

Olympic Diplomacy and International Relations: Reflections from the Paris 2024 Games

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Abstract

In today's world, it is clear that the Olympic Games are more than just a competition; they have become an arena where countries leverage their ideological superiority, protest against others, or develop friendships. Each Game offers countries an opportunity to utilize the event in a manner that aligns with their goals. Therefore, this study aims to examine the political and diplomatic implications of the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the political and diplomatic implications of the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. Data were gathered through comprehensive documentary analysis of relevant literature and reports from renowned news agencies, complemented by systematic observation of the Games through live broadcasts. Content analysis was employed during the data analysis process, and the MAXQDA software was used. The analysis identified three key themes: Soft Power, Geopolitical Conflicts, and Friendship. These themes demonstrate how international sports enhance national image, foster cross-border cooperation, and address political tensions. This study underscores the significance of mega-events like the Olympics in shaping global diplomacy and offers a framework for future research on the interplay between sports and international relations.

Keywords: Olympics, Sports Diplomacy, Sports Policy, Paris 2024 Games.

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Olimpik Diplomasi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler: Paris 2024 Oyunlarından Yansımalar

Öz

Günümüzde Olimpiyat Oyunları, bir rekabetten çok daha fazlası haline gelmiştir. Olimpiyat Oyunları, ülkelerin ideolojik üstünlüklerini sergilediği, diğerlerine karşı protestolarını gösterdiği veya dostluklar geliştirdiği bir arena olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Oyunların her biri, ülkelerin bu etkinliği kendi hedeflerine uygun bir şekilde kullanmaları için bir fırsatlar sunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı 2024 Paris Olimpiyat Oyunları'nın siyasi ve diplomatik etkilerini incelemektir. Bu çalışmada 2024 Paris Olimpiyat Oyunları'nın siyasi ve diplomatik etkilerini araştırmak için nitel araştırma yaklaşımı tercih edilmiştir. Veriler doküman analizi ve gözlem yolu ile toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde temalara ayırmak için içerik analizi yöntemi tercih edilmiş ve MAXQDA yazılımından faydalanılmıştır. Analiz sonucunda üç temel tema belirlenmiştir: Yumuşak Güç, Jeopolitik Çatışmalar ve Dostluk. Ortaya çıkan bu temalar, uluslararası sporların ulusal imajı güçlendirme, uluslararası iş birliğini güçlendirme ve siyasi gerilimleri ele alma konularında etkili bir platform olabileceğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, Olimpiyatlar gibi mega spor etkinliklerin küresel diplomasiyi şekillendirmedeki önemini yinelemekte ve spor ile uluslararası ilişkiler arasındaki etkileşimi ele alacak olan gelecekteki araştırmalar için yardımcı bir rehber olmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Olimpiyatlar, Spor Diplomasisi, Spor Politikası, 2024 Paris Oyunları.

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Introduction

Sport and politics have historically been intertwined, with the Olympic Games representing the most politically charged sporting event (Grix, 2013). The Olympic Games have become an essential part of global culture, demonstrating their role as a diplomatic tool. Sports, politics, and diplomacy have long been concepts that coexist harmoniously. In regulating international relations, sports are used as a public diplomacy tool. Sports diplomacy enables countries to create alternative channels for establishing connections with other countries (Murray and Pigman, 2014). For governments, sport is seen as a valuable resource in terms of its capacity to help achieve non-sporting goals, assist the government's political objectives, maintain public order, and sustain legitimacy (Green and Houlihan, 2005; Lin et al., 2008). When sport has such a functional role, politicians often adopt it (Murray and Pigman, 2014).

Although the Olympics and major sporting events appear to be a part of international sports, the countries participating in these events are also prominent in the diplomatic arena. The fundamental assumption of the Olympics is that participating countries represent their athletic capabilities while symbolizing national identity and global presence. The world as a whole supports these organizations. The influence of commercial interests and diplomacy at the state, regional, and municipal levels can be seen in hosting games. (Algün Doğu, 2010).

