



Department of Political Science

Chair of Political Sociology

Sport as a mean of Soft Power: a focus on China and  
United States of America

SUPERVISOR

Prof. Michele Sorice

CANDIDATE

Chiara Mormile

076542

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## **Introduction**

This thesis is an elaborate on Soft Power and more precisely on Sport as Soft Power. I have chosen this topic because I am a professional athlete since I was fourteen years old. I play fencing at the international level and the sport's practice gave me the possibility to meet people from other countries and to encounter different cultures. During my tournaments around the world I observed how politics is influenced by sport: the main example could be the Olympic Games which are the main opportunity to show a country's power. I ask to myself how this system works and I had the desire to find out the answers.

The thesis is divided in three chapters. The first one is an analysis on Power in general, in order to give a wider framework on the argument. There is a comparison between hard, soft and smart power, while during the first part of second chapter the attention is focused more on soft power and on the various forms it is utilized. The latter part of this second chapter is dedicated more to the role of athletes and media. The last chapter is a case-study on China and Us and on their Soft Power's use. The third chapter has the goal to give a practical explanation of the soft power's theory. The thesis begins with an introduction and end with by a conclusion.

## CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS SOFT POWER

### 1.1 What is Power

To define what power means and includes is not an easy task. There is not a valid definition or a unique point of view. There are various ideas over what power is and many sociologists have tried to provide explanations about it across the centuries. Anyway, the debate over the meaning of power is still open today but amongst many theorists, those that emerged the most were Weber, Foucault and Hobbes. Recently another sociologist, Steven Lukes, has given his opinion on the definition of power and has received successful answers to his theory.

According to Weber, power is nothing more than the chance that men have to realize their own willingness through several actions against those who are contributing to the movement<sup>1</sup> (Weber 1958).

Furthermore, Weber established that power is a mean to get what you should achieve and follow the way you have previously chosen even if it is different from others' method.

Weber believed that power comes from authorities and is sorted in ideal types. He divided power into three categories: the Traditional Authority; the Charismatic Authority and the Rational-legal Authority<sup>2</sup>.

The former authority is a power acquired during the centuries and that often belonged to a dynasty or to families. It is considered hereditary and Weber made a comparison with the medieval families in order to demonstrate his theory. While the first kind of authority has a hereditary feature, the second one tends to be the opposite.

In this case, power is in the hands of a figure, chosen by subordinates, because of his own special features that determined his charisma: something that no one else has. Weber took as a case study Mahatma Gandhi.

The latter type of authority is frequently used in recent years and has substituted the Traditional one. It consisted in the follow of norms and laws in order to elect a fundamental figure capable of ruling.

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<sup>1</sup> To have more information about it: (Weber 1948)

<sup>2</sup>A.Giddens & P.W. Sutton, *Sociology 7<sup>th</sup> edition*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2013, p.971-974

The current governments prefer to use this kind of authority through elections and referendums and it is considered the fairest way to elect a leader.

The sociologist Steven Lukes gave a radical interpretation of power by proposing a “three-dimensional view” of power<sup>3</sup>.

The one-dimensional view is the actors’ behaviour and ability to make decisions when there is a conflict of interest. It can be considered the capacity of an actor called “D” to make “B” to do what D really has thought to be the best way in order to maximize its benefits. The value of D is the persuasion it exercised over B. In this case the power corresponds to the conversion of a decision on another one when the political context is particularly complex.

The two-dimensional view is the actors’ ability to exercise control on the decisions made previously. To exercise a full control on others’ actions, there should be restrictions and limitations. For example a government can restrict the freedom of press in order to hide some information that could be inconvenient for the public opinion. In this two-dimensional view the agenda of decision-making is important.

The three-dimensional view consists in the ability to influence and manipulate the others’ desires. As Lukes wrote “Is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have desires you want them to have, that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires<sup>4</sup>?” People have their own brains and ideas and manipulation is not always something that they are able to recognize because it acts on minds in subtle ways. Sometimes people have difficulty to recognize what they really like or what are their preferences on something, so the external flow of ideas can create confusion and instability. An individual who is confused and has not the awareness of his believes is easily led to act as the others want him to act.

On the other hand, Foucault strongly diverged from Weber and Lukes. He believed that the identification of power is not possible in an institution or in a group of people, like the Marxists have done by associating power to the ruling class. The power can be found in all the social institution and people<sup>5</sup>. He detached from the traditional conflict theories and proposed a new idea of power, wherein power and knowledge are strictly related.

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<sup>3</sup> To Know more about it: S.Lukes, *Power a radical view 2th edition*, Palgrave, 2004

<sup>4</sup> A.Giddens & P.W. Sutton, *Sociology 7<sup>th</sup> edition*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2013, p.973

<sup>5</sup> A.Giddens & P.W. Sutton, *Sociology 7<sup>th</sup> edition*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2013, p.971-974

The use of knowledge by a person allows one to put in practice what he knows and then to act in a powerful way. To be clearer: a person who owns specific tools on something is more prepared to face up a situation which concerns the application of these abilities. On the other hand, a person who does not know specific tools, or that has not the capacities to perform certain actions, has not the possibility to exercise power.

As an example, a doctor who possesses knowledge can exercise his power over the patients in the hospital (institution).

The Foucault's point of view can be enlarged to several fields amongst the topic.

Thomas Hobbes recognized power as the ability to safeguard personal well-being to obtain the ideal future, which is just an illusion. According to him, people possess both Natural and Instrumental powers.

Natural power consists of all the internal qualities a person possesses since one was born: caution, strength, eloquence, nobility. Instrumental power consists of all the qualities one can acquire to gain more power: reputation, friends.

Anyway, it is remarkable to make a clear distinction between these individual capacities and state's authority. First of all, individual power is conceived as a social constituted capacity; second, human powers are results of combinations; third, there's a distinction between causal capacity and sovereign's authority.<sup>6</sup> In order to escape from the primitive condition within everyone lives, the multitude has to build an efficient society to secure individual's freedom and desires. This can happen only when all the citizens renounce to their natural powers and transfer them to one single person who has the control of state's peace and freedom. In this case, the sovereign, who has previously acquired citizens' powers, could decide, through the laws, what is fair and what is unfair. According to Hobbes, the sovereign's power has to be coercive in the respect of everyone's individual liberty in order to make this system more functional.

There have been many dissertations on power's conception and other sociologists that have conducted researches on it. Marx and Durkheim have been important pillars in sociology and politics with their theories on power.

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<sup>6</sup> S.Field, *Hobbes and the question of power*, Journal of the history of philosophy, January 2014, p.61-85

## 1.2 Comparison between hard, soft and smart power

In the previous paragraph I explained the most relevant theories on power and even if there are many others that should be mentioned, the attention has to be focused on the distinction between hard and soft power.

Joseph Nye is an American political scientist and co-founder with Robert Keohane of the neo-liberalism theory. Anyway, Nye has conducted many studies on power and has formulated the concept of soft power.

It is interesting his definition of power: “Power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants. [...] When we measure power in terms of the changed behaviour of others, we have first to know their preferences<sup>7</sup>.”

He, as Lukes, believed in the ability to persuade others in order to get what it is desired. According to Nye, this goal is reachable through both hard and soft power. To understand in which ways the two kinds of power act, it is important to define firstly what they are and then to prosecute with the differences between them.

Hard power consists in the use of military and economic means to get others to change their opinions and positions; it is based on the use of coercion and payments and its strategies focus on coercive diplomacy. Hard power has been one of the main resources in politics during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If we just think about the two World Wars and all the subsequent events in international affairs, the presence of hard power was constant. Even the Bush government made a large use of hard power rather than the soft one. Anyway, at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nye proposed the other side of the medal: soft power. So if on one hand there is the use of force and coercive means, on the other one there is the indirect and invisible way to get what it is desired. A country can act as another country wants just because it admires the values proposed in this nation or because it aspires to its level of richness and openness towards the rest of the world. Soft power includes the capacity to manipulate information and knowledge.

The coexistence of these two kinds of power has led to create another term “smart power” which is considered as inclusive of all the tools and means at disposal. The term smart power has been coined by Nye in 2003, by starting from the idea that

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<sup>7</sup> J.Nye, *Soft power: the means to success in world politics*, Public Affairs, 2004, p.2



there are three ways to achieve determinate goals: coercion, payment and attraction. While the first and the second one belong to the hard power sphere, the last one is linked to soft power. The combination of those three means is called Smart Power. Nye firmly believed that, to reach objectives and to persuade states is not possible to use just hard or soft power, but there should be a perfect balance of both.

