

**Olympic Diplomacy and Peacebuilding in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games:
Evaluating the Potential of Sport to Promote International Dialogue, Conflict Prevention,
and Global Cooperation**

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ABSTRACT

The Olympic Games constitute one of the world's most prominent platforms for international interaction, bringing together states, athletes, institutions, and diverse communities within a shared framework of peaceful competition. In an increasingly fragmented international environment characterized by geopolitical rivalry, armed conflict, diplomatic tensions, and declining trust among states, the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games provide an important opportunity to examine whether Olympic diplomacy can contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and international cooperation. This study critically evaluates the potential of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games to function as a platform for international dialogue and peacebuilding through the mechanisms of Olympic diplomacy, the Olympic Truce, intercultural exchange, diplomatic engagement, and sport-based soft power. Rather than assuming that a mega-sport event can independently resolve complex political conflicts, the study conceptualizes Olympic diplomacy as a complementary instrument capable of creating temporary spaces for communication, confidence-building, symbolic reconciliation, and relationship development among actors experiencing political disagreement. The research adopts a qualitative analytical framework integrating perspectives from international relations, sports diplomacy, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and Olympic studies. Previous Olympic experiences are examined comparatively to identify patterns, opportunities, and limitations that may inform the peacebuilding potential of Los Angeles 2028. Particular attention is given to the United States' position within contemporary international relations, the global

visibility of the Los Angeles Games, the diversity of participating nations, and the capacity of the Olympic Movement to facilitate dialogue across political, cultural, and ideological boundaries. The study further considers critical challenges that may constrain the effectiveness of Olympic diplomacy, including geopolitical polarization, politicization of sport, human-rights controversies, competing national interests, diplomatic boycotts, security concerns, and the gap between symbolic Olympic commitments and sustained political action. The analysis argues that the peacebuilding significance of Los Angeles 2028 should be assessed not simply according to whether political conflicts are resolved during the Games, but according to whether the event creates measurable opportunities for dialogue, cooperation, mutual understanding, and continued diplomatic engagement. The study proposes that Olympic diplomacy can have greater peacebuilding value when supported by inclusive governance, human-rights principles, transparent institutions, intercultural initiatives, and sustained diplomatic engagement before and after the Games. Consequently, Los Angeles 2028 represents not merely a sporting spectacle but a potential diplomatic arena in which sport can complement conventional international diplomacy and contribute to broader efforts toward peaceful international relations. The study contributes to Olympic and international-relations scholarship by developing a forward-looking framework for evaluating the conditions under which mega-sport events can transform Olympic ideals of peace into meaningful diplomatic practice.

Keywords: *Olympic Diplomacy; Peacebuilding; Los Angeles 2028; Conflict Prevention; International Cooperation*

INTRODUCTION.

The Olympic Games represent one of the most visible manifestations of international cooperation in the contemporary world. Every four years, athletes from diverse political systems, cultures, and national backgrounds participate within a common institutional framework that emphasizes peaceful competition, mutual respect, solidarity, and human dignity. Although the Olympic Games are primarily organized as a sporting mega-event, their significance extends considerably beyond athletic performance. The global visibility of the Olympic Movement provides opportunities for diplomatic interaction, intercultural communication, and the construction of relationships among states and societies. In this context, Olympic diplomacy has increasingly attracted scholarly attention as a potential instrument of international dialogue and peacebuilding. The Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games offer a particularly relevant opportunity to examine this relationship because the event will take place in a period characterized by geopolitical polarization, armed conflicts, strategic competition, and growing challenges to multilateral cooperation.

The relationship between sport and international relations is not new. Sport has historically provided states and political actors with opportunities to communicate symbolic messages, strengthen international relationships, develop national reputations, and exercise soft power. Nye (2004) conceptualized soft power as the capacity to influence others through attraction rather than coercion or payment, a framework that is particularly relevant to international sporting events. The Olympic Games possess considerable soft-power potential because of their global audience, symbolic significance, and capacity to bring political communities into a shared environment. Grix and Lee (2013) similarly demonstrate that international sport can contribute to broader foreign-policy objectives by enhancing national visibility and creating opportunities for diplomatic engagement. Consequently, Olympic diplomacy can be understood as a form of sports diplomacy through which sporting relationships and Olympic institutions may complement conventional diplomatic processes.

The peacebuilding dimension of the Olympic Movement is embedded within its foundational principles. The Olympic Charter presents Olympism as a philosophy that seeks to place sport at the service of humanity and promote peaceful society through sport, without discrimination of any kind (International Olympic Committee [IOC], 2023). The Olympic Truce, historically associated with the ancient Olympic Games and

subsequently revived within the modern Olympic Movement, provides an institutional expression of this aspiration. The United Nations has repeatedly supported the Olympic Truce as a means of encouraging the cessation of hostilities and creating conditions conducive to dialogue and peaceful engagement (United Nations General Assembly, 2023). Nevertheless, the existence of these principles does not automatically establish that Olympic events produce sustainable peace. The relationship between sport and peace is complex because international sport can simultaneously facilitate cooperation and reproduce geopolitical competition.

The Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games therefore present an important case for critically assessing the practical potential of Olympic diplomacy. As the United States prepares to host the Summer Olympic Games, Los Angeles will become a temporary meeting point for athletes, government representatives, international organizations, media institutions, businesses, and civil society actors from across the world. The international character of the event creates opportunities for communication among countries that may otherwise experience political disagreement or limited diplomatic engagement. The Games may also facilitate people-to-people contact, cultural exchange, and symbolic forms of reconciliation. From a peacebuilding perspective, these interactions can potentially contribute to confidence-building and the reduction of interpersonal and societal barriers associated with political conflict.

However, the diplomatic potential of the Olympics must be evaluated critically rather than assumed. Olympic history demonstrates that sport can become deeply entangled with international politics. Boycotts, political protests, national rivalries, human-rights controversies, and diplomatic disputes have repeatedly demonstrated that the Olympic arena is not politically isolated (Toohey & Veal, 2007). The contradiction between the Olympic ideal of political neutrality and the political realities surrounding mega-sport events remains an important analytical problem. The commercialization of the Games, security concerns, questions of human rights, environmental pressures, and competing national interests can also affect the credibility of Olympic peace initiatives. Therefore, the effectiveness of Olympic diplomacy depends not simply on bringing states together but on whether meaningful opportunities for dialogue and cooperation can be generated and sustained.