As sports gained popularity and international competitions became more structured, their role in cultural diplomacy became inevitable. The literature on sports diplomacy presents various perspectives. One prominent approach is the concept of sportswashing, where states use sports events to improve their international reputation and divert attention from political or human rights issues (Grix and Brannagan, 2024). Another perspective highlights the role of sports diplomacy in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, as seen in cases where sports initiatives have facilitated dialogue between rival nations (Murray and Pigman, 2014). Additionally, some scholars focus on sports diplomacy's economic and strategic dimensions, emphasizing its function in nation branding and global influence (Pigman and Rofe, 2013). Country-specific studies can be exemplified by the study conducted by Gök (2020), which discussed the effect of sports diplomacy enhancing Türkiye's soft power. Another research conducted by Göksu (2019) found that sports diplomacy elements, such as sporting success and the positive image of Turkish athletes, play a critical role in restoring the negative perception of Türkiye in the international media.

Sports diplomacy involves athletes representing their states or engaging in diplomatic activities alongside their governments. It can serve a variety of purposes. As international sports organizations such as the International Olympic Committee and FIFA emphasize, sports can function as a unifying force, fostering dialogue and contributing to world peace: sports ambassadors and scholars in sports aim to create such an impact. However, on another level, sports also serve as a means of expressing national pride, presenting national identity, and demonstrating a country's success and strength. When interpreted critically, this can be viewed as a propaganda tool, but when viewed positively, it can be seen as an example of a nation's soft power (Yağmurlu, 2019).

Sports diplomacy is closely linked to the increasing significance of soft power—the ability to influence and attract others—as a key development in international relations since the end of the Cold War. As diplomacy is one of the core and perhaps most crucial instruments of soft power, there has been growing interest in diplomacy, especially in public diplomacy and place branding, among scholars and the public. International sports competitions, such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, serve as diplomatic platforms, fostering dialogue and cooperation among nations. Beyond athletic contests, these events facilitate political engagements and global interactions, reinforcing the role of sports diplomacy in shaping international relations (Pigman and Rofe, 2013; Tamari, 2024; Mirzayeva, 2024).

The principles of diplomacy are evident as nations use sporting events to showcase their athletic prowess while managing international relations. States or geopolitical blocs often leverage sports to demonstrate superiority or desired characteristics. Governments may pursue athletic success to highlight the strength of their political and economic systems, a strategy particularly significant for non-democratic nations. Hosting major sporting events, such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup, offers states a global platform to reinforce their influence and prestige (Kobierecki, 2013).

In today's world, it is clear that the Olympic Games are more than just a competition; they have become an arena where countries leverage their ideological superiority, protest against others, or develop friendships. Each one of the Games offers countries an opportunity to utilize the event in a manner that aligns with their goals. Therefore, this study aims to examine the political and diplomatic implications of the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. By exploring how nations leverage the global stage of the Olympics to enhance their international standing, project soft power, and engage in diplomatic interactions, this research seeks to uncover the multifaceted role that sports mega-events play in global politics. This study focuses on how the Olympic Games serve as an arena for political statements, cultural diplomacy, and the reinforcement of national identity. By analyzing critical

political events, diplomatic strategies, and international narratives surrounding the 2024 Paris Olympics, this research will provide insights into the complex relationship between sports, politics, and international diplomacy in the modern world. This research will contribute to understanding how mega-events like the Olympics shape international relations and provide a framework for analyzing future sporting events as diplomatic platforms.

Method

The study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the political and diplomatic reflections of the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. This approach was selected because it effectively captures the complex and nuanced interactions among sports, politics, and diplomacy. The data collection process began at the start of the Games and continued for four months.

Researchers examined broadcasted events during the systematic observation phase, concentrating on specific political and diplomatic themes. Observations were organized using a predefined coding scheme to ensure reliability, and researchers kept observation logs to document recurring patterns.

The document analysis phase examined academic publications, reports from the sample countries' local media, and internationally recognized news agencies. The data collection process is discussed in detail below.

Documentary Analysis

The methodology of the present study was based on document analysis. First, academic publications related to the political and diplomatic dimensions of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games were reviewed. Second, publicly available governmental reports, policy documents, and official statements concerning the geopolitical and diplomatic aspects of the Games were collected and analyzed. Third, relevant domestic and international media archives covering the Olympic period were gathered and examined to identify key narratives and diplomatic discourse. The limitations of the present study stem from the fact that the Paris 2024 Olympic Games have only recently concluded, meaning that long-term political and diplomatic consequences are still unfolding, and comprehensive academic literature on the subject remains limited.

