

Theorizing the Role of Sport in State-Politics

Chien-Yu Lin^{1,*}, Ping-Chao Lee² & Hui-Fang Nai³

¹ Graduate Institute of Sports & Health Management, National Chung Hsing University, Taichung, Taiwan, 402, ROC

² Department of Physical Education, National Tai-Chung University, Taichung, Taiwan, 403, ROC

³ Athletics Department & Graduate School, National Taiwan Sport University, Taichung, Taiwan, 404, ROC

Received 23 Oct 2008; Accepted 28 Dec 2008

Abstract

If ever there was a perfect marriage, one would be hard pressed to find a more compatible couple than sport and politics. State intervention in sport has been evidenced in many countries throughout history. Today, sport and politics are still inextricably intertwined and often work to demonstrate social, economic, or political supremacy over another nation. The aim of this paper is therefore to articulate rationales for state intervention in sport as a way of providing a background for analyzing the relationship between sport and state-politics. The last section of this paper identifies a more sophisticated body of theoretical concepts including hegemony theory, which gives substantial weight to cultural practices in analyzing political-economic and non-economic activities such as sport which play a vital role in the articulation and consolidation of power relations.

Keywords: Sport, Politics, Hegemony theory, State intervention

Introduction

The relationship between sport and politics is one of the most enduring and pervasive examples of society's impact/influence on sport. Whilst there may still be some people who consider sport and politics to be completely separate entities, evidence suggests that it is no longer possible for any serious social commentator to posit a separation between the worlds of sport and politics. As Horne et al. [1] state, 'sport (and play) involves rules and regulations which are derived in some way from the 'real world'; sport provides politically usable resources; sport can promote nation-building and international image-making. In fact, modern sport has seldom been free of politics'. In other words, there is very little current evidence to support the view that sport and politics exist separately; Allison [2] posits the view that the idea of sport existing either 'below or above politics' is no longer sustainable.

State intervention in sport has been evidenced in many countries throughout history, such as the government of the city-states in ancient Greece used sport to enhance the fitness of their citizens for war and to demonstrate their superiority over other city-states and the early part of the Roman era, sport was used for military fitness; in the later years the ruling elites produced sport-like events to entertain and thereby control the masses [3]. Although the importance of sport has varied over time, the growth of nationalism in the late 18th and early 19th

centuries revived the idea of using sport and games for promoting fitness and national integration (i.e., patriotism). Ostensibly, as McPherson et al. [3] point out, 'a main reason for reviving the Olympic Games in 1896 was to stimulate improved physical fitness among children' [3]. The Games and other international sport events soon became mechanisms for propaganda and vicarious war [A term used by George Orwell meaning 'a war minus the shooting']; today, sport and politics are inextricably intertwined and often work to demonstrate social, economic, or political supremacy over another nation.

It is the elusive yet frequently influential role of sport in national, international, and transnational politics, especially why and how states manipulate sport to achieve their political intentions and to maintain their political power, that initially attracted the researcher's attention to this subject. In order to explore the issues and questions that arise from any examination of the relationship between sport and politics it is necessary to find an effective way of organizing the discussion.

The aim of this paper is, therefore, to articulate rationales for state intervention in sport as a way of providing a background for analyzing the relationship between sport and state-politics. The last section of this paper identifies a more sophisticated body of theoretical concepts including hegemony theory, which gives substantial weight to cultural practices in 'analyzing political-economic and non-economic activities such as sport which play a vital role in the articulation and consolidation of power relations' [4].

*Corresponding author: Chien-Yu Lin

Tel: +886-4-22840230 Ext.229

Fax: +886-4-22862237

E-mail: cylin1349@nchu.edu.tw

The Rationale for Government Intervention in Sport

The contention that sport as a cultural form possesses a degree of autonomy suggests that sport and sporting events may, and frequently do, prove to be less amenable to ideological manipulation than governments would wish. Thoroughly belying the myth of autonomy is the direct, self-conscious and instrumental use of sport by numbers of governments of various ideological persuasions in the post-World War Two era and earlier [2].

