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Dissonance Issues Incurred with the Use of Taekwondo for Promoting Peace

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Abstract

Background. Taekwondo organizations such as *World Taekwondo* and the *International Taekwon-Do Federation* have made it a goal to use martial art/combat sports for peace promotion, which is in line with the moral goals of the early pioneers of this martial art. **Problem and Aim.** Despite these best intentions, there is an intrinsic dissonance between the aim(s) of peace and the potential violent techniques that are innate to Taekwondo.

Methods. A focused literature review was performed on academic articles, theses, dissertations, and lay Taekwondo materials through internet keyword searches. Taekwondo and Korean martial arts textbook publications dating back to the first use of the term ‘taekwondo’ were identified, read for passages that can now be interpreted as soft diplomacy efforts, and the data found were then codified. The data obtained were viewed through the General Theory of Fighting Arts and Peace Studies lenses, permitting interpretations of Taekwondo’s international governing bodies’ peacebuilding actions.

Results. To address this dissonance, there has been a shift in focus away from self-defense and combat readiness to the sportification of Taekwondo. By rebranding Taekwondo primarily as a sport, the focus of practice is shifted from arguably violent “martial” techniques, to simply sports competitions. In so doing, the peace promotion goal is the pursuit through sports diplomacy, a type of soft diplomacy. However, a shift away from martial art practice to combat sport practice is problematic.

Conclusions. Although the aim of using Taekwondo for soft diplomacy is commendable, a sportive focus may not be the best course for achieving Taekwondo’s peace promotion goal. Nevertheless, it is a sensible strategy within the social (i.e., organizational) and international levels, where sports diplomacy may be effectively applied.

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Introduction

There are several international entities that govern what is commonly referred to as Taekwondo. For example, World Taekwondo (WT) is the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) international federation (IF) for the global sport of Taekwondo, while the Kukkiwon is concerned with the technical, promotional, and educational foundation of that style of Taekwondo. Both WT and the Kukkiwon are headquartered in the Republic of Korea (ROK). The International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF), which splintered into numerous organizations after its founder died in 2002, governs a style of Taekwondo that is rooted in traditional martial arts values. Arguably the three largest ITFs are currently located in Vienna, Austria (President Ri, Yong Son); London, England (President Choi, Jung Hwa); and Benidorm, Spain (President Paul Weiler). Despite having different agendas and strategic goals, all of these organizations have put forth a goal of peace promotion through Taekwondo [Johnson 2018; Johnson, Vitale 2018].

WT has especially of late emphasized a peace-directed agenda. On May 9, 2015, at the 5th International Symposium for Taekwondo Studies WT President Choue, Chungwon stated in his opening address: "Taekwondo is a combat sport, as you all know, a martial art sport, but Taekwondo is the only martial arts sport, supporting sports through world peace" [sic] [3]. In 2021, at the 1st Sport Taekwondo International Convergence Conference, he reemphasized a Taekwondo peace strategy that would unify WT and the ITF as well as allow the organizations' athletes to compete against each other [Kim 2021], thus moving forward a soft diplomacy that first began at the 2017 WT World Championships in Chelyabinsk, Russia [Johnson, Vitale 2018].

More than merely advocating for the world's improvement through Taekwondo and sport, WT had already established the World Taekwondo Peace Corps Foundation in 2008 [Yu *et al.* 2016] and the following year it was showcased at the UN-IOC Sport for Development and Peace Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. In 2015, WT President Choue also established the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation (THF), an organization "dedicated to teaching taekwondo and marketable skills to refugees, [which would] eclipse what individual instructors can do" [Johnson, Lewis 2020: 70]. THF volunteers promote the IOC's mission to help refugees and displaced peoples in various camps around the world, and WT supports a team to compete in the Olympics (THF 2017). Thus, WT's peacebuilding efforts take place at the organizational and governmental diplomatic levels [Johnson 2018].

