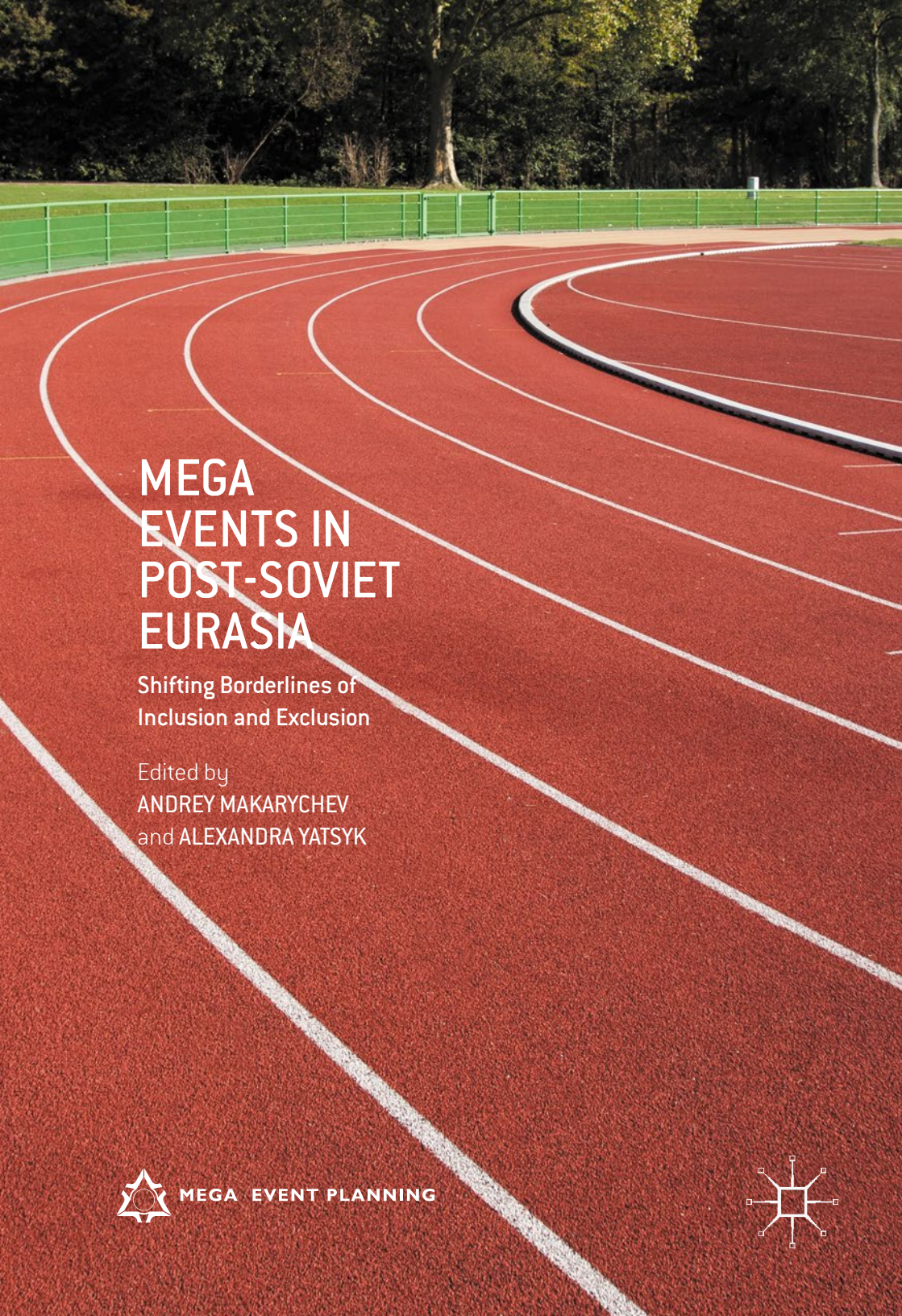

MEGA EVENTS IN POST-SOVIET EURASIA

Shifting Borderlines of Inclusion and Exclusion

Edited by
ANDREY MAKARYCHEV
and ALEXANDRA YATSYK

MEGA EVENT PLANNING

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Mega Events in Post-Soviet Eurasia

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on the Sochi Olympics, January 2014; 'European Urban and Regional Studies', April 2015; and 'Sports in Society', on post-Olympic Sochi, Fall 2015. We hope that this book continues the previous series of publications and offers new perspectives for comparative research in this field of study.

