

# **Weaponizing International Sports: Can Punishing Countries in the Sports Realm Compel Them to Change Their Behavior?**

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**ABSTRACT.** Can the international community get certain countries to change their behavior by punishing them in the sports realm? If so, sports sanctions could serve as a valuable tool for encouraging positive change in world politics. However, sports sanctions could also provoke backlash in the target country. It is therefore important for IR scholars to understand when sports sanctions are most likely to get target countries to comply. In this study, we theorize the conditions that could make compliance more or less likely. We then analyze 20 major cases of sports sanctions. Our results suggest that sports sanctions can get target countries to comply, but several factors appear to matter greatly for whether they do so. We conclude that sports sanctions are at times a very valuable tool in international politics.

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Sports sanctions have attracted great interest from policymakers and the general public in recent years. In 2014, John McCain and other Congressional leaders tried to convince FIFA to punish Russia for its foreign aggression by moving the 2018 World Cup to another country (Reis 2015). Many have also argued that Iran should be banned from the Olympics for human rights violations and their refusal to allow their athletes to compete against Israelis (Riddle 2021). The possibility of banning North Korea has also been raised given the country's terrible human rights record and treatment of athletes (Chiasson 2018). Further, some U.S. lawmakers called for the 2022 Beijing Olympics to be moved to another country unless China improved its human rights record (Neumann 2021). The United States, United Kingdom, Japan, and several other countries ended up staging a diplomatic boycott of the event (Feng 2021).

But could punishing countries in the sporting realm really cause them to change their behavior? If so, sports sanctions might be able to promote positive change in the world, such as by curbing racial discrimination and advancing women's rights. However, sports sanctions might also create resentment in the target country and make it less likely to change its behavior.

In this paper, we attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of sports sanctions by investigating every case in history that involved a country being banned from the Olympics or international soccer. We conclude that sports sanctions can bring about compliance, but several factors seem to matter for whether they do so. First, sports sanctions appear to be much more likely to change the target country's behavior when their objectives are related to sports governance. It is important not to dismiss such issues as trivial, as they sometimes relate to matters of racial and gender equality, crime and violence, government

corruption, and the diplomatic recognition of other nations. Second, sports sanctions appear much less likely to change a target country's behavior if it has the capabilities and resolve to resist them. Third, the government in a target country might actually welcome the sports sanctions because they can make it easier to undertake beneficial reforms. When the government is an ally in the fight for change, it can greatly increase the chances that sports sanctions will succeed.

This paper proceeds as follows. In Section 1, we build on some findings about economic sanctions to theorize about when sports sanctions should be most likely to achieve compliance. In Section 2, we outline the existing empirical research on sports sanctions. In Section 3, we explain our research methodology. In Section 4, we turn to the empirical record and investigate 20 major cases where sports sanctions were employed. In Section 5, we qualify our findings and consider some of the broader complications that could arise if sports sanctions were used on a more regular basis.

## **Section 1: Theorizing About When Sports Sanctions Will Work**

**General Definition.** In the international relations literature, sanctions are defined as punishments designed to compel countries to change their behavior (Pape 1997; Allen 2008; Krustev 2010; Bapat and Kwon 2015; Lektzian and Patterson 2015; McLean and Mitchell 2018; Kavaklı, Chatagnier, and Hatipoğlu 2020). The most common type of sanctions are economic, which can be comprehensive or targeted. Comprehensive economic sanctions impose costs on the country's entire society across a wide range of sectors, and they can lead to major economic depressions that impact the general public. In contrast, targeted economic sanctions focus on specific industries or key government decision-makers, and thus try to avoid causing any unnecessary human suffering.

**Defining Sanctions as Successful.** International relations scholars typically define sanctions as successful if they compel the target country to comply with the demands of the sanctions (e.g., Pape 1997; Allen 2008; Dom and Roger 2020). There are other ways one could define success. For example, even if the target country resists, the sanctions might still be considered successful (or partially successful) if they weaken the target country or prevent it from achieving certain goals. Doxey (2000) and Little (2011) argue that there are at least five possible goals of sanctions beyond compliance: signalling, solidarity, symbolism, destabilization, and punishment. Therefore, even if the target country refuses to change its behavior, sanctions might still prove effective in other ways.

In this paper, we focus on evaluating whether the sanctions played an important causal role in compelling the target country to comply with the demands of the sanctions. This approach keeps our analysis consistent with past research. However, readers should keep in mind that we are referring to success in this particular sense and not in others.

**The Logic of Sanctions.** For sanctions to “succeed” under our definition, they must be so costly that they cause the target country to cave to the pressure. This can happen because the leaders themselves want the sanctions to be lifted, because the leaders’ supporters demand that reforms be made so that the sanctions are removed, or because the leaders lose power and new politicians make the necessary changes (Pape 1997; Marinov 2005).

Much research has explored when economic sanctions are most likely to work (e.g., Pape 1997; Drezner 2011). In this section, we outline some of the main findings from this literature and use them to theorize about the potential effectiveness of sports sanctions.

**Costs of the Sanctions.** Several studies find that economic sanctions are more likely to work when they are very costly to the target country (e.g., Dashti-Gibson, Jaleh, and Radcliff 1997; Allen 2005; Lektzian and Souva 2007). This finding suggests two important hypotheses about when sports sanctions could be effective. First, for sports sanctions to have any chance of bringing about meaningful social change, they probably need to involve important sports that many people watch. Banning a country from a sport that few people care about would not impose much of a cost for that country. Second, the degree to which countries care about international sports could matter greatly for whether sports sanctions prove effective. Most countries do care a great deal about participating in international sports (Cottrell and Nelson 2011; Baker 2016), so this condition is likely to hold in most cases.

For instance, research by Markovits and Rensmenn (2010) shows that government leaders often take international sports very seriously. This pattern seems to hold especially true for non-democracies, where governments tend to have closer links to the national sports teams. Cases range from Mussolini and Hitler's great interest in sports in the 1930s to Xi's passion for sports today. In some cases, leaders may be genuinely interested in watching sporting competitions. The North Korean regime stands out in this respect. Kim Jong-il displayed a passionate admiration for sports, especially basketball, that carried over to his son Kim Jong-un. In fact, Dennis Rodman was one of the first individuals to get access to the country after Kim Jong-un came to power in 2011.

Beyond genuine interest, government leaders might also benefit from the sentiments that international sports evoke. For example, international sports are closely linked to nationalism (Gift and Miner 2017; Bertoli 2017; Rosenzweig and Zhou 2021). There is also

the potential for international sports to distract the public from the country's problems. It is not surprising, therefore, that world leaders tend to take international sports so seriously.

**Perceived Legitimacy.** A number of studies conclude that states are more likely to follow international norms or demands when they view them as legitimate (Hurd 1999; Cortell and Davis Jr. 2000; Zwingel 2012; Terman 2017). Since international sports organizations are responsible for the governance of the sporting realm, it is reasonable to think that sports sanctions would likely be perceived as most legitimate when they address issues related to sports governance. If they try to tackle issues that go well beyond sports governance, the target country might view the international sports organization as stepping outside its lane.

Of course, even if the sanctions focus solely on sports governance, the target country might still not perceive them as legitimate. For example, they might conflict with cultural norms in the country. However, all else equal, it seems reasonable to think that sports sanctions will be more likely to succeed when they focus on issues of sports governance.

**Target Country Strength.** Powerful countries can sometimes evade or offset the effects of economic sanctions (Weir 2003). For sports sanctions, two possibilities stand out for how leaders of powerful countries might fight back. First, they might gain undue influence over international sports organizations through bribes or other means. Second, if they are banned, they might be able to stage their own sporting events with their allies as an alternative. Therefore, there is good reason to suspect that applying sports sanctions to powerful countries will be much more difficult than instituting them on relatively weaker countries.

**Nationalism.** Numerous studies have shown that economic sanctions can create resentment among the people of the target country, which can make them even less willing to

give in to international pressure (Pape 1997). No doubt, sports sanctions raise this concern as well. A target country's citizens might feel they were being treated unfairly by the international community, and the government could stoke these feelings. This possibility means that sports sanctions could potentially make matters worse in some cases. If so, they could cause countries to resist making reforms rather than encourage them to change their behavior.

**Third-Party Costs.** Another important concern that comes with sanctions, especially comprehensive sanctions, is how the sanctions could affect third parties (Pape 1997; Peksen 2009; Drury and Peksen 2014). For sports sanctions, athletes probably pose the greatest concern when it comes to third party costs. Many athletes devote their lives to reaching these international sporting events, and banning their country could impose an unjust cost on them.

Fortunately, when it comes to individual sports, athletes from a banned country could still compete under a neutral flag, provided that they comply with all necessary regulations. Team sports present a more difficult matter. It may not be possible to protect athletes in this situation. In addition, the government in a target country might try to use this inequity to delegitimize sports sanctions, which could make them less effective. International sports organizations would need to develop mechanisms to allow compliant athletes to participate in team events if this issue is to be avoided.

## **Section 2: Existing Research on Sports Sanctions**

The existing literature features many historical articles that describe sport sanctions but do not analyze their effectiveness. For instance, in the case of Yugoslavia, Mills (2009) gives a rich historical overview of the decline in Serbian sport following the sport sanctions

of the early 1990s. However, he does not analyze whether the sanctions achieved their goal of bringing about political change. Similarly, Novak (2021) recounts Rhodesia's suspension from FIFA in 1970 and describes the subsequent changes that took place in Rhodesian soccer. Nevertheless, the article does not attempt to determine whether the sanctions brought about these changes or had other broader effects.