Riordan stresses, 'it is overt that sport in many societies is a serious business with serious functions to perform. It is accordingly state controlled, encouraged, and shaped by specific utilitarian and ideological designs (it is by no means a matter of fun and games)' [5]. Riordan further points out that in Africa, Asia and Latin America, sports development is closely associated with hygiene, health, defence, patriotism, integration, productivity, international recognition, even cultural identity and nation-building. Sport, therefore, often has the 'quite revolutionary role of being an agent of social change, with the state as pilot.

There are, indeed, many different reasons why governments intervene in or promote sport and physical education for their people. The reasons may vary in different time periods and in different countries and will have been affected by political, economic, cultural and social changes [6]. For instance, Houlihan points out that from the 1970s sport became regarded as an element of the social services by the British government [7].

The political perception of sport as an element in the fabric of the welfare state was confirmed in the 1975 White Paper, Sport and Recreation, which is one of the few attempts by government to provide a comprehensive philosophy of sport and recreation. It refers to the role of sport and recreation in contributing to the 'physical and mental well-being' of population.

There is no doubt that governments throughout the world intervene in sports affairs to assist their own political intentions. Literature shows that states intervene in sport as they attempt to develop the physical fitness and health of the citizen for national defence; to maintain public order; to promote national prestige; to promote social solidarity; to promote political ideology; to increase and maintain the legitimacy of the government and to promote public moral status as a part of welfare provision or to achieve its foreign policy objectives [6-12]. These intentions may derive from domestic or international perspectives. However, it should be noted that the distinctions between domestic and international functions of sport as mentioned above are by no means tightly bounded.

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Sport and National Defence

Governments have long supported physical education and sport as a means of fostering a militarily effective populace in times of war. Riordan [13] points out that the link between sport and military combat was particularly evident during the period of rising nationalism and imperialism in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Gymnastics were introduced as the core of school physical education in many Western countries, such as Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Russia and England during this period. For instance, in England, the purpose of the introduction of gymnastics into elementary schools by the 1870 Education Bill was to increase work output, increase military power and to save money by the diminution of the Poor Rates, the Police Rates and the expenses of criminal machinery [13]. Riordan further points out that in the early twentieth century, most Western states gave encouragement to the formation of units of Boy Scouts as the paramilitary vehicle with a distinctly military-religious-patriotic stamp.

As Houlihan [11] indicates, 'Sport is a mirror of society and consequently it is a reasonably accurate reflection of the prevailing ideology found within a particular state at a particular time'. Together with modernization and the rapid development of 'high-tech' in many nation-states, the purposes of sport may have moved on and become attached to different political intentions from this national defence purpose.

Sport and Social Control

Eitzen [14] states that the mechanisms of social control can be divided into two broad types by the means to achieve it, ideological control and direct intervention. Ideological social control is by manipulating the consciousness of individuals so that they accept the ruling ideology and refuse to be moved by competing ideologies, but also by persuading the members to follow the rules and to accept without question the existing distribution of power and rewards. Direct social control refers to attempts to reward those who conform and to punish or neutralize (render powerless) individuals who deviate from the norms of the social organization [14].

Social integration is one of the important aspects of social control. Houlihan [12] points out that social integration is a loose term which can cover a diverse range of policy objectives including combating juvenile delinquency, establishing a sense of community during periods of rapid urbanization and the integration of diverse ethnic groups. The motive for state involvement in sport (and one of the most common) is the belief that sport imbues the populace with the right type of values and norms – of obedience, self-discipline, team-work [13] – and therefore, participation in sport will

facilitate social integration and thus further achieve social control. The study of Sugden and Bairner [4] shows that in Northern Ireland there was an extensive program of investment in public sport and recreational facilities aimed at bridging the gap between the Catholic/Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist communities. In a similar fashion, in Great Britain during the 1970s, the role of sport in preventing youth delinquency and vandalism was clearly expressed in White Papers. The UK Government publication, 'Sport and Recreation', which was published by the Department of the Environment in 1975 (Cmd 6200), emphasized the importance of the role of sport and physical recreation as follows:

For many people physical activity makes an important contribution to physical and mental well-being By reducing boredom and urban frustration, participation in active recreation contributes to the reduction of hooliganism and delinquency among young people [7].