Although various ITF organizations have also advocated peace diplomacy, they have yet to even come close to matching WT's actual peacebuilding efforts, despite the fact that the ITF first advocated using Taekwondo for peacebuilding purposes. In 1972, several decades before WT began its peace promoting activities, the ITF began

requiring practitioners to recite an oath that ends with a promise of building a more peaceful world [Choi 1972]. However, without the level of financial and political support that WT currently enjoys from the ROK government and in addition to being internally fractured into several organizations, the ITF has not been as successful in peacebuilding activities on the organizational and governmental levels of sports diplomacy. Instead, the ITF seems to rely on individual instructors to devise and enact peacebuilding activities at the grassroots level in whatever ways possible.

Using sports as a means of peace promotion is a well-established method of "soft power" diplomacy. A famous example of sport diplomacy is the so-called "Ping-Pong Diplomacy" used in the 1970s to open dialogue between an otherwise antagonistic United States of America (USA) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Another famous example of using sport for peace promotion is when Nelson Mandela used rugby as a means of bringing the racially divided South Africans together when the country hosted the 1995 Rugby World Cup. Sport events have also been used to build connections between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the ROK, for example at the 2000 Summer Olympics and several subsequent sporting events where the two countries shared a single flag ("Korea Unification Flag"). More recently, WT and the ITF (Vienna) have held the aforementioned joint demonstrations at various locations and events, including the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, which helped it become dubbed the 'Peace Olympics' by ROK President Moon, Jae-in [Johnson, Lewis 2020].

While sport diplomacy is indeed an admirable and potentially effective method for peace promotion, there are certain challenges in attempting to use Taekwondo for this purpose. Firstly, there is an intrinsic issue with Taekwondo, an inherently forceful and arguably violent activity, used to promote peace. Many scholars have addressed this issue almost *ad nauseam*, but other issues have yet to be discussed in the literature; namely, the very character of martial arts versus combat sports. Using a focused review of the literature spanning decades, this paper will highlight some of the problems with this sport emphasis towards achieving Taekwondo's peace promotion goal. A solution we propose is to suggest that WT's style of Taekwondo should not be viewed as a martial art, but that it should rather be reinterpreted and rebranded as a combat sport.

Unlike previous studies that have advocated WT Taekwondo as both a martial art and combat sport [Dziwenka, Johnson 2015; Na 2016; Johnson 2018], this research is singular in its approach by suggesting that what is commonly known as Kukki (Olympic) Taekwondo should be repurposed solely as a combat sport for diplomatic purposes. Ironically (and syncretically), that would help achieve the goal of Taekwondo's pioneers, who taught it as a martial art only, and today's ITF, who currently advocate it as a martial art primarily, to use Taekwondo to build a more peaceful world.

Notes on terminology and Romanization

WT prefers to Romanize 태권도 (*t'aegwōndo*) as *taekwondo*, while the ITF uses a hyphen to separate the martial art's physical aspects (*t'ae* and *gwōn*, meaning *foot* and *hand*, respectively) and its spiritual side (*do*, or *way*), written as *Taekwon-Do*. To simplify matters, "Taekwondo" is used throughout the paper and will herein refer to both the martial art and the combat sport, or as a whole. Organizational names are the sole exception. Korean names are presented with the surname first and are followed with a comma. Given names in the person's preferred Romanized spellings. All other Korean terms are presented in the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system.

Materials and Methods

This study incorporated a focused literature review. Academic articles, theses, and dissertations were identified, in addition to non-academic (i.e., not peer-reviewed) Taekwondo materials, through internet keyword searches. Taekwondo and Korean martial arts textbook publications dating back to the first use of the term 'taekwondo' were identified, read for passages that can now be interpreted as soft diplomacy efforts, and the data found were then codified. Internet searches were performed using Google Scholar and the ROK academic databases RISS (Research Information Sharing Service) and KISS (Koreanstudies Information Service System). Searches consisted of the keywords "World Taekwondo," "WT," "International Taekwon-Do Federation," "ITF," "Taekwondo," "Taekwon-Do," "martial arts," "combat sports," and "peace studies." The authors then codified the results and conducted a qualitative thematic analytical analysis to interpret the results of the review.

The data obtained from the literature review were interpreted through several theoretical lenses. First, Cynarski's General Theory of Fighting Arts was used to interpret and classify martial arts and Taekwondo in general [Cynarski 2016, 2017]. Johnson and Ha's [2015] definitions of combat sports, martial arts, and combat systems were used to delineate Taekwondo as a martial art and Taekwondo as a sport. The found literature was also viewed through a Peace Studies lens, which allowed for the interpretation of Taekwondo governing bodies' peacebuilding activities.

