

978-9934-619-24-3

MEGA-EVENT SPORTS DIPLOMACY: A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PERSPECTIVE

Published by the
NATO Strategic Communications
Centre of Excellence

978-9934-619-24-3

MEGA-EVENT SPORTS DIPLOMACY: A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PERSPECTIVE

Published by the
NATO Strategic Communications
Centre of Excellence

978-9934-619-24-3

MEGA-EVENT SPORTS DIPLOMACY: A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PERSPECTIVE

Published by the
NATO Strategic Communications
Centre of Excellence



ISBN: 978-9934-619-24-3

Author: Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova,
Rīga Stradiņš University China Studies Centre

Content Editor: Monika Hanley

Design: Kārlis Ulmanis

Rīga, November 2022

NATO STRATCOM COE

11b Kalnciema iela

Rīga LV1048, Latvia

www.stratcomcoe.org

Facebook/[stratcomcoe](https://www.facebook.com/stratcomcoe)

Twitter: [@stratcomcoe](https://twitter.com/stratcomcoe)

This publication does not represent the opinions or policies of NATO or NATO StratCom COE.

© All rights reserved by the NATO StratCom COE. Reports may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or publicly displayed without reference to the NATO StratCom COE. The views expressed here do not represent the views of NATO.

Contents

Contents	4
----------------	---

Introduction and methodology description	5
Report organisation	8

1. The conceptual foundation of sports diplomacy	10
1.1. The concept of sports diplomacy	10
1.2. The objectives of sports diplomacy ...	11

2. National strategic approaches to sports diplomacy	13
2.1. Commonwealth of Australia	13
2.2. Japan	15
2.3. People's Republic of China	16
2.4. Russian Federation	17

3. The operational level: case studies of mega sport events	19
3.1. 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia	19
3.2. Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics	21
3.3. Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics	23

4. National messages: a strategic communications assessment	26
---	----

Conclusions	28
-------------------	----

Endnotes	31
----------------	----



” It might sound odd that essentially hosting a sporting event was a sign of your worthiness to rule...

Robin Pierson, the History of Byzantium Podcast, episode 10

Introduction and methodology description

International sports competitions have perhaps the second most widespread and normalised use of national flags and symbols after the military. Undoubtedly, sport—both in terms of athlete accomplishments and sporting events organisation—are a source of reputation for a country. Nations use sport to tell stories of their role in fostering achievers, winners, overcomers, and even triumphant underdogs. International sporting events are drama-laden displays of national unity and purpose.

Sport is increasingly featured in national strategic documents pertaining to public diplomacy. Different in size, form, and vision, the documents nonetheless demonstrate that there is a certain strategic communications approach to sport, which might point to high soft power value. Using both the strategies and the communication surrounding mega sports events, this report aims to analyse and compare the national strategic communications messaging—what stories nations tell, and how they position themselves externally. This research adopts

the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence definition: ‘Strategic communications encompass multiple elements of public diplomacy, political marketing, persuasion, international relations, military strategy, and many others. Strategic communications [are] a holistic approach to communication, based on values and interests, that encompasses everything an actor does to achieve objectives, in a contested environment.’¹ Building on Michelsen and Woodier’s research specifically on Olympic strategic communications, the strategic

communications aspect of sports diplomacy is defined here as sport-related planned interventions into the information environment, 'with observable effects on that environment, which serve international political ends'.²

In both 2021 and 2022, the world experienced the Olympic Games despite the global COVID19 pandemic. With no lack of critical voices and opinions related to the negative benefit-to-cost ratio³, two Asian cities, Tokyo and Beijing, nevertheless decided that the show must go on for these mega sports events. How come? 'It is precisely the reach of mega sports events, such as the Olympic Games and the World Cup, which attracts a range of actors to seek to utilise them to achieve their diplomatic goals'.⁴

For sake of clarity, the current report adopts the following definition of mega sports events by Byers et al.:

*'Mega sporting events are defined as those one-time sporting events of an international scale organized by a special "authority" and yielding extremely high levels of media coverage and impacts (economic, tourism, infrastructure, etc.) for the host community because of the event's significance and/or size. The mega event is often accompanied by parallel activities such as festivals and/or cultural events.'*⁵

Given the interest, scale, magnitude, and high levels of media coverage and impact,

the Summer Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup are definitely considered mega sports events. Additionally, the Winter Olympic Games, albeit with lower levels of global viewership, also fall within the category of mega sports events.⁶

Mega sports events are not just competitions between athletes, but an exercise in sports diplomacy, with both the organisers and the participating nations turning to a wide range of communication tools. Sports diplomacy is an approach to how countries showcase their national brands through sportsmanship. It is also a commodity, an investment beyond immediate returns, and even a service that governments can procure to 'enhance their international work through sport'.⁷ Progressively, it is not just the number of medals or triumphs per career that determines sympathy and respect towards a power via its national teams. Athlete wellness, both physical and psychological, their freedom to make cultural, political, and gender identity-based choices, as well as granting equal access to sports infrastructure regardless of gender, social class, geographic location, or ethnicity in a given country, also matter to the general public.

Countries in their sports strategies and wider communication are approaching the wellness and inclusivity trend differently. Examples such as the controversy on US and Chinese social media over the identity choices of the US-turned-People's Republic of China freestyle skier Eileen



” Sports diplomacy is an approach to how countries showcase their national brands through sportsmanship. It is also a commodity, an investment beyond immediate returns, and even a service that governments can procure to ‘enhance their international work through sport

(Ailin) Gu; the celebration of her triumph paired with the outcry over the failure of the also American-born figure skater Zhu Yi among Chinese netizens; the fears over coaches’ exploitation and mistreatment of the Russian figure skating prodigy Kamila Valieva; and the US skier Michaela Shiffrin’s processing of failures, framed in social and traditional media as a demonstration of grace and mental health, dominated the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.⁸

Embedded in this race is the strategic communication surrounding major sports events. This report looks into examples of the strategic communications of the host countries of three recent mega sports events, namely, those of Japan, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and the Russian Federation, which hosted the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, the Beijing 2022 Olympics, and the 2018 FIFA World Cup, respectively. The Commonwealth of Australia was added for benchmarking purposes as the origin

country of the World’s first sports diplomacy strategy. This report aims to answer the following research questions:

- Why do nations use sport as a diplomatic tool?
- How do nations communicate and justify pouring a considerable amount of resources into sport?
- How do nations use major sporting events to augment and further their national interests and agendas? What are the main means through which they do so? What are the leading messages they produce?

All three sets of research questions analyse strategic communications aimed at external audiences.

Methodologically, the report employs qualitative content analysis of documents,

and draws information from the following sources:

- official statements and comments by key nations;
- statements and comments by non-state actors in key nations; and
- coverage by the media in key nations.

The analysed time frame of the case studies (Section 3) centres on the year of the organisation of the respective mega sports event—2018 for the FIFA World Cup in Russia, 2020 for the Olympic games in Tokyo, and 2022 for the Winter Olympic games in Beijing; however, the materials also include the run-up period to each event, beginning with the announcement of organising rights (2010 for Russia, 2013 for Tokyo, and 2015 for Beijing). Documents in English, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and French are used in the analysis herein.

Report organisation

This report is organised into four sections, with the study's conclusions presented in a subsequent section. Section 1 offers a conceptual perspective that is aimed at providing insight into the existing approaches to sports diplomacy analysis. Drawing on the soft power concept, this section explains the position sports diplomacy holds in relation to national public diplomacy. It exam-

ines the objectives that states pursue when engaging in sports diplomacy, including the complex motivational drivers behind hosting mega sports events, and it underlines the importance of the international strategic communications aspect of national sports diplomacy endeavours.