Hargreaves [8] further extends the social integration thesis into the work routines of a capitalist/industrial economy through an acceptance of the codification, rationalization and authority structures (governing bodies) of modern sport. In addition, sport is also used as a means to promote traditional values and societal arrangements such as gender roles and sexuality in society [14]. For instance, in the US, sport is used to transmit the values of success in competition, hard work, perseverance, discipline, teamwork and obedience to authority, to participants and observers. This is the explicit reason given for the existence of children's sports programs such as Little League baseball and the tremendous emphasis on sports in US schools [14].

However, while there is much evidence, as mentioned above, which argues strongly for the integrative effect of sport, it must be acknowledged that sport has also provided an opportunity for political opposition, especially in repressive regimes. For example, in Korea, during the Japanese colonial period, (1910 – 1945), the formation of sport's groups was among the ways in which Koreans could organize against Japanese cultural and political hegemony and encourage independence from the Japanese [15]. In South Africa, during the apartheid period, visits by foreign teams provided black South Africans with the opportunity to voice their support for the visitors, whoever they happened to be [12].

To summarize, sport has been seen as a positive means of social control (maintaining social order, promoting social integration, or transmitting traditional social values) among other social purposes, but it cannot be ignored that sport can also be used for the purposes of expressing a counter-force by subordinate groups against the dominant group and its political ideology and hegemony.

Sport and Foreign Policy

In an even more direct and overt fashion, in many countries sport is also used as a form of political propaganda to gain prestige and support for the regime in power and its particular social system. In other words, sport is often used to gain specific political advantages which are often associated

with foreign policy, both internationally and domestically. Taylor [16] emphasizes three broad ways in which states have attempted to do this in the international sphere. First, a few states have given sport a central role in their foreign policies, 'presumably because they perceive the correct and successful practice of international sport will support their interests'. Particularly noteworthy in this regard were several of the former Eastern Bloc countries, such as East Germany and Cuba. For example, many Cuban sports which [they] identified were bound up with both domestic and foreign policy issues:

- I. Sport is used as an ideological support to the Cuban version of socialism.*
- II. Sport has been used in Cuba to contribute to the generation of a post-revolutionary spirit of national identity and collective solidarity.*
- III. Through sport, in dramatically contrasting ways, Cuba has been able to define and develop her relationship with the two super powers. [4]*

Sugden et al. [4] point out that in Cuba, since 1959, sport has been deliberately and unashamedly manipulated as a vehicle for the inculcation of the ideals of the revolution and the development of socialist and communist values. After the revolution, many people fled to the United States and sport was used in the service of nationalism, for uniting the population and establishing a shared national identity by Castro's fledgling regime. In much the same way as the West Indies once celebrated world superiority in cricket as a symbolic victory over their former colonial oppressor, England, so too do Cubans see their prowess at certain sports as a means of equalizing their relationship with the United States, particularly if they can do well in American sports and / or beat the US in world competitions.

Secondly, all states have periodically found it useful to use sporting contacts to send both positive and negative diplomatic signals. Houlihan [12] indicates that the rapid internationalization of sports competition and the advances in media technology have combined to make sport an increasingly attractive diplomatic resource. For many governments the development of international sporting contact has provided them with a 'low-cost', but 'high-profile' resource for publicizing their policy on international issues or towards specific states. However, while some argue that sport provides a versatile and effective resource [11], others would agree with Kanin [17] that sport is peripheral to international relations and provides, at best, weak symbolism. Nevertheless, Houlihan [12] stresses,

Sports diplomacy retains its attraction to governments, partly because international sport adds to the pursuit of foreign policy goals but also because of the subtlety and malleability of sports diplomacy.

One of the most well-known examples of the political use of sport is that in the early 1970s when attempts were being made to improve relations between the US and the PRC (People's Republic of China). Following an invitation from the Chinese in 1971, the United States sent a table tennis team to

the PRC, followed, a year later, by a basketball team. The sports were carefully chosen for their diplomatic value; it was expected that the Chinese would win at table tennis and the Americans at basketball with no loss of face on either side [18]. Moreover, sport was used in a similar fashion during a period of great tension between the United States and the former Soviet Union. In the late 1950s, US troops were in the Lebanon and British forces were in Jordan ostensibly to forestall Soviet expansion, and Khrushchev talked of the world being on the brink of catastrophe. At the same time the US and the former USSR initiated an annual track and field competition which, while at times reflecting the tensions of the Cold War, generally provided opportunities for diplomatic bridge-building [19].