Another famous scientist, Ernest J. Wilson III defines Smart power as: “the capacity of an actor to combine elements of hard power and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing such that the actor’s purposes are advanced effectively and efficiently<sup>8</sup>.” Furthermore, one has to understand when the moment is propitious to use one kind of power rather than the other one and also how to combine, in a successful way, coercive and persuasive means.

Anyway smart power does not want to replace hard power which is essential in a country’s policy.

The aim should be a combination that poses its bases on hard power’s strength but, that at the same time, emphasizes soft power’s features. Soft power should be more practical and less theoretical while hard power should utilize good diplomacy to avoid military interventions.

It is important to mention that hard power, until the first years of the 21th century, has had a much more relevant visibility than soft power. This is reliable to the strategies put in act during the Bush government. The failure of such policies has given the possibility to shift the attention on other kinds of measures such as the implementation of soft and smart power means.

Other countries are emerging within the International scenario and they claim for a larger inclusiveness of their policies in the international decisions. These countries have been marginalized during the past years because of their poorness but, stating that they actually possess the means to be included, they call for a more equal consideration.

Although by going back to the Cold War, United States have utilized a strategy that combined soft and hard power, and despite all the mistakes committed during these years, the success of this combination is not casual.

Even if during the development of wars and conflicts soft power may have seemed ephemeral and not sufficient, it plays a very important role.

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<sup>8</sup> Ernest J. Wilson III, *Hard power, Soft power, Smart Power*, The annals of the American Academy, Vol. 616, March 2008, p.110-124

As Nye wrote: “Even if soft power is rarely sufficient, it can help create an enabling or disabling context for policy<sup>9</sup>.”

In the subsequent years, following the end of Cold War, United States have lost ground on the use of Soft Power but a successive step had to be made: put in practice the “Contextual Intelligence”. Nye gave an exhaustive definition of contextual intelligence by writing: “Contextual intelligence is needed to produce an integrated strategy that combines hard and soft power. Many official instruments of soft power: public diplomacy, broadcasting, exchange programs, development assistance, disaster relief, military-to-military contacts- are scattered across the U.S. government<sup>10</sup>.”

This strategy should be applied at many problems and issues related to international affairs.

In the recent years the most crucial question is the one of Islam and its radicalization. The most difficult thing is to find a strategy that could allow the challenge of this phenomenon. The risk is that by using just hard power the conflict could evolve in a worst way, while by using just soft power, the results could be too weak. A balanced combination of both and the Smart power’s use could be the best solution to face, not only toward Islam radicalization, but also to many others current issues.

### **1.3 Definition of Soft power**

In the previous paragraph hard power has been the main issues of the analysis together with soft power and smart power. The attention has to be focused on soft power more in depth. Joseph Nye coined the term soft power and insisted on the capacity of getting other to want the outcomes that one desires.

We know the power of seduction and attraction because we experiment these feelings in our personal relationships. In public life, these powers are essential in order to form a group that follows the one who leads them.

Leaders have understood how to use the power of attraction: they could gain more advantages with less efforts. In authoritarian countries they prefer military and coercive means, while in democratic ones it is better to count on attractive and persuasive tactics.

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<sup>9</sup> J.Nye, *Get Smart: combining hard and soft power*, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 88, No.4, July/August 2009, p.160-163

<sup>10</sup> See note 7

Anyway, politicians and leaders have to understand and to find out which are citizens' preferences in order to accomplish them. Soft power is not simply the ability to influence, but it relies more on the concept of attraction. As Nye sustains, "attraction often leads to acquiescence<sup>11</sup>." So attraction towards a set of values or beliefs can induce a person or a country to imitate another one because of the achievement's desire of this results.

In international politics and within the international scenario, a country's strength related on soft power's scale, depends on the values and the expression of culture. Even if is not easy to employ soft powers, they may play a key role in international affairs. When a state loses ground on its military apparatus or on its economic means, it also loses ground on its soft power credibility and effectiveness, because in a situation of great poverty, it is difficult to appeal to other countries. The implementation of cultural and valid policies can solve even the most complex situation. It is for this reason that states must not give up the attractive and persuasive sphere and that politicians have to practice their political programs with charisma.

It is necessary to define the sources and resources of soft power to understand how these processes work.

There are three main resources a country utilizes in soft power policies: Culture, Political values and Foreign policy. First of all culture is considered as the set of values and traditions that constitutes a state. There could be high and popular culture. The former one is constituted by literature, art and education, while the latter one is constituted by mass entertainment.

Culture can promote values and initiatives that can be considered functional and attractive by other countries. Other states can share the cultural programs promoted by someone else. For example, American culture has had a great evolution during the years and it is present all over the world. Just by thinking at the multinational firms and industries or at Hollywood movies' production we can see how Americans' ideal have influenced the rest of the world. The effectiveness of culture has to be measured on its ability to be practiced outside its original country.

The political values are also important in soft power. Politicians and leaders have to balance their behaviour both within internal and international politics. In domestic affairs, the head of state or the leaders have to accomplish citizens' requests without losing credibility and protecting monetary and economic fields. When the focus is

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<sup>11</sup> J.Nye, *Soft power: the means to success in world politics*, Public Affairs, 2004, p.6

shifted to foreign policies, politicians have to be cautious and prudent in taking decisions. The art of diplomacy is not easy and have to be exercised carefully.

The third resource is foreign policy, and even if it has been mentioned above there is something that must be clarified. The respect of human rights and the non-use of chemical or atomic weapons can give more attractiveness to a country and can strongly affect the preferences of others.

Soft power basically relies on these three resources but there are many others such as sport. However, some scientists consider soft power as full of limits.

Many people are sceptics toward soft power because they believe its resonance to be less safe and substantial than the one of hard power.

Someone believes that the goals are achievable only through the use of payments or threats or through control or command, while in the past years, soft power's influence has had great results. The power of attraction can exercise on other countries the desire of imitation of a certain policy or approach. Furthermore, the context makes the difference because, to obtain certain results there should be at least a similar cultural base.

Other sceptics criticize the use of the term soft power in politics due to the fact that it is related to something invisible and intangible that can be difficult to manage.

Anyway, even if soft power is not directly connected to something practical, attraction can generate great influence and has a notable effect, so it is not wrong to utilize soft power even in politics. Governments and politicians consider command and payments as more efficient in terms of outcomes and sometimes they are critic toward the power of persuasion. In the countries wherein there is a diffuse trust in soft power, the policies work efficiently. It always belongs on the right use and how it has been exploited. The nongovernmental organizations and universities are applying soft power measures more than governments, and their influence is quite consistent on the international scenario<sup>12</sup>.

It is natural and obvious that soft power cannot solve all the problems present in the world, but its accurate application can give a great incentive to the international community.

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<sup>12</sup> J.Nye, *Soft power: the means to success in world politics*, Public Affairs, 2004, p.17-18

#### **1.4 The evolvement of soft power during the years**

During the last decade, soft power has globally gained more popularity and its language is very simple and comprehensible.

As it has been mentioned above, the term soft power is recent as its policies has not been discovered a long time ago. Many states are adopting soft power measures and it is necessary to analyze them more specifically.

Russia, Qatar and Great Britain have promoted sport and culture; Brazil, until its financial crisis was one on the main exponent and promoter of soft power; China is expanding its horizons towards the European markets.

The BBC World Service has received supplementary funds from the State in order to bring the soft power messages also in those countries wherein just hard measures are taken into consideration, such as North Korea.

Until the Iraq War, United States of America had the primacy on the promotion of persuasion and attraction power and they were the first believers in the soft power's project. However the Iraq War has changed something and US started losing ground on its efficiency and credibility as a leader. Still today the American government plays an important role and has its primacy thanks to the most prestigious universities because the Americans know how to manage power and they are the most serious players<sup>13</sup>.

Nowadays, many competitors exist both in Europe and Asia.

Europe is the strongest competitors of US because of its unlimited culture, music and arts. Europe has a great influence on the other states because of its variety in languages and habits and its multiethnic populations. Anyway, Europe is a federation of states that, if they act separately, they cannot compete with US, but if they collaborate and unite their forces, they can reach good results in the solution of international issues.