Discussion

Taekwondo's peace teachings: A historical overview

Taekwondo developed from nine *kwan* (Korean: martial arts gyms or schools) in Korea in the late 1940s and 1950. From early on, some of these *kwan* taught ideals of peace promotion. From writings dating to 1957 by Park, Chul

Hee, a co-founder of the *T'aegwōndo Kangdōgwōn* ('The house of generous teaching'; one of Taekwondo's oldest *kwan*), Taekwondo students were taught "to make contribution to the world peace and prosperity of civilization" (sic) [Kukkiwon ND: 364]. South Korean General Choi, Hong Hi, *Odogwan* founder and the first ITF president, wrote in 1965 that Taekwondo practitioners should not start fights, but instead "help the weak" and promote justice [Choi 1972]. Choi stressed that his followers be proponents of peace in later writings as well [Choi 1984, 1999]. Practitioners should "never misuse Taekwondo", but instead should be "gentle to the weak and tough to the strong" and aim to be champions "of freedom and justice" that strive to "build a more peaceful world" [Choi 1999]. The *Chōngdogwan's* (another early *kwan*) 1968 *Taekwondo Manual* affirmed that Taekwondo practitioners should not initiate fights with others and must never make the first move in a fight. Later, WT instructs that Taekwondo practitioners should also "love peace, [and] protect justice and humanitarianism" [Kukkiwon ND: 87]; i.e., Taekwondo is for self-defense only. More recently, Rhee Ki Ha, an early promoter of Taekwondo outside of Korea and one of the most senior ITF practitioners in the world, described Taekwondo as "the physical, spiritual and mental practice of human rights and human equality" [Rhee 2012: 12].

Apart from such teachings, Taekwondo has also been used for soft power diplomacy since very early on. In 1959, a Taekwondo military team from the ROK toured Vietnam and China. This was only the first of many future 'goodwill tours', which ought to be understood as soft power diplomacy efforts [Johnson 2018]. In 1965, General Choi lead a "Kukki Taekwon-Do Goodwill Demonstration Team" that visited Egypt, Germany, Italy, Malaysia, Singapore, and Turkey [Kimm 2013]. Such Taekwondo cultural exchanges were not only used by the ROK but the DPRK as well. The two Koreas have long held joint Taekwondo demonstrations, but these became much more commonplace after 2002 when a ROK team visited the DPRK, which was then followed shortly thereafter by a team from the North visiting the South. A similar exchange happened in 2007 when a DPRK Taekwondo demonstration team visited the ROK cities of Seoul and Chuncheon. The two countries also took hands in 2015 at the WT Taekwondo Championships in Chelyabinsk, Russia, when demonstration teams from the DPRK and the ROK shared the stage during the opening ceremony [Johnson 2018; Johnson, Vitale 2018].

In this way, Taekwondo demonstrations have been used for peace at the organizational and governmental levels of diplomacy [Johnson 2018], but only Taekwondo organizations such as WT and the ITF have had successful international peacebuilding initiatives. The only exception may be when one Taekwondo grandmaster personally funded two DPRK demonstration teams to tour the USA in 2007 and 2011 [Johnson, Vitale 2018],

which is the only known grassroots effort supported, financially or otherwise, by a lone individual. Unfortunately, no empirical data exists on how much impact, positive or negative, those two tours had on the American audiences and the DPRK team members outside of some positive statements given to media outlets. These tours most certainly had smaller audiences than the WT and ITF demonstration team events that have occurred in the ROK and the DPRK, around the globe and, most notably, at the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games. With smaller audiences comes lesser influence on peacebuilding efforts. Indeed, the 2018 Olympics demonstration may be directly responsible for the 2018 summits between ROK President Moon, Jae-in and DPRK leader Kim, Jung-un. In turn, those summits facilitated the 2018 summits between US President Donald Trump and the DPRK's Kim, Jung-un [Johnson 2018]. Consequently, focusing peacebuilding efforts at the individual or grassroots level, which involves the individual practitioner (i.e., martial artist or sports combatant), may have little to no effect, while large-scale sport events that occur at the organization and/or international level of sports diplomacy may have a wider and more meaningful impact.

