

From “Diplomatic Dwarf” to Gulliver Unbound? Brazil and the Use of Sports Mega-Events

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On July 8th, 2014, Israel launched a massive military attack in the Gaza Strip, which has been ruled by Hamas, a Palestinian Islamic organization, since 2005, when Israel withdrew its army from this territory. Israel accused Hamas to have started the conflict by firing rockets from Gaza to Israel. After weeks of bombardment, 1881 Palestinian and 67 Israeli citizens died (Yourish & Keller, 2014). International organizations accused both sides of many human rights violations and urged for a cease fire (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Worldwide, most countries manifested support for Israel based on the fact that Hamas started the conflict (*National Post*, 2014). The United States, for example, supported its long-term allies, by sending \$225 million in military aid to Israel (Everett, 2014). But what caused disquiet in the international media was the fact that Brazil’s Foreign Ministry condemned the “escalation of violation,” urged an end to the conflict, and added, “We strongly condemn the disproportionate use of force by Israel in the Gaza Strip” (Tavener, 2014, p.1). Israel did not like the statement and its Foreign Ministry spokesman suggested, “This is an unfortunate demonstration of why Brazil, an economic and cultural giant, remains a diplomatic dwarf” (Keinon, 2014, p. 7).

Curiously, the international press did not consider this as the worst insult directed at Brazil (Taylor, 2014). The Israeli spokesman added, “This is not football. In football, when a game ends in a draw, you think it is proportional, but when it finishes 7-1, it’s disproportionate. Sorry to say, but not so in real life and under international law” (Taylor, 2014).

The diplomat was referring to the humiliating defeat Brazil had suffered to Germany in one of the semi-finals of the home-hosted 2014 FIFA World Cup, in the very same month of that Gaza conflict. For many sport media persons, this was one of the worst and most embarrassing sporting defeats ever (McNulty, 2014). Clearly, in using a very bitter loss in sport, the Israeli spokesman meant to offend Brazil. But should Brazil take more offense on being called a diplomatic dwarf or a sporting contest loser? Even more intriguing is why the international media spread the second comment so intensely and considered it even more offensive than the first one.

Following a recent trend among developing countries, Brazil bid and won the rights to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games, in Rio de Janeiro. The country has many and diverse political motivations to host such events. Certainly among these motivations, improving its diplomatic role in international affairs is a very important one. Historically, hosting sport mega-events has represented a unique opportunity to improve public diplomacy (Black & Van Der Westhuizen, 2004). The current hosting trend is the third wave of the connection between sports mega-events and diplomacy development. The first wave happened after World War II, when the Axis countries hosted three Olympic Games in a period of sixteen years (Rome 1960, Tokyo 1964, and Munich, 1972) in an attempt to send a message of recovery to the rest

of the world (Black & Van Der Westhuizen, 2004). The second wave came in the 1960s through the 1990s, when postcolonial countries used both sport mega-events (Mexico City 1968 and Seoul 1988 Olympic Games) and international events (South Africa 1995 Rugby World Cup and Malaysia 1998 Commonwealth Games) to indicate industrial, economic, and social progress. The third wave started with the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games and passed through South Africa 2010 and Brazil 2014 FIFA World Cups, Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics, and the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games. Considering that Russia and Qatar will host the 2018 and 2022 FIFA World Cups, respectively, this third wave continues.

This chapter offers an assessment of Brazil's political use of not one but two sports mega-events, and considers whether hosting the most prestigious and globally recognized and watched sporting events will see the country move beyond the "diplomatic dwarf" stereotype touched on above. The chapter unfolds as follows: first, we situate the debate on Brazil among the wider literature on sports mega-events and the renaissance of sport and diplomacy studies. We then discuss the diplomatic problems facing Brazil, before looking specifically at Brazil's double host status and what this may mean for the nation.

