

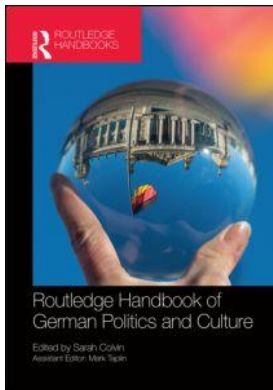
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Sport politics

Jonathan Grix

This chapter looks at the unusually important role that Germany has played in manipulating sport for non-sporting ends. It argues that Germany has played a major role in influencing the manner in which other states have used sport for political aims. The core focus will be on two case studies: an in-depth discussion of the role of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in fostering the political use of sport; and the more recent example of Germany's hosting of the 2006 FIFA World Cup. If the 1936 Berlin Olympics are looked upon as the first mega-event in sports history, the GDR can be understood as the first state systematically to exploit (elite) sport for political purposes. In fact, it is fair to suggest that, without the unprecedented global success of GDR athletes, East Germany might never have been recognised as a *de jure* state in the first place. The second case study deals with the successful leveraging of a major sports event (the 2006 World Cup) to change Germany's poor national image abroad as a result of the atrocities wrought by the Nazi regime. It is argued that the success of 2006 has influenced a number of other states to bid for and host sports mega-events in order to alter and improve their international image.

Germany has played a central role in the use of sport for political ends. Four key examples illustrate Germany's impact on the development of sport and on sport's manipulation for political purposes: first, the so-called 'Hitler Olympics' of 1936, arguably the first sports mega-event, which has influenced subsequent sports mega-events (these generally refer to the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, but they include so-called 'second order' events (Black 2008) such as the Commonwealth or Pan American Games); second, the Munich Olympics, held in democratic West Germany in 1972, which saw the first political use of a major sporting event by terrorists and greatly influenced the manner in which subsequent such events have been 'securitised' (Cornelissen 2011; Houlihan and Giulianotti 2012); third, the manipulation of elite sport in East Germany for political gains, which resulted in arguably the most successful sports system ever known (the key characteristics of this system – minus the systematic doping – are to be found today in most advanced capitalist states); and finally, Germany's hosting of the 2006 FIFA World Cup. The success of this and the impact it had on Germany's international image, it could be argued, have influenced recent and future mega-event hosts from 'emerging' states. In what follows, the unprecedented politicisation of sport by East Germany is the backdrop for a discussion of unified Germany's successful attempt to use a sports mega-event to change its (negative) image abroad.

By way of introduction, it is worth reflecting briefly on the two German Olympics. Although the Nazi dictatorship (1933–45) lasted only 12 years, it produced one of the very first politicised sports mega-events in modern history: the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. The so-called ‘Hitler Olympics’ (or ‘Nazi Olympics’) is widely recognised as the first and most blatant use of sport for political purposes. Young (2010: 96) labels the event ‘the pinnacle of Olympic spectacle’, comparable to the ‘Hollywood show’ of Los Angeles in 1984 (also known as the most commercial Games up until that time) and Beijing’s bombastic affair in 2008. The Berlin Olympics were immortalised by Leni Riefenstahl’s beautiful, and extremely controversial, documentary of the whole event, *Olympia* (Riefenstahl 1938/2006). Both Riefenstahl and Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s infamous propaganda minister, worked hard to create the impression of a link between the philosophical and aesthetic Greek origins of the Olympic Games and the emerging Third Reich. Riefenstahl, the author of infamous propaganda films such as *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, 1935), begins her epic documentary-style film of the Games by making a transition from ancient Greece to modern Germany, the prologue capturing physically perfect athletes against a backdrop that includes shots of ancient Olympia. Riefenstahl’s link with antiquity ties in with the symbolism of Olympism and the lofty ideals of world peace espoused by the movement. Goebbels oversaw the introduction of the torch relay, the idea for which is generally credited to the sports administrator Carl Diem. The practice continues to this day (Hilton 2008), and sees a torch lit in Athens and carried by a succession of runners to the country in which the Games are taking place. Miah and Garcia (2012) point out the difference between the original motives for instigating the relay, which were to propagate the Nazi regime, and its use now, as an integral part of community engagement by the Olympic movement, in an attempt to whip up enthusiasm for the event rather than the hosts.

