POSTING NIGERIA'S SOFT POWER AS A STRATEGIC FOREIGN POLICY TOOL

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INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the 21st century, soft power stopped being a peripheral concept in international relations. States that once measured influence through military capacity, alliances, and trade balances began investing, deliberately and at scale, in culture, education, and diaspora networks as instruments of foreign policy. Joseph Nye first named this form of power in 1990, describing it as the ability to get others to want what you want rather than forcing them through coercion or payment (Nye, 1990). South Korea's deployment of K-pop and K-dramas, and Turkey's use of television exports and religious diplomacy, show how culture can be organised to work deliberately on a country's behalf rather than simply happening to its advantage.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, presents an unusual case within this pattern. Despite globally recognized cultural assets and a vast diaspora, its foreign policy remains state-centric and fails to convert these resources into strategic leverage, leaving a significant gap between the country's influence potential and its actual diplomatic outcomes. Nigerian Afrobeats routinely charts on international platforms, and Nollywood produces thousands of films annually, an industry PwC valued at close to $15 billion by 2025 (Businessday NG, 2026). A diaspora community estimated at 17 million people, according to Nigeria's own National Diaspora Policy (Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, n.d.), sent home $21.8 billion in 2025 alone, according to Central Bank of Nigeria data (Brand Spur, 2026), more than four times the country's foreign direct investment inflows for the same year. Yet none of this sits inside a coherent foreign policy strategy. There is no dedicated budget line for cultural diplomacy in the way there is for defence cooperation or trade missions, and no network of cultural attachés comparable to what South Korea's KOFICE, Turkey's Yunus Emre Institutes, or the United Kingdom's British Council maintain abroad.

While studies on Nigeria's soft power has acknowledged Nigeria's soft power potential (Ogunnubi, 2020a; Tella, 2018), it has tended to focus on isolated instruments, a Nollywood success here, a diaspora remittance figure there, rather than asking what institutional and policy mechanisms would be required to move the country from accidental cultural influence to a coordinated strategy. A comprehensive framework addressing that transition, from "accidental" to "strategic" soft power, is still lacking in the literature.

This study addresses that gap. Its objectives are to:

i. map Nigeria's principal soft power assets, including its creative industries, diaspora networks, and technical assistance programmes

ii. analyze the institutional and policy gaps that prevent Nigeria from converting these assets into diplomatic leverage;

iii. draw comparative lessons from the institutionalized soft power approaches of

South Korea, Turkey, and the United Kingdom;

iv. Propose a coordinated policy framework for institutionalizing Nigeria's soft power as a deliberate instrument of foreign policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most contemporary studies on Nigerian foreign policy still largely frame regional influence in terms of material capability, even as doubts grow about the durability of that capability. Erameh, Ologe, and Ojakorotu (2025) directly interrogate Nigeria's hegemonic status in Africa, concluding that internal constraints, such as insecurity, weak infrastructure, and inconsistent policy, alongside external pressures such as the emergence of the Alliance of Sahel States, have combined to undermine Nigeria's ability to translate economic and military weight into sustained regional leadership. Their assessment and submission suggest a clear departure from earlier studies like Ojakorotu and Adeleke (2018) and Ogunnubi (2018) that assumed the continuity of Nigerian hegemony, and instead reflects a growing emphasis on documenting decline in Nigeria's hegemonic position.

Ogunnubi (2020a) offers a partial counter narrative, rather than treating soft power as absent, he described it as an emerging strategy within Africa's evolving geopolitics. Together, Erameh et al. (2025) and Ogunnubi (2020a) reveal a literature at crossroad, one line of argument documents the decline of Nigeria's hard power capacity or her hegemonic position, while the other tracks the tentative, uneven rise of soft power as a potential alternative. What emerges from these arguments reflects the reality of Nigerian foreign policy itself. Material power is no longer sufficient to guarantee leadership, as the material base weakens, the question is no longer whether Nigeria can lead through military might or economic size alone, but whether it can build the institutions that will enable her lead through attraction. This is the central challenge for Nigeria's soft power in the current era.

The two forms of power are rarely deployed in isolation by states that use them effectively, a combination Nye (2009) termed "smart power." Tella (2022) applies that framing directly to Nigeria's democracy promotion efforts across Sierra Leone, São Tomé and Príncipe, and The Gambia, finding that Nigeria has deployed all three dimensions, hard, soft, and smart, depending on domestic circumstances and presidential personality. Even so, in an African Soft Power Index, as cited in Tella (2022), Nigeria is ranked only fifth among African soft power states, behind Egypt, South Africa, Morocco, and Algeria, despite Nigeria's status as the continent's largest economy. This ranking exposes a central contradiction, considerable cultural assets with limited strategic deployment.