The documentary analysis used specific search terms to ensure comprehensive topic coverage. These terms included “Paris 2024 Olympic Games political impact,” “Olympics and diplomacy,” “sports diplomacy 2024,” “international relations and sports,” “political implications of mega sports

events,” and “Olympics soft power influence.” These searches helped the researchers identify relevant studies analyzing the local and global impacts of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Observation

The researchers' role during the observation was indirect. The observation method can be direct or indirect. Direct observation occurs when the observer watches events happening in front of them at the moment they occur. Indirect observation is remote, relying on the observations of others or recordings of past events in the form of documentation, videos, and so forth. (Ciesielska et al., 2018).

Observations focused on the political and diplomatic dimensions of the Paris 2024 Olympics, including symbols in ceremonies, nations' messages, political incidents, and state leaders' statements. Athletes' political expressions and global audience reactions were also noted. Additionally, media reports, social media, and live broadcasts were analyzed to assess how sports influenced diplomatic relations and international discourse.

Findings from the observations were cross-checked with documentary analysis to identify overlapping themes. For instance, media reports on diplomatic tensions during the Games were compared with real-time observations of official statements and athlete responses, ensuring a multi-layered interpretation of political discourse in sports.

Data Analysis

In the data analysis phase, content analysis was employed to meticulously identify key themes, including soft power, geopolitical tensions and friendship. MAXQDA software was utilized to organize and code the data to ensure a systematic and rigorous analysis. MAXQDA was used to code the collected data, allowing for the identification of themes. The software facilitated categorizing the observed political and diplomatic expressions, aiding theme development and comparative analysis. In addition to coding, MAXQDA's visualization tools enabled researchers to explore connections between identified themes, thus enhancing the depth of interpretation.

Findings

In this research on the Paris 2024 Olympics, three key themes were identified: Soft Power, Geopolitical Tensions, and Friendship (Table 1). These themes reflect how international sports serve as a platform for enhancing national image, strengthening international relations, and addressing political tensions. Soft power emerges through athletes' performances and their ability to influence

global perceptions. Friendship and diplomacy are seen in collaborative efforts between nations, while protests highlight how sports can become a stage for expressing political stances and resistance. These themes form the analysis's foundation, demonstrating the Olympics' multidimensional impact.

Table 1. Findings

Themes	Countries	Sub-themes
Soft Power	Türkiye	Diplomats in Tracksuits
	South Korea	
	France	Hosting Mega Sports Events
Geopolitical Tensions	Russia - Ukraine	Conflict
	Palestine – Israel	
	Azerbaijan – Armenia	
	USA - China	
Friendship	Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan	Turkic Countries
	Türkiye - Azerbaijan	

Soft Power

Soft power is a form of influence states use in diplomacy and image management, focusing on attraction rather than coercion. It emphasizes the growing importance of intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions in the post-Cold War era. This approach suggests that instead of completely replacing traditional “hard power,” states should combine “soft power” with it to develop what is referred to as “smart power.” (Nye, 2004).

Sport plays a significant role in a “soft power” strategy, with countries viewing the hosting of major sports sporting events—notably the Olympics—as a vital means of enhancing their national image and presenting themselves on the global stage. These events attract tourism, stimulate trade, and cultivate a heightened national pride. This is often accompanied by a widely experienced yet under-researched “feel-good” factor associated with significant sporting occasions (Grix, 2013). The idea of utilizing sports as a tool for soft power is increasingly acknowledged in international relations, where nations capitalize on sports to bolster their global image and influence without coercion.

Türkiye and South Korea stood out as key examples of soft power at the Paris 2024 Games, with their athletes' achievements and cultural displays significantly boosting their global image and fostering diplomatic connections. This influence was further amplified by widespread engagement on social media, in which both countries sparked discussions and captured the attention of international audiences, even though these outcomes were not a deliberate strategy.

Hosting the 2024 Olympic Games was one of France's long-term goals to strengthen its global influence through sports. France achieved this objective by successfully organizing the event, showcasing its ability to host major international competitions. This also reinforced the country's position in sports diplomacy and soft power.

Türkiye

Turkish shooter Yusuf Dikeç became popular during the games for his shooting skill and his relaxed and unconventional demeanor. Competing in his fifth Olympics at the age of 51, Dikeç won a silver medal in the 10m air pistol mixed team event alongside Sevval İlayda Tarhan. His casual approach, often shooting with one hand in his pocket and using minimal equipment, captured the imagination of social media. His demeanor earned him comparisons to "cool" film characters, and he became Türkiye's oldest Olympic medalist.