Apart from building closer relationships between enemies, sport is more commonly used as a means of maintaining good relations with allies or neighbors. Riordan [9] points out that sport was strategically used as a diplomatic and propagandist medium by the former Soviet Union to promote relations with geographically close states and with newly-independent or dependent nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. For instance, in 1986 the first bilateral sports exchange agreement between China and the former USSR was signed in Beijing between the respective sports committee chairmen; 'it provided for the exchange of 40 sports groups, involving 550 athletes and coaches over three years'. This led to a new 'co-operation' protocol that was signed in Moscow in 1987, 'providing for joint competitions and training sessions in twelve sports'. In a similar fashion, the United States also pursued sporting links with Japan. US President Harding hoped that continued sporting contact through baseball between Japan and the US would help to improve relations [20]. Unfortunately, the outcome was not what Harding had hoped for.

Thirdly, states have occasionally judged that in unusual circumstances private sporting contact might subvert its overall foreign policy and have therefore acted to forestall it. Several Olympic boycotts, including both the African boycott of the 1976 Olympics in protest over New Zealand's continuing rugby links with South Africa, and the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, have been based on this calculation [21].

Within these general parameters, a number of more specific international political roles may be identified, perhaps none more important than the pursuit of international prestige. Humphrey [22] noted that when Brazil in 1970 won the Football World Cup, there was a strong feeling within the country that their way of life was equal to or even better than the first world countries and they felt that their country had become recognized in international society. International prestige is so valued that the former Soviet Union, France, and South Korean governments offered their elite athletes financial rewards for winning medals in international mega-sports events such as the Olympic Games [23]; and some countries, such as Britain, give a very high profile through the media to their athletes when they win medals in the Olympic Games or other international mega-sports events as well as giving them

honors (e.g. awards of minor titles conferred by the Queen).

A different motive for the utilization of sport in foreign policy is for the promotion of individual state interests. As mentioned above, sport provides a number of opportunities for the pursuit of a range of foreign policy objectives. Some states, such as Cuba [4], have used sport to assert the superiority of their ideology, while others, who have more limited diplomatic resources and more limited diplomatic aspirations, will use sport as a cheap and easily deployed resource. Very often the objective of sports diplomacy is simply to seek acknowledgement of their existence within the international system, which could be evidenced in the examples of the 'Two Chinas', the 'Two Koreas', and the 'Two Germanys' [18].

Sport, Nation-building and National Identity

During the twentieth century nearly sixty new states have been established; many as a result of the process of de-colonialization or of the redrawing of the world map in the wake of two world wars. Houlihan [11] points out that many of these new states were faced with the acute problem of establishing a sense of national identity. For former colonies the unity of the immediate pre-independence period was built around a common colonial enemy. When that enemy withdrew or was expelled, previously subsumed divisions of race, tribe or wealth commonly surfaced. These divisions had either to be allowed an expression that did not challenge the state's fragile stability or subsumed under a stronger loyalty to the new state. Sport was seen as a potential contributor to both strategies. As Maguire [24] argues, sport could form one of the most significant arenas by which nations become more 'real'. Particular sports come to symbolize the nation. The close bind of sport with national identification has made it an important conduit for a sense of collective resentment and popular consciousness.

The relationship between sport and national identity has been increasingly well documented. The most widely discussed and pervasive political role of sport is in the forging and reinforcing of community/national identities. Hoberman [25] has termed this near-universal characteristic 'sportive nationalism', and points out that it appears to have easily outlived the most extreme manifestations of political manipulation of sport under Eastern Bloc regimes. For instance, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the former Soviet Union used sport to develop a form of socialist nationalism. For the GDR, as Vinokur [10] points out, the objectives attached to sport were not only to foster a sense of national identity distinct from West Germany, but also to develop socialist personality. Clearly, the politicization of sport in this respect is a much more widespread and deeply rooted phenomenon. Sport's potential value for identity-building is something of which many political and social leaders have been keenly aware, and which they have attempted to manipulate for their own purposes [11,18].