Peacebuilding scholarship provides an additional theoretical foundation for examining this issue. Lederach (1997) argues that sustainable peace requires more than the temporary absence of violence; it involves transforming relationships, structures, and patterns that contribute to conflict. From this perspective, the Olympic Games should not be evaluated according to whether they independently resolve major international conflicts. Instead, their potential contribution may lie in creating spaces for communication, relationship-building, intercultural understanding, and confidence-building that can complement broader diplomatic and peacebuilding processes. This distinction is important because sporting events may provide opportunities for engagement even when formal political negotiations are difficult or temporarily suspended.

The Los Angeles 2028 Games consequently provide a valuable forward-looking case through which to examine the conditions under which Olympic diplomacy might contribute to international peace. Since the Games have not yet occurred, their peacebuilding outcomes cannot be empirically measured in terms of post-event effects. A more appropriate approach is to evaluate their institutional framework, anticipated diplomatic mechanisms, lessons from previous Olympic experiences, and the contextual factors that may enhance or constrain their peacebuilding potential. Such an approach avoids premature claims while establishing a research framework through which the actual diplomatic and peacebuilding outcomes of Los Angeles 2028 can subsequently be assessed.

This study therefore examines the potential of Olympic diplomacy within the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games to promote international dialogue, conflict prevention, and global cooperation. It investigates how

Olympic institutions, diplomatic engagement, the Olympic Truce, intercultural exchange, and sports-based soft power may contribute to peacebuilding while simultaneously considering the political and institutional limitations of the Olympic Movement. By connecting Olympic studies with international relations and peacebuilding scholarship, the study seeks to move beyond the assumption that sport is inherently peaceful. Instead, it conceptualizes Olympic diplomacy as a potentially valuable but conditional mechanism of international engagement whose effectiveness depends on political context, institutional credibility, inclusiveness, human-rights commitments, and sustained diplomatic action. In doing so, the research contributes to the growing debate concerning whether contemporary mega-sport events can transform Olympic ideals of peace and cooperation into meaningful practices of international diplomacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Scholarship on the relationship between sport, diplomacy, and peacebuilding has expanded considerably, positioning major sporting events as important sites of international interaction. Early approaches often treated sport as a mechanism for promoting friendship and mutual understanding, reflecting the broader ideals of Olympism. More recent scholarship, however, has adopted a more critical perspective, recognizing that sport operates within complex political, economic, and institutional environments. The Olympic Games therefore represent both an opportunity for international cooperation and a potential arena for geopolitical competition. The concept of sports diplomacy provides an important foundation for understanding this relationship. Murray (2018) argues that sport can function as a diplomatic resource by creating opportunities for communication, relationship-building, and trust between actors who may experience difficulties through conventional diplomatic channels. Similarly, Nye's (2004) concept of soft power explains how attraction, values, culture, and international reputation can influence relationships without coercion. Within this framework, the Olympic Games possess significant diplomatic potential because their global reach allows states and international institutions to communicate with audiences extending far beyond traditional diplomatic environments. Grix and Lee (2013) further demonstrate that international sporting events can contribute to foreign-policy objectives and national soft-power strategies.

The literature on Olympism and peace highlights the normative commitment of the Olympic Movement to peaceful international relations. The Olympic Truce represents one of the most prominent institutional mechanisms through which the Olympic Movement seeks to associate sport with the cessation of hostilities and peaceful dialogue. The United Nations has repeatedly endorsed the Olympic Truce, demonstrating the recognition of sport as a possible supporting mechanism for peace and international cooperation (United Nations General Assembly, 2023). Nevertheless, scholars caution against interpreting the Truce as evidence that Olympic events automatically generate peace. Rather, its effectiveness depends on political willingness and the existence of broader diplomatic processes. Peacebuilding theory provides an additional analytical perspective. Lederach (1997) emphasizes that sustainable peace involves transforming relationships and addressing underlying sources of conflict rather than merely suspending violence. Applied to Olympic diplomacy, this perspective suggests that the contribution of the Games should be evaluated through mechanisms such as dialogue, interpersonal contact, intercultural understanding, confidence-building, and long-term relationship development. This approach moves the analysis beyond symbolic Olympic rhetoric toward measurable diplomatic and social processes. At the same time, critical Olympic scholarship demonstrates that the relationship between sport and politics is inherently contradictory. Toohey and Veal (2007) document the extensive political dimensions of the Olympic Games, including boycotts, nationalism, political protest, and international rivalry. Consequently, the claim that Olympic sport is politically neutral remains problematic. Mega-events can facilitate cooperation while simultaneously reinforcing national competition and geopolitical narratives.

The existing literature provides substantial theoretical foundations for understanding sports diplomacy, soft power, Olympism, and peacebuilding, but comparatively limited research has examined the prospective

peacebuilding potential of Los Angeles 2028. Most existing studies focus on historical Olympic events or examine sport diplomacy in broader terms. This creates an important research opportunity. By examining Los Angeles 2028 through the combined perspectives of Olympic diplomacy, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and international relations, the present study seeks to identify the institutional and political conditions under which the Games may contribute to meaningful international dialogue and cooperation. The study therefore extends existing scholarship by developing a forward-looking framework for evaluating Olympic diplomacy before the event takes place.

METHODOLOGY.

Research Design.

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and comparative research design to examine the potential of Olympic diplomacy to contribute to peacebuilding, conflict prevention, international dialogue, and global cooperation through the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. Because Los Angeles 2028 is an upcoming event, the research does not attempt to measure outcomes that have not yet occurred. Instead, it evaluates the institutional arrangements, diplomatic mechanisms, historical evidence, and contextual conditions that may influence the Games' peacebuilding potential.

Research Approach

The study employs a qualitative document-analysis approach supported by comparative case analysis. Primary and secondary documentary sources will be examined, including the Olympic Charter, International Olympic Committee (IOC) policies and reports, United Nations resolutions concerning the Olympic Truce, official Los Angeles 2028 documents, host-city commitments, academic publications, policy reports, and relevant international-relations literature. Particular attention will be given to documents addressing Olympic diplomacy, peacebuilding, human rights, international cooperation, political neutrality, and conflict prevention.

Comparative Case Analysis

Selected previous Olympic Games will be examined to identify lessons relevant to Los Angeles 2028. Cases may include PyeongChang 2018, Tokyo 2020, Rio 2016, London 2012, and other historically significant Games in which diplomatic engagement, political tensions, or peace initiatives were particularly visible. The cases will be compared according to several dimensions: diplomatic dialogue, participation and inclusion, conflict-related engagement, Olympic Truce initiatives, intercultural exchange, political tensions, human-rights considerations, and evidence of sustained cooperation. These cases will provide a comparative foundation for assessing the opportunities and limitations facing Los Angeles 2028.

Analytical Framework

The analysis will integrate four conceptual dimensions: sports diplomacy, soft power, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention. Sports diplomacy will be used to examine communication and relationship-building through sport, while soft-power theory will assess the capacity of Olympic institutions and participating states to influence international perceptions through attraction and values (Nye, 2004). Peacebuilding theory will provide a framework for examining dialogue, reconciliation, relationship transformation, and cooperation (Lederach, 1997).

Data Analysis

The collected material will be analyzed thematically. Relevant evidence will be coded into categories including diplomatic engagement, dialogue, conflict prevention, international cooperation, cultural understanding, human rights, political neutrality, and institutional limitations. Comparative findings will then be synthesized to identify conditions that could strengthen or weaken the peacebuilding potential of Los Angeles 2028.

Ethical Considerations

The study relies primarily on publicly available documentary and scholarly sources and therefore involves no direct human-subject experimentation. Sources will be accurately represented and appropriately cited according to APA guidelines. Particular care will be taken to distinguish established evidence from prospective interpretations concerning Los Angeles 2028.

RQ1: To what extent can Olympic diplomacy associated with the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games contribute to international dialogue, conflict prevention, and global peacebuilding?

Supporting Research Questions

RQ2: How can the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games create opportunities for diplomatic dialogue and communication between states experiencing political tensions?

RQ3: What lessons from previous Olympic Games can inform the peacebuilding and diplomatic potential of Los Angeles 2028?

RQ4: What institutional, political, and geopolitical factors may enhance or constrain the effectiveness of Olympic diplomacy during Los Angeles 2028?

RQ5: How can the Olympic Truce, intercultural exchange, and sports diplomacy contribute to conflict prevention and international cooperation through Los Angeles 2028?

RQ6: What mechanisms could be used to evaluate the peacebuilding impact of Los Angeles 2028 before, during, and after the Games?

Research Objectives.

The primary objective of this study is to critically evaluate the potential of Olympic diplomacy associated with the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games to contribute to international dialogue, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and global cooperation.

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the role of Olympic diplomacy in promoting international dialogue and communication among states and non-state actors participating in or associated with the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

2. To assess the potential contribution of Los Angeles 2028 to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, particularly through diplomatic engagement, intercultural exchange, and the principles of the Olympic Truce.
3. To analyze lessons from previous Olympic Games in which sport, diplomacy, political tensions, or peace initiatives influenced international relations and identify their relevance to Los Angeles 2028.
4. To identify the political, institutional, and geopolitical factors that may facilitate or constrain the effectiveness of Olympic diplomacy during the Los Angeles 2028 Games.
5. To evaluate the relevance of sports diplomacy and soft power theories in explaining how the Olympic Games can facilitate international cooperation and improve relations between politically divided or competing states.
6. To examine the role of the International Olympic Committee, national Olympic committees, host-city institutions, and other stakeholders in supporting diplomatic engagement and peace-oriented initiatives associated with Los Angeles 2028.
7. To develop an analytical framework for evaluating the peacebuilding potential of Los Angeles 2028, including indicators related to international dialogue, diplomatic engagement, intercultural understanding, conflict prevention, cooperation, and sustained post-Games relationships.
8. To propose policy and institutional recommendations for strengthening the contribution of Olympic diplomacy to peacebuilding, international cooperation, and peaceful international relations before, during, and after the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

Theoretical Framework.

This study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates Soft Power Theory, Sports Diplomacy Theory, Peacebuilding Theory, Conflict Transformation Theory, and the principles of Olympism to examine the potential contribution of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games to international dialogue, conflict prevention, and global cooperation. Combining these perspectives enables the study to move beyond the assumption that sport is inherently peaceful and instead examine the political, institutional, and relational conditions under which Olympic diplomacy may contribute to peacebuilding.

Soft Power Theory

The first foundation is Nye's (2004) Soft Power Theory, which explains how states and institutions can influence others through attraction, legitimacy, values, culture, and international reputation rather than coercion. The Olympic Games possess considerable soft-power potential because of their worldwide visibility and ability to communicate cultural and political narratives to global audiences. In the context of Los Angeles 2028, soft power provides a framework for assessing how the United States, the Olympic Movement, and participating countries may use the Games to promote cooperation, intercultural understanding, and positive international relationships. However, soft power is likely to be effective only when the values communicated through sport are perceived as credible and legitimate.

Sports Diplomacy

The second component is Sports Diplomacy, which conceptualizes sport as a mechanism for facilitating communication and relationship-building between political and social actors. Murray (2018) emphasizes

that sporting interactions can create informal diplomatic opportunities and establish relationships that may complement conventional diplomacy. The Los Angeles 2028 Games may therefore provide opportunities for governmental representatives, athletes, international organizations, and civil society actors to interact despite political differences. Sports diplomacy is particularly relevant to this study because it explains the mechanisms through which sporting encounters may contribute to dialogue and confidence-building.

Peacebuilding Theory

The third foundation is Peacebuilding Theory, particularly Lederach's (1997) emphasis on transforming relationships and addressing the social conditions underlying conflict. From this perspective, peace should not be understood simply as the temporary absence of violence. Instead, sustainable peace requires communication, trust, reconciliation, cooperation, and constructive relationships. Applied to Los Angeles 2028, this theory suggests that the Games should be evaluated according to their ability to create opportunities for sustained dialogue, intercultural understanding, and relationship-building rather than their capacity to independently resolve international conflicts.

Conflict Transformation Theory

Conflict Transformation further strengthens the framework by emphasizing changes in relationships, structures, narratives, and social interactions that contribute to conflict. Olympic diplomacy may contribute to such transformation by creating neutral or semi-neutral spaces where competing actors can communicate. However, its contribution is likely to remain limited unless sporting engagement is connected to broader diplomatic and peacebuilding processes.

Olympism and Olympic Truce

Finally, the principles of Olympism and the Olympic Truce provide the normative foundation of the study. The Olympic Movement emphasizes peaceful competition, respect, solidarity, equality, and mutual understanding (International Olympic Committee [IOC], 2023). The Olympic Truce provides a specific institutional mechanism through which the Olympic Movement seeks to associate sport with peace and the cessation of hostilities. Together, these principles establish the normative expectations against which the diplomatic and peacebuilding potential of Los Angeles 2028 can be assessed.

Overall, the framework proposes that Olympic values and sporting interaction can generate diplomatic contact; diplomatic contact can facilitate dialogue and confidence-building; and sustained dialogue may contribute to conflict prevention and broader peacebuilding. The framework therefore treats Olympic diplomacy as a complementary rather than independent mechanism of international peace, whose effectiveness depends on political context, institutional credibility, human-rights commitments, inclusiveness, and continued diplomatic engagement beyond the Olympic Games.

Comparative Case Studies: Olympic Diplomacy and Peacebuilding

PyeongChang 2018: Olympic Diplomacy and Direct Diplomatic Engagement

The PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games provide one of the strongest contemporary examples of sport functioning as a channel for diplomatic engagement during a period of significant geopolitical tension. The Games were held in South Korea at a time when relations between North and South Korea were characterized by military tensions, disagreements over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, and limited political communication. Against this difficult background, the Olympics created an institutional and symbolic environment in which representatives of the two Korean states could interact through sport.

North Korea's participation, the formation of a joint Korean women's ice-hockey team, and the presence of senior political representatives generated considerable international attention and demonstrated the capacity of an Olympic event to facilitate contact between politically divided actors.

From a sports-diplomacy perspective, PyeongChang illustrates the importance of sporting platforms as spaces for confidence-building. The Olympic environment did not resolve the underlying political and security disputes between North and South Korea; however, it helped establish communication that contributed to subsequent diplomatic engagement. The case therefore supports the argument that sports diplomacy is most appropriately understood as a complementary mechanism rather than a substitute for formal diplomacy. Murray (2018) emphasizes that sport can facilitate relationship-building and provide informal opportunities for diplomatic interaction. PyeongChang provides empirical support for this proposition by demonstrating how sporting participation can create political openings under conditions in which conventional diplomatic relations are constrained.

For Los Angeles 2028, the PyeongChang experience provides an important lesson: the peacebuilding value of an Olympic Games may depend on whether institutional actors deliberately transform sporting contact into opportunities for sustained dialogue. LA28 could potentially provide similar spaces for interaction among states experiencing political tensions, although the geopolitical circumstances will necessarily differ. The key lesson is therefore not that Olympic Games automatically produce reconciliation, but that they can create temporary diplomatic opportunities that may be developed through broader political engagement.

Barcelona 1992: Olympic Sport, Political Transformation, and International Cooperation

The Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games provide a different model of Olympic diplomacy, emphasizing political transformation, international integration, and the symbolic power of hosting. Held shortly after the end of the Cold War, Barcelona 1992 occurred during a period of profound changes in the international system. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of newly independent states altered the political landscape represented at the Games. The Olympic event therefore became an important setting for observing the changing configuration of international relations.

Barcelona also demonstrated how a host city can use the Olympics to strengthen international identity and cultural diplomacy. The Games presented Barcelona and Spain to a global audience and contributed to a narrative of openness, modernization, cultural diversity, and international engagement. Rather than functioning primarily as direct conflict mediation, the diplomatic significance of Barcelona emerged through international visibility, cultural interaction, and participation in a changing global environment.

The case is particularly relevant to peacebuilding because it illustrates the broader understanding of peace as relationship-building and international integration. Lederach (1997) argues that sustainable peace involves transforming relationships and social structures rather than merely ending immediate confrontation. From this perspective, the Olympics can contribute indirectly to peace by creating opportunities for intercultural contact and strengthening perceptions of common international membership.

The Barcelona experience offers Los Angeles 2028 a different lesson from PyeongChang. While PyeongChang demonstrates the possibility of direct diplomatic engagement between politically divided actors, Barcelona highlights the potential contribution of cultural diplomacy and international cooperation. Los Angeles, as a globally diverse city and a major international cultural center, may similarly use the Olympic platform to encourage intercultural dialogue and demonstrate the value of international cooperation.

Munich 1972: The Limits of Olympic Peace and Security Challenges

The Munich 1972 Olympic Games provide an essential counter-case because they demonstrate the limitations of viewing the Olympics as inherently peaceful spaces. The Games were disrupted by the terrorist attack against members of the Israeli Olympic delegation, resulting in the deaths of Israeli athletes and officials and highlighting the vulnerability of international sporting events to broader political violence. The incident fundamentally challenged the assumption that the Olympic environment could be insulated from international conflict.

From a theoretical perspective, Munich demonstrates why Olympic diplomacy must be analyzed within its wider geopolitical and security environment. Although the Olympic Charter promotes peace, mutual understanding, and respect, these principles cannot eliminate political violence or ideological conflict. The Munich experience consequently provides a critical warning against overly optimistic interpretations of sports diplomacy. Sport may create opportunities for dialogue, but it can also become a highly visible target or arena for political expression.

The case has direct implications for Los Angeles 2028. Security, political polarization, terrorism, protest, and geopolitical tensions must be considered when evaluating the peacebuilding potential of the Games. A credible peacebuilding strategy requires not only diplomatic initiatives but also effective governance, human-rights protections, responsible security arrangements, and mechanisms capable of responding to political tensions without undermining peaceful expression.

Comparative Implications for Los Angeles 2028

Taken together, the three cases demonstrate that Olympic diplomacy operates through different mechanisms and under different political conditions. PyeongChang 2018 demonstrates the potential of sport to create direct diplomatic openings; Barcelona 1992 illustrates the contribution of cultural diplomacy, international integration, and political transformation; while Munich 1972 demonstrates the structural limitations and security vulnerabilities of the Olympic peace ideal. These contrasting experiences suggest that the peacebuilding potential of Los Angeles 2028 should not be evaluated simply by measuring whether political conflicts are resolved during the Games.

Instead, LA28 should be assessed according to whether it creates meaningful opportunities for international dialogue, intercultural understanding, diplomatic contact, confidence-building, and sustained cooperation. The comparative evidence indicates that Olympic diplomacy is most likely to contribute to peace when sporting interaction is supported by credible institutions, inclusive governance, respect for human rights, diplomatic willingness, and continued engagement beyond the Olympic event. Consequently, Los Angeles 2028 should be understood as a potential diplomatic platform rather than an independent mechanism for resolving international conflicts. Its ultimate peacebuilding significance will depend on whether the relationships and opportunities created through the Games can be translated into sustained international cooperation.

Research Gap, Los Angeles 2028 Context and Olympic Governance, and Human Rights, Peace, and Olympic Diplomacy

Research Gap

Existing scholarship has established that sport can influence international relations through diplomacy, soft power, public diplomacy, cultural exchange, and symbolic interaction. Research on sports diplomacy has demonstrated that sporting events can provide opportunities for communication and relationship-building

that complement conventional diplomatic processes (Murray, 2018). Similarly, soft-power scholarship emphasizes the capacity of international sporting events to influence perceptions through attraction, cultural visibility, and institutional values (Nye, 2004). Olympic scholarship has also examined nationalism, political protest, boycotts, governance, commercialization, and the complex relationship between the Olympic Movement and international politics (Toohey & Veal, 2007). These studies provide important theoretical foundations for understanding the diplomatic dimensions of the Olympic Games.

However, several significant gaps remain. First, much of the existing research examines completed Olympic Games retrospectively, focusing on events for which diplomatic or political outcomes can already be observed. Comparatively less attention has been given to developing a prospective framework capable of assessing the peacebuilding potential of an Olympic Games before it takes place. This distinction is particularly important in the case of Los Angeles 2028 because claims about its actual contribution to peace, conflict prevention, or international cooperation cannot yet be empirically established.

Second, existing studies frequently examine sports diplomacy, soft power, Olympic governance, human rights, and peacebuilding as relatively separate areas of scholarship. There is a need for a more integrated framework that examines how these dimensions interact. In particular, the relationship between Olympic diplomacy and peacebuilding is conditional: sporting contact may create opportunities for dialogue, but meaningful peacebuilding requires institutional credibility, political willingness, human-rights protections, and sustained engagement.

Third, previous Olympic research provides important historical evidence but does not adequately identify the lessons that can be systematically transferred to Los Angeles 2028. The experiences of PyeongChang 2018, Barcelona 1992, and Munich 1972 demonstrate contrasting possibilities and limitations, ranging from direct diplomatic engagement to broader political transformation and severe security challenges. A comparative framework connecting these experiences to LA28 remains underdeveloped.

Fourth, the human-rights dimension requires greater integration into analyses of Olympic diplomacy. The Olympic Charter now explicitly connects Olympism with human dignity, non-discrimination, and the right to participate in sport without discrimination. Yet the practical relationship between human-rights credibility and the peacebuilding effectiveness of Olympic diplomacy requires further investigation.

This study addresses these gaps by developing a forward-looking analytical framework for Los Angeles 2028 that connects Olympic diplomacy, sports diplomacy, soft power, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, human rights, and Olympic governance. Rather than predicting that LA28 will produce peace, the study evaluates the institutional and political conditions under which the Games could create meaningful opportunities for dialogue, cooperation, intercultural understanding, and conflict prevention. This approach provides a basis for subsequently evaluating the actual outcomes of LA28 after the Games.

Los Angeles 2028 Context and Olympic Governance

The Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games represent a distinctive opportunity for examining the relationship between sport, governance, diplomacy, and peacebuilding. LA28 is being organized by an independent, non-profit organization that works with public and private partners and is governed by a volunteer board of directors. This institutional arrangement is significant because the Games involve multiple layers of authority, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC), LA28, the City of Los Angeles, national and international sporting bodies, public authorities, sponsors, athletes, and community stakeholders.

The relationship between the IOC and the host city is structured through the Olympic governance system. The Olympic Charter provides for a formal agreement between the IOC, the host city, and the National Olympic Committee of the host country through the Host City Contract. Consequently, LA28 is not simply a local sporting event; it is part of a wider international governance system in which the IOC establishes principles and requirements while the organizing committee and host institutions translate those requirements into operational practices.

LA28's current Games Plan emphasizes the use of existing venues and temporary facilities rather than constructing a new permanent Olympic infrastructure network. Official planning documents describe the approach as one designed around existing facilities, sustainability, fiscal responsibility, and the athlete and fan experience. The current venue plan involves more than 40 competition venues across Southern California, providing a geographically distributed platform through which international athletes and audiences will interact with the wider Los Angeles region.

Governance is also increasingly connected to sustainability and community impact. LA28 released an Impact and Sustainability Plan in 2025 emphasizing economic empowerment, youth sport, environmental responsibility, local businesses, community engagement, clean energy, transportation, and resilience. The plan includes a commitment to use existing venues, prioritize reuse, pursue renewable electricity for venues, and promote a transit-first approach. The plan also identifies community participation as an important element of Games planning, including working groups involving community, labor, academic, and other stakeholders.

International participation is central to the diplomatic significance of LA28. The Games will bring athletes and representatives from across the international Olympic Movement into a common institutional and cultural environment. The Olympic qualification pathway itself is increasingly international, with the IOC announcing Olympic Q-Series events in Tokyo, Shanghai, Montreal, and Orlando in the lead-up to LA28. Such networks illustrate that Olympic diplomacy extends beyond the competition period and can involve international interaction during preparation and qualification.

The U.S. context adds another layer to the analysis. Hosting the Olympics provides the United States with substantial global visibility and a platform for public and cultural diplomacy. However, this visibility creates both opportunities and responsibilities. If the Games are perceived as inclusive, transparent, rights-respecting, and genuinely international, they may enhance the credibility of Olympic diplomacy. Conversely, political polarization, exclusion, discrimination, or governance controversies could weaken the legitimacy of peace-oriented messages.

Therefore, LA28 governance should be evaluated not only through operational efficiency but also through its ability to translate Olympic values into institutional practice. The Games' governance arrangements, sustainability commitments, community participation, accessibility, and international engagement collectively shape the credibility of LA28 as a potential platform for global cooperation.

Human Rights, Peace, and Olympic Diplomacy

Human rights represent a fundamental dimension of contemporary Olympic governance and cannot be separated from discussions of peacebuilding. The Olympic Charter identifies Olympism with the promotion of a peaceful society concerned with human dignity and establishes sport as a human right to be practiced without discrimination. It also rejects discrimination based on characteristics including race, religion, politics, gender, and other grounds. The IOC Code of Ethics further emphasizes human dignity, non-discrimination, protection against harassment and abuse, and participant safety and well-being.

These principles have direct implications for Olympic diplomacy. Peace is difficult to sustain when individuals or groups experience exclusion, discrimination, violence, or denial of fundamental rights. Consequently, the credibility of Olympic diplomacy depends partly on whether the institutions promoting dialogue also demonstrate respect for human dignity. In this sense, human rights can be understood as both an ethical foundation and an enabling condition for peacebuilding.

For Los Angeles 2028, inclusion is particularly significant. LA28 has emphasized accessibility and states that the Games are intended to welcome guests of all abilities. Its accessibility planning includes accessible seating and routes, while some specific services continue to be finalized as preparations progress. The Paralympic Games also provide an important opportunity to place disability inclusion within the broader international narrative of equality and human dignity. LA28 will host Los Angeles' first Paralympic Games, creating an additional platform for challenging stereotypes surrounding disability and promoting participation through sport.

Human rights also intersect with Olympic peacebuilding through the principle of non-discrimination. The Olympic environment brings together individuals from different political, cultural, religious, linguistic, and national backgrounds. When this diversity is managed through equal participation and mutual respect, sporting interaction can contribute to intercultural understanding. The Olympic Charter's emphasis on friendship, solidarity, fair play, and non-discrimination therefore provides a normative foundation for viewing sport as a potential contributor to peaceful relations.

The Olympic Truce represents another important connection between human rights, peace, and diplomacy. The United Nations has historically supported the Olympic Truce as a means of promoting international understanding and peaceful settlement of conflicts. A foundational UN General Assembly resolution adopted in 1993 encouraged states to observe the Olympic Truce and pursue peaceful settlement of international conflicts. More broadly, the UN continues to describe the Olympic Truce as an expression of the shared aspiration for peace and non-violence.

Nevertheless, the peacebuilding capacity of Olympic diplomacy should not be exaggerated. Human rights commitments may exist at the normative level while implementation remains uneven. Similarly, the Olympic Truce may generate powerful symbolism without producing lasting changes in conflict relationships. This creates an important distinction between normative peace and practical peacebuilding. Olympic diplomacy can establish a language and institutional environment supportive of peace, but durable peace requires political negotiations, structural reforms, human-rights protections, and sustained engagement beyond the Games.

For LA28, therefore, the relationship among human rights, peace, and diplomacy should be assessed through measurable institutional practices. These could include accessibility, non-discrimination, athlete protection, stakeholder participation, community engagement, transparency, diplomatic initiatives, intercultural programs, and post-Games cooperation. LA28's sustainability and impact strategy already places emphasis on community benefit, youth sport, local participation, resilience, and environmental responsibility, creating a broader platform through which social legacy can be connected with peacebuilding.

Overall, the LA28 case demonstrates that Olympic diplomacy should not be understood simply as interaction between governments during a sporting event. It is a multidimensional process involving institutions, athletes, communities, international organizations, cultural actors, and civil society. When supported by human rights, inclusive governance, intercultural exchange, and credible institutional practices, Olympic diplomacy may create conditions conducive to dialogue and cooperation. The central challenge is to ensure that these values extend beyond Olympic symbolism and become part of sustained

international and social relationships. For this reason, Los Angeles 2028 provides an important prospective case for examining whether the Olympic ideal of peace can be translated into meaningful practices of diplomacy, inclusion, human dignity, and international cooperation.

DISCUSSION.

The findings of this study indicate that the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games possess meaningful potential to contribute to international dialogue, conflict prevention, and global cooperation, but this potential should be understood as conditional rather than automatic. The comparative analysis of PyeongChang 2018, Barcelona 1992, and Munich 1972 demonstrates that Olympic diplomacy can create opportunities for communication and relationship-building while simultaneously remaining vulnerable to geopolitical conflict, political instrumentalization, security challenges, and institutional limitations. Consequently, the Olympic Games should be understood as a complementary diplomatic platform rather than an independent mechanism for resolving international conflicts.

The PyeongChang 2018 case provides the strongest evidence for the diplomatic potential of sport. Interaction between North and South Korea demonstrated how an Olympic event can create opportunities for communication during periods of significant political tension. This supports the sports-diplomacy perspective that sporting environments can provide informal spaces for contact when conventional diplomatic channels are constrained (Murray, 2018). For Los Angeles 2028, this suggests that international participation can be deliberately connected with diplomatic initiatives, cultural programs, and dialogue mechanisms. However, the PyeongChang experience also demonstrates that sporting diplomacy alone cannot resolve deeply embedded political disputes. Its effectiveness depends on whether temporary sporting contact is followed by sustained political engagement.

The Barcelona 1992 case provides a broader interpretation of Olympic peacebuilding. Rather than focusing primarily on direct conflict mediation, Barcelona demonstrated the importance of cultural exchange, international visibility, and political transformation. This finding supports Nye's (2004) soft-power perspective because international sporting events can generate attraction and influence through culture, values, and international engagement. Los Angeles 2028 may possess considerable soft-power potential because of the city's global cultural profile and the international visibility of the United States. Nevertheless, soft power depends on credibility. Olympic messages concerning peace, equality, and cooperation are likely to be more persuasive when supported by transparent governance, inclusion, human-rights protection, and consistent institutional behavior.

The Munich 1972 case provides an important counterargument to overly optimistic interpretations of Olympic diplomacy. The terrorist attack during the Games demonstrated that international political violence cannot simply be excluded from the Olympic environment. This finding emphasizes the relevance of conflict-transformation theory, which recognizes that peacebuilding must address underlying political and social conditions rather than rely solely on symbolic events (Lederach, 1997). For LA28, security and political risk management will therefore be essential. Excessive securitization, however, could itself create tensions if security practices undermine civil liberties, accessibility, or public trust. Consequently, effective governance must balance security with human rights and openness.

The findings also demonstrate that human rights are central to the credibility of Olympic peacebuilding. The Olympic ideal of peaceful international relations is difficult to sustain if participation is accompanied by discrimination, exclusion, harassment, or violations of human dignity. LA28's emphasis on accessibility, inclusion, community participation, and sustainability therefore has significance beyond event management. These commitments can contribute to the legitimacy of Olympic diplomacy by demonstrating that peace is connected to equality and human dignity.

Another important finding is that the Olympic Truce has greater potential when treated as a mechanism for practical engagement rather than merely a symbolic declaration. The Truce can provide political actors with a common normative language, but its peacebuilding contribution depends on whether institutions use it to encourage dialogue, humanitarian cooperation, and conflict-sensitive initiatives. LA28 therefore provides an opportunity to strengthen the connection between Olympic symbolism and practical diplomacy.

Overall, the study suggests that the peacebuilding potential of Los Angeles 2028 depends on four interconnected conditions: credible governance, meaningful diplomatic engagement, respect for human rights, and sustained post-Games cooperation. Without these conditions, Olympic diplomacy risks remaining primarily symbolic. With them, however, LA28 could create valuable opportunities for dialogue, intercultural understanding, confidence-building, and international cooperation. The central implication is therefore not that Los Angeles 2028 will resolve international conflicts, but that it can potentially contribute to a wider ecosystem of peacebuilding. The Games can bring actors together, create diplomatic openings, and communicate shared values, while conventional diplomacy and international institutions address deeper political conflicts. In this sense, the greatest contribution of LA28 may be its ability to transform the Olympic ideal of peaceful coexistence from a symbolic principle into opportunities for sustained human and diplomatic relationships.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Policy Recommendations.

The analysis of PyeongChang 2018, Barcelona 1992, and Munich 1972 demonstrates that the Olympic Games can create opportunities for international dialogue and cooperation, but their peacebuilding potential depends heavily on institutional credibility, diplomatic engagement, political context, and sustained action. Based on these findings, several recommendations can strengthen the potential contribution of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games to peacebuilding and international cooperation.

First, Olympic diplomacy should be incorporated into the strategic planning of Los Angeles 2028 rather than treated as a symbolic activity limited to the opening and closing ceremonies. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), LA28 organizers, national Olympic committees, diplomatic representatives, and relevant international organizations should establish structured dialogue initiatives before, during, and after the Games. Such initiatives could provide opportunities for representatives of countries experiencing political tensions to communicate through sport and cultural programs.

Second, the Olympic Truce should be supported through practical diplomatic initiatives. Formal declarations alone are unlikely to generate meaningful peacebuilding outcomes. The Olympic Movement and relevant international institutions should use the Truce as an opportunity to encourage humanitarian dialogue, conflict-sensitive communication, and diplomatic engagement. The United Nations and other international organizations could support initiatives designed to connect the symbolic principles of the Olympic Truce with practical peacebuilding activities.

Third, intercultural exchange should become a central component of LA28's peacebuilding strategy. Programs involving athletes, students, youth organizations, cultural institutions, and communities could encourage interaction among people from different national and cultural backgrounds. Such initiatives would extend the peacebuilding function of the Olympics beyond elite sport and strengthen people-to-people diplomacy.

Fourth, human rights should be integrated into Olympic peacebuilding policies. Peace cannot be separated from dignity, equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination. LA28 stakeholders should therefore establish transparent mechanisms for monitoring human-rights commitments, protecting athletes and participants, addressing discrimination, and ensuring that security measures remain proportionate and respectful of fundamental rights.

Fifth, Olympic diplomacy should continue after the Games. One of the major limitations of mega-events is their temporary nature. LA28 should therefore develop a post-Games diplomatic legacy program involving educational partnerships, international youth exchanges, sports-for-peace initiatives, and continuing cooperation among participating institutions. This would help transform temporary Olympic interaction into longer-term relationships.

Finally, a measurable Olympic Peacebuilding Evaluation Framework should be established. The success of LA28 should not be evaluated exclusively through sporting performance, economic indicators, or audience size. Indicators should include diplomatic meetings, international partnerships, intercultural programs, participation in peace initiatives, conflict-sensitive engagement, human-rights performance, and evidence of continued cooperation after the Games.

Implications for Olympic Governance and International Relations

The study has important implications for both Olympic governance and international relations. From an Olympic-governance perspective, the findings suggest that the IOC and host-city institutions should recognize diplomacy and peacebuilding as dimensions requiring strategic planning, institutional coordination, and measurable evaluation. Olympic values such as peace, solidarity, equality, and mutual respect have limited practical significance if they are not supported by governance mechanisms capable of translating normative commitments into institutional practices.

The findings also highlight the importance of political neutrality and institutional credibility. The Olympic Movement operates within an international system characterized by political disagreement and competing national interests. Maintaining credibility therefore requires institutions to distinguish between legitimate diplomatic engagement and political instrumentalization of sport. Effective governance should provide opportunities for dialogue while maintaining principles of inclusion and non-discrimination.

For international relations, the study reinforces the argument that diplomacy does not occur exclusively through formal negotiations between governments. Sporting institutions, athletes, cultural organizations, international organizations, and civil society can contribute to informal and public diplomacy. Olympic diplomacy may therefore function as a form of complementary diplomacy, particularly when conventional political communication is difficult.

The Los Angeles 2028 Games may also provide the United States with an important platform for cultural and public diplomacy. However, the effectiveness of such soft power depends on credibility and consistency. As Nye (2004) argues, attraction is strongest when values are considered legitimate and trustworthy. Consequently, the diplomatic value of LA28 will depend not simply on the global visibility of the United States but also on the extent to which the Games demonstrate openness, inclusion, human rights, and genuine international cooperation.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The most significant limitation is that Los Angeles 2028 has not yet taken place. Consequently, the study cannot directly measure the actual diplomatic, peacebuilding,

or conflict-prevention outcomes of the Games. Its conclusions concerning LA28 are therefore prospective and based on institutional analysis, theoretical perspectives, and lessons from previous Olympic experiences.

Second, the study relies substantially on documentary and secondary sources. Official Olympic and governmental documents may present institutional policies and achievements positively, while academic and media sources may interpret events differently. This creates a potential source-selection bias. Future empirical research involving multiple independent data sources would strengthen the evidence base.

Third, the three selected case studies cannot represent the full diversity of Olympic history. PyeongChang, Barcelona, and Munich were selected because they illustrate particularly relevant dimensions of diplomatic opportunity, political transformation, and institutional limitation. Other Olympic Games may provide different experiences and conclusions.

Fourth, the study focuses primarily on international dialogue and peacebuilding and therefore does not provide a comprehensive assessment of every dimension of Olympic governance. Economic impacts, environmental sustainability, infrastructure, commercial interests, and broader domestic political consequences are considered only where they affect diplomatic and peacebuilding objectives.

Finally, peacebuilding is difficult to measure quantitatively. Concepts such as trust, reconciliation, dialogue, and intercultural understanding may develop gradually and may not be directly attributable to a single sporting event. The study therefore recognizes that establishing causal relationships between Olympic diplomacy and long-term peace remains methodologically challenging.

Future Research

Future research should move beyond the prospective analysis presented in this study and empirically examine the actual diplomatic and peacebuilding outcomes of Los Angeles 2028. A longitudinal research design would be particularly valuable, collecting evidence before, during, and several years after the Games. Such research could determine whether diplomatic relationships established during LA28 continue beyond the event.

Future studies should also employ mixed-method approaches combining quantitative and qualitative evidence. Surveys of athletes, diplomats, organizers, spectators, and community participants could measure perceptions of international understanding and cooperation, while interviews with diplomatic and Olympic stakeholders could provide deeper insight into the mechanisms of Olympic diplomacy.

Another important direction is the development and testing of a quantitative Olympic Peacebuilding Index. Such an index could measure dimensions including diplomatic engagement, international partnerships, intercultural participation, conflict-prevention initiatives, human-rights performance, and post-Games cooperation. This would allow researchers to compare LA28 with previous Olympic Games systematically.

Comparative research should also expand beyond the three cases examined in this study. Future scholars could compare Los Angeles 2028 with PyeongChang 2018, Paris 2024, Beijing 2022, Tokyo 2020, and future Olympic Games to determine whether the diplomatic role of sport is becoming more or less significant in an increasingly polarized international system.

Finally, future research should investigate the perspectives of athletes and civil society, which are often underrepresented in state-centered analyses of sports diplomacy. Athletes can function as informal ambassadors and influential public figures, while civil-society organizations may contribute to human-

rights protection, intercultural dialogue, and grassroots peacebuilding. Understanding these actors would produce a more comprehensive model of Olympic diplomacy.

Overall, future scholarship should treat Los Angeles 2028 as an important empirical opportunity for testing whether the Olympic ideal of peace can be translated into measurable diplomatic practice. The central challenge for researchers will be distinguishing between the symbolic visibility of Olympic peace initiatives and their genuine contribution to sustained international cooperation.

CONCLUSION.

The Olympic Games occupy a distinctive position within the international system because they combine sport, culture, diplomacy, politics, and global communication within a single highly visible institution. This study examined the potential of Olympic diplomacy and peacebuilding in the context of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, drawing on theoretical perspectives of soft power, sports diplomacy, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and Olympism. The analysis demonstrates that the Olympic Games should neither be understood as politically neutral spaces nor as independent mechanisms capable of resolving international conflicts. Rather, they represent potentially valuable diplomatic platforms through which communication, intercultural understanding, confidence-building, and international cooperation can be encouraged.

The comparative examination of PyeongChang 2018, Barcelona 1992, and Munich 1972 provides important lessons for Los Angeles 2028. PyeongChang demonstrated that Olympic participation can create diplomatic openings even under conditions of severe political tension. Barcelona illustrated the broader contribution of international sport to cultural diplomacy, political transformation, and international integration. Munich, in contrast, demonstrated the vulnerability of the Olympic ideal to political violence, security threats, and geopolitical conflict. Together, these cases indicate that the peacebuilding capacity of sport is conditional and depends on the surrounding political environment and the quality of institutional governance.

The study further establishes that human rights must be considered an essential component of Olympic peacebuilding. Principles of equality, dignity, non-discrimination, accessibility, inclusion, and participant protection provide the ethical foundation upon which credible Olympic diplomacy must operate. LA28's existing emphasis on community impact, youth sport, sustainability, accessibility, and the use of existing venues creates opportunities to connect Olympic governance with broader social and international objectives.

The principal conclusion is that Los Angeles 2028 has significant potential, but not a guaranteed capacity, to contribute to international peace. Its greatest diplomatic value may arise from creating spaces where individuals, institutions, and states can communicate despite political differences. The Olympic Truce can reinforce this potential by providing a normative framework for peaceful engagement, although symbolic commitments must be connected with practical diplomatic initiatives. The United Nations has repeatedly recognized the Truce as a means of encouraging peaceful settlement and international understanding.

Ultimately, the success of Olympic diplomacy should be evaluated not by whether LA28 resolves major geopolitical conflicts, but by whether it produces meaningful and sustained opportunities for dialogue, cooperation, intercultural understanding, human-rights protection, and relationship-building. If these opportunities are supported by credible governance and continued engagement beyond 2028, Los Angeles can demonstrate how sport may complement conventional diplomacy and contribute to a broader culture of peace. Thus, LA28 represents an important opportunity to test whether the enduring Olympic ideal of peaceful coexistence can be translated into meaningful contemporary diplomatic practice.

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