

## THE ROLE OF SPORTS DIPLOMACY IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

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**Annotation.** Sports diplomacy has emerged as a significant tool in contemporary international relations, leveraging the power of sports events such as the Olympic Games to foster dialogue, cooperation, and understanding among nations. This research examines the role of sports diplomacy through a case study of the Olympic Games, focusing on its impact on international relations and global perceptions. By analyzing historical and contemporary examples, including diplomatic boycotts, symbolic gestures, and cultural exchanges, this study elucidates how the Olympics serve as a platform for diplomatic engagement, transcending political differences and promoting peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, the research explores the challenges and opportunities associated with sports diplomacy in the modern era, considering factors such as commercialization, politicization, and ethical considerations. Through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing political science, sociology, and sports studies, this research offers insights into the evolving dynamics of sports diplomacy and its implications for global governance, conflict resolution, and cultural exchange in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** *sports diplomacy, International relations, Olympic Games, Diplomatic relations, Peacebuilding, Cultural exchange.*

**Introduction.** The purpose of this research is to examine the role of sports diplomacy in contemporary international relations, with a specific focus on the Olympic Games as a case study. The research aims to investigate how sports, particularly through

events like the Olympics, contribute to diplomatic efforts, facilitate dialogue, and promote cooperation among nations on the global stage. By analyzing the diplomatic aspects of the Olympic Games, the research seeks to uncover the various ways in which sports serve as a platform for building bridges, resolving conflicts, and fostering mutual understanding between countries. Additionally, the research aims to explore the effectiveness of sports diplomacy as a tool for promoting peace, cultural exchange, and international cooperation in the modern geopolitical landscape. Ultimately, the research aims to provide insights into the evolving role of sports in diplomacy and its implications for contemporary international relations.

### Research questions:

1. What is the relation between sports and international relations?
2. How has the Olympic Games been used as a platform for sports diplomacy?

### Research Objectives:

1. To examine the historical evolution of sports diplomacy and its significance in shaping international relations.
2. To analyze the impact of the Olympic Games on diplomatic relations between participating nations.
3. To assess the effectiveness of sports diplomacy in promoting peace, dialogue, and cultural exchange on the global stage.
4. To explore the challenges and opportunities associated with utilizing sports diplomacy as a diplomatic tool.
5. To propose recommendations for enhancing the role of sports diplomacy in fostering international cooperation and understanding.

**Methodology.** This study uses mixed methods combining qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the role of sports diplomacy in international relations. The qualitative aspect included a literature review, case studies and interviews with relevant stakeholders, including athletes, diplomats, and sports officials. The quantitative aspect includes statistical analysis of diplomatic interactions during the Olympic Games and public opinion polls.

**Main text.** Sports diplomacy as a tool of “soft power” has gone through a difficult path of development. The basis was the phenomenon as a means of maintaining peace, respect for any person, underlying sports diplomacy, was laid in the period of Hellenism and Antiquity. During the Middle Ages, sport as a phenomenon lost its former political significance, although it gained mass popularity at the population level. In addition to this, “elite” sports also appeared, which include knightly tournaments. The Renaissance and Modern Times brought to the fore a humanistic attitude towards the world and towards man and returned sport to the life of society. And, of course, the history of sports diplomacy cannot be imagined without the name of Pierre De Coubertin, who initiated the organization of the modern Olympic Games and the creation of the International Olympic Committee, thereby laying the spiritual foundations of sports diplomacy [1].

According to Stuart Murray, a doctor at Bond University in Australia and coordinator of the Diplomatic Studies Section of the Association for International Studies, there are six key reasons for identifying sports diplomacy as a separate branch [1]:

- diplomacy is constantly looking for new, unconventional ways to resolve issues in the international arena
- sport increases its influence on people
- sports diplomacy is a manifestation of soft power, so necessary for people tired of cruelty
- sport is a part of the life of any person, regardless of age, position, etc.