Adolf Hitler’s sporting dictum, recorded in his prison-penned biography, *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*), was as follows: ‘Not a day should go by in which a young person does not receive at least one hour of physical training in the morning and one hour in the afternoon, covering every type of sport and gymnastics’ (‘Es dürfte kein Tag vergehen, an dem der junge Mensch nicht mindestens vormittags und abends je eine Stunde lang körperlich geschult wird, und zwar in jeder Art von Sport und Turnen’; Hitler 1926: 410); this sentiment was echoed in Walter Ulbricht’s (East German head of state, 1960–73) rather more catchy slogan (in the original German, that is): ‘everyone, everywhere, should take part in sport once a week’ (‘Jeder Mann, an jedem Ort, einmal in der Woche Sport’; DDR-Wissen 2013). Hitler, like Ulbricht, was fully aware of the political potential of sport. Although Hitler was not known as a sporty type, he recognised the enthusiasm that accompanied national success in sports such as football. And sport fitted well with an ideology based on a cult of youth, strength, and genetic and racial endowments. Sport lends itself to the simplistic narratives of dictatorships. The binary opposites available in the arena of sport assist in drawing comparisons: contestants meet ‘one-to-one’, they go ‘head-to-head’; usually sport is ‘black and white’, with clear rules and a clear winner or loser; participants’ performances are judged as good or bad; and so on. Modern sport, with its emphasis on ‘measuring’ or ‘quantifying’ performance, exact times, national, European, and world records, distances, and, above all, medal tables, appears to fit well with the crass racial distinctions made by the Nazis and the simplistic *Klassenkampf* (class war) mentality of the Socialist Unity Party (Dennis and Grix 2012). Interestingly, in his study of the 1936 Games, Young concludes that the extravagant show put on by the Nazis – including 10,000 dancers performing a play and a 3,000-strong choir (Senn 1999) – did little to change perceptions of the country abroad, despite intense propaganda efforts (Young 2010). Yet in the 21st century, showcasing the host nation and attempting to improve a state’s international image are what drives hosts of sports mega-events more than any other reason for hosting (Grix 2012).

The events that took place in Munich in 1972 are a reminder of the Janus-faced nature of sports mega-events, especially the Olympic Games. Schiller and Young (2010), in their excellent in-depth study, carefully trace and uncover the meticulous planning and considerable effort Germany put into preparations for the 1972 Games. A few days prior to the deaths of 11 Israeli Olympic team members and one West German policeman during a kidnap attempt by the Palestinian group Black September (five group members were also killed), a 16-year-old German had won the Olympic high jump. Had the event finished there, the 'joyous leap to victory might well have stood as a metaphor for West Germany's successful rehabilitation on the world stage through the Olympics' (Schiller and Young 2010: 2). Unfortunately, politics viciously interrupted sport, completely overshadowing the planned 'coming out' party for the Germans, who were hoping to use the event to signal their successful transformation from defeated aggressor to democratic economic powerhouse.

The brief description possible here does little to unravel the complexities of what the 1972 Games meant: the bitter German-German rivalry and the GDR's delight at being able to use its own insignia for the first time in an Olympics, or deeper debates about 'overcoming' or 'mastering' Germany's recent history and how this affected the institutional and psychological development of Germany and the Germans. But it reminds us of the risks involved in staging a major sports event and the legacies of Munich. Munich can be read as the starting point for the 'securitisation' of mega-events, which reached its apogee at the recent London 2012 Games. In London, measures taken to prevent a Munich-type security disaster included surrounding the Olympic park with an 11-mile, £80 million, 5,000-volt electric fence, and providing more troops than those deployed at the time for the war in Afghanistan (approximately 13,500). The UK even stationed anti-aircraft missiles on residential roofs close to the Olympic park (Graham 2012).

East Germany and the politicisation of sport

The East German dictatorship, founded in 1949, the same year as the Federal Republic, lasted almost four times as long as the Third Reich (1933–45). The 'German Democratic Republic' was initially a pariah state in terms of international political legitimacy. Its founders were well aware of the power and potential of sport as a political tool, and as early as 1948 Erich Honecker, then Head of the Free German Youth movement (*Freie Deutsche Jugend* or FDJ) in the Soviet zone and a future leader of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) and the East German state, declared that 'sport is not an end in itself, but the means to an end' (Holzweissig 2005: 1), effectively anticipating the politically focused use of sport by the GDR just prior to its inception.

East Germany's political instrumentalisation of sport for international recognition and legitimacy remains unparalleled. I shall argue that East Germany's success in elite sport has had far-reaching and unintended consequences, and that the sports model developed and refined in the GDR continues to shape modern-day elite sports in advanced capitalist states. There is a certain irony in the fact that East Germany collapsed, yet its sporting legacy continues to influence its erstwhile opponents. Mike Carlson, who wrote the obituary for *The Guardian* on the death in 2002 of Manfred Ewald, the architect of much of the GDR sport model, aptly observed that 'despite being disgraced, in the end he [Ewald] had won, because the entire sporting world followed down the path he had blazed' (Carlson 2008; Younge 2002). Not only do the central tenets of this system live on in the 21st century, but it would appear that the most successful elite sports systems globally are beginning to converge around a GDR-influenced model.