Some articles do try to analyze the effectiveness of sport sanctions in specific cases. For example, Keech and Houlihan (1999) attempt to analyze the effectiveness of sport sanctions on South Africa. The authors argue that the sport sanctions contributed to the anti-apartheid movement by drawing further international attention to the situation. Similarly, Little (2011) assesses the effectiveness of sport sanctions in Rhodesia. Specifically, he examines the role that sport sanctions played in the overall policy of the United Kingdom towards Rhodesia. Both articles move away from pure historical description as they try to assess the causal contribution of sport sanctions to changes in government behavior by examining their role in broader political campaigns. Nonetheless, by focusing on specific historical cases, the authors limit their ability to draw broader conclusions about the factors that might make sports sanctions more or less likely to work.

Indeed, attempts to draw lessons about sports sanctions through comparative research across different historical cases has been scarce. MacLean (2014) compiles a list of factors that he believes influence the effectiveness of sport sanctions, but his historical analysis focuses mainly on South Africa. Rosner and Low (2009) examine several Olympic boycotts and bans, with their most notable cases probably being the South Africa and Afghanistan bans. They conclude that Olympic boycotts are futile and that Olympic bans are unlikely to work except if the country broke International Olympic Committee rules. This finding



is important and accords with the results that we present later in this paper. However, focusing on a narrow set of Olympic cases inherently limits the scope of their study.

This paper seeks to move beyond past work by analyzing every major case of sports sanctions in history that involved bans from the Olympics or international soccer. We believe that such an approach is necessary to reach the most reliable and complete set of conclusions as possible. We provide a detailed explanation of how we carry out this analysis in the next section.

### **Section 3: Methodology**

**Case Selection.** For this study, we attempted to identify every major case of sports sanctions in history that involved countries being banned entirely from the world's most visible sporting events: the Olympics and/or soccer tournaments. We do not, for instance, consider bans that only involved less visible sporting events, because these bans presumably receive far less attention. Thus, we believe that these bans are unlikely to have much of a meaningful impact in world politics. For similar reasons, we also leave out bans from single events at the Olympics, like weightlifting, which happen regularly due to doping allegations.

We also consider two borderline cases that did not rise to the level of particularly strong sports sanctions, but nonetheless seemed important to us to consider. The first involved the pressure that the International Olympic Committee put on Saudi Arabia to send female athletes to the Olympics. According to the public record, Saudi Arabia was not threatened with a ban, but they were told that they would not be able to host the Olympics unless they reformed the gender policies of their domestic sports leagues. The second borderline case was the 1980 boycott of the Moscow Olympics. Although the Olympics did take

place, this boycott was notable because it involved a very large number of countries. It was therefore a rather visible attempt to pressure the Soviet Union by punishing it in the sporting realm.

Past studies have noted that focusing on examples where sanctions actually occurred could lead to selection bias because the target governments are likely to be more resolved in these cases (e.g., Lacy and Niou 2004). In other words, if a target country did not change its behavior due to the possibility or threat of sanctions, it was probably quite resistant to making the reforms. This observation has very important implications for the economic sanctions literature. Some influential prior research had found that economic sanctions rarely achieved their goals (e.g., Pape 1997), and this selection bias issue could help explain the low success rate.

In the context of our study, we do not believe that this type of selection bias presents a major concern. The reason is that we find that sports sanctions do have a high success rate when they address issues related to sports governance. Therefore, the fact that we are looking at hard cases should strengthen confidence in this result, not weaken it. We also think that this type of selection bias does not pose a problem for our finding that sports sanctions tend to be ineffective for issues that go beyond sports governance. The selection bias would only cause a problem if some governments factored the possibility of a sports ban into their decision-making when they considered important issues that went beyond sports. This is hard to imagine. Part of the reason is that sports bans for purely political reasons have been rare. Therefore, the concern about selection bias that has been important in the literature on economic sanctions should not pose a major issue for our study.

**Evaluating Whether Sanctions Were Successful or Unsuccessful.** As mentioned earlier, we define sports sanctions to be successful if they played an important role in encouraging the target country to change its behavior in the desired way. Under this definition, sports sanctions would clearly be unsuccessful if the target country did not reform its behavior. The sanctions would also be unsuccessful if the target country did change its behavior, but for reasons other than the sports sanctions (e.g., economic sanctions or civil unrest). In other words, we consider sports sanctions to be unsuccessful if they appeared to play little or no role in the government’s decision making process. Below, we elaborate on our methodology for evaluating the causal role that sports sanctions played in each case.

**Assessing Causality.** In this paper, we adopt a degrees of causation approach to causal inference. Rather than looking at whether or not a factor is critical in achieving a desired goal or outcome, a degrees of causation approach considers to what extent a specific factor helped attain a certain goal. To illustrate this, imagine that three companies are simultaneously polluting a river but are emitting different amounts of the polluting toxin. A degrees of causation approach takes into account this asymmetry in causal contribution by acknowledging that the companies contributed to the destruction of the river to different degrees depending on the amount of toxins they emitted. A degrees of causation approach therefore focuses on the relative importance of each causal factor in bringing about the outcome (Braham and Hees 2009).

In the context of sports sanctions, the degrees of causation approach offers important advantages over the traditional counterfactual framework. The main limitation of the counterfactual framework is that it struggles to address cases of overdetermination (Brady 2013). Under the counterfactual framework, no company would be responsible for killing the wildlife in the river unless its independent contribution was alone pivotal in bringing

about the outcome. This means that if far more pollutants were emitted into the river than were necessary for the destruction of the wildlife, none of the companies would be liable. In sum, the counterfactual approach to causal inference is inadequate for addressing the causal contributions of factors in cases where the outcome is overdetermined.

The main drawback of the degrees of causation approach is that it can be difficult for researchers to measure the relative importance of different causal factors. To address this challenge, we use a process tracing methodology. Specifically, we focus on the timeline of the events of each historical case, along with causal process observations (CPOs). CPOs are pieces of evidence that one would expect to find in the real world if a given hypothesis is true (Collier 2011). Thus, by applying process tracing, we can analyze whether the details of each historical case support the notion that the sport sanctions were effective. We explain our methodology in more detail below.

**Timeline.** When conducting process tracing, Collier (2011) advises to first start by describing in detail the key moments or events in the narrative from which one wishes to draw causal inferences. He writes, “grasping [the unfolding of events or situations over time] is impossible if one cannot adequately describe an event or situation at one point in time. . . . To characterize a process, we must be able to characterize key steps in the process, which in turn permits good analysis of change and sequence” (Collier 2011). A detailed timeline is therefore important for identifying potential causal links in a series of events.

**Causal Process Observations.** After examining the timeline, it is necessary to corroborate possible causal links with other forms of evidence, namely causal process observations (CPOs). In the context of sport sanctions, we expect to observe several specific CPOs if sport sanctions played an important causal role in the case. These include:

- A1. Compliance: The target country complied with the specific demands related to the sport sanctions.
- A2. Government Concerns: Government officials in the target country expressed concerns about the sports sanctions in public statements.
- A3. Failed Alternatives: The target country attempted to find alternatives to the sporting events that they were banned from but were unable to do so.
- A4. Athlete Reinstatement: During negotiations the officials of the target country tried to get the athletes back into sports as soon as possible by pushing for the removal of the sports sanctions or at least attempting to secure better terms for the athletes.
- A5. Domestic Pressure: The sports sanctions created domestic discontent that put pressure on government officials to have them lifted.
- A6. Failed Mitigation: The sports sanctions had a costly impact on the athletes and teams in the target country that the target government attempted to mitigate.
- A7. Attribution: Government leaders attributed the reforms to the sports sanctions.
- A8. Isolated Reforms: The country did not make other changes beyond the specific demands of the sports sanctions.
- A9. Only Factor: The sports sanctions were the only plausible factor leading to government compliance. There were no other plausible factors like economic sanctions, new developments in armed conflicts, or civil unrest.

On the other hand, if sport sanctions played little causal role in the case we would expect to observe different CPOs:

- B1. Non-compliance: The target country did not comply with the demands of the sanctions.

- B2. Government Indifference: The government in the target country seemed uninterested in the sport sanctions.
- B3. Successful Alternatives: The target country was able to find satisfactory alternatives to the sporting events.
- B4. Successful Mitigation: The target country was able to largely mitigate the negative effect of the sport sanctions on their athletes and sports teams.
- B5. Athlete Indifference: The government did not express concerns about the country's athletes or sports teams.
- B6. Public Indifference: The population in the target country seemed uninterested in the sports sanctions.
- B7. Parallel Reforms: Compliance happened in parallel with other broader reforms that went beyond the demands of the sports sanctions, suggesting that compliance might have just been part of larger social or political changes rather than a response to the sports sanctions.
- B8. Other Factor(s): Government compliance with the sports sanctions demands overlapped with important events such as the intensification of economic sanctions, new developments in armed conflicts, or civil unrest.

Finally, it is also possible that the sport sanctions could provoke nationalism and resentment in the target country and thereby make it less willing to change its behaviour. In such a case we would expect to observe the following CPOs:

- C1. Defiance: The target country moved further away from implementing the desired changes.
- C2. Rally Around the Flag: The popularity of the target country's regime increased, with blame for the country's problems diverted away from government officials.

C3. **Government Backlash:** The government expressed outrage over the sanctions.

C4. **Public Backlash:** The popularity of the sanctioners decreased amongst the public.

In the next section, we apply this methodology to assess the effectiveness of sports sanctions throughout history. At the end, we summarize the CPOs for all of the cases.

