

FOREIGN MEDIA REPORTS ABOUT BRAZIL'S MEGA SPORTING EVENTS: *SOFT POWER*, PERIPHERY AND DEPENDENCE

*AS REPORTAGENS DAS MÍDIAS ESTRANGEIRAS SOBRE O BRASIL DOS
MEGAEVENTOS ESPORTIVOS: SOFT POWER, PERIFERIA E DEPENDÊNCIA*

*LOS REPORTAJES DE LOS MEDIOS EXTRANJEROS SOBRE EL BRASIL DE LOS
MEGAEVENTOS DEPORTIVOS: SOFT POWER, PERIFERIA Y DEPENDENCIA*

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Keywords:
Sports.
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Abstract: In this article, based on the analysis of reports from nine international media outlets published during the World Cup and the Olympic Games held in Brazil, we discuss whether the category of soft power can be applied to the Brazil of mega sporting events. We consider that it cannot be applied to peripheral nations and must be rethought for countries with dependent economies. Therefore, we propose an initial redefinition of the soft power theory. This context gives rise to 'heterodox soft power' as a category based on which we consider that the media outlets analysed portray two different countries in the same territory – one in 2014 and another one in 2016. We point out five hypotheses to understand this phenomenon: organization, size, characteristics, logistics, lack of interest. In addition, this study shows that there are no elements to corroborate advances in Brazilian soft power after the World Cup (2014) and the Olympic Games (2016).

Palavras chave:
Esportes.
Brasil.
Soft power.
Mídias sociais.
Sul Global.

Resumo: Neste artigo, a partir da análise de reportagens de nove jornais estrangeiros publicadas durante a Copa do Mundo e os Jogos Olímpicos realizados no Brasil, discutimos se a categoria *soft power* pode ser aplicada ao Brasil dos megaeventos esportivos. Consideramos que a categoria não pode ser aplicada em nações periféricas e deve ser repensada para países de economia dependente. Por isso, propomos de maneira embrionária uma redefinição da teoria de *soft power*. Neste contexto, surge a categoria "*soft power heterodoxo*". A partir de tal categoria, consideramos que os jornais analisados retrataram dois países em um mesmo território, um em 2014 e outro em 2016. Levantamos cinco hipóteses para compreender este fenômeno: organização, dimensão, características, logística, desinteresse. Ademais, este estudo evidencia que não há elementos que possam corroborar avanço no *soft power* do Brasil a partir das Copa do Mundo (2014) e dos Jogos Olímpicos (2016).

Palabras clave:
Deportes.
Brasil.
Soft power.
Medios de comunicación
sociales.
Sur Global.

Resumen: En este artículo, a partir del análisis de reportajes de nueve periódicos extranjeros publicados durante la Copa del Mundo y los Juegos Olímpicos realizados en Brasil, discutimos si la categoría *soft power* puede ser aplicada al Brasil de los megaeventos deportivos. Consideramos que la categoría no puede ser aplicada en naciones periféricas y debe ser repensada para países con economía dependiente. Por eso, proponemos de manera embrionaria una redefinición de la teoría de *soft power*. En este contexto, surge la categoría '*soft power heterodoxo*'. A partir de esa categoría, consideramos que los periódicos analizados retrataron dos países en un mismo territorio, uno en 2014 y otro en 2016. Levantamos cinco hipótesis para comprender este fenómeno: organización, dimensión, características, logística, desinterés. Además, este estudio pone en evidencia que no hay elementos que puedan corroborar avance en el *soft power* de Brasil a partir de los megaeventos mencionados.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This article discusses whether the category of soft power can be applied to peripheral nations such as Brazil. We analyzed the coverage of the Mega Sporting Events (MSEs) held in Brazil by the nine international media outlets with the most visited websites in the period (*BBC, CNN, The New York Times, The Guardian, El País, El Mundo, Le Figaro, Le Monde, Daily Mail*). According to Nye's (1990a) theory, international media play an important role in spreading, throughout global society, the set of views that may define the image of a country and thus interfere in foreign policy decisions.