Success in elite sport was intended to promote the tiny state of about 17 million citizens and gain it desperately needed recognition, as it was constantly in the shadow of its richer and bigger

neighbour, West Germany. Examples of sport as a central part of nation-building abound – take Australia and its rather more recent attempts to construct a sense of community around sporting success (Stewart *et al.* 2004) – but none compare with the efforts of East Germany, with its serious legitimacy deficit and lack of a cohesive ‘national’ history or culture, to gain *de jure* international recognition. Andrew Strenk perhaps overstated the ‘soft power’ role of sport when he suggested, as early as 1978, that the usual measures of ‘trade, commerce, diplomacy and negotiation were not available to the GDR for use in influencing the world beyond the borders of Eastern Europe’, so it instead ‘turned to sports as a medium of cultural diplomacy to obtain [its] foreign policy goals’ (Strenk 1978: 348–9). Nonetheless, in 1969 official East German documents demanded not only that elite sport should contribute more to an ‘increase in the international authority and image of the GDR’, but also that sporting success ought to indicate the ‘growing strength of the GDR’ (Dennis and Grix 2012: 19) – clear indications that elite sport success was intended to influence world opinion on East Germany.

This was achieved by making a swift and impressive impact on the world of elite sport, improving from seven summer Olympic medals in 1956 (as part of a ‘unified’ German team) to a staggering 102 at the state’s last Olympics in Seoul in 1988 (Dennis and Grix 2012; see also Beamish and Ritchie 2006). The 1970s can be understood as the period in which the GDR finally began to gain the recognition from the international community that it craved. After formal recognition of the East German Olympic Committee by the International Olympic Committee in 1965, East Germany had to wait until the Munich Olympics, organised by its *Klassenfeind* (class enemy), West Germany, in 1972, before it was able to compete as a wholly independent national team, complete with national flag, national anthem, and national kit (Riordan 1999).¹ While the Munich Olympics in 1972 can be understood as the beginning of the securitisation of the Games, it also signals a high point in the pursuit of politics through elite sport by the GDR. The GDR not only beat its West German neighbours at their home Games, but the GDR flag and national anthem became commonplace and were televised around the world to a global audience watching and listening to the event. It is quite clear that the GDR leadership perceived a positive correlation between the achievement of their sportsmen and -women and the international standing of the state, with East German sport representatives dubbed ‘diplomats in tracksuits’ (Holzweissig 1981) because of their contribution to breaking the diplomatic deadlock and isolation of their country (Dennis 1988). Yet in an official document from 1970, in the run-up to Munich, East German sport officials rather hypocritically accused their cousins next door of ‘using sport and sports performances for the purpose of underpinning the political aims of West German imperialism’ (Dennis and Grix 2012: 20).

Another East German legacy that has relevance for sport politics today is the intense and successful propaganda undertaken by the regime via the elaborate provision of mass sport in a unique combination with elite sport, where the former provided a ‘throughput’ of raw material for the latter. This has had a clear impact on how politicians and governments in advanced capitalist states view sport policy. A majority of states, including the UK, now build their sports policies on the premise that elite sport success inspires the masses to take up sport and thereby produces a ‘pool’ of potential talent whence future Olympians will come. This ‘virtuous cycle’ of sport (Grix and Carmichael 2012) has its roots, in part, in a misreading of GDR sport history. It impacts directly on, for example, the UK’s Olympic legacy claims (see below). Stewart *et al.* (2004: 53) provide a clear example of how Australia, too, was taken in by the GDR’s propaganda when it came to assessing the link between community or mass sport and elite sporting success: in the 1970s the Confederation of Australian Sport, making the case for more sport funding, even ‘cited East Germany as an exemplar of good sport policy since it funded both elite and

community sport'. While East Germany was at pains to explain its success in terms of an harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship between elite and mass sport – in part to cover up a systematic doping programme – in fact part of the success of the system was keeping elite sport separate from mass sport, channelling the majority of scarce resources into elite sport, and focusing on specific sports with the best chance of medal success.

The East German model and its impact on contemporary sport politics²

If the belief in a 'virtuous cycle' of sport discussed above is a GDR legacy, then another and perhaps more profound one is the influence the GDR sports model has had and continues to exert on the majority of states that excel at elite sport (apart from the US, which depends on its collegiate system). Most states successful in elite sport exhibit systems based on the core characteristics of the East German model. [Table 27.1](#) below indicates the similarities between modern-day sports systems and the GDR and places them in context by comparing them with a range of different regime types. Of the 10 areas of influence listed in the table, the following can be understood as generic characteristics that have stood the test of time:

- a government-led sport policy;
- government funding for sports and full-time athletes;
- a system of talent identification;
- the professionalisation of coaching;
- the integration of sports science/medicine in attempting to improve athletes' performance.

These core tenets of an elite sport development model can be found in, or have been employed in, advanced capitalist states such as the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, the Netherlands, and unified Germany, as well as in China, which despite its consumer approach to communism is still a dictatorship. It is around such tenets that successful elite sports models appear to be 'converging' (for an earlier comparative discussion of elite sport models and the influence of East Germany on them see also the work of Green and Oakley 2001; Green and Houlihan 2005; Collins and Green 2007).

