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Nigeria's Soft Power Sources: Between Potential and Illusion?

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Abstract A major requirement for regional power status is the location and deployment of soft power attributes which may range from culture, political ideology, diplomacy, to sporting achievements, foreign policy articulation, tourism, media exports and language. While contemporary analysis of Nigeria's regional and continental power profile is almost entirely focused on economic and military aspects, an objective account of the state's power portfolio would be incomplete without a careful estimation of its soft power potential and influence. This article contributes to the study of Nigeria's foreign policy by initiating the debate on the utility and prospect of its soft power characteristics. An assessment of the country's soft power resources in the form of culture, political values and foreign policy reveals that Abuja can indeed use these co-optive platforms to mitigate the negative contradictions that dampen its regional power status in Africa. The paper concludes that, although there are enormous limitations, a careful articulation of Nigeria's soft power assets has the potential to reinforce the country's regional leadership.

Keywords Africa · Foreign policy · Leadership · Nigeria · Soft power · Regional power

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Introduction

There has been much debate on Nigeria's status in Africa's geopolitical and economic architecture. Labelled in some quarters as 'the Giant of Africa', Nigeria's regional power status has often been advanced on the basis of its superior economic¹ and comparatively advanced military capabilities² (Apter 2005). The rebasing of Nigeria's GDP in April 2014 which made it Africa's largest economy until 2016 further bolstered arguments of its influence within the continent. While these power indicators remain significant, shifts in the international system require that states explore more innovative ways to secure their national interest without having to deploy tangible inducements or threats (Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power Index 2012). Evidence of international relations suggest that states can sometimes obtain positive outcomes through non-coercive means using what is sometimes called 'co-optive power' or 'soft power'. Soft power generally refers to a state's ability to 'shape the preferences of others' through 'intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority' (Nye 2004; Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power Index 2012, p. 4). A number of scholars have drawn positive correlation between regional power status and soft power attributes (Sidiropoulos 2014; Ogunnubi 2014; Geldenhuys 2010; Flemes and Wojczewski 2010; Gill and Huang 2006). According to them, a major requirement for regional power status is the location, presence and deployment of soft power attributes which may range from culture, to political ideology, diplomacy, sporting achievements, foreign policy, tourism, media and language (Flemes and Wojczewski 2010).

As Nye (2004) suggests, any meaningful assessment of states' national power status must necessarily include both the hard power and soft power competences in what is often referred to as 'smart power'. To date, there has been barely any scholarly effort to articulate the potential and capacity of Nigeria's soft power resources³ despite evidence of reputed unofficial and official mobilization by both state and non-state actors. In a period in which Nigeria is confronted with numerous internal contradictions that debilitate its leadership role in Africa, unpacking the role of soft power can perhaps offer an alternative platform to mitigate the cost of its foreign policy obligations in the continent (Mustapha 2008). By wielding its soft power resources, Nigeria—arguably with enormous soft power potential—is able to gain legitimacy, acceptance and recognition as a benign regional power among other possible contenders.

While analysis and debate on Nigeria's power capability have focused almost entirely on economic and military aspects, an objective account of the state's power portfolio would be incomplete without an estimation of its soft power capabilities. An account of Nigeria's soft power status is therefore imperative.⁴ This article thus aims to add to the debate on the possibilities and utility that Nigeria's soft power attributes offer. The authors examine the potential and substance of Nigeria's soft power attributes within the ambits of Nye's three prescriptions of culture, foreign policy and political values. The first part of the article examines the idea of soft power within Nye's original conceptualization of three realms: attractive culture, political values and foreign policies. Secondly, we examine critically Nigeria's soft power instruments and resources in relation to these three components while

¹ With a GDP of over \$520m, Nigeria is ranked as the biggest economy in Africa.

² According to the SIPRI reports 2004–2014, Nigeria ranked highly in Africa in terms of military expenditure.

³ An extensive review of literature reveals the following contributions: Adebajo (2008), Mustapha (2008), Ogunnubi and Isike (2015) Lawal et al. (2015) and Iyorwuese (2016).

⁴ The fact that there is barely any literature on Nigeria's soft power should not imply that it is non-existent.

discussing the ways in which the country can leverage on its inherent soft power potential to optimize its leadership status in Africa. In the third section, we offer an objective appraisal of the constraints and contradictions of Nigeria's soft power prospect, while the final section concludes the article.

Soft Power: the Concept and Its Features

Although the idea of soft power has always featured in international relations literature,⁵ the concept was first popularized by American Political Scientist, Joseph Nye in 1990. Nye conceived soft power as different from the traditional concept of power. According to him, soft power is the 'ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment' as well as the 'ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment' (Nye 2008, p. 94). States mobilize this non-physical, abstract, subjective and often subtle attribute of power in three dimensions, which according to Nye include *culture* (in places where it is attractive to others), *political values* (when it lives up to them at home and abroad) and *foreign policies* (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority) (Nye 2004, p. 11). In this sense, culture refers to the values, norms and practises that give meaning to a society in forms such as literature, art, music, entertainment, tourism and hospitality, popular media and indigenous products.

States can use a number of sources to project these forms of soft power. Nye (2008, p. 95) termed these 'assets that produce such attraction'. Soft power is centred on resources such as the culture of a nation, its norms and values and its foreign policy, which reflects these values (see Geldenhuys 2010; Flemes and Wojczewski 2010). These may include movies, products, the educational system, humanitarian aid, development assistance and bilateral or multilateral relations, as well as public diplomacy⁶ programmes such as broadcasting, cultural exports and exchange programmes (Nye 2008).

Since Nye, many other scholars have formulated their own prescriptions for the elements of soft power. Gill and Huang (2006, p. 17) maintain that soft power is a 'directing, attracting and imitating force derived mainly from intangible resources such as national cohesion, culture, ideology and influence on international institutions'. Soft power is therefore deployed when other nations are inspired by certain values and the civilization of another nation to the point that they are driven to imbibe such standards (Lam Pin Foo 1996). If power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others to act in a way they would otherwise not have acted in order to obtain an intended outcome, then powerful states can affect the behaviour of others by coercion (with threats), inducement (with payments) or attraction and co-option (with the attraction of ideas) (Nye 2004).