Andrey Makarychev and Alexandra Yatsyk

Contents

List of Abbreviations

AEF	Astana Economic Forum
BEGOC	Baku European Games Operations Committee
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLWTR	The Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions
EOC	European Olympic Committee
EU	European Union
Expo	Universal Exposition
FIFA World Cup	International Federation of Football Associations' World Cup
FINA	World Aquatic Championship
FISU	International University Sports Federation
IHWC	Ice Hockey World Championship
IIHF	International Ice Hockey Federation
IOC	International Olympic Committee
ISG	Islamic Solidarity Games
LDPR party	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia
LGBT people	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODIHR of OSCD	Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's
RFU	Russian Football Union

Sochi-2014	same as SOOC
SOOC	Sochi Olympic Organizing Committee
UEFA	European Association of Football Unions
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VAT	value added tax
WWF-Russia	World Wildlife Fund, Russia

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Sports, Politics and Boundaries: Playing the Inclusion/Exclusion Games

Andrey Makarychev and Alexandra Yatsyk

This book offers a variety of views on a relatively new trend in the global industry of sports mega events—the growing interest, supported by the corresponding material resources, of non-Western countries to host them. A number of Western cities (such as Toronto, Hamburg, Munich, Stockholm and Krakow) have recently dropped their Olympic bids, largely because of the huge financial expenses they entail, along with demanding requirements of global sports organizations that are critically perceived by local citizens. In the meantime, many non-Western countries are increasingly eager to host global sports events. Particular manifestations of this trend are FIFA World Cups in South Africa (2014), Russia (2018) and Qatar (2018), as well as Olympic Games in Beijing (2008), Sochi (2014) and, again, in Beijing in a not-so-distant future (2022). This trend might be explained from different angles—economic, political, cultural, and the like—and deserves greater attention, since it provides a framework for analysis of the larger dynamics in world politics, stretching far beyond sports as such.

As global phenomena, mega events represent *trans-national* practices of governance (regulation, control, monitoring and surveillance) grounded in neoliberal logics of entertainment, commodification, gentrification and marketization. By the same token, there is an important normative dimension of mega-projects that foster global rules, principles and regulations. Seen from a *national* perspective, mega events are testing grounds for strengthening national identities through emotionally charged discourses

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on collective Selves, but also 'through the construction of stadiums, parks or sporting grounds; institutionally through clubs, federations, competitions and their regulative frameworks and culturally through inventing its own national traditions and national styles of play' (Faje 2015: 162). A *sub-national* level of analysis implies focusing on *regional/urban* strategies of place promotion and territorial branding, with all duly understood limitations imposed by central authorities, which is particularly the case of non-democratic countries.

The shift of mega events to the global East and South raises a number of questions pertinent to a large part of research vocabulary used in social sciences. On a general note, the authors of this edited volume assume that the growing appeal of mega events for countries that do not associate themselves with the West requires more attention of researchers to a variety of the researchers of globalization, sovereignty, soft power, nation branding, and a few others. The application of these concepts to mega-event studies allows reaching beyond the widely discussed areas of financial, economic, administrative and managerial technicalities, and unpacking global sportive events as multi-dimensional spaces where different narratives, identities and imageries collide and compete with each other.

One of the most important contributions of this volume to the existent literature on sports and politics is the accentuation of a plethora of deeply normative issues that mega events raise. Certainly, global sports events are business projects, based on mobilization and redistribution of resources; yet at the same time, they are also nodal points for identity-making. Sports events of different scales have a huge potential for promoting national identities, though sometimes in explicitly radical and aggressive forms. Yet they can also appeal to trans-national points of reference based on history (the Commonwealth Games), geography (the Mediterranean Games), cultural markers (European Youth Olympic Festivals), religion (Islamic Solidarity Games) or political status (football tournaments for unrecognized states).

It is the normative dimension of the expanding industry of mega events that raises a conceptual issue of the intricate dynamics of inclusion and exclusion as key mechanisms of international socialization. By and large, strategies of inclusion presuppose a set of neoliberal, post-politically consensual and consumption-driven policies, whereas exclusion is epitomized by cleansing cultural and social spaces of mega events from potentially conflictual meanings and interpretations for the sake of safety and marketization.

