

# CASE STUDIES IN SPORT DIPLOMACY

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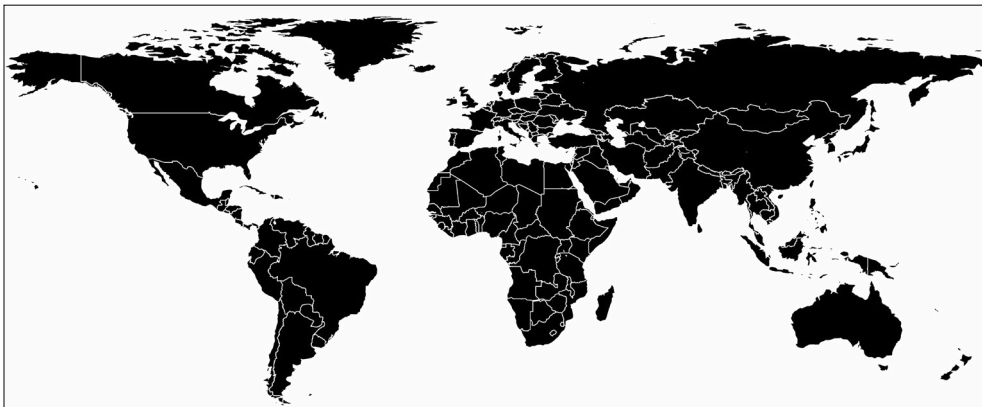
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# 1

## SPORT DIPLOMACY: A REVIEW OF HOW SPORTS CAN BE USED TO IMPROVE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

JUDIT TRUNKOS · BOB HEERE



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### ABSTRACT

How can states leverage international sports events to strengthen their international relations? The emphasis in this discussion is on the instruments that states have at their disposal. *Sports diplomacy* falls under *public diplomacy*, which is used to improve intermediate and long-term relations between states by influencing the public abroad to accomplish foreign policy goals (Gilboa, 2008). Through a review of different foreign policy objectives that are common in multilateral diplomacy, we discuss the effectiveness of sports as a platform for

diplomacy. The most common strategic objectives are (a) providing an unofficial reason and location for international leaders to meet and begin a dialogue; (b) providing insights into the host country and educating others about it; (c) bridging cultural and linguistic differences among nations and seeking common ground through sports; (d) creating a platform for new trade agreements or legislation; (e) creating awareness for the international relationship through sport ambassadors; (f) creating a legacy for the host country, improving its image in the world; and (g) using sport to provide legitimacy for a new nation.

## UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Countries interact on a daily basis and have ongoing dialogues on many issues, which include political, social, economic, and military problems. How they handle these issues and which foreign policy instruments they select to resolve potential problems or challenges is up to the leaders of the state. Realist scholarship has largely focused on military and economic capabilities, geography, natural resources, population, and political stability and competence in terms of sources of power. According to the Realist worldview, conflict is expected to happen between nations so the implementation of new and versatile diplomatic tools such as sport diplomacy is not their first choice of action. Realist scholars generally argue that power is mainly force and military strength (Morgenthau, 1948; Kissinger, 1994). Liberal scholars on the other hand, look into other aspects of power, including influence (Nye, 1990; Keohane & Nye, 2001). The Liberal approach is more interested in states' interaction during periods of peace than are the Realists. While force may be the obvious choice during conflict, during peacetime many new diplomatic tools can be considered. Liberal scholarship is thus concerned with alternative tools such as economic diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, and sports diplomacy. This book focuses on the application and evaluation of a specific diplomatic tool, namely *sports diplomacy*.

Diplomatic success stories, while they are very important, are usually not as noteworthy as military victories. One of the most well-known achievements of diplomacy is the Marshall Plan. This US-funded economic package jump-started the European economic recovery after World War II. This program not only demonstrated the US's goodwill to former adversaries like Germany and Italy, but also helped strengthen political alliances during the Cold War. After the Cold War, diplomacy gained even more importance in the new international order. With the merging of new states and new powers, the roles of diplomacy and communication became even more pronounced. The velvet revolution in the former Czechoslovakia was another great victory, using diplomatic solutions to resolve interstate issues. When in 1989 the former Czechoslovakia faced domestic upheaval about the independence of Slovakia, diplomacy was able to resolve the conflict without bloodshed. As a result, Czechoslovakia separated into two sovereign nations without any force being used. Finally, a more recent successful example of using diplomatic instruments is former President Clinton's visit to North Korea in 2009. His goal was to return American hostages to the US, using only his personal political influence to avoid any confrontation between

North Korea and the US. This example shows the diplomatic power of one uniquely qualified and well-known person. The successful return of the American journalists was also a great diplomatic move as the State Department was only remotely involved in the exchange; the incident did not provoke the official channels of the two countries, which did not have diplomatic relations at the time.