Europe has participated actively during the Iraq War, by bringing a notable support and a positive force; despite many critics, European citizens feel that Europe had and still has a positive impact on foreign affairs.

Recently it has adopted a lot of flexible and new policies, even more than US and the prospective, promoted by European leaders, is a multilateral one, made of multilateral agreements and cooperation.

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<sup>13</sup> D.W. Ellwood, *L'evoluzione del Soft Power*, Il Mulino, Vol. 5 September/October 2016, p.739-754

Among the European states, Great Britain is the country that has taken y the question of soft power more seriously. The British government conceives soft power as a fundamental dimension of its foreign policy and it is trying to gain profits from successful events, such as the Olympic Games.

On the other hand, the other big “Giant” is Asia, considered as competitor both economically and politically.

Asia owns a very ancient culture and it is famous for its fashion and cuisine, as well as for its history. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Asia was a poor power and did not have a good reputation, it was considered a backward side of the planet. Due to the economic growth, it developed a series of modern and more cooperative policies in order to increase both its economy and reputation. Actually Japan is considered the richest Asian country in terms of soft power resources because of its famous brands and its respect of human rights and laws and great civic sense.

China, the largest country in Asia, is trying to renew its image and to endorse cooperative and open policies.

Like Europe, Asia is always more participating in the endorsement of soft power.

Other states are emerging and are observing the effectiveness of soft power policies.

Russia, for example, has made an enormous development during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Initially it was a backward country and the Cold War and the subsequent wars of the former Yugoslavia Republics contributed to worsen its position.

Today Putin’s Russia uses a wide range of instruments to diffuse its messages and propaganda; for example all the most important and recent music festivals have taken place in Russian cities ( such as San Petersburg). Russia has found support from European States and its cultural proposes are shared by foreign governments.

The new concept elaborated in recent times is that social networks, digital companies and start-ups are substituting states and governments in the soft power ranking.

The spread of news and the proposal of soft power policies is faster and could reach at the same time people living at the opposite sides of the globe.

The International Organizations are trying to preserve their roles as promoters of cultural and valid policies, alternative to the hard power ones or to the others proposed by social networks and sites.

## **1.5 Different types and functions of Soft Power**

Soft Power is characterized by a wide variety of dimensions wherein it has the possibility to manifest its impact. At the beginning, soft power was conceived just as a way to persuade or attract other states through diplomacy and strategies aimed at convincing the rest of the world that the way chosen to operate was the best one.

As the years go by, soft power was subjected to a change and it began to be seen also as a mean to impose superiority over other countries. It could be used to demonstrate the power and influence possessed by a person or a country. Nowadays, soft power has different goals: to attract others as more as possible and to show the enormous possibilities owned by a country. Furthermore, soft power is not only related to diplomacy but it can operate in different manners that anyway gravitate around this art.

Culture is the main approach chosen by many European states because they own enough resources to organize exhibitions and events. Arts and fashion can attract foundations to invest their money in the promotion of culture. The cure of this aspect is fundamental to improve the attractiveness and captivation of a State.

Music, as written above, is another great resource that can invite people to participate to festivals and contests. Science and technology are often chosen as instruments to support and sponsor scientific or medical discoveries in order to improve a country's situation and visibility. It is important the educational assortment offered by universities both for domestic and international students in order to increase the enrolments over the years and to expand the prestige all over the world.

Sport is another resource of soft power and in the last few years it is always gaining more consideration. Its expression is visible through financial measures and organization of big events; Great Britain and China have exploited Olympic Games to give the world a different impression and power of their policies.

In addition to the types of soft power, there is a long list on its functions and it can be summarized in some points.

The first function could be the willingness to give a mean to focalize the attention on the sources of immaterial powers that a nation could mobilize by beginning from its values, prosecuting through its heroes, its lifestyle, its institutions, its industrial products and finishing through its domestic and foreign policies. The author Joseph

Nye believed in this first function as the main one, especially during the American's decline.

The second function could be considered to give the nation a goal in order to fill all the gaps and the ideological and psychological emptiness left at the end of the Cold War. It could be a new way to conceive the role of the nation within the world and how the non-military means have contributed to the Occidental triumph over the Soviets, as well as the aim to guarantee the availability of these means in every new clash among civilities.

Another function could be the elaboration of a geopolitical representation comprehensible by everyone. The Americans have always possessed this ability and they have brought everywhere the American conception of the world.

Furthermore in the US, soft power, as cultural product, has had an evolution during the 1990s, which have been similar to the one of the 1920s due to the big economical expansion led by the concept of free market and free regulation. From the end of the 1980s until the end of the 1990s the American movies and multinationals such as McDonald's have been promoted as never before. This "Americanization" of the world would have collected great success and would have been subjected to a huge expansion to the other side of the globe.

At the beginning of the 2000s, soft power has evolved in something different in order to maintain its supremacy in a period when the emerging countries were developing through globalization and informatics revolutions. These countries were competing with the Americans because of their innovative ideas. China and India but also Germany and Japan and the European Union proposed new models of policies and of Welfare State aimed at the populations' and citizens' well-being.

This function of soft power was considered as a threat for the Americans who began to vacillate and to be uncertain on many areas that were previously considered successful features.

Finally the Anti-Americanism has taken place after the Iraq War and so the soft power function as changed even more. The government's goal was to establish again this sort of "American miracle" experienced a decade before. It is a long process that should be constituted both of hard and soft power in a combination called smart power.



Joseph Nye established that even if the recovery is long and difficult, the Americans are able to impose their supremacy on and all over the world once again. It all depends on the future administrations and governments<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> D.W. Ellwood, *L'evoluzione del Soft Power*, Il Mulino, Vol. 5 September/October 2016, p.742

## CHAPTER 2: SPORT AS SOFT POWER

### 2.1 The role of sport within politics

Previously sport has been mentioned as a mean of soft power. The mega-events related to sport give the states the possibility to show their economic and political possibilities to the rest of the world. Sport can be used as a political weapon in order to achieve determinate goals and as François Carrard writes: “the relationship between the political authorities and the world of sport is permanent, often unpredictable and fascinating<sup>15</sup>.”

The relationship between the two is very important and reciprocal because, even if governments have key roles in a country’s decision of political setting, sport can give incentive and play a great role within the “political game.”

Anyway the way in which sport is related to state and then practiced depends on the cultural approach, the richness available to be used for sportive events and on the imprinting adopted by governments. According to Carrard there exist three types of relationship between sport and governments and they are different approaches which often reflect the situation of a country and its position within the international scenario.

The first concept conceives sport as an instrument for the State which has a total control on it; the example of totalitarian states can perfectly fit this first kind of administration. In this case sport cannot be separated from the State’s figure and has not decisional autonomy. The countries that adopt the first concept are considered rigid and authoritarian.

The second concept conceives sport as a private body which has nothing to do with the State. The best example could be the Anglo-Saxon countries which consider sport as belonging to a detached administration. The loans are made by private entities or by people that have economic availability to invest money in this sector.

The third concept conceives sport as a point of balance between the private and public entities. The legal conditions are set up by governments, while the administration of events and practices depends on the public authorities.

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<sup>15</sup> F.Carrard, *Sport and politics on the international scene*, Rivista di studi politici ed internazionali, Vol. 78 n.1 2011, p.25-32

This concept is related to Western states that have to find an equilibrium between the current government and the independent institutions<sup>16</sup>.

These three ways to conceive the relationship that concerns governments and sport is related to a domestic ground. Furthermore the situation changes when the relationship takes place on the international ground.

The United Nations, UNESCO and European Union want to intervene in the support of policies related to sport and try to propose ideas in order to involve the youth in the participation and practice of sport.

These organizations and bodies promote policies concerning the development of sport within everyone's life. There are also some specific ones that organize international events, such as the International Olympic Committee which has the task to organize the Olympic Games and to safeguard the athletes and sports.

It is fundamental to underline the fact that these big events and also athletes attract investments of money and they are good financial resources for the states.

Sport is not just a mean to gain money but also a mean to foster a project of peace-building, or on the contrary it could be an instrument of boycott.