Dikeç's fame quickly skyrocketed, attracting a significant following on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. A notable interaction occurred when Dikeç playfully asked tech magnate Elon Musk if robots could compete in future Olympic events. Musk responded with his characteristic humor, further enriching the conversation.

The official Olympic website and various news outlets, such as *Euronews*, took notice, with headlines like "*Meet Yusuf Dikeç: The Turkish shooter who has gone viral at the Paris 2024 Olympics*" and "*The Star We Didn't Know We Needed: Turkish Olympic Shooter Yusuf Dikeç Takes the Internet by Storm.*" His performance, both in and out of the competition, enhanced Türkiye's soft power on the global stage.

South Korea

Kim Yeji, a South Korean shooter, became popular at the Paris Games. She was seen as one of the Paris Games' most notable stars so far. Social media was flooded with praise for Kim's composed and masterful shooting skills, further boosting South Korea's positive global image.

This surge in her popularity significantly contributed to South Korea's soft power, demonstrating the nation's athletic and cultural capabilities on an international platform, especially in the shooting. Kim Yeji not only embodied the spirit of the Olympic competition but also bolstered her country's standing in the eyes of the world. *The New York Times* highlighted her impact with the article "*Kim Yeji: The Paris Olympics' Coolest Athlete and a South Korean Superstar.*"

France

The Paris 2024 Olympic Games marked the centennial of the city's last time hosting the event in 1924. This milestone highlights France's continued presence in Olympic history, as Paris hosted the Games for the third time after its previous editions in 1900 and 1924.

The 2024 Olympics in Paris focused on key themes such as sustainability, technological advancements, and gender equality. Artificial Intelligence (AI) was crucial in ensuring event security, analyzing athlete performance, and improving the spectator experience. Organizers prioritized using renewable energy and rental equipment to create the most environmentally friendly Games to minimize waste (Voinea et al., 2025).

Hosting the mega sports events was part of France's broader sports diplomacy strategy (<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/sports-diplomacy/>). France has a rich history of hosting international sports events, which it sees as opportunities to enhance its global standing and soft power. Successfully hosting the Paris 2024 Olympics reinforced France's image as a reliable host nation and demonstrated its ability to use sports as a medium for diplomacy, economic development, and international engagement.

Geopolitical Tensions

Boycotts of major sporting events, as a protest against foreign or domestic policies or geopolitical tensions, are common. During the Cold War, these boycotts and counter-boycotts were a standard part of international relations. Another aspect of sports diplomacy is the banning of national teams from competing, such as the prohibition of apartheid South Africa from participating in sporting events. Additionally, symbolic protests by groups or individuals frequently use sporting events as a platform to express their views (Nygård and Gates, 2013).

Tensions at the Olympics are not new. One of the most memorable examples of tension occurred at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. In response to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, over 60 countries, led by the United States, boycotted the Games. This boycott demonstrated how international relations and geopolitical conflicts could directly impact participation in the Olympics. Another example is that protests against China marked the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The Paris 2024 Games are marked by significant geopolitical tensions, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict, debates over Russian athletes' participation, and the enduring Palestine-Israel conflict. The territorial disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the growing competition between the USA and China complicated the geopolitical situation. These conflicts reflect the

intersection of global diplomacy and international sports, turning the Games into a stage for competition and political expression.

Russia – Ukraine

The ongoing conflict has raised questions about Russian athletes' participation in international competitions, including the Olympics, as sanctions and international condemnation have led to calls for their exclusion from various sporting events (Dubinsky, 2019). This situation reflects a broader trend where geopolitical tensions directly impact the Olympic movement, as seen in past instances where countries have boycotted the Games due to political disputes.

The suspension of Russia from the Olympics sparked controversy. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) penalized Russia for its activities in Ukraine, a decision that occurred just days after the conclusion of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. This act was viewed as a violation of the Olympic Truce. However, the IOC allowed Russian athletes to compete in the Summer Olympics in Paris as Individual Neutral Athletes, provided they met the eligibility criteria. Almost all international federations supported the IOC's decision, though World Athletics imposed a blanket ban on Team Russia (Lee, 2024).