The martial art as a sports approach

Continuing from the above, little empirical data exists on the degree of success of the joint Taekwondo demonstration teams on peace promotion, and there have been few qualitative studies performed on their success in- and outside of the Korean Peninsula. There does seem to be a consensus among researchers that these events have had a positive impact on ROK citizens' attitudes toward Korean rapprochement [e.g., Johnson, Vitale 2018; Lee, Jang, Lee 2019]. With the precedent of using Taekwondo for soft power diplomacy well established, how might using Taekwondo in this manner be problematic?

One dilemma is that none of the Taekwondo organizations have yet to provide a definition of *peace*, a multifaceted and somewhat ambiguous term [Na 2016], which would guide their decision-making processes. Taekwondo's early literature seems to follow a "peace through strength" ideology in that it advocates the strong protecting the weak [Johnson, Lewis 2020]. Furthermore, the literature, and especially that of the WT and its related organizations, seems to consider peace as occurring when parties formerly involved in a conflict actively work toward a new relationship dedicated to mutual benefit. Although not defined explicitly, Taekwondo peace researchers seem to concur [Na 2016; Johnson 2018; Johnson, Vitale 2018; Lee, Jang, Lee 2019; Johnson, Lewis 2020]. Other Peace Studies terms such as *peacekeeping* and *peacebuilding*, which are activities performed by Taekwondo organizations either at the grassroots or organizational level [Johnson 2018], have yet to be defined. Within the field of Peace Studies, peace-

keeping is understood as activities performed to maintain an established peace but that does not address a conflict's underlying causes, while peacebuilding refers to the actions performed before a conflict starts or after it ends. Johnson [2020] showed that despite their peacebuilding efforts, the WT and the ITF are still in the process of negotiating what their collective peacekeeping efforts might entail. Due to this, the recent WT and ITF collaborative efforts seem to be rudderless in their pursuit of 'peace.' Even with the adoption of IOC and Olympic values [cf. *Olympic Charter* 2021], it is difficult to predict the success of these peace pursuits without clear definitions in place.

Na [2016] discussed the use of Taekwondo for peace at the individual, social, and international levels using Kim's [1993] tridimensional discussion of peace. However, Na's Taekwondo and peace discussion does not bifurcate Taekwondo as a martial art and sport. Considering these activities as identical, he ignores a large part of the Taekwondo literature that proves they are distinct activities with a shared name and history. Moenig [2017b] meticulously, for instance, described how (WT) Taekwondo morphed from a Korean martial art into an Olympic sport. Furthermore, Galtung's CRT, a more recognized and practically applied peacebuilding theory, has been found to be a better theoretical framework for Taekwondo peace studies [Johnson 2020].

Moreover, in a discussion of modern Taekwondo peace trends, using "an aggressive martial art" for peace promotion is "awkward," [Monig 2012: 169]. Thus, attempts at using martial arts (i.e., fighting systems) for peace promotion seems antithetical, causing an intuitive dissonance. Such dissonance can be inferred from WT President Choue when he pointed out that Taekwondo is a "combat sport" on the one hand, but that it is used for promoting "world peace" on the other hand [2015]. That he needed to emphasize the odd bringing together of fighting techniques for peace promotion reveals the dissonance of this endeavor. This may be why there is little consensus on even the most basic terms, such as *martial arts* and *combat sports* [Cynarski, Obodynski, Zeng 2012; Wasik 2014; Johnson, Ha 2015]. Several authors, maybe most notably Lewis [2016], have argued that Taekwondo can be used as peaceful means, but doing so will require a fundamental rethinking of the martial art's underlying ethical structure.