## Section 4: Historical Cases

In this section, we attempt to evaluate every serious instance of sports sanctions that involved bans from the Olympics or international soccer. We also examine two borderline cases. We have 20 cases in total. We discuss eight of them in depth here, and the other 12 in the Online Appendix. The cases that we will discuss here are (1) the banning of Rhodesia from international sports after it declared independence from Britain (1966-1979), (2) the sports sanctions against South Africa to combat its government's racist policies (1957-1991), (3) the IOC's ban of Indonesia for "mixing sports with politics" (1963-1966), (4) the banning of English teams from European soccer due to fan violence (1985-1991), (5) the sports sanctions against Yugoslavia during its civil war (1992-1995), (6) the banning of Afghanistan from the Olympics for not having female athletes (1999-2002), (7) Kuwait's Olympic ban for government interference in its National Olympic Committee (2010-2019), and (8) the sports sanctions against Russia for its doping program (2018-present).

**The Illegitimate Government in Rhodesia.** In the British colony of Rhodesia (modern-day Zimbabwe), whites held extensive power. Even though they made up less than 10% of the colony's population, they controlled the colonial government. In the early 1960s, the British government wanted to establish democracy in Rhodesia, which would shift power

to the black population. However, the whites resisted democratization. In 1965, they declared independence from Britain, and they formed a new government that protected their elevated status.

This new Rhodesian government faced intense resistance from the international community. Nearly all African countries condemned it, along with the United States. Britain would also not tolerate the situation, since it was a rebellion against the English Crown. The Soviet Union and its communist allies also sympathized with the black population. While none of these countries wanted to send troops to fight in Rhodesia, they still wanted to pressure the government to change.

Starting in 1965, most of the international community instituted sanctions against the Rhodesian government, some of which targeted the sporting realm. Rhodesia was banned from the Commonwealth Games starting in 1966, the Olympics starting in 1968, and major soccer competitions beginning in 1970. The international community also threatened to punish any country that arranged a game against a Rhodesian sports team. As a result, Rhodesia found itself almost entirely cut off from the world of international sports by the early 1970s. Its isolation continued until a new government agreed to make wide-ranging democratic reforms in the late 1970s.

**Evaluating the Sanctions:** Although the Rhodesian government eventually democratized, sports sanctions do not appear to have played a major role. In fact, scholarly work on Rhodesia comes to the conclusion that two other factors were far more important than sports sanctions (Rowe 2001; Evans 2007; Little 2011). The first was the economic sanctions, which intensified in the years just prior to Rhodesia's capitulation. The second was



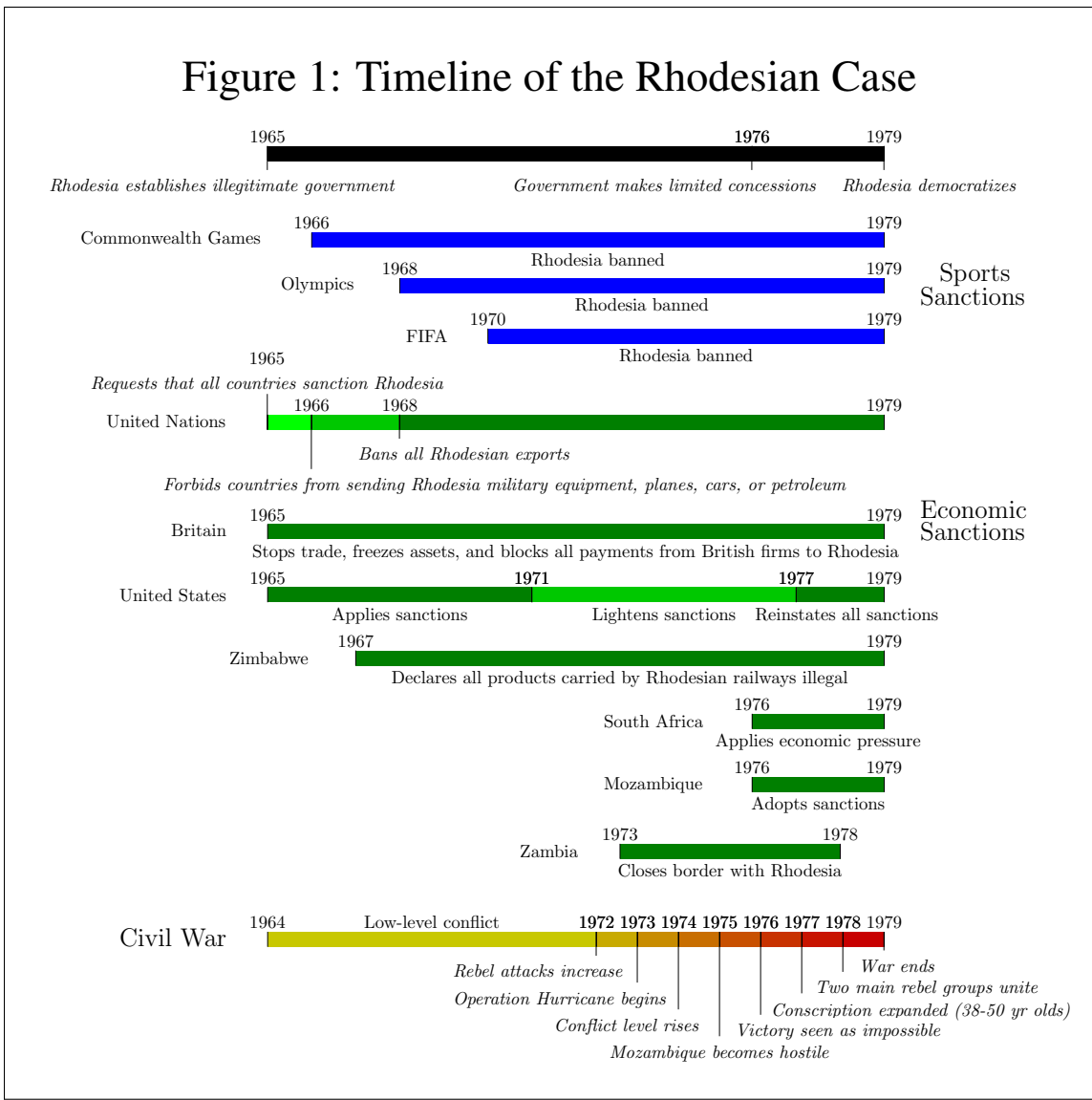
the inability of the Rhodesian military to defeat the African nationalist forces, who staged an insurgency in the country that escalated in the late 1970s.

Figure 1 depicts the timeline of events. The major sports sanctions leveled against Rhodesia were all in place by the early 1970s. However, by themselves, they achieved no results. As the historian Charles Little (2011) describes, “there are no indications that sporting sanctions changed the policies of the state in any way.” He continues,

Perhaps the strongest evidence to support this viewpoint can be seen in the election campaign leading up to the 1969 referendum on the adoption of a new constitution and declaration of a republic. The (white) opposition highlighted the impact of the sports boycott as one of their reasons for urging a no vote... but despite this the constitution was endorsed by a sweeping majority of the electorate. If anything, sporting sanctions may even have contributed to the ‘siege mentality’ prevalent amongst the bulk of the white Rhodesian population, whilst also earning them some degree of international sympathy (Little 2011).

On the other hand, the economic sanctions and civil war both intensified in the late 1970s, making them much more plausible explanations for the capitulation of the Rhodesian government. The economic sanctions had been in place since 1965, but it took nearly a decade before Rhodesia felt any major effects. The reason is that many of Rhodesia’s main trading partners and allies ignored the sanctions. For example, South Africa and Mozambique only started putting trade restrictions on Rhodesia in 1976. The U.S. also acted as an important trade partner for Rhodesia. Although it initially adhered to the sanctions, it passed legislation in 1971 that reopened trade in several important sectors. This legislation was repealed in 1977.

# Figure 1: Timeline of the Rhodesian Case



By themselves, the economic sanctions might not have caused Rhodesia’s government to cave. However, they proved effective because they weakened its capacity to combat the insurgency that had been taking place in its country since 1964. Up until 1972, this rebel movement remained a low-level conflict and did not pose a serious threat to the

regime. However, it became increasingly violent as the 1970s proceeded. From 1972-1979, it resulted in 30,000 dead and 275,000 wounded, and it consumed nearly one-third of Rhodesia's national budget (Evans 2007). By 1977, the Rhodesian government position had grown so desperate that it began drafting 38-50 year olds into the military. Whites in Rhodesia eventually came to see victory as impossible, and many fled the country in the latter half of the 1970s. The Rhodesian government eventually agreed to full-scale democratic reforms in 1979.

Thus, the sports sanctions played little role in bringing democracy to Rhodesia. Although this conclusion is discouraging, we should remember that these sports sanctions aimed to achieve an extremely ambitious goal that went well beyond sports. They sought to get a minority ethnic group to give up political power. Moreover, many white Rhodesians proved that they were willing to die or flee the country before they would concede power to the black population. Therefore, sports sanctions would need to be incredibly powerful to work in a case like this. The next example that we will look at had much more modest goals, at least initially, and provides more promising evidence that sports sanctions can get target countries to comply.

**Apartheid in South Africa.** Up until the early 1990s, South Africa was racially segregated. This social system was known as "Apartness", a word pronounced as "Apartheid" by South African whites. Every citizen in South Africa was put into one of four racial categories—"white", "black", "colored" (mixed-race), or "Indian". These categories determined where people could travel and live, what types of jobs they could take, who they could marry, and what schools they could attend. Under this system, the opportunities afforded to whites were far better than they were for non-whites. Non-whites were often

forced to live in slums and take on the lowest-paying jobs in society. Thus, it was not so much a system of “Aparthness” as it was a system of repression.