Russia's participation in the Olympics has faced scrutiny since 2016 following the revelation of a state-sponsored doping scheme involving multiple athletes. This controversy continues to shape debates over the role of politics and ethics in international sports.

In some sports, fewer eligible athletes may be than the number of earned quota places. In these cases, extra quotas will be given to athletes from the same National Olympic Committee (NOC) or athletes from other NOCs based on the qualification system of the respective International Federation. At the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, Individual Neutral Athletes (AINs) are athletes holding Belarusian or Russian passports who have been verified as eligible and invited to compete. The AIN quotas were established based on the results of existing qualification competitions and the specific eligibility criteria set by the International Federations. Russian and Belarusian athletes competed under the AIN flag in canoeing, gymnastics, judo, modern pentathlon, road cycling, rowing, shooting, swimming, taekwondo, tennis, and weight lifting.

Palestine - Israel

The political atmosphere surrounding the Paris 2024 Games became increasingly tense as the Palestinian Olympic Committee called for the exclusion of Israeli athletes, citing ongoing conflicts in Gaza. The Palestine-Israel conflict became a prominent issue during the Games and differing

perspectives emerged among participating athletes. Palestinian judoka Feras Badawi, after losing his match, publicly stated that he could not compete against or shake hands with Israeli athletes while the conflict in Gaza persisted. He expressed that participating in the Olympics under such circumstances felt contradictory, reflecting the broader struggles of athletes caught between professional aspirations and political convictions.

The tension was further underscored by the disqualification of an Algerian judoka who declined to face an Israeli opponent, drawing attention to the complexities of upholding the Olympic Truce amid long-standing geopolitical disputes. This incident highlighted the challenges the Games' organizers faced in navigating political sensitivities while maintaining the spirit of inclusivity.

Additionally, other athletes displayed gestures of dissent. For instance, Tajik judoka Nurali Emomali and Moroccan judoka Abderrahmane Boushita refused to shake hands with Israeli judoka Barch Shmailov after their matches. Similarly, Algerian judoka Messaoud Redouane Dris did not weigh in before a scheduled match with Shmailov, which was widely interpreted as an intentional decision to avoid competing. These actions underscored the ongoing difficulties in separating sports from political and ideological disputes on the global stage.

Azerbaijan-Armenia

The Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict primarily revolves around territorial disputes, particularly over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Today, the two countries have diplomatic tensions.

Diplomatic tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia also played a role during the Paris Olympics. Azerbaijan expressed dissatisfaction with remarks made by a French state television reporter during the opening ceremony. Armenia was described as a country "historically close to the hearts of the French." Azerbaijan filed an official complaint with the IOC, viewing these comments as biased. The Turkish news agency Anadolu Ajansı (AA) highlighted the article "*Azerbaijan Sends Protest to International Olympic Committee over French State TV Remarks.*" The protest included a letter.

The letter states that the state television channel's disrespectful behavior toward Azerbaijan constitutes a direct breach of the Olympic Charter. This type of propaganda is inconsistent with the Olympic Games fundamental principles and undermines ongoing peace initiatives between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as stated in the joint statement.

USA – China

The USA and China are two of the most significant examples in the history of sports diplomacy. Ping Pong Diplomacy refers to the diplomatic efforts between the United States and China during the early 1970s, which utilized table tennis to foster better relations between the two nations. This unique form of diplomacy was catalyzed by the visit of the U.S. table tennis team to China in 1971, marking a significant thaw in the previously frosty relations that had persisted since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The event is often seen as a pivotal moment that eventually normalized relations between the U.S. and China, culminating in President Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972 (Qing, 2018). However, the two countries are considered poles of world politics (Zou, 2022).

The geopolitical rivalry between the USA and China was highlighted during the Paris 2024 Olympics. Team China defeated the USA in the Men's 4x100m medley relay, but American media raised doubts about the Chinese swimmers due to past doping allegations. Although the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) cleared them, stating that their positive tests were due to contaminated meat, suspicions remained in the USA.

The U.S. Department of Justice investigated the swimmers in response to ongoing concerns. WADA countered by considering action against American authorities for spreading misinformation. China accused the USA of undermining its athletes and politicizing the Olympics while also calling for a review of American track and field athletes. This dispute illustrated the broader geopolitical tensions between the two nations (Lee, 2024).