While the concept of soft power is still a work in progress and its meaning in real political terms is still unclear, particularly in international politics (Smith 2012), it would make more conceptual and analytical sense if it is measured in tangible terms. In our view, soft power is a concept which is antonymous in meaning from hard power and essentially rests on a state's ability to find subtle and non-violent means—particularly through cultural influence—to promote its own agenda within the international arena in a way that also reflects the interests

⁵ The concept of soft power can be gleaned from the works of Hans Morgenthau, Klaus Knorr and Ray Cline.

⁶ While public diplomacy is sometimes confused with soft power, we have referred to the term here as a foreign policy instrument as well as a component and expression of soft power especially when it is coordinated by government (see Melissen 2005).

of others. Drawing largely on a combination of realist, idealist, soft balancing and constructivist paradigms, soft power presumes that cultural capability and public diplomacy can be strategically calibrated with a state's foreign policy interests to achieve goals that advance its preferences in the international arena in a non-violent manner. A state is able to become more attractive, persuasive and influential through mobilizing its soft power resources without having to force or intimidate other states to accept its preferences. As Yu (2007, p. 116) puts it, 'others emulate actively, or have to follow as a matter of course even though this is not their willing choice'.

More recently, there has been increasing evidence of the recognition of the potency of soft power as an essential component of power status (Gill and Huang 2006), and it is passing the measurability test (see Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power Index 2012). Countries are also beginning to pay closer attention to the intricacies of culture, political ideology and diplomacy (soft power) as a subtle weapon in the changing international relations landscape. Major powers such as the USA and China as well as middle powers such as Canada and Australia do not deny the potency of soft power instruments in building a positive image for themselves in world affairs (Nye 2004, 2011; Potter 2009). This enables them to generate greater levels of respect and admiration from other nations.

The rapid growth market (RGM) soft power index⁷ is an attempt to develop a quantitative index that objectively 'combines a wide range of indicators that captures the overall soft power capabilities across nation states' (Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power Index 2012, p. 6). While global image is measured as a country's global popularity and admiration with particular reference to its culture, global integrity is calculated based on how much a country adheres to international ethics and moral codes. On the other hand, global integration gauges a country's interconnectivity with the rest of the world (see Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power Index 2012, pp. 7–9) (Table 1).

Proponents of soft power argue that countries with more global admiration, countries such as USA and UK are likely to have a greater degree of soft power influence. As the RGM soft power index suggests, 'variables that reflect a country's global image include its export of media goods, the popularity of its language, the number of Olympic medals it has earned, the number of its citizens who are global icons and the number of its companies that are globally admired' (Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power Index 2012, p. 7). It is therefore imperative to locate the role (if any) of soft power in Africa's foreign policy literature in general and more specifically in Nigeria's foreign policy discourse. This is in line with the country's status as a regional power and its potential as a regional hegemony in Africa. The analysis suggests that although Nigeria has the potential to aspire to a regional leadership position in Africa, its capacity to fulfil this role can be strengthened by recognizing the relevance of the complementary role of its soft power resources.

Identifying Nigeria's Soft Power Attributes

Does Nigeria have any meaningful soft power potential that it could wield on an international scale? Although the literature on Nigeria's soft power profile is very thin, there is clear

⁷ The index measures soft power capabilities of a country on the global stage using 13 variables organized into three major categories: global integrity (freedom index, voter turnout, rule of law and CO₂ emissions), global integration (immigration, tourism, English fluency and university ranking) and global image (Time's 100, media exports, most admired companies, the Olympics and language enrolments).

Table 1 RGM soft power index results

Rank	Country	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
1	USA	84.0	85.5	86.3	88.1	87.0	87.0
2	France	49.7	48.4	50.3	49.6	49.6	49.5
3	Germany	44.0	46.6	46.6	45.8	44.0	43.2
4	UK	46.0	45.9	46.3	46.0	46.7	43.0
5	Canada	36.0	39.4	38.6	36.8	35.3	39.0
6	Italy	33.0	34.6	33.9	34.6	34.2	32.0
7	Japan	36.9	36.5	35.5	34.7	32.5	31.8
8	China	31.1	32.2	32.2	32.2	33.7	30.7
9	India	22.6	21.5	21.9	26.7	22.6	20.4
10	Russia	22.9	18.4	22.9	21.0	23.5	18.0
15	South Africa ^a	13.0	10.0	8.5	12.6	11.8	10.3

Source: Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power Index (2012)

^aSouth Africa is the only country in the entire continent of Africa ranked in the top 20

evidence of soft power opportunities which it can project if carefully combined with its hard power capacities.⁸

What are Nigeria's soft power attributes and potential? The nexus between soft power and Nigeria's foreign policy is an important part that has remained largely under-examined in the current literature (see Ogunnubi and Isike 2015; Adebajo 2008). Clearly, Nigeria's soft power may potentially be sourced from attributes such as its cultural exports (film—Nollywood, music, dress, food and other indigenous products), its political and iconic personalities (including Olusegun Obasanjo,⁹ Fela Kuti, Chimamanda Adichie, among others), sporting accomplishments, international peace keeping and mediation role, delivery of public goods through agencies such as the Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS), its Afrocentric foreign policy and policy of good neighbourliness. We consider these soft power opportunities on three scales of cultural attraction, political values and foreign policy as espoused by Nye.

Building a Nigerian Cultural Diplomacy

According to Nye (1990), culture is a major source of soft power. This is achieved when other countries admire and desire to emulate aspects of a country's civilization (see Gill and Huang 2006). Conceivably, Nigeria is uniquely poised to use the platform that culture offers to advance its influence regionally. In what platforms is Nigeria's cultural attraction located? The answer lies in identifying the cultural elements within the Nigerian society that highlight positive perception of its global popularity and admiration (Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power

⁸ As some scholars argue, South Africa regional prominence as an emerging power and a putative hegemony in the continent has been due largely to its superior soft power strength along with its traditional hard power competences (see Smith 2012, Sidiropoulos 2014, Ogunnubi and Isike 2015, Schoeman 2015).