The clearest example of the GDR's impact on modern elite sports systems is Australia, which studied the East German set-up carefully and took steps to introduce an up-to-date, technologically advanced version of the sports 'miracle' (Dennis and Grix 2012). Interestingly, the UK – and for Olympic purposes, Great Britain – has adopted many of the characteristics of the Australian (and by default, the East German) model of sport. However, the UK rarely (and never positively) mentions the GDR in UK sport policy documents, while Australia is held in very high regard, even revered. The UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) produced a strategy document in 2002 in which the authors asserted:

we can learn lessons from Australia. Their purposeful pursuit of sporting excellence, sustained by Government in partnership with sporting bodies, has resulted in Australia becoming, on a per capita basis, by far the most successful sporting nation in the world.
(DCMS 2002: 7)

An indicator of East Germany's influence on Australia came in the run-up to the Sydney Olympics in 2000 when Ekkart Arbeit, the former East German coach, was controversially signed up as their director of coaching (*Independent* 1997).

Table 27.1 Key characteristics of select countries' sports models (GDR, Australia, UK, China and the US)

Regime type	East Germany		Australia		UK/GB		China		US	
	Socialist dictatorship	Democracy	Democracy	Democracy	Democracy	Communist dictatorship	Democracy			
1 <i>Rationale for investment in elite sport</i>	International prestige; domestic 'feelgood' factor/identity	International prestige; domestic 'feelgood' factor/identity participation/health	International prestige; domestic 'feelgood' factor/identity participation/health	International prestige; domestic 'feelgood' factor/identity participation/health	International prestige; domestic 'feelgood' factor/identity	International prestige; domestic 'feelgood' factor/identity	International prestige; domestic 'feelgood' factor/identity			
2 <i>Policy type</i>	Olympic-driven, Government-led sport policy	Olympic-driven, Government-led sport policy	Olympic-driven, Government-led sport policy	Olympic-driven, Government-led sport policy	Olympic-driven, Government-led sport policy	Olympic-driven, Government-led sport policy	Distinct lack of Government involvement in elite sport; US Olympic Committee drives sport policy			
3 <i>Management/governance type</i>	Technical-rational/instrumental approach ('Old' PM)	New Public Management	New Public Management	New Public Management	New Public Management	Technical-rational/instrumental approach	Not applicable			
4 <i>Underlying philosophy</i>	Ideologically-driven (socialist) professionalism/win at all costs attitude	Ideologically-driven (capitalist) professionalism/win at all costs attitude; 'virtuous cycle' of sport	Ideologically-driven (capitalist) professionalism/win at all costs attitude; 'virtuous cycle' of sport	Ideologically-driven (capitalist) professionalism/win at all costs attitude; 'virtuous cycle' of sport	Ideologically-driven (capitalist) professionalism/win at all costs attitude; 'virtuous cycle' of sport	Ideologically-driven (consumer communist) professionalism/win at all costs attitude	Ideologically-driven (capitalist) professionalism/win at all costs attitude; focus almost exclusively on elite sport in colleges/universities			
5 <i>Talent ID</i>	Systematic talent ID and youth development (initially drawing on USSR)	Well developed, systematic talent ID programme built on GDR model	Well developed, systematic talent ID programme built on GDR model	Outline of a talent ID system that draws on Australia and Canada	Systematic talent ID and youth development (similar original roots as GDR)	Systematic talent ID and youth development (similar original roots as GDR)	Well developed talent ID systems through professional sport/high school/universities			

6 (Central) State funding for sport and athletes	Athletes effectively full time or given jobs to suit	Athletes offered scholarships and career and education support	Very small group on tiered funding scheme according to their chances to 'medal'	All 'professional' athletes full time and receive wages directly from the state	Funding administered by USOC to NGBs. Tiered funding scheme according to NGB medal success.
7 Coaching and Training	Comprehensive system of coaching and coaches; training treated as a science	Funded athletes given access to top-level coaching and training facilities	Funded athletes given access to top-level coaching and training facilities	Comprehensive system of state coaching and training	College/university athletes given access to top-level coaching and training facilities
8 Sport science/medicine	Advanced and integrated sport science and medicine	Comprehensive system attempting to mesh sports science and medicine	Fledgling system of science and sport medicine	Advanced and integrated sport science and medicine	There is a lack of integrated sport science and medicine programmes
9 Sport facilities and competition	Top-class sport facilities; wide network of sport schools; frequent competition from young age	Network of state of the art facilities	Loose network of English Institutes of Sport based on Australian example	Top-class sport facilities; wide network of sport schools; frequent competition from young age	Top-class and wide-ranging sport facilities; wide network of college and inter-collegiate/university sport; frequent competition
10 Focus on specific sports	1969 decree to split sports into funded and non-funded crucial to later success	AIS decision to focus on specific Olympic sports	Game Plan discusses the need to focus on 'medal intensive' sports	China remains world leading in specific sports: table tennis, gymnastics; traditionally focused on specific events	Sports leading to professional career favoured

