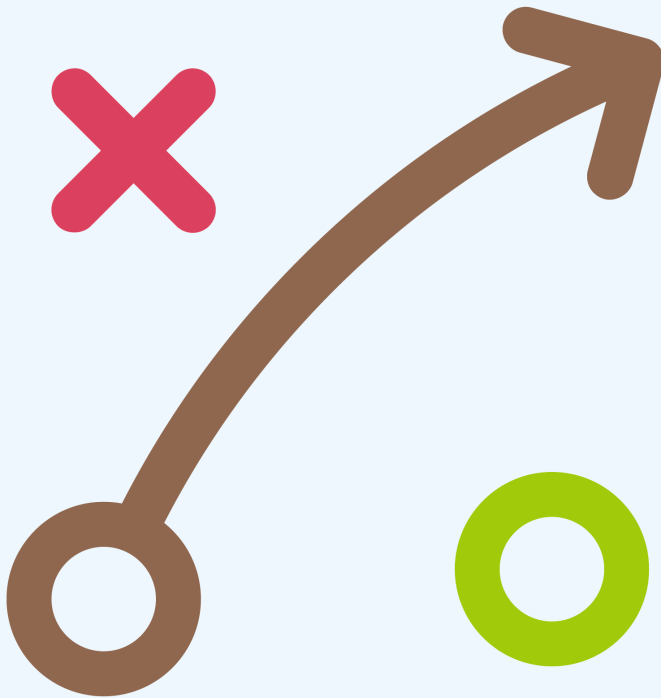


Armstrong | Rosbrook-Thompson | Lindsay

Power Plays

The Projection of Hard and Soft Power in Sport



ACADEMIA

Gary Armstrong | James Rosbrook-Thompson | Iain Lindsay

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*GA: To Hani Darlington whose soft and hard diplomatic skills
have produced 25 years of marriage.*

*JRT: To Caesara and Aden. As always, thanks for tolerating the
uneven hours (and moods!) – but in particularly trying circum-
stances this year.*

*IL: For Michelle, Matt and Lucy. Thank you for allowing me the
time to get back to writing. Not sure how many others will thank
you however!*

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Chapter One: Setting the Scene

The distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power was drawn in the 1990s by Joseph Nye of Harvard University (Nye 1990). “Broadly speaking,” Nye (2006: 2) has argued, “power is the ability to affect the behaviour of others to get the outcomes you want, and there are three basic ways to do that: You can coerce them with threats; you can induce them with payments; or you can attract and co-opt them”. An exponent of ‘hard’ power would pursue his or her desired outcome using threats and coercion. As Nye (2003) has put it, the term refers to ‘the use of the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will’. Inducements may include favourable trading arrangements, the diminishing of trade barriers, or the guarantee of military support or protection. Threats may include economic sanctions or the prospect of military intervention and occupation. As the name implies, ‘soft’ power must be administered more artfully – it rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others rather than underlining the consequences should an opposite number make the ‘wrong’ decision. Whereas hard power is most effectively expressed or projected by a political entity possessing greater economic or military heft than its interlocutor, the pursuit of political ends via ‘softer’ means isn’t as contingent on the strength of armies and national economies. In explaining the role of soft power, Nye (2006: 2–3) draws an analogy with the role of seduction and attraction in romantic relationships: “At the personal level, we all know the power of attraction and seduction. In a relationship or a marriage, for example, power does not necessarily reside with the larger or richer partner, but in the poorly understood chemistry of attraction.” So, whereas hard power might involve the use of coercion and payment in seeking to bring about a particular outcome, soft power might entail the pursuit of this outcome through the arts, culture or charitable acts, such as a nation sending relief aid to another during times of crisis.

In terms of measuring the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power potentialities of nations and other political bodies, different indices have been employed. The reckoning of hard power tends to centre on absolute measures of a nation’s strength such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and military spending. However, as Nye’s emphasis on attraction and seduction implies, soft power is much more difficult to quantify. The first attempt at measuring the soft power capabilities of nations was conducted in 2010 by the Insti-

tute for Government together with public affairs magazine, *Monocle*. *Monocle*'s latest Soft Power Survey (published in 2019) ranked nations according to the quality of their governmental and educational institutions, diplomatic infrastructure, cultural exports, and business climate. France came out on top, being trailed by Germany, then Japan, Canada and Switzerland. Interestingly, the survey includes sport as a cultural sub-index, with France being crowned world champions at the 2018 World Cup a significant factor in the nation's soft power supremacy.

The chapters contained in this book certainly underline the ways in which sport can be used as a means to project 'soft' power across the globe. However, at times it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between expressions of soft and hard power, with different forms of power foreshadowing and implying one another. The chapters also demonstrate that it isn't always nation-states who seek to use sport as a means to further their political ends. In some cases it is organisations that actively oppose forms of national government who wield hard and soft power. In other instances it is individual sportspeople who turn diplomat, sometimes operating under the banner of nationhood, sometimes not.

Chapter Two examines the history of soft and hard power projection in the Olympic Games from the Ancient Games, to the Nazi Olympics of 1936, to the Munich disaster of 1972 in which 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team lost their lives. Chapter Three tells the story of a group who actively opposed the forces of sporting nationalism, the Workers' Sport Movement. More specifically, here we illustrate how sport featured in attempts to animate leftist political values, such as the Workers Olympics and the sporting policies of Marxist-Leninist leaders such as Fidel Castro. In Chapter Four we consider how, within sport, gender and sexuality have been subject to expressions of hard and soft power, from the controversial opinions of the founder of the Modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, to the Gay Games. Chapter Five details the role of sport in Cold War diplomacy. More specifically, it documents the exchange of table-tennis players between China and the USA in the early 1970s, and the tit-for-tat Olympic boycotts which saw the USA and a number of its allies refuse to enter the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games, with the USSR and its own coterie of ideologically-aligned nations returning the gesture at the 1984 Games in Los Angeles. In Chapter Six we describe how those opposed to the Apartheid regime in South Africa harnessed the soft power bound up with organised sport to marginalise South Africa within the international sporting community and, more specifically, the forums provided by football's governing body, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA),

and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Having considered the role of sport in the Cold War, Chapter Seven examines sport's function within Cuba. As well as being used as a means to strengthen ties with fellow socialist allies, Cuban sport has proved an indirect but effective way to communicate often hostile government policy, especially toward the United States. Chapter Eight tackles the complex and fraught issue of sport in Northern Ireland; from the overt use of sporting associations as vehicles for sectarian sentiment, to the hope invested in Belfast Giants, a concerted-ly apolitical, non-sectarian ice hockey club. Chapter Nine concerns the use of sport by the United Nations (and various UN agencies) in the pursuit of 'development and peace'. The chapter considers the success (or otherwise) of various UN-related schemes as well as the ability of sporting practices to realise the outcomes promoted by such schemes. Chapter Ten examines the role of sportspeople as diplomats, while in Chapter Eleven analysis turns to the role of soft and hard power in Bosnian football. The book's penultimate substantive chapter considers the soft power potentialities inherent in hosting a sporting mega event, using the 2014 World Cup Finals (in Brazil) and the 2014 Winter Olympic (in Sochi, Russia) as case studies. Chapter Thirteen discusses instances of 'sportswashing', where nations and other entities seek to launder reputations through sporting means. The book closes with a short chapter in which key themes are underlined and the future of the relationship between power and sport considered.

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Chapter Two: Hard & Soft Power in the Olympic Games

‘Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.’ In some ways the iconic opening line from Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* sums up the concept of the “Olympic family”; the potentialities of soft power are strained in attempts to keep the peace, but one of any number of factors can lead to full-blown fall-outs encompassing economic sanctions and the use of military force. In this chapter we examine the play between soft and hard power in the history of the Olympic Games, from mythological origins to Cold War geopolitical schisms. This history tells us that sport and international politics have always been, and will continue to be, inextricably entangled.

If Greek mythology is to be believed, the Ancient Olympics came about as the result of a family feud. The story has it that Pelops, a prince from Lydia in Asia Minor (after whom the Peloponnese is named), sought to marry Hippodamia, whose father was King Oinomaos of Pisa. However, Pelops wasn’t the only young man seeking Hippodamia’s hand in marriage. With a number of suitors making their intentions known, Oinomaos proposed a chariot race in which the losers would be beheaded – their severed heads being used to adorn the King’s palace – and the winner would be permitted to marry his daughter. Desperate for victory, Pelops colluded with his charioteer, Myrtilos, in tampering with the King’s chariot. Its bronze linchpins were replaced with linchpins made of wax, meaning that after the race had begun and Oinomaos was about to pass Pelops’ chariot, the linchpins on the King’s vehicle melted and he suffered a fatal fall. Pelops went on to claim victory and marry Hippodamia. The story goes that he celebrated by instituting the Olympic Games. Other versions of this myth portray the Ancient Olympics as a funeral games established to honour the memory of King Oinomaos (Spivey 2005).

From the start, the notion of *agon* (or “contest”) informed the tenor of the Ancient Olympics. The ultimate objective of being the best, in sport as in all other elements of life, was all-important. The honour of winning at Olympia encapsulated this notion, with the olive wreaths presented to the victors, while not of any material worth, being loaded with symbolic value. The Games also strengthened the bond between those Greeks who settled away from the cultural epicentres of their homeland – in places such as modern-day Syria and Egypt – and those who had stayed behind. One