⁹ We must state at the outset that President Obasanjo's record from 1999 to 2007 may be disputed as an attractive element of Nigeria's soft power. For instance, it was during his leadership that Nigeria experienced various violations of political human rights and corruption as the reports of many reports from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Freedom House show. Also, according to the Freedom House Reports, during Obasanjo's 8 years in office, Nigeria was a hybrid state or 'partially free' state, which is a mixture of democracy and authoritarianism. Obasanjo on my occasions sought to undermine the Nigerian constitution and democratic experiment through his 'third term bid'. Again, Obasanjo presided over a very fraudulent election in 2007. Even the late President Yar'Adua, who he foisted on Nigeria, admitted that the election brought him to power was fraudulent.

Index 2012). While these cultural exports may be valuable sources of a state's soft power, they are however at different stages of development in Nigeria. Nevertheless, we attempt to apply some of these variables to the Nigerian cultural context.

In the area of media exports, Nigeria's contribution can be strategically propelled and coordinated to improve its often provocative international reputation through music, art, entertainment, fashion, language and literature. For example, Nigeria's entertainment industry, particularly its film and music industry, permeates the airwave of the African continent and beyond. Nigeria boasts of internationally renowned artists who have made their mark in their respective music genres. The state is endowed with living music legends such as King Sunny Ade (KSA), Asa, Tuface, P-Square, Olamide, D'banj, Davido and many others whose tunes are aired in public places across the continent. Buoyed by their artistry mainly in the last decade, the country's massive and attractive entertainment industry has positively transformed perceptions of Nigeria and its people generally evidenced with many international awards to their credit. To be sure, for all of its five editions, the MTV Africa Music Awards (MAMAs) which celebrates the popularity of African contemporary music has witnessed international music stars from Nigeria garnering the awards for Best Artiste for all the five editions.¹⁰ Also, in 2015, while P-Square won the award for artist of the decade, D'banj was given the MAMA Evolution award in honour of his indelible mark on African and global music culture, for pushing the boundaries of creativity and shaping the soundscape of contemporary Africa (MAMAs 2015). Pointedly, these international celebrities with major music collaborations with artistes across Europe and America are reckoned as evidences of Nigeria's cultural capital and useful instruments for its cultural diplomacy. As a way of pursuing its national interest and deepening its leadership influence within Africa, these global celebrities from Nigeria are unarguably unofficial ambassadors for discovering Nigeria's celebrity diplomacy. As its current Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed affirms that Nigeria's 'rich cultural heritage is "soft power" to confidently take on the world' (Adaoyiche 2016).

Nollywood—Nigeria's film industry, dubbed after America's Hollywood—is another uncultivated potential attribute of the state's soft power. Nollywood showcases the complexing varieties of the Nigerian cultural heritage and its people, sometimes with admiration from other nationalities. Nollywood actors and actresses such as Stephanie Okereke, Genevieve Nnaji, Patience Ozokwor, *Mr. Ibu*, Osita Itheme (Aki and Pawpaw), Pete Edoche, Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde,¹¹ Mercy Johnson, Richard Mofe Damijo, Ike Owo, Funke Akindele and many others are popular and celebrated in Africa and could become ambassadors for promoting the Nigerian brand. Furthermore, popular Nigerian soap operas like *Jacobs Cross* and *Tinsel* are widely admired and watched by millions of viewers on the African continent courtesy of Multichoice/Dstv. Africa Magic channels (AMEpi 152, AMUrb 153, AMFam 154 and AMWld 155) are dedicated Nollywood channels that mostly showcase the diverse cultural depictions of the Nigerian people.¹² It is for this reason that the first ever Africa Magic Viewer's Choice Awards (AMVCAs) on the continent was held in Nigeria in 2013.¹³ Isike and Isike's (2012) study on the sociocultural implications of African immigration to South Africa

¹⁰ D'banj won the award twice in 2008 and 2009, 2face in 2010, Davido in 2014 and Mavins in 2015.

¹¹ Celebrated as the 'Queen of Nollywood', Omotola featured in Times Magazine 100 most influential people in the world in 2013, a list that included leaders like Barak Obama and Pope Francis.

¹² It would perhaps incorrect to state that Nollywood only portrays Nigeria's rich culture. Many Nollywood videos are known to project the vices of the Nigerian society. In fact, a recent report on Nollywood suggests that about 40% of films produced are soft pornography and enmeshed in vulgarity.

¹³ Nigeria has played host to subsequent three editions of the AMVCAs (2014–2016).

that sampled 120 African immigrants report that more than 90% of the respondents gained a more positive perception of Nigeria through watching Nigerian movies.

This suggests that an increased interest in Nigerian food, music, attire and language all contribute to deepening cultural understanding and better friendships between Nigerians and South Africans on one hand and Nigerians and African immigrants on the other. It is however difficult to ascertain however how much of this appeal has been the result of official efforts on the part of the Nigerian government (through its High Commissions and Consulates) over the past 20 years. Potter (2009) observes that, 'if a country fails to tell its own story, its image will be shaped exclusively by the perceptions of others'. Believably, through its entertainment industry (specifically music and film), Nigeria has been able to subtly shape the perceptions of other African nationalities about Nigeria and Nigerians. There is the obvious issue of Nigeria's notoriously bad image abroad. Certainly, any sensible assessment of Nigeria's soft power must be mindful to look at these issues in a sober manner. However, beyond the stereotypical negative perception of Nigeria and its people as corrupt, peddlers in illicit drug and email scam swindlers, its government is well placed to take advantage of the representation of its people through films, soap operas and programmes to project an admirable image of its social standards, moral values and one that endears the international community to it.

Also, many Nigerian authors have become international literary icons across generations. Worthy of note are late Chinua Achebe, whose book, *Things Fall Apart*, published years before Nigeria's independence remains perhaps the most translated and relevant African literary work: Wole Soyinka (Africa's first Nobel Laureate for Literature), J.P. Clark (world-renowned poet and playwright), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (author of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*) and many more. To a large extent, the country's international status has improved considerably by virtue of these authors' representations of the Nigerian cultural life.

