

Music and dance diplomacy in the COVID-19 era: *Jerusalema* and the promotion of South Africa's soft power

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Abstract

South Africa's soft power has been in the ascendancy since its emergence from the end of apartheid rule. As a regional hegemon in Africa, Pretoria also wields the most impressive soft power assets on the continent. Although South Africa has produced cultural exports that command global appeal, there is a dearth of studies on the soft power and diplomacy of the country, in particular the attraction of its music and dance in the global arena. As the novel coronavirus surged in 2020, South Africa witnessed the transnational acceptance and global adulation of its iconic *Jerusalema* song and the *#JerusalemaDanceChallenge*. This article is the first scholarly attempt to explore the soft power nuances and foreign policy implications of the *Jerusalema* song. The authors claim that *Jerusalema* offers South Africa an unexplored foreign policy opportunity to use the diplomacy of music and dance to subtly project a positive image in the unprecedented period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: [COVID-19](#), [Jerusalema](#), [#Jerusalemandancechallenge](#), [musical diplomacy](#), [soft power](#), [South Africa](#)