An excellent example of policy transfer from the GDR to contemporary sports systems is the area of coaching. The GDR set the standard for the professionalisation of coaching in terms of both quality and quantity, with literally thousands of coaches propping up the sport system, many of them volunteers. Australia's coaching system, which influenced the UK, was in turn influenced by Canada's system. Canada, whose high level of state involvement in sport earned it the nickname the 'GDR of the Commonwealth' (Macintosh *et al.* 1987), is yet another advanced capitalist state to draw upon the East German dictatorship's sport system for inspiration. The GDR is thus the starting point for a chain of policy transfer: Canada adopts and develops its own specific coaching system based on the East German model; this is then imported and adapted in Australia; and that in turn influences thinking about how to shape the UK coaching system. A glance at [Table 27.1](#) above reveals, however, that the US, still the most dominant Olympic superpower, has not been affected by the global developments and trends towards a convergence of elite sport development systems. In fact, Sparvero *et al.* suggest the US has developed elite sport 'amid the chaos' (2008: 260), a reference to the seemingly haphazard and uncoordinated make-up of the sport landscape in the US. Interestingly, perhaps, in the place one would presume East Germany's system to have had the most impact, unified Germany, there does not appear to have been much transfer from the sports 'miracle'. According to Busse (2010), Germany failed to pick out the best aspects of the East German model and implement them in the new, unified Germany. A dynamic German Olympic squad could have been produced consisting of the best of both Germanies. Busse picks up on many of the cornerstones of East Germany's success discussed above, such as the development of children and youths, and suggests that Germany should have learned lessons. It does appear, however, that a much watered-down version of the successful elite sports schools has been kept in Germany, with the *New York Times* claiming in 2002 that 'East Germany may be gone, but its sports system is being resurrected' (Pohl 2002). Forty-one 'sports schools' exist in unified Germany today, 18 of them taken over from the GDR (Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund 2013).

The 'sporting arms race' of the Cold War (Collins and Green 2007), led by the successes of East Germany, has clearly influenced the UK and a majority of advanced capitalist states in their sport policies. In the UK, for example, elite sport policy has been and remains the clear focus of attention for successive governments. Community sport and school sport, on the other hand, are of secondary importance. Evidence of this can be found in key UK sports policy documents: the Labour Government's *Game Plan* (2002) and *Playing to Win* (2008), both issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Both documents leave little doubt about whether international success through sport should be a key policy aim; rather, they discuss the process by which that can best be achieved.

The UK's new approach to funding athletes, which underpins the shift towards striving for elite sport success, is based on a so-called 'no-compromise' management system clearly linked to an Olympic-driven sport policy. It finds parallels in Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian sport policies. UK Sport is very clear that it intends to ensure that no national governing bodies of sport underperform, and that they are held accountable for the monies they receive, by publishing a

series of 'Funding Release Triggers' that will ensure that the planning and governance of all the governing bodies is carefully monitored. *Those not able to meet the criteria over a range of key issues will have performance funding withheld as they modernise their practices and performance systems.* The triggers – which also require performance targets to be achieved – look to set in place a range of sound governance processes.

(UK Sport 2008; my emphasis)

Two key points are to be taken from this. First, the manner in which sport is ‘managed’ and the associated discourse are very similar to practices in the GDR (see the discussion of the GDR’s ‘Old Public Management’ in Dennis and Grix 2012). Target setting, checks and balances, feedback loops, reviews, reassessments, and so on are employed to ensure a continuous progression and improvement of the system (see also Bergsgard *et al.* 2007). Secondly, the elite-driven discourse in sport policy that underlies and affects most policy decisions remains unquestioned. Few dispute the underlying logic of the virtuous cycle of sport (see above); few outside academia appear interested in the fact that elite sport success and the holding of mega-sporting events do not appear to be linked to an upsurge in sustained mass participation. Evidence for the long-term effects of elite sport success on participation is hard to come by, but a report commissioned by Sport Canada came to the conclusion that ‘there is little empirical evidence to support the anecdotal claims that high performance sport leads to social benefits such as building national pride [. . .] and encouraging healthy behaviours’ (Bloom *et al.* 2006: ii). The lack of evidence for the ‘elite sport–mass sport’ causality has not, however, dampened governments’ appetite for investment in elite sport, as the heavy investment in Olympic sports and the fierce competition to host sports mega-events by a range of states around the world testify.

The 2006 FIFA World Cup: improving Germany’s image abroad

The final example of how Germany has been and continues to be influential in sport is the country’s hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2006. Once again Germany turned to sport for political purposes: it attempted – successfully – to use a sports mega-event to improve its negative and stereotypical image abroad. In particular, and importantly, the event was designed to effect a change in a negative international image based mostly on atrocities carried out during the Nazi era over 50 years before. The Germans adopted an innovative leveraging strategy (discussed in depth in Grix 2013a) – that is, a strategy that involved long-term, well planned campaigns to ‘leverage’ as much as possible out of the sports mega-event. This should be understood as an attempt actively to gain from hosting the event, rather than hoping for post-event ‘legacies’. Germany prepared for hosting the 2006 World Cup by putting in place measures designed to improve the country’s image and ensure an efficient, smooth-running event: a fan-centred approach, whereby fans were not seen as a ‘problem’ but were central to the success of the image improvement campaigns; and the generation of a ‘feel good’ factor among fans, visitors, and Germans alike.