Furthermore, although hardly acknowledged, Nigeria's secular status as both a Muslim¹⁴ and Christian nation is crucial in its soft power estimation—as it is uniquely placed to use its membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to negotiate international acceptance of its foreign policy strategy. Similarly, Nigeria has a vibrant Christian community, which produces clergy that are known globally for their miracles and supernatural healing powers and attract millions of believers from across the continent, and thus contribute to the growing trend of religious tourism in Nigeria. Some of these pastors, televangelists and faith healers have multimillion dollar church organizations with net values worth more than some African states. Popular among them include Pastor Chris Oyakilome of the *Believers Love World Inc.*, Prophet Temitope Joshua of *The Synagogue Church of All Nations* (SCOAN), Bishop David Oyedepo of the *Living Faith Church Worldwide* (Winners Chapel) and Pastor Enoch Adeboye of the *Redeemed Christian Church of God* (RCCG), as well as some in diaspora such as Pastor Sunday Adelaja of *Embassy of God* to mention but a few. These spiritual leaders with very strong global followership are profoundly popular across the continent and connect other Africans to Nigerians and Nigeria in beyond territorial limitations. A state with a poor international profile such as Nigeria with leadership aspirations in Africa cannot therefore ignore the role that this community of religious leaders can play.

It must however be borne in mind that Nigerian pastors have also attracted negative publicity for the country on several occasions especially because of the nefarious ways of some 'pastorpreneurs'—seeking only to exploit their followership. As we have also argued

¹⁴ Nigeria's Muslim population is the fifth largest in the world behind Bangladesh (fourth), Pakistan (third), India (second) and Indonesia (first).

elsewhere, 'the incidences surrounding the collapse of a guesthouse in Pastor Joshua's church, which led to the death of over 100 people including 89 South Africans' is a grim reminder of the duality of the impacts of Nigeria's international mega-churches (Ogunnubi and Isike 2015, p. 162). Nevertheless, in this case, soft power diplomacy became evident because, as a result of the reverence for Pastor Joshua, it became difficult for South Africa to openly condemn Nigeria despite the loss of lives and the way and manner SCOAN and Nigerian government treated the repatriation of the lives lost¹⁵ (Ogunnubi and Isike 2015). In effect, Nigeria was able to save face from the international embarrassment arising from the building collapse.

Putatively, Nigeria's unexplored soft power potential can also be gleaned from its rich culture of language. In many parts of Africa, it is common to find locals giving themselves Nigerian native names like *Adaeze* (meaning first girl in the family), *Oghenevieve* (sent by God) and *Funmilayo* (give me joy) among others: This suggests a reflection of their admiration for the Nigerian language as well as their exposure to the country's culture as displayed on numerous DSTV platforms and their fraternization with Nigerian people ubiquitous in many parts of the world. It is also not unusual to find many Africans attempting to speak Nigerian *Pidgin* English using common expressions like 'oga!' (master), 'how you dey now?' (how are you?), 'igwe' (chief), 'welcome ooo' and 'abeg o!' (please) (Songa 2014). Nigerian *Pidgin* English is widely spoken in many parts of West and Central Africa with an adulterated version also used in many parts of Southern Africa, especially South Africa. As Nye (2004) acknowledges, this (culture) could be an important source of Nigeria's soft power given its capacity to attract people and produce soft power in conditions where similarities rather than differences exist (see Huang and Ding 2006).

Nigeria's soft power potential can also be derived from the academic strength of its people. While this would seem to represent hard power, if used creatively, its population can be channelled to attract soft power gains. Nigeria is the largest African country in terms of population and is also the most populous black country in the world. According to Peter (2007), 'Nigeria boasts one of the most educated populations in the African continent', and Nigerians rank among the most qualified professionals in Africa (cited in Akinyeye 2007, p. 44). The health and education sectors in South Africa benefit immensely from Nigerian personnel. For example, there is no public hospital or university in South Africa without a Nigerian doctor or lecturer (from senior lecturer to professor). To support this claim, the database of the Nigerian Union in South Africa indicates that there are at least two medical doctors and a university lecturer in every branch of the association spread across the nine provinces in South Africa. This was further verified from the database of the Association of Nigerian Residents in the South African city of Umhlathuze (ANRU) which has 60 registered members comprised of 25 medical doctors, 4 nurses, 2 university professors, 6 senior lecturers, 2 architects and 4 clergy men/women (Association of Nigerian Residents in Umhlathuze 2014).¹⁶

Nigerian students also top the list of foreign African students in both the UK and USA and in South Africa (with the exception of Zimbabwe) (see Lee and Sehoole 2015).¹⁷ In general, despite the widely prevalent perception of criminality, it is hard to find any country today that

¹⁵ Accorded almost a stately status, SCOAN is a popular destination for many in the Southern African region and is frequented by many African leaders including all manner of statesmen, celebrities and royalties.

¹⁶ The ANRU is a registered non-profit organisation (NPO) which has been in existence since 2004. Its goals, apart from fostering unity among Nigerians in area and catering for their welfare, are primarily geared towards.

¹⁷ In a detailed study of student flows in and out of the USA conducted by the Institute of International Education (IIE) and published in 2013, it was found that Nigeria ranked 19th (7316; 0.9%) in terms of place of origin of international students and is the only African country represented in a list of 25 countries.

does not have a large number of Nigerian diaspora making substantial contribution to the economic life of their host country.¹⁸ Mr. Aliko Dangote, a Nigerian, is Africa's richest man, and Nigeria's Mrs. Folorunsho Alakija is Africa's second richest woman, highlighting the fact that Nigerians are also among the most prosperous people on the continent (Forbes 2013). All of these factors are potent soft power resources at the state's disposal which the state can use for the transformation of global perceptions of Nigeria and Nigerians.

As noted by the late Nelson Mandela, 'Sport is probably the most effective means of communication in the modern world, bypassing both verbal and written communication and reaching directly out to billions of people worldwide' (cited in Beck 2004, p. 77). Beck (2004, p. 90) argues that 'modern sport represents a major political, economic, social and cultural force in today's world'. In other words, sporting laurels and hosting mega-sporting events have the capacity to enhance the international prestige of the host nation. Levermore (2004, p. 21) adds that a country's membership of international sports associations signals recognition on the part of the international community. South Africa was excluded from many international sports associations as a result of its apartheid policies. During the Cold War period, sport was used as a political weapon. Similarly, Germany used the hosting of the Olympic Games in 1936 to advance its international prestige (Roche 2000, p. 104). In the same vein, Nigeria rallied 32 African, Asian and Caribbean states to boycott the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh following the British government's policy of keeping its ties with apartheid South Africa (Magee 2012). Hence, historically, sport has offered enormous soft power potential as it gives the host nation the opportunity to subtly announce itself as an emerging power or showcase its level of development and economic progress to the international community (Black and Van Der Westhuizen 2004). This can raise international prestige, while at the same time yielding other potential benefits.