- the characteristic features of sport and diplomacy allow them to simultaneously interact and compete
- the ideals of sport are universal; they are applicable in any society.

To explain the concept of sports diplomacy, it is necessary to specify the means that are its component part. Since in the traditional understanding of diplomacy the most important role is played by negotiations, the same applies to sports diplomacy. International sporting events contain other methods that can be used to achieve diplomatic goals. Diplomats in this area are not only members of governing organizations at the international and state level or envoys authorized to negotiate on behalf of various actors, but also athletes who, through their performances, sporting achievements and diplomatic activities, are the most important messengers and envoys.

Having analyzed the position and status of sports figures, we can identify the following means used in sports diplomacy:

***Diplomatic correspondence.*** The main form of diplomatic communication is written communication, in the form of sending messages, notes, announcements, and other official letters. In the field of sports diplomacy, correspondence is necessary for communication between individual actors, and first, we are talking about official communication between official bodies of a sports and political nature.

***Negotiation.*** The most important form of diplomatic communication is negotiation. In the field of sports diplomacy, negotiation is the main communication tool. Formal negotiations are the main condition for making important political decisions. As a rule, it is preferable to conduct direct negotiations, whether bilateral (for example, negotiations by IOC President Juan Antonia Samaranch on the joint organization of the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul and Pyongyang, the capitals of both countries of divided Korea), or multilateral (many political issues were discussed at the meetings The IOC, for example, at the IOC meeting in Paris in 1955, the IOC members, in the presence of a delegation from the Federal Republic

lic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, agreed that they would support the participation of a joint German team in Melbourne in 1956). Sometimes it was necessary for the negotiations to be organized by a special mediator, and, in addition, for him to take part in them [2].

**Diplomatic mediators.** Throughout the long history of the Olympic movement, the IOC has been forced to maintain communication with representatives of countries whose membership in the Olympic family was problematic. In such cases, the IOC used the services of diplomatic intermediaries, mediators responsible for communication between the IOC and representatives of countries.

**Diplomatic missions and commissions of inquiry.** Important means by which the IOC could influence the international political situation are missions and commissions of inquiry with an IOC mandate. Their task is, first, to collect information and maintain a friendly dialogue between the IOC and individual National Olympic Committees, and the relevant political bodies of the country responsible for governing the sport.

**Goodwill Ambassadors and Sports Ambassadors.** The status of a famous and successful athlete provides its bearer with popularity and respect throughout the world, but also the potential of an individual who extols the spirit of sportsmanship and the Olympic ideals in the world. The first goodwill ambassadors were table tennis players in the 1970s, who opened the door to diplomatic rapprochement between the United States and China. Relations between these countries became much worse after the end of Mao Zedong's war with the Nationalists in 1949. National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger made two secret visits to Beijing in 1971, and the US table tennis team was subsequently invited to China to play a series of friendly matches. In total, nine athletes made up the US team, which was the first to enter Chinese territory in 1949. US President Richard Nixon later visited Beijing, and this friendly visit began the process of improving relations between the Cold War rivals. Thus,

the athletes opened the door to rapprochement between the two world powers [1].

Based on the above examples, two forms of sports diplomacy can be defined in terms of the level of communication: official and unofficial sports diplomacy. Official sports diplomacy includes the means and instruments of diplomatic communication at the official level, primarily between the IOC, national committees of individual members of the Olympic family, sports, and political authorities of states.

Unofficial sports diplomacy mainly includes the activities of athletes, their personal and official actions, carried out with the aim of influencing the policy of a state or group of states, expressing their opinion on a certain political situation, or showing their views to the public. However, because athletes, based on their sports results and performances at the Olympic Games, have many times in the past actively taken the initiative in the political sphere, it is necessary to include the activities of athletes in the issues of sports diplomacy.

Based on the theory of diplomatic science and considering the number of participants in diplomatic communication, two types of communication can be defined, bilateral and multilateral. But this classification, in the case of sports diplomacy, is insufficient since it does not include the activities of athletes and non-governmental organizations whose addressee is the international society.