With regard to the use of sport for nation-building, Houlihan [12] points out that modern states want not only national unity and distinctiveness, but also an international stage on which to project that identity utilizing an increasingly

common array of cultural symbols (national anthems, flags and colors, stamps, armed forces, and Olympic sports) to demonstrate their individuality. Success in sports events, and particularly the hosting of sports events, provides ‘a benign and uncritical backdrop for the parade of national achievement’ [12]. Dauncey and Hare [26] point out that the victory of France in the 1998 Football World Cup gave a great opportunity to demonstrate public service values, successful French integration, and traditional French values in the international arena.

However, as Hargreaves [27] points out, to reduce sport to a tool of political-economic elites – a super-structural ‘opiate’ effectively fostering false consciousness – as some neo-Marxist analysts were tempted to do in the 1970s and early 1980s, is both too crude and often inaccurate. It undervalues the extent to which shared experiences and identities are fostered around sport quite independently of over-political manipulation. It also ignores the potentially progressive and oppositional activities that can be organized around sport, limited though they may be in the longer term. In Korea, during the Japanese colonial time, sports groups were among the ways in which Koreans could organize against Japanese cultural and political hegemony and encourage independence from the Japanese. Thus, sport, in the Korean case, was not only used to promote national development and Korean culture and nationalism, but was also used to maintain its own national identity (Mulling, 1989: 83-90). Hargreaves’s study on the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games [28] concluded that the concessions won by Catalonia in the campaign to ‘Catalanise’ the Games represent a significant step in the delicate process of negotiating a greater degree of autonomy for Catalonia within the existing democratic constitution. It is evident the nationalists seek varying degrees of autonomy from an existing nation state and sport has become one of the main vehicles through which a sense of national identity has been maintained despite centralizing political tendencies.

Black and Nauright [21] stress, ‘a more subtle understanding of sport’s role in identity-building conceives of it as a central aspect of popular culture, which is in turn part of a broader, interdependent relationship with the spheres of politics and production in any given society – an approach strongly influenced by Gramscian analysis’. Sport is an important locus of socialization, political and otherwise, which can be deliberately fostered and manipulated, but which also has a dynamic and a life of its own. As Hoberman [25] notes in defining sportive nationalism, it is the ‘ambition to see a nation’s athletes excel in the international arena, (which can be) promoted by a political elite or felt by many citizens without the promptings of national leaders’.

Do these sport-linked identities matter in any substantial socio-political sense? Are they more than a source of recreation and escapism? Jarvie [29] rightly notes that ‘there is a great danger in overemphasizing the role of sport in the making of nations’. Certainly, one must guard against reading too much into the heated talk of sports fans. Nevertheless, as Black and Nauright [21] note, a more searching and critical investigation of the particular meanings of various sport-based

identities suggests that they play a multi-faceted and diffuse role in cultural development and socialization, with significant political consequences. For example, Kidd [30] observes about Canada, ‘the Canadian unity celebrated by the triumph of Team Canada in international ice hockey helps reinforce the hegemony of English-speaking, central Canadian patriarchy, and the legitimacy of high performance as the ultimate measure of cultural validity in sport’. On other occasions, however, ‘the ideology of dominant meanings is contested as such’ and ‘while cultural struggle has occurred at every Olympic Games, it was particularly acute at the time of the 1976 Montreal Games, when the very definition of the host nation and the purpose of sports – both of which frame the staging and interpretation of an Olympics – were openly and fiercely debated’ [30].

However, Hargreaves’ study [31] of the Barcelona Olympic Games concludes that the outcome to the conflict surrounding the Games represented, not a reinforcement of Spanish hegemony, but a significant step in the delicate process of negotiating a greater degree of autonomy for Catalonia within the existing democratic constitution. Spanish prestige and Spanish identity were enhanced simultaneously, so there was no fundamental challenge to the integrity of the Spanish state. Here the predominance of dual rather than polarized national identities, and inclusive rather than exclusive nationalism, proved to be stabilizing factors contributing to national integration. This is, perhaps, a timely reminder that unitary, one-dimensional national identity is not a prerequisite for a viable state.

While it is wise to reiterate a note of caution about reading too much into the role of sport in constructing identities and socializing groups and individuals, that it plays some role in this regard cannot be denied. Indeed, that it can play a prominent and important role, with significant political consequences, is a proposition which bears serious investigation.