Both inclusion and exclusion can be understood in the framework of an ambiguous interlacing of *making and unmaking of cultural and political boundaries.* Non-Western hosts use mega events as springboards for legitimizing their roles and overcoming relative peripherality in the global milieu by means of joining practices 'designed to encourage and advance private capital in an increasingly competitive globalized world' (Friedman and Andrews 2010: 84). Yet these attempts can exacerbate normative divides between democracies and non-democracies, with issues of human rights, environmental protection, transparency, tolerance and multiculturalism at their top.

On the one hand, mega events erase some of the extant boundaries and promote host cities and nations as open to the global world and eager to take advantage of its multiple opportunities. Major sport tournaments and championships can be studied as cross-/trans-border events with huge de-bordering potential. On the other hand, mega events hosted by non-Western countries might exacerbate existing ruptures or create new dividing lines. Many non-democratic hosts often face critical reactions from the West that accuses them of corruption, low environmental standards, and violations of democratic rights under the guise of security protection. Indeed, non-Western hosts are post-political regimes (managerial, administrative, project-/event-based) that operate within a neoliberal logic of branding and place promotion, but in the meantime adhere to outdated, archaic practices of social relations and wealth distribution. Mega events in many non-democratic countries remain top-down neopatrimonial projects aimed at opaque redistribution of resources and power within the patron—client clan-like type of relations cemented by corruption in global sports organizations. From a critical analysis perspective, 'sport these days is a tool of capitalism, part of the machine that persuades us to buy stuff we don't need, fuelling economic growth that may or may not be in our true interests—but most certainly serves the interests of a growing clique of corporate executives and shareholders whose individual wealth amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars' (Jennings 2011: 390).

It is from this double perspective of inclusion/exclusion and the making/unmaking of boundaries that the authors of this volume discuss the origins of politicization of sports through global events. One of the paradoxes addressed is that post-political strategies of neoliberalism are not necessarily hotbeds of the global and the cosmopolitan, but rather they are, in many cases, sources of country-specific identity discourses and practices, and in this respect their roles have to be taken into seri-

ous account along with political institutions and the mass media. It is through references to experiences of non-Western hosts that post-politics has to be reconceptualized—not as a denial or evanescence of the political momentum, but rather as its mimicry and transformation into seemingly non-ideological and mainly market-oriented practices.

Sports mega events are complex interfaces of communication, spaces for international socialization, and playgrounds for synthesizing cultural plurality and celebrating diversity. Each of these aspects of mega events is in one way or another linked to relations of power and (re)distribution of power resources. The authors of this collective volume explore different effects for power relations that the ensuing interconnections entail. Power in this context is understood as a broad spectrum of mechanisms of (re) creating and (re)shaping identities and subjectivities on the basis of various discourses and practices of exclusion and inclusion, as well as boundary (un)making.

Arguably, three distinct models of inclusion/exclusion can be singled out, each one grounded in a specific reading of the universal. The first model is based on a post-political proliferation of administrative and managerial practices of governance, along with the corresponding standards articulated through policies of international sports bodies—the International Olympic Committee (IOC), International and European Football Associations (FIFA and UEFA) and others. As seen from this perspective, organizers of global sports events have to obey to a rather strict and, in most cases, non-negotiable list of procedural requirements that regulate both material aspects of host cities (e.g. hotel and transport infrastructure, rules of advertising, property rights, financial regulations) and symbolic dimensions of mega events (e.g., opening ceremonies are on principle cleansed of references to wars and military episodes, narratives by which host countries' might expose their historical glory). Due to the global media coverage, mega events 'exhibit all the salient features of postmodern culture: proliferation and dissemination of images, glitzy, high-tech produced intensities, pastiche and implosion of forms, and quotation and repetition of past images and styles' (Segrave 2000: 272). *Alexandra Yatsyk* in her chapter explicates how national and subnational host authorities (more specifically, in the city of Kazan, Russia) culturally appropriate this global proliferation of universal norms and regulations, and how their policies of inclusion into global mega-event industry intertwine with multiple exclusionary moves—from destroying ancient urban areas to filtering out certain cultural and historical interpretations.

