomplished. Only through a process of civic discourse, respect and argument can this discourse serve any purpose.

The vehicle used to deliver the agenda to a targeted audience mostly defines the agent delivering cultural diplomacy. Having English as a language spoken by most citizens in the world, the UK, through the British Council, had maintained a successful presence in many countries promoting UK values. Many perceive English as the language of opportunity, of science and technology, of law, medicine, and business. If this language is not completely understood, messages could be lost in translation and individuals will find it difficult to reflect on their views and express their voices. Therefore, there is a reason in the Arab world in particular to have a much greater selection of translations into certain languages, most notably Arabic, for all those who do not learn English. This aspect had served the British Council very well by enhancing the skills of citizens of Arab countries in order to empower their capabilities to be part of the process of change and reform in their countries. The British Council's approach to partner with local entities has served as a tool for citizens to engage with each other as well as the affairs of society. The ancient principles of advocacy are a reminder of how each individual has a part to play in civic engagement. Advocacy can improve and resuscitate civil society, and in turn, it can improve democracy.

From 2010 to present day, civil society activism and a new culture of political protest have brought about dramatic change in the Middle East. The Arab uprising has challenged the frontiers of political protest and discourse throughout the world. The Arab uprising shows that long-term political and economic reform gives people a greater stake in their societies. Many Arab countries have recognized this and the UK works with them to support their own efforts and encourage them to continue to play a positive role in the wider region. As much as political and economic reform at policy level is important, creating platforms for citizens to become active citizens is essential. It is when citizens feel part of the change and the reform process, stability is mostly granted. As demonstrated earlier, a prime example of such is the joined efforts of the British Council and the Anna Lindh Foundation, co-financed by the UK

government's Arab Partnership Initiative, in bringing tools of which citizens of the Arab world can engage within each other and across the countries of that region. The 'Young Arab Voices' regional project creates opportunities for debating in events scheduled in various places across the region. The project offers public debates around the role of youth in shaping local public policies in the Moroccan cities for example, a public debate and training for secondary school students in Algeria, a high profile public debate in the Libyan capital, two public debates in Egyptian cities, a two days debate tournament and a rap slam debate battle concert in Alexandria and culminating in the Tunisian capital with an intensive three days debate competition, in addition to various debates in other countries in the region.

'There is nothing to be feared, and much to be gained, from the growing diversity in international centres of culture around the world. This opens up new opportunities for Britain.'¹⁵ Nowhere more than the Arab world today does the UK have the opportunity to engage and promote its values and create a culture of debate and dialogue that ultimately achieves instructive participation and democracy. Today, the UK continues to give practical support to these countries, which have experienced revolution and change, while respecting those changing through evolution. From Tunisia to Burma, the set of values: free speech, free enterprise, the rule of law, freedom of expression and so on are common values across cultures, and promoting these values continue to inspire people seeking change in their own political and private lives. People of the Arab world need to be globally connected and locally engaged, and 2013 has been a year in which the importance and the value of diplomacy have been fully demonstrated.

¹⁵ Rt Hon. William Hague MP - Secretary of State for foreign and commonwealth affairs, Influence and attraction report, Culture and the race for soft power in the 21st century, published by the British council

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