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Dichter, H.L. (Ed.) (2020) *Soccer Diplomacy: International Relations and Football since 1914*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky. pp.270. £45

Over the past century various nation states have used soccer to help them achieve their diplomatic objectives. This edited collection reflects the growing interest in the issue of sport and diplomacy, and presents examples of both ‘soccer diplomacy’ and ‘soccer-as-diplomacy’. In this collection, Heather Dichter, Associate Professor of Sports History and Sports Management at DeMontfort University, follows up her previously co-edited collection (*‘Diplomatic Games: Sports Statecraft And International Relations Since 1945’*) with a compilation of works written by scholars based in the United States, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Australia.

Echoing the format of an academic conference, the book opens with a ‘keynote’. Sarah Snyder notes soccer historians and diplomatic historians have rarely brought their materials together. Snyder goes on to encourage those involved in traditional approaches to diplomatic history to

engage with sport. Nine chapters later, the book closes with a contribution from soccer and diplomacy pioneer, Peter Beck, who notes that the term ‘soccer diplomacy’ nor ‘soccer-as-diplomacy’ featured much in his *Scoring for Britain. International football an international politics 1900 to 1939*, which was published in 1999.

Sandwiched in between is an impressive collection of chapters. Covering six continents and 13 countries, this volume draws on source material in six languages (English, French, German, Icelandic, Portuguese, and Spanish), and archive collections from regional soccer bodies, foreign ministries, and intergovernmental organisations. Paul Dietschy focuses on football diplomacy during the French Third Republic (1914-1939) and proposes France as having invented ‘soccer diplomacy’ in the 1920s. Juan Antonio Simon examines football diplomacy and international relations during General Franco’s dictatorship. George Kioussis explores the USA-Icelandic football exchange that took place in the mid-1950s, while Brenda Elsey assesses how Cold War politics played out during the 1962 FIFA World Cup in Chile. Heather Dichter then offers a commentary on relations between East Germany and NATO between 1960 and 1964. Shifting to South East Asia, Erik Nielsen reflects on the Australian mens national team’s (‘the Socceroos’) tour of the region in 1967, at the height of the Vietnam War. Chris Bolsmann’s chapter offers an interesting assessment of how the white football authorities in South Africa attempted to manage the looming sporting boycott (due to the country’s Apartheid system) – but notes how this was a rare case of ‘failed diplomacy’. Crossing to the Caribbean, Roy McCree makes a critical assessment of football in the region, and the ineptness of FIFA (and others) in responding to Jack Warner’s maladministration of the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association. Euclides de Freitas Couto and Alan Castellano Valente offer an assessment of soccer in Brazil between 2007 and the hosting of the FIFA finals in 2014. Tournaments are central to soccer diplomacy and feature in a number of the chapters. This is partly because they are foundational for diplomacy, be this bidding to host, sending (or not

sending) teams to represent the nation, and the subsequent levels of success at such tournaments.

Broadly understood, soccer diplomacy, a subset of sport diplomacy, is how governments utilise soccer as a means of public diplomacy – for example, through individual players, teams, matches, tours and tournaments and government structures. By contrast, soccer-as-diplomacy, describes how international federations engage with governments, media, and others, in the management of soccer events.

The 12 contributors show how various non-state actors increasingly work within a diplomatic framework that links soccer with governments, NGOs, ISFs, global businesses, and the media. Increasingly, soccer-as-diplomacy presents all those involved with some difficult decisions and serious challenges. Each of the authors demonstrate how soccer has been mobilized to realise specific diplomatic goals, and in doing so, illustrate how it can result in negative ('failed') or positive ('successful') outcomes.

As with any edited collection, questions can be asked on what is 'missing'. Most obviously, as noted by Dichter, is the absence of women's soccer. This is partly explained by how women's football has not been used for diplomatic purposes. Although there has been a welcome upturn in women's soccer, it is suggested that key sources, including governmental files, will not be available for many years. Similarly, those holding high office in international sports federations are increasingly unaccountable and unlikely to readily avail themselves to researchers. There is also a question on the terminology used in this emerging field of study, and although asked, it remains unresolved as to the extent to which it is possible to speak of soccer diplomacy and how this may, or may not be, distinguished from sports diplomacy.

Acknowledging that there is still more research to be done, the FIFA finals in Russia (2018) and in Qatar (2022) are likely to appeal to researchers. The African continent is also identified

as likely to attract increased interest. Like many texts on sport history, there is a focus on the elite levels, with ‘Sport for Development’ a notable omission, along with other forms of grassroots diplomacy. As the editor notes in their conclusion, the issues of class, gender, religion, race, and health - areas that diplomatic historians have been studying for quite some time – have been only briefly addressed in this collection.

Given its global popularity, soccer diplomacy is likely to become more prominent as researchers focus on their own, local regions. Each of the essays gives an insight into soccer’s diplomatic potential, and collectively they demonstrate the excellent work being undertaken. They clearly show how football has been, and still is, valued by politicians, diplomats, government officials, the media, and all those working in the game. Overall, this is an interesting and illuminating set of case studies on soccer diplomacy and soccer-as-diplomacy, which demonstrates how one specific cultural activity continues to play a key role in international relations.

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