As the above examples demonstrated, diplomacy manifests itself through many different tools, including official negotiations and cultural exchanges. Within these cultural exchanges, sport can play an important role because of its universal popularity and homogeneous character (i.e., international rules and federations; Jackson & Haigh, 2008). To provide the reader with a stronger understanding of the traditional and the new applications of diplomacy, we start our chapter with a review of diplomacy in general, after which we will review the development of the theory of *soft power*. Soft power is a construct more recently introduced by political scholars; we will review the concept in more depth, as sport falls under this category. Finally, we will discuss the various objectives that governments could achieve through the use of sports.

## DIPLOMACY

Modern diplomacy can be traced back to the 5th century's Italian city-states. The goal of diplomacy was to establish representation and create a communication channel between the monarch and the city-states. Since that period, communication channels have been dominated by the Western European languages, first French, and later, English. Today, modern technology allows for instant translation during international meetings. Once nation states became the dominant political entities in the world, the Westphalian notion of sovereign states (the principal in international law that sovereignty resides with each nation state) added to the importance of using diplomacy. Sovereignty became a symbol of equality among states, which used diplomacy to communicate among equal sovereign states.

Diplomacy is "the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist" (Nicolson, 1964, p 4-5). A more current, shorter definition allows for a more ambiguous view on diplomacy: "the dialogue between states" (Watson, 1991, p. xii). This latter definition does not define the agents within the diplomacy process, nor does it acknowledge the role of nongovernmental agencies. Diplomacy is therefore the main instrument to implement national foreign policy during peace and is also a tool that can be used to communicate during conflict. The main features of diplomacy have been communication and representation. Diplomacy has long been established as the first step to avoid or resolve conflicts. In addition, it helps with negotiations; protects the citizens and other interests abroad; promotes economic, social, cultural, and scientific exchanges between states; and manages foreign policy decisions. Diplomacy traditionally involves government-to-government contact, but there are other channels of communicating national interest and influencing other countries. After the official diplomatic recognition between states,

the dialogue usually continues through other channels of diplomacy, such as educational exchange programs, concerts, or other cultural events.

Because of technological advances that have led to cheap and easy transportation and communication, the world is increasingly interconnected and many new tools are now available for diplomats. Bilateral negotiations and summit meetings have been the traditional approaches to resolving international issues, but in the 20th century, new diplomatic communications tools have emerged, such as public diplomacy (Cull, 2008), cultural diplomacy (Arnd, 2005), and cyberdiplomacy (Potter, 2002). Since the beginning of the 20th century, how diplomacy is conducted and who the actors are have changed significantly. From the traditional way of diplomats communicating their state's preferences at summits or at multilateral negotiations, modern diplomacy has moved to operating through many new channels and actors. The government may not even participate in these exchanges, but instead an athlete, artist, or scientist can represent the interests of the state at various events.

Multilateral institutions like the United Nations or the International Olympic Committee, global firms like Apple or Nike, and individuals such as famous athletes or actors can now represent their states. This new type of diplomatic representation can have both positive and negative outcomes. While it gives governments another outlet to work through, it could also prioritize the corporate interests of a nation over its political interests when these two conflict. In addition, the traditional venue of diplomacy has also moved towards economic or cultural forums or international sports events such as the Olympics. While there is still some scholarly disagreement about these new types of diplomatic actors and venues, the shift from traditional ways must be noted (Pigman, 2010).

While sovereignty has remained key in international negotiations and diplomatic recognitions, it no longer implies that only official diplomats can serve as representatives of a nation's interest and culture (Pigman, 2010). Indeed, in the 21st century more nonstate actors such as individuals, teams, and even companies can function as representatives of their nation. This is another reason why today even sports teams or individuals can become the messengers of their nation's diplomatic messages. Famous artists or athletes can act as bridges between nations and can help to resolve national issues via cultural and sport diplomacy. These lesser known diplomatic instruments serve as great examples of how governments can influence other states indirectly. While the athletes usually do not directly participate in the negotiations, the athletic event serves as a great venue for heads of state and diplomats to meet and discuss issues. This influence based on the attraction of countries is also called *soft power*.