Section 1 centres on the first research question: why do nations use sport as a diplomatic tool?

Section 2 of this report addresses the roles that various countries ascribe to sports diplomacy. This section, for benchmarking purposes, first considers the Commonwealth of Australia, which is the World's first sports diplomacy strategy and hence a reference point for national sports diplomacy strategies worldwide.⁹ Then, the section presents an analysis of sports diplomacy approaches of the host countries of three mega sports events that were chosen as case studies: Japan, the PRC, and the Russian Federation (even if the latter two do not have specific sports diplomacy strategies).

Section 2 is primarily intended to approach the second set of questions, namely, how nations communicate and justify expending a considerable amount of resources on sport.

Section 3 features case studies at the operational level. It places the last three mega sports events that have taken place in the world, which have had global



participation, at the centre of analysis, examining the following events:

- 2018 FIFA World Cup in the Russian Federation;
- Tokyo 2020 Olympics (taking place in 2021); and
- Beijing 2022 Olympics.

This section also presents a discourse analysis of Russia, Japan, and China as both organising and participating nations, and offers a comparison between their communicated values, worldviews, and goals.

Section 3 addresses the third set of questions:

- How do nations use major sporting events to augment and further their national interests and agendas?
- What are the main means by which they do so?
- What are the leading messages they produce?

Section 4 offers a comprehensive comparison of the national approaches to sports diplomacy, and conclusions are presented in the subsequent and final section.



1. The conceptual foundation of sports diplomacy

This section explains the position sports diplomacy holds in relation to national public diplomacy, examines the objectives states pursue when engaging in sports diplomacy, including the complex motivational drivers behind hosting mega sports events, and highlights the importance of the international strategic communications aspect of national sports diplomacy endeavours.

1.1. The concept of sports diplomacy

‘Sport provides a lens upon the international system that gives insight into the underpinning facets of diplomacy as means of communication, representation and negotiation’,¹⁰ writes the founder of the field of sports diplomacy, J. Simon Rofe, Reader in Diplomatic and International Studies at SOAS University of London. Sports diplomacy forms part of national public diplomacy. National public diplomacy is a diplomatic practice that centres on diplomatic communication between states and people, usually in foreign countries,¹¹ giving them ‘other options to shape the country’s images and try to reposition themselves in the international system through peaceful means’.¹² Therefore, the soft power concept, ‘the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments’,¹³ of Joseph Nye is the dominant theoretical approach to sports diplomacy.¹⁴

Richard Parish, professor of Sports Law at Edge Hill University, UK, also applies the soft power framework, distinguishing between three ‘faces’ of sports diplomacy: the ‘traditional’ face, the ‘modern’ face, and the ‘sport-as-diplomacy’ face. The ‘traditional’ face, which famously includes the Berlin 1936 Olympics, is about the amplification of foreign policy and diplomatic messages through sport. The ‘modern’ face is more closely related to the praxis of strategic communications than its traditional counterpart, as it ‘draws in a wider number of actors beyond the traditional diplomat and politician including amateur and professional sportspersons (“diplomats in tracksuits”), sports clubs, governing bodies and civil society actors’.¹⁵ Finally, the ‘sport-as-diplomacy’ face is about private sports bodies harnessing ‘the appeal of sport as a means of pursuing their interests in the international arena’.¹⁶ According to this classification, this report falls into the realm of the first two faces of sports diplomacy. It approaches sports diplomacy



as 'governments employing sportspeople to amplify a diplomatic message, or with states exploiting sporting events for public diplomacy opportunities'.¹⁷

1.2. The objectives of sports diplomacy

The concept of soft power is helpful not only in establishing the *what* but also the *why* of sports diplomacy. Given its public diplomacy roots, the gains that sports diplomacy brings to a nation also fall into the general realm of gaining allies via soft power and forging relationships not by coercion but by attraction, so that others 'want what you want'.¹⁸

The connection that is more problematic and harder to explain, however, is between soft power and mega sports events. It is hard to argue that the hosting costs provide the best return on investment in the form of increased soft power. The legacy aspect is also debatable—the events often elicit grievances from the local communities and leave unnecessary and unreasonably grand hard-to-maintain infrastructure behind.¹⁹ Thus, if nations can achieve a soft power boost via other less costly avenues of sports diplomacy, such as participation of star athletes, why do states still vie to hold mega sports events?

Jonathan Grix and Barrie Houlihan believe sports diplomacy 'offers at least a partial answer to the unanswered question' as to why states host mega sports events'.²⁰ States

demonstrate internal cohesiveness by symbolically uniting, often through pledging to a cause. These causes may include more generally communicated goals such as inclusivity, development, clean sport, tackling climate change, or more streamlined communications such as the UK's messaging during the London 2012 Olympic Games, including the concerted message of 'digital Olympics'.²¹ Host cities tie their names to victories and records. National teams help introduce the world to the population of the country they represent. Individual athletes at international sporting events become 'marketable commodities', who communicate through their sporting behaviour regardless of being articulate orators or not,²² providing nations with access to the high-impact tools of celebrity diplomacy.

Major sporting events are used to boost visibility and to highlight agendas. Notably, Olympic diplomacy²³ provides states with opportunities to showcase their images, agendas, and symbols, due to both the event's size and the inherent positive association with the values of the Olympic movement. Such values include blending sport with culture and education, a way of life based on the joy found in physical effort, the educational value of setting good examples, and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.²⁴ The opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games help nations to increase soft power as they allow them 'to smuggle in and project soft power through the guise of Olympic stewardship'.²⁵



Furthermore, mega sports events can provide high dividends of soft power for nations with image problems. The intrinsic appeal of these sports events helps the organising nations communicate with global audiences and downplay problematic issues. The feel-good effect is hard to resist, because these events scale up a fundamental positive relationship present across humanity: the host-guest bond.²⁶ Regardless of the legacies and long-term impacts on the host nations,²⁷ the public is wired to like mega sports events.

By engaging in sports diplomacy, governments can efficiently target global sympathetic audiences with a display of operationalised self-perception in pursuit of respect, support, and sympathy. Such targeting is carried out via a concerted

message, putting sports diplomacy in the realm of strategic communications.

In the following sections, this report uses the perspective of strategic communications analysis to first look at sports diplomacy in a wider context. This is achieved first through examining and comparing the most visible national sports strategies, and then studying a more specific strategic communications outlet of sports diplomacy—mega sports events—to gauge how organisers capitalise on the intensity of the communicative opportunities that these events provide. The international perspective on strategic communications analysis is particularly valuable, because it reveals the tools nations apply to boost soft power, manipulate symbols, and justify ideologies, allowing for a comparison.



2. National strategic approaches to sports diplomacy

Even though governments routinely deploy sport in expanding their soft power and recognition, as well as in soliciting solidarity, not many nations have formulated a separate sports diplomacy strategy.

Tackling the first set of research questions, namely, how nations communicate and justify pouring a considerable amount of resources into sport, this section addresses the role various countries ascribe to sports diplomacy, as well as to large international events, including mega sports events. This section features an analysis of official documents charting national and supra-national outlooks and approaches, and presents a table with messaging comparisons.

This section first examines the Commonwealth of Australia for benchmarking purposes. Australia is a reference point for a national sports diplomacy strategy due to its gold standard status of 'leading the esoteric, conscious and innovative practice of sports diplomacy',²⁸ as worded by Stuart Murray. Subsequently, an analysis of sports diplomacy approaches of the host countries of three mega sports events chosen as case studies—Japan, the PRC, and the Russian Federation—is presented.