Sports Mega-Events and Diplomatic Studies

Much ink has been spilled discussing sports mega-events, including the legacies they are supposed to produce (Preuss, 2007), the leveraging strategies states adopt to get at such legacies (Chalip, 2006), the politics and the political use of these events (Grix, 2013), the economic benefits states can gain through hosting (Gratton, Shibli, &

Coleman, 2006), and the impact of major sporting events on citizens and their attitudes towards sport and physical activity (Weed et al., 2012). A differentiation in the literature is along the lines of type of states hosting (advanced capitalist versus emerging states) and among the events themselves, with the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup – both of which Brazil were charged with hosting – generally seen as sports megas of the first order and thus, globally the most prestigious and sought-after (on emerging states see Grix and Lee, 2013; for a categorization of sports mega-events see Black, 2008). Thus, the case of Brazil dealt with in this chapter is one of an emerging state taking on the double host status of the world's largest sporting spectacles.

It is fair to say that the academic literature on sport and politics in general is relatively thin on the ground; the literature on international relations (IR) and sport and diplomacy and sport, in particular, is even thinner. Recently, there has been an increase in IR and sport and diplomacy in sport, the latter drawing on Joseph Nye's concept of soft power (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2014; Cornelissen, 2010; Manzenreiter, 2010; Nygård & Gates, 2013). Scholars have turned to Nye's concept as a lens through which to explain why states host sports mega-events in terms of their place in the international arena. What binds both emerging and advanced capitalist states when hosting sports megas is the attempt to leverage the occasion to (a) better a tarnished image (e.g., Germany, South Africa etc.); (b) put their states on the international map (e.g., Qatar, South Korea); (c) signal to the world their growing economic, diplomatic, and/or political strength (e.g., China, Russia, etc.); and (d) to show the watching world that they, the hosts, can put on what is one of the most logically complex events that exists. Of course, these reasons are not mutually exclusive and many states seek to use the

event to achieve all of the above. The Brazilian state does not have a tarnished image, as Germany had prior to 2006 and their hosting of the FIFA World Cup. While Brazil is already on the world stage, it seeks to step out of the shadow of its depiction as a “diplomatic dwarf.” The double-host status of Brazil is designed to send a signal that Brazil has finally arrived and now punches its weight; finally, pulling off both events without any major hitches will send out a message that Brazil is ready to do business with the most advanced states in the world.

Current Diplomatic Challenges of Brazil

In 2015, Brazil ranks as the world’s fifth-largest landmass, fifth-largest population, and seventh-largest economy. Brazil has been considered an emergent power since 2001, when a Goldman Sachs report coined the term BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) to refer to the group of growth markets that nowadays accounts for about 20% of global gross domestic product and is expected to overtake the U.S. economy by the next decade (Bodman, Wolfensohn, & Sweig, 2011; Malamud, 2011). Despite the recent reduction in the economic growth of these nations, the BRICs kept working together to turn the positive predictions into reality. In 2014, they agreed to start a \$50 billion “BRICs Bank” to invest in developing nations projects, alongside a \$100 billion pool of reserve (Kenny, 2014). Brazil has also been part of the so-called IBSA alliance along with India and South Africa since 2003. Basically, these three countries have been lobbying for reforms at the United Nations and looking for a stronger participation of developing countries (Flemes, 2009). The emergence of Brazil as a global actor has attracted the attention of the United States, the European Union, and the G-8, which have been

calling Brazil a “strategic partner” in their diplomatic meetings.

The increased importance of Brazil in the international political scenario in the last decade has changed the country’s diplomatic aspirations. The country has not hidden its major diplomatic aspiration: to have a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). France, United Kingdom, and Russia have supported Brazil’s intentions, while the United States and China remained uncommitted in their support (Brown, 2012). However, in 2011, an independent task force of the Council of Foreign Relations analyzed Brazil-U.S. relationships and recommended that U.S. policymakers should recognize Brazil as a global actor and support its bid for a permanent seat on the UNSC (Bodman et al., 2011). The basis for this recommendation is that the US has exercised unilateral influence in South America since the 1800s (Brown, 2012); therefore, that task force indicated that practical steps, like supporting Brazil on the UNSC, would signal a more mature relationship with the “new” Brazil (Bodman et al., 2011). This recommendation has not been implemented so far.