Recent studies on Nigeria's soft power have all reached a consistent conclusion, even as the range of instruments examined has expanded. Ogunnubi (2020a) frames Nigeria's soft power as an emerging strategy rather than a complete one, he opines that cultural and diplomatic assets exist, but they are only beginning to be organized with intent. Tella (2018) reaches a related but sharper conclusion, he argued that Nigeria possesses soft power resources that compare favourably with other African states, yet successive governments have failed to translate that potential into structured diplomatic leverage.

More recent studies have narrowed this argument to individual instruments. Ogunnubi and Idowu (2022), in a study examining Nollywood through the lens of the "orange economy," argued that the industry's soft power value is being driven informally by individual actors, producers and distributors who built global audiences without any deliberate state policy. Idowu and Ogunnubi

(2022) extend this argument to digital comedy skits on social media, contending that this informal, humour based content also functions as a soft power alternative for nation branding. This illustrates how far Nigeria's cultural influence now extends beyond formal state planning; comedy skits shared peer to peer carry cultural influence and can generate attraction in the same way Nollywood films or Afrobeats tracks do, simply through a different channel and at a different scale. Asani (2026) reinforces these submissions, arguing that Nollywood could function as a platform for nation branding and economic diplomacy if properly integrated into government strategy. The reoccurrence of these findings across different authors in different years of publication is significant. It means the disagreement in this field was never really about what Nigeria's soft power problem is. Scholars consistently agree; the resources are there, what is missing is the coordination.

Addressing this, is critical if Nigeria is to transform cultural attraction into diplomatic leverage.

Alongside this empirical debate sits a theoretical one. Soft power theory itself has drawn scholarly criticism. Saliu (2025) argues that the Western values Nye described in 1990 were attractive largely because many countries lacked them at the time, particularly across Eastern Europe, and that decades on, with many of those countries having adopted the values in question, the relative pull of that attraction has weakened. Saliu further contends that in today's networked societies, marked by declining message credibility and billions of people interacting across competing platforms, the conditions under which soft power was originally theorised no longer hold. Cammack (2008) argues that Nye's advocacy for soft power, later repackaged as "smart power," remains fundamentally unilateralist, still insisting on hard power supremacy and continued American leadership; Cammack finds the underlying case weak both theoretically and in practice, concluding that the most constructive step America could take would be relinquishing its claim to global leadership rather than reforming how it is exercised. These critiques bear directly on how this paper applies Nye's framework to Nigeria, discussed further in the Theoretical

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOFT POWER THEORY

This study adopts Nye's (1990, 2004) soft power theory as its primary analytical lens because it provides a structured way to categorise Nigeria's assets: culture, in places like Afrobeats and Nollywood where it is attractive to others; political values, when the country lives up to them at home and abroad; and foreign policies, such as the Technical Aid Corps, when they are seen as legitimate and carrying moral authority. Nye developed this concept to explain how American cultural attractiveness, democratic values, and policy legitimacy could achieve outcomes that coercion alone could not, a distinct form of power running alongside military and economic strength rather than replacing it. Soft power is distinct from hard power in this respect: hard power relies on inducements and threats, using military force and economic sanctions to compel behaviour, while soft power works by co-opting people through attraction.

The theory is not applied uncritically here. This paper departs from Nye's original formulation in three ways.

First, it engages directly with critics of the framework rather than treating it as settled. Saliu (2025) and Cammack (2008), as discussed in the Literature Review above, raise substantive objections, that the historical conditions producing Western attraction have shifted, and that Nye's framework remains fundamentally unilateralist even in its "smart power" form. This paper accepts these

criticisms as valid at the level of cross-national theory, while arguing that the framework remains analytically useful for a single-country assessment. Nigeria's case does not require precise cross-national measurement of soft power; it requires a structured way to identify assets that are already, visibly, under-used relative to their scale, a comparative and largely descriptive task rather than a quantitative one.

Second, the paper reframes the theory itself. Where Nye treats soft power largely as an organic attribute, something a country simply possesses by virtue of its culture or values, this study argues that for a country like Nigeria, soft power must instead be understood as a function of institutionalised strategy. Possessing attractive cultural assets is not the same as being able to convert that attraction into diplomatic or economic outcomes; the latter requires deliberate coordination that Nye's original model does not address.