Interpretations derived from a critical reading of the bibliography and an analysis of documents based on these interpretations led us to demonstrate, under the proposed framework, that the category of soft power as it is used by Nye (1990a, 1990b, 2004, 2009, 2018) cannot be applied to peripheral countries. Therefore, we propose an initial and challenging redefinition of soft power theory, which deserves a critical analysis by researchers concerned with topics such as Latin American dependence.

Based on such redefinition, we propose the concept of "heterodox soft power" and come up with four subareas of analysis that allowed us to devise the views presented in this work: (a) Soft power in the context of the globalized world; (b) Use of MSEs by peripheral nations to increase their soft power; (c) International Media as a factor impacting Brazil's image abroad and a possible influence on its soft power; (d) Application of the soft power theory to peripheral nations such as Brazil.

2 SOFT POWER IN FOREIGN POLICY

According to traditional studies on soft power, nations play leading roles in international relations, acting in a cohesive and rational way (CAMPBELL, O'HANLON, 2006; COOPER, 2004).

Nye (1990a, 1990b) sees power as something fluid; therefore, intangible elements gain importance when he articulates his concept of soft power (HUANG, DING, 2006, p. 33). According to traditional authors, Nye's theory is a proper tool to analyze the new international scenario with the rise of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) (HOLSTI, 1985). Under such political alignment, the concept of fluidity legitimizes soft power, since it considers military and economic coercion less effective when seeking international prestige and influence, thus allowing nations to pursue their goals in other ways and to rise within the established order without necessarily destroying their institutions and agreements (LAFER, 1982; NYE, 2004). Still according to these studies, MSEs are showcases for developing soft power because they allow host countries to spread their images to the world and – through sports' universal values – reach a global media audience (GRIX, LEE, 2013; GRIX *et al.*, 2015).

Nye divides soft power sources into three main categories: culture, political values, and foreign policy (NYE, 2008). MSEs are a great opportunity for being in the spotlight of foreign policy reading these three aspects. Local culture is spread by the event as a whole, with large numbers of tourists traveling around the country, in contact with its most diverse expressions. Opening and closing ceremonies are the highlights, with increasingly grandiose performances intended to display the nation's achievements and qualities. Political values are conveyed in the organization of the competition and in the functioning of the institutions.

As we see it, sustaining that MSEs are a way to leverage host countries' soft power is at least debatable since – due to the increasing importance of such events – hosting them involves changes in several aspects of the country, from urban mobility and housing to political and legal matters (HORNE, 2017; HORNE; MANZENREITER, 2006; MÜLLER, 2015; PREUSS, 2007). Billions of dollars in spending, alleged profits and mass audiences do not guarantee the success of the event and may result in huge failures, as shown by analyses about Sochi, South Africa, and China (AHLERT, 2007; CORNELISSEN, 2010; 2011; PREUSS, 2007; ALMEIDA; GRAEFF, 2016; ZIAKAS, 2015). The heterodox analysis we propose in this study was based on contradictions found in the causal relationship established between MSEs and the use of the soft power concept. We will present three studies that helped us to reflect about such analysis. The first two works are Manzenreiter (2010) and Preuss and Christian (2011). Based on global data, both studies pointed out the weak impact of changes in Westerners' perception about Chinese society, sustaining that China's soft power had not been strengthened with the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games (OG). The third study – Brannagan and Giullianotti (2014) – sustains that Qatar sought to use the 2022 Football World Cup (FWC) to establish itself as a friend of the West, but it is rather losing soft power as a result of problems during the construction works.

We establish two hypotheses based on this scenario: the first one, aligned with Nye's tradition, would argue that soft power could be increased or reduced depending on the nation's performance. The second hypothesis, not aligned with Nye's tradition, points out that traditional theory does not cover peripheral nations and that Nye and his colleagues based it on the views of the Pentagon – the military brains of the United States of America (NYE, 2009). Therefore, another analysis of soft power is necessary.

Thus, we interpret soft power from the point of view of the critical literature on Sociology, globalization, and the periphery (BRANNAGAN; ROOKWOOD, 2016; GRIX *et al.*, 2016; GRIX; LEE, 2013; MBEMBE, 2001; MIGNOLO, 2007). In order to have an empirical basis to deconstruct the concept of soft power, we analyzed the coverage made by nine media outlets published in different languages (English, French and Spanish) whose articles were the most visited online during the event¹.