Sport and Economics

A more recent motive for government involvement in sport is to support economic development. The relationship between sport and the economy can be discussed in two ways. Firstly, the relationship between elite sport and economics and secondly, mass sports. During the 1980s and 1990s, elite sport, such as professional leagues of baseball, basketball and American football in the US; cricket, football and rugby leagues in the UK, have become more and more heavily promoted as a commercial product. Moreover, hosting of mega-sports events in many countries has also become a desire, although the economics of such events are now being questioned (see next section). For instance, the summer and winter Olympic Games or the Football World Cup are perceived as generating financial gains to the host country or city along with heightening of its national image, prestige, legitimacy of the government or as an international tourist destination. For example, Gratton [6] points out that the economic impact of Euro’ 96 in Sheffield was to generate £5.83 million additional visitor expenditure in Sheffield and

the creation of 154 extra full time equivalent (FTE) jobs. There were £3.59 million additional visitor expenditure and 99 FTE jobs created in the 1996 4th FINA World Masters Swimming Championship, also in Sheffield. Total economic impact of both events was: 67,000 visiting spectators, average stay for all visitors 3 nights, 70,842 commercial bed-nights generated, and £9.42 million additional visitor expenditure. Houlihan [12] also points out, 'at a national strategic level Mexico, Japan and South Korea used the hosting of the Olympic Games as opportunities to project images of modern technological and organizationally sophisticated societies and economies'. Some doubt has recently been cast on the validity of figures produced for such mega events (Roche, 2000) and the whole issue of the validity of Economic Impact Studies (EIS) is currently being debated [32].

With regard to the second issue, mass sport and leisure activities play a vital role in contributing to the economy in many countries. For example, in the UK the Sports Council (England), (in 1997 it changed the name to Sport England), pointed out that sport / recreation has a significant contribution to the national economy:

Sport and recreation is now a major contributor to the national economy. In 1985 it generated an estimated £6.9 billion of total final expenditure, of which £4.4 billion represented consumer sector expenditure [33].

Ten years later, in 1995, consumer expenditure on sport was estimated at £10.4 billion, or 2.33% of total consumer expenditure. The value-added to the UK economy in 1995 by sport-related economic activity was estimated at £9.8 billion, or 1.6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Employment in sport in the UK was 415,000 in 1995 compared with 324,000 in 1985. Accounting for 1.61% of total employment in 1995 compared with 1.52% of total employment in 1985 [34]. The importance of sport and recreation in the economy of Britain has increased in the 1980s and 90s and, consequently, the involvement and the interest in the development and provision of sport and recreation by Sport England as well as by the government has also increased, and will continue to increase in the future.

Consumer expenditure can be split into three categories, (1) expenditure directly related to sports participation (2) expenditure related to passive consumption of sport as a spectators and (3) expenditure related to gambling. According to the council of Europe (1995), in most European countries, the sport-related expenditure is closely influenced by standards of living and disposable income and these factors have a clear impact on the level and structure of increases in sport-related expenditure in both absolute and relative terms. In 1990, almost 2% of overall consumer expenditure was categorized as sport-related in European countries [35]. In the UK, consumer expenditure on sport reached a record £15.2 billion in 2000, which represented nearly 3% of total consumer spending [36].

The study of sport and its economic impact which was published by the European Commission [37] shows that (1) sport has a significant effect on the GNP and employment and the commercialization of sport has contributed to this

development. For instance, in Germany sport accounted for 1.4% of GNP, and in the UK accounted for 1.6% of GDP in 1995, and 1.8% of GDP in 2000. There were 60,000 jobs in sports clothing and equipment in the European Union (EU) in 1994. In 1995 sport sector employed a total of 450,000 people and accounted for 1.61% of total employment in the UK. (2) The sports industry also affects the economy through, for example, the sale of sporting goods, the managing of sports event, advertising, sponsoring and television broadcasting of sport. The sports industry accounted for 3% of world trade, with Europe accounting for 36% of this activity and the US, 42% (Europe Commission paper, 1999). Despite some current disagreement on the actual accounting practices and the validity of some Economic Impact Studies, there is no disagreement that sport and its associated infrastructure is a major driver in the economies of many countries.

