

This study sets out to investigate the debate about the real and perceived effects of “sportswashing”—the practice in which a state uses sports to deflect attention away from human rights violations in order to launder their reputation.

**D** : deliberate communication effort to mobilize and draw attention to soft power resources

- Dependent on acceptance and credibility

**D** : states take advantage of athletes, teams, and competitions for diplomatic and foreign policy purposes

High-profile opportunity to

- Appeal to and engage public
- Promote international understanding, shared values

Historical use of sports diplomacy

- ‘Ping pong diplomacy’ (1970s)
- USA boycotted the Moscow Olympics (1980)

Sports Mega-Events (SMEs) [Olympics, FIFA World Cup]

- Significant soft power opportunities
- Legitimization
- Project a positive image, alter the perception of a foreign public
- Drawbacks? Costs? Negative legacies?

“Soft Disempowerment” (Brannagan and Giulianotti)

- Fungible asset, relative gains or losses can be measured
- “Unintended outcome of losing attraction and credibility”
- Upsets, offends, or alienates others
- Erosion of a country’s political legitimacy and credibility
- Unfavorable media narratives...

Sportswashing

- Designed to build positive associations rather than simply conceal
- A means to conduct diplomacy, improve and forge relations globally and attract tourists, investments, and trade
- Distraction, minimization, and normalization

Independent Variable: “lower” and “upper” levels

Dependent Variables:

- Average change in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in billions of USD
- Average change in arms imports (TIV in millions) [SIPRI Arms Transfers Database]
- Major, moderate, and minor categories

**H** : If a government invests in sportswashing, then this will lead this state to gain economically and politically.

Longitudinal case studies: method of difference