In all, 480 articles on the FWC and 242 articles on the OG were examined. The selected articles discussed social, political, and economic issues in Brazil during the MSEs. We sought to understand what kind of image the international press presented about the country and the impacts of such major events on its image abroad.

When reading and categorizing the articles, we noticed that the media presented two distinct Brasils to the world – one at the FWC and another one at the OG. Within two years, their representations had changed radically. Thus, how is it possible to build a category as fluid as soft power, which is shaped according to the media's editorial interests? In our opinion, it is necessary to build a category of analysis, such as the one proposed here, which has a critical stance toward the way the media conveys the news and "... understands the media as representatives of political and economic interests"² (MUNDIM, 2018, p. 9).

1 The media outlets were selected by Alexa, the company responsible for measuring Internet traffic, which ranks the 500 most visited websites in the world. They were *CNN* (57th), *BBC* (64th), *Daily Mail* (96th), *The New York Times* (126th), *The Guardian* (147th), *El País* (373rd), *El Mundo* (412th), *Le Monde* (412th), *Le Figaro* (452nd). The period of analysis included (1) the Football World Cup: June 11, 2014-July 15, 2014 – three days before the start of the 2014 World Cup until three days after its end; and (2) the Olympic Games: August 4-22, 2016 – three days before the Games started until three days after they ended.

2 Based on some assumptions, we argue that the media represent political and economic interests. In his studies on "The bias of political press coverage during the Brazilian presidential elections of 2002, 2006 and 2010", Mundim demonstrated the bias of media coverage, which is a result of the "lack of balance" that occurs when one side of a story receives more attention than another or when an event, political party or side

For this reason, we propose to rebuild the category from the perspective of a peripheral nation, demonstrating that Nye's analyzes are part of the process of affirming power and cannot be used for countries that do not have economic and military power to impose their agendas, for example, on international mass media. For the purposes of this work and within the limits of this short analysis, "heterodox soft power" is a category of power in international relations, especially bureaucratic power in the Weberian sense of the term, applied to politics among countries as developed by Hans Morgenthau (2003). It defines power as a struggle between forces that are not necessarily antagonistic, since wanting power is having and remaining in power, regardless of ideology. We have advanced on Morgenthau's studies to extend the idea of power as an end in itself.

For Morgenthau, nations use elements of cultural and social co-optation to impose their strength in the international political game. "The element of power as the immediate goal of the policy pursued is explained and justified in ethical, legal, or biological terms. That is to say: the true nature of the policy is concealed by ideological justification" (MORGENTHAU, 1948, p. 161). We would add social and cultural aspects to this definition. Therefore, the nation that manages to make its culture prevail over others would have more "heterodox soft power". Because the dominant nation is in the hearts and minds of the dominated nations, it could yield its power through the principles of traditional soft power. Ultimately, soft power can only be used if its primary foundations include a dominant nation's violence, imposition and strength over a dominated one. It would be neocolonization of culture itself in a globalized society (MBEMBE, 2001, MIGNOLO, 2007).

Therefore, the category of soft power developed here is heterodox, seen through the eyes of the colonized and dominated – far from the neorealist school of international relations where soft power would be clean and hard power would be dirty. An example of this is the experience of a peripheral country that wants to host a World Cup or the Olympic Games, which demonstrates this exercise of controlled power, alignment and dependence.

3 BRAZIL AND THE MEGA SPORTING EVENTS

A major aspiration of Brazil – or at least of part of the country, especially those involved in decision-making processes at the macro level – came through. The country hosted South America's first Olympic Games and two of the world's largest events took place in Brazilian lands within two years – the 2014 World Football Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games (AQUINO, 2009).

From the perspective of the media outlets analyzed, the 2014 FWC began under major doubts, especially as a result of protests that took place during the 2013 Confederations Cup³ (the so-called Days of June). There was widespread discussion about Brazil's political moment (presidential election) and the major role played by football in Brazilian life was challenged. It

of an issue is treated differently over a long period of time or yet when the media are selective. We have to consider that today's mainstream press is structured as a business within a very competitive information market and relies basically on circulation and advertisers for its funding.