Bilateral sports diplomacy concerns, first, bilateral negotiations, that is, negotiations between two participants, or countries. Most often, we are talking about negotiations with the IOC, on behalf of which the chairman, president or representative of the national Olympic committee of one of the member countries can act.

Multilateral diplomacy, in comparison with bilateral diplomacy, has a wider space for negotiations, since representatives of a larger number of member countries of the Olympic movement take part in the negotiation process. Such negotiations include, first, negotiations at the annual meetings of the IOC. IOC meetings are the main part of the IOC's policy management, where key decisions regarding the

movement are made. IOC members also deal with the IOC's external relations with political structures and organizations, which means that political issues are usually the main topics at IOC meetings. Cases cannot be ruled out when delegations from countries that are being discussed take part in the meetings. In addition to the meetings, the negotiations of the 15-member executive committee are also an important example of multilateral diplomacy and formal negotiations at a higher level.

The founder of the modern Olympic movement, Pierre de Coubertin, made a significant contribution to the formation and development of the concept of "sport is beyond politics". His position on the issue of the relationship between sports and politics is very contradictory. On the one hand, he considered the connection between sports and politics. This is evidenced by his following words: "Any institution, any creation, no matter how alive they may be, develops in (according to the customs and passions of the current moment. Today politics is at the center of any problem. How can sports, muscularity, and even Olympism itself avoid this? But the destructive actions caused by politics are only on the surface. Institutions almost always develop according to two scenarios: external manifestation and internal, the soul of the organization. The first is oriented towards fashion and changes following its new trends, the second remains stable "because the principles on which the institution is founded are stable; it transforms slowly and painlessly in accordance with the laws of human nature. Olympism belongs to the latter category [3]".

Sport itself, as a system of sports competitions and preparation for them, is not directly a political activity. At the same time, sporting competitions, meetings, and other events in the field of sports, even regardless of the will and desire of their organizers, can have (and in real history have indeed repeatedly had) a certain (often very significant) influence on the solution of certain political problems, on relations between various social groups, nations, states, etc.

Sport is one of the human activities based on rules agreed upon by the participants. Sports are designed to be healthy and have the potential to create a better, more productive community. It promotes teamwork, the development of a specific skill set, and teaches respect for other competitors, tolerance, initiative, and self-discipline. It strengthens the ability to set goals and do the preparation necessary to achieve them. All these qualities can be used in any other activity or to solve problems that a person faces in society and can also have a positive impact on such activities or problems.

Indeed, in modern international relations the role of sports ties has increased significantly. This is due to the increase in the number of international sports competitions and the interest of political forces in their information and social potential. The Olympic Games and the World Cup invariably attract the attention of most people in the world. In addition, competitions of this scale themselves imply interstate contacts since they are international. In addition to points of contact within sports federations, sports committees and even athletes from different countries, political interactions are also intensifying. It is in this plane that sport becomes something more than just competition between athletes [4].

International sporting competitions are becoming a significant support for the actions of politicians. In this regard, sport and sporting events are a kind of platform for the interaction of various political actors and economic entities. Based on this provision, we can identify several so-called "interactions" of political and social actors within the sports environment, as well as present an analysis of the manifestation of the political component in the modern sports system at the interstate level. The sports movement has spread throughout all countries of the world [5]. Every state on the globe, one way or another, participates in international sports competitions. Millions of people are involved in this process. Athletes and fans, competition organizers, sports officials and journalists, government officials and

ordinary citizens - without exception, all experience the influence of major sporting events or have a tangential relationship with it. In this regard, in the international arena, sport, as a significant global phenomenon, can fulfill several political tasks.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, the research underscores the significant role of sports diplomacy in contemporary international relations, particularly through the lens of the Olympic Games. The Olympics serve as a powerful platform for fostering diplomatic relations, promoting peace, and enhancing cooperation among nations. Through case studies and analysis, this research has shed light on the multifaceted ways in which sports diplomacy operates within the context of the Olympics.