These racist policies also spilled over into the sporting realm. Domestically, all sports leagues were segregated by race. When it came to international sports, non-whites were forbidden from playing on the South African national teams, and often could not even attend the games. In cases where they were permitted to go, they had to use different entrances than whites, sit in different parts of the stadium, and use separate bathrooms (Corrigall 1971). The South African government also kept its all-white national teams from playing games against African teams, instead setting up games against predominantly white nations like England and Australia (Corrigall 1971).

These racist policies had an obvious and visible impact on international sports, making it impossible for other countries to look the other way. They clearly violated one of the key principles set out in the Olympic Charter: that no athlete should be discriminated against on the basis of race. By the early 1960s, many countries favored banning South Africa from international sports until it changed its policies.

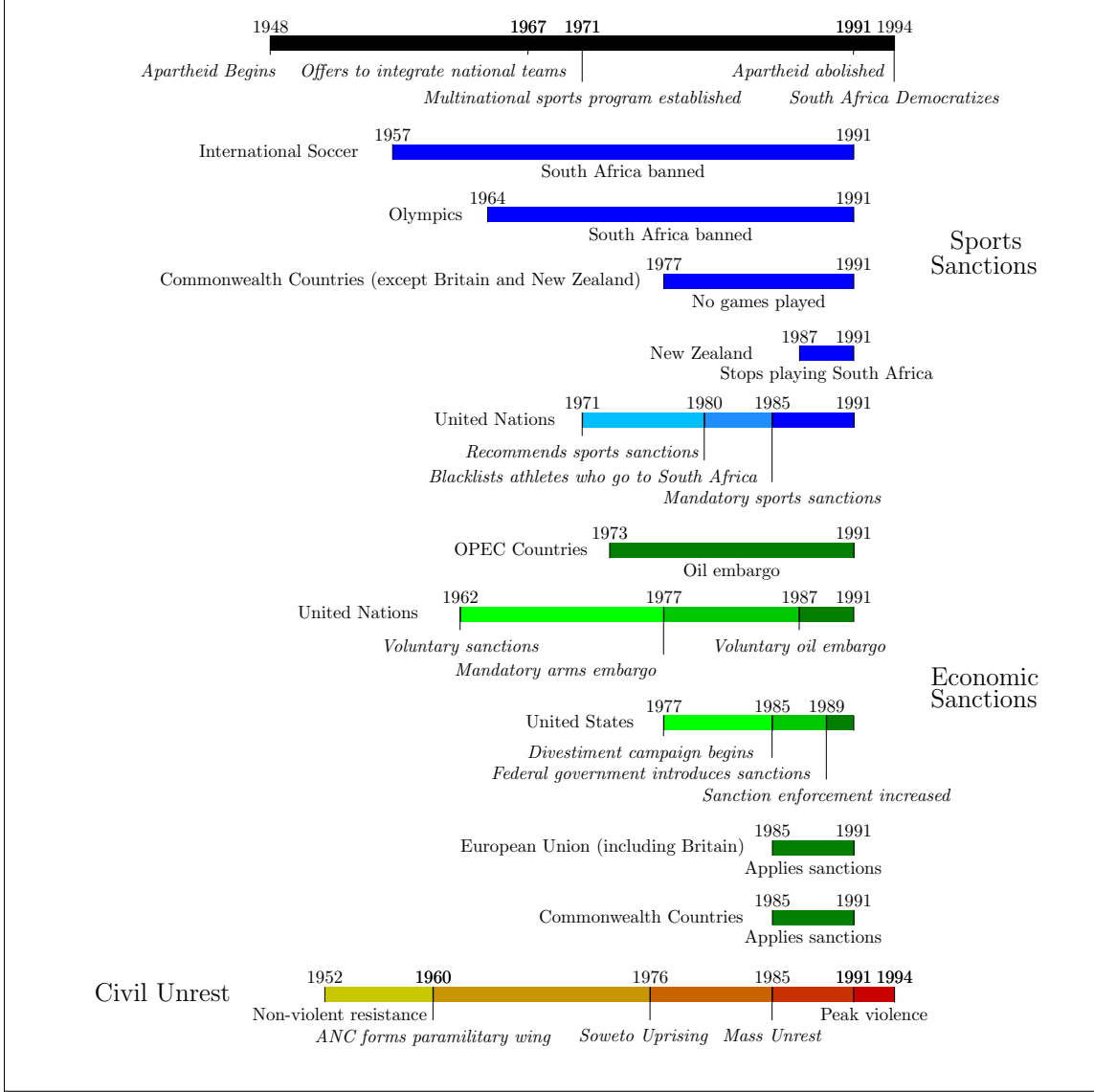
These countries initially focused on changing sports policy in South Africa. However, as the international campaign against South Africa progressed, the goal expanded to getting the South African government to abolish all of its racist policies. It had become clear that non-whites in South Africa would always be disadvantaged in sports as long as their society treated them as inferiors and denied them the educational, financial, and civic benefits afforded to whites. As the saying went, “There could not be normal sports in an abnormal society” (Rademeyer 2000). The entire political structure of South Africa needed to be changed. This change eventually came when the government abolished Apartheid in 1991. Elections were finally held in 1994 and Nelson Mandela was elected president.

**Evaluating the Sanctions:** To some extent, the sports sanctions proved successful. South Africa made major reforms to its sports policies in the hopes of appeasing the international community (Klee 2012). They began in 1967, when the South African Prime Minister B.J. Vorster announced that he would allow all races to participate on many of the national sports teams, as well as to represent South Africa at the Olympics. However, he refused to desegregate sports within South Africa, so these concessions were not enough to satisfy the international community. In 1971, he finally gave in and established a multinational sports program that allowed for mixed sports competition. Although non-whites continued to face various forms of overt discrimination in sports over the next decade, by 1981 the situation improved enough to deem the sanctions as successful in at least partially achieving their initial goal.

Nevertheless, the clear economic disparity between the racial groups in South Africa undermined the notion that the whites and non-whites were on equal footing when it came to sports. Whites could practice at better facilities, purchase better equipment, eat better food, and go home to nicer houses. While inequality of this sort is present in many countries, what made it unacceptable in the case of South Africa is that the government explicitly discriminated against people based on their race. Thus, the international community refused to remove the sanctions based on the changes that had been made in the sporting realm. It demanded a new political system in South Africa that gave every citizen equal rights, regardless of race.

The sports sanctions alone failed to bring about this type of political change in South Africa. Like in the Rhodesian case, economic sanctions and internal instability turned out to be the key factors. Figure 2 shows the timeline of events. The United Nations had recommended sanctions going as far back as 1962, but most of South Africa's major

## Figure 2: Timeline of the South African Case



trading partners only put them in effect starting in 1985. This delay occurred because many of these countries viewed the major anti-Apartheid group in South Africa, the African National Congress, as a communist organization. However, as the Cold War wound down,

fears that South Africa might join the communist block abated. As a result, South Africa felt increasing economic and diplomatic pressure to reform in the second half of the 1980s.

Levels of civil unrest had also been steadily rising since the 1960s. By the mid-1980s, the government faced mass riots across the country. This instability intensified after the Cold War. More people died between 1991 and 1994 than in the previous 30 years of the conflict. Even though the international community had allowed South Africa to participate in international sports after it abolished Apartheid in 1991, it was during this intensified period of civil unrest that the white population made the major political concessions, like the extension of voting rights to non-whites, that turned South Africa into a real democracy.

Therefore, the sports sanctions against South Africa managed to encourage positive change in the sporting realm, but they fell short of ending Apartheid. The country had been all but banished from international sports by 1977. However, it was not until external economic pressure and internal conflict increased in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the government began to make serious political reforms that changed the social landscape. Therefore, the case suggests that sports sanctions are capable of achieving important concessions that are related to sports governance, but that they are unable to bring about broader political change.

**Politics and Sports in Indonesia.** In 1962, Indonesia hosted the Asian Games, which are affiliated with the Olympics. However, the government refused to allow athletes from Taiwan and Israel to enter the country and compete in the event. As a result, the IOC banned Indonesia from the Olympic Movement. The ban was meant to be temporary: the IOC merely wanted assurance from Indonesia that the incident would not happen again (Kobierecki 2016). However, the Indonesian government accused the IOC of being political and biased toward developed nations (Field 2016). It created its own international sporting

event called the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO) that was meant to be an alternative to the Olympics (Goldblatt 2016).

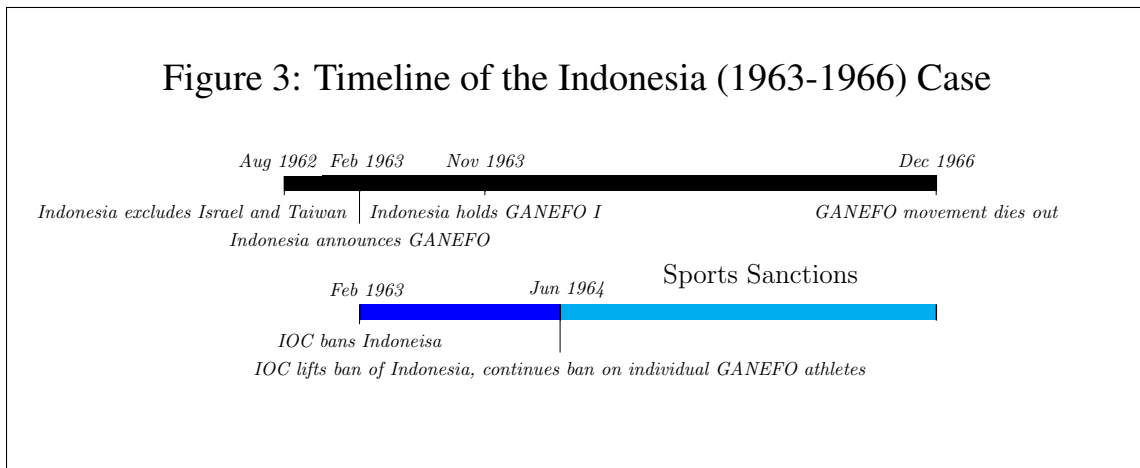
In 1963, GANEFO kicked off in Jakarta with about 50 nations participating. The event resembled the Olympics in many ways, such as having a torch lighting along with opening and closing ceremonies. However, the event also featured a political rally and various cultural events that were meant to enhance the prestige of Indonesia and other participating nations (Kobierecki 2016). The games were to a large extent a success, although most participating countries sent their second-tier athletes because anyone who participated in GANEFO would be banned from the Olympics (Goldblatt 2016).