³ Discussing the dilemmas of democracy in Brazil, Avritzer (2016), Bastos, (2017), Dantas, (2016) and Szwako (2016) show us a very consistent reading that covers from the 2013 protests to the 2016 coup. We extend that reading to the 2018 electoral process. In each of their articles, the authors argue that the green-and-yellow mobilization that gained the streets in March, April and August 2015 was able to appropriate one of the main legacies of 2013: the streets as a legitimate stage for protest. To the cries of "Down with [then president] Dilma [Rousseff]" and "Down with [then governing party] PT", a mass of fascist enthusiasts were fed by right-wing movements that, as we know today, were and are linked to coup-leading parties and ultraconservative groups, using selective denunciation of systemic corruption of the State as an idea-force to coordinate the mainstream press, middle-class moralist sectors, and interveners of the constitutional order.

was in this scenario of uncertainties that the media sought to trace its editorial line in the early days of the FWC. Interestingly, while the event was happening without any incident, that is, the protests were properly controlled (i.e. repressed), tickets were sold out even for less important games and spectators displayed immense happiness, there were changes in the editorial lines of almost all media outlets analyzed. An example is *El Mundo* in its article “*El fútbol y Brasil*” (MAYOR, 2014).

On June 16, two days after the start of the World Cup, the *BBC* made the following comment: “So, were all of us who have spent the last year reporting on the chaos, delays and arguments, wide off the mark? Has Brazil proved wrong all the doubters and critics who said this country was not ready to host an event of this magnitude?” (DAVIES, 2014).

The New York Times points out that misfortunes give way to small problems:

One stadium would not be ready on time. Another would not be ready at all. Violent street protests would threaten fans and upstage everything. Airport and subway strikes would strand tens of thousands of visitors. These, and other doomsday predictions, were perpetual concerns in the days leading up to the World Cup in Brazil. But after nearly one full week of games, the situation in South America’s largest country is hardly bleak. For those fans who enjoy eye-popping goals, surprising results and stylish soccer, this tournament has, so far, been an incredible success. The games are enthralling and the drama has been perfect for television (BORDER, 2014).

On the 21st, *El País* says that criticism to the event’s organization was exaggerated:

Pero, por lo general, los partidos se desarrollan puntualmente, de una manera brillante, las calles se llenan de hinchas felices envueltos en un ambiente cada vez más festivo. Y por eso cada vez arraiga con más fuerza la certeza, incluso para los brasileños desconfiados, de que no era para tanto (BARCA, 2014).

Le Monde says that Brazilian improvisation had overcome concerns:

Dans les stades, toutes les inquiétudes semblent s’être évanouies aux premiers accords de la cérémonie d’ouverture. Après un peu plus d’une semaine de compétition, il semble que la catastrophe annoncée n’ait pas eu lieu dans les enceintes de la compétition. Bien sûr, il manque ici ou là la dernière finition, la dernière couche de peinture. Mais un sourire fait oublier un carrelage qui manque, un *bem vindo* (« bienvenue ») compense une prise qui flanche ou un réseau téléphonique défaillant. Un pouce levé vers le haut, signe qui signifie à la fois bonjour, au revoir et tout va bien, sert d’espéranto pour communiquer sa bonne humeur (HERNANDEZ; HOPQUIN; BOURCIER, 2014).

CNN sought to provide an overview of the FWC through interviews with Americans who came to Brazil – and who praised the country’s hospitality and beauty – ending with an interview with then-President Dilma Rousseff about the event and the prospects for 2016 in which she said “we did the best World Cup of all time and we will do the best Olympics” (DARLINGTON, 2016).

The Daily Mail conveyed a more general view, stating that the World Cup was a success but pointing out that it was the Cup of the elites and comparing criticism leveled at Brazil to those aimed at South Africa:

As a model for social equality, then, this World Cup has achieved little. As a sporting event, however, it has passed its test comfortably and – thanks to the beauty of the football – spectacularly.

This, remember, was supposed to be the World Cup that wouldn't work. It was to be the tournament where stadia weren't ready, where the infrastructure wouldn't cope and where visiting football fans would lose their wallets and mobile 'phones.

They said all this before South Africa, of course, and, just as it didn't happen then, it hasn't happened here (LADYMAN, 2014).

The Guardian highlighted a story it had run at the height of the protests during 2013 Confederations Cup showing that catastrophic predictions did not come true:

The political situation is complex. President Dilma Rousseff was booed and subjected to obscene chants during the opening match, but that was as much due to a moneyed Sao Paulo crowd protesting against her socialist policies. Meanwhile unions and protest groups have used the World Cup as a platform. Things could change if Brazil go out, but for now protests in Sao Paulo, Porto Alegre and elsewhere have remained small and the mood is largely celebratory.

Beyond the stadiums underlying tensions remain but Ito has again caught the mood with his latest work: a family, including a protestor with a "fuck Fifa" banner, crowded around the television watching the Seleccion (GIBSON, 2014).

Along with *The Guardian*, which pointed out Brazilians' exclusion during the World Cup, *El Mundo* harshly criticized the endogenous part of the organization, such as corruption, debts and the country's goals:

Pero Brasil ha vivido una ilusión: el fútbol ha ocultado por unos días la realidad del país. El ex presidente Lula Da Silva, que fue quien promovió el Mundial y los próximos Juegos de Río, supo aprovechar la coyuntura internacional para vender el milagro de Brasil: la mayor economía emergente de América. Pero abusó de medidas populistas y del recurso a la deuda, que generaron burocracia y corrupción. Su discípula Rousseff jamás se ha planteado corregir la situación. La pobreza y la desigualdad siguen siendo la gran asignatura pendiente de Brasil. Pese al Mundial (EDITORIALES, 2014).

Differently from the changes in editorial lines of all media analyzed regarding the success of the event and Brazil's organizational ability to host the FWC (even with the fall of a bridge in Belo Horizonte, a field invasion in Recife and floods in Cuiabá, Recife, Porto Alegre and Natal), in the OG there was only criticism. The IOC had to main concerns: (a) Would the basic infrastructure for the event be ready (stadium, Olympic Village, Guanabara Bay, etc.)? and (b) Would the impeachment process that culminated in the 2016 Parliamentary Coup (JINKINGS, DORIA, CLETO, 2016; SOUZA, 2016) and protests – against and in favor of it – prevent the Games from happening?

The Games did happen, but the media spared no adjectives to highlight the problems in the 2016 Rio OG. Political demonstrations, empty stadiums, accidents around the stadiums, street protests, urban violence, lack of elementary infrastructure for athletes, basic problems such as the treatment of pool water in the Olympic complex, problems in draining the athletics track – there are almost 150 articles criticizing the OG's infrastructure. We will analyze some of them, which deal with the problems most often cited during the event to be able to clearly understand the changes in the media' mood two years after the FWC.

The opening ceremony was not enough to appease criticism. The following topics were discussed: (a) At whom was the ceremony directed?; (b) How can an extremely unequal country speak of equality of rights?; (c) How can a country with alarming levels of sexual violence,

femicide and assaults against homosexuals speak of respect for diversity?; (d) How can a country that is destroying the Amazon forest discuss climate changes?

We are close in distance, but far away': Rio's slum-dwellers are forced to watch the glittering opening ceremony standing on the roofs of their run-down homes

While thousands of spectators packed into the Maracana Stadium for the glittering opening ceremony, Rio's slum-dwellers were forced to watch the event from the roofs of their run-down homes.

In Mangueira, a favela mired by gang violence and poverty, residents looked down to the arena from rooftops, separated from the spectacle by a highway and train tracks.

In this neighbourhood of tattered homes, the next two weeks are a visceral reminder of the lines dividing the city's haves and have-nots (TINGLE, 2016).

This is the country lecturing us on climate change? Brazil attempts to teach world a lesson despite its horribly polluted water and deforestation of the Amazon But many have pointed out the hypocrisy of Brazil trying to teach the world a lesson on climate change while its own record on the issue is far from stellar. Among the many problems facing the emerging world power is the dire state of its highly polluted water, highlighted by the problems in Guanabara Bay.