## HARD POWER AND SOFT POWER

*Power* remains one of the key concepts in international relations (Machiavelli, 1532/2010 Morgenthau, 1948; Deutsch, 1967; Kissinger, 1994). For many years Realist and Neorealist scholars viewed interstate relations in terms of states seeking power and wanting to dominate other states. In this conceptualization, international politics is a struggle for power



(Morgenthau, 1948), tends to only consider power in terms of capability (land, military, wealth, etc.), and is most commonly applied to armed conflicts. While power has been broadly defined as the ability to influence (Dahl, 1957; Morgenthau, 1973; Deutsch, 1967), Nye (1990) later separated power into the categories of *hard power* and *soft power*. Today, hard power usually refers to military interventions or economic payments or sanctions. This interpretation of power, however, fails to address the more subtle aspects of power, such as the influence of culture in general or sport events in particular, in which states can use their cultural prowess to affect changes in other nations. Nye's (1990) concept of soft power thus recognizes the way in which power is exercised through democratic values, human rights, and opportunities, and other seductive values (Nye, 1990, 2004a).

The US's strength in soft power has often been the focus of soft power research, but studying other applications of soft power, such as President Putin's hosting of the Sochi Olympics or Brazil's organization of the soccer World Cup, are less obvious research topics (see "From Diplomatic Dwarf to Gulliver Unbound: Brazil and the Use of Sports Mega-Events" and "Putin and the 2014 Winter Olympics: Russia's Authoritarian Sports Diplomacy" in this book). For Nye, soft power is a strong shaper of foreign public opinion and is a cheaper option than force. Nye's definition of the sources of soft power includes culture, political values, and foreign policy (Nye, 2004a). As such, sport may play an important role as a form of soft power, and therefore, it is important to study and understand the range of contexts within which it has been most effective.

In today's increasingly interconnected international system, countries try to utilize their diplomatic assets to their fullest. Sport can play an important role in this process, because of its universal popularity and its ability to serve as common ground between nations. It allows hosts and guests to converse about an issue they both have knowledge of and can feel comfortable to disagree on, because of its nonsensitive nature (Chalip, 2006). The popularity of world-class sport events can enable the initiation of multilateral diplomacy. In terms of foreign policy tools, sport also serves as an instrument to wield soft power. As noted earlier, this chapter will shed light on the role that sport can play and will highlight both successful and unsuccessful examples.

## SPORT DIPLOMACY

International sporting events continue to mediate estrangement among people and their governments by promoting intercultural understanding and cooperation. Using the Olympics to improve a country's image abroad or to better the relationship between countries has been a diplomatic tool since the Olympics in ancient Greece (Pigman, 2010). Sporting events are useful because both the spectators (people) and their governments (elite politicians) can be reached through their love of sport. As a consequence, international sporting events can also improve relations both bilaterally and multilaterally (Chehabi, 2001).

During the Cold War, bilateral sporting events were used repeatedly to increase communication among hostile countries. Ping-pong diplomacy, for instance, between China and

the United States allowed two nations in the middle of the Cold War to restart dialogue in a politically divided environment. President Nixon's diplomatic move opened up relations with China, which resulted in an improved bilateral relationship between the two nations in the decades to come. Cricket diplomacy between India and Pakistan offered another illustration of successful sport diplomacy. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1987, General Zia ul-Haq, Pakistan's president at the time, attended a test cricket match between India and Pakistan in Jaipur—a visit that apparently helped cool a flare-up in tensions caused by Soviet pressure on India. Furthermore, in 2004 after a break of fifteen years, India toured Pakistan in the wake of diplomatic initiatives to bury half a century of mutual hostility. Both sides relaxed their tough visa regulations for each other, allowing thousands of fans to travel across the border.

Yet, sport can also worsen the relationship between nations, as the example of El Salvador and Honduras shows. The poor relationship between the two nations was caused by large numbers of migrants from El Salvador, who moved to Honduras in search of a better life. This poor relationship was further exacerbated by the three World Cup qualifying matches these two nations had to play against each other in the month of June in 1969. The same day that the third and final game was played between the two nations, El Salvador severed all diplomatic ties with Honduras and started bombing their neighboring nation. Ever since then, this war has been referred to as *La Guerra del Fútbol*—the Soccer War. While in the past bilateral sport diplomacy played an important role in bringing two countries to the negotiating table, this chapter focuses on the multilateral aspect of sport diplomacy by looking into various government initiatives. The examples in this chapter illustrate different levels of success using *multilateral sport diplomacy*.