Karolina Tetłak in her chapter discusses the financial side of the mega-event global machinery, drawing attention to the universalization of the practices of tax benefits accorded by host governments to international organizers of mega events, a practice that excludes—or strongly discriminates against—democratic mechanisms of transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

The *second* model is grounded in a different concept of universality as based on equality of nation states as constitutive members of the international sports community. In the case of international sports organizations this translates into the principle "one country—one vote", which reflects the idea of sovereign equality of all member states and their non-discrimination on the basis of the nature of domestic regimes (be they democratic or authoritarian, and so on). It is within this logic of universality that attempts to raise normative issues and question the appropriateness of treating authoritarian and totalitarian regimes on equal footing with democracies is rebuked as undue politicization. *Andrey Makarychev* in his contribution to this volume looks at the linkages between sports and politics in Russia through the prism of sovereignty, the constitutive element of Putin's political discourse. *Adilzhan Nurmakov* on the example of Kazakhstan explains how much the regime of President Nazarbaev invests in raising the country's profile via diverse high-profile events, while *Anar Valiyev's* chapter touches upon similar policies of the government of Azerbaijan. In all these cases the ruling elites balance between culturally articulating their European credentials on the one hand and preserving their authenticity and autonomy on the other, which makes inclusion/exclusion games particularly complicated.

Unlike the first two models, the third plays more decisively upon political strings by claiming the universality of human rights as the utmost *raison-d'etre* for any version of globalization worthy of the name. This norm-based reading of universalization leads to conflicts with both logics mentioned above, since in its most radical form it delegitimizes autocracies on the grounds of violations of democratic principles and contests the appropriateness of hosting mega events in countries with poor human rights records. Multiple boycotting campaigns aimed against non-democratic hosts are conceptually grounded in the third vision of universality in sports. In their chapter *Ryhor Nizhnikau* and *Niko Alvari* discuss the case of the World Ice Hockey Championship held in Minsk for demonstrating political context of the normative pressure which the Lukashenko regime faced in its relations with the West. By the same token, *Bo Petersson*

and *Karina Vamling* discuss the importance of ethnic and environmental issues, widely raised internationally, for the Sochi Olympic project and its international legitimation.

It is in the complex context of three competing and partly overlapping versions of universality and the ensuing models of inclusion/exclusion that the growing importance of normative issues in the global sports arena has to be discussed. This book is focused on a recent shift of the sports mega-event industry from more or less traditional Western venues to new hosts whose normative standards are different from Western ones. Of course, the growing Orientalization of mega events can be viewed as a peculiar type of outsourcing and thus as a cost-saving—and in this sense still Western-centric—strategy of non-Western hosts adjusting to and complying with neoliberal approaches to transformations of urban spaces, patterns of consumption, gentrification, rationalization and other elements of the global sports industry (Carter 2011:134).These transformations cause multiple effects on national sovereignties of non-Western hosts. Unlike Western nations/cities with relatively well-established destination brands, most mega-event hosts in post-Soviet countries have much less recognizable international profiles and thus are keen on investing resources in developing their (re)branding strategies and looking for new pathways to reach global audiences. *Phillipp Casula* points in this direction, discussing Russia's bidding policy for the Sochi Games from the viewpoint of the ideas of modernization and diversity.

Yet controversies unfold as soon as it comes to the implementation of the most value-ridden norms promoted by international sports organizations. It is through sports that global normative discourses on human rights (Kidd and Donnelly 2000), race and ethnicity (Adair and Rowe 2010) and so on can make inroads into public spaces of host autocracies. The global media along with international environmental and human rights networks increase transparency and visibility of local problems. Greenpeace, World Wide Fund for Nature, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and UN Environment Programme are examples of cosmopolitan organizations that exert normative pressure on host governments, thus pushing them to accept—or at least adjust to—global normative standards. In fact, this effect had an institutional impact: in the aftermath of the Sochi Olympics the IOC approved the rewording of its Principle 6 on nondiscrimination to include sexual orientation—a move that followed the controversy over Russia's law against gay 'propaganda' ahead of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi (New York Times 2014). In this volume *Richard Arnold* explains

how human rights criticism affected the Olympic Games in Beijing (2008) and Sochi (2014), and how these critical discourses can resonate during the forthcoming mega events to be held in Russia (the FIFA World Cup—2018) and China (the winter Olympics—2022).