By way of comparison, Aikido is another martial art that emphasizes peace promotion [Bryant 2019]. What makes Aikido different from Taekwondo in this regard is Aikido's removal of nearly all offensive techniques. Rather, Aikido's goal is the use of techniques that blend with the opponent's force to redirect or lessen the opponent's aggression. While the practical effectiveness of Aikido may be questioned by some, at least there is some congruence between Aikido's peace teachings and its physical practice that encourages harmoniously mov-

ing with the opponent to dissuade the violent energy [Bryant 2019]. Aikido's strategy often includes control techniques aimed at immobilizing the opponent. In this way, Aikido practitioners aim to converge with an attack and nullify it without escalating the violent encounter or harming the attacker. It is thus, "more in line" with Galtung's conflict resolution theory (CRT) [Johnson 2020], which advocates for the negation of violence through conflict transformation "and peace-building by cooperation and harmony" [Galtung 2010: 20].

For this current study, however, we adopted Johnson and Ha's [2015] delineation between a *martial art*, a system of self-cultivation based on combat systems, and a *combat sport*, which they defined as having the learning objective of utilizing some martial arts techniques in competition. Both of these, according to those authors, are rooted within *combat systems*, which they defined as a group of physical techniques purely "for self-defense or killing on the battlefield" [Johnson, Ha 2015: 67]. Combat systems provide combat effectiveness training but do not usually directly attempt to improve the mind and spirit. On the other hand, martial arts and combat sports provide means for self-improvement: martial arts through self-cultivation and self-expression of often stylized and sometimes archaic combat system techniques whereas combat sports provide improvement through sport. Other student objectives, such as socialization and physical fitness, also exist for Taekwondo martial art and combat sport practitioners, but a full discussion of such auxiliary benefits would be outside of the scope of the current research.

Kim and Back further substantiate the difference between Taekwondo as martial art and sport by stating that "just as their goals differ, so too do their training methods" [2020: 7]. First, self-defense situations are unexpected by nature, whereas sporting events are not. Also, profound philosophical differences exist: a sport is performed for play and adheres to rules and other restrictions; martial arts on the other hand are intended for personal defense in unpredictable situations that can occur anytime and anywhere. Rules provide equity and equality for competitors, while self-defense prepares for just the opposite for martial artists. Finally, martial arts are intended to be practiced for a lifetime without any goal other than to learn and improve oneself. Conversely, competitive players of most sports have a limited time-frame in which they can be competitive. In this sense, Taekwondo can become:

a "Way" in a respect that a sport is not. We do not have the time here to defend and develop what it means to be a Way (*Do; Tao*). Suffice it to say that a Way attempts 1) to confront the brute realities of human existence, especially violence, 2) so as to change the actors / practitioners for the better 3) along with a symbolic practice aimed at enlightenment. Thus, a Way consists in confronting the brute realities of life so as to

extract meaning from it, often expressed symbolically, as in the *poomsae* [prearranged series of movements with offensive and defensive techniques]. Athletes do not do this: their activity is confined to the rules and to the space and time of the contest. [Kim, Back 2020: 10]

While there are other ways to demarcate differences between martial arts and combat sports, we do not need to belabor the point, except for emphasizing their different orientations towards violence. Taekwondo as a martial art tries to avoid violence yet also accepts that sometimes violence may be necessary for defending oneself and others from physical harm. On the other hand, combat sport distances itself from violence. As Channon and Matthews [n.d.] argued, generally, fighting in combat sports should not be considered violent because the athletes "enter into such exchanges in a spirit of respect for one another's boundaries, as laid out by the rules and norms of their disciplines, and with a view to fair competition or mutually beneficial learning." This is not the case when a martial artist defends themselves against physical violence. In a situation that necessitates self-defense, the encounter is not consensual: the aggressor disrespects the boundaries of the victim and for the sake of survival, in order to defend themselves, the victim has to similarly disrespect the boundaries of the aggressor.

There is a dissonance that arises when one wants to use a potentially violent martial art for peace promotion. One way this dissonance can be resolved is if Taekwondo is viewed as a combat sport, rather than a martial art. Hence, some scholars, such as Moenig [2017b], argue for the full metamorphosis of Taekwondo from a martial art to a pure sport stripped of all its historic military and cultural martial arts baggage. Such an 'evolution' of Taekwondo from combat system to combat sport would align Taekwondo with the goal of the Olympic Games, which is "to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity" [IOC 2021: 8] and "to place sport at the service of humanity and thereby to promote peace" (ibid 2021: 13). However, it seems that WT and other Kukki (Olympic) Taekwondo organizations are still trying to retain their martial arts history and culture.