Germany had started planning *before* it was even awarded the right to host the 2006 World Cup. Unlike many states, it took a proactive approach to hosting a mega-event. One key example of this will suffice. Horst R. Schmidt, Vice Chair of the 2006 FWC organising committee, described the strategy developed with the aim of improving Germany’s image in the world and ensuring the success of the event thus:

We developed a cluster of specific measures to achieve this. We launched a ‘welcome tour’ to *all* 31 countries qualified for the tournament. Franz Beckenbauer, the Chair of the organising committee, visited every country and received a high-level reception; he went to the countries to welcome them to Germany [. . .] this greatly influenced the media coverage of the event positively.

(author interview with Schmidt, 2012; Grix 2013a: 297)

The ‘cluster’ of measures Schmidt refers to included several high-level campaigns that brought together politics, business, NGOs, civil society, and cultural organisations (Brauer and Brauer

2008). Well-orchestrated and resourced national and international campaigns were put together, funded, in the main, by the Federal government, but also with partners from business, FIFA, and the German Football Federation.

Interestingly, what the Germans were attempting – to alter a national image based in great part on outdated stereotypes – is conventionally deemed either impossible or extremely difficult to do (see Manzenreiter 2010 for the case of China; also Fan 2006). The Barcelona Olympics in 1992 is usually cited as the only exception to this rule (Horne and Manzenreiter 2006). However, given that Germany had suffered from an extremely negative image abroad for many years prior to 2006, it had little to lose and much to gain. Grix and Lacroix, writing before the event, note that to suggest

that Germany has an image problem abroad would not be new. It remains the case that the legacy of the Third Reich, the barbarity of the Nazis and the bellicose behaviour in the early part of the 20th century has etched itself deep into the psyche of Germans themselves and that of their international partners. Germany's rich cultural history and her spectacular rise from ruins during the post-war period rarely figure in foreigners' perception of modern-day Germany, especially it seems in Britain.

(Grix and Lacroix 2006: 373)

Given Germany's traumatic past, it had much to gain from attempting to reforge a national image that had 'remained fixed in the stereotypes established in two world wars' (Watt 1965: 114). Germany's postwar identity was built around the export-driven 'German model', based on a successful (social) democratic economic model also known as 'corporatism' (Hutton 1996). By 2006, however, the Germans wanted to move on from an image derived from history and the ability to make things. In 2004 the incoming Federal president, Horst Köhler, had suggested Germany should become 'more than the land of poets and thinkers' ('mehr als das Land der Dichter und Denker') and more than just 'Made in Germany' (Köhler 2004).

Postwar Germany was characterised by its lack of 'hard' power, by a strong commitment to multilateral institutional arrangements and the expanding European Union, and by its consistent efforts to convince foreign elites and publics alike that it had changed. 'Soft power' resources, in the shape of academic and cultural exchanges, were and remain the object of heavy investment with the purpose of changing Germany's negative image abroad (see Chapter 28). Organisations such as the German Academic Exchange Service and the Goethe Institut (receiving around €200 million per year; author interview with the German Foreign Office 2011) have set up cultural centres and undertaken campaigns throughout the world, and act as ambassadors for German culture and language (DAAD 2013; Goethe Institut 2013).

Indices of success?

Clearly one of the ways to dispel myths about foreign nationals, their nations, culture, and habits is to visit the country concerned. This section discusses how the World Cup provided the catalyst for Germany to showcase itself externally and, at the same time, offer an event that encouraged non-German nationals to travel to and around Germany, acquainting themselves with the nation and its people. Central to Germany's leveraging strategy was to improve its poor external image and break down entrenched stereotypical depictions of the Germans. Reports on Germany and the Germans in the British press, for example, have for decades touched on World War II and Nazism, or employed the stereotypical monikers of a 'dominant', 'arrogant', and 'dull' people. It is noticeable that since 2006 the British press, the worst offenders in the world for 'German

bashing’ – according to Gary Younge, the ‘last “acceptable” prejudice’ (Younge 2002) – appear to have become much better disposed towards Germany (Grix 2013a).

Incoming tourists and overnight stays by international travellers increased greatly in the context of this sports mega-event. Overnight stays by visitors from the UK rose in June and July 2006 by 35.9 per cent, the highest among Germany’s 10 most important source markets (Federal Ministry of the Interior 2006)). There appears to have been a steady increase in the number of incoming tourists and overnight stays by international travellers in Germany since the event, with the former increasing slowly but tourists clearly staying longer (and spending more). The two million foreign tourists who travelled to Germany during the month-long tournament are estimated to have spent €600 million (Deutsche Welle 2006). While it is notoriously difficult to find accurate data on the exact economic impact of the World Cup on a nation’s economy, half of the companies that reported a positive ‘World Cup’ effect on their business thought reputational gain for Germany and its products was ‘the underlying reason for the economic success of this mega event’ (Federal Ministry of the Interior 2006: 24). The head of sport at the national news magazine *Der Spiegel* believes that the World Cup acted as a catalyst in breaking down stereotypes of Germans and building up a positive sense of home-grown patriotism: ‘I think we are happy about the change to our image in the world – everybody knows already that we can organise the World Cup, but the image of a modern, friendly, party-loving nation is new’ (author interview with Gerhard Pfeil, 2011).

