

Description for the general public

The project is dedicated to a widely understood category of sports diplomacy – in its positive dimension. The term seems to be known and understood, but has not been researched by scientists in a sufficient way so far (in Poland it has not been undertaken almost at all). Sports diplomacy should be understood as the activities undertaken by states and other subjects in the area of sport. Most of all they are meant to achieve various diplomatic goals, such as the desire for rapprochement between countries (often mutually hostile) and exposing conflicts in international relations, although the second aspect has been omitted in the proposed research. Sports diplomacy as a term is most often associated with the first dimension accordingly to the most famous example of its execution – so called ping pong diplomacy, within which a contact between the United States and People's Republic of China was established - states that did not hold diplomatic relations at the time. The significance of sports diplomacy is extraordinary big on such occasions, as sometimes states can pursue steps in the area of sport which they could not pursue in other areas due to prestigious reasons.

The category of sports diplomacy does not apply to already mentioned states' activities only. It is also perceived as a tool of shaping brand of a nation – by organizing sports events broadcasted abroad and attracting athletes and supporters from other countries, by achieving sports victories internationally, by providing development aid and sometimes even by simply participating in international sport – in case of small or weak states. What is more, sports diplomacy can also be considered as all the diplomatic activities undertaken by international sports governing institutions, such as sports federations, which in some elements of their international activity take on the roles typical for states.

The planned project will mostly consist of comparisons concerning similar cases of sports diplomacy, what should allow to identify their typical characteristics and regularities. Such research should allow to acquire knowledge about the mechanisms of functioning of sports diplomacy and its utility.

Besides the analysis of the examples of sports diplomacy, the research will also encompass testing the effectiveness of its selected types: directed at nation-branding and at making hostile states closer. It is going to be conducted with the use of existing polls of public opinion and data concerning the intensity of contacts between states, which attempted to enhance them with the use of sport.

The research will also concern most powerful sports institutions as diplomatic actors, so the investigation shall encompass their quasi-political activity, which is based for instance on granting the right to host sports events, inviting new states to compete in international sport and pursuing international negotiations.

The author has decided to choose the research problem for various reasons. The issue of political utilization of sport (or sports politics) has been researched by the author since the beginning of his scientific career, so he has both knowledge and research experience in the field. Moreover, the issues connected to diplomatic use of sport are extraordinary interesting as they reveal new opportunities of political use of sport, especially in case of seeking for political rapprochement between hostile states. Such pacifist perception of sport dominated in times when it was being established in modern shape and as it appears, although sport for many years has served as a tool of transmitting political confrontation, it can still be seen from such consensual perspective. Insufficient investigation of the problem by scientists, especially in Poland, has also influenced the authors decision to investigate it, as the proposed research is innovative.

The results of the project can potentially have a practical character as well and serve in preparing recommendations concerning ways of using sport in fostering objectives of foreign policy and shaping states' international brand. Consequently, the research can serve in identifying solutions concerning sports diplomacy that could be adopted for instance in Poland. This has also convinced the author to undertake the research problem.