Under international pressure, the IOC invited Indonesia to the Olympics in 1964, but it maintained its ban on any individual athletes who had participated in GANEFO (Pauker 1965). Nevertheless, both Indonesia and North Korea refused to participate unless their entire teams were allowed to attend. Both teams ended up withdrawing from the event when the IOC held its ground. Indonesia returned for the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, a location that the IOC chose in part in an effort to mend fences with the developing nations.

The GANEFO movement died out in the years following the event. The main reason was that most participating countries prioritized their relationship with the IOC, which continued to be adamantly opposed to GANEFO (Kobierecki 2016). Another contributing factor was the worsening relations between Indonesia and China, the movement's second most important member (Kobierecki 2016). The second round of the games, scheduled for Cairo in 1967, was moved to Beijing when Egypt withdrew their commitment to host the event in 1965. The following year, Beijing announced that it no longer wanted to be the



Figure 3: Timeline of the Indonesia (1963-1966) Case



host, and the GANEFO movement died out by the end of the year. The IOC thus staved off a major attempt to establish a viable alternative to the Olympics.

**Evaluating the Sanctions.** Despite Indonesia’s initial resistance, the sanctions eventually proved successful. The alternative sports movement that Indonesia attempted to spearhead floundered, and Indonesia returned to the Olympics on the IOC’s terms. This example attests to the ability of sports sanctions to succeed when the demands are related to sports governance—in this case, the recognition of Taiwan and Israel.

**British Spectator Violence.** Beginning in the 1960s, Britain developed a soccer violence problem that became so serious that it earned the name the “English Disease.” Its unruly fans frequently attacked spectators and players from other countries. Over the next couple decades, the violence grew progressively worse, eventually culminating in a massive riot at the 1985 European Cup Final game in Belgium between Liverpool and Juventus (from Italy). Thirty-nine people were killed and over 600 were injured.

In response to this incident, the main soccer governing body of Europe, UEFA, banned all English club teams from participation in the European league. The English national

Figure 4: Timeline of the British Case



team could still participate in international competitions, but teams like Manchester United, Arsenal, and Liverpool were banned from European competition. Importantly, the British government supported the ban, which would stay in place until a series of reforms got the spectators under control. The sanctions were eventually lifted in 1991.

**Evaluating the Sanctions:** The sports sanctions in the British case were largely successful. Following the 1985 ban, the country instituted a number of major reforms to combat spectator violence. These included:

1. Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985: Banned alcohol at sporting events, gave police the authority to arrest drunk spectators, and banned fireworks.
2. Public Order Act 1986: Allowed authorities to ban troublemakers from soccer games for up to three months, banned actions intended to provoke disorder, and outlawed provocations of violence, including racial and religious hatred (spoken or written).
3. Football Spectators Act 1989: Allowed authorities to make troublemakers report to police stations during games for up to five years and prevented troublemakers from attending games outside the country. It also coincided with the creation of the National Football Intelligence Unit to keep track of troublemakers.

Figure 4 shows the timeline of events. Since Britain did not face economic sanctions or mass civil unrest over this period, we can safely attribute the improved situation to the sports sanctions and the government's willingness to comply. There was one other major factor that contributed to reforms in Britain—the Hillsborough disaster of 1989, where a mass influx of spectators into a stadium resulted in 96 fans being crushed to death and over 800 injuries. This tragedy led to the Football Spectators Act of 1989. However, although this tragedy did play a major role in the creation of that particular act, the British government passed the two prior pieces of legislation before the Hillsborough disaster. There were also similar incidents before 1985 that did not prompt major government reforms. Therefore, we can conclude that the sports sanctions played a major role in bringing about change in British society.

**The Civil War in Yugoslavia.** In 1992, the Yugoslavian military began carrying out major military operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In response, the international community leveled sanctions against the country, which included a ban on international sports. Between 1992 and 1995, Yugoslavia was excluded from almost all international sporting events, including the Olympics and World Cup. Its major club soccer team, Red Star Belgrade, was also banned from playing in the European league. The team was one of the best in the world, and had won both the European Cup and Intercontinental Cup the previous year.

The war waged on for three-and-a-half years. During this period, the economic sanctions against Yugoslavia caused significant damage to the economy, shrinking the country's GDP by over 50%. In 1994, NATO began air operations against Yugoslavian military targets in Bosnia. In 1995, the Yugoslavian military agreed to withdraw from Bosnia when it signed the Dayton Accords, which were brokered by the United States.

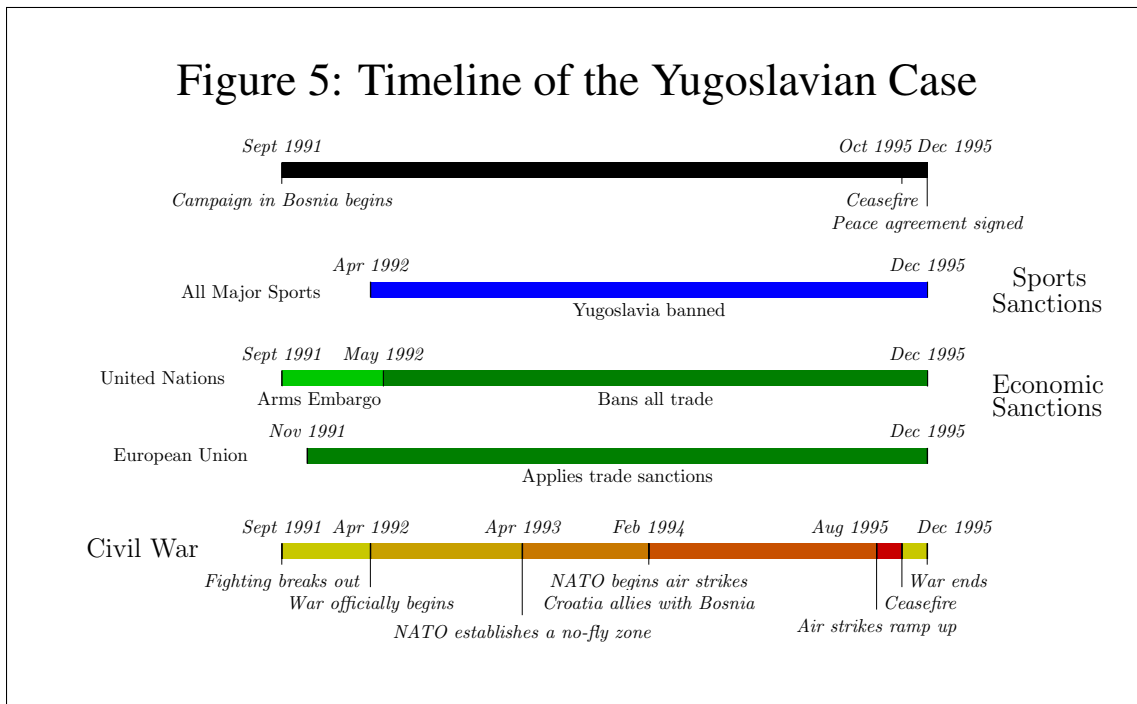
**Evaluating the Sanctions:** The sports sanctions had a devastating effect on Yugoslavian teams, particularly when it came to soccer. Although they were only in place for three-and-a-half years, they resulted in Yugoslavia missing the 1992 European Championship, the 1994 World Cup, and the 1996 European Championship (which they were unable to qualify for because of the sanctions). In addition, many of the nation's elite players left to play soccer for clubs in other countries and never returned after the sanctions were lifted. This flight of players was a major setback for the national team and Red Star Belgrade.

Given the centrality of soccer in Yugoslavia, the impact of these sanctions cannot be understated. As the historian Richard Mills (2009) explains, "For many Serbs involved with football, the most damaging aspect of the civil war was the implementation of sanctions on Serbia's teams." The British reporter Louise Branson wrote, "It is the one sanction that really hurts. Stoics in the face of petrol shortages, hyper-inflation and international opprobrium, football-mad Serbs are in despair at the damage wrought to the once-glorious Red Star Belgrade" (Mills 2009).

Nevertheless, there is little evidence that the sports sanctions caused Yugoslavia's government to end its military operations. Figure 5 shows the timeline of events. The sports sanctions were initially imposed in May of 1992. However, Yugoslavia only suspended its activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the latter half of 1995, specifically after NATO escalated its bombing campaign and threatened a ground invasion. Therefore, the timing of Yugoslavia's compliance suggests that the military situation was the driving factor in this case.