The bay, which is due to be used for Olympic events including sailing and swimming, is hugely polluted - containing everything from human waste to trash.

Body parts were even found lurking in its depths as authorities tried desperately to clean it up before events begin there in a few days' time (PLEASANCE, 2016).

Maranhão is a particular target of rightwing conservatives because she has expressed vocal support for suspended Workers Party president Dilma Rousseff, and criticised two of the right's most prominent Congressmen: Jair Bolsonaro (who taunted Dilma over her torture during the dictatorship) and Marco Feliciano (who was accused last week of sexual abuse) (WATTS, 2016a)

The run-up to every Olympics is marked by anxiety and controversy, but Rio de Janeiro has arguably outdone all of its predecessors on this score. Against a backdrop of economic recession, the impeachment of Brazil's president Dilma Rousseff, a Zika epidemic, resurgent crime and water pollution, the city's officials are not only having to fight off accusations of corruption, incompetence and unbalanced priorities, they are also battling to justify whether the Games were worth hosting in the first place.

In this polemical combat, the establishment - the Rio city government and the International Olympics Committee - argue the event boosts economic developments and raises the global profile of the host. Challenging this is an array of social activists, critical academics, political opponents, displaced residents and environmental campaigners who argue that the Olympics are disruptive, destructive and skewed to benefit a wealthy elite.

But beyond all the angry headlines, is it possible to assess exactly how this city of more than 6 million people has really been impacted – for good and bad – by the awarding of the Olympics in 2009? To assess this in the long term, it is necessary to go beyond the media furore and focus instead on the likely legacy for Rio's residents.

The main beneficiaries have been construction firms, real-estate companies, private security firms. One of the most controversial issues for years has, of course, been the question of displacement: just how many residents have been uprooted

as a result of building projects around Rio for the Olympics, not to mention the 2014 football World Cup? Where have they been moved to, with what compensation – and who is benefitting from the property (often very central) that they left?

The numbers are contested. The city puts the numbers in the hundreds. On the other extreme is an estimate that Rio moved 22,100 families (average size of 3.5 people) in 2015, 20,200 families in 2014, 19,200 families in 2013 and more than 10,000 before then (WATTS; DOUGLAS, 2016).

To understand the magnitude of these discussions, let us look at the numbers of articles on inequality and police violence published by the media analyzed: *Daily Mail*, 26; *The Guardian*, 13; *NYT*, 19; *BBC*, 5; *CNN*, 8; *Le Figaro*, 6; *Le Monde*, 12; *El Mundo*, 10; *El País*, 2.

Under the category of “heterodox soft power”, Brazilian institutions do not seem to fit the logic behind the idea of *soft*, since there was a State effort to pacify slums (favelas) through a veiled civil war. Thinking about domestic policy, there seems to be no doubt that the State of Rio de Janeiro’s effort to “pacify” the favelas, especially after 2009 (when Brazil was selected to host the OG’s), had devastating effects on the lives of their residents, showing that those territories had their own laws and that State power comes through violence rather than basic sanitation, basic health units, schools.

El Mundo, with typical irony, severely criticizes the idea of diversity in Brazil. Under the headline “*The Brazilian traditional family*”, it argues that there is no room for forms of family other than the Mom-and-Dad-and-their-happy-children model, thus challenging the alleged diversity displayed at the opening ceremony:

Resulta curioso ver a tanta gente -generalmente blancos de la clase media para arriba o evangélicos fervorosos- defendiendo este estilo de vida y aún llamándole «familia tradicional brasileña» en un país donde cuesta más encontrar a un hombre casado una sola vez que a un esquiador en Salvador de Bahía. La separación y la infidelidad parecen pecados más perdonables (ARANDA, 2016).

What actually happened? Either Brazil’s charm ended in two years or we have other indicators that may suggest that there was not only an organizational problem but also a specific scenario that can help understanding this change in the media’s approach to the events in the country.