There are at least two recent decisions made by Brazilian diplomats that have created a sense of suspicion in U.S. authorities regarding supporting Brazil on the UNSC. First, in 2010, as a nonpermanent member of the Council, Brazil voted against implementing sanctions on Iran (and indirectly against the US). The Security Council was imposing additional sanctions on Iran because of its alleged “lack of compliance with previous resolutions on ensuring the peaceful nature of its nuclear program” (United Nations, 2010, p. 1). Brazil explained its vote in affirming that additional sanctions “would lead to the suffering of the Iranian people and play into the hands of those on all sides who did not want a peaceful resolution of the issue” (United Nations,

2010, p. 4). Second, in 2011, Brazil along with Germany, Russia, China, and India abstained from voting on tightened sanctions on Libya and stressed “the need for peaceful resolution of the conflict and warned against unintended consequences of armed intervention” (United Nations, 2011, p. 3). The conflict referred to was the Libyan civil war, which broke out in 2011.

According to Brown (2012), in both instances Brazil showed coherence with its diplomatic values of nonmilitary intervention as far as possible. Although Brazil’s military budget exceeded all other South American nations combined (Malamud, 2011), the country has decided to rely heavily on soft power to conquer its international space. Malamud (2011) noted that Brazil’s market size, enormous exports, and investment potential have been effective in international affairs. Recent events have reinforced Brazil’s option to rely on soft power when planning diplomatic growth.

Cason and Power (2009) claimed that, since 1995, the changes in Brazilian foreign policies have been rooted in international, national, or individual levels (as proposed by Waltz, 1959). The end of the cold war (international level), the resurgence of democracy (national level), and the election of two presidents (individual level) who focused on the changing Brazilian role in the international arena have changed Brazil’s foreign policy. Cason and Power added that the “presidentialization” of Brazilian international affairs – mainly conducted by the two last presidents, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) – had positive impacts on Brazil’s profile on the world stage. Both presidents worked to strengthen the “Mercosul” – the free trade agreement between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Venezuela. During his term, President Lula constantly expressed a deep desire to see a stronger

South America and believed that Brazil's leadership would be fundamental to creating a better continent (Cason & Power, 2009).

Not by chance, during Lula's term, Brazil was chosen to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games (in Rio de Janeiro). Some authors argue that the involvement of the president in the Olympic bid was fundamental in convincing the IOC to grant, for the first time ever, the Olympic Games to a South American country (Carey, Mason, & Misener, 2011). The fact that Brazil was chosen as the host of the 2014 World Cup was not as important as the fact it was chosen as the host of the 2016 Olympics. In fact, other South American countries (including Brazil itself) have hosted previous editions of the FIFA World Cup (e.g., Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina).

Since 2007, Brazil has used international sports events as part of its strategy to expand its soft power, diplomacy, and international relevance. Only in the last ten years, the country hosted the 2007 Pan-American Games, the 2011 Military World Games, the 2013 Confederations Cup, the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. While the three former events have been called second-order sport events (Black & Van Der Westhuizen, 2004), they can be understood as a necessary precursor to hosting first-order events, the latter two are definitely the most important global sporting events in the world. Consequently, these events have brought unprecedented media attention to the host country. In the next section, we discuss how Brazil can use these sports mega-events to expand its soft power and grow in diplomatic stature.