Third, the paper applies a critical lens to Nye's Western-centric assumptions about the sources of attraction. Nigeria's soft power is not rooted primarily in the kind of institutional legitimacy or democratic modelling Nye emphasises, but in cultural output and policy assets, Afrobeats, Nollywood, the Technical Aid Corps, that operate on a different logic and reach different audiences.

Taken together, these three departures allow the analysis that follows to focus on the structural deficits, lack of coordination and institutional fragmentation, that prevent Nigeria from leveraging resources it already has, rather than treating soft power as something Nigeria simply lacks. Nye's three-part structure still maps cleanly onto the categories this paper examines, but the emphasis throughout is on the missing institutional architecture, not on measuring soft power against other states.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative policy analysis approach to examine Nigeria's soft power assets and their integration into foreign policy. The methodological approach comprises three components. First, document analysis was used to examine official policy documents. Second, comparative analysis was conducted to examine how South Korea, Turkey, and the United Kingdom have approached soft power, drawing on secondary sources and policy research. Third, secondary data analysis synthesises data on Nigeria's creative industry contributions, diaspora remittances, and diplomatic engagements from 2015 to 2026, drawing on academic journals, policy reports, media sources, and official statistics.

Sources were selected against three criteria. The first was publication date, restricted to the 2015 to 2026 window, chosen to capture the evolution of Nigeria's soft power discourse and policy responses across two administrations. The second was geographic focus, prioritising sources addressing Nigeria specifically rather than Africa in general terms. The third was thematic relevance to foreign policy, cultural diplomacy, diaspora engagement, or the creative economy. Sources meeting all three criteria were retained for analysis; sources discussing soft power in general theoretical terms without direct application to the Nigerian case were excluded.

Thematic analysis proceeded in two stages. Deductive coding applied categories drawn directly from Nye's (2004) three-part framework, culture, political values, and foreign policy, to sort evidence into the asset categories examined in the Findings section. This stage also drew on the paper's guiding research questions to ensure the coding remained tied to the study's objectives. Inductive coding was then used to identify patterns not anticipated by the framework. The

most significant of these was a recurring gap between asset abundance and institutional coordination, a pattern that emerged independently across multiple sources and forms the paper's central argument.

Table 1 summarises the categories of secondary data drawn on in this study.

Table 1: Summary of Secondary Data Sources

Data Source Type	Key Examples	Purpose in Study
Academic journals	Tella (2018); Ogunnubi & Isike (2018); Asani (2026)	Establish scholarly debate on Nigeria's soft power potential and its limitations
Official policy documents	National Diaspora Policy (NiDCOM)	Identify official frameworks and assess how, or whether, they address soft power
Statistical and industry reports	PwC (creative industry value); Central Bank of Nigeria (remittance data)	Provide quantitative evidence of the scale of Nigeria's soft power assets
Institutional reports	NTAC; NiDCOM; KOFICE; British Council	Offer data on the activities and reach of specific organisations and provide comparative models
Media sources	Businessday NG; Brand Spur; Technext24	Capture current events, expert commentary, and up to date economic data

The research period of 2015 to 2026 was selected to capture the evolution of Nigeria's soft power discourse and policy responses across two administrations, providing a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in institutionalising soft power.

NIGERIA'S SOFT POWER ASSETS AND CONSTRAINTS

Nigeria possesses an impressive array of soft power assets that have achieved global reach, though largely through organic, non-state-driven processes. These assets span cultural, demographic, and diplomatic domains, each contributing to Nigeria's international influence in distinct ways.

Culture: Afrobeats, Nollywood, and Fashion.

Nigeria's cultural exports have become defining features of its global presence. Afrobeats musics has evolved from a regional genre to a global phenomenon, with artists achieving international acclaim and collaborations with major Western artists. Burna Boy's 2021 Grammy win for Best Global Music Album, and Tems' 2023 Grammy win for Best Melodic Rap Performance, signaled mainstream global acceptance of Nigerian music at the highest levels of the recording industry (Von.gov.ng, 2021; Kolaking, 2023).

In film, Nollywood produces thousands of films annually, among the largest film industries globally by volume. Netflix alone invested $23.6 million in Nigerian content between 2016 and 2024, licensing and commissioning original productions that helped Blood Sisters become the first Nigerian Netflix original to reach the platform's global top 10 (Nairametrics, 2024; Technext24, 2023). Nigerian fashion, literature, and art have also gained international recognition. PwC valued Nigeria's entertainment and media industry at close to $15 billion by 2025, driven substantially by Nollywood and Afrobeats (Businessday NG, 2026). This cultural influence operates through multiple channels: music streaming platforms, film distribution networks, fashion weeks in major global cities, and literary festivals that feature Nigerian authors.