In the meantime, many global sports organizations tend to support autocratic governments. This is due not only to the interlacing of their material interests but also to their understanding of the universality of mankind as grounded in full equality between different types of political regimes up to the point of erasing substantial distinctions between them. This makes global sports institutions insensitive to political matters. In particular, this is the case of FIFA, a cosmopolitan institution that de-facto 'normalizes' dictatorial regimes by disregarding normative gaps between them and democracies.

Therefore, cosmopolitan principles of international sports organizations can coexist with sovereign policies of autocratic rulers who pragmatically utilize global mega-forums for internationally legitimizing their regimes, using a broad range of marketing and branding techniques (Parent et al. 2012a). In some cases, bidding countries' strategies might be discussed from the viewpoint of identity construction, while in others—as in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan—branding strategies only indirectly relate to identity debates. They are rather meant to advertise countries internationally in terms of investment opportunities and tourist and cultural promotion, but hardly foster deep societal identity changes. In this respect it is doubtful that brands can be viewed as relatively stable constructs that necessarily reflect the dominating attitudes to 'ontological security' and 'national self-esteem' (Browning 2015). Some cases collected in this volume show the opposite, namely that branding strategies have only indirect—if any—impact on societies and only in a very limited sense can be dubbed agents for change.

In certain contexts the global norms of inclusiveness, openness and equality can be supportive of dictatorial and tyrannical governments by disallowing public expressions of particularities beyond national symbols (Longman 2013). According to the interpretation shared by global sports organizations and non-democratic hosts, politicization results from the attempts to breach borderlines between sports (universal) and identitarian (and thus particular) issues. Paradoxically, all global sports organizations prohibit public exposures of political preferences and sympathies, but the Olympic movement itself to a large extent is part of emancipatory politics with strong normative background, including gender and racial

equality. Sports as an element of modernity develop in parallel with the progress of democracy, but policies of major sports institutions and their non-democratic allies are not necessarily in harmony with principles of democracy and are contested by their opponents (domestic political opposition, LGBT global community, independent NGOs) that adhere to a different understanding of universality, one based on human rights, non-discrimination, tolerance and dignity (Change.org 2014).

This situation elucidates a major controversy embedded in the concept of liberal cosmopolitanism: the consistent implementation of its key ideas of non-discrimination, tolerance and multiculturalism might be tantamount to equating undemocratic regimes with democracies, and thus de-valorizing the normative component of globalization for the sake of opening new markets and expanding the boundaries of global industry of media entertainment. This explains why many non-democratic hosts can use ideas and institutions of Olympism for their own purposes that appear immensely remote from the normative ideals of cosmopolitan democracy. Dictatorial regimes might capitalize on mega events not for socializing into international milieu, but rather for legitimizing their international positions and using the newly acquired symbolic capital for unleashing hard-force-based types of policy, including military invasions.

This controversy engenders another one: mega events both strengthen and erode national sovereignties. *On the one hand*, mega events are meant to boost sovereign politics in at least two different ways. First, mega events are important tools for articulating pride in nation, and encouraging loyalties to national identities and patriotism, often based on a post-colonial logic of "rising from the knees". Second, providing security through systems of surveillance and control is another area where state sovereignty proves indispensable. Police functions, implying control and supervision of places for the sake of public safety, remain an important pillar of the sovereign power that usually seeks to marginalize voices of dissent and build mega-event strategies on more or less unified and even standardized practices. Mega events therefore produce overregulated spaces with issues of security at the top of the agenda, and thus can be viewed as imposing a wide array of mechanisms of surveillance and control over the everyday lives of citizens. Those spaces can be based on the political logic of top-down sovereignty, as well as grounded in the economic logic of monopolizing certain segments of mega-event economies. This conflation of political and economic toolkits of regulation is conducive to shrinking publicity and enhanced mechanisms of policing—from the regulation

of consumption to military protection measures against possible terrorist attacks (Boyle et al. 2015). Hosting mega events is therefore possible only under the condition of the suspending of certain legal acts authorized by local sovereigns and legitimized by global sports organizations. Non-Western hosts, therefore, take pragmatic advantages of those structures of opportunity that the global sports industry provides, including the lack of due accountability and transparency in making decisions (Booth 2011).

It is at this juncