

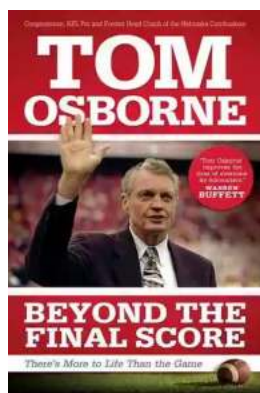
The Politics of Sport in Asia - Contemporary Asia in the World

The world of sports has always been intertwined with political dynamics and ideologies. From boycotts, controversies, and diplomatic exchanges, to the power of national pride and the pursuit of global influence, sport serves as a platform for political expression. Asia, with its diverse countries and rich cultures, is no exception to this phenomenon.

The Rise of Nationalism in Asian Sport

In recent years, nationalist sentiments have been on the rise across Asia. Governments and politicians often use sports events to showcase their nations' strength and unity. Mega sporting events, such as the Asian Games and the Olympics, provide an ideal stage for countries to display their prowess in athletic competition while asserting their nationalistic pride.

China, for example, has strategically utilized sports to promote national identity and project its influence globally. The Beijing Olympics in 2008 marked China's emergence as a global power, with the opening ceremony serving as a grand display of its cultural heritage and technological advancement. The success of Chinese athletes became a symbol of the nation's achievements and aspirations.



Beyond the Final Score: The Politics of Sport in Asia (Contemporary Asia in the World)

by Angel Lawson(Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Similar trends can be observed in other Asian countries as well. Japan used the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the upcoming Tokyo Olympics in 2021 to present itself as a global player and recover from the economic downturn it faced. South Korea, too, utilized the 2018 Winter Olympics as an opportunity to improve relations with North Korea and foster an atmosphere of cooperation.

Controversies and Human Rights Abuses

While sports can bring people together, they also have the potential to highlight political controversies and human rights abuses. Asia has faced its fair share of such issues concerning the hosting of major sports events.

Qatar, an Asian country, faced intense scrutiny when it was awarded the rights to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022. The allegations of corruption surrounding the bidding process, as well as concerns over the treatment of migrant workers involved in constructing the stadiums, raised questions about the ethics of awarding mega sporting events to countries with questionable human rights records.

Similarly, the controversies surrounding the hosting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics in Russia shed light on the political environments in these countries. While the aim is to promote unity and athleticism, the events exposed underlying power dynamics and societal issues, such as censorship, government control, and discrimination.

Sports as Diplomatic Tools

Asian governments often use sports as diplomatic tools to improve relations with other countries. Ping-pong diplomacy, which helped open communication between the United States and China in the 1970s, is a prime example of the politico-sportive approach.

In recent times, there have been efforts to use sports as a means to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula. The unified Korean hockey team at the 2018 Winter Olympics and the participation of North Korean athletes in various international sports events serve as gestures of goodwill and peace, aiming to reduce political tensions and foster dialogue between North and South Korea.

The Impact of Fan Activism

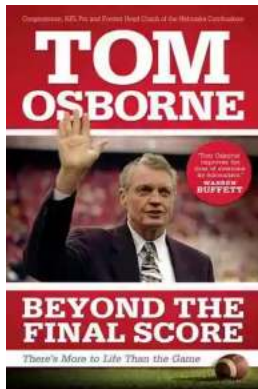
With the advent of social media, sports fans in Asia have gained a platform to voice their opinions and raise social and political issues. Fan activism has become a powerful force in the region, challenging authorities and advocating for change.

For instance, the Hong Kong protests in 2019 spilled over into the sports arena when fans and athletes used sporting events as platforms to express their dissatisfaction with government policies. Fans displayed banners, chanted slogans, and embraced symbols of dissent to draw attention to the political climate at the time.

The politics of sport in Asia reveal a complex interplay between national pride, diplomatic maneuvers, human rights, and fan activism. Sporting events serve as powerful tools for governments to shape public perception, project national identity, and handle diplomatic relations. However, they also shed light on societal issues and controversies, raising questions about the ethical implications of

hosting mega sporting events in countries with questionable human rights records.

As sports continue to create platforms for political expression, the interactions between Asian nations through these events will continue to shape the contemporary political landscape of Asia and its position in the world.



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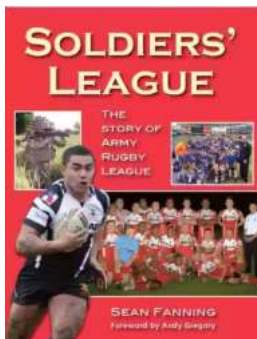


The Beijing Olympics will be remembered as the largest, most expensive, and most widely watched event of the modern Olympic era. But did China present itself as a responsible host and an emergent international power, much like Japan during the 1964 Tokyo Games and South Korea during the 1988 Seoul Games? Or was Beijing in 2008 more like Berlin in 1936, when Germany took advantage of the global spotlight to promote its political ideology at home and abroad?

Beyond the Final Score takes an original look at the 2008 Beijing games within the context of the politics of sport in Asia. Asian athletics are bound up with notions of national identity and nationalism, refracting political intent and the

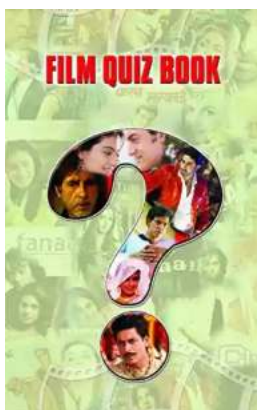
processes of globalization. Sporting events can generate diplomatic breakthroughs (as with the results of Nixon and Mao's "ping-pong diplomacy") or breakdowns (as when an athlete defects to another country). For China, the Beijing Games introduced a liberalizing ethos that its authoritative regime could ignore only at its peril.

Victor D. Cha—former director of Asian affairs for the White House—evaluates Beijing's contention with this pressure considering the intense scrutiny China already faced on issues of counterproliferation, global warming, and free trade. He begins with the arguments that tie Asian sport to international affairs and follows with an explanation of athletics as they relate to identity, diplomacy, and transformation. Enhanced by Cha's remarkable facility with the history and politics of sport, *Beyond the Final Score* is the definitive examination of the events—both good and bad—that took place during the Beijing Olympics.



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