Diaspora

Nigeria's second major assets is its Diaspora. Nigeria's diaspora is one of its most significant but underleveraged soft power assets. An estimated 17 million Nigerians live abroad, (Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, n.d.), remitting $21.8 billion in 2025 according to Central Bank of Nigeria data (Brand Spur, 2026), more than four times Nigeria's foreign direct investment inflows for the same period. Beyond money, the diaspora functions as a cultural and political network. Nigerian doctors, academics, tech founders and entertainers in the US, UK and Canada and other parts of the World, shape how Nigeria is perceived abroad. The diaspora occupies influential positions in professional networks across the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries. As NiDCOM Chairman Abike Dabiri-Erewa has emphasised, the diaspora represents "a vast reservoir of investment capital, professional expertise, global networks and cultural influence" that could be deployed well beyond its current role (THISDAYLIVE, 2026).

Technical Assistance:

The Nigerian Technical Aid Corps (NTAC), established in 1987, has deployed more than 10,000 professionals to over 40 countries across Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (Blueprint Newspapers, 2026). NTAC's own leadership describes the scheme as "one of Nigeria's most enduring instruments of soft power diplomacy, projecting the country's image abroad while building lasting partnerships" (Blueprint Newspapers, 2026). The program's nearly four-decade track record demonstrates a genuine capacity for systematic soft power projection through institutionalized programs, even if it remains only loosely coordinated with Nigeria's other soft power assets.

Sports, Religion, and Language:

These three social assets give Nigeria unique reach. In sports, Nigeria's footballers compete in top European leagues, serving as informal cultural ambassadors; Nigerian players in the English Premier League and NBA are household names. In religion, Nigeria is home to some of the world's largest Pentecostal denominations. The Redeemed Christian Church of God alone operates in close to 200 countries with tens of thousands of parishes worldwide, one of the most globally extensive religious networks with Nigerian origins (RCCG Central Office, n.d.; Pulitzer Center, 2014). Religious networks of this scale move people, money, and ideas across borders and project Nigerian influence abroad in ways conventional diplomacy rarely reaches.

In language, English gives Nigeria a structural advantage as Africa's largest Anglophone country, positioning it as a hub for media, technology, and education across the continent's hundreds of millions of English speakers.

Having mapped these assets, it is equally important to examine the structural constraints that prevent their conversion into diplomatic leverage. Several structural constraints stand between Nigeria's current soft power assets and a coherent strategy for deploying them.

Domestic governance and insecurity: Soft power depends on underlying credibility (Nye, 2004); insecurity and governance challenges complicate the story Nigeria can tell about itself abroad, regardless of how compelling its cultural exports are. Persistent security threats, corruption, and infrastructure deficits undermine the country's international reputation and make it difficult to project a consistent positive image.

Institutional fragmentation: No single body currently owns Nigeria's soft power strategy; cultural diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and technical assistance sit under different ministries and agencies with limited formal coordination (Ogunnubi & Isike, 2018). This fragmentation prevents coherent deployment of soft power resources.

Visa restrictions and mobility barriers: Nigerian passport holders face restrictive visa regimes globally, limiting the ease with which Nigerian creative professionals and diaspora members can move for cultural exchange and diplomacy.

Negative branding: Re-current association with financial fraud and governance failures in international coverage has produced a reputational deficit measurable enough that the government commissioned its own index to track it (PRNigeria, 2026). Negative narratives often overwhelm positive cultural contributions.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: INSTITUTIONALIZING SOFT POWER

Soft Power becomes strategic only when it is deliberately institutionalized and deployed to serve foreign policy objectives. Using South Korea, Turkey and the United Kingdom, these three states successfully converted cultural assets into diplomatic influence, they offer a relevant model.

South Korea: The Hallyu Model

South Korea transformed cultural exports into a diplomatic asset through deliberate state coordination. The Korea Foundation, established in 1991 under the Korea Foundation Act, was tasked with promoting understanding of Korea and supporting international cultural and academic exchange (Korea Foundation, n.d.-a). It has assigned professorships at 109 universities across 20 countries and supported research at institutes in 44 countries (Korea Foundation, n.d.-a). KOFICE (Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange), a separate body founded in 2003 and formally designated Korea's international cultural exchange hub by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in 2018, was established specifically to support the global spread of Hallyu, the Korean Wave (KOFICE, n.d.). Together, the two organisations reflect a government that treats cultural exports as a national strategic asset with dedicated institutions behind them, rather than leaving cultural diplomacy to individual artists and producers.

Turkey: The Yunus Emre Model

Turkey established the Yunus Emre Institute in 2007, with international operations beginning in 2009, to promote Turkish language, culture, and arts abroad. The Institute now operates over 90 cultural centres in more than 60 countries (Daily Sabah, 2023). It offers language courses, cultural events, and academic exchange programmes that have measurably expanded Turkey's international presence, functioning as a fixed institutional apparatus for projecting Turkish culture consistently over time, rather than relying on informal or organic cultural export alone.

United Kingdom: The British Council Model

The British Council, founded in 1934 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1940, operates in over 100 countries with a specific mandate for cultural relations and public diplomacy (British Council, n.d.). It receives government funding while maintaining day-to-day operational independence, a structure that allows it to build trust and credibility with international audiences without appearing directly propagandistic. The Council focuses on education, arts, and English language promotion, areas that directly serve UK diplomatic and economic interests while appearing apolitical.

Lessons for Nigeria

These comparative cases offer four lessons for Nigeria.

First, institutionalisation matters, soft power in each of these states rests on dedicated institutions with sustained funding, not occasional initiatives, whether Korea's Foundation and KOFICE (Korea Foundation, n.d.-a; KOFICE, n.d.), Turkey's Yunus Emre Institute (Daily Sabah, 2023), or the UK's British Council (British Council, n.d.).

Second, semi-independent actors can be more effective than direct government messaging because they appear less propagandistic, a structural feature shared by all three models. The British council is respected because it is seen as independent, KOFICE funds private studios but does not control content, Turkey uses Yunus Emre Institutes to deliver services, not propaganda. A public-private partnership will preserve authenticity while providing strategic direction

Third, cultural diplomacy should be integrated with economic diplomacy: cultural institutes can facilitate trade, investment, and educational partnerships alongside their cultural mandate. For instance, Korea linked Hallyu to K-Beauty exports, tourism and FDI (KOFICE, n.d). Turkey uses its institutes to promote trade missions and scholarships (Daily Sabah, 2023), the UK ties the British council to education exports and trade (British Council, n.d.). Nigeria can replicate this by tasking cultural missions abroad with dual mandates, cultural programming and facilitating Nigerian businesses, creative exports and educational exchange

Fourth, domestic credibility underpins international attraction; governance and security matter for soft power as much as cultural output itself. Soft power collapses when the domestic reality contradicts the projected image. For Nigeria, this means that security, power and corruption challenges directly limit the diplomatic yield of Afrobeats and Nollywood. Cultural diplomacy must therefore run parallel to domestic reforms that reinforce Nigeria's credibility.

TOWARD A COORDINATED SOFT POWER STRATEGY

As it has been earlier established in the study, Nigeria has no dedicated budget allocation for cultural diplomacy comparable to what it allocates for defence cooperation or trade missions, and no network of cultural attachés built to project its culture abroad. The soft power it does exercise, through Afrobeats, Nollywood, the Technical Aid Corps, and diaspora remittances, has accumulated largely because individual artists, filmmakers, and volunteers built their own audiences, not because a coordinated state strategy put them there (Ogunnubi & Isike, 2018). The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations only unveiled its first Reputation Perception Index in January 2026, framed as an attempt to move national reputation "from vague opinion into measurable evidence" (PRNigeria, 2026).

The literature consensus, that Nigeria has soft power potential without a strategy to

use it, points to a practical question: what would it actually take to close that gap? Right now, Nigeria's cultural and diplomatic assets each run on their own track. Nollywood, Afrobeats, diaspora networks, and digital creators all generate global attention on their own effort, but nothing links that attention back to what the state is trying to achieve abroad. Three gaps explain why.

First, there's no office inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose job is specifically soft power, the way South Korea's Korea Foundation or Britain's British Council exist to fund and project national culture abroad (Korea Foundation, n.d.). Nigeria has nothing comparable. Secondly, Cultural industries also sit apart from economic diplomacy: Asani (2026) and Ogunnubi and Idowu (2022) have both argued that; Nollywood and the wider creative economy should be built into trade and nation-branding missions, and neither has happened yet. And thirdly, the platforms actually carrying Nigerian influence today, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, are treated as private space rather than as something diplomacy touches, even though Idowu and Ogunnubi (2022) opines digital comedy skits already function as an informal soft power channel in their own right.