In terms of sport diplomacy, the fact that international organizations serve as the main organizers of events also creates a diplomatically comfortable situation in which a third-party civil organization can serve as a neutral host and mediator between parties. Some of the most prominent international sports organization are the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which organizes the modern Olympic Games; Fédération Internationale de Football (FIFA), which organizes the largest, most well known global sport event, the Soccer World Cup; and International Tennis Federation (ITF), which includes 205 national tennis federations. By organizing events, as well as sanctioning and facilitating the competitions, these organizations can be both causes of cultural alienation and mediators of cooperation (Chalip, 2006). Stated differently, international sporting events can mediate conflicts between nations but only when organized and delivered under the right circumstances. It has been noted in both international relations and sport diplomacy scholarship that international institutions can serve as vehicles for sharing norms among nations, which can facilitate cooperation but also can cause tension among nations (Risse-Kappen, 1995; Axelrod & Keohane, 1985).

The role of international sport events has recently become even more complicated as it is now a very lucrative global business. Through sponsors, government and private contracts, and tourism, these events can earn lots of money for both the government and for

Source: US Department of State, [wikimedia.org/47696471](https://www.wikimedia.org/47696471)



*U.S. President Barack Obama sits with Cuban President Raul Castro at the Estadio Lationamericano in Havana, Cuba, on March 22, 2016, for an exhibition game between the Cuban National Baseball Team and the Tampa Bay Rays.*

private businesses. The following examples will illustrate how new diplomatic actors and venues can play important roles in conducting diplomacy. The examples will also illustrate some of the successful and failed practices of multilateral diplomacy through sports events.

## SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

1. Sport provides an unofficial reason and location for international leaders to meet and begin a dialogue.

The potential diplomatic contributions of international sport events can be manifold. They can serve as a general outreach to the international community or strengthen the relations between two specific countries, one being the host (see “Sport for Hope in Haiti: Disaster Diplomacy or Disaster Capitalism,” “Sport as a Political Strategy in North-South Korean Relations,” and “Wrestling with Diplomacy: The US and Iran” in this book). Using the general popularity of sports, athletic events can be great excuses for unofficial meetings for leaders, and mega sports events can allow for large-scale diplomacy where a multitude of political leaders could meet. There are plenty of official meetings and summits for diplomats and heads of state, but few of them are as desirable and entertaining as sport events—nor do they receive as much media attention. While enjoying the performances of the elite athletes, including the ones from their own nations, many heads of state often use the opportunity to engage other parties in unofficial discussions about issues.

While mega sport events provide good venues for multilateral meetings, sometimes heads of state need an event that is specifically designed to resolve issues between two states. Ping-pong diplomacy was a great example of using a sport event to initiate political dialogue between two countries on opposite sides during the Cold War, as Nixon did by visiting China in 1972. Attending a bilateral sport event helps two countries’ representatives work out their issues while enjoying the competition. In 1972, Nixon’s decision to

visit ended the long U.S. ostracism of China and was both a major event in modern diplomacy and a smart geostrategic move. It increased external pressure on the Soviet Union, facilitated the U.S. exit from the Vietnam conflict, and laid the foundation for subsequent Sino-American cooperation (Kissinger, 1994). South Korea provides another example of using a mega sport event as a successful tool in their international relations. They used the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul successfully as a tool to improve their relationships with the (then) USSR and Eastern European nations, and were successfully able to prevent these nations from boycotting the Olympics in support of North Korea.

Nevertheless, these meeting spaces should not be seen as exclusively positive, because such events can also legitimize a regime when an opposite response is warranted. The Berlin Olympics in 1936 offers a great example of this. Even though Germany won the bid for the Olympic Games two years before Hitler came to power, during a tense international period just before WWII, this multinational sporting event was used as political propaganda for the German Reich and an unofficial meeting place to talk about alignment in case of potential war. More recently, the Dutch royal family and Prime Minister came under strong criticism in 2014 for attending the Sochi Winter Olympics opening ceremony, while other foreign heads of state stayed at home in protest of the civil right violations against the LGBT community in Russia (Pinedo & Versteegh, 2014). The Dutch media perceived the delegation as legitimizing the Russian state, and their criticism highlights the scrutiny that can be placed on politicians to attend certain events and refrain from attending others.