Brazil, Sport Mega-Events, and Diplomacy

Brazil has tried to use the promotional effects of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games to expand its soft power and diplomatic status. The literature supports the idea of positive relationships between hosting sport mega-events and increasing soft power (Finlay & Xin, 2010; Grix, Brannagan, & Houlihan, 2015). As suggested by Grix et al. (2015), successfully hosting sport mega-events “is increasingly acknowledged to be a highly visible and potential positive signal to other countries, acting as a valuable asset in accelerating their entry to, and acceptance within, the world’s mature economies” (p. 470). Soft power is directly related to public diplomacy, since both involve the ability of having influence over others via attraction instead of coercion (Nye, 2008). Therefore, in expanding its soft power by hosting sport mega-events, Brazil is actually looking to improve its public diplomacy. Cornelissen (2010) asserted that Olympic Games and World Cups have been used by developing countries “to showcase economic achievements, to signal diplomatic stature or to project, in the absence of other forms of international influence, soft power” (p. 3008).

However, Grix et al. (2015) proposed that Brazil is not a typical case of an emerging nation using the association with sport mega-events to increase soft power and improve public diplomacy. They argued that Brazil is different because it is already “at the forefront of the emerging powers discourse” (p. 474) and it is using the mega-events to shift from a regional leader to a global leader. In agreement with this statement, Malamud (2011) reported that Brazil’s role as an emergent global player has been confirmed by some invitations from important international institutions. For example, in 2005, the G-8 formally invited five developing countries (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa), in the so-called G-8+5, to join the group talks in the

summit hosted in Gleneagles, Scotland. Two years later, the European Union invited Brazil for a strategic partnership, leaving other South American countries out.

Naturally, Brazil's prominence has not resounded well among other South American nations, which have developed strategies to slow that rising path (Malamud, 2011). For instance, although a regional commercial partner, Argentina has not supported Brazil's aspirations to become a permanent member on the United Nations Security Council. According to Malamud, Brazil has found that global diplomatic ambition can prompt regional resentment, creating what he called "the mounting mismatch between the regional and global recognition of Brazilian status" (Malamud, 2011, p. 19).

From a diplomatic point of view, probably the most effective way to act would be to forget the regional leadership and focus on the global context (Cason & Power, 2009; Malamud, 2011). However, as mentioned previously, mainly during Lula's term, leading South America was almost an obsession. In this regard, hosting the Olympic Games has a special meaning. Since the bid campaign, Lula has proposed that the 2016 Olympics should be not only the Rio and Brazil Olympic Games, but the *South America Games*. The former president asserted, "It is time to make the Olympics democratic, developing countries have the right to host the Games. . . . South America has the right to hold the Games" (Bugge, 2009). Lula knew that no other country in South America would have the infrastructure and financial resources to compete for the Games. Therefore, he used the special economic moment of the country to bid for the Games and consolidate himself as a regional leader. Interestingly, Brazil did not use the 2014 FIFA World Cup in the same way, simply because it would not work with the World Cup. First, the World Cup has been previously hosted by other South American

countries. Second, soccer is the preferred sport in the majority of the South American countries, which already have at least the initial infrastructure to host it. Finally, Brazilian leaders know that the World Cup will eventually be hosted by other South American countries, which is unlikely to happen with the Olympic Games, at least in the short term.

However, hosting the Olympic Games is not a guarantee of growing diplomatic power. Other emerging states have tried to use sport mega-events to attain this aim, but they have run into some trouble. For example, investigating the recent experiences of Russia (Sochi 2014) and China (Beijing 2008) with the Olympic Games, scholars highlighted controversial policies regarding human rights and the treatment of minorities that have hindered these countries' intentions to use the Olympics to accomplish diplomatic objectives (Arnold & Foxall, 2014; Manzenreiter, 2010). The negative aspect of hosting major games has been termed both a double-edged sword and soft disempowerment (Grix & Houlian, 2014; Brannagan, 2014). Both terms point to an effect opposite that states set out to achieve through hosting: rather than enhancing their global status, the media attention brought to bear on hosts magnifies negative aspects of a state's politics, culture, or human rights record. Qatar is a case in point: the initial jubilation on winning the hosting rights for the 2022 FIFA World Cup gave way, quickly, to full-scale investigative journalism into Qatar's treatment of their foreign workforce, frantically building sporting infrastructure from scratch.