The findings highlight the importance of sports as a means of transcending political differences, building bridges between nations, and promoting mutual understanding and respect. By examining the diplomatic initiatives and outcomes associated with the Olympic Games,

this research has provided valuable insights into the complex dynamics of sports diplomacy in the modern world.

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## MÜASİR BEYNƏLXALQ MÜNƏSİBƏTLƏRDƏ İDMAN DİPLOMATİYASININ ROLU: OLİMPİYA OYUNLARININ NÜMUNƏSİ

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**Annotasiya.** İdman diplomatiyası xalqlar arasında dialoqu, əməkdaşlığı və anlaşmanı gücləndirmək üçün Olimpiya Oyunları kimi idman tədbirlərinin gücündən istifadə edərək müasir beynəlxalq münasibətlərdə əhəmiyyətli bir vasitə kimi ortaya çıxdı. Bu tədqiqat Olimpiya Oyunlarının beynəlxalq münasibətlərə və qlobal qavrayışlara təsirinə diqqət yetirməklə idman diplomatiyasının rolunu araşdırır. Diplomatik boykotlar, simvolik jestlər və mədəni mübadilələr də daxil olmaqla tarixi və müasir nümunələri təhlil edərək bu araşdırma Olimpiadanın siyasi fikir ayrılıqlarını aşan və dinc yanaşı yaşayışı təşviq edən diplomatik iştirak platforması kimi necə xidmət etdiyini ay-

dınlaşdırır. Bundan əlavə, tədqiqat kommersiyalaşma, siyasiləşmə və etik mülahizələr kimi amilləri nəzərə alaraq müasir dövrdə idman diplomatiyası ilə bağlı çətinlikləri və imkanları təhlil edir. Siyasi elm, sosiologiya və idman tədqiqatlarını əhatə edən multidissiplinar yanaşma vasitəsilə bu tədqiqat idman diplomatiyasının inkişaf edən dinamikası və onun 21-ci əsrdə qlobal idarəçilik, münəqişələrin həlli və mədəni mübadilə üçün təsirləri haqqında fikirlər təklif edir.

**Açar sözlər:** *İdman diplomatiyası, Beynəlxalq əlaqələr, Olimpiya oyunları, Diplomatik əlaqələr, Sülh quruculuğu, Mədəniyyət mübadiləsi.*

## РОЛЬ СПОРТИВНОЙ ДИПЛОМАТИИ В СОВРЕМЕННЫХ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЯХ: НА ПРИМЕРЕ ОЛИМПИЙСКИХ ИГР

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**Аннотация.** Спортивная дипломатия стала важным инструментом в современных международных отношениях, используя силу спортивных мероприятий, таких как Олимпийские игры, для содействия диалогу, сотрудничеству и взаимопониманию между странами. В этом исследовании рассматривается роль спортивной дипломатии на примере Олимпийских игр с упором на ее влияние на международные отношения и глобальное восприятие. Анализируя исторические и современные примеры, в том числе дипломатические бойкоты, символические жесты и культурные обмены, это исследование объясняет, как Олимпийские игры служат платформой для дипломатического взаимодействия, преодоления политических разногласий и содействия ми-

рному сосуществованию. Кроме того, исследование изучает проблемы и возможности, связанные со спортивной дипломатией в современную эпоху, учитывая такие факторы, как коммерциализация, политизация и этические соображения.

Благодаря междисциплинарному подходу, охватывающему политологию, социологию и спортивные исследования, это исследование предлагает понимание развивающейся динамики спортивной дипломатии и ее последствий для глобального управления, разрешения конфликтов и культурного обмена в 21 веке.

**Ключевые слова:** спортивная дипломатия, Международные отношения, Олимпийские игры, Дипломатические отношения, Миростроительство, Культурный обмен.