The negotiation process also suggests that sports sanctions were not a key factor. In November 1995, the U.S. government brought the warring parties together for a conference in Dayton, Ohio. The key issues discussed at the meeting were the delineation of territory,

Figure 5: Timeline of the Yugoslavian Case



the status of the government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the role that international organizations would play in managing security in the future. In contrast, sports received little consideration. Yugoslavian representatives never asked for a guarantee that the sports sanctions would be lifted. They also did not try to get their national soccer team the chance to earn a spot at the 1996 European Championship. They could have requested that their team be allowed to participate in the qualification process provided that they made the necessary political concessions. However, this issue was not a priority for Yugoslavian leaders.

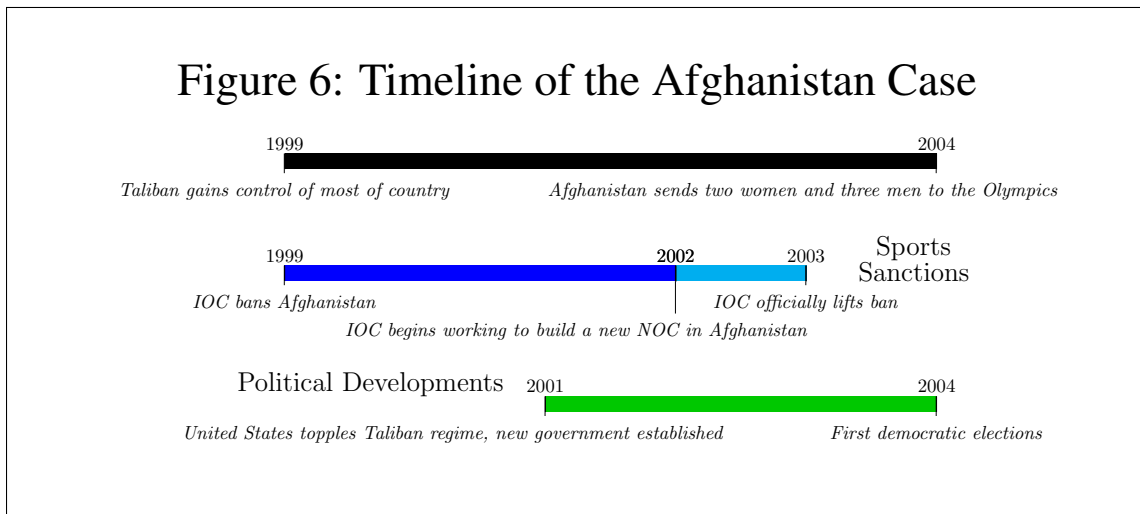
In sum, the sports sanctions had an important impact on the Yugoslavian athletes, teams, and fans, but they appear not to have played a significant role in ending the war.

**Women's Rights in Afghanistan.** Under Taliban rule, women in Afghanistan were strictly prohibited from participating in sport. Men's sport was also restricted by rules which regulated everything down to the length of their shirt sleeves and the trimming of their beards (McCarthy 2000). Following decades of repressive Taliban rule that banned women from all sport, the IOC suspended Afghanistan in 1999 (Robb 2002), as this unequal treatment of women goes against the Olympic Charter. Despite not being the official UN-recognized government of the country, the IOC was able to conclude that Taliban-enforced laws had sufficient enough influence on both sports and the treatment of women in broader society to warrant suspension (McCarthy 2000). This meant Afghanistan could not compete in the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The ban on Afghanistan was not lifted until 2002, following the fall of the Taliban and the removal of the prohibition on women's sport. Afghanistan sent two women to the Olympics in Athens in 2004 (BBC 2004). Despite this, there continued to be significant barriers to women's participation in sport in Afghanistan during the government transition in the years that followed (BBC 2004), largely due to a number of vocal conservative members of government.

**Evaluating the Sanctions:** We code this case as a qualified success. Had Afghanistan not been banned from the Olympics, increasing gender equality in sports and sending female athletes to the Olympics might not have been viewed as priorities for the new government. However, the case is complicated. Had the regime not fallen in 2001, the sports sanctions would almost certainly have been entirely ineffective in their pursuit of gender equality in sports. Therefore, even though we code this case as a success, we believe that the regime change was a necessary component. Without the regime change, the case would likely have been a failure.

Figure 6: Timeline of the Afghanistan Case



Even despite the regime change, significant barriers continued to limit female sport in Afghanistan after 2001 (O’Grady and Hassan 2019). For example, training in a mixed-gender gym was unacceptable to many families and parents, barring their daughters from being able to train (O’Grady and Hassan 2019). Therefore, the lifting of the IOC’s ban on Afghanistan should not be confused with a major increase in female equality in sports.

**Government Interference with Sports in Kuwait.** In 2010, the Kuwaiti parliament passed new national sport laws that limited the autonomy of national sporting organizations, including the Kuwait National Olympic Committee (KNOC) (Reuters Staff 2015). The laws allowed the government to interfere in the elections of sports organizations in the country. This interference in the internal processes and functions of an autonomous sporting body goes against the Olympic Charter, as these national Olympic entities are intended to advance the Olympic Movement rather than the specific interests of national governments (IOC 2015). Interference with these organizations can therefore result in repercussions from the IOC, including suspension from the Olympic Games.

Not only did the new legislation infringe upon the independence of the sporting bodies, but it also failed to appropriately acknowledge the requirement for Kuwaiti national sporting organizations to cooperate with international entities responsible for maintaining standards across international sport, namely the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the Court of Arbitration for Sport. This led to WADA naming Kuwait as "non-compliant" (Mackay 2017), a declaration that in turn allows the IOC to suspend countries from competition. Similar accusations of interference and infringement upon sporting autonomy brought further sporting suspensions upon Kuwait's national teams and athletes by FIFA (Mackay 2017).

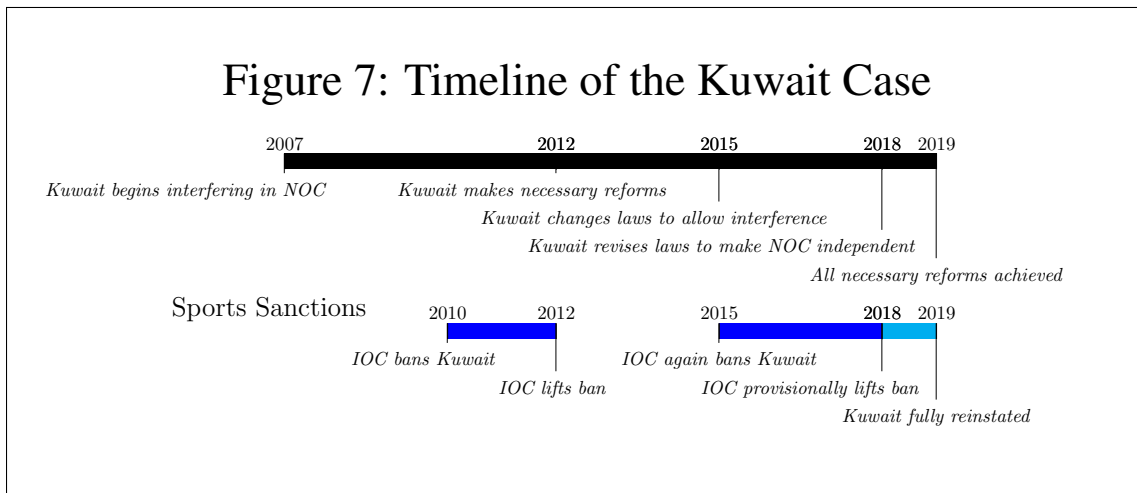
Kuwait was excluded from international sports competitions intermittently between 2010 and 2019, costing them participation at the 2010 Youth Olympic Games, the 2010 Asian Games, and the 2011 Asian Winter Games. While the suspension was lifted in time for the 2012 London Olympics, it was reinstated in October of 2015, due to further government interference. This meant that Kuwait was banned from the 2016 Rio Olympics, with their athletes only permitted to participate independently, under the IOC flag (Culpepper 2016).

The IOC's ban on Kuwait lasted until the Kuwaiti parliament amended the sports law which infringed upon the Olympic Charter in the first place. After new legislation allowed for the restructuring of Kuwaiti national sports organizations, the IOC lifted the ban, in time for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (Etchells 2019).

**Evaluating the Sanctions:** The sanctions against Kuwait proved successful and had a clear, significant impact on Kuwaiti sport law: each time Kuwait was suspended from international competition because of laws which permitted government interference in national sport organizations' elections, parliament moved to pass the necessary amendments



**Figure 7: Timeline of the Kuwait Case**



to lift the ban. This happened in 2012, when the ban on Kuwait was lifted the first time, after Kuwait made sufficient amendments to the law in question. Legal changes in 2015 led to the return of IOC sanctions. The Kuwaiti parliament once again passed the necessary amendments to the law which infringed upon the Olympic Charter, in order for the suspension to again be lifted in 2018. The suspensions clearly incentivized the legal changes, and they proved successful on more than one occasion.

This case quite clearly fits the pattern established by previous cases, indicating that sport sanctions can succeed when the issues at stake are related to sports governance.

**Russian Doping Program:** In 2010, Russia did not perform as well as it usually does at the Winter Olympics. For the first time in history, Russia had not competed for an Olympic medal in hockey, having lost to Canada in the quarterfinals. Moreover, Russia ranked eleventh in the final gold medal count, a disappointment for a country that is usually among the top four. Russian officials were determined to reassert Russian leadership in the world of sport, especially ahead of the 2014 Winter Olympics that were going to be held in Russia (Ioffe 2017). As a result, the Russian state began doping athletes. The

Disappearing Positive Methodology that concealed the state doping regime is believed to have operated since late 2011 until August 2015 (McLaren 2016).