2. Sport provides insight into the host country and educates others about it.

Many people, not just heads of state, want to enjoy large sport events and are proud of hosting them. Since 1936, when the Summer Games were first broadcast to 41 countries, hosting nations take great pride in beautifying their countries to project a positive image, and with the development of technology, billions of people can watch these sporting events on television or using various devices. This view of the competitions also provides information about the host cities, such as infrastructure, tourist attractions, and culture. In 1936, not only did the Games provide a meeting place for European and other leaders to discuss their political alignment, but the world saw the political ideology and domestic politics of Germany through the kind of state-controlled propaganda now often associated with mega sport events.

Today, billions of people can see into a host nation's domestic politics and political ideology. Mega-events such as the Olympics are witnessed around the world, not just broadcast on the official TV stations but also disseminated via YouTube and other social media outlets. Educating people about a nation's beautiful scenery and resources can benefit host nations in many ways, encouraging tourism, foreign-directed investment, and foreign students. Spreading the political ideology of the hosting government can influence both the foreign public and the leaders; as the example of the 1936 Nazi Olympics illustrates, these sport events can be used to mislead an international audience about the intentions of a particular regime.

While sport events can inform people around the world about the positives of a destination, they can also inform people of the negatives, as states are seldom able to entirely

control the media exposure around the event (Giffard & Rivenburgh, 2000). Protest groups have understood the power of these events to convey their message to the media, and many have turned media attention to the negative aspects of the host nation, such as environmental issues (e.g., smog), human rights issues, health standards, high rates of HIV virus carriers, or specific problems such as the domestic dispute with Tibet in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics, the economic inequality in South Africa, and the water pollution and home evictions in Brazil. Additionally, the opportunity to host these mega-events is no longer uncontested, and the exorbitant costs and the many corruption charges against federations such as FIFA and the IOC have made people around the world very critical. As a result, nations need to think carefully about how to present themselves through the international media and understand that these events spotlight a nation in ways that can be both negative and positive.

3. Using sport to bridge cultural and linguistic differences among nations through sports. Sporting events have another special feature. Because most people who watch a competition already know the rules, the events bridge cultural and linguistic gulfs that may exist between the hosting nation and the spectators. It does not matter if the hosting nation is Russia, China, or Brazil, millions of sport fans are cheering for their favorite athletes despite the language used in the broadcast. There are numerous ways to use the connecting effect of sport events, and they can also be used on a much smaller scale for diplomatic purposes. Sports teams, as well as individual athletes, can be used to educate people about countries and also promote mutual understanding of different cultures.

A recent example of a head of state deliberately using a sport event to bring two different nations together is President Obama's 2016 visit to Cuba. During his trip, the U.S. President not only reconnected the two nations diplomatically, but by attending a baseball game, he also took a significant step towards bridging the ideological and political differences between Cuba and the U.S, reminding the Cubans of a shared passion for the game of baseball. As noted earlier, watching a sport event, such as a baseball game, bridges linguistic, cultural, and political differences between nations, and in the case of Cuba and the US, it pointed to the common interest of two presidents and their nations.

4. Sport can be used to create a platform for new legislation or trade agreements. Mega sport events also provide a good illustration of the role sport can play in regards to legislation or trade agreements. International federations, most notably FIFA and the IOC, have certain guarantees associated with hosting their events and require governmental approval. The most influential guarantee related to diplomacy is the visa requirement that these organizations impose on their hosts. In order to prevent hosts from excluding particular nations from their events (i.e., China and Taiwan, United States and Iran, etc.), the host nation is not allowed to withhold a visa from anyone who is associated with the event. To illustrate, when the Netherlands bid for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, they had to put the following guarantee in their bid:

The Netherlands, represented by its Government, represents, warrants, ensures and guarantees to FIFA for the purposes of entry into and exit from the Netherlands, and for a period commencing on the date of this Guarantee and ending on [31 December 2018 /31 December 2022], that entry visas and exit permits shall be issued unconditionally and without any restriction and, where issuance of formal visas or permits is not required, the right to entry to and exit from the Netherlands, shall be granted unconditionally and without any restriction, and regardless of nationality, race or creed, to... [followed by a long list of all FIFA stakeholders, including FIFA employees, sponsors, broadcasters, athletes and spectators]. (Heere, 2012)

When Korea and Japan were asked to co-host the 2002 FIFA World Cup, the two nations used the event to start a dialogue and improve on their historically problematic relationship. However, the organization of the event itself became symbolic of the problematic relationship between the two nations, and the two nations fought openly about the name of the tournament, the mascot, and the location of the important matches (opening match, semifinals, and final). Still, the event did allow for a stronger bilateral relationship between the two nations (Heere et al., 2012). The most notable changes were caused by bilateral agreements between the two nations: visa regulations for visitors from the other nation were loosened up and different economic forums and symposia were held in the years surrounding the World Cup. In 2004, the Korean Overseas Information system reported that the event had initiated increased political dialogue between South Korea and Japan as a direct consequence of joint-hosting the event (Heere et al., 2012).