One might reasonably ask whether institutionalizing soft power could actually harm Nigeria's influence. After all, the organic authenticity of Nigerian culture, its creation by artists rather than bureaucrats, may be precisely what makes it attractive. State involvement could make Nigerian culture appear propagandistic, reducing its appeal. This is a legitimate concern, but it misses the point. The objective is not to control cultural content but to connect existing cultural reach to diplomatic and economic objectives. South Korea did not create K-Pop; it created KOFICE to leverage what artists had already built. Turkey did not create Turkish television dramas; it created Yunus Emre institutes to amplify their reach. Partnership with, not control of, private actors is the model Nigeria should adopt.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's soft power is real, and by most measures considerable. Afrobeats and Nollywood reach global audiences most countries would envy. A diaspora of 17 million people sent home $21.8 billion in 2025 (Brand Spur, 2026), a sum that dwarfs Nigeria's foreign direct investment for the same year. The Technical Aid Corps has quietly built goodwill across four decades and forty countries (Blueprint Newspapers, 2026). None of this happened because the Nigerian state built it that way.

This paper set out to achieve four objectives, and has done so. It has (1) mapped Nigeria's substantial soft power assets across culture, diaspora, and technical assistance, (2) identified the critical institutional and policy gaps that prevent these assets from being converted into diplomatic leverage, (3) drawn comparative lessons from the institutionalised soft power models of South Korea, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, and (4) proposed a coordinated framework for institutionalisation. Applying Nye's (1990, 2004) framework, the paper has shown that Nigeria's soft power is accidental rather than strategic, a product of individual artists, filmmakers, volunteers, and diaspora professionals building international reach largely without state coordination, as Ogunnubi and Isike (2018) and Tella (2018) have separately observed.

None of this substitutes for domestic credibility. A branding strategy cannot outrun a country's own governance record, and institutionalising soft power is not a replacement for addressing that record; the two are parallel tasks, not competing ones. Without deliberate statecraft, Nigeria will

continue to yield the diplomatic and economic benefits of its cultural dominance to actors and interests beyond its control. What Nigeria has, at this point, is the raw material. What remains is the decision to organise it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the Study, the following recommendations are made;

Nigeria should establish a presidential-level coordinating body, drawing on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy, NiDCOM, NTAC, and the creative industries, this would give soft power strategy the cross-ministerial authority is currently missing

Nigeria as a matter of necessity should adopt a diaspora foreign policy framework. With an estimated 17 million Nigerians abroad and $21.8 billion in remittance, the diaspora is Nigeria's largest underused soft power asset, rather than treating diasporas primarily as remittance sources, Nigeria should institutionalize their role through a formal diaspora foreign policy framework. This would involve establishing diaspora advisory council within embassies to guide bilateral engagements, create investment facilitation desk to channel diaspora capital into priority sectors and launch a national cultural ambassador programs to certify or credential artist, scholars and professionals as representatives of Nigerian abroad, by doing this, Nigeria can convert organic diaspora influence into structured diplomatic and economic outcomes.

To give Nigerian culture a fixed and credible presence globally, Nigeria needs to establish cultural institutes in cities with large diaspora population or strategic diplomatic value such as London, New York etc. modelled on the Korea Foundation and British Council, these institutes would help in projecting Nigerian values consistently, this would replace the current reliance on individual artist to carry Nigeria's cultural diplomacy formally and provide a permanent institutional body for soft power projection

Nigeria needs to link creative exports to trade diplomacy, incorporating cultural delegations into trade missions and diplomatic visits, and building the connection between Nollywood and economic diplomacy

Build soft power metrics into foreign policy planning, so cultural reach is tracked alongside trade and security outcomes rather than sitting outside the data that actually shapes strategy, closing the measurement gap the 2026 Reputation Perception Index only just began to address (PRNigeria, 2026).

Partner with, rather than control, informal digital and cultural actors. Comedy skits, Nollywood producers, and independent musicians are already carrying Nigerian soft power further than any state program has, the state's role is to connect that reach to diplomatic and trade objectives, not to direct its content.

Finally, as a Nation, Nigeria needs to address domestic governance as a precondition, not a separate track. No coordinating council or branding strategy substitutes for credibility. Progress on security, electricity, anti-corruption and institutional performance will shape how Nigeria's cultural exports are received abroad regardless of how well the rest of this strategy is executed. International attraction cannot be sustained where domestic credibility is weak.

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