Only one year after the end of the Apartheid, Nelson Mandela who was the elected president, decided to host the Rugby World Cup. Nelson Mandela was black while the majority of the population was and still is white. Rugby was a sport practiced by the upper classes and the black, during the Apartheid regime, did not have the possibility to practice it. The president believed that the preparation of the event and then its subsequent implementation could be an occasion to definitively stop the conflict between the white and the black. It was not an easy goal and the success observed was greater than the one expected<sup>17</sup>.

Another important episode that has to be mentioned is the one of Ping Pong Diplomacy, when the American team of Ping Pong was invited to spend some days in China; It happened during the Cold War and it was the moment in which Mao Tse-Tung started to open a dialogue with the American president Nixon.

Sport is a way to aggregate populations and to find shared agreements for peace-building projects.

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<sup>16</sup> F.Carrard, *Sport and politics on the international scene*, Rivista di studi politici ed internazionali, Vol. 78 n.1 2011, p.25-32

<sup>17</sup> H.M. Nygard and S.Gates, *Soft power at home and abroad: sport diplomacy, politics and peace-building*, International area studies review, vol.16 n.3 2013, p.235-243

Politicians know that a good administration of the sportive sphere could give the state more attractiveness, so they try to exploit as more as possible this resource.

However Sport is not conceived just as a mean of aggregation but also (as written above) as an instrument of boycott. When governments disagree on something both at the domestic and international levels they use some ways to rebel and to protest.

One of the most efficient methods to rebel and protest is the boycott of events or the non-participation of some athletes to international competitions. During the Cold War it was one of the major and most used methods to protest on policies. Many states decided to adopt this kind of disagreement because it could have more resonance and could be more efficient. Nowadays during International events there are countries that prefer to preserve their reputation and to protect their image.

The scandal of doping is famous and actual but also in the past years it was something known but hidden. It happens that some states can boycott events because they perceive that there are athletes who make use of doping substances and they repute unfair to participate in an unequal competition.

The most important point is that the policy of sport has to be confrontational<sup>18</sup>.

It should be a moment wherein politicians have the possibility to confront their policies and their approaches towards foreign issues. By starting from the discussion of sport and organization of events they should arrive at the analysis of something more such as the existing conflicts and the financial crisis.

The conciliatory feature of sport as soft power is relevant and has a great role on the international scene, but the contradictory one is even more decisive and crucial.

## **2.2 The importance of mega events**

Since the new millennium has begun, mega events have received more attention than before. The Olympic Games are considered the most important mega event in the world. Its foundation is dated back to 1896 year in which the Baron Pierre de Coubertin had the genial idea to set up the Games to encourage the collective participation to sport and the achievement of peace. Anyway the Olympic Games have their own Olympic Charter that describes the realization of the event as a moment wherein people from different countries can develop culture, education and

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<sup>18</sup> H.M. Nygard and S.Gates, *Soft power at home and abroad: sport diplomacy, politics and peace-building*, International area studies review, vol.16 n.3 2013, p.235-243

good values. The Olympic Charter is a codification of the main principles adopted by the International Olympic Committee. It is considered the central power and it is composed by 125 members appointed by the IOC. Together with the IOC, the International Federations, the National Olympic Committee and all the organizations that gravitate around the movement, cooperate to realize the Olympic Games every four years<sup>19</sup>. The mechanism to organize the Olympic Games is not easy and the cooperation among these entities should be almost perfect. The process is the subsequent: the host country forms a National Committee that elects an Organizing Committee which cooperates with the IOC and the International Federations.

Even if the organization is really complex the host country gains a lot of economic, political and social advantages by realizing the Olympic Games.

In the moment in which a country decides to host the Olympics and the International Olympic Committee approves the project, the economic budget is considered by the country as the driving force that guides the program.

During the whole preparation for the Olympic Games the host country has to renew its existing infrastructures and has to build new ones in order to perform in the best way. As Malfas wrote in his article: “Expenditures on facility and infrastructure preparation, as well as revenue from visitor spending, ticket and media exposure, from the baseline of the bulk of mega-event analysis<sup>20</sup>.”

The expenditures have to be focused on the construction of buildings and infrastructure, such as Metro stations, in order to facilitate the movements of both the citizens and the hosts. Furthermore the participation to the Olympics can give the possibility to experiment an urban regeneration and an alternative way to demonstrate to other states that the concurrence is high and the competition alive.

During the period preceding the inauguration of the Games, many investments and money’s movements are made by investors and citizens.

The infrastructure that have been built will be used in the future by the population and the money earned will be invested in new projects. The country’s goal is to a give a new and better image of the city, region or state in order to increase its attractiveness towards the other states.

Barcelona can be considered the best example to explain this concept. The Olympics in 1992 gave to the city a great impact and a new consideration.

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<sup>19</sup> IOC, *Marketing revenue: facts and figures of the International Olympic Committee*, Lausanne, 2004

<sup>20</sup> M.Malfas, E. Theodroaki, B.Houljian, *Impacts of the Olympic Games as mega-event*, Municipal Engineer 157 issue ME3, 2004, p. 209-220

Another important economic aspect that emerges when a country decides to host the Games is the creation of new job places. The construction of buildings and infrastructures need more people available for working and this generates more number of jobs for the entire period preceding the event and during its realization.

The enlargement of job is not only related to those regarding the event's organization but also to those related to tourism and the third sector. The duration of these jobs depends on how the state is able to manage them after the end of the Games.

Often can happen that at the end of the manifestation many jobs have not the reason to exist and so there could be a high degree of unemployment as it was after the Cape Town 2004 Olympic bid; the majority of these jobs are part-time or low-paid<sup>21</sup>.

The analysis on the economic impact that the Olympic Games can have on a country is very relevant; the socio-cultural one is even more important.

The situation could be different if a country is in a positive period or if it is having a moment of deep poverty or crisis. If the country that hosts the Olympic is rich and prosperous it has more possibilities to strengthen its richness and visibility. The case is different when a country has experimented a hard period and considers the Games as a potential mean to enlarge its economic and socio-cultural condition.

In this case it can bolster the values and traditions and also increase the national pride and invigorate the attachment to homeland. By increasing the level of sport activities and by attracting even more people to participate to sport events can be a quality for the individual and the community and as Hooper asserted the participation to sport is often a way to feel a general well-being through both the physical practice and fun.

Especially those sports that are related to team practice can increase cohesion and friendship through the individuals<sup>22</sup>.

It has been noted that, after the Olympic Games, the cities responsible for the organization have improved their image and have registered more participation to sport. Furthermore all the installations utilized for the event have been used again by the citizens and many of them are still utilize to host mega-events.

The impact on the youth is the biggest one because they are inspired by watching the competitions on the television and want to be an active part in the physical practice.

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<sup>21</sup> H.H.Hiller, *Mega- events,urban boosterism and growth strategies: an analysis of the objectives and legitimations of the Cape Town 2004 Olympic bid*, International journal of urban and regional research, Vol.24.2, June 2000, p.439-458

<sup>22</sup> I.Hooper, *Sport and the city: the role of sport in economic and social generation*, The value of sport in urban generation, Routledge, London 2011

The political part is the last relevant part that has to be examined. For “political” we do not just mean the debates around the Olympic Games or how the politicians take decisions, but it means also the administration before the event. The main difficulty belongs to the covering of all the costs and the balance between them and benefits.

The costs for the realization of this huge manifestation include the money spent for the construction of new buildings, the sponsorship and the television rights.

Anyway the role of the leaders in such a moment is to distribute the costs as best as they can. Furthermore they should find new sponsors and try to attract other countries or organizations to participate to the monetary financing.

It is fundamental the role played by the organizations and privates that can glimpse their supports as a profitable way to gain advantages for themselves.

Therefore mega-events are considered as an opportunity to emerge and to acquire credibility. It is for this reason that some politicians make alliances with others who do not belong to their same faction in order to sustain campaigns to persuade the citizens to host the Olympics. The scientist Lenskyj defined these kinds of alliances as “Politics of Place” because they are aimed to influence and convince citizens that the city after the Olympics will be transformed and that the impact will be positive<sup>23</sup>.

The Politics of Place it is utilized to justify the tax system and the monetary action.

The last analysis regarding politics is the one on the Committees delegated to the organization of the mega-events. The Committees include the politicians of every country and are elected to perform this role.