Sport mega-events are also associated with a strong increase in trade agreements between the host and the rest of the world. Rose and Spiegel (2011) argued that hosting a mega-event such as the Olympics signals to the rest of the world that the nation is “open for business,” and they report export and import increases in nations that have hosted the Games, often related to the trade agreements that nations are able to make before, during, and directly after the event.

5. Sport can be used to create awareness for the international relationship through sport ambassadors.

As we mentioned earlier, sports teams, events, and even individual athletes can become sports ambassadors and can provide a face to the nation. A benefit of sport events and individual athletes over official diplomats and politicians is that the negotiations can be seen less as government directed and more as free and spontaneous. In an international environment when governments face criticism for practicing too much control, allowing less restricted forms of diplomacy to occur can be refreshing and welcomed. Also, including the individuals as ambassadors who are not otherwise affiliated with their governments and can speak through their athletic achievements can also bring a fresh start to a relationship between nations that may have previously been complicated by problems and distrust. Whereas

some people instantly distrust politicians, athletes are generally well-liked and admired, and can provide cultural empathy among people. They provide a friendly and positive face to a nation. Watching the performance of world-class athletes has been one of the favorite activities of political leaders as well as most ordinary people.

Many former athletes have chosen political careers after their athletic careers have ended, and have used their celebrity to create new relations. For instance, after his basketball career, Bill Bradley became a U.S. senator and in 1992 was a sponsor of a bill called the Freedom Support Act that allowed for exchanges between the Soviet Union and the United States (Cox, 2007). Former athletes such as Pele, George Weah, and Manny Pacquiao all have become politicians in their own nations to shape domestic and foreign policies. International organizations such as the United Nations have also understood the power of athletes to build international relationships and have structured ambassador programs in which many athletes participate: Muhammed Ali, Carl Lewis, Maria Sharapova, Marta, Didier Drogba, and the list goes on ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)).

Sport ambassadors do not necessarily have to be famous athletes. One great example of public diplomacy is the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (BECA); see "Culture Connect and the U.S. Department of State: A Gateway to the Future of Sport Diplomacy." This office has many programs, one of which is SportsUnited, which sends American athletes on international cultural exchange missions and brings foreign athletes to the US for clinics and exhibition games. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said,

Actually, our sport's exchanges are the most popular exchanges we do. And when I go to other countries around the world and we talk about what kind of exchanges that people are looking for, very often a leader will say, how about a sports exchange? (Clinton, 2011)

Along with art and music, sports are one of those areas of human commonalities that require little interpretation. SportsUnited describes the program as,

an international sports programming initiative designed to help start a dialogue at the grassroots level with non-elite young people. The programs aid youth in discovering how success in athletics can be translated into the development of life skills and achievement in the classroom. (Clinton, 2011)

Additionally, professional athletes can bridge cultural differences because they enjoy worldwide admiration. Athletes such as Yao Ming (China), Vlade Divac (Yugoslavia/Serbia), George Weah (Liberia), and Kathy Freeman (Aboriginal population Australia) have put a face to a nation or an ethnic group that people knew little about, thereby providing knowledge and understanding to those outside their particular culture.

Sport can also do the opposite, and sport teams and athletes can serve a national propaganda machine meant to support a negative narrative. Both the victories of chess