The argument in favor of changing Taekwondo from a martial art to sport is based on the notion that in "modern civil societies... martial arts have no purpose for real fighting" [Monig 2012: 147]. In other words, he asserted that Taekwondo's function as a martial art used for fighting (either in military contexts or personal self-defense) had become obsolete because of the civility of modern societies. This is, however, a privileged interpretation by people fortunate enough to live in such "modern civil societies." While martial arts practice may not be of much value in modern military combat situations, there is still

great value in martial arts as self-defense systems as well as a means of self-cultivation and exercise (or whatever goal a student has). In fact, a primary reason for a large percentage of people taking up martial arts continues to be the self-defense value of martial arts.

Naturally, individual Taekwondo practitioners can choose which (art or sport) to pursue. For Taekwondo organizations like WT, however, it is important to determine which side of this coin they wish to brand themselves. Right now, they are hoping to reap the benefits of being an Olympic sport that comes with associated political and cultural influence and economic gains, all the while trying to keep a foot in their past as a martial art. In other words, they want to claim that Taekwondo is a non-violent sport that can be used for peace promotion, yet they also want to claim that Taekwondo is a martial art while ignoring the inherent potential for violence that martial arts imply. (Incidentally, ITF organizations tend to not have this identity problem as they do not view Taekwondo as primarily a sport, but as primarily a martial art; however, this may change for the ITF under President Ri, Yong Son, since WT only engages with his organization for the purposes of sport diplomacy.)

Costs of evolving from a martial art to combat sport

The shift from a martial art to combat sport comes with other unfortunate costs. First, when a martial art changes into a sport there is a dilution of the rich historical content of the original system. When Judo was developed as a streamlined version of Jujutsu, many of the original, more dangerous techniques were purged. Similarly, when the focus in Taekwondo becomes sports competition, a large percentage of its techniques, such as low kicks, elbow strikes, and so on are inevitably removed to adhere to competition rules. Taekwondo enthusiasts are all aware how Olympic Taekwondo has reduced the martial art – that, by its very name, is supposed to be a foot-and-hand system – into primarily a high-kicking sport. Sadly, an emphasis on kicking in sport Taekwondo has not enriched Taekwondo's kicking arsenal with a wider variety of kicks but has rather reduced practitioners' arsenal to only a handful of techniques that work well in the limited context of the sports ring and the electronic equipment used to score points [Moenig 2015; 2017a].

Not only are there technical losses when a martial art becomes a sport, but there is also an intangible loss in the form of a reduced cultural and philosophical heritage. Of the surviving historic European martial arts (HEMA) that became modern sports such as Western boxing, Greco-Roman wrestling, and fencing, very little of the original cultural and philosophical heritage is practiced and celebrated by the athletes practicing these sports. Even Judo, another combat sport that was intended to be a pedagogic tool “for moral, intellectual and physical education” [Kodokan 2009: iii], is in current times known more for its Olympic status than its potential to build character and

improve lives. How much of the Japanese cultural heritage that was the context from which Judo emerged is present in modern sportive Judo? Contrary to such combat sports, in martial arts the cultural and philosophical heritages are usually integral to their practice.

When a martial art's philosophical and cultural heritage is removed, it is often replaced with “[p]ositive sporting values and objectives” [Monig 2012: 196]. In the case of Taekwondo as promoted by the WT, an emphasis is given to the sportive values of Olympism. This means that the original East Asian philosophy and values that are inherent to the martial arts may have been replaced with Western values (i.e., Grecian-inspired Olympism) for the combat sport. The adoption of Olympism may at first seem commendable. However, the East Asian martial arts are not culturally neutral. Quite the opposite: East Asian martial arts, like folk dances, function as repositories and conveyers of cultural heritage. Therefore, when focusing on the sport aspect of the martial art there is an emphasis on the new sportive values, which inevitably results in a de-emphasis of the original cultural heritage. In a discussion on the Western-centric Olympic sports, Guttman lamented the resultant cultural imperialism and argued that when East Asian martial arts spread to the West, they were “[often transformed] in accordance with Western assumptions about the nature of sports” [1993: 125]. Ironically, instead of the intended goal of using Taekwondo for soft power diplomacy, the result is a form of “soft colonialism” [Lewis 2017] where the martial art's original East Asian cultural identity is replaced with a Western-inspired identity. At the very least this should be considered culturally insensitive and a regrettable loss.