Let us point out some hypotheses: (1) Organization: the FWC was better organized, and Brazil still breathed an air of functional institutions, while the OG’s organization was poorer and Brazil showed signs of institutional rupture, after the overthrow of an elected president (JINKINGS, DORIA, CLETO, 2016, SOUZA, 2016). (2) Magnitude: during the FWC, journalists traveled all over Brazil and the media published sections in each place where their national teams would play, writing about local culture, how they were received, natural attractions; therefore, there was a potentially positive agenda, since host cities were extremely charming. At the OG, in turn, all media outlets and their correspondents were in the same place for about a month, in contact with the problems of the population and highly visible social gap and inequality. (3) Characteristics: As soon as a national team was eliminated from the FWC and returned home, the media would automatically use correspondents from other news agencies to comment on the event. During the OG, in turn, correspondents stayed until the last day. (4) Logistics: for the media, the FWC is a much more expensive event in terms of logistics and human resources, and most media outlets chose to have two teams of journalists – one covering their country’s national team and another one covering the event in general, often using – buying – local news

to expand their publications. In terms of spending and media logistics, the OG are smaller and correspondents are able to focus on issues other than the event itself, such as hunger, income distribution, the Coup in Parliament, protests, and structural problems because there was close contact between the event and journalists and among journalists themselves. (5) Disinterest: The flirting of major powers with Brazil ended and big corporations lost interest in the country, while the media followed these moods; differently from the FWC, there was no pressure for the event to appear great and with no problems.

Events such as the attack on an official bus with foreign journalists in the first week of the event were also noticeable. *BBC* (WORLD LATIN AMERICA, 2016): “There was a sharp sound when the bus was hit. Holes were drilled in the glass when it happened”. *CNN* (ROBERTS, 2016): “A Rio 2016 bus carrying journalists was hit by an object that broke its windows on Tuesday night, leaving two people injured”. *El País* (AMENA, 2016): “Un autobús oficial que transportaba reporteros fue atacado en Río”. *Le Figaro* (THAYALAN, 2016): “Mardi, un bus transportant des journalistes a été attaqué”. There is no space or interest here to cite all media, so we use only one outlet from each country to point out that news in the Olympic Games are repeated on the media analyzed, while topics during the FWC were more dispersed, which would reinforce the hypotheses discussed above.

Both events had serious organizational problems, but, in our view, the international media portrayed the FWC as a success while the OG was depicted as a disaster.

The news topic on OG infrastructure that was most frequently published by the media was the green swimming pool at the Maria Lenk Olympic Park, but here is a quick glance at the news stories about Rio: *Le Figaro*: “Plongeon olympique: Le mystère de l’eau devenue verte”; *El Mundo*: “El ‘Call of Duty’ carioca”. *Le Monde*: “JO de Rio : la chute d’une caméra officielle fait sept blessés dans le parc Olympique”. *CNN*: “Rio athletes deal with water full of sewage and trash”. *BBC*: “Rio Olympics Marred By Pollution”. *NYT*: “Rio Olympics: Stray Bullet Flies Into Equestrian Media Center”. *The Guardian*: “Empty seats all around Rio 2016 Olympic Stadium as athletics begin”. *Daily Mail*: “Olympic tourists caught up in gun battle between criminals and police in shopping mall”. *El País*: “Objetos flotadores no identificados”. Some of the topics of each media outlet included: *Le Figaro*: the green pool; *El Mundo*: urban violence in Rio; *Le Monde*: the fall of the camera at the Olympic Park; *CNN*: pollution at the Guanabara Bay; *BBC*: pollution in Rio de Janeiro; *NYT*: the bullet that hit the equestrian center; *The Guardian*: empty seats in most competitions; *Daily Mail*: the war between police and drug dealers in tourist sites; *El País*: objects that would get in the way of sailing competitors. These facts corroborate the hypotheses presented.

As pointed out, the news about the FWC changed and the media began to approach different perspectives on Brazil, football and the event itself. The *Daily Mail* interviewed a number of people in São Paulo, asking how they had prepared for the FWC in the article “The colorful lives inside the Brazil that is crazy about football. A look at the daily life of the people of São Paulo” (TRAVELMAIL REPORTER, 2014). Another article that addresses infrastructure and expensive hotels presents an alternative: “Favela residents make World Cup work for them with home stays for fans. Some supporters are shunning Brazil’s expensive hotels and say they feel safer in the favela than they do on Copacabana beach” (FREEMAN, 2016). “Brazil’s passion for football is still evident. Brazilians bought most of the 2.5 million tickets despite high prices. Some local demonstrations are likely to happen, but not at last year’s scale” (PEREIRA, 2014).