They are often subjected to pressures both from the Organizing Committee for the Games and from their domestic policy and they try to balance their power on both the sides.

It is relevant to underline that the Olympic Games bring advantages and disadvantages and the efforts made by the Organizing Committee and by the International Olympic Committee are aimed at the resolution of problems and at the best success of the event.

To host the Olympics or a mega-event is not an easy task but it can be a resource for the organizing country and it can be a driver of values and principles.

In addition to the economic and social benefits, the Olympic Games can be a way to attract other countries and to emphasize the power of sport.

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<sup>23</sup> H.J.Lenskyj, *Inside the Olympic industry: power, politics and activism*, State of New York University Press, Albany, 2000

### 2.3 The role of athletes: Tommie Smith's case

The story of Tommie was an American track and field athlete who, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1968, won the 200 meter-sprint finals at the Olympics Games of Mexico City.

During the ceremony for the medal's assignment, Tommie Smith and his teammate John Carlos did the most famous protest gesture of the Olympic Games: they went up on the podium without shoes and wearing a black glove each one which was the symbol for the support of the movement called "Olympic Project for Human Rights." As Tommie Smith wrote in his autobiography: "On the night of October 16, 1968, I had stood on a platform on the infield of the Olympic Stadium in Mexico City, with a gold medal around my neck, black socks on my feet, and a glove on the right fist I had thrust in the air<sup>24</sup>."

The reactions to the gesture were different and various: someone supported the choice mad by the two athletes but the major part of the people criticized it.

The historic moment was difficult and turbulent, the black population was still discriminated and Martin Luther King, who defended the rights for black, was just assassinated.

Tommie Smith felt a lot of fear as a consequence of his gesture but he never denied what he did because he believed in his values and in a population's equality.

By continuing with the autobiography he wrote: "That was my victory stand. Not only because I had won the gold medal in the 200-meter final half a hour earlier in world record time. This was my platform, the one I had earned by years of training my body and my mind for the ultimate achievement. The athletic achievement paved a road toward my quest for a social victory, where everyone would be listening to and watching my statement about the conditions in which my people and I were living in the greatest country in the world<sup>25</sup>."

This event remained in the memories of many people and it was relevant to start to change something in the conception of equality among populations and communities. The point that has to be underlined is that athletes are not just means to gain success for the countries and they are not just ways to make money and to sponsor brands and industries.

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<sup>24</sup> T.Smith and D. Steele, *Silent gesture: the autobiography of Tommie Smith*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2007, p.1-2

<sup>25</sup> See note 24



Athletes, mainly during mega-event manifestations, can be considered as drivers of values. They can be source of inspiration for the youth and they can bring important messages to the world. Everyone is watching them and, beyond the fact that they are attractions for the people, they can exploit their figure in order to become symbols for the nation.

Tommie Smith has brought one of the most important messages in the world. He protested for a more equal respect of human rights and in particular for the black population's respect.

He risked his life for a worthwhile principle and even if there were oppositions to his gesture, the message was received as clear and powerful.

Athletes can be promoters of a good and health lifestyle and of the respect of human rights. During the competitions they are enemy just for the duration of the race; at the end of it they are friends independently to the colour of the skin or to the religions the believe in.

Mega-event, such as the Olympic games, are fundamental to show the world how the athletes act and how they can be pillars for the promotion of values and principles.

## **2.4 Communication and the role of media**

During the mega-event the media role is one of the most influential factor for the success of the manifestation. If there is the desire of a great impact on the spectators there should be a good organization of the communication.

Furthermore the television coverage and the attraction of sponsorship determine the relevance of an event: the coverage degree is directly proportional to the event's relevance.

Anyway the media coverage is also important for the costs paid to create the event and to avoid the accumulation of debts.

The 1991 World Student Games in Sheffield had a poor media coverage and created debts for the organizers. Even if the event was a great starting point for the renewal of the city's image, the costs were more than the benefits and the fail of the media coverage contributed to the debts' enlargement<sup>26</sup>.

There have been numerous studies on the impact of media coverage and on the attraction they are able to exercise.

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<sup>26</sup> M.Roche, *Mega-events and urban policy*, Annals of Tourism Research, 1994, 21, N.1, p.1-19

Among these scientists there is Morphet who argued that the media are fundamental in order to acquire more awareness for the host city. After mega-events, a city that has well exploited the media, will never be the same again because it will live of success and recognition by the world<sup>27</sup>

Anyway it is not granted that the media coverage is connected to a different host city's image for the tourists. There was a famous study on the city of Gothenburg that organized the 1995 World Athletics Championship, on the event's impact on the foreigners. The study revealed that just few tourists connected the new image of the city of Gothenburg with the realization of such event. It means that even if there was a media coverage it was not enough to sponsor the information about the World Championship<sup>28</sup>.

Furthermore, two other scientists, Ritchie and Smith, found out that the city of Calgary, lost its credibility and attractiveness after the 1988 Winter Olympic Games. Compared to United States and other Canadian city, Calgary's games resulted a failure<sup>29</sup>.

The ability consists in the acquisition of rights in order to transmit as more as possible all the competitions related to the events. Another ability consists in the utilization of advertising. Both journals and advertising boards can contribute to the enlargement of news.

All the organizers have to plan in detail the media coverage and the advertising in order to gain more success for the host city and the citizens that can enjoy advantages from the realization of a mega-event.

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<sup>27</sup> J.Morphet, *The real thing*, Town and country planning, 1996, N.11, p.312-314

<sup>28</sup> L.Mosberg, *The event market*, Annals of tourism research, 1997, 27, N.3, p.748-751

<sup>29</sup> J.R.Rithice and H.B. Smith, *The impact of a mega-event on host awareness: a longitudinal study*, Journal of travel research, 1991, 30, N.1, p. 3-10

## CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDIES CHINA AND UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### 3.1 American soft power

The United States of America have always had a tradition in terms of soft power. They have been one of the first countries to promote the expansion of soft power in all its aspects. Sport has had a privileged place and athletes were a mean to show the power of the country.

Anyway it is important to recall the historical background of US in order to better understand the causes that have led to a disempowerment of its soft power.

During the past century the American presidents have put attention on soft power by promoting the export of movies and in particular by sponsoring Hollywood and its production.

The president Roosevelt firmly believed that a country's security was in its ability to speak and to find support of citizens in other countries<sup>30</sup>. Meanwhile the Second World War he strongly promoted the information and created a Office of Wartime Information (OWI). Journals, radio and medias in general were considered a way to show attractiveness and power.

Furthermore the American policy was famous because of its capacity to contain the Cold War and solve the conflict through a strategy that combined both soft and hard power.

The American universities were considered as the most prestigious in the world because of their programmes and hospitality towards the foreigners. Sport was a compulsory activity practiced at school and then within university. Many students that were particularly able in some sports were supported both economically and psychologically by the governments and all the associations that gravitated around it.

Anyway the situation was prosperous until the invasion of Iraq. US lost most of its power with the beginning of terrorism and its position became more vulnerable.

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<sup>30</sup> <sup>30</sup> J.S.Nye, *Diplomacy and Soft Power*, SAGE Journals, The annals of the American Academy, March 2008, Vol.616, issue 1

In 2007 the BBC published an opinion poll made on twenty-five countries: the result for US was really negative and underlined that it played a negative role within the international scenario.

In addition, some polls conducted by Gallup International have found out that Washington's policies had a negative impact on the total opinion of United States and it showed that many Europeans consider the Americans' decisions as noxious and harmful for the International Community<sup>31</sup>.

As written above, many of the problems related to the American's decline of soft power have to be connected to the Iraq invasion and the explosion of terrorism. Soft power has little consideration when it concerns terrorism: Osama Bin Laden and in general the Islamic world rejected the ideas and values endorsed by US. Anyway it is fundamental to underline that not all the Islamic World adopts this extremist point of view. Even within the same religious contest there exists a division between extremists and moderates. During the last decade, the American government has tried to challenge terrorism by invading Iraq and adopting a policy of contrast, but results were scarce. Terrorism is a widespread phenomena and it is difficult to stop it. There are some scientists that have proposed alternative solutions: the best way to challenge violence and terrorist attacks could be a strong alliance with the moderate part of the Islamic World.

Public diplomacy could be an alternative and a determinative way to communicate with the Islamic part and to find a compromise able to secure citizens' lives.