Friendship

The nature of Olympism is excellence, respect, and friendship. These constitute the basis on which the Olympic movement builds its activities to promote sport, culture, education, and a better world (IOC, 2024). The Olympics are an excellent platform for fostering friendship and peace-building among countries.

Throughout history, there have been notable instances of friendship building between countries. A prominent example is the "ping-pong diplomacy" between the United States and China during the 1970s, illustrating how sports can help establish diplomatic channels and enhance bilateral relations. Similarly, the Indian cricket team's tour of Pakistan in 2004, which followed peace talks, highlighted the role of sports in reinforcing diplomatic sincerity and goodwill (Merkel, 2016).

Olympism, the philosophy developed by de Coubertin, underscores the significance of sport in fostering global development, international understanding, peaceful coexistence, and social and moral education. It views sport as a means of educating and shaping individuals, contributing to the development of desirable personal and social qualities. This concept remains an unchanging element of the Olympic Games, with the Olympics serving as one of the most important tools for peace (Spaaij, 2012).

Sports have historically been part of a broader quest of regimes for prestige on the world stage and to project hegemony and power in an anarchic international system. While such historical trends of politicization of sports continue the nationalism on display at each Olympic Games--today, sports are equally seen as a strategic key for advancing human rights, building peace, strengthening social cohesion, and fostering development. International sports reside between a "realist" world of power and profit while simultaneously becoming an instrument of liberal internationalism that sees the advancement of individual values of rights, gender equality, and empowerment of often marginalized groups such as indigenous peoples, traumatized war victims, and those with disabilities (Sisk, 2024).

Therefore, sport is a powerful tool for promoting world peace and enhancing friendship among nations. The Olympics are the most prominent platform for countries to foster peace and friendship through sport.

The Olympics continue to serve as a unifying force by reinforcing diplomatic ties and fostering friendly relations between nations. The Paris 2024 Games provided further evidence of this phenomenon, with several notable instances of solidarity and friendship emerging, particularly among Turkic countries such as Kyrgyzstan—Uzbekistan and Türkiye —Azerbaijan.

Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan

The relationship between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan is continually strengthening across various domains. Their bilateral ties are rooted in the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, a foundation for collaboration (Adylbekova, 2024). This spirit of friendship was also evident during the Paris 2024 Games, where both nations showcased remarkable examples of friendship and solidarity.

A remarkable story of sportsmanship and cooperation emerged from the boxing quarterfinals. Kyrgyz boxer Munarbek Seyitbek Ugli, competing against American Harvey Jahmal, was supported by coach Akmal Hasanov from Uzbekistan. Due to accreditation issues, Ugli's regular coach, Beganas Sultanbaev, could not attend the match in person and watched from afar. After that, Uzbek coach Akmal Hasanov, who assisted the Kyrgyz boxer Munarbek Seyitbek ugli at the Olympic Games

in Paris, was awarded the "Chingiz Aytmatov" medal. The Chingiz Aitmatov Award is named after Chingiz Aitmatov, a prominent Kyrgyz author and intellectual widely regarded as one of the most influential writers from Central Asia. He gained international recognition for his literary works, which often explored human dignity, cultural identity, and the relationship between nature and society.

Qalampir, the news agency in Uzbekistan, highlighted the article "An Uzbek coach who had assisted the Kyrgyz boxer had been awarded" and emphasized the friendship between the two countries.

This display of cross-border camaraderie between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan highlighted the profound unity among Turkic republics, even in a highly competitive environment.

Türkiye – Azerbaijan

The bilateral relations and growing interactions between Türkiye and Azerbaijan have steadily strengthened over the years. These developments reflect not only cooperation at the state level but also a deepening solidarity in the social sphere (Karayel, 2024).

This friendship also continued during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, as evident through behaviors among athletes, politicians, and the public. The visible cooperation and respect during the Games strengthened the bilateral relationship between the two nations and underscored their commitment to enhancing positive relations and unity on the global stage. This demonstration of partnership illustrated how international sporting events can effectively serve as a platform for reinforcing diplomatic ties and promoting cooperative international relations.

After the games, Turkish Airlines, the flag carrier of Türkiye, organized a celebration for Hidayet Heyderov and Selim Kotsoyev, who won gold medals in judo for Azerbaijan at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris. The celebration took place during their flight from Paris to Istanbul. The event included a cake cutting and photo shoot, while the flight crew announced the winners. The success of Azerbaijan was celebrated by the Turkish people, many of whom offered their congratulations.