Nigeria's contribution to sports in terms of both participation, laurels, bidding and successful hosting of mega-sporting events also presents viable platforms to increase its reputation in the eyes of global stakeholders. Since independence, Nigeria has recorded impressive performance in terms of organizing and participating in major sporting events, particularly football. These achievements could be converted into soft power potential for achieving its external strategies. Recently, Nigeria emerged African champion after it won the CAF Orange African Cup of Nations hosted by South Africa in 2013, a feat that the country last achieved almost two decades ago. Many Nigerian soccer exports to Africa and Europe in the 1990s are still revered in ways that endear Nigeria to other Africans; this has resulted in goodwill which manifests itself in support for the Super Eagles by Africans whenever Nigeria plays any team other than their own. Examples of Nigerian football ambassadors who have brought goodwill to Nigeria on account of their soccer prowess include Rashidi Yekini, Stephen Keshi, Daniel Amokachi, Kanu Nwankwo and Jay Jay Okocha, to name but a few. The Nigerian government could take advantage of the popularity of these sporting personalities as well as its sporting accomplishments as soft power resources in different contexts of international diplomacy.

Although the extent to which the Nigerian state (through its organs) is able to use its cultural products as cultural (or public) diplomatic tool remains limited, greater investment and

¹⁸ This is notwithstanding the fact that the huge presence of Nigerians in almost every country of the world has its drawbacks for Nigeria's soft power potential, given that it is itself a source of xenophobia. A number of Nigerians in the diaspora take part in illegal activities such as immigration fraud, drug-trafficking, human trafficking, credit card scams and 419, all of which pitch their host communities against Nigerians in general, irrespective of the fact that there are more Nigerians that make positive contributions than the few criminal elements.

commitment towards these non-state 'soft-powered' sources need to be made to mitigate the often negative reputation associated with Nigeria and Nigerians across the world. No doubt, Nigeria remains a critical and important actor in the international system, but she must work with other non-state actors within the country in positively projecting its image and reputation. Largely driven by individuals and civil society (with no formal state affiliation) who have become important actors in shaping Nigeria's soft power profile, there is no gainsaying that Nigeria's soft power diplomacy can be framed through the collective actions of a wide variety of non-state actors including iconic individual personalities, international mega-churches and Nollywood. Among other roles, these actors can also serve to cushion perceived dominance of Nigeria in Africa's geopolitics.

More empirical studies need to be carried out to unpack how Nigeria's soft power resources can be a tool for building its cultural diplomacy especially in the continent. For example, how does soft power contribute to cultural diplomacy? What form would this diplomacy take in terms of institutions, programmes and policies that need to be set up? In building its soft power arsenal, how should Nigeria develop its soft power resources for the mutual benefit of its people and the foreign publics who are the direct recipients of soft power.

Nigeria's Soft Power of Political Values

A country's political values impact significantly on its international acceptance. Nigeria's political values and domestic policy thrusts are thus important leverage for its soft power. As a result of long years of military rule, Nigeria's political values were anything but ideal or admirable. However, with the advent of democracy in 1999, the global identity of the Nigerian state has been transformed significantly. The way and manner it conducted its 2015 general election with the subsequent election of President Mohammed Buhari is a case in point, and this emerging profile of political tolerance and accommodation can be built on to develop something uniquely Nigerian. After barely 15 years of democratic rule, Nigeria has again occupied the position as Africa's economic powerhouse—upstaging South Africa. Contrarily, Enweremadu (2013) claims that Nigeria's economic standing hardly translates to any image of a prosperous and affluent country. Added to this is the fact that Nigeria is not included in the top 10 countries in Africa in terms of GDP per capital income (IMF 2014).

However, in examining Nye's soft power attribute of political values in the Nigerian democratic context, it is possible to infer that the state seeks to promote an internationally acceptable political ethos of liberal democracy: the rule of law; constitutionalism; and respect for the constitutionally enshrined values of fundamental human rights, equality and justice for all. Although these political values were not initially designed by Nigeria, the country's democratic consolidation efforts since 1999 have presented a platform to begin to imbibe these values and principles that were missing under previous, successive military eras. Currently, Nigeria's soft power in political values remains a myth as there is very little soft power claim it can make from its political ethos. Admittedly, Nigeria's emerging democratic and human rights profile is heavily tainted by numerous allegations and known cases of torture and extrajudicial killings by security forces, the latest of which is the June 2015 indictment of the military by Amnesty International.¹⁹ The report documents 27 cases of extrajudicial

¹⁹ See Amnesty International Report (June 2015); Stars on their Shoulders. Blood on their Hands: War Crimes committed by the Nigerian Military. London: Amnesty International. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/ogunnubir/Downloads/AFR4416572015ENGLISH.PDF.

killings committed by the military between 2013 and 2014 involving over 1200 men and boys. According to the 129 page document, 'in 14 of these cases, Nigerian military forces, sometimes in collaboration with Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) members executed a large number of people, at times dozens or even hundreds in one day' (Amnesty International 2015, p. 6).

Nevertheless, Nigeria's soft power potential in political values can stem from the political goodwill and international status of many of its past and present political leaders and iconic characters like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Tafawa Balewa, General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd), General Abdulsalami Abubakar (rtd) and Muhammadu Buhari among others. Archbishop Peter Akinola (former Anglican Primate of the Church of Nigeria) and Goodluck Jonathan featured in the 2006 and 2012 *Times Magazine 100* most influential people, respectively. Interestingly, the 2015 edition of the same Times Magazine list featured five Nigerians including Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Obiageli Ezekwesili, Muhammadu Buhari, Chris Ofili and notorious Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau. Renowned author, Chinua Achebe also tops *Forbes'* 2013 list of the 40 most powerful celebrities in Africa, accompanied by accomplished Nigerians such as Wole Soyinka (6th), Femi Kuti (10th), Genevieve Nnaji (19th), Chimamanda Adichie (32nd), Tuface Idibia (34th), P-Square (35th), Don Jazzy (36th), D'banj (37th), Nneka (38th) and Asa (39th) (see Forbes 2013).

While they are not all political leaders, the influence of these inspiring, charismatic and iconic characters transcend national boundaries (Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power Index 2012). The image they exude could be used to attract abundant global public goodwill which can be converted into tangible foreign policy benefits. This has the potential to drastically reduce the cost of achieving Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. In line with Mustapha's (2008, p. 52) position, the national reputation of Nigeria and Nigerians can have tremendous implications for the cost of Nigeria's foreign policy, particularly if it is creatively and positively channelled. Conversely, a negative national character has destructive consequences, making it extremely difficult and frustrating to accomplish foreign policy.

Another possible potential soft power variable for Nigeria is its commitment to good neighbourliness through peaceful resolution of disputes. Reputedly, this is exemplified, for instance, in President Obasanjo's decision to grant asylum to Liberian warlord and former president, Charles Taylor in 2003,²⁰ and the country's peaceful resolution of the Bakassi peninsula dispute with Cameroon in 2008. These gestures (although sometimes contentious) could translate into subtle forms of power, especially in the long term in the form of global benefits such as a permanent seat at the United Nations (UN). Nigeria's many decades of foreign policy incursions into Africa have been dedicated to improving the quality of life of its African neighbours, often by expending its oil wealth and military resources as well as human capital for the development of many parts of the continent (Ogunnubi 2014). Similarly, Nigeria's 'strong political will and financial support has also helped to transform ECOWAS from its trade-based foundation to a security-based Economic Community of West African

²⁰ Some analysts disagree with this position arguing that there can be no soft power merit in granting asylum to a leader accused of horrendous acts in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Inferably, Taylor was one of the worst mass murderers in African history and now, rightly so, has been convicted by an international tribunal and sentenced to prison. It is difficult for his victims to see this gesture as evidence of good neighbourliness. The point also needs to be made that after President Obasanjo granted Charles Taylor asylum in Nigeria, he (President Obasanjo) then violated the ECOWAS-brokered agreement, under American pressure, and turned Taylor over for prosecution by the Special Court of Sierra Leone. Clearly, President Obasanjo did not demonstrate credibility, when he violated the aforementioned agreement that led to Taylor's being granted asylum in Nigeria.

States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)' (Amao and Okeke-Uzodike 2015, p. 10). In summary, as Osuntokun (2008, p. 157) remarks, 'Nigeria's relations with its neighbours have largely been friendly....' As noted earlier, Nigeria could consolidate its progress in development and economic growth as a result of a stable democracy aided by noticeable improvements in its foreign relations since 1999 from a virtually bellicose state to one that is accepted as a member of the international system.

Nigeria's Soft Power of Foreign Policy

Nigeria's robust foreign policy, particularly in the area of peacekeeping and peacemaking, provides a valuable platform for advancing its international image and respectability. It contributes the highest number of troops among West African states and is the fourth overall largest contributing country to UN troops after Bangladesh, Pakistan and India (Okafor 2011). Since its peacekeeping operations baptism in the Congo in 1960, 'Nigeria has been at the forefront of a number of peace building and conflict resolution initiatives in Africa... championing the cause of peace and unity' (Amao and Okeke-Uzodike 2015, p. 2). In the West African sub-region, Nigeria played an enviable role in bringing solutions to many conflicts through intervention and contributing military,²¹ humanitarian, diplomatic, financial and material resources in war zones such as Chad, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sao-Tome and Principe, Sierra-Leone, Sudan and more recently in Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Central African Republic. Its involvement in many of these sub-regional conflicts has helped to shape its international reputation as a benevolent regional power, thus gaining respectable international acceptance among its contemporaries (Amao and Okeke-Uzodike 2015).

As noted earlier, Nigeria's concern for the well-being of its African neighbours has motivated an exceptionally benevolent foreign policy posture that prioritizes the progress of the African people. Furthermore, considering its power capabilities, Nigeria has refrained from throwing its weight around on both the African continent and further afield (Osuntokun 2008, p. 157). Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy is premised on the underlying principles of a total commitment to advancing the spirit of African unity. Nigeria's foreign policy prioritizes Africa, a principle that has largely remained the same over several administrations. As a result, Nigeria has made an unrivalled contribution to the growth and development of its African neighbours since it attained formal independence in 1960 (Akinyemi 1989). Nigeria has also been able to use numerous economic incentives alongside bilateral and multilateral treaties and commissions with other countries to attract international benefits and goodwill.²²

The 1999 constitution outlines the country's foreign policy priorities since the time of President Obasanjo; these priorities have been used to advocate international respectability and

²¹ Although this is a hard power element of Nigeria's foreign policy, its military engagement in Africa has also helped to improve its soft power profile. Nigeria's extensive involvement in the decolonization process and liberation struggle in many African countries made a huge contribution to the independence of African states, particularly in the Southern African region. Nigeria was at the forefront of a number of decolonization struggles in Africa, exemplified in its uncompromising support for several liberation movements in Southern Africa including the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia, the Zimbabwe Africa National Union-Patriotic Front, (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola (MPLA) (see Amao and Okeke-Uzodike 2015, p. 9; Chinade 2013:4-7). This contributed to the appreciation of Nigeria's profile as a benevolent big brother on the continent.

²² During the apartheid period, the Nigerian government made a donation of about \$2 million to the ANC in support of the liberation struggle. It is gestures such as this that solidified its status as a frontline state despite not being with geographic proximity of the southern African region.

acceptance, in contrast to the pariah that the country was, particularly during the Babangida and Abacha military administrations. Democracy, the rule of law, government accountability, popular sovereignty and regional and continental economic integration are gradually becoming cardinal components in the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy (Osuntokun 2008, p. 157). There is no denying the destructive effect of military rule on Nigeria's international image; however, in the past decade and half of sustained democratization, the country seems to have made substantial progress in revitalizing its international image beyond official rhetoric. Major evidence of this is the way and manner it concluded its 2015 General Elections culminating in the telephonic congratulations by Goodluck Jonathan extended to the eventual winner, Muhammadu Buhari Nigeria's current position as Africa's biggest economy ahead of South Africa. It should be borne in mind that prior to this period, Africa had witnessed a spate of leaders seeking continuation in office.