grandmaster Bobby Fischer (over Boris Spassky in 1972) and the U.S. hockey team (over the Soviet Union in 1980) were used to support the Cold War narrative and demonstrate U.S. superiority over the Soviet Union. In the late 1980s, the rivalry between the Netherlands and Germany in football was highlighted by two incidents that worsened the relationship between the two nations, and revived (undeservedly) an anti-Germany sentiment in the Netherlands. First, in 1988, Ronald Koeman used the shirt of German player Olaf Thon (football players often swap jerseys after the match as a token of mutual appreciation) to make an offensive gesture, and two years later, a spat between Frank Rijkaard and Rudi Voller at the 1990 World Cup led to the expulsion of both players from the field. These are examples in which athletes actually play a negative role in emphasizing cultural differences and historical divides, negatively affecting the bilateral relationship between the two nations (Altijd weer dat shirt van Olaf Thon, 2008). In that light, the invitation of Dennis Rodman (former NBA player) by North Korea is an interesting case, an instructive example of both the power of elite athletes and also the complexity of having a nondiplomat play a diplomatic role. The fact that the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-Un, was willing to allow an American TV crew into his country and into his life in 2013 is the result of basketball's popularity and the fact the young leader is a huge fan of NBA basketball and Dennis Rodman. As there was no official diplomatic relationship between the US and North Korea at the time, letting an American athlete and his TV crew film North Korea and provide an insight into this country was a great diplomatic contribution. However, as we later learned, having a diplomatically untrained athlete serve as the eye of the US and the West is definitely not without limitations. As U.S. State Department officials learned after Rodman's trip, while the athlete was able to satisfy Kim Jong-Un's desire to play basketball with a superstar, he did not have the necessary diplomatic sophistication and patience a true sport ambassador needs to successfully conduct both the preparation and the aftermath of such events.

Another creative and effective way of using individual athletes as sport ambassadors is the US's approach to allowing the recruitment of the best foreign athletes to play collegiate sports in the US. Providing sports grants and sports scholarships for foreign athletes to study in American colleges are great examples of encouraging cultural exchanges using both the platform of sports and cultures. There are over 2,000 universities in the US, many of which offer scholarships for athletes. Because the coaches are pressured to have the most competitive teams, they often recruit athletes from abroad with athletic scholarships. These elite athletes not only bring victory for their U.S. college teams, but also bring their own culture. During a typical four-year term, similar to an exchange program, foreign athletes become sport ambassadors to their countries as they share their cultures with teammates and other students. At the same time, the foreign athlete also lives in the US, which serves as a great educational and cultural experience.



6. Sport events can be used to create a legacy for the host country, improving its image in the world.

Creating a legacy is one of the most commonly used reasons for hosting a large sport event. For countries that are trying to improve their image abroad, organizing a successfully run sport event is a great opportunity to showcase not only the firm institutional and organizational grounds of the state, but also to allow the visitors and spectators to see the cultural and geographic beauty of the host nation. One of the oldest sport events in the world is the Tour de France, an annual sport cycling race that showcases the nation to the world every year. Because the sport is best viewed from the air, the Tour de France makes extensive use of helicopters, which showcase not only the cyclists, but also provide views of the beautiful French landscapes, and historic towns and castles, and the event has played an important role in the image-building process of France around the world (Heere et al., 2015).

Similarly, mega sport events, such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, have often been used to show the progress a developing nation has been making and can change the somewhat antiquated views that Western viewers, in particular, have of the nation. The Summer Olympics in 1964 in Tokyo might have been the first example of this tradition, but other organizers, such as Mexico City (1968 Summer Olympics and 1970 FIFA World Cup), Seoul (1988 Summer Olympics), Barcelona (1992 Summer Olympics), Beijing (2008 Summer Olympics), and South Africa (2010 FIFA World Cup) were all used to show their host city or nation as modern, “Westernized” destinations with universally accepted values.

These prestigious events are also seen as ways for a nation to show their hard power, which might not necessarily improve the image of the nation around the world but simply shows that they are a nation to be reckoned with. This use of sport events to show a nation's power has been a long-time tradition, perhaps starting as early as 1934, when Mussolini used the FIFA World Cup to show Italy's superiority, a strategy repeated two years later by Hitler at the 1936 Summer Olympics. Since then, nations such as the United Kingdom (1948 Summer Olympics), Argentina (1978 FIFA World Cup), China (2008 Summer Olympics), United States (Summer Olympics 1984, Winter Olympics of 1980 and 2002), and Russia (Summer Olympics of 1980 and Winter Olympics of 2014) have all used these events to show their power to the rest of the world.

The most recent example of such ambitions, the Sochi Winter Olympic Games showed the intricacies associated with the attempt to use mega-events as tools to show off both hard and soft power. The Sochi event showed the world that even in times of international tensions and doubts about Russia's foreign policy goals, President Putin could use the event to implement foreign policy through multiple channels (Simonyi & Trunkos, 2014). To some extent, the event was a success for Russia. The main issue during the Sochi Olympics was security. President Putin had to ensure that nothing interrupted the safety of spectators and athletes at the event despite the threat of domestic ethnic conflicts, and he did so successfully. By allowing the visitors to better understand Russia through the sports events, President Putin created a window into what he thought was a perfectly controlled image of Russia and one that his own constituency in Russia was very supportive of. Also, the success

of Russian athletes supported the narrative of the Russian resurrection as a world power (see “Putin and the 2014 Winter Olympics: Russia’s Authoritarian Sports Diplomacy”).