The current approach of envisioning Taekwondo as a sport to be used for sport diplomacy is praiseworthy but may not be the best way to ensure the perpetuation and development of Taekwondo's peace promotion ideals. Instead, a way to harmonize Taekwondo's innate “martial” (i.e., potentially violent) nature with its peace promotion ideals should be sought, and at least one researcher has argued for framing them within Galtung's CRT [Johnson 2020]. Another path may be to emphasize how training in traditional martial arts tends to reduce aggression and violence in individuals [Song 1999; Han, Son 2003; Yang 2003; Lee 2009], as well as emphasizing how martial arts training may be empowering and useful for self-development. For instance, empowerment through martial arts may be understood as physical empowerment, increased self-efficacy, and increased confidence due to the perceived ability to protect oneself in a self-defense situation. While self-development through martial arts may be understood as those “spiritual” benefits often associated with martial arts practice, such as improved states of mind and mind-body connection (i.e., embodiment). A more comprehensive explication of the use of martial arts for empowerment and self-development falls outside the scope of this paper.

Conclusions

The goal of using a martial art's inherently forceful and arguably violent techniques for peace promotion is intrinsically “awkward” [Monig 2012: 169]. To overcome this awkwardness, some international governing bodies of Taekwondo, that are formally involved with peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, have attempted to reinterpret the function of Taekwondo. Instead of viewing Taekwondo as a martial art with roots in military combat, WT, the Olympic IF, promotes Taekwondo as an Olympic (combat) sport. If Taekwondo can be viewed as primarily a sport, then its “violent” aspects can be downplayed as simply sport competition, which combat sport theorists argue is not violent because of the consensual nature of (combat) sport. As merely a sport, Taekwondo can be used as a tool for soft power diplomacy (i.e., sports diplomacy).

This rebranding of Taekwondo is incomplete since other Kukki (Olympic) Taekwondo organizations are still promoting themselves through their ‘martial arts’ roots. While the current WT website focuses its mission on developing the sport of Taekwondo [WT 2021], the THF [2018] and other Kukki (Olympic) Taekwondo websites are still branding Taekwondo as a martial art *and* a sport. There does not seem to be a unified definition of Taekwondo or vision for the future of WT activities, despite them all propagating an ill-defined concept of ‘peace.’

The goal of employing Taekwondo as a peace promotion tool is an admirable endeavor and clearly in harmony with the intention of the early Taekwondo pioneers. However, there is a difference between how the early pioneers viewed peace promotion and how such peace promotion is attempted by the current Taekwondo organizations such as the WT. From the writings of the early pioneers, we notice that their peace promotion ideal was not separate from the combative and the potentially violent function of the martial arts. Although they admonished members not to be the instigators of violence and not to misuse Taekwondo, they did not try to remove the possibility of aggressive (re-)action. Practitioners were encouraged to protect the weak and to fight for freedom and justice. Their writings clearly imply that Taekwondo's violent combative techniques are to be used if necessary.

This then is the main difference between ‘peace through Taekwondo’ as viewed through either a martial art or a combat sport lens. Taekwondo as a martial art acknowledges and even embraces the possible necessity for violence; i.e., “a *peace through strength* strategy” [Johnson, Lewis 2021: 59], whereas Taekwondo as a combat sport denies its violent nature by means of a “teleological redefinition” [Lewis 2016: 4] that argues that as a sport, Taekwondo is not violent since a combat sport is consensual.

Current attempts at de-emphasizing the violent side of Taekwondo and emphasizing Taekwondo as a peace promoting sport are also at odds with Taekwondo's historic development as a means of self-cultivation and “Korea's Art of Self-Defense” [Choi 1999]. What the pioneers had in mind was less political, in the form of soft diplomacy, and more practical forms of self-empowerment. The practice of Taekwondo strengthens both body and mind and thereby empowers practitioners to stand up for themselves and stand up for others. However, such individual physical empowerment has little impact on the global viewing audiences and therefore works only at the individual or grassroots level of soft diplomacy. Although the martial arts strategy of *peace through strength* may work for the individual, Taekwondo organizations like WT that are dedicated to using Taekwondo as a tool towards peace at the organizational and international levels of sport, should discard the martial arts identity and frame their efforts within a combat sport motif. Since WT is in fact a sports organization associated with the IOC, this is merely a logical step for them.