Mega-sports Events

Mega events can be viewed in many contexts, social, economic, cultural, image building, political, international recognition and acceptance...the list goes on. The nature and significance of the cultural, sociological and political relevance of modern mega-events is perhaps best captured by Roche in his book, 'Mega Events Modernity' [38] where he analyses the history of mega events from the late 19th century through to current times from a mainly socio-political view point.

Indeed, today, the sports world has become increasingly complex and global and the use of sport as a propaganda vehicle for demonstrating the physical, economic, military and cultural superiority of one political system over another, for granting diplomatic recognition (or non-recognition) and gaining national prestige, for socializing sports participants and non-participants alike into the political ideology of a particular social system, or for constructing or re-constructing national identity and nation-building are evidenced in many nation-states. Sport, especially mega-sports events, have become one of the most common means for the modern nation-state to achieve many of its ambitions and great achievements in major sporting events or the success of a bid for hosting mega-sports events are seen as an important indication of the success of that nation-state in the international arena.

The role of the media and global communications means that events are truly now world events, available to be seen in real time almost anywhere on the surface of the planet. This study is not concentrating on the role of the media in sport but an interesting fact noticed by Roche was that at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, the 13000 press and TV personnel actually outnumbered competing athletes[38] .

There appeared to be reasonable consensus that a well-run mega event did confer long term benefits on the host country and its populous. Substantial 'profits' were often quoted and the vast sums usually spent on infrastructure development were held to be of lasting value to the community. However, more recent research indicates that this may well not be the case. The 2000 Sydney Olympics were regarded by all parties as a triumph, and a profit making one. There now appears to be

a considerable over-run of the original budget and some doubt about the accounting practices used. In his report to Parliament, the Auditor-General states, "Limiting the costs to direct costs but allowing revenues to reflect indirect revenues mingles incompatible concepts" [39].

Despite a firm commitment by the current Labor Government in the UK in its election manifesto to support a bid for the UK to host the 2012 Olympics, recent reports commissioned by the Government on the cost/benefit led the Sports Minister, Richard Caborn, to say, "That is why, from now on, this government is only going to commit itself to support bids for mega sports events after a thorough and independent assessment of all of the costs" [40].

To conclude this brief over-view, it is worth noting that opinions on the 'value' to the host country are becoming less clear. Figures on cost / profits produced both pre and post event seem to have little credence as accounting practices seem to vary wildly. This is not only a problem in developing nations but also, as the Auditor-General in Australia pointed out, a problem there too. The Japanese bid-team in its bid (in 1990/91) for the 1998 Winter Olympics, (the bid was successful) ended up shredding all of the documents and accounts associated with the bid in 1992 [38]. The benefits to the host nation's infrastructure are not as clearly defined as once thought and there are strong differences of opinion in other areas such as increases in tourism which follow a mega event. Mega sports events involve substantial amounts of money from both State, private business and sponsors. The media / TV rights cost small fortunes and now, it is beginning to appear that the cost/benefit trade-off is less well understood than was previously thought.

Theorizing the Role of Sport in Socio-political Analysis

The aim of theory in social science is to help researchers understand the social phenomenon that is being observed. Theory should enhance description by identifying underlying social processes and help researchers look beyond surface appearance. However, it is important to remember that 'theories are only tools. They are not sacred; nor are they ends in themselves. Like any tools, theories are limited in their uses. No theories can explain everything. Therefore, they must be used with caution and scepticism. Theories are meant to expand our awareness, but when they are used unquestioningly they can interfere with the growth of understanding' [23].

Despite the fact that socio-scientific sports analysis is quite a new field of study there is a considerable body of literature starting to be amassed on the subject. It is not the aim here to review this literature base but rather to overview some general concepts which help to frame the discussions in analyzing the relationship between sport and state-politics and to outline that there is little consensus amongst sociologists on the meaning of sports to societies.

The perhaps simplistic and more orthodox and established view seeing sport as a positive and generally constructive influence on society, inculcating values, discipline and providing a source of role models for the youth has, perhaps

rightly, been criticized for taking too simplistic and uncritical view of sport. The more radical, neo-Marxist based theories see sport as an integral part of a system which is based on class domination and designed and used to serve the purposes of the dominant class, 'alienating people from their own bodies, maintaining social control, facilitating capital accumulation through its (sports) commercialization and commodification and fostering false and dangerous ideologies of nationalism, militarism and sexism' [21].