Additionally, according to Manzenreiter (2010), hosting the 2008 Olympic Games did not change the antiquated and oppressive designs adopted by China to deal with Taiwan and Tibet. Therefore, considering that during the 2008 Olympics the eyes of the

world were on China, even those people who had not previously known about its insistence on state sovereignty and violations of human rights. Apparently, such exposition made diplomatic relationships between China and Western countries more complicated (Manzenreiter, 2010). Similarly, the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics brought more decline than improvement for Russia in terms of diplomatic relationships. The controversial law that prohibited “propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations” exposed Russia’s intolerance toward the LGBT community became the most-commented-on human right violation in the international press in 2014 (Arnold & Foxall, 2014). In addition to the state-sponsored homophobia, during the preparation for Sochi 2014, Russia faced other problems (such as journalism censure and the arrest of Greenpeace activists), which damaged its project to send a positive image of the country abroad in association with the Olympics (Simons, 2014). Taken together, Russia’s use of sports mega-events, like Brazil’s, does not fit the usual explanation of simply trying to showcase their nation and increase soft power via sporting spectacles. Russia’s use of sports megas is less about sport diplomacy and much more part of a special governance strategy (Grix and Kramavera, 2015; see also “Putin and the 2014 Winter Olympics: Russia’s Authoritarian Sports Diplomacy” in this book).

Double-Edged Sword for Brazil?

On the one hand, Brazil has seemingly avoided controversies related to violations of human and minority rights, but on the other hand, the country has suffered historically from a culture of corruption. More recently, two impressive cases of corruption emerged, affecting politicians of all levels, including two former presidents of the

republic. The first case of corruption affected the credibility of the then-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, when in 2005, a vote-buying scheme named “mensalao” (big money stipend) was discovered inside the national congress (*The Economist*, 2013). After years of prosecution, the second most powerful man of Brazil at that time and the right-hand man of Lula, Jose Dirceu went to jail in 2013, sending a positive message domestically and internationally about Brazil’s serious intentions to combat corruption (*The Economist*, 2013). Unfortunately, another corruption scheme has erupted in Brazil in 2015. Since then, a bribery scheme involving Petrobras, the state oil company, has placed a lot of supporters of the former president Ms. Dilma Rousseff under investigation. Most of these supporters belong to the left Worker’s Party, the party of former president Lula (Segal, 2015). Many politicians are still under investigation, but the apex of the case was reached in August 2016, when Ms. Rouseff was impeached and removed from office.

Such cases of corruption have produced some popular manifestations against the government. For example, during the Confederations Cup in 2013, many protests and riots against corruption happened in different places in the country, mainly in the host cities of this event (Watts, 2014; Zirin, 2013). In October 2015, ten months before the 2016 Olympic Games, more protests against corruption in the federal government erupted in Brazilian streets (Biller & Colitt, 2015). Most of the protesters involved in such resistance have requested the impeachment of the President Dilma Rousseff, mainly because of her alleged involvement in the bribery scheme of Petrobras. Because sport mega-events have brought Brazil into the international spotlight, such manifestations and their consequences may signal that Brazil is finally fighting

corruption seriously. In this sense, sport mega-events can help Brazil to be better perceived by other nations as a serious international player, not only because it is able to host such events, but also and mainly because it is able and willing to battle corruption.

