

China must be laughing itself silly

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I admit that the supposed 'once in a lifetime' [decision taken by Keir Starmer](#) to increase UK defence spending by something approximating to the square root of diddly squat has irritated me considerably. I have [noted some reasons already](#), but let me add another. Cutting the aid budget massively reduces the UK's soft power in the world.

I do not have time to write about what soft power is this morning, so for once, I am going to use ChatGPT for this purpose because this is a perfectly good summary:

Soft power in the context of **overseas aid** refers to a country's ability to influence other nations through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or force. It is the use of cultural, economic, and diplomatic means to shape international relations, promote goodwill, and advance strategic interests.

When applied to overseas aid, soft power operates in several ways:

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Humanitarian Assistance as a Diplomatic Tool – Providing foreign aid in response to natural disasters, conflicts, or poverty can enhance a country's reputation, making it seen as compassionate and responsible on the world stage.

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Building Long-term Alliances – By helping developing nations through aid programs (e.g., infrastructure projects, healthcare initiatives, or education support), donor countries can strengthen diplomatic ties and create favourable relations that may benefit them politically and economically in the future.

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Promoting Values and Ideology – Aid can be used to promote certain political or economic models, such as democracy, human rights, or free-market policies, aligning recipient nations with the donor country's worldview.

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Economic Influence and Trade Benefits – Aid programs often encourage economic ties by fostering trade relationships and opening markets for businesses from the donor country.

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Enhancing Global Leadership and Reputation – Countries that actively provide aid often gain international prestige, increasing their influence in global institutions like the United Nations or the World Bank.

Example:

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) involves large infrastructure aid and investment in developing countries, strengthening its global influence. Similarly, the **United States and European nations** use foreign aid to support democratic governance and align other countries with their strategic interests.

In summary, soft power in overseas aid is about using generosity as a means of influence—building alliances, spreading values, and shaping global perceptions in favour of the donor country.

Starmer gave up massive amounts of the UK's soft power yesterday to boost his supposed physical capacity to resist Putin's advances. We may need to do that, of course. But the point I am making is that the two are not mutually exclusive. It would, as I have explained, be quite possible to maintain our soft power and finance additional defence spending **by simply taxing the wealthy more**. **By doing so, we would not only defend ourselves against Putin and his friends allies in the USA, we could also defend ourselves against China, which is at least as important. Somehow, someone in the Foreign Office has forgotten that issue, as well as the vital importance of soft power.**

It takes staggering stupidity to have such limited awareness of these issues.