2.1. Commonwealth of Australia

The most comprehensive example of sport-related diplomacy is represented in 'Australian Sports Diplomacy Strategy 2015-18'²⁹, followed by Australia's 'Sports Diplomacy 2030', adopted in 2019, which builds upon its 2015 predecessor. The latest document posits that 'sport is one of Australia's key soft power assets and can play a leading role in strengthening partnerships and promoting our national brand'.³⁰

Both the original 2015 document and its 2019 successor contain a strong value discourse, which suggests that the image Australia is striving for is that of a 'sports nation'. Keyword density analysis of 'Sports Diplomacy 2030' suggests that over 5 per cent of the text is composed of inclusivity-oriented vocabulary, including such keywords as women, girls, gender equality, and disability inclusion). 'Sports Diplomacy 2030' argues the necessity of sports promotion, focusing on four strategic priorities: representing Australia globally, building

linkages with neighbours, maximising trade, tourism, and investment opportunities, and strengthening communities in the Indo-Pacific.

The third pillar of Australia's strategy in 'Sports Diplomacy 2030', focused on economy and trade, is especially interesting from a communications standpoint. In a neoliberal approach to interdependency of all things, Australia emphasises sport as a regional tool of influence, and ties sport with trade, making the following return-on-investment argument:

*'Our love and dedication to sport can provide us with unique opportunities to engage our neighbours, and advance our national interests. Sport allows us to build and extend our influence in our region and beyond. We also use our love of sports as an expression of who we are and what we stand for as an open trading partner to the globe.'*³¹

Thus, spending resources on sport is justified by sport subsequently enhancing links with neighbours, which in turn would lead to financial gain through increased trade.

The sports industry and its development feature prominently in the document, with 20 mentions throughout the text. This underscores the financial value that the sports industry has in the Australian economy.³² This also communicates the message that sports diplomacy is a profitable endeavour and not a taxpayer subsidised, unsuccessful public relations campaign.

'Sport for development' holds another strong presence in Australia's messaging, emphasising the role of the nation beyond its borders in the Indo-Pacific. It acknowledged the achievements of the previous strategy and pledged AUD6 million annually to 'deliver safer, more inclusive sports programs that support gender equality, disability inclusion and create leadership pathways for participants'³³ in Pacific and Asian countries.

The organisation of mega sports events, albeit not central to the strategy, does come up in the context of tourism and investment promotion. This manifests in the form of strategic initiative to 'promote Australia as a host of choice for major international sporting events and leverage associated legacy opportunities'.³⁴ This approach can be explained with Australia acknowledging itself to be a visible and established venue already:

*'Australia is renowned as a host and destination of choice for sporting events. Our proven track record in hosting major multi-sport events such as the Olympic and the Commonwealth Games, cricket, rugby and netball world cup events and world-class tournaments like the Australian Open, reinforce our sporting credentials.'*³⁵

It appears that, rather than chasing new mega-event opportunities, Australia is interested in communicating beyond its borders that it is a knowledge base whose 'expertise can play a pivotal role in enabling other nations, especially across Asia and the



Pacific, to host major international sporting events that enhance their global image and offer lasting impacts'.³⁶ Mega sports events are not a goal in and of itself for Australia, but rather are tied to projecting the image of being a regional knowledge hub.

In general, the economic argument is strong in the Australian outlook on sports diplomacy. The policies of experience and transfer of expertise, including inclusivity and diversity messaging, as well as the organisation of mega sports events, are especially pertinent in the Australian sports diplomacy communication. To sum up, the Australian national sports brand appears to communicate itself as an Indo-Pacific knowledge hub that is capable of supporting others and reaping profits in the process.

2.2. Japan

The Japanese sports diplomacy approach is centred on the Olympic and Paralympic movement. This particular national characteristic has been outlined by academia before, as Sakaue and Thompson, quoted in Rofe and Postlethwaite, argue that the Olympic Movement and the hosting of the event have had 'an inordinate significance to and influence on Japan'.³⁷

The Sport for Tomorrow consortium steered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several sports-related government agencies 'is an international contribution through sport initiative by Japan, toward the Tokyo 2020

Olympic and Paralympic Games'.³⁸ It emphasises the goals of peace and development, alongside the mission of 'improving international competition levels'. In the spirit of this framework, the goals of the programme spotlight international exchanges, education in sports leadership, as well as sports integrity.

In an illustration of the link between sport and diplomacy, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs set up a dedicated twitter account (@MofaJp_Sports) in 2019, first stemming from Olympic content. The account seems to have transitioned into an 'all-things Japan sports feel-good content' retweeting approach. With tweets in Japanese as well as English together in one feed, and the lack of a dedicated account for each audience, however, from a strategic communications viewpoint, the target audience is not well-defined, and the account misses the mark of spreading a concerted diplomatic message.

A more recent, yet not less compelling example, is the description of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games under the Public Diplomacy section on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan official webpage³⁹, analysed in more detail in Section 3 of this report.

In summary, the Japanese approach to sports diplomacy strongly features the Olympic movement and UN development goals. Institutionally, rather than resting squarely on a single ministry, the sports diplomacy task is divided among a variety of

governmental, local, and non-governmental stakeholders.

2.3. People's Republic of China

China does not have a separate sports diplomacy strategy. Its sports diplomacy activities can be seen under Chinese President Xi Jinping's 'Thought on Diplomacy', where the goals of 'major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics for a New Era' are to 'serve the national rejuvenation, promote human progress, promote the building of a new type of international relations, and promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind'.⁴⁰

In 'Experiencing the story of Xi Jinping's "sports diplomacy"',⁴¹ published on the official website dedicated to China's diplomatic strategy titled 'Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy and Chinese Diplomacy in the New Era', it is suggested that Xi Jinping 'often uses sports, the common language of all mankind, to convey China's friendship and goodwill to the world'. It is described as 'Xi Jinping's "sports diplomacy" story'. The main characteristics of the 'story', first of all, focus on Xi Jinping personally, illustrated by the following report on China Central Television in 2019: 'In Xi Jinping's diplomatic videos, sports elements often appear. As a senior sports enthusiast, Xi Jinping has personally passed on friendship through sports, boosting the friendship between the countries and the people.'⁴²

Secondly, at the core of the Xi Jinping's vision is a celebration of the positive social momentum brought by the 2022 Winter Olympics in China. Third of all, in contrast to the foundations of public diplomacy reviewed in the first section of this report, Xi Jinping's sports diplomacy targets state-level and organisational counterparts rather than the public abroad.

The above material does not include any mention of another key sport-as-diplomacy initiative promoted by Xi Jinping—the football movement. An attempt to promote Chinese traditional sport internationally is also absent from the reports on Xi Jinping's diplomatic agenda.

In a shift towards what can be seen as a debate on formulating a sports diplomacy strategy, sports academics have presented their visions, tying their proposals with the existing strategic keywords of the PRC. The General Administration of Sport in China published a proposal of a sports diplomacy strategy in 2019, authored by the Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee and President of Capital Institute of Physical Education Zhong Bingshu—a strong indication of political intention. 'Sports, a world language, transcends the international attributes of ideology',⁴³ writes Zhong, hinting, perhaps, at sports diplomacy as a tool in overcoming the stalemate in China-US relations.

Liu Guihai, a professor at East China Normal University, is also calling for a strategic



system of sports diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.⁴⁴ Zhang Jianhui from China Renmin University goes on to suggest six particular avenues of China's sports diplomacy: 'international sports cooperation to build a shared community for human health; "double cycle" service construction to promote the higher opening level of sports; good host diplomacy at the Beijing Winter Olympics to create a good national image; cultural exchanges for sport to enhance mutual understanding; multilateralism practice to take an active part in global sports governance; bilateral and multilateral cooperation in sports to promote the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative'.⁴⁵

Overall, China's approach to sports diplomacy is currently not a strategy, but, as Chinese sources suggest, a story—one told by Xi Jinping. The keywords of this story are the same as in other diplomacy directions outlined in Xi's Thought on Diplomacy: great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, shared future for mankind, multipolarity, friendship, and even Belt and Road. Whether a strategy is currently being developed remains to be seen, but the current debate already suggests such a strategy will be in line with Xi's diplomatic concepts, and as such differs substantially from the Australian one.

2.4. Russian Federation

The Russian Federation has not formulated a dedicated strategy on sports diplomacy;

however, the 'Foreign Policy Concept' (approved by Vladimir Putin in November 2016) underscores the 'importance of "soft power" tools to solve foreign policy problems [...] in addition to traditional diplomatic methods'.⁴⁶

The 'Strategy of the Development of Physical Culture and Sports in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030' (adopted in November 2020) explicitly makes reference to Russia's sports diplomacy goals: 'strengthening of international cooperation and increasing the authority of Russia in the international sports arena'.⁴⁷ The document speaks of:

*'[...] improving the tools for international sports diplomacy, promoting the institution of sports attachés and developing a system of interaction with executive authorities of foreign countries that ensure the development of physical culture and sports; development and implementation of a programme aimed at creating a positive image of the Russian Federation in the international sports community (including through active participation in international scientific and social and business events); [...] effective application campaigns for the right to organize major international sporting events, as well as scientific and social and business events related to the development of physical culture and sports on the territory of the Russian Federation.'*⁴⁸



The organisation of mega sports events features prominently here.

In addition to the quoted text above, the document also underscores the principles of good sportsmanship, notably, anti-doping, which is significant in the Russian context, with Russia having been accused of state-sponsored doping by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Commenting on this, Vladimir Putin said during a press conference in 2018, 'It is our own fault to a great degree that we ended up in this situation. [...] It is because the doping abuse did take place.'⁴⁹ But he denied state involvement. Perhaps the mentions of no doping in the document serve the purpose of distancing the state from the scandal, making it appear rather as a set of local bad practices, which Russia is willing to tackle, rather than a centralised and institutionalised system.

Notably, a tradition of excellence is also underscored in the document, in consistency with an overall Russian strategic communication of underlining Russian achievements.⁵⁰ Still, academia has outlined the lack of a streamlined approach towards sports diplomacy in Russia. In her piece on the role of sport in country image crafting,

Polina Gruzdeva said that Russia's foreign policy concept is not perfect and it should 'take into account foreign experience to create in Russia new areas of foreign policy strategy to promote the development of high achievement sport'.⁵¹

The approach to sports diplomacy in the above document is traditional-diplomacy-based rather than public-diplomacy-based, aimed at 'taking into account national interests in terms of the preparation and implementation of international acts (international conventions, resolutions, charters, declarations) on sports issues, including an increase in the number of Russian representatives in the leadership positions of these organizations'.⁵²

In contrast to the Australian approach, the economic aspect of sports diplomacy is not present in the above document's text. PRC-style streamlining of strategic communication via big keywords is also not in the Russian tradition, and neither is the Japanese consortium-based solution. Instead, sports diplomacy in the Russian Federation documents focuses on showcasing the country through mega sports events, as well as arguing for a bigger role in international organisations.



3. The operational level: case studies of mega sport events

Moving on from the documents behind the various outlooks on national sports diplomacy and the messages contained in them, this section dives into the operational level, which presents three particular case studies of mega sports events that have taken place during the past four years: the 2018 FIFA World Cup in the Russian Federation, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (taking place in 2021), and the Beijing 2022 Olympics. The platform for nations to exercise strategic communication is wider than just the period of the actual short-lived event, encompassing the years of preparation before the event as well as the legacy that remains long after the event has concluded. Rofo and Postlethwaite have argued that ‘a key driver of hosting international sporting events is the effort to change perceptions of the host through the course of the build-up to the event, through its operation, and then with the legacy it leaves for a range of different audiences’.⁵³ Therefore, the documents and statements analysed here cover the run-up to the particular event, the event itself, and the post-event communication.

Tackling the third set of research questions, this section looks at how nations use mega sports events to augment and further their national interests and agendas, the main means through which they do so, and the leading messages that they produce, ultimately trying to gauge how successful they are.

3.1. 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia

‘We have no doubt that Russia will ensure that all work is completed on time and, of course, at the highest quality level’,⁵⁴ stated Vladimir Putin during an Organizing Committee ‘Russia-2018’ meeting in 2014. The years leading up to the event, however, were a challenge to Russian strategic communications, as the country was hit with scandals on several fronts—Western media reported on allegations of bribery to ensure the venue vote,⁵⁵ an uptick in

racist chants,⁵⁶ homophobia,⁵⁷ and state sponsored doping.⁵⁸ Still, Russia strove to harness the positive energy of the mega sports event to outweigh the controversy.

The mascot imagery of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia was that of a football-playing wolf that ‘radiates fun, charm and confidence’.⁵⁹ A friendly wolf can be seen as an effort of painting over the international image of Russia as aggressor. After all, Russia won the World Cup bid two years after the 2008 war with Georgia, and the



tournament took place just four years after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight 17. As explained by the Local Organising Committee Chairman, the then Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation, Vitaly Mutko, 'Millions of Russian football fans took part in the vote and this means Zabivaka will do a worthy job representing our country around the world.'⁶⁰ Ironically, the mascot evoked the association of a wolf in sheep's clothing. Furthermore, the name of the mascot dressed in the colours of the Russian flag, 'Zabivaka', loosely translates as 'the scorer'. One can argue that this visual representation of a nationalistic pursuit of scoring and winning created a disconnect with the message of celebrating sport in global solidarity.

In the video welcome address on 8 June 2018, Vladimir Putin communicated that the event is 'an opportunity to make acquaintance with Russia, its distinctive culture, unique history and diverse nature, as well as its welcoming, very sincere and friendly people'.⁶¹ He further tried to paint a positive picture of Russia by saying that Russia had 'opened our country and our hearts to the world'. The message of presenting Russia as a welcoming and open nation for outside audiences, coupled with domestic messaging aimed at overriding unease over possible bad international feedback, was widespread in the run-up to and during the event. The then Russian Minister of Sport, Pavel Kolobkov, expressed that the reactions

from team representatives, fans, and FIFA demonstrated that 'organizationally, everything is very much not bad so far'. The title of the media article that contained his quote went further and paraphrased the minister's words into an even more positive assessment to say 'the championship is going well'.⁶²

Vladimir Putin's speech at the 2018 FIFA World Cup opening ceremony at Luzhniki Stadium, on 14 June 2018, also contained both Russian pride and friendly Russia messaging: 'I welcome all guests to the *legendary* Moscow stadium Luzhniki. [...] We prepared responsibly for this major event and did our best so that fans, athletes and specialists could immerse themselves in the atmosphere of this magnificent football festival and, of course, enjoy their stay in Russia – *open, hospitable, friendly* Russia – and find new friends here, new like-minded people'.⁶³ (Emphasis added).

The Russian messaging surrounding the 2018 FIFA World Cup strongly prioritised national image. The Russian government expected the nation to weather discomforts and expenditures caused by the event without complaints in the name of national pride. Such messaging implies that it is not about the comfort of the individual people of the hosting nation, but rather about collectively proving that the nation is up to the task.