Spalding et al. (2014) affirmed that the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games have drawn, and will draw, “the world’s attention to a nation’s anti-corruption efforts as few events ever could” (p. 2). These authors added that “Brazil has become a kind of vortex for the global anti-corruption movement,” because “its popular protests and governmental response in the form of specific legal reforms” (p. 3). In fact, the government response to the public outcry seems to be somehow linked to the fact that Brazil is in the international spotlight because of the sport mega-events. That is, the Brazilian government has felt the pressure of so much international exposure and started to support, at least symbolically, measures against corruption. In practice, as shown above, the federal government is highly involved in corruption scandals (Segal, 2015). However, as noted by the international press, the Brazilian Federal Supreme Court has been more efficient than ever in trying to condemn politicians, lobbyists, and businessmen for corruption (*The Economist*, 2013). Meanwhile, scholars have mentioned that Brazil’s democratic institutions, independent judiciary, and free press have made the country more likely to improve its diplomacy via battling corruption when hosting the events; especially if someone compares it to previous hosts, such as Russia/Sochi 2014 and China/Beijing 2008 (Spalding et al., 2014).

In this sense, the current status of Brazilian institutions in association with the international attention received by the country has helped Brazil to promote itself as a

less corrupt nation. However, the association with FIFA and the IOC can bring a reverse effect. Both institutions have been frequently involved with corruption in the remote and recent past (Abrahamson, 1999; Zirin, 2014). For instance, Joseph Blatter, FIFA president for the last 17 years, has recently resigned due to intense pressure from investigations by the FBI and Swiss prosecutors that have led to 18 senior soccer executives being charged on accusations of money laundering and tax evasion (Gibson, 2015). The closer a country is associated with these organizations, the more they are likely to be suspected of involvement in corruption (Spalding et al., 2014). For example, Germany was recently accused of buying the right to host the 2006 World Cup (Smith, 2015). According to German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, the bid committee bribed four Asian representatives with about US\$11 million to vote for Germany's candidature (Smith, 2015). Similarly, Qatar has been constantly accused of buying votes to be chosen as the host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2014). Likewise, the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi has brought a lot of corruption accusations over Russia. As noted by Arnold and Foxall (2014), "the astronomical cost of the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games [US\$51 billion] is an indictment of the pervasive corruption in the Russian system" (p. 6). Therefore, the challenge of Brazil is to use the international media interest before, during, and after the World Cup and the Olympics to showcase its fight against corruption, while avoiding FIFA and IOC corruption scandals.

Considering that the 2014 World Cup has already passed, in terms of sport policies, Brazilian authorities have focused on creating an environment in the country that helps national athletes to perform the best they can during the 2016 Olympic Games. They believe that an outstanding performance of the national athletes might

improve the country's image internationally. Rhamey and Early (2013) support this belief when they reported that good performances in the Olympic Games (i.e., winning a lot of medals) would build a positive image and enhance the international prestige of any nation. Additionally, these authors found that both surpassing the expectations in Olympic performance (winning medals) and hosting the event would produce the greatest gains in terms of improving diplomatic contacts with other nations.

The decision to host sport mega-events is an attempt to break a virtual circle in elite sport in Brazil – to date, low investments have produced low performances. Brazil has had a very flat performance in terms of medals won in the Olympics. For example, in the last two Games – 2012 London and 2008 Beijing – Brazil won 17 and 15 medals, finishing in the 23rd and 22nd position, respectively. For the 2016 Games, Brazilian sport authorities have established the goal of finishing among the top 10 (ESPN, 2015). In order to achieve this aim, they know much more investment needs to be put into sport. In hosting the 2016 Games, the local sport authorities have seen an opportunity to increase investments in both sporting infrastructure and the preparation of elite athletes. Rocha (2015) described four different federal programs, which have been supporting the preparation of Team Brazil for the 2016 Olympics. About R\$1 billion will be invested in athletes' preparation and physical structures and equipment between 2013 and 2016 (Brasil, 2014) – two thirds of this money has come from federal funds and one third from sponsorships of public enterprises to support the preparation of the national teams. For example, the national bank – “Banco do Brasil” – has sponsored the Brazilian teams in volleyball, beach volleyball, sailing, and modern pentathlon. Other public organizations have supported other sports in Brazil, as part of the preparation

for the 2016 Olympic Games.