Discussion

The Paris 2024 Olympic Games showcased diverse interactions, highlighting the multifaceted impact of international sports on shaping global relations. Key themes such as Soft Power, Geopolitical Tensions, and Friendship were prominently featured, offering unique insights into the Olympic experience.

This paper examines the role of sports in international relations, particularly in soft power, geopolitical tensions, and friendship. The data shows that sports are used as a political and cultural tool to influence power dynamics on the international stage.

Soft Power

Hosting important athletic events, like the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup, is one of the main ways that sport is a tool of soft power. These events allow nations to demonstrate their organizational ability, culture, and values to a worldwide audience. One well-known example of leveraging sport to enhance national image and promote worldwide goodwill is Germany's hosting of the 2006 FIFA World Cup (Grix and Houlihan, 2013). Similarly, the UK strategically used the 2012 Olympics to boost its reputation abroad and advance a favorable national image (Grix and Houlihan, 2013). These events draw tourists from abroad and receive much media attention, which can significantly affect how the host country is perceived (Dubinsky, 2019). Qatar is among the most effective nations in using sports as a soft power tool. It achieves this by deliberately hosting significant events like the FIFA World Cup, investing in international sports alliances, and marketing its national brand to strengthen its diplomatic ties and worldwide influence. Qatar's hosting of the FIFA World Cup is one of the most important components of its soft power strategy. Qatar's international stature is enhanced by this event, which provides a worldwide stage for showcasing its culture and capabilities (Hassan, 2023). Similarly, France has actively utilized sports diplomacy as part of its soft power strategy. France has a sports diplomacy plan, including increasing soft power through sports by hosting international mega-events. As well as these games, the Rugby World Cup, the French Open (Roland Garros), and the Tour de France cycling race contribute to enhancing France's visibility on the international stage (<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/sports-diplomacy/>). France hosted the games for the second time after 100 years, also in 1924. France has improved its soft power by organizing the 2024 Games and utilizing the hosting international mega-events strategy.

Diplomats in tracksuits are defined as athletes or sports officials from a country who are generally considered a tool used outside of formal or traditional diplomatic relations. These sports ambassadors try to develop cultural relations by representing their countries in international sports events and using the unifying power of sports. An athlete or sports official appointed as a sports ambassador can participate in sports events in other countries, interact with the people of that country, and promote the values of sports and their country's culture (Gertrud, 2004). During the 2024 Paris Olympics, two Türkiye and South Korea athletes served as "diplomats in tracksuits," contributing to their countries' soft power through sports. Especially in individual sports like shooting, the

achievements obtained in these countries enhance their international prestige and create a positive image.

Strenk (1980) emphasized that the German Democratic Republic has benefited from diplomats in tracksuits to enhance soft power. This situation aligns with Joseph Nye's concept of soft power, reflecting countries' efforts to expand their spheres of influence by using attraction power instead of coercive power.

Geopolitical Tensions

The sport might become a battleground for protests and boycotts, particularly in contexts where human rights violations are perceived to occur. Israel's case and the calls for boycotts against its sporting events highlight the complexities surrounding the intersection between sport and politics. Pro-Palestinian activists have sought to frame their arguments within a human rights discourse.

The 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow provide a significant case study of how sports can intersect with political activism. The United States, alongside several other nations, boycotted the 1980 Olympics in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This boycott was not merely a withdrawal from competition; it was a political statement aimed at condemning the Soviet Union's actions and asserting the United States' stance on international aggression. The boycott exemplified how sports can be leveraged to express political dissent and mobilize public opinion against perceived injustices (Hörne, 2015).

Sports events reflect conflicts between countries, such as Russia-Ukraine, Palestine-Israel, Azerbaijan-Armenia, and USA-China. They show that sports can be used as a political tool. Protests, boycotts, and other political messages emphasize that sports competitions have ceased to be merely athletic contests and have become a reflection of tensions in international relations.