Scandals surrounding bribery, racism, homophobia, and doping, as well as reports



of possible UK, Polish, and Japanese teams' boycotts⁶⁴ of the tournament did not impede Russia from scoring in terms of sports diplomacy objectives, as it used the games to further the country's international standing. Then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson wrote that a boycott would 'have been unfair on the team [...] would have been unfair on the fans [...] It was certainly Putin's Russia that won the right to host the World Cup. But this World Cup does not belong to the Kremlin. It belongs to football fans everywhere in the world.'⁶⁵ However, one cannot deny that the Kremlin did in fact receive image dividends from it.

Sentiment analyses of Twitter during the FIFA World Cup in Russia indicates that 'negative messages declined in the course of the World Cup; hence, the event might have distracted audiences from political issues and created a "feel-good effect"'.⁶⁶ On the diplomatic front, the list of dignitaries who attended the tournament included the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, South Korean President Moon Jae-in, and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. This was described by CNN in Moscow as the Kremlin being 'locked in confrontation with the West, but the rest of the world is coming to Russian President Vladimir Putin'.⁶⁷

Arkady Dvorkovich, deputy Prime Minister during the run-up to the event, even expressed the belief that Russia 'changed its reputation'⁶⁸ due to the tournament. Even in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine, for experts like political scientist and Russia

specialist Dr. Marlene Laruelle, the fact that Russia hosted the FIFA World Cup connects with Russia's success as a country. Dr. Marlene Laruelle recalled how 'Russia successfully hosted the 2018 soccer World Cup—the first to be played in Eastern Europe—and won praise from many in Europe and Latin America for the way Russia managed one of the world's biggest sporting events and had proven to be an efficient and modern country.'⁶⁹

3.2. Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics

Japan began the countdown in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 for the Tokyo Olympics with then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe appearing in a Super Mario costume for the handover⁷⁰—a communication of a modern Japanese soft power image.

The description of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games under the Public Diplomacy section on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan official webpage⁷¹ serves as an example of a streamlined communication via sports diplomacy. Aside from more general goals, such as the Japan Brand Program, the text presents a very specific goal that the Games 'will present an opportunity for Japan to deliver a powerful message to the world on how it has been recovering from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.'⁷² This approach demonstrates a narrow, well-defined, and targeted communication's goal of countering an element of negative image, and serves

to showcase how a nation can use mega sports events for its soft diplomacy. Additionally, Japan demonstrated flexibility by shifting the Olympic narrative according to the image it wanted to project.⁷³

The event's symbolism heavily featured the motif of bringing tradition and future together. For instance, the mascot, Miraitowa, 'embodies both the old and the new, echoing the concept of "innovation from harmony"'.⁷⁴ The Games, with the 'United by Emotion' slogan, featured, as it states, emotion; however, in contrast to the planned emotions centring around 'hope',⁷⁵ the leading emotion on display was anxiety.⁷⁶ The 'Welcome from the Host' section of the opening ceremony of the event featured a dedication to the victims of the 2011 earthquake, among other commemorations. The Japanese official messaging surrounding the Olympics leaned into commemorations and acknowledgements, perhaps to counter domestic and international criticism over holding the Games amidst the global COVID19 pandemic.

This message of acknowledging the hardship was also underscored in the then Prime Minister Yoshide Suga's statement before the UN General Assembly, where he said that 'above all, while humanity has been faced with immeasurable hardships, the Tokyo 2020 Games proved to be a symbol of global unity among people around the world.'⁷⁷ This framing probably did not do much domestically for Suga's political

ratings, suggesting the different effects a single message can yield domestically and internationally.

A major success for Japan was the introduction of the nation's traditional sport, karate, into the Olympic programme of Tokyo 2020.⁷⁸ Suga said that the Olympic Games 'must be a unique opportunity to spread the value and traditions of Japanese martial arts to the world through the showcase of Karate as a universal sport'.⁷⁹ The corresponding official Japanese communication around it consistently circles back to the junction of tradition and future, by emphasising the internationally acknowledged excellence and the potential of something so truly traditional. Although reportedly short-lived, as the discipline of karate will not be appearing at the Paris Olympic Games in 2024⁸⁰, the accomplishment nonetheless can have a lasting effect for Japanese soft power.

Dignitaries in attendance included WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who had supported holding the Games despite the COVID19 pandemic.⁸¹ Instead of denouncing public events, he shifted the message towards global vaccination as a way to curb the pandemic. Such support helped the Japanese strategic communications objective of 'overcoming hardship'.

However, it was not just the official communication, and the communication of the attendees, that drew attention to the event, but also the negative effect surrounding the absentees. For instance, the





It is no coincidence that the Beijing 2022 Olympic slogan ‘Together for a shared future’ in English resembles Xi Jinping’s signature foreign policy vision ‘Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind’.

visit of the South Korea President Moon Jae-in and his meeting with then Prime Minister Suga was scrapped following a reported offensive comment by a senior diplomat at Japan’s embassy in Seoul.⁸² Japan and Korea had wanted to use the positive atmosphere intrinsic to mega sports events for the first summit between both leaders at a time of a low point in bilateral relations. South Korea still sent a dignitary, albeit not a senior one, the Minister of Culture, Sports, and Tourism Hwang Hee.

Domestic pushback and diplomatic incidents aside, the Games were in fact beneficial for the host country and city, as Japan met its sports diplomacy objectives of demonstrating a strong spirit of overcoming the earthquake and the pandemic.⁸³ No real COVID19 clusters appeared among the participants, although, admittedly, COVID19 cases reached a record number outside the Olympic bubble.⁸⁴ On top of those two goals of overcoming hardships, the Tokyo games organisers underlined the importance of environmental sustainability in their communication. Perhaps an unintended consequence rather than planned strategic

communication, the Games produced such instantly successful imagery as cardboard bed frames—the story had just the right balance of originality, humour, sex (a US athlete’s viral tweet suggested the beds were designed to keep Olympians from engaging in intimacy⁸⁵), and playful weirdness that it sparked instant positive engagement from the global community.

3.3. Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics

‘Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics is not only a sports event, but also reflects China’s value pursuit of building a community with a shared future for mankind,’ a statement by the Communist Party of China reads.⁸⁶

It is no coincidence that the Beijing 2022 Olympic slogan ‘Together for a shared future’ in English resembles Xi Jinping’s signature foreign policy vision ‘Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind’. China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi made sure nobody would miss the connection as he tied the two together at the Munich Security Conference in February 2022.⁸⁷



The Olympic mascot Bing Dwen also carried a futuristic message, as it was wearing 'a full-body "shell" made out of ice, which resembles an astronaut suit—a tribute to embracing new technologies for a future with infinite possibilities.'⁸⁸ Both the slogan and the mascot came together as if to say that China will play a major role in our global future, be it in ideology or technology. This vertical integration of Olympic messaging into Xi Jinping's vision is a prime example of Chinese international strategic communication.