The evidence appears to confirm that the World Cup acted as a turning-point in the relationship of foreigners with Germany and of the Germans with their own self-image. All available indices suggest that the 2006 FIFA World Cup was successful. For example, the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (2004–11), which measures foreigners’ views of Germany in respect of six dimensions (governance; people; exports; culture and heritage; tourism; and investment and immigration) shows how Germany fared before and during the World Cup, and how it has fared since.

The graph indicates that being chosen to host the 2006 FIFA World Cup, including the run-up to the event in 2006, led to an upward trajectory in Germany’s image abroad. A survey

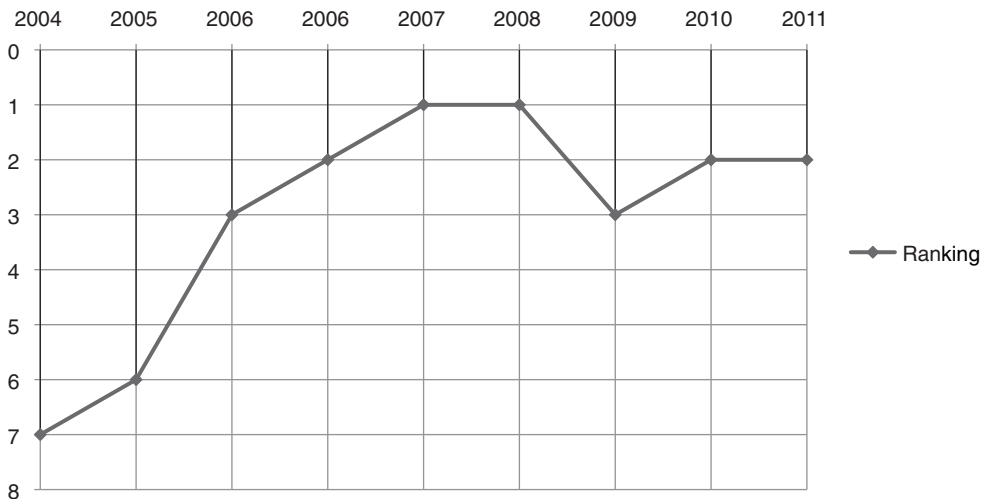


Figure 27.1 Germany’s image abroad

Source: Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (2004–11)

taken just before the event in 2006 placed Germany third in the world, while a survey round after the event saw an immediate improvement to second place and then a two-year reign at the top of the index. Subsequent years, although with some fluctuation, show a much improved international image of Germany, which maintains a level way above that of pre-tournament times. There is little evidence of any other event or reason that helps explain this turnaround in international image other than the well-planned, well-executed ‘leveraging’ of the sports mega-event of 2006. Some five years after the event, with Germany due to host the FIFA women’s World Cup in 2011, Petra Hedorfer, Chair of the German National Tourist Board, suggested that the men’s World Cup in 2006 ‘proved to great effect how an event of this kind can improve the international perception of Germany’ (FVW 2013). The German National Tourist Board was equally pleased to note that the external perception of Germany and the Germans had improved markedly due to the World Cup, unexpectedly so among the bordering nations of the French and Dutch; the only exceptions, where a negative image of Germans remained, were (perhaps understandably given the history of its relations with Germany) neighbouring Poland, and Italy (Federal Ministry of the Interior 2006).

The atmosphere around the mega-event, helped by the Fan Zones and public viewing areas – and the fact that the home side got off to a very successful start – impacted not only on the non-German perception of Germany, but also on the German self-image. All nine interviewees in an in-depth study of the 2006 World Cup spoke of the new, confident flag-waving (sporting) patriotism that accompanied this mega-event (Grix 2013a). Patriotism is normal for the vast majority of countries, but in Germany it has been suppressed because of the country’s Nazi past. When they were brought together in 1990 after a separation by high walls and barbed wire of some 40 years, East and West Germans exhibited very different social and political attitudes accrued via socialisation processes in diametrically opposed political systems (see, for example, Grix 2000). The World Cup was 16 years on from formal unification, but differences between former ‘Ossis’ and ‘Wessis’ remained. Robert Ide, sports correspondent with the leading Berlin daily *Der Tagesspiegel*, was in a good position to reflect on the effect of the World Cup on the ‘inner unity’ (*innere Einheit*) of the Germans. Born in East Germany, Ide wrote a bestselling novel depicting his difficulties in coming to terms with the collapse of his former state and in dealing with being an outsider in the new, unified Germany (Ide 2007). In a subsequent interview with the author, he recalled how a spontaneous meeting of Croatian, Australian, and German fans at the railway station after a match in Stuttgart turned into a party. Hundreds of fans followed a local brass band around the huge railway station. The Australian fans, whose team had just lost to Croatia, mixed happily with Croatian and German fans. Ide comments:

a lot of people were so delighted that something like this could happen in Germany [. . .] as the brass band weaved its way around the railway station with all those different fans in tow, I caught sight of an old man, who must have been 70 or 80. He had tears of joy in his eyes and he said to me, ‘I’ve never experienced anything like this in Germany, ever. Astonishing, this is my country, I can’t believe it.’ I felt the same way, and as I sat in a beer garden later and heard our national anthem, I thought, yeah, I’m going to sing along, this is somehow my country as well [. . .]. That was the first time for me that I sang the national anthem, because it wasn’t our [i.e. those from East Germany’s] national anthem, it was West Germany’s, along with all their laws and so on.

(author interview with Robert Ide, 2011)

It would appear that this sports mega-event *has* altered Germany’s image abroad, contrary to what many commentators believe (Fan 2006; Manzenreiter 2010). The German Embassy in

London suggested that not since the Berlin Wall fell had there been such an ‘intensive and positive impact on Germany’s image’, which had ‘turned into almost enthusiastic perception’ (cited in Federal Ministry of the Interior 2006: 25). Patrick Spaven, called before the UK Foreign Affairs Committee as an expert witness, identifies what this section has attempted to show, a deliberate and calculated leveraging of a sports mega-event to change Germany’s image abroad:

Germany’s status [. . .] seems to be significantly better off in image terms now than it was in late 2005. The only factor that I can find to explain that is the 2006 FIFA World Cup, around which it managed public diplomacy, in a very broad sense – international influence – as well as I’ve seen any country, and in a purposeful way. What happened in Barcelona was almost incidental; it wasn’t a grand strategy. Germany had a grand strategy, which I think they designed and pulled off very well.

(Foreign Affairs Committee 2010: Q33)

While many hope the impact of hosting a sports mega-event will be positive, the German use of the 2006 FIFA World Cup to shape Germany’s image abroad left little to chance. Its effects are now being felt in other spheres, seven years on: a recent *Guardian* article describes a ‘shift’ in the perception of German cultural output and an ‘invasion’ of the UK by German cultural influence in the form of music, dance, and art. Cultural commentators ‘believe[s] the 2006 World Cup helped popularise German culture beyond artistic and intellectual circles’ (Needham 2012).

Germany’s influence on world sport politics continues: the ‘emerging’ states now bidding for and winning the right to host sports mega-events show a shift away from the belief that their primary functions are to leverage economic gains, bring forward urban regeneration projects, and inspire the masses to take up physical activity. The so-called ‘new lands’ (FIFA President Sepp Blatter, cited in Longman 2010) of Qatar, China, Brazil, Russia, and so on are moved by a desire not only to put themselves on the map, but also to improve their image among foreign publics abroad (Grix 2013b, Grix and Lee 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Germany’s global influence on sport politics has been substantial. Other scholars have analysed at length the impact both German Olympics have had on subsequent sports mega-events (Young 2010). The Hitler Olympics can be read as the first in a long line of bombastic uses of sporting spectacle to showcase a nation and its values; the most recent example is the £60 million opening ceremony by China in 2008. The Munich Olympics signals the start of what has been termed the ‘securitisation’ of mega-events; the culmination of this development was witnessed in London 2012, where the army had to be called in to secure the Games after the private security company G4S failed to provide the necessary personnel. The chapter has also discussed in detail two further German examples of sport politics. The first, and perhaps the least advertised, is the unprecedented influence the East German model of sport has had on modern-day sports models. No official, commentator, or athlete would admit to the similarities between the 21st century’s elite sport development systems and East Germany’s, but there is little doubt that the GDR was some 40 years ahead of its time in terms of producing world-class athletes. The final example of Germany’s influence on sport politics is the recent (2006) staging of the FWC, which showed other states what a successful sports mega-event can achieve. The next group of mega-event hosts, including Qatar, Russia, and Brazil, are looking to such events to put their states on the world map and to burnish their

respective images for the benefit of foreign publics. Germany, a democratic state since 1949, has been able to project and alter its image abroad; whether others will fare as well when exposed to the scrutiny of the global media remains to be seen.

Notes

- 1 The GDR did compete as an independent team in Mexico in 1968, but without GDR insignia. In previous Olympics a joint German team had competed, using a German flag adorned with Olympic rings and Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' as an anthem, to be played at medal ceremonies in lieu of the German national anthem; see Balbier 2007.
- 2 This section rests heavily on Dennis and Grix 2012: 176–85, but also updates and expands on it.

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Interviewees

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- 2 Robert Ide (Chief Sports Editor, *Tagesspiegel*), Berlin, August 2011.
- 3 Gerhard Pfeil (Chief Sports Editor, *Der Spiegel*), Hamburg, August 2011.
- 4 Horst R. Schmidt, Secretary of the German Football Federation and Vice President of the FIFA 2006 organising committee (currently treasurer of the German Football Federation) (telephone interview, September 2012).