Friendship

Relations between countries such as Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan and Türkiye-Azerbaijan demonstrate that common historical and cultural ties are strengthened through sports. This situation highlights sports' unifying power and potential to promote international cooperation. The role of sports in shaping national identities and fostering international friendships is well-documented. Nygard and Gates (2013) also argued that sports can be a political tool for building friendships among countries. One of the most well-known examples of decreasing tensions and bridging friendship is "Cricket Diplomacy," which occurred between Pakistan and India, which had tensions for many years over some disputes between the two countries. However, sports have facilitated the connection

between these countries (Moolakkattu, 2020). Another example is between Türkiye and Armenia, which have geopolitical problems. Two countries utilized “football diplomacy” to foster their relations (Güleç, 2022).

Schneider emphasizes that sports can create bonds and friendships among individuals representing different nations, reinforcing cultural ties and national identities (Schneider, 2016). This sentiment is echoed in the work of Akhmetkarimov and Aminova, who argue that sports have historically played a crucial role in bringing nations together, suggesting that sports diplomacy can be an effective means of soft power (Akhmetkarimov and Aminova, 2021). The ability of sports to foster positive interactions is particularly relevant in contexts where traditional diplomatic channels may be strained or non-existent.

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to the field by deepening the understanding of how the Olympic Games serve as a platform for fostering international diplomacy and leading geopolitical interactions. By analyzing the most recent Olympic Games, this research enriches the literature on sports diplomacy and provides insights into the current geopolitical landscape of participating nations.

Sport possesses a unique capacity to bridge divides, facilitating connections between both governments and societies. This study underscores the role of sports as a mechanism for promoting peace and diplomatic engagement among nations.

Moreover, the Olympic Games are a prominent arena where geopolitical tensions are often reflected. This study highlights that long-standing political disputes and international rivalries were manifested during the Games, as nations strategically utilized the event to express their positions on global issues.

The modern Olympics have always concentrated more on political goals than collaboration and intercultural communication. The Olympics have also given participating nations a new means of competition in diplomacy. Millions watch as it is announced which nations will win the most medals at each Olympic Games. The athletics competition is only one aspect of the Olympics; the results impact international reputation and prestige. The competition goes beyond athletes participating in specific events to showcase their remarkable international recognition and achievements.

This study intended to find diplomatic and political implications for the Paris 2024 Games. Findings indicate that sports serve multiple functions in international relations. Sports achievements

in the Paris 2024 Games enhance nations' soft power, while disputes in sporting events reflect political turmoil. Conversely, in nations with shared ideals, sports enhance friendship and foster regional collaboration.

The noteworthy accomplishments and traits of athletes like Yusuf Dikeç from Türkiye and Kim Yeji from South Korea were found as examples of soft power. Their achievements and media attention improved their countries' international standing and individual reputations. They served as “diplomats in tracksuits” for their country. France already has a soft power strategy, such as hosting major sporting events, and has leveraged this power by doing so 100 years after the 1924 Games.

The geopolitical tensions surrounding the Games perfectly illustrated protest as a tool. As demonstrated by the exclusion of athletes from Russia, the Palestinian Olympic Committee's protests, and the diplomatic conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, sports can be used as an arena for political statements and disagreements. These occurrences demonstrate how challenging it is to maintain the Olympic spirit and keep politics and sports apart in the context of ongoing global crises.

The positive interactions between athletes and countries, particularly between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan, demonstrated friendship. The mutual support and teamwork demonstrated the benefits of sports diplomacy and reaffirmed the idea that the Olympic Games provide an arena for promoting global unity and strengthening bilateral relations.

International sporting events serve as platforms for expressing political, cultural, and diplomatic narratives in addition to being competitions, a point the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris will emphasize. The Games have offered a venue for constructive collaboration and heated debates, illustrating the complex relationship between international politics and sports. Regardless of these differing perspectives, the Olympics are a powerful tool for shaping international relations and fostering a sense of global connection.

Ethics Committee Approval Information

Throughout all stages of this research — from planning and implementation to data collection and analysis — all rules specified under the “Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive” have been followed. None of the actions listed under the second section of the directive, titled “Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics,” have been conducted.

During the writing process of this study, scientific, ethical, and citation rules were adhered to; no data manipulation was performed, and this study has not been submitted to any other academic publication

platform for evaluation. Since no data were collected in a manner requiring ethics committee approval, no such approval was obtained.

As the study is a systematic literature review and document analysis, it does not fall under the category of studies requiring ethics committee approval. Therefore, ethics committee approval has not been declared.

Authors' Contribution Statement

All authors contributed equally to all stages of the research.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest related to this research.

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