The same city of Rio de Janeiro is portrayed under a different light at the OG: “The lack of basic sanitation in this city of 12 million is mainly due to poor infrastructure and chaotic urban planning decades ago” (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 2016).

Are Rio de Janeiro’s military and civil police really the world’s most violent? That is the conclusion of separate studies released by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch earlier this year. They are accusing Rio de Janeiro’s police forces of routinely torturing and killing citizens – especially young black men – during arrest. They also say the problem is getting much worse as the Olympics approach.

The scale of Rio de Janeiro’s military and civil police involvement in the excessive use of force is chilling. And it is hardly a new phenomenon. In 2003 they were responsible for 1,195 civilian deaths across Rio de Janeiro state, most of them young black men. In 2007, 1,330 citizens reportedly died in the course of police action. These numbers are breathtaking when you consider that in 2015, across the whole of the US (a country with a population more than 50% larger than Brazil’s) an estimated 1,134 people were killed by police (MUGGAH, 2016).

The only soft power that Brazil would be able to yield is that of dominant nations. But the country is not a dominant force on the international scene. Thus, by hosting the Games, it reinforces the power of those that have a developed imperialist culture and can benefit from the complex ways of deciding the fates of the peripheries.

On the websites of the media outlets, the element of inequality is constantly treated as though the unknown were being revealed or making it clear that Brazil belongs to the periphery or through a civilizing western view that shows we are subject to all kinds of weather.

4 CONSIDERATIONS

The article sought to discuss the concept of soft power as power mobilized and yielded within foreign relations by developed nations in the context of the mega sporting events in Brazil. Applying the theory of periphery and dependence, we discussed how the mainstream international media exercised power during the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games.

This article discusses whether the category of soft power can be applied to peripheral nations such as Brazil. For that, we use the theoretical framework in dialogue with data extracted from nine relevant and influential international media outlets. We see the need for redefining the concept of soft power and we put forward the idea of “heterodox soft power” when it comes to peripheral countries. As we pointed out, our analysis was based on five hypotheses and found a dominant’s view over the dominated one in the international media’s coverage of the Brazil of the mega sporting events.

We sought to analyze and understand international media coverage about political, social and economic aspects of Brazilian society during the Football World Cup and the Olympic Games, based on the category developed in this article – heterodox soft power.

We built this category based on Weberian analysis of bureaucratic power applied by Morgenthau to the theory of power in foreign relations and we further expanded upon the idea of seeking power for the sake of power. Therefore, the “power” in soft power was been explained. In turn, Nye’s term “soft” is founded in cultural values. We developed a dialogue with Mbembe and Mignolo to question “cultural values” understood by us as imperialism, domination, dependence and co-optation by the “power” defined above. Violence plus cultural imposition equals soft

power. Thus, we affirm the impossibility of using the concept of soft power in its traditional form to analyze the evolution of developing nations' participation in the international scenario.

In addition, the media articles analyzed portrayed two countries in the same territory – one in 2014 and another one in 2016, depicting a manipulated image of the country in the international context. We raised five hypotheses to understand such manipulation: organization, magnitude, characteristics, logistics, and disinterest. From such hypotheses it was possible to understand that the image of Brazil could be manipulated in innumerable ways⁴.

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⁴ The challenges faced to rebuild our democracy are many. They include: Moderating the judiciary, democratizing the media, holding those who violated the democratic pact accountable for that, and stopping the advances of an illegitimate regressive agenda. Crucial to this project is an arc of polyclassist alliances that are also democratic and combine peripheries, middle classes and non-conservative liberal entrepreneurs. Against this necessarily heterogeneous set of voices, the emergence of an authoritarian conservative wave or a crypto-militarist new Right will keep its course towards winning the political struggle through truculence and intimidation. We must overcome fear. One of the good strategies to face fear is to look for elements and clues of democratic coexistence even in the heart of reactionarism.

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