On November 9, 2015, an independent commission created by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) published a report that confirmed the existence of widespread doping in the All-Russia Athletics Federation (ARAF). The findings implicated several organizations, including the Moscow accredited anti-doping laboratory, the ARAF, and the Russian National Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA). The RUSADA was suspended by WADA a few days later.

Subsequently, an independent investigator commissioned by WADA, Richard McLaren, published a report in July 2016 which stated that the Russian Ministry of Sport together with the Moscow accredited laboratory were beyond a reasonable doubt responsible for the creation of a fail-safe system that protected doped Russian athletes through the use of the Disappearing Positive (Test) Methodology. As the findings involved doping across multiple sports, and not only athletics, WADA recommended that Russia be banned from the 2016 Summer Olympics (WADA 2016).

Nevertheless, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) chose not to ban the Russian Olympic team. Instead, it stated that it would be up to each international sporting federation to decide for itself which athletes should be allowed to participate based on reliable international tests and the athletes' anti-doping records (IOC 2016). In most sports, Russian athletes that passed these examinations were allowed to participate in the Olympics. The only exception was athletics where Russia was banned.

Following new findings of institutionalized cheating by the IOC's Disciplinary Commission, the Russian Olympic Committee was suspended and Russian athletes allowed to participate in the 2018 Winter Olympics as neutral "Olympic Athletes from Russia

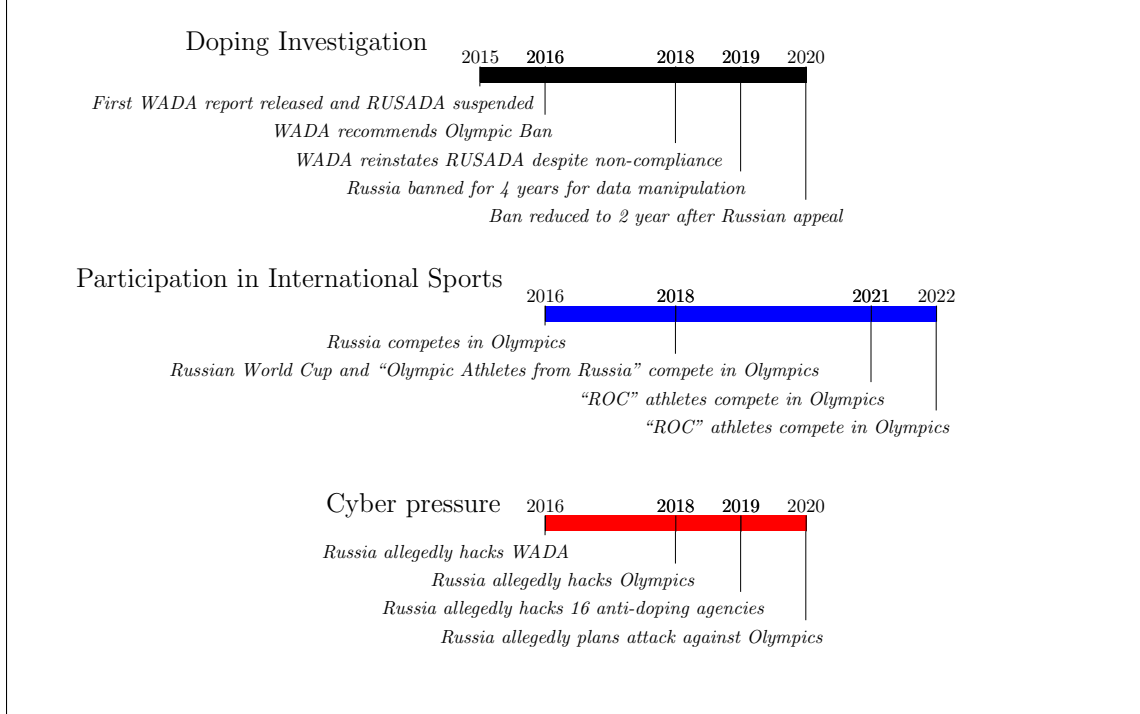
(OARs)”. This meant that they competed under the Olympic instead of the Russian flag (IOC 2017).

Finally, after Russia provided WADA with incomplete and inauthentic doping data, WADA’s executive committee endorsed the recommendation in December 2019 that Russia be banned from international sports for a period of four years. Later, upon appeal before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), this period was reduced to two years (BBC 2020). As a result, Russian athletes had to compete in the 2020 Summer Olympics and the 2022 Winter Olympics under the acronym “ROC” (short for Russian Olympic Committee). Athletes from Russia might be allowed to compete at the 2022 World Cup under a neutral banner. However, because of Russia’s recent invasion of the Ukraine, FIFA has entirely banned Russia and its players from international competition until further notice.

**Evaluating the Sanctions:** The sanctions imposed by the international community against Russia were ineffective. They were intended to punish Russia for its state-sponsored doping program and bring the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) into compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code. Nevertheless, despite the sanctions, Russia gave WADA inauthentic and incomplete data. According to WADA’s President, this showed a continued stance of deception and denial (WADA 2019).

The ineffectiveness of the sanctions can be attributed to the fact that they were limited. The IOC’s decision to allow Russia to compete in Rio meant that it could still maintain its leadership in the world of sports. In fact, during the 2016 Summer Olympics the Russian federation won 19 gold medals and ranked fourth (CBS 2016). Furthermore, after nearly three years of suspension RUSADA was reinstated in September of 2018, even though it had still not fulfilled all the requirements laid out in WADA’s “RUSADA Roadmap to

## Figure 8: Timeline of the Russia Case



Code Compliance”, such as giving WADA data from the Moscow anti-doping laboratory (Reuters Staff 2019).

Finally, while athletes from other sanctioned countries such as Kuwait participated in the Olympics under the name of “Independent Olympic Athletes”, Russian athletes were allowed to participate under less neutral designations such as “Olympic Athletes from Russia” and “ROC” athletes. The sports sanctions were therefore not too costly for Russia. Had Russia’s punishment been more severe, perhaps it would have been pressured into compliance.

Sanctions towards Russia were limited likely because Russia is a powerful state. For instance, the IOC’s decision not to ban Russia from the Olympic Games in 2016 and to

later allow Russian athletes to compete as OARs came as a surprise given the severity of Russia's violations. Indeed, maybe a complete ban would have been imposed if another country had committed the same breaches. As one Canadian athlete expressed after the IOC's decision in 2016, "I ask myself if we were not dealing with Russia would this decision to ban a nation been an easier one? I fear the answer is yes" (Maese 2016). However, Russia has leverage over international sporting organizations, which stems from its cyber attacks and its political influence.

Following the outbreak of the doping scandal in 2015, Russian hackers conducted a series of cyber attacks on international sports and doping organizations. In 2016, Russian hackers gained access to WADA's Anti-Doping Administration and Management System (ADAMS) database and published confidential medical information of athletes. In 2018, they rendered thousands of computers unusable in an effort to disrupt the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics (Collier 2021). In 2019 and 2020 there were further allegations of attempted cyber attacks in the world of sport by Russian state hackers. Due to this history of cyber attacks, it is possible that fear of future attacks influenced the decision-making of international sports organizations.

Moreover, Russia is believed to have influence over several international sports federations in which Russian officials and businessmen hold important positions (Lowe and Vasovic 2016). In addition, Russia is thought to have influence over the IOC via its President Thomas Bach. It is speculated that Putin helped Bach secure the post by influencing IOC members who elect the President. Moreover, indicative of Bach's close ties with Russia was his soft stance towards the country prior to the doping scandal. For instance, in 2014 Bach praised Putin's great commitment to the Olympic Games and described the Sochi Winter Olympics as a "real special experience" despite criticism in the media that

the games were too expensive and that there may have been corruption involved (Gibson 2016).

Finally, that Russia has influenced decision making has been implied by the IOC's longest serving member and founding President of the WADA, Richard Pound. He stated that the IOC had a zero tolerance policy for doping unless Russia is concerned (Butler 2017). Similarly, Paul Melia, head of the Canadian Centre of Ethics in Sport which is responsible for drug testing Canadian athletes stated that WADA was not sufficiently independent to withstand IOC pressure to reinstate RUSADA after the IOC had reinstated the Russian Olympic Committee (Strashin 2018). In sum, the Russian case illustrates that the effectiveness of sports sanctions is largely influenced by the leverage of the target country over its sanctioners.

**Summary of the Results.** Table 1 and Figure 9 present the main findings of our analysis. The clearest pattern is that sports sanctions seem more likely to work when they address issues related to sports governance. Whether the issue was segregated domestic sports leagues in South Africa, fan violence in Britain, the lack of female athletes in Afghanistan, or government interference in Kuwait, sports sanctions appeared capable of promoting meaningful social progress. On the other hand, when the objectives of the sports sanctions extended beyond sports governance, the results look quite different. Sports sanctions could not bring regime change to Rhodesia, dismantle Apartheid in South Africa, nor end the war in Yugoslavia.