Unlike in the communication and visuals of the Tokyo Olympics just a year before, mourning COVID19 victims did not play a significant part in China's messaging surrounding the Beijing Winter Olympics. Quite the opposite, conscious efforts were made on the Chinese side to use the Olympics to change the negative image linking China and the novel coronavirus, by instead praising the PRC's zero COVID19 policy. Toasting the guests of the Olympic banquet, Xi Jinping alluded to the virus as a hardship China had faced and won:

*'Committed to organizing green, inclusive, open and clean Games, China has made every effort to counter the impact of COVID19, earnestly fulfilled its solemn pledge to the international community, and ensured the smooth opening of the Beijing Olympic Winter Games as scheduled.'*⁸⁹

Later, said at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics review and

awards ceremony, Xi Jinping went further and compared China's COVID19 policy with Olympic gold:

*'China's COVID response policy has once again withstood the test, contributing useful experience for the world to fight the virus and host major international events. As some foreign athletes said, if there were a gold medal for responding to the pandemic, then China would deserve it.'*⁹⁰

While the Beijing Games were high on boycott promises, as Susan Brownell explains, mega sports events boycotts tend to leave a short memory trail. She said that 'most of these public relations and diplomatic campaigns have had little or no impact in China or any host country, and the absence of the politicians has been quickly forgotten.'⁹¹ Indeed, in line with Brownell's projections, the 2022 diplomatic boycott has had little to no impact on Chinese governance. To counter possible negative impacts, China signalled that several high-profile attendees made up for the lack of others. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had a meeting with Xi Jinping and with PRC State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi.⁹² Xi Jinping also welcomed Argentinian president Alberto Fernández.⁹³ China also pledged to deepen bilateral cooperation with Argentina—the second largest South American country and third largest South American economy. This messaging is consistent with China's self-positioning as the voice for the developing



countries, or, as put by David Kelly, the Chinese identities of the 'Leader of the Developing World' and the 'Champion of Plurality'.⁹⁴

Overall, however, the Olympic Games in Beijing were overshadowed by boycotts, no-shows, and criticisms, a polarised assessment of China, with Western media tending to frame the Games as a failure or at least a 'joyless triumph',⁹⁵ while the Chinese

and some East Asian media framed it as a success.⁹⁶ The negative aftereffect that China will find particularly hard to counter is Xi Jinping's Olympic meeting with the Russian president Vladimir Putin only three weeks before Russia's invasion in Ukraine.⁹⁷ Still, the games did yield benefits for China—Beijing became the first city to have hosted both the Summer and Winter Olympics, and the gold medals solidified the image of Chinese engineered success.



4. National messages: a strategic communications assessment

This section presents an analysis of Australian, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian messaging, both as organising and participating nations, and offers a comparison between their communicated values, worldviews, and goals.

This comparison was derived after examining various types of sports diplomacy communication, including official sports diplomacy strategies, sports development strategies, and channels of official communications (press releases, official statements, twitter accounts). The table below includes a message comparison between the countries assessed to establish the narratives the respective nations use in their sports diplomacy. Some of those efforts amount to strategic communication, including those of Japan and Russia, whereas others present a more scattered message.

Nation	Message on values	Message on athletes	Message on mega sports events	Strategic communications examples
Australia	<p>The healthy sporting nation.</p> <p>Sport for regional development.</p> <p>Benefits for national economy.</p>	<p>Inclusivity and diversity.</p>	<p>Expertise of organising mega sports events is shared with other nations.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
Japan	<p>Improving international competition levels.</p> <p>Peace and development.</p> <p>The Olympic spirit.</p> <p>Health.</p>	<p>Talent fostering.</p> <p>Equality and inclusion.</p>	<p>Responsible legacy management (1964-2020 and beyond).</p> <p>Gaining recognition for Japanese sport.</p> <p>Hi-tech games.</p>	<p>Tradition plus future.</p> <p>Linking the 2020 Olympics with earthquake recovery.</p> <p>Heavy focus on commemorations.</p>



Nation	Message on values	Message on athletes	Message on mega sports events	Strategic communications examples
China	<p>Great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.</p> <p>Shared future for mankind.</p> <p>Multipolarity.</p> <p>Friendship. Belt and Road.</p>	N/A	<p>Volunteering.</p> <p>Ecology.</p> <p>Olympic spirit.</p> <p>Welcoming, guest-loving nation.</p>	<p>Xi Jinping's thought ('Community with a Shared Future for Mankind').</p> <p>Green and clean winter Olympics.</p> <p>Targeted override of #genocidegames.</p> <p>Praise of zero COVID19 policy.</p>
Russia	<p>Russian traditional values.</p> <p>The healthy sporting nation.</p>	<p>Tradition of excellence.</p> <p>No to bad sportsmanship.</p> <p>No to doping.</p>	<p>Ensuring the highest level of hosting.</p> <p>No to politics in sport.</p> <p>Legacy management (infrastructure, economic, social development).</p>	<p>#WeWillROCYou (at Beijing Winter Olympics)</p>



Conclusions

Sports diplomacy forms part of national public diplomacy. Therefore, the soft power concept, 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments', as Joseph Nye stated, is the dominating theoretical approach to sports diplomacy, presented in the Section 1 of this report. The concept of soft power is helpful not only in establishing the *what* but also the *why* of sports diplomacy. Given its public diplomacy roots, the gains sports diplomacy brings to a nation also fall into the general realm of soft power, gaining allies and forging relationships not by coercion but by attraction.

Section 2 of this report demonstrated major differences in how the examined countries approach sports diplomacy, mega sports events, as well as strategic communication in sport. In sports strategies, Australia underscores economic gain and development; China debates sports diplomacy within the stern framework of official foreign policy keywords, such as great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, shared future for mankind, multipolarity, friendship, and even Belt and Road; Japan focuses on the Olympic spirit via multiparty consortiums; whereas Russia argues for increasing influence over decision-making via international sports organisations.

Whereas mega sports events are not central in the Australian sports diplomacy strategy, they, however, matter greatly to Russia, Japan, and China. In the organisation of these events, nations choose their own positions on the national/universal values spectrum, approach the events either as a showcase of national 'friendliness' and achievement (Russia 2018), a stage for

commemoration (Tokyo 2020), or opt for escape via creating a fairy-tale world of forgetful bliss (Beijing 2022). One could argue that even if countries do not have a sports diplomacy strategy, by organising mega sports events, states can almost certainly benefit from an image point of view, because sport is likely to be viewed by a wider audience, far beyond those who are interested in geopolitics, contributing to a more positive view of the host country.

Countries approached communicating their national role in the global future differently. While China demonstrated a vertical integration of Xi Jinping's ideology during Beijing 2022, the Japanese approach was a softer cultural referral to tradition and its future impact, with an elastic narrative change. Russia made a point of underscoring its capacity as a country.

Although the mega sports events analysed in Section 3 of this report differ in scope and timing, the overarching conclusion can be made that, in all three cases, hosting



the event helped the nations reach their sports diplomacy objectives, boost the reach of their strategic communications, and increase the country's international standing. Scandals and boycotts of the tournament did not impede Russia from meeting their sports diplomacy objectives and furthering the country's international standing. Previous sentiment analysis research of Twitter during the FIFA World Cup in Russia indicated a 'feel-good effect', a decline in negative messages regarding political issues.⁹⁸ Domestic pushback and diplomatic incidents aside, the Olympic Games were in fact beneficial for Japan, as the nation met its sports diplomacy objective of demonstrating a strong spirit of overcoming the earthquake and the pandemic, adjusting the narrative in the process. Beijing became the first city to have hosted both the Summer and Winter Olympics, and the gold medals solidified the image of Chinese development and success.

Despite the criticism of mega sports events, the host can use the events to shape their own narratives and present a favourable self-image because of the high media interest the events generate. Both China and Russia had done just that by showing that both the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the Beijing 2022 Olympics were not isolated internationally, with world leaders still flocking to these games. If anything, the controversies around the games cast the organising nations in a protagonist role of overcoming adversity, demonstrating

their ability to hold the games in difficult circumstances.

In addition, the spectators, athletes, and officials attending the Games added to the aura of hospitality and positive atmosphere surrounding them. As China scholar Dr Susan Brownell explains on the Beijing Olympics:

*'You can't write stories about people who aren't in Beijing—that's the problem with the diplomatic boycott. There's no story once the Games start [...] I've predicted at the beginning that the political issues would fade into the background and the sports would take the headlines, and that would be the memory that would be left, at least for the general audience. I think that has largely happened.'*⁹⁹

The fact that, despite diplomatic boycotts, the countries still send their athletes, is also a victory for the organisers. This is because regardless of the boycott, countries will still present the achievements of their national athletes, the gold medals, and the triumphant moments in a positive light. The initial negative information surrounding the 2018 FIFA World Cup in the French information space was eclipsed by the triumph of the French national team. The excitement around Croatia succeeding at making it to the finals had an empowering effect on small nations and kept the World Cup interesting and dramatic, providing for good emotions and buy-in from spectators world-

wide. Same feel-good flavour applied to Norway and Germany during the Beijing Games, and can be extended to the excitement over breaking the world records by the Americans and Australians at the Tokyo Olympics. One event produces many victors, creating the power and accounting for the appeal of hosting mega sports events. On the flipside of hosting mega sports events are the boycotts of them. By boycotting, a nation is effectively conducting its own brand of sports diplomacy by using sport to emphasise a certain national point of view.

The positive aftereffect is due also in part to the 'neutral' perception of the nature of the mega sports events. Athletes become

ambassadors for their countries by participating and doing well in the Games. Feel-good stories of human connection, solidarity, last-minute luck, beating the odds, or even graceful failure continue to contribute to the reputation of international sporting events long after the Olympic Games or World Cups have concluded.

The longevity of the positive effects is open to debate, however. As the public opinion moves on to other events, and host countries continue to implement the policies that had been at the core of their image problems in the first place, such as human rights abuses, the feel-good effect might dwindle.



Endnotes

1. [About Strategic Communications](#). NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.
2. Michelsen, Nicholas and Woodier, Jonathan (2018). [STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AT THE PYEONGCHANG WINTER OLYMPICS: A GROUNDWORK STUDY](#). *Defence Strategic Communications*, Volume 5. NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.
3. McBride, James and Manno, Melissa (2021). [The Economics of Hosting the Olympic Games](#). *Council on Foreign Relations*.
4. Rofo, J. Simon (2018). Introduction: Establishing the field of play. In J. Simon Rofo (Ed.) *Sport and diplomacy: Games within games (Key Studies in Diplomacy)*. Manchester University Press.
5. Byers, Terri, Slack, Trevor, and Parent, Milena M. (2012). [Mega events](#). In *Key concepts in sport management* (pp. 103-106). SAGE Publications Ltd.
6. Brent Ritchie, J. R. (1984). [Assessing the Impact of Hallmark Events: Conceptual and Research Issues](#). *Journal of Travel Research*, 23(1), 2–11.
7. [SportsDiplomacy.org](#) official webpage.
8. Paumgarten, Nick (2022, February 10). [Mikaela Shiffrin's Stunning Slalom Collapse](#). *The New Yorker*.
9. Murray, Stuart (2017). [Sports Diplomacy in the Australian Context: Theory into Strategy](#). *Politics & Policy*, 45(5), 841–861.
10. Rofo, J. Simon (2018). Introduction: Establishing the field of play. In J. Simon Rofo (Ed.) *Sport and diplomacy: Games within games (Key Studies in Diplomacy)*. Manchester University Press.
11. Huijgh, Ellen (2016). [Public diplomacy](#). In C. Constantinou P. Kerr, & P. Sharp (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of diplomacy* (pp. 437-450). SAGE Publications Ltd.
12. Dubinsky, Yoav. [From soft power to sports diplomacy: a theoretical and conceptual discussion](#). *Place Brand Public Dipl* 15, 156–164 (2019).
13. Nye, Joseph S. Jr. (2005). *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics*, PublicAffairs Books.
14. Parrish, Richard et.al. (2021, December). [Promoting a Strategic Approach to EU Sport Diplomacy Final](#) Report, p.6.
15. Parrish, Richard (2022), [EU Sport Diplomacy: An Idea Whose Time Has Nearly Come](#). *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 60: 1511– 1528.
16. Parrish, Richard (2022), [EU Sport Diplomacy: An Idea Whose Time Has Nearly Come](#). *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 60: 1511– 1528.
17. Murray, Stuart and Pigman, Geoffrey Allen (2014). [Mapping the relationship between international sport and diplomacy](#). *Sport in Society*, 17:9, 1098-1118.
18. Nye, Joseph (2017). [Soft power: the origins and political progress of a concept](#). *Palgrave Commun* 3, 17008.
19. Sorkin, Andrew Ross and Kessler, Sarah (2021, July 24). [Hosting the Olympics is a Bad Deal](#). *The New York Times*.
20. Grix, Jonathan and Houlihan, Barry (2014), [Sports Mega-events](#). *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 16: 572-596.
21. Beacom, Aaron (2012). [International Diplomacy and the Olympic Movement, The New Mediators](#). Palgrave MacMillan.
22. Rofo, J. Simon (2018). Introduction: Establishing the field of play. In J. Simon Rofo (Ed.) *Sport and diplomacy: Games within games (Key Studies in Diplomacy)*. Manchester University Press.
23. Beacom, Aaron (2012). [International Diplomacy and the Olympic Movement, The New Mediators](#). Palgrave MacMillan.
24. International Olympic Committee. [Beyond the Games](#).
25. Chris Arning (2013). [Soft power, ideology and symbolic manipulation in Summer Olympic Games opening ceremonies: a semiotic analysis](#), *Social Semiotics*, 23:4, 523-544.
26. For an anthropological breakdown of the host-guest relationship, see Michel Agier (2018). *L'Étranger qui vient: Repenser l'hospitalité*, Le Seuil.
27. The 2020 volume "[Legacies and Mega Events: Fact or Fairy Tales?](#)" edited by Ian Brittain et.al., addresses, among other topics, the impacts on host nations.
28. Murray, Stuart (2018). *Sports Diplomacy: Origins, Theory and Practice*, Routledge.
29. Australian Government (2014). [Australian Sports Diplomacy Strategy 2015-18](#).
30. Australian Government (2019). [Sports Diplomacy](#).
31. Australian Government (2019). [Sports Diplomacy](#).
32. Australian Government (2019). [Sports Diplomacy](#), p.16.
33. Australian Government (2019). [Sports Diplomacy](#).
34. Australian Government (2019). [Sports Diplomacy](#), p.11.
35. Australian Government (2019). [Sports Diplomacy](#), p.6.
36. Australian Government (2019). [Sports Diplomacy](#), p.17.
37. Sakaue, Y., and Thompson, L. (2021). "The Rise of Modern Sport and the Olympic Movement in Japan. In *Handbook of Sport in Asia*, F. Hong and Z. Lu (Eds.) Abingdon: Routledge, 135–48., quoted in Rofo, J. S., & Postlethwaite, V. (2021). *Scholarship and Sports Diplomacy: the Cases of Japan and the United Kingdom*, *Diplomatica*, 3(2), 363-385.
38. Sport for Tomorrow. [What is SPORT FOR TOMORROW?](#)



39. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2022, April 12). [Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games](#).
40. The State Council of the People's Republic of China (2021, November). [中共中央关于党的百年奋斗重大成就和历史经验的决议 \(全文\)](#).
41. China's Diplomacy in the New Era (2022, January). [以体育外交 习近平的“体育外交”故事](#).
42. Sina (2019, August 31). [六张海报 看习近平如何开展“体育外交”](#).
43. General Administration of Sport of China (2019, February 28). [钟秉枢, 人类命运共同体引领下的中国体育外交战略构建](#).
44. 刘桂海 : [人类命运共同体视域下的中国体育外交战略](#).
45. 张建会(2022). [新发展阶段我国体育外交发展的战略思路与实现路径](#). Journal of Shanghai University of Sport. 2022, 46(1): 60-71.
46. President of Russia. [КОНЦЕПЦИЯ внешней политики Российской Федерации](#).
47. Government of the Russian Federation. (2020). [Development of Physical Culture and Sports in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030](#) (Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 3081-p) (translated). Government of the Russian Federation.
48. Government of the Russian Federation. (2020). [Development of Physical Culture and Sports in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030](#) (Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 3081-p) (translated). Government of the Russian Federation, p.32.
49. TASS. (2018a, December 20). [Russia's anti-doping work enormous, but problem not solved yet, Putin says](#). TASS – Russia News Agency.
50. [E.g. see here: Russia's Achievements](#) (translated). (2022, February 16). In Ruxpert.
51. Груздева, П.О. (2017). «Международная спортивная деятельность как показатель состоятельности и имиджа современных государств на примере России», состоятельность государства и национальные интересы России в глобальном мире: материалы круглого стола, *вестн. Моск. ун-та. Сер. 12. Политические науки*. № 3, p. 114
52. Government of the Russian Federation. (2020). [Development of Physical Culture and Sports in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030](#) (Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 3081-p) (translated). Government of the Russian Federation, p.32.
53. Rofo, J. S., and Postlethwaite, V. (2021). Scholarship and Sports Diplomacy: the Cases of Japan and the United Kingdom, *Diplomatica*, 3(2), 363-385.
54. TASS. (2017, October 3). [Putin: Russia will provide preparations for the 2018 World Cup](#). TASS – Russia News Agency.
55. Hills, David (2010, October 30). [Russia's 2018 World Cup bid attacks new 'bribery' allegations](#). *The Guardian*.
56. Kelner, Martha (2018, May 30). [Russia sees spike in racist and homophobic chants before World Cup](#). *The Guardian*.
57. *ibid*.
58. Pitt-Brooke, Jack (2018, July 1). [World Cup 2018: Russia left with serious questions to answer as state-sponsored doping scandal widens](#). *Independent*.
59. FIFA (2016, October 21). [Wolf chosen as 2018 FIFA World Cup Official Mascot and named Zabivaka](#).
60. FIFA (2016, October 21). [Wolf chosen as 2018 FIFA World Cup Official Mascot and named Zabivaka](#).
61. FIFA (2018, June 8). [Welcome Address by Vladimir Putin](#).
62. Независимое Информационное Агентство Самара (2018, June 26). [Министр спорта РФ: с точки зрения организации ЧМ-2018 проходит хорошо](#).
63. President of Russia (2018, June 14). [President Putin's speech at the 2018 FIFA World Cup opening ceremony at Luzhniki Stadium](#), accessed.
64. Igel, Lee (2018, March 15). [2018 World Cup Teams Could Boycott Russia Or Go Under Protest](#). *Forbes*.
65. Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2018, June 15). [The World Cup 'does not belong to Vladimir Putin' and an England boycott would only cheat fans: article by Boris Johnson](#).
66. Meier, Henk Erik, Mutz, Michael, et.al. (2021). [Politicization of a Contested Mega Event: The 2018 FIFA World Cup on Twitter](#). *Communication & Sport*, 9(5), 785–810.
67. Hodge, Nathan (2018, June 20). [Amid the World Cup, Vladimir Putin scores some diplomatic goals](#). *CNN*.
68. TASS. (2018b, July 11). [Dvorkovich: The World Cup 2018 has changed Russia's image for the better, bringing it closer to reality](#) (translated). TASS – Russia News Agency.
69. Burdeau, Cain (2022, August 13). [Russia expert: West needs to self-reflect on its own responsibility in Ukraine war](#). Courthouse News.
70. Olympics official webpage. [Japan PM Abe Shinzo steals the show in Rio](#).
71. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2022, April 12). [Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games](#).
72. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2022, April 12). [Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games](#).
73. Dubinsky, Yoav (2021, August 3). [Live From The Games: Country Image And The Changing Narratives Of Tokyo 2020](#). USC Center on Public Diplomacy.
74. International Olympic Committee. [TOKYO 2020 THE MASCOT](#).
75. International Olympic Committee. [TOKYO 2020 THE MASCOT](#).
76. Kennedy, Merrit (2021, July 23). [Olympic Opening Ceremony Is A Delicate Mix Of Celebration and Solemnity](#). *NPR*.
77. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2021, September



- 24). Address by Prime Minister Suga at the Seventy-Sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly.
78. International Olympic Committee. Karate.
79. WKF (2020, November 18). Japan Prime Minister, IOC President, Tokyo 2020 President among personalities congratulating WKF on 50th anniversary.
80. WKF (2019, February 23). WKF "saddened" by Paris 2024 exclusion.
81. WHO (2021, July 21). WHO Director-General's keynote speech at the 138th International Olympic Committee Session.
82. Shin, Hyonhee and Kim, Chang-Ran (2021, July 19). S.Korea's Moon scraps Tokyo trip over 'unacceptable' diplomat remarks. *Reuters*.
83. International Olympic Committee. Tokyo 2020 reflects on global success, with Games legacy already inspiring future generations.
84. Takeo, Yuko, Du, Lisa, and Huang, Grace (2021, July 30). Olympics Bubble Holds Up Even as Tokyo Covid Cases Hit Record. *Bloomberg*.
85. Paul Chelimo Twitter account (@Paulchelimo)
86. People.cn (2022, February 17). 习近平谈构建人类命运共同体. (Source: 党建网微平台)
87. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2022, February 19). Rising to Challenges Together for a Shared Future-Virtual Address by State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the 58th Munich Security Conference.
88. International Olympic Committee. BEIJING 2022 THE MASCOT.
89. China Daily (2022, February 5). Full Text: Toast by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the welcoming banquet of the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022. (Source: Xinhua)
90. News.cn (2022, April 9). Full text of Xi Jinping's speech at Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics review and awards ceremony. (Source: Xinhua)
91. Kuo, Mercy A (2022, April 18). Assessing the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics: Soft Power, Politics, and the Future of the Games. Insights from Susan Brownell. *The Diplomat*.
92. United Nations (2022, 9 February). Activities of Secretary-General in China, 3–6 February.
93. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2022, February 2). Xi Jinping Meets with Argentine President Alberto Fernández.
94. Kelly, David (2018, February). Seven Chinas: A Policy Framework. Center for Strategic and International Studies.
95. The New York Times (2022, February 20). With Olympics Closing Ceremony, China Celebrates a Joyless Triumph.
96. Ip, Cyril and Lau, Jack (2022, February 25). Winter Olympics: has China's Games success raised its global standing, allowing it to win friends and influence people? *South China Morning Post*.
97. People.cn (2022, February 9). "习近平的 "冬奥时间". (Source: CCTV)
98. Meier, Henk Erik, Mutz, Michael, et.al. (2021). Politicization of a Contested Mega Event: The 2018 FIFA World Cup on Twitter. *Communication & Sport*, 9(5), 785–810.
99. CNN (2022, February 21). The Olympics was a success inside China. And that's the audience Beijing cares about





Operating since 2014, we have carried out significant research enhancing NATO nations' situational awareness of the information environment and have contributed to exercises and trainings with subject matter expertise.

www.stratcomcoe.org | [@stratcomcoe](https://twitter.com/stratcomcoe) | info@stratcomcoe.org