While the present research was limited by a lack of similar studies on Taekwondo and peace, it does contribute to that growing field of research. There should be future studies that identify how and to what degree combat sports have the ability to contribute to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In particular, a quantitative analysis on whether Taekwondo peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts have been effective in changing the minds of the Korean people would be instrumental in determining whether Taekwondo peace activities should continue, as well as which direction they should take. Along similar lines, quantitative studies on whether Taekwondo is a good “fit” for peace promotion outside of its home culture are warranted. For instance, Blomqvist and Hansson's [2021] research suggests that combat athletes such as WT and ITF players would be the only individuals to benefit from inter-organizational competitions. Their research shows that spectators are not necessarily convinced of the utility of peacebuilding through sports competitions. Also, further research to quantify the possible (intangible cultural) losses that occur when a combat system evolves from martial art to combat sport is prudent.

Taekwondo organizations, including WT and the various ITFs, could consider this study's findings to ensure their leaders' ideals for Taekwondo/Taekwon-Do are passed to future generations.

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Kwestie dysonansu związane z wykorzystaniem taekwondo do promowania pokoju

Słowa kluczowe: dyplomacja *soft power*, dyplomacja sportowa, dziedzictwo kulturowe, sztuka walki, sport walki, taekwondo, World Taekwondo (WT), Międzynarodowa Federacja Taekwon-Do (ITF)

Streszczenie

Tłó. Organizacje taekwondo, takie jak World Taekwondo i Międzynarodowa Federacja Taekwon-Do, postawiły sobie za cel wykorzystanie tej sztuki walki/sportu walki do promocji pokoju, co jest zgodne z moralnymi celami pierwszych pionierów tej sztuki walki. Problem i cel. Pomimo najlepszych intencji, istnieje wewnętrzny dysonans między celem (celami) jakim jest zachowaniem pokoju a potencjalnymi brutalnymi technikami, które są nieodłączną częścią taekwondo.

Metody. Przeprowadzono ukierunkowany przegląd literatury tematu wśród artykułów akademickich, prac dyplomowych, rozpraw doktorskich i popularno-naukowych materiałów dotyczących taekwondo poprzez wyszukiwanie słów kluczowych w Internecie. Dokonano przeglądu publikacji podręczników taekwondo i koreańskich sztuk walki sięgających czasów pierwszego użycia terminu "taekwondo", przeczytano je pod kątem fragmentów, które można obecnie interpretować jako wysiłki miękkiej dyplomacji (*soft diplomacy*), a następnie skodyfikowano znalezione dane. Uzyskane dane zostały przeanalizowane przez pryzmat Ogólnej Teorii Sztuk Walki i Studiów nad Pokojem, umożliwiając interpretację działań międzynarodowych organów zarządzających taekwondo na rzecz budowania pokoju.

Wyniki. Aby zaradzić dysonansowi, nastąpiło przesunięcie punktu ciężkości z samoobrony i gotowości bojowej na usportowienie taekwondo. Poprzez rebranding taekwondo przede wszystkim jako sportu, punkt ciężkości praktyki został przeniesiony z prawdopodobnie brutalnych technik "walki" na zwykłą rywalizację sportową. W ten sposób cel promocji pokoju jest realizowany poprzez dyplomację sportową, rodzaj miękkiej dyplomacji. Jednak odejście od praktyki sztuk walki na rzecz praktyki sportów walki jest problematyczne. Wnioski. Chociaż cel wykorzystania taekwondo do miękkiej dyplomacji jest godny pochwały, sportowe ukierunkowanie może nie być najlepszym sposobem na osiągnięcie celu promocji pokojowego podejścia w taekwondo. Niemniej jednak jest to rozsądna strategia na poziomie społecznym (tj. organizacyjnym) i międzynarodowym, gdzie dyplomacja sportowa może być skutecznie stosowana.