The government's emphasis on the importance of rule-based multilateralism has been at the forefront of its foreign policy implementation. It has continued to participate actively in the reformation and functionality of a number of multilateral initiatives such as the African Union (AU), the New Partnership for Africa's development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

Another important dimension of Nigeria's soft power base in foreign policy is its longstanding contribution towards South-South development and cooperation through four main technical cooperation programmes: Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA), the Directorate of Technical Aid Corps (TAC), the Nigerian Trust Fund (NTF) and the Nigerian Technical Cooperation Fund (NTCF). These are government initiatives to institutionalize Nigeria's development assistance and foreign aid programmes through the demonstration of its commitment to the human capital development of countries in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions. For instance, TAC was strategically aimed at 'using Nigeria's large pool of trained manpower as a means of enhancing cooperation, understanding and development among developing countries' (Daura 2010, p. 110). Since its inception in 1987 when it was introduced by former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bolaji Akinyemi, Nigeria has made sustained financial and material commitment to the tune of over \$22.5 million as at 2001 (Ogunnubi et al. 2016). As at 2010, over 4000 Nigerian professionals had successfully served in the TAC in contribution to the socioeconomic development of over 38 countries from Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific. Currently, the Directorate has over 780 Nigerian volunteers deployed across 20 ACP countries (Daura 2010) (Table 2).

As a soft power tool of development diplomacy targeted towards the delivery of public goods, these technical cooperation programmes have also become platforms for promoting

Table 2 TAC deployment from 1987 to 2010

Year	Number
1987–1990	102
1990–1992	103
1992–1994	190
1994–1996	280
1997–1999	195
1999–2001	254
2002–2004	382
2004–2006	617
2006–2008	744
2008–2010	800

Source: Authors' compilation (see Daura 2010)

cooperation and meaningful interaction among the people of the region (Daura 2010). No doubt, this is one of the few ways in which Nigeria tries to project soft power, with payoff evidenced in the international recognition accorded to her as a five time non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

In summary, while acknowledging the difficulty of estimating soft power potential in concrete terms, we suggest that Nigeria possesses considerable soft power potential, much of which has yet to be properly channelled to accrue any meaningful benefit for both the country and its people. A number of impediments pose serious threats to the use of this potential; if addressed, these may reduce the cost of actualizing Nigeria's foreign policy and the country's heavy reliance on the hard power of coercion. Nigeria's engagement with the sub-region and continent can be underpinned by elements of both hard and soft power. Nigeria could substantially improve its public image by focusing on building positive international respect, such that every Nigerian begins to 'consider him- or herself an ambassador of the country. The image of the "ugly Nigerian" has become a significant obstacle to good relations, not only with Nigeria's neighbours, but also on the continent and further afield' (Osuntokun 2008, p. 158). However, the formal institutions of foreign policy processes are not in themselves sufficient to further Nigeria's cause. There is a huge responsibility on the part of the citizens to help build a positive image for the country.

Any Prospects in Soft Power for Nigeria?

While it is expected that any analysis on the impact of Nigeria's global identity on its foreign policy would generate mixed reaction, its assessment must be balanced in offering a critical analysis of limitations such as the negative pervading perceptions of Nigeria and how soft power can perhaps be a tool to address this. Therefore, the paper is not oblivious to the reality that there are common perceptions of Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, especially in economics, by the indices compiled by Transparency International; scam letters; environmental pollution in the Niger Delta region; gross incompetence in military and police sectors which are also engaged in human rights violations while confronting the Boko Haram insurgency; ethnic, religious, regional divisions and conflicts; and a vast inequality of wealth (one of the highest Gini indexes globally). These negative images constrain Nigeria's soft power influences especially in the short term. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on the Nigerian state to fix its own domestic problems first before it can seek to impress other nations. Clearly, as Mustapha (2008, p. 52) aptly observes, 'Nigeria's national reputation in the international arena as a country of alleged fraudsters and drug barons makes some of its formal national foreign policy objectives very difficult to attain'. It is true therefore that Nigeria has not been able to exert its influence to the full measure that its hard and soft power potential requires, and this poses a dialectical dilemma.

The analysis shows that there are aspects of the Nigerian culture that are globally admired and considered popular in Africa and that Africans are participating in this cultural domain in ways that impact in some ways their perceptions and acceptance of Nigerians and Nigeria as a continental leader. Nigeria's music, films, fashion, language (Pidgin English) and literature are cultural elements of the country's soft power in Africa. In terms of political values, in the post-1999 democratic era, and despite its civil war and ethno-religious cleavages, Nigeria has been a relatively good model of peaceful co-existence rooted in the political ideal of unity in diversity. Compared with plural states such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe, Nigeria has been able to hold together. Furthermore, its foreign policy principle of Afrocentricity and commitment to the liberation and unity of the continent

exemplified in its contributions to peacebuilding in different parts of Africa since the 1960s all help to endear it to other African states and peoples. However, the utility of these soft power resources is constrained by the limitations outlined above such as the insurgencies in the south and north of Nigeria. However, this should not dissuade Abuja from these soft power resources into manifest political advantages and influence. Is Nigeria harnessing its soft power resources adequately? Does it have the capacity to convert its soft power resources into political leverage in its relations with other African states and the rest of the world? Why is Nigeria not using its soft power resources adequately? These are important questions that could be the subject of further research, given the absence of clearly articulated and coherent national interests to guide Nigeria's foreign policy (see Saliu and Omotola 2006).

For example, in contrast to its regional competitor (South Africa), Nigeria is yet to officially or unofficially appreciate the value of its soft power.²³ Although a soft power doctrine appeared to have been enacted under General Olusegun Obasanjo when Nigeria hosted the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977 with a gathering to celebrate black culture and heritage (Iyorwuese 2016), the only soft power reference by any Nigerian government official was in 2016 when Minister of Information Lai Mohammed stated that 'We have a vibrant culture sector which is second to none in the world. Moreover, our cultural heritage is a soft power that can confidently take over the world'. He added further that 'We have to leverage on the potentials in our culture to help drive our tourism sector so as to obtain our share of the global tourism benefits that would help resuscitate and redefine our industry for sustainable economic development' (Adaoyiche 2016).