Nevertheless, despite the successes, Sochi came at a price for Russia. As they had done at other events, global media emphasized the poor human rights for the LGBT community in Russia and the environmental disaster that Sochi might produce for the region; the exorbitant costs of the event showcased how little power Putin has over the corporate elites in his nation. Moreover, any goodwill that Sochi might have built up around the world was destroyed a year later, when Russia decided to invade the Crimean Peninsula and support the pro-Russia faction in the Ukraine.

#### 7. Sport can be used to provide legitimacy for a new nation.

As noted in the earlier sections, international sport events attract the attention of millions of people, including sport fans and political leaders. This global stage can be used to achieve the previously listed outcomes, but it can also be used as a platform for a symbolic fight for a country’s political independence. For instance, international sport federations often offer the opportunity for territories that have the ambition to become independent nation-states and compete under a flag that might not actually represent the current sovereign nation. For instance, there has been political tension between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan for many years. Taiwan has been fighting for its political independence from China. As a result of political negotiations and the IOC’s decision in 1980, the athletic teams of Taiwan are now allowed to compete under the Chinese Taipei flag, which is separate from the Chinese flag. This solution has been accepted for numerous international sport events such as the Olympic Games, the World Baseball Classic and the FIFA World Cup. This is not only a political victory for Taiwan but it also allows Taiwanese athletes to express their feelings about independence and it provides opportunities for the athletes to compete against China in the games. Similarly, in the years after World War II, Israel actively used sport in their quest for international recognition of their nation (Galily & Ben-Porat, 2009).

Even if a particular quest is unsuccessful, sport can still shed light upon the occupation of one nation by another. The Hungary versus USSR water polo game at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics was a good example of this. The Hungarians rebelled against the oppression of the Soviet Union in October of 1956 but were defeated in a bloody fight. Later in the year, the Hungarian national team ended up playing against the Soviet team in the Olympic Games and the Hungarians won. While the sport victory of the Hungarian team did not lead to better treatment of the Hungarians at home, it gained the sympathy of millions of sport fans after the bloody events of the revolution.

## CONCLUSION

We attempted in this chapter to outline different ways governments can use sport as an international policy tool. Following Chalip (2006), we acknowledge that sport can have both a negative and positive effect on society, and we attempted to showcase some of the

best and worst examples of how sport has been used by political regimes. Sport events, athletes, and teams can provide a face to a nation and a useful instrument to exert their soft power and showcase their hard power to the world, but only if they are used and leveraged correctly. In today's complicated and fast-paced, technology-driven world, every opportunity to promote a country's positive image abroad must be taken, and politicians are well served with the knowledge of how to use sport to fit their purposes. Placing the spotlight on a nation through sports can be advantageous and provide worldwide attention to positive changes. Seoul used the Summer Olympics to improve their relationships with the Soviet Union and the nations in their hemisphere. Barcelona used the Summer Olympics to showcase that they were no longer burdened by the heritage of Franco and were an attractive tourist destination in Europe. However, events could also lead to an emphasis on larger domestic issues challenging a nation. A fascinating example was provided by Athens that, because of its historic ties to the Olympics, was seen as a perfect host to the event. However, in the lead-up, global media often emphasized the lack of progress in building the required infrastructure. The high costs of organizing the event also placed an economic burden on the nation that contributed to its economic collapse a decade later (Heere, 2012). Sport plays an enormous role in our daily lives and, similar to other cultural global phenomena such as popular music, food, and dance, sport entails a universal language that everyone speaks. As Nelson Mandela once stated, "Sport has the power to change the world, to inspire and to unite people in a way that very little else can" (Korr & Close, 2008). Yet that power is not a given and only manifests itself when sport managers and politicians understand how to leverage sport correctly to achieve the objectives associated with it in the first place.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can states leverage international sport events to strengthen their international relations?
2. What is soft power and how is sport diplomacy connected to it?
3. What are the most common strategic objectives when relying on sport diplomacy?
4. Are these strategic objectives always achieved? List some of the successful and unsuccessful examples.
5. Based on this chapter, please explain which strategic outcomes Brazil wished to achieve with the summer Olympic Games. What issues did they have to overcome and how did they use the Olympics to achieve them?

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