Another important aspect that has to be mentioned is that, in the years following the Cold War, the American government has preferred to save money and to preserve its resources and they neglected in the cure of soft power. Politicians made the wrong choices because that period was the one of information's explosion. Many problems that arose after 2001 are related to this willingness to save money more than to invest it in soft power.

US has all the possibility to re-establish a political program aimed at the strengthen of soft power. There have been proposed many solutions. Among the most famous ones there are two that could best fit the issue.

In the short term United States have to accelerate the process of responding by media to the rest of the world and have to establish stronger bonds with other countries' media collection.

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<sup>31</sup> J.S.Nye, *The Decline of America's Soft power*, Foreign Affairs, May/June 2004

In the medium term the government has to find key themes to propose the policies and to promote the American political model.

The purposes have to be positive and constructive without military intervention, while it has been done during the past conflicts.

The long term program is the most difficult one because it include the change of values and principles in order to create a society more open to the rest of the world, in particular to the Arab one.

Even if the situation is hopeless, in this contest sport as soft power has always played a positive role.

The promotion of sport within education and the support given to the athletes who want to emerge have maintained US at the top of the international soft power ranking.

In the United States athletes are seen as idols and some of them are chosen as promoters of international campaigns. They can write on journals as it happens on the online journal “The Player Tribune”.

In one of the publication there is an interview done to a Muslim American Fencer and she wrote: “ I realize the importance of being the first Muslim woman to compete for Team USA. I am an image of change<sup>32</sup>.”

The space dedicated to athletes and to sport is very important and it has a huge resonance not only in US but also in the rest of the world.

Some of them become icons of fashion or celebrities, and the messages that they bring can reach all the citizens and even if they are not considered politicians, the way in which they communicate can influence many people and try to change their points of view.

Furthermore, the attention posed on the Olympics Games has collected its results. Los Angeles has been elected as the host city for the 2028 Olympic Games. This victory underlines the American willingness to impose again its supremacy as soft power proponent because it is through the valorisation of sport that United States can achieve great results in terms of attractiveness and persuasion towards other countries.

The change must to start both from a renewal of the American values and also from the views and prospective the citizens have towards the foreigners.

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<sup>32</sup> I.Muhammad, *The face of change*, The players tribune, July 20 2016.

The US has suffered a crisis of soft power ideals but it has various resources to exploit in order to reach again its status as international super power.

### **3.2 Chinese soft power**

The analysis made on US soft power has revealed that the American supremacy has had its most glorious period during the past century but that from 2001, things went wrongly. It is nowadays that the situation is changing positively again.

China has a different story and a completely opposite background.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century China was a backward country in terms of public diplomacy and in the use of soft power.

The culture the Chinese possess is a precious resource as the Singaporean Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew declared: “Soft power is achieved only when other nations admire and want to emulate aspects of that nation’s civilization<sup>33</sup>.”

The Tang Dynasty has been the most important because it has increased the diffusion of Chinese culture to neighbouring countries, as it happened immediately after the Mao Tse Tung period of governance.

China expanded not only its culture all over the world but also its language which has become known by many populations that had the willingness to learn it.

There has been the institution of Confucius schools in various countries in order to provide Chinese education and to promote a positive image of China; the spread of Chinese culture attracted always more foreign students to move to live in China and in neighbouring countries. This process has led to an increase in the Chinese economy and to a real economic boom. As the Chinese enrolment saw expansion, on the other side, the American education had a considerable decline.

The Asiatic students prefer to remain in Asia and to study close to their native country more than to move in US because the educational courses were as prestigious as those in China.

Anyway, as stated above, this decline in American education and the subsequent growth in the Chinese one, coincides with the 11 September 2001<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> L.P.Foo, *Only the Tang dynasty came close to having influence*, The Straits Times, 26 October 1996

<sup>34</sup> A. McGrath, *A loss of foreign talent*, U.S. News and World Report, 22 November 2004, p.76

During the last decade, China started to improve its image and acquired more recognition by other states, including Western countries that begun to consider it a super power not just in economic terms but also on a cultural and diplomatic ground. Chinese soft power developed rapidly and has reached successful results.

Anyway there are still some issues wherein China intervenes with hard power means, as it happens with the Taiwan Island that does not want a reunification with China or the difficult relationship with the region of Tibet.

It is not always able to influence other countries as it would like to because sometimes the means of soft power are not solid enough to exercise their functions.

There exist three main reasons why China lacks ability on the exercise of soft power. The first one is the imbalance of soft power resources that consists in the misused of cultural resources. Even if the products made in China are exported everywhere, the brands and icons are still not recognized by big giants such as South Korea or United States that have supremacy on the market. It does not have a company which is emulated by other ones. There should be a sort of inspiration in order to establish competitive companies able to be attractive for other states.

The second issue is the one related to diplomacy and specifically to the problem of legitimacy. In the Chinese case it means that the form of government chosen is in contrast with the use of soft power. Nye pointed out that soft power is more effective when it is utilized in countries wherein democracy and freedom are at the bases of the government. Anyway China is improving its contacts with other governments and it is creating closer bonds with neighbouring countries. It has to improve human rights and some norms in order to fit the issues related to culture.

The last problem is related to the incoherence in the promotion of foreign policy: sometimes it prevails the nationalistic sentiments over the willingness to find a convenient compromise in order to build stable relationships with other nations<sup>35</sup>.

Anyway China is utilizing soft power means since few years and it is not fully able to manage it. It is doing many steps to improve the situation but it is still rude and primitive in some situation. Even if US has faced many problems during the last decade, they have utilized soft power since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and they are able to solve complicated dilemmas.

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<sup>35</sup> B.Gill and Y.Huang, *Sources and limits of Chinese soft power*, Survival, Summer 2006, vol.48, N.2, p.17-36

In order to be a competitive nation in terms of soft power it should modernize the institutional sector both regarding domestic and foreign policy and it has to make progresses in terms of scarcity of environmental resources.

China has been perceptive to exploit the moment of US soft power's decline to demonstrate its abilities and qualities and has found its strategic points in tradition, culture and also sportive practice.

In 2008 there have taken place the Olympic Games that were an enormous opportunity to show the development of the country.

The results were really positive because Beijing was able to demonstrate all the efforts put in the organization of this mega-event and how it was perfectly coordinated. Even if before there was a particular attention to sport, since 2008 China supported always more the best athletes of the nations by giving them encouragement and protection.

During the 2012 Olympic Games, China has won thirty-eight golden medals: this demonstrates all the dedication spent for sport.

The Olympic Games and the Universal Exposition set up in Shanghai 2010 are events that underline the Chinese willingness to occupy a notorious place as member of the international community<sup>36</sup>.

### **3.3 US and China**

US and China are countries with huge differences: culture, tradition, politics, values and many others divergent aspects.

US have been for several years the first country in the soft power ranking: it had the ability in the art of diplomacy and have always demonstrate the capacity of an intelligent use of its resources. Anyway the crisis of values and the decline in soft power due to invasion of Iraq and explosion of terrorism, have led United States in a backward position.

During these years the government is trying to increase soft power and to strengthen Sportive practice.

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<sup>36</sup> L.Riccardi, *Soft power cinese: medaglie olimpiche e istituti di cultura per contrastare l'influenza americana*, Corriere Asia, website available here: <http://www.corriereasia.com/notizie/soft-power-cinese-medaglie-olimpiche-istituti-di-cultura-contrastare-linfluenza>



On the other side, China was in the last positions in the soft power's ranking, but with the improvement of culture and valorisation of tradition it was able to increase its situation and to become as competitive as United States.

The primacy remains in the American's hands because of its talent demonstrated in various occasion. China is still evolving its image and probably will become competitive not only under the sportive or economic aspect but also under the political and diplomatic ones.

These two countries are the first who best optimize the use of soft power.

## **Conclusion**

In my elaborate I analyzed the concepts of power and its various forms of manifestation.

By beginning with the most famous scientists such as Hobbes, Weber and Foucault, the discussion of power has shifted to its more modern forms.

It is not easy to find an approach of power that could be shared by all because power is evolving everyday in different manners and it could not be closed in a single category.

The part I wanted to underline was the one with the analysis of hard, soft and smart power. They can be defined as distinctive ways to put in practice the theories of power.

