Sports Diplomacy and Global Peace Building: The Experience of FIFA, 1904-2023

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Abstract

This paper examined sports diplomacy and global peacebuilding: The experience of FIFA from 1904 to 2023. The paper noted that in a world often marked by geopolitical tensions, cultural differences, and ideological divides, the power of sports diplomacy emerges as a unique and effective tool for fostering global peace and cooperation. Sports diplomacy represents a multifaceted approach to international relations that harnesses the universal appeal of sports to transcend political boundaries, build bridges between nations, and promote understanding, unity, and peace among diverse communities worldwide. This paper adopted the contact theory to explain FIFA role in global peace building using sports diplomacy. The contact theory, developed by Gordon Allport in the 1950s, suggests that intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and foster positive attitudes and cooperation between different groups or nations when certain conditions are met. FIFA provides a platform where nations compete not for political supremacy but for sporting excellence. The research work adopted the descriptive research design. The paper used secondary data to achieve its objectives. Content analysis was used as the tool for data analysis. The study revealed that FIFA, which stands

for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (International Federation of Association Football), is the global governing body for the sport of football in most parts of the world. Since its formation in 1904, FIFA has played a significant role in various aspects of global society, including peace building. While FIFA's primary focus is on the development and promotion of football worldwide, its impact on global peace building has been both direct and indirect. The paper recommended that FIFA should organize friendly matches between national teams from countries in conflict or with historical tensions. These matches will symbolize a commitment to peace and serve as a platform for diplomacy.

Keyword: FIFA, Sport, Peacebuilding, Cooperation, Diplomacy

Introduction

In a world often marked by geopolitical tensions, cultural differences, and ideological divides, the power of sports diplomacy emerges as a unique and effective tool for fostering global peace and cooperation. Sports diplomacy represents a multifaceted approach to international relations that harnesses the universal appeal of sports to transcend political boundaries, build bridges between nations, and promote understanding, unity, and peace among diverse communities worldwide. Sports diplomacy is a dynamic form of public diplomacy that employs sports and athletic events as instruments to achieve diplomatic, foreign policy, and peace-related objectives. It is characterized by the use of sports as a means of communication and interaction, fostering relationships and goodwill between nations on various levels, from grassroots initiatives to high-level international competitions (Rofe, 2018).

According to Zhang (2016), the roots of sports diplomacy can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where athletic competitions like the Olympic Games in ancient Greece served as truces to halt wars and promote peaceful dialogue. In the modern era, one pivotal moment in the history of sports diplomacy occurred during the Cold War, when ping-pong diplomacy between the United States and China played a crucial role in thawing relations between the two superpowers. Since then, sports diplomacy has evolved and expanded, becoming a prominent feature of international relations. Sports diplomacy relies heavily on people-to-

people exchanges, encouraging athletes, coaches, and fans from different countries to engage in cultural exchange, fostering understanding and reducing stereotypes.

Hosting major sporting events, such as the FIFA World Cup or the Olympics, provides host countries with a platform to showcase their culture, promote tourism, and enhance their global image, while also serving as opportunities for diplomatic discussions and cooperation. Sports diplomacy offers a neutral and non-confrontational platform for nations to engage in dialogue, build trust, and seek solutions to conflicts, as seen in the case of North and South Korea's joint participation in the 2018 Winter Olympics. Through sports, nations can celebrate their diversity, bridge cultural gaps, and break down barriers that often lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. It enhances a nation's soft power by projecting a positive image internationally, fostering goodwill, and building lasting relationships with other countries. Engaging young people in sports diplomacy initiatives promotes tolerance and understanding from an early age, creating a foundation for future peace-building efforts. This study, will be segmented into five basic chapters. Each chapter will provide the researcher the knowledge and understanding of the topic under study.

Statement of the Problem

Despite FIFA's potential to foster global peace and cooperation, several challenges and issues persist within the context of FIFA's involvement in sports diplomacy. FIFA operates within a global landscape marked by geopolitical tensions, conflicts, and rivalries. Hosting the World Cup or other international football events can inadvertently become a source of controversy and exacerbate existing conflicts. The problem is to assess how FIFA can navigate these geopolitical challenges and contribute positively to peace-building efforts. FIFA has faced allegations of corruption and poor governance practices in the past. These issues can undermine the credibility and effectiveness of its diplomatic initiatives. The problem is to evaluate the extent to which FIFA's internal governance affects its ability to engage in meaningful sports diplomacy for global peace.

The hosting of major sporting events, including the World Cup, often raises human rights concerns, such as labor exploitation, displacement of communities, and

restrictions on freedom of expression. The problem is to analyze FIFA's role in addressing these human rights issues and ensuring that its events do not contribute to global instability. FIFA's involvement in sports diplomacy should not be limited to the duration of its events. Sustainable peace-building efforts require a long-term commitment. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of sports diplomacy initiatives. Negative coverage or controversies can overshadow FIFA's diplomatic efforts. Promoting gender equity and social inclusion is essential for sustainable peace-building. FIFA has been criticized for disparities in investment and support for women's football. Addressing these problems is crucial for understanding the potential of sports diplomacy, particularly through FIFA's experiences, in contributing to global peace-building efforts.

Methodology

This paper adopted the descriptive research design. Descriptive research studies are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or group (Kothari & Garg, 2014). The method of data collection for the study is the qualitative method. In the qualitative method, information is gathered in form of words, descriptions, narratives and numerals from secondary sources such as books, journals, articles, internet records and other documents. Content analysis was used in analyzing the data sourced. Content analysis is a research technique used to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual materials. According to Luo (2020), content analysis is a research method used to identify patterns in recorded communication.

Conceptual Review

- **The Concept of Diplomacy**

Diplomacy is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the art and practice of conducting negotiations, maintaining peaceful interactions, and promoting cooperation among individuals, groups, or states. It involves the strategic management of relationships, the exchange of information, and the pursuit of mutual understanding and agreement. Diplomacy plays a crucial role in shaping the course of international relations, resolving conflicts, advancing national interests, and fostering cooperation on various issues of global importance. At its core, diplomacy is a means of peaceful engagement and conflict resolution. It

provides a framework for dialogue and negotiation to address differences, manage disputes, and prevent or de-escalate conflicts. Diplomatic efforts are often aimed at finding common ground, seeking compromise, and seeking win-win outcomes that satisfy the interests of all parties involved. It emphasizes persuasion, communication, and the use of soft power rather than force or coercion (Lekhi & Brunn, 2018).

According to Berridge (2015), diplomacy is a set of practices, procedures, and interactions through which states and other international actors manage their relationships, communicate, negotiate, and pursue their objectives in the international arena. Diplomacy encompasses the formal and informal processes by which states interact, negotiate, and manage conflicts, typically employing diplomatic officials who represent their countries in diplomatic missions, conferences, and international organizations (Sharp, 2019). Fruhling and Podberscek (2007) stated that diplomacy can be understood as a multifaceted activity aimed at facilitating international cooperation, resolving disputes, managing crises, and advancing national interests through negotiation, representation, persuasion, and information exchange among states and non-state actors. Diplomacy can be defined as the conduct of relationships between entities, usually sovereign states, through the medium of officials based at home or abroad.

One of the fundamental purposes of diplomacy is to promote peace and maintain stability between nations. By establishing channels of communication and mechanisms for dialogue, diplomacy creates opportunities for states to express their concerns, clarify their positions, and seek resolutions to conflicts or tensions. It provides a forum for the exchange of views, the exploration of shared interests, and the identification of areas where collaboration is possible. Another significant aspect of diplomacy is the advancement of national interests. States engage in diplomatic activities to protect and promote their interests on the global stage. These interests may include economic objectives, security concerns, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, or human rights advocacy. Diplomatic negotiations and agreements allow states to pursue their goals through diplomatic means, avoiding confrontations or violent conflicts. Diplomacy also serves as a vital tool for information exchange and intelligence gathering. Diplomats act as conduits

of information, transmitting messages and reports between their home countries and the states they are assigned to. They collect and analyze information on political, economic, and social developments, which informs policymaking and decision-making processes. Diplomatic networks and institutions facilitate the sharing of knowledge, fostering cooperation on issues of common interest and allowing states to better understand each other's perspectives (Keal, 2012).

- **The Concept of Sports Diplomacy**

Sports diplomacy, a concept that has gained prominence in recent years, refers to the use of sports and athletic events as a means to foster international relations, build bridges between nations, and promote global peace and understanding. This innovative approach leverages the universal appeal and power of sports to transcend cultural, political, and ideological boundaries. Through friendly competitions, collaborations, and exchanges, sports diplomacy aims to create a platform where countries can engage in constructive dialogue, resolve conflicts, and work together towards common goals. Sports diplomacy refers to the use of sports and sporting events to influence foreign relations, foster international cooperation, and build positive relations between countries and peoples. It harnesses the universal appeal of sports to transcend political and cultural differences and promote peace and understanding among nations (Nye, 2012).

In an era marked by geopolitical tensions, armed conflicts, and complex international relations, the role of sports in diplomacy has become increasingly significant. The ability of sports to unite people across borders and provide a non-threatening environment for interaction has made it a valuable tool in the pursuit of global peace and cooperation. Sports diplomacy involves the strategic use of sports and sporting events by governments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to achieve political, diplomatic, and social objectives on the global stage. It encompasses activities such as international sporting exchanges, sports-related cultural events, and humanitarian initiatives (Rofe, 2018).

According to Ljungqvist and Andersson (2008), sports diplomacy encompasses efforts to strengthen international relations through sports, where sporting events and activities are used to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between nations. It

involves a wide range of initiatives, from Olympic Truces to sports exchanges and cultural exchanges related to sports. Sports serve as a tool for countries to project their soft power on the global stage. Hosting major sporting events, achieving success in international competitions, and showcasing their athletes can enhance a nation's image and influence. Countries invest heavily in their sports programs not only to win medals but also to bolster their standing in international affairs. Sports can act as a bridge to foster dialogue and reconciliation between nations in conflict. Joint sporting events, athlete exchanges, and sports initiatives can create opportunities for diplomatic negotiations, trust-building, and conflict resolution. For instance, North and South Korea have engaged in sports diplomacy to ease tensions and promote peace on the Korean Peninsula.

At the heart of sports diplomacy is people-to-people diplomacy. Athletes, coaches, and fans from different countries interact, fostering mutual respect and cultural understanding. This grassroots approach can lead to lasting friendships and connections that transcend political differences, contributing to a more peaceful global community. Several international organizations and initiatives are dedicated to sports diplomacy. The United Nations recognizes the role of sports in promoting peace and development, and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) actively promotes peace through sports. Additionally, organizations like Peace and Sport work to leverage sports as a tool for conflict resolution and peace building. As the world becomes more interconnected and interdependent, sports diplomacy is likely to play an increasingly vital role in global affairs. Advancements in technology, increased access to sports, and the growing influence of social media will provide new opportunities for nations to engage in sports diplomacy initiatives.

- **The Concept of Peace**

The concept of peace is multifaceted and can be understood and interpreted in various ways. It encompasses more than just the absence of armed conflict or violence and involves the presence of harmony, stability, and well-being in individual, societal, and international contexts. According to Williams and Bellamy (2015), peace is generally defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence, and about peaceful coexistence. It is primarily concerned

with creating and maintaining a just order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violent means. According to John Burton, a renowned peace theorist, peace is "a process of resolving conflict and establishing justice and sustainable relationships between and among individuals, groups, and nations. In their book "Theories of Peace and Security," Jackson and Webel (2019) defined peace as a state of tranquility, harmony, and absence of violence and structural violence in which people can live in security and freedom, and develop their potential.

Barash and Webel (2019) described peace as an absence of direct and indirect violence, a state of cooperation and harmony, and the promotion of social justice, equality, and human well-being. According to Richmond (2015), peace is a positive and sustainable condition that goes beyond the mere absence of violence and conflict, encompassing social justice, reconciliation, and the ability to address the root causes of violence. In general, six meanings of peace are agreed on by many peace researchers including; peace as the absence of war (absence of direct violence), peace as Justice and development (absence of structural violence), peace as respect and tolerance between people, peace as Gaia (balance in and with the ecosphere), inner peace (spiritual peace), and peace as 'wholeness' and making whole'. Peace is not merely the absence of violence or conflicts; it is a positive and proactive state that requires active engagement and effort. It involves addressing root causes of conflicts, promoting social justice, empowering marginalized communities, and ensuring equitable distribution of resources. Sustainable peace is built on principles of equality, inclusivity, and cooperation, while addressing structural issues and systemic injustices that can lead to tensions and violence (Adedeji & Tadesse, 2014).

Peace can be said to reflect a condition of human existence in which individuals have freedom, adequate standard of living, and are meaningfully integrated with one another in a just and egalitarian society. For the peace scholars, then, peace is the non-violent transformation of conflict. Non-violence is seen as a strategy to resist oppressive power relations and unjust structures. It is equated with the refusal to use violence as a means to eradicate the causes of violence and political and socio-economic inequalities. Peace as non-violence is all about struggles for freedom and justice, the transformation of unjust and unequal power relations, and

confrontation against repressive socio-political conditions. It is not an escape into pacifism. It is a striving through social pressure against unjust or oppressive conditions (Gahia, 2008, p.271).

According to the University for Peace, peace is a political condition that makes justice possible. More strictly, politically, peace entails political order that is, the institutionalization of political structures. Peace as a concept is primarily concerned with the creation and the maintenance of a just order in society. Ibeanu (2006, p.5-6) noted that many philosophers see peace as a natural, original, God-given state of human existence. Peace from this philosophical standpoint, is the pre-corruption state of man in society, as God established it. Consequently, peace is a state of perfection, an earthly expression of God's kingdom that is yet uncorrupted.

Dersso (2015) sees peace as a condition of social harmony in which there are no social antagonisms in other words this is a condition in which there is no social conflicts and individuals and groups are able to meet their needs and expectations. This could be seen as a contractual back to the notion that the parties to the part especially nation-states mutually respect the part and recognize each other peace is a process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict both within specific societies and in the wider international community.

- **The Concept of Peace-building**

Peace-building is a comprehensive and multifaceted concept aimed at preventing and resolving conflicts, fostering reconciliation, and promoting sustainable peace in societies affected by violence or unrest. It involves a wide range of activities, strategies, and interventions that address the root causes of conflict, promote social cohesion, and rebuild institutions and communities. Peace-building is a long-term process that requires the collaboration of various stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, and local communities. It is important to note that peace-building is a complex and context-specific process. Each situation requires tailored approaches that take into account the unique dynamics and challenges of the conflict-affected society. Moreover, peace-building is an ongoing endeavor that requires sustained commitment and collaboration

among all stakeholders to achieve sustainable peace and prevent the recurrence of violence (Adedeji & Tadesse, 2014).

At its core, peace-building seeks to transform societies by addressing the underlying causes of conflicts, rather than merely addressing their symptoms. It recognizes that sustainable peace cannot be achieved solely through military or security measures, but also through social, political, and economic reforms that address inequality, injustice, and grievances. Peace-building aims to identify and address the root causes of conflicts before they escalate into violence. This involves early warning systems, mediation, dialogue, and diplomacy to de-escalate tensions and promote peaceful resolutions (Dersso, 2015). Peace-building recognizes the importance of healing and reconciliation processes to overcome the divisions and traumas caused by conflict. This may include truth and reconciliation commissions, memorialization efforts, and community dialogues to promote understanding, forgiveness, and social cohesion.

Building effective and inclusive governance structures is essential for peace. This involves strengthening institutions, promoting transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, and ensuring the participation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. Peace-building recognizes that poverty and economic inequality are often drivers of conflicts. Promoting sustainable economic development, creating employment opportunities, and reducing poverty are vital for long-term peace. Peace-building seeks to uphold human rights and ensure access to justice for all individuals, including victims of violence and marginalized groups. This involves strengthening legal frameworks, supporting human rights defenders, and promoting gender equality and social justice.

According to Barash and Webel (2019) transforming the security sector is crucial to building sustainable peace. This includes demilitarization, disarmament, and the reform of police and military forces to ensure they are accountable, professional, and respect human rights. Peace-building emphasizes the importance of education, skills development, and capacity building to empower individuals and communities to address conflicts peacefully, participate in decision-making, and contribute to societal development. Peace-building often requires international

support and cooperation. This includes providing financial assistance, technical expertise, and diplomatic efforts to facilitate peace processes, promote dialogue, and strengthen local capacities.

Theoretical Framework

- **Contact Theory**

This paper adopted the contact theory to explain FIFA role in global peace building using sports diplomacy. The contact theory, developed by Gordon Allport in the 1950s, suggests that intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and foster positive attitudes and cooperation between different groups or nations when certain conditions are met. FIFA provides a platform where nations compete not for political supremacy but for sporting excellence. The common goal of winning a tournament or representing one's country can unite nations with diverse backgrounds and ideologies. In FIFA competitions, nations are treated as equals regardless of their size, power, or geopolitical influence. This equal status levels the playing field and promotes a sense of fairness (Kluch, 2017).

The contact theory is very relevant to this paper as it demonstrates how the power of sports (football) can bring nations together, reduce prejudice, and contribute to global peace building by fostering positive interactions, cooperation, and mutual understanding on an international scale. International football requires cooperation between nations, including organizing matches, participating in tournaments, and adhering to rules and regulations. This cooperation fosters diplomatic ties and encourages nations to resolve conflicts through dialogue and compromise. Football matches and related events provide opportunities for people from different nations to interact in a positive and non-threatening environment. This can lead to the breaking down of stereotypes, increased cultural understanding, and the promotion of peaceful coexistence. Prominent figures in the football world, such as FIFA officials and football stars, can serve as role models for promoting peace and diplomacy. Their actions and statements can influence public opinion and encourage nations to embrace peaceful resolutions to conflicts. Football is a sport with global appeal, attracting millions of fans worldwide. FIFA's global reach means that its events are watched and followed by people from diverse backgrounds, providing a unique platform for promoting messages of

peace and unity. FIFA's ability to influence nations and shape perceptions through its soft power cannot be underestimated. The hosting of major tournaments, like the FIFA World Cup, allows host countries to showcase their culture and values, potentially fostering goodwill and improving international relations.

Sports diplomacy and global peace building: The experience of FIFA from 1904 to 2023

According to Kluch (2017), sports diplomacy refers to the use of sports as a tool for diplomacy and international relations. It involves using sporting events, activities, and organizations to promote peaceful international relations, resolve conflicts, and build bridges between nations. FIFA, which stands for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (International Federation of Association Football), is the global governing body for the sport of football in most parts of the world. Since its formation in 1904, FIFA has played a significant role in various aspects of global society, including peace building. While FIFA's primary focus is on the development and promotion of football worldwide, its impact on global peace building has been both direct and indirect. FIFA has consistently advocated for sport, particularly football, as a means to promote peace, unity, and understanding among people of different backgrounds and cultures. Football is often referred to as the "beautiful game," and its universal appeal makes it a powerful tool for bringing people together.

FIFA, as a global organization, has facilitated diplomatic efforts through the medium of football. By organizing international tournaments and events, FIFA provides a platform for nations to come together, fostering diplomatic relations and mutual understanding. The FIFA World Cup, in particular, has a history of bringing countries with political tensions closer together through sport. FIFA's Football for Hope program is a key initiative aimed at promoting social development and peace. It supports various community-based organizations that use football as a means to address social issues such as conflict resolution, youth empowerment, and gender equality. This program has positively impacted numerous communities worldwide. FIFA has been involved in conflict resolution efforts in regions where football has been affected by violence or political strife. It has supported initiatives to rebuild infrastructure and foster reconciliation through

the sport. For example, FIFA helped rebuild football infrastructure in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Balkan conflicts.

FIFA's motto is "For the Game. For the World." This reflects its commitment to using football as a unifying force. International football competitions, such as the FIFA World Cup and regional tournaments like the UEFA European Championship and Copa America, bring nations together and create a sense of unity and shared purpose, even in regions with historical conflicts. FIFA has been active in promoting inclusion and diversity in football. Through initiatives like the "Say No to Racism" campaign and support for LGBTQ+ rights in the sport, FIFA works to create an inclusive environment that fosters peace and harmony. FIFA has invested in football infrastructure and development programs in countries affected by conflict or poverty. By improving access to the sport and providing opportunities for young people, FIFA contributes to social stability and peace in these regions (Rofe, 2018).

FIFA has engaged in humanitarian activities, such as organizing charity matches and contributing to disaster relief efforts. These actions have not only raised funds for important causes but also highlighted the role of soccer in promoting solidarity and peace. FIFA has launched educational programs, including the FIFA Diploma in Football Medicine, to train medical professionals in conflict zones. Such programs indirectly contribute to peace by improving healthcare access and expertise. FIFA collaborates with various international organizations, including the United Nations, on projects related to peace, development, and human rights. These partnerships amplify FIFA's impact on global peace building.

Global Reach: FIFA is one of the most influential international sports organizations, with member associations from almost every country. Its flagship event, the FIFA World Cup, is one of the most-watched sporting events globally, attracting billions of viewers. This global reach provides FIFA with a unique platform to engage in sports diplomacy.

Neutral ground: Sports, including football, offer a neutral ground where countries can come together, compete, and collaborate. FIFA, as the governing body for

international soccer, helps facilitate this by organizing tournaments, competitions, and events that involve teams from diverse nations.

Promotion of fair play: FIFA's emphasis on fair play, sportsmanship, and the importance of the game's values can promote mutual respect among nations, transcending political and cultural differences.

World Cup diplomacy: Hosting the FIFA World Cup requires significant collaboration and diplomacy between the host nation and participating countries. The tournament often serves as a catalyst for international cooperation and cultural exchange. Nations may use the event to improve diplomatic relations and showcase their culture, technology, and hospitality to the world.

Football for peace: FIFA has launched initiatives like "Football for Peace" programs, which aim to use soccer as a means to promote peace, tolerance, and reconciliation in conflict-affected regions. These programs often involve community-based projects, coaching, and educational efforts aimed at bringing people from different backgrounds together through the sport (Price, 2012).

Conflict resolution: Football has a history of being used as a tool for conflict resolution. For instance, FIFA has helped mediate disputes between national football associations, helping to ease political tensions. When teams from historically adversarial countries compete peacefully on the pitch, it can inspire diplomatic efforts off the field.

Cultural exchange: The World Cup and other FIFA events facilitate cultural exchange, exposing people to different customs, traditions, and perspectives. This can foster understanding and appreciation of other cultures, contributing to a more peaceful world.

Overall, sports diplomacy through FIFA is a multifaceted endeavor that leverages the popularity and reach of football to promote international cooperation, cultural exchange, and peace building. While it has the potential to foster positive diplomatic relations and bridge divides, it also faces challenges related to

commercial interests and governance issues. Nonetheless, the power of sports to transcend borders and bring people together remains a potent force in the pursuit of global peace and understanding.

Critique of FIFA's role in global peace building using football

FIFA, the international governing body for soccer (football), has often positioned itself as an advocate for global peace building through the sport. While it is commendable that FIFA recognizes the potential of football to promote peace and unity, there are several critiques and concerns regarding its role in this area. FIFA has faced numerous corruption scandals and allegations of financial mismanagement. This lack of transparency and accountability within the organization undermines its credibility as a leader in global peace-building efforts. To be an effective advocate for peace, FIFA must address its internal governance issues. Critics argue that FIFA's primary motive is to generate revenue rather than genuinely contribute to global peace. The organization's focus on commercial interests, such as the hosting of expensive World Cup tournaments, often overshadows its peace-building initiatives. Critics argue that FIFA should allocate a larger share of its revenue towards peace-building efforts if it wants to be seen as a sincere advocate. FIFA has initiated various programs aimed at promoting peace through football, such as "Football for Hope" and "Football for Peace." However, the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives are often questioned. It can be challenging to measure the long-term success of such programs and their contribution to global peace. FIFA needs to establish clear and measurable goals and outcomes for its peace-building initiatives.

FIFA has faced criticism for not doing enough to address human rights abuses in countries hosting major tournaments. Allegations of labor exploitation, discrimination, and other human rights violations have marred FIFA's image. To genuinely contribute to global peace, FIFA must take a stronger stance on human rights issues in the countries it collaborates with. Critics argue that FIFA's neutrality in political matters can sometimes be problematic. The organization's reluctance to take a stand on politically sensitive issues can be seen as a way to avoid jeopardizing its relationships with powerful member nations. This can hinder its ability to effectively address conflicts through football.

While football can undoubtedly serve as a powerful tool for peace and reconciliation, it is important to recognize that it cannot solve all global conflicts. FIFA's peace-building efforts might be more effective if they were part of a broader strategy that addresses the root causes of conflicts, including socio-economic disparities and political instability. Overall, while FIFA's role in global peace-building using football has the potential for positive impact, there are significant concerns and critiques that need to be addressed. Transparency, accountability, a focus on peace over profit, and a commitment to human rights are essential aspects that FIFA must prioritize to make a more meaningful contribution to peace and unity in the world.

The lack of diversity among FIFA referees, including the underrepresentation of black referees, has been a subject of criticism. Critics argue that FIFA, as the governing body of international football, should prioritize inclusivity and diversity within its officiating ranks. The underrepresentation of black referees can be seen as a failure to achieve these goals. The lack of black referees can be seen as perpetuating stereotypes that suggest certain racial or ethnic groups are not as capable or qualified to officiate at the highest level of the sport, reinforcing biases and discrimination. Some argue that FIFA should do more to address any potential discrimination, unconscious bias, or structural obstacles that may prevent black referees from advancing in their careers or reaching the highest levels of the game.

Critics contend that there are many talented and capable black referees who could make valuable contributions to the sport but face barriers to entry and advancement within the refereeing system. The lack of diversity in officiating may lead to a perception that FIFA is not fully committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity, thus damaging its credibility and reputation. Some argue that the lack of diversity among referees affects players' perceptions of fairness and equity, potentially leading to concerns about bias or discrimination in officiating decisions.

Critics have raised several concerns and criticisms against FIFA for what they perceive as a lack of opportunities for African countries to host the FIFA World Cup. FIFA has been accused of favoring European and South American countries when it comes to awarding World Cup hosting rights, which has led to a lack of

diversity in host nations. Critics argue that this approach has limited opportunities for African countries to showcase their capabilities and infrastructure on the global stage. The only African country to host the world cup since its inception is South Africa in 2010. Some critics claim that FIFA's selection process is biased in favor of more economically developed nations, as hosting a World Cup requires significant financial investment and infrastructure. This bias disadvantage African nations, which struggle to meet these financial and infrastructure requirements.

Critics argue that FIFA underestimates the potential of African countries to successfully host a World Cup. Despite hosting successful regional tournaments, like the Africa Cup of Nations, some believe that FIFA has been hesitant to entrust the continent with the responsibility of hosting a World Cup. It has been suggested that FIFA and other international sports organizations do not provide enough financial and logistical support to help African countries prepare competitive bids to host the World Cup. The lack of African World Cup hosts can perpetuate a perception of inequality in international sports. Critics argue that providing more opportunities for African nations to host the tournament can help rectify this perceived imbalance.

One of the most significant criticisms against FIFA is the perceived lack of consistency in awarding penalty kicks. Fans and analysts often argue that decisions are arbitrary and can vary from one match to another, leading to a lack of fairness and transparency. Some critics argue that referees may show bias in awarding penalty kicks, favoring certain teams or players due to various factors, including pressure from the home crowd or personal preferences. This bias can result in perceived unfairness. The interpretation of fouls and handballs leading to penalty kicks can be subjective, and this subjectivity can lead to controversy. Some critics argue that FIFA's rules and regulations regarding penalty kicks are not always clear or well-defined, leading to confusion and disputes in high-stakes matches. Penalty kicks can have a significant impact on the outcome of a match, and critics contend that a single decision to award a penalty can disproportionately influence the result of a game, leading to frustration and complaints from the losing side. In some cases, external pressures, such as the importance of a match or the significance of the teams involved, can influence the decision to award a penalty kick. Critics argue

that such external factors should not play a role in determining the outcome of a dispute.

Conclusion

Sports diplomacy plays a significant and multifaceted role in global peace building. As a tool for fostering international cooperation and understanding, it has the potential to transcend political, cultural, and social boundaries. Sports diplomacy serves as a platform for people from different cultures and backgrounds to come together. It promotes mutual understanding and respect, breaking down stereotypes and prejudices. Athletes and fans alike are exposed to diverse perspectives, fostering a sense of global unity. Sporting events often act as a neutral ground where countries in conflict can engage in peaceful competition. This can help ease political tensions and provide an avenue for dialogue and diplomacy. The historic "ping pong diplomacy" between the United States and China during the 1970s is a prime example of how sports can lead to diplomatic breakthroughs (Kluch, 2017).

Countries use sports as a means to project their soft power on the global stage. Successful athletes and international sporting events can enhance a nation's image and reputation, which can facilitate diplomatic relations and trade opportunities. Hosting major sports events, such as the Olympics or FIFA World Cup, allows countries to showcase their capabilities and attract positive international attention. Engaging in sports can help divert young people away from violence and conflict, particularly in regions prone to instability. Providing opportunities for youth to participate in sports can be a preventive measure against radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups. Sports diplomacy is an effective form of public diplomacy, allowing countries to communicate with global audiences beyond traditional diplomatic channels. It creates emotional connections and generates goodwill among people, enhancing a nation's diplomatic efforts.

Murray (2014) noted that sports diplomacy often involves humanitarian initiatives, such as using sports to address social issues like poverty, gender inequality, and healthcare disparities. These initiatives not only contribute to global peace building but also improve the quality of life for disadvantaged communities. Major

international sporting events like the Olympics have been used as showcases for peace and unity. The Olympic Truce, which calls for a cessation of hostilities during the Games, is a testament to the belief that sports can contribute to a more peaceful world. Non-governmental organizations and individuals often play a crucial role in sports diplomacy. Track II diplomacy, involving unofficial channels and civil society, can bridge gaps between nations and create opportunities for dialogue and cooperation. Sports diplomacy can be linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It can promote education, gender equality, health, and well-being, contributing to a more peaceful and equitable world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, the following are recommended:

i. FIFA should organize friendly matches between national teams from countries in conflict or with historical tensions. These matches will symbolize a commitment to peace and serve as a platform for diplomacy.
ii. There is need to incorporate peace education into the curricula of football academies.
iii. There is need to invest in grassroots football initiatives in conflict-affected regions.
iv. There is need to encourage cultural exchange programs among youth football teams. These exchanges can help break down stereotypes and build bridges between communities from different countries.
v. FIFA should collaborate with organizations specializing in conflict resolution to offer workshops and training for football leaders, coaches, and players on conflict resolution and peace-building skills.
vi. There is need to use FIFA's platform to promote messages of tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for diversity.
vii. FIFA should collaborate with organizations working with refugees to provide football programs and facilities in refugee camps.

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