Such investments in elite sport and (the expected) outstanding performance in the 2016 Olympic Games can bring some benefits to Brazil in diplomatic terms (Rhamey & Early, 2013). However, internal policies related to human and social rights are considered much more important to measure the diplomatic stature of a country than winning medals or hosting events. In this sense, Brazil's strategy to focus heavily on elite sport, while relegating education and social sport to the status of a poor cousin may be a mistake, from a diplomatic point of view. The World Cup and the Olympic Games should be used to showcase a new Brazil, where sport is an important tool not only to produce better elite athletes, but also – and mainly – to promote well-being, social rights, gender equity, and diversity. Unfortunately, the social and educational sport programs in the country have received fewer resources than the elite sport programs (Rocha, 2015). Only China, among the so-called emerging states, has been able to put on a spectacular Olympic event and top the Olympic medal table. Success in elite sport requires lots of resources over an extended period of time; it also requires a coordinated sports system with high quality school and community sport. Brazil is a long way from fulfilling these requirements.

Final Remarks

Brazil has struggled to be perceived as a higher-stature actor in international affairs. The country's most important diplomatic aspiration remains to have a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. So far Brazil has not been successful in its attempts to accomplish this and a number of other aims related to international affairs.

Currently, Brazil has attempted to use the 2014 World Cup and will use the 2016 Olympic Games to expand its soft power and diplomatic status. Hosting sports megas has been acknowledged as an important strategy to send messages of economic maturity and diplomatic importance to other international states (Grix et al., 2015).

Comparing Brazil to other developing nations that have recently used similar strategies, we note that the nation has had relative success in avoiding overt negative publicity, mainly related to violations of human and minority rights (which were frequently linked to China and Russia during the 2008 Beijing Games and the 2014 Sochi Winter Games). However, as we have pointed out, the constant media scrutiny that accompanies the hosting of a global sporting spectacle can reveal to the world more than just positive aspects of a country. For example, the media focus on Brazil has exposed many cases of corruption (despite the fact that corruption is endemic in this country). Moreover, Brazil has not escaped criticisms related to environment deterioration. The literature has reported the impact of construction of Olympic facilities on environmentally protected areas of Rio de Janeiro city and a pervasive concern about real estate speculation (Gaffney, 2013). In this sense, hosting sports mega-events and receiving extensive media coverage can be a double-edged sword for Brazil. Dealing with negative coverage, while reinforcing the positive aspects of the country is a difficult mission, which needs to be quickly accomplished if it wants to use the sports mega-events as catalysts for its diplomatic growth.

Finally, we argue that successfully hosting the sport mega-events and handling media coverage in a positive way might not be sufficient to elevate the current diplomatic status of Brazil. These events have brought a lot of attention to competitive

sport and much has been invested in this area. Consequently, given the limited resources overall, little has been invested in educational and social sport programs. When the party is over, the medals are counted, and the Olympic caravan moves on, Brazil might not accrue all possible diplomatic benefits from hosting sports mega-events because of its focus on investing large amounts of money in sports stadia and promoting elite sport. We would suggest a better investment balance between elite sport, on the one hand, and social and educational sport programs, on the other. This is based on the fact that internal policies related to human and social rights are considered much more important to measure the diplomatic stature of a country than winning medals or hosting events.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your perception about Brazil's current diplomatic status?
2. Do you believe that the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Games had the same types of impact on the country, internally and internationally?
3. Thinking about legacies in general, do you think that hosting the two largest sport events in such a short period was strategically beneficial for Brazil? Why?
4. Do you think that hosting the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games has helped Brazil to improve its diplomatic status? Why?
5. Point out three benefits Brazil has reaped from hosting the 2016 Olympic Games.
6. Point out three criticism Brazil has suffered for having hosted the 2016 Olympic Games.
7. Based on Brazil's experience, should other Latin American countries bid for the

Olympic Games?

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