Nations and governments, according to the situations they are living in, can decide which practice could best fit the necessity they have or they could utilize a combination of them.

Anyway the elaborate was concentrated on the soft power's discussion and Joseph Nye, who is considered the "founding father" of this theory has provided a satisfactory definition of it.

He tried to analyze the various forms of soft power and how, specifically, United States have evolved during the years according to the different functions power has to fulfil.

Among the various faces of soft power there is sport. My thesis was aimed to demonstrate how sport can change political and economic situations and how it can strengthen and empower values and traditions.

In this part it was notable the role of athletes as icons and supporters of policies aimed at the improvement of the nation.

Athletes together the intervention of the media are the pillars for the success of mega-events that are means to achieve richness and popularity.

The most famous mega-event is considered the organization of the Olympic Games that always give the host country the possibility to show its attractiveness, abilities and resources.

It happened that the Olympic Games have changed the image of a city or of a whole nation or that during some of them there were specific events that have been used as examples to spread values or to initiate different policies.

The last part of my thesis was dedicated to a case study: a comparison between China and US and how these two nations utilize soft power.

The task of this thesis is the one to understand if soft power is still useful to the world and if yes, which are the best ways to reach determinate goals.

Through this study I realized that soft power is important for domestic and foreign policies and that the results achieved during the years are more substantial than those achieved through hard power means

It is relevant the role played by sport and an improvement of the sportive practice could be successful for a nation's policy.

The politicians should attract people to practice sport and should support athletes during their careers in order to guarantee them all the instruments they could need.

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## **Abstract**

La tesi da me trattata è uno studio approfondito sul ruolo dello sport all'interno del panorama sociale, economico e perlopiù politico.

In tutto il trattato da me scritto c'è un sostenimento attivo dello sport in modo da illustrare come esso può essere un indicatore chiave di alcuni cambiamenti che sono avvenuti nel mondo nel corso degli ultimi anni.

La tesi è stata strutturata su tre capitoli: un primo più introduttivo che ha lo scopo di esaminare il concetto di potere e le varie teorie proposte da importanti filosofi quali Weber, Foucault, Hobbes e Lukes. Le diverse teorie sono poste a confronto tra di loro in modo da rendere il panorama filosofico più ampio. Nel secondo paragrafo l'attenzione è concentrata sui concetti di Hard, Soft and Smart power, ovvero sui tre metodi utilizzati dai governi o più generalmente dai sistemi politici per affrontare tematiche attuali quali ad esempio una crisi economica o più generalmente per dirigere alcuni progetti economici e sociali.

Nel terzo paragrafo, dopo aver illustrato esaustivamente le tre tipologie di "power", l'analisi è volta all'approfondimento del Soft power, termine coniato dal politologo statunitense Joseph Samuel Nye. Il soft power è l'argomento principe della tesi. Il pilastro attorno al quale vertono tutti gli altri paragrafi.

A seguire, la ricerca si concentra sull'evoluzione del soft power durante gli anni e in particolare sul ruolo detenuto dagli Stati Uniti fino all'esplosione della guerra in Iraq.

Nell'ultimo paragrafo del primo capitolo, avendo esaminato già il ruolo del soft power all'interno della cornice politica, si valutano i diversi e ulteriori ruoli che esso può avere per una nazione o uno stato.

Il secondo capitolo, considerato dalla sottoscritta il capitolo centrale e più significativo della tesi, osserva come lo sport possa essere utilizzato dagli stati per compiere manovre politiche e influenzare altri stati ad agire come essi stessi

desiderano. L'influenza che lo sport può avere nello scenario internazionale è rilevante e notevole.

In questo contesto i media svolgono un compito importante e possono aumentare o diminuire lo "share" di attenzione della popolazione durante alcuni eventi sportivi specifici. Ed è proprio durante i grandi eventi sportivi quali le Olimpiadi che possono essere messi in atto cambiamenti significativi. In questi momenti, cruciali sono gli atleti stessi che con la loro personalità e influenza possono condizionare gli spettatori e cercare di essere portatori di messaggi alternativi e "rivoluzionari".

Nell'ultimo capitolo viene strutturato un cosiddetto case-study, ovvero viene messo a fuoco il fenomeno o la teoria in maniera da dare un esempio pratico. In questo caso, il paragone più rilevante poteva essere quello tra Stati Uniti e Cina.

La tesi viene aperta da un' introduzione e viene terminata da una conclusione.

Ad ogni modo reputo importante l'analisi specifica dei tre capitoli così da delucidare in maniera più esaustiva il tema da me scelto.

Durante il corso dei secoli, vari filosofi, politologi e scienziati si sono interrogati sul concetto di potere e sulle varie forme che esso può prendere a seconda del contesto nel quale viene inserito. Tra gli esponenti più famosi e tra coloro che più si sono dedicati allo studio del potere, troviamo Weber, Foucault, Hobbes e Lukes. Weber sostiene che il potere sia niente altro che la possibilità che ha il genere umano di raggiungere le proprie volontà e desideri tramite azioni e scelte che contrastino quelle fatte da altre persone. La strada scelta per raggiungere il proprio scopo non deve essere abbandonata solo perché differente da quelle già intraprese precedentemente. Weber crede che il potere provenga dalle autorità che desidera dividere in tre tipologie. L'autorità tradizionale, ovvero il potere esercitato per via ereditaria che può essere incarnato da un monarca e che trova la sua massima collocazione nelle dinastie durante il periodo feudale. L'autorità carismatica invece è esercitata da una persona o una figura che detiene particolari attitudini caratteriali che gli permettono di avere influenza sulla popolazione. Tra questi troviamo la figura di Gandhi. La terza autorità è la cosiddetta legale-razionale che pone le sue basi sull'idea di democrazia e impersonalità. Il potere, in questo caso, viene esercitato da

una figura che lo ha ottenuto tramite metodi democratici. Essa viene ritenuta tipica dei sistemi politici moderni ed attuali.

Lukes si distacca da Weber e propone un modello di potere basato su una visione tridimensionale. La prima dimensione è concepita come l'abilità di prendere decisioni qualora si palesi un conflitto di interessi o anche come il comportamento messo in atto da un individuo in modo che un altro individuo agisca come il primo desidera. La seconda dimensione è l'abilità di un individuo di esercitare il controllo delle decisioni prese durante la fase della prima dimensione, il controllo viene esercitato tramite restrizioni e obblighi. La terza ed ultima dimensione consiste nell'abilità di manipolare le decisioni già prese da altri individui.

Se Lukes si distacca da Weber proponendo le tre dimensioni che però in qualche modo ancora sono legate a quelle del sociologo tedesco, Foucault vi si distacca completamente proponendo l'idea per cui non sono le autorità a dover esercitare il potere ma principalmente persone che possiedono specifiche abilità.

Hobbes, d'altra parte, riconosce il potere come mezzo per la salvaguardia personale. Il genere umano è nato con i poteri naturali e strumentali. Quelli naturali si riconoscono nella forza, nella calma, nella nobiltà mentre quelli strumentali sono perlopiù un'aggiunta a quelli naturali quindi l'acquisizione di reputazione e amicizie che possano permettere più esercizio del potere.

Il potere per essere rispettato deve essere trasferito nelle mani di un'autorità che garantisca il rispetto e la libertà di ogni uomo all'interno di una comunità. Solo così un sistema politico e sociale può funzionare nel migliore dei modi.

Nella sua concezione più moderna il potere è stato diviso tra Hard e Soft. Sono due emisferi opposti che possono o entrare in collisione, o essere utilizzati entrambi allo stesso tempo o solamente uno alla volta. Nel caso in cui si utilizzi l'hard power, si intende l'impiego di poteri economici e perlopiù militari per eseguire una manovra politica. Durante il ventesimo secolo è stato il mezzo prescelto per scopi politici se si pensa solamente alle due guerre mondiali. Il politologo Nye ha proposto però l'impiego del soft power nel panorama politico, ovvero la forza di attrarre altri paesi ad agire come si desidera. Prima di approfondire la tematica del soft power e quali sono le modalità che si prediligono, è importante specificare che spesso i governi preferiscono adottare entrambi i tipi di potere, facendoli coincidere. In questo modo



si può parlare di smart power: l'utilizzo intelligente e ponderato dei due poteri nello stesso momento.

Come ho riportato precedentemente il soft power è quel potere che non ricorre a mezzi militari o prettamente economici per il raggiungimento dello scopo ma ne predilige altri. Sono mezzi persuasivi ed attrattivi che influenzano altri stati a seguire la politica già adattata da un altro stato in modo da imitarne il modello.

Esistono tre principali risorse alle quali le nazioni si appellano nel momento in cui decidono di impiegare il soft power: la cultura, i valori politici e la politica estera.

La cultura è considerata come un insieme di valori e tradizioni in cui si trovano letteratura, arte ed educazione ma anche più generalmente intrattenimento di massa. La cultura e i progetti culturali possono attrarre paesi e turisti ad aderire ad alcune iniziative promosse quali festival, concerti, mostre. Inoltre, quando si palesano manifestazioni di questo genere, la nazione ospitante e promotrice può sfruttare l'occasione per mostrare ad altri paesi quali sono i valori tradizionali e quali sono le basi su cui poggiano i principi ed il senso civico. La classe politica dovrebbe assecondare le richieste ed il volere dei cittadini cercando di educarli a questi principi creando eventi che valorizzino la politica stessa e la nazione in senso più ampio. Ed è sempre la classe politica che si deve occupare dei rapporti diplomatici e degli affari esteri. La politica estera, dovrebbe essere basata sul rispetto dei diritti umani e sul rifiuto delle armi atomiche. I governi in carica e che detengono il potere, spesso si appoggiano a organizzazioni non governative o ad università che spingono la gioventù ad abbracciare alcuni valori sani e pacifici.

Il soft power durante il corso degli anni ha cambiato volto più volte. All'inizio il primato era detenuto dagli Stati Uniti che erano i primi nelle statistiche mondiali. Sicuramente l'intervento in Iraq ha indebolito la posizione americana lasciando la possibilità ad altre nazioni di emergere e di scalare più posizioni nelle statistiche mondiali. Tra queste troviamo Qatar, Gran Bretagna, Brasile e Cina.

Per quanto riguarda la Gran Bretagna, il governo inglese ha cercato di allargare i propri orizzonti in politica estera, anche se molti valori rimangono quelli tradizionali. Nel 2012 la città di Londra ha ospitato i Giochi Olimpici e la nazione ha potuto mostrare la sua potenza al mondo intero. Nonostante in Europa sia una delle promotrici del soft power, a livello internazionale deve interfacciarsi con i grandi

giganti asiatici quali Cina, Corea del Sud e Giappone. Ed è proprio la Cina che negli ultimi anni ha fatto progressi nel campo del soft power, prima ospitando le Olimpiadi del 2008 a Pechino e in seguito adottando politiche specifiche anche sul piano internazionale. Il Giappone è attualmente considerato il paese più ricco in termini di risorse del soft power mentre la Corea del Sud ha migliorato di molto la sua economia.

Negli ultimi tempi è risultato notevole il compito che ha avuto lo sport nella politica, addirittura ormai viene considerato parte integrante della politica di un paese, una risorsa enorme per colmare disattenzioni e mancanze, ma anche un mezzo per arricchire le potenzialità di una nazione. La relazione sport-politica prende varie forme a seconda del tipo di governo che esiste in quel momento. Negli stati totalitari la relazione può essere considerata unilaterale, in quanto lo stato ha il pieno controllo dell'attività sportiva e dell'organizzazione di mega-eventi. Nella seconda tipologia lo sport invece è considerato come un'industria privata, un business nel quale i finanziamenti provengono da enti privati e nel quale lo stato non interviene mai. Infine il terzo modello proposto riguarda una piena integrazione tra sport e politica in cui enti privati e pubblici collaborano continuamente per obiettivi comuni.

Lo sport attualmente viene utilizzato per campagne politiche e promozionali, per sponsorizzare eventi sportivi, per dare un'immagine migliore di uno stato. È un potentissimo metodo per mostrare e dimostrare le capacità detenute da un popolo. D'altra parte però può essere anche di aiuto nel caso in cui ci fosse la volontà di boicottare scelte politiche del governo come ad esempio accadde durante la Guerra Fredda. Ultimamente lo scandalo del doping ha portato molti paesi partecipanti a boicottare competizioni internazionali in modo da creare disagi sia alle altre nazionali in gara ma anche al paese ospitante l'evento. Sono messaggi diretti e forti che possono cambiare le sorti di una scelta governativa e politica.

Ed è specialmente durante i grandi eventi sportivi che televisioni, giornali, promulgano notizie di protesta o di adesione ad alcune politiche. Fondamentale è anche quindi il ruolo ricoperto dai media. Essi possono decretare un aumento o una diminuzione di partecipazione attiva ad un evento. Ci sono state Olimpiadi che sono state organizzate nei minimi dettagli ma che non sono state supportate dai media in modo adeguato e che quindi non hanno avuto il successo sperato. Altri eventi, talvolta di minore importanza, hanno riscosso un successo maggiore. Bisogna però

anche specificare che molto dipende dall'investimento messo in atto. Nel momento in cui si decide di ospitare un' Olimpiade si deve considerare un'analisi approfondita di costi e benefici, che devono risultare in equilibrio; qualora si dovesse presentare uno squilibrio dovrebbe essere sempre spostato verso i benefici e mai sui costi. L'olimpiade di Atene ha influenzato in maniera fortemente negativa l'economia della Grecia che dal 2004 ha aggravato la sua situazione economica. Esempio positivo può invece essere considerato quello della città di Barcellona che dal 1992 in poi ha aumentato il numero di turisti ogni anno e che ha rivoluzionato moltissime infrastrutture proprio in occasione dei Giochi Olimpici.

In un paragrafo della mia tesi ho dedicato anche uno spazio alla figura degli atleti. Ci sono stati atleti che hanno combattuto campagne per il rispetto dei diritti umani e ce ne sono altri che tuttora partecipano attivamente alla vita politica. Oltre all'eclatante gesto compiuto da Tommie Smith, esistono tanti altri atleti di rilievo minore che si spendono per valori in cui credono fermamente.

Ritengo importante concludere con un confronto pratico tra due super-potenze: Cina e America.

Come accennato già precedentemente queste due nazioni si sono alternate nella "conquista" del primo posto della classifica mondiale del migliore utilizzo di mezzi di soft power.

Gli Stati Uniti hanno primeggiato per numerosi anni, mostrando abilità sempre più definite e sono stati considerati i più specializzati ed esperti in questo campo. Le università americane hanno sempre promosso l'attività sportiva e si sono messe a disposizione degli atleti di prestigio per incoraggiarli allo studio senza abbandonare lo sport. L'America era considerata come eccellenza nell'utilizzo del soft power fino all'intervento in Iraq che ha cambiato la situazione di politica interna ed estera. Ha perso credibilità e attrazione ed è stata rivalutata da molti studiosi e politologi. Nello stesso momento altre nazioni hanno cominciato ad emergere e tra queste spicca la Cina. Dopo l'impronta comunista di Mao Tse-Tung, il governo cinese ha considerato proficua un'apertura maggiore al mercato occidentale. Ha incrementato la produzione a basso costo e l'esportazione. La crescita esponenziale dell'economia ha portato un'apertura verso altri campi e la volontà di investire in altre attività quali lo sport. La diffusione della lingua cinese è stato un fattore determinante nella crescita

della Cina come nazione. Sono stati stabiliti istituti di lingua cinese in tutto il mondo che hanno reso l'espansione più rapida ed efficace su piano politico.

Nel 2008 la Cina ha ospitato i Giochi Olimpici e da allora ha guadagnato fama e rispetto da parte dei paesi occidentali.

Il governo americano ha intercettato questa crescita e sentendosi "minacciato" ha promosso politiche volte al supporto sportivo e all'utilizzo del soft power.

In conclusione, nonostante lo sport non possa sopperire totalmente alle mancanze di una nazione e non possa farsi promotore di tutte le politiche, è considerato un pilastro e un punto cardine delle politiche moderne.

Lo sport come soft power potrebbe essere il mezzo politico del futuro che coinvolgerebbe le popolazioni dei paesi più differenti. Lo sport tende a legare più che a dividere, a dialogare più che ad innalzare muri, a costruire progetti più che a demolirli. Un ulteriore e maggiore investimento nello sport potrebbe, politicamente, socialmente ed economicamente risultare vincente.