Our analysis also suggest that when powerful countries want to evade or offset the sanctions, they may be able to do so. The case of Russia (2018-present) is the only one where we found that sports sanctions failed to achieve a purely sports-related objective. In addition, even though the Moscow Boycott (1980) had an ambitious geopolitical objective,

**Table 1: Summarizing the Results**

	Goals	CPOs	Outcome
<b>Rhodesia (1966-1979)</b>	Democratization	A1. Compliance A2. Government Concerns A3. Failed Alternatives A6. Failed Mitigation B8. Other Factor(s) C2. Rally Around the Flag C4. Public Backlash	Limited Causal Role
<b>South Africa (1957-1981)</b>	Desegregate Sports Leagues	A1. Compliance (partial) A2. Government Concerns A3. Failed Alternatives A4. Athlete Reinstatement A5. Domestic Pressure A6. Failed Mitigation A7. Attribution A8. Isolated Reforms B8. Other Factor(s) C3. Government Backlash	Qualified Success
<b>South Africa (1982-1991)</b>	Democratization	A1. Compliance A2. Government Concerns A3. Failed Alternatives A4. Athlete Reinstatement A7. Failed Mitigation B8. Other Factor(s)	Limited Causal Role
<b>Indonesia (1963-1966)</b>	End Attempts to Politicize Sports	A1. Compliance A2. Government Concerns A3. Failed Alternatives A4. Athlete Reinstatement A6. Failed Mitigation B7. Parallel Reforms B8. Other Factor(s) C2. Rally Around the Flag C3. Government Backlash	Success
<b>Britain (1985-1991)</b>	Reduce Spectator Violence	A1. Compliance A7. Attribution A8. Isolated Reforms B8. Other Factor(s) C4. Public Backlash (limited)	Success

**Table 1: Summarizing the Results (Continued)**

	<b>Goals</b>	<b>CPOs</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Yugoslavia (1992-1995)</b>	End War	A1. Compliance A5. Domestic Pressure B2. Government Indifference B5. Indifference to Athletes B8. Other Factor(s) C2. Rally Around the Flag C3. Government Backlash C4. Public Backlash	Limited Causal Role
<b>Afghanistan (1999-2002)</b>	Women's Inclusion at the Olympics	A1. Compliance A2. Government Concerns A4. Athlete Reinstatement A6. Failed Mitigation B7. Parallel reforms B8. Other Factor(s) C3. Government Backlash	Qualified Success
<b>Kuwait (2010-2018)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A2. Government Concerns A5. Domestic Pressure A7. Attribution A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Only Factor C3. Government Backlash	Success
<b>India (2012-2014)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A2. Government Concerns A5. Domestic Pressure A7. Attribution A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Only Factor C3. Government Backlash	Success
<b>Russia (2018-Present)</b>	Stop Doping Program	A2. Government Concerns A4. Athlete Reinstatement B1. Non-compliance B4. Successful mitigation C2. Rally Around the Flag C3. Government Backlash C4. Public Backlash	Largely Evaded



**Table 1: Summarizing the Results (Continued)**

	<b>Goals</b>	<b>CPOs</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Iraq (2008)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A2. Government Concerns A4. Athlete Reinstatement A5. Domestic Pressure A7. Attribution A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Only Factor A8. Isolated Reforms C3. Government Backlash	Success
<b>Indonesia (2015-2016)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A1. Compliance A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Other Factor(s)	Success
<b>Guatemala (2016-2018)</b>	Get Country to Adopt New FIFA Statutes	A1. Compliance A7. Attribution A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Only Factor	Success
<b>Pakistan (2017-2018)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A7. Attribution A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Only Factor	Success
<b>Nigeria (2010)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Only Factor	Success
<b>Nigeria (2014)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A2. Government Concerns A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Only Factor	Success
<b>Benin (2016)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Only Factor	Success

**Table 1: Summarizing the Results (Continued)**

	<b>Goals</b>	<b>CPOs</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Sierra Leone (2018-2019)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A2. Government concerns A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Other Factor(s)	Unclear
<b>Cameroon (2013)</b>	End Government Interference in NOC	A1. Compliance A2. Government concerns A8. Isolated Reforms A9. Only factor	Success
<b>Saudi Arabia (2012-Present)</b>	Women's Inclusion at the Olympics	A1. Compliance B7. Parallel reforms B8. Other factor(s)	Limited Causal Role
<b>Moscow Boycott (1980)</b>	End War	B1. Non-compliance A2. Government concerns B3. Successful mitigation C3. Government backlash	Failure

Notes: Reported outcomes are based on our own evaluations of the cases. We define cases as successful if the sports sanctions appeared to play an important role in causing the target country to comply with the stated demands of the sanctions.

the Soviet Union was able to blunt the punishment, holding a sporting event with many of its allies. It therefore seems that a state's capacity to undermine the sanctions is a critical determinant of whether they will prove successful.

Lastly, the interesting case of Britain (1985-1991) demonstrates that a government might actually welcome sports sanctions. Many government leaders work hard to make their countries safer and improve the well-being of their citizens. If a temporary ban from a sporting event could help them achieve these goals, some governments might view sports sanctions as a valuable tool for facilitating important reforms. When a situation like this

## Figure 9: Summary of the Results

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	<b>Goals Limited to Sports Governance</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Broader Political Goals</b>
<b>Success</b>	Indonesia (1963-66) Britain (1985-91) Afghanistan (1999-2002) Iraq (2008) Nigeria (2010) Kuwait (2010-18) India (2012-14) Cameroon (2013) Nigeria (2014) Indonesia (2015-16) Benin (2016) Guatemala (2016-18) Pakistan (2017-18)		
<b>Mixed</b>	Sierra Leone (2018-19) Saudi Arabia (2012-Present)	South Africa (1957-91)	
<b>Limited Impact or Failure</b>	Russia (2018-Present)		Rhodesia (1966-79) Yugoslavia (1992-95) Moscow Boycott (1980)

arises, sports sanctions could be a promising policy instrument for bringing about positive change in the world.

### Section 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Although our results suggest that sports sanctions can be very effective in certain contexts, several additional considerations should qualify our findings. First, we defined success of sports sanctions as whether they played an important causal role in compelling the target country to comply with the stated demands. Defining success in this way is useful

for analytical clarity, but it might also be a narrow way to think about success. As discussed earlier, sports sanctions might be considered successful if they simply delegitimize a country or prevent a dictator from using international sports to bolster his domestic prestige. Further, sports sanctions might be effective in deterring other countries from engaging in the target country's undesirable behavior (Miller 2014). Saudi Arabia, for instance, announced that it would work toward including women on its Olympic team following the ban of Afghanistan in 1999. This suggests that the Afghan case may have been an important early catalyst for Saudi reform.

Sports sanctions might also act as a signalling device, which could lead to other types of international sanctions or domestic resistance (Grauvogel, Licht, and von Soest 2017). The sports sanctions against South Africa might have worked according to this logic (Little 2011). If so, our analysis may have understated their importance in this respect. Still, thinking about success in this way is questionable. The reason is that the sports sanctions themselves would not be doing much of the causal work. Therefore, studies that define success in this way should be clear that they are referring to success specifically in terms of acting as an important signal. In sum, how scholars define the success of sports sanctions is an important decision, and it should be carefully considered in future research on this topic.

A second limitation of our analysis is our small sample size. While we still think our analysis provides valuable insights, particularly when it comes to the effectiveness of sports sanctions when they address sports-related issues, we should nevertheless be cautious given our small number of cases. In particular, only two of our cases involved obstinate great powers—Russia (2018-Present) and the 1980 Moscow Boycott. Similarly,

Britain (1985-1991) was the only case where a government was welcoming of the sanctions, and future cases like it might be quite rare. Therefore, our results regarding these specific cases should be interpreted with caution.

Third, we believe that it may be very difficult to use sports sanctions in a way that is both effective and morally consistent. The key challenge is that the cases where governments break the rules most egregiously (e.g., North Korea) may not be the cases where sports sanctions are most likely to work. Therefore, an approach to sports sanctions that prioritizes effectiveness may lead the international community to ban countries that are not the most serious offenders. Meanwhile, an approach that prioritizes moral consistency might be completely counterproductive, because it would involve using sports sanctions in cases where they are very unlikely to succeed.

This potential effectiveness/consistency trade-off could make it very difficult to use sports sanctions in practice. Prioritizing effectiveness may be the best option. However, being inconsistent could reduce effectiveness if it made the sanctions seem less legitimate. There is some empirical evidence that this can happen. When Russia was banned from the Olympics in 2018, one Canadian journalist pointed out that it seemed inconsistent to ban them but not North Korea (Chaisson 2018). Of course, we do not believe that questions of consistency completely undermine effectiveness. If they did, very few past cases of sports sanctions would have proved successful. However, the effectiveness/consistency trade-off is still an important concern, and it deserves careful attention from scholars who write about this subject.

Fourth, if sports sanctions become a more common feature of international relations, some countries might actively try to get their adversaries banned. This could result in negative publicity campaigns that heighten tensions between rival countries. Some nations

might also spread propaganda and misinformation about their enemies, which could result in a wide range of negative consequences. Thus, implementing sports sanctions more often in international relations could cause more problems than it would solve. To mitigate this issue, it may be best to ensure that the decisions about whether to ban certain countries are left up to strong, trustworthy institutions, rather than allowing them to be influenced by public sentiment.

Fifth, it is worth stressing again that sports sanctions probably hurt the athletes more than anyone, which in some cases could be unfair. Fortunately, for individual sports, athletes can compete under a neutral flag, as we discussed earlier. However, there simply may be no good solution for team sports. We encourage scholars who write about this topic in the future to keep the interests of these individuals in mind. Competing at an event like the World Cup could be a dream that they have spent years or decades working towards, and this can be an easy thing for academics to overlook. It is not the only issue to consider, but it is certainly part of the equation.

In sum, sports sanctions raise several potential concerns that warrant more attention from the academic community. In fact, it appears to us that the topic of sports sanctions is far from simple. While this paper contributes to our understanding of when sports sanctions get target countries to comply, it cannot answer all the complex and challenging questions about when and how sports sanctions should be used. We do hope, however, that our research in this paper can serve as a starting point for making more progress on this topic in future studies.

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