A soft power policy is particularly important given inherent domestic contradictions (including Boko Haram and militancy in the Niger Delta region) that confront the legality of Nigeria's leadership prospect in Africa and continue to dent the possibility of any soft power influence (Ogunnubi et al. 2016). As Ogunnubi and Isike (2015, p. 166) have argued, 'Due largely to its dysfunctional state system, Nigeria continues to lose international credibility and recognition and much of its international reputation not minding its status as an African economic giant'.

Suffice to add that if the Nigerian state expects Africa and the world to take its aspirations for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and as a genuine power pole in Africa seriously, the sum total of its power resources and capabilities need to be better packaged and projected. Given this article's focus, the following recommendations are made within the ambit of Nye's three dimensions of soft power towards realizing Nigeria's soft power potential.

In terms of cultural diplomacy, there is need for the Nigerian government at all levels to invest in the development of its movie industry and in the entertainment industry broadly. Believably, this industry has projected Nigeria in a better light in Africa than its official channels (High Commissions and Consulates). The Nigerian state can use these movies to project a particular image of Nigeria which it can use as leverage in its relations with other African states. Also, linguistics departments at Nigerian universities should be motivated to develop the *Pidgin* English language to its full potential such that it becomes a national/official language. This language is an important component of Nigeria's soft power appeal to Africans and has great unifying potential. The absence of an enduring framework for cultural diplomacy perhaps explains why there is yet the establishment of a Nigerian International Cultural Centre

²³ In the National Development Plan (2030), South Africa clearly articulates its soft power policy noting that 'In areas such as science, culture, higher education, sport and environmental protection, there is a need to showcase South Africa and promote its presence and leadership on strategic issues as part of its soft power in international relations...' (NDP 2012, p. 241) and that 'Public diplomacy is fundamental to South Africa's projection of soft power' (NDP 2012, p. 255).

(NICC) abroad which could showcase its vibrant arts and culture for rebranding Nigeria's image. The construction of the Nigerian Cultural Centre and Millennium Tower in Abuja should serve as springboard for achieving this goal. Relatedly, expanding the administrative mandates of national agencies established to promote Nigeria's cultural values will serve to strengthen her cultural diplomacy. These agencies include the National Institute for Cultural Orientations (NICO), National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), the National Gallery of Art and the National Commission for Museums and Monument (NCMM).

Second, foreign policymaking should be democratized such that it encourages groups and individuals outside government organs to participate in policy formulation. These should include Nigerians in the Diaspora. This can start with reviewing the nation's foreign policy to adopt less ambiguous foreign policy goals that all Nigerians understand to play their role effectively. Such a review should also articulate and incorporate the country's soft power elements into her foreign policy machinery.

Lastly, given the link between domestic economy and foreign policy, we suggest that Nigeria's economic transformation agenda which was started by the Jonathan administration should be continued and fast-tracked by the Buhari administration with focus on wealth redistribution. Clearly, a state whose citizens wallow in abject poverty cannot be regarded as a successful power broker or leader in the international system.

Finally, in terms of political values, Nigeria would do well to articulate and develop its own political innovation (values) which it can 'sell' to Africa and the world. These can be built around political accommodation, consensus and tolerance given its ability to stick together after a civil war, its peaceful transition following the 2015 elections and in the face of its multilateral diversities. Addressing calls for peacefully renegotiating the basis of the state to engineer a national rebirth may be a useful starting point. One suggestion in this regard is to harmonize the reports of the two political conferences organized by the Obasanjo and Jonathan administrations in 2007 and 2014, respectively, and conducting a referendum to legitimize the new consensus that can emerge from it. And in terms of political values at the short-term level, although a good human rights record is not one of the strong points of its soft power potentials as is the case of South Africa, for example,²⁴ Nigeria needs to address human rights abuses by its security forces which may impact negatively on its soft power profile. This may be a source of tension between hard power²⁵ and soft power which can be a bit tricky to manage. For example, torture and extrajudicial killings by security forces which though are reflective of state power expressed in realist terms also subtract from Nigeria's soft power profile. The challenge essentially is in knowing which type of power capability it can apply for each situation same way, for example, that the USA combines both hard and soft powers to combat terrorism.

Conclusion

While Nigeria's geostrategic status in Africa has been questioned by some scholars who note inherent internal and external contradictions, the paper has argued that Nigeria can reinforce its

²⁴ See Ogunnubi and Isike (2015) which documents human rights, rule of law, media export, cultural export and iconic personalities among others as part of what constitutes South Africa's soft power capabilities.

²⁵ The arguments presented in this paper do not subtract from the continuous relevance of hard power which is rooted in the realist conception of power neither does it draw a parallel between the two. Rather, we argue that hard and soft power complement each other and both can be utilized to realize the national interests of Nigeria in the context of this paper.

leadership role in Africa by looking beyond its traditional elements of power. Among many examples, Nigeria's soft power is argued to be domiciled in its cultural exports especially in the entertainment industry (Nollywood, music and comedy), international peacekeeping record, international development diplomacy through the TAC, Afrocentric foreign policy, its contribution to African scholarship, the strong linkage of its economy with the West African sub-region, its leadership in the ECOWAS, ECOMOG, OAU/AU, its United Nation Security Council representation of the African continent on five occasions and its international mega-churches. Although the Nigerian state may not have recognized these as instruments of its national soft power, it is difficult to argue that these platforms have not contributed positively to its international profile and reputation. Nigeria can increase its influence in the international arena if it begins to creatively articulate and mobilize its official and unofficial soft power resources like other regional power contemporaries such as Turkey, Brazil and South Africa.

The extent to which its leadership role in West Africa and the continent is accepted will depend partly on how it manages its non-military resources. This assortment of soft power resources (when properly articulated and coordinated) perhaps presents an alternative approach to cushion the pervasive negative perceptions (especially among its African neighbours) that dwindle the country's leadership credentials within the continent. To encapsulate our argument, as Adebajo (2008, p. 31) rightly notes, Nigeria's diplomatic practise needs to be 'careful not to arouse the fears of its neighbours through unilateral military interventions and other actions that make it appear to be pursuing policies in an effort to dominate its sub-region'. Its soft power attractions and potentials for persuasion thus provide a veritable leeway of giving contextual expression to the Nigerian maxim; 'there are many ways to kill a rat'.

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