Black and Nauright feel that there has been something of a convergence between more radical and orthodox approaches to the study of sport, emphasizing the reality and importance of people's cultural experiences and values as political forces in their own right, and sport's potential to have both a constructive and destructive influence in society. Black and Nauright see this convergence as reasonable and loosely label it 'idealist' because they posit reality is a mixture of the more radical and the orthodox; '...not because it asserts the unchallenged primacy of values but rather because it asserts the substance and significance of their role alongside material and political structures and forces' [21].

There are numerous concepts utilized by sociologists to explain social structure and order. Libertarianism, functionalism, pluralism and Gramscian concepts to name some of the more well known. Gramsci's hegemony theory has held sway for many years and despite being often challenged, in the researcher's view, still provides a sound conceptual basis for the understanding of the use of sport by various political regimes. That historical orders and forms of class domination are maintained with relatively limited resort to coercion, by persuading most members of the society that they constitute the natural or normal order of things, gives substantial weight to the concept of controlling cultural practices, including sport, in explaining the nature and persistence of political-economic orders. They also lead to an emphasis on oppositional organization and activity around sport as a meaningful aspect of broader counter-hegemonic struggles [41].

The critical question remains regarding how much we can then generalize about the overall weight of sport's influence in politics and society? Black and Nauright conclude that, on balance, sport has most often been a conservative, status quo oriented influence in society. For example, they say, it has tended to reinforce patriarchal attitudes, it has been widely supported by social and political elites in an effort to maintain social control, and it has been used to encourage values supportive of the status quo – most notably patriotism. Coakley [23] points out that 'it is probably true that athletes and fans are more likely than other people to have attitudes supportive of the status quo', although Coakley also notes that the degree to which sport is influential in actually shaping these attitudes is somewhat less certain.

Jarvie [29] stated, 'sporting traditions themselves, whether they are invented or not, can be both integrative and divisive, conservative and oppositional'. Later in this study we will see exactly this, where, during the different governing regimes in Taiwan, sport has clearly been used, by the people and by the ruling regimes in all of these categories. One could

posit that sport can take on so many different meanings that it can be all things to all people (and societies and governments) at all times, depending on the needs of those people, societies and governments. This supposition would of course lead to the view that sport is an exceedingly powerful and influential entity; an exceedingly flexible tool but with no one overall dominant meaning.

Summary

To summarize, as the themes discussed above illustrate, sport can be a diverse and complex source of influence in politics both within and between national societies and states. As Black and Nauright [21] point out, sports' political significance, 'is rooted in its central roles in popular culture and socialization. It can and has been used in a self-conscious and instrumental fashion by states and political and economic elites in various social and economic contexts; it has also, less routinely, been exploited instrumentally by counter-hegemonic social movements, as in the sports boycott movement, or in grass-roots coalitions opposing high profile Olympic bids'.

This paper has taken five broad headings and has illustrated that sport plays an important part in each of the subject areas, (and has introduced some questions around the staging of mega-events). These major headings, defence, social control, foreign policy, national identity and economics are the key areas which form the framework for analysis in future research of how the Taiwan State used sport to attempt to achieve their (changing) objectives. The sixth topic, sports mega events, has been included because such events have become of prime importance to aid international recognition of states, national identity building and the establishment of diplomatic contacts, (foreign affairs), i.e. many of the five main points of this paper are tied in with the staging of mega events and Taiwan has attempted to make use of such an event, such as the staging of the 2001 Baseball World Cup.

It is the argument that the politics surrounding sport, particularly baseball, in Taiwan provides a particularly clear illustration of both the internal role of sport and sporting culture in politics, and the trans-nationalization of world politics. It illustrates, for example, the degree to which internal social and cultural issues can become intense political concerns in divided societies, the degree to which effective political co-operation and alliances can be forged across national boundaries by groups operating at cross-purposes with their respective national governments. It is a complex story, which belies simple conceptions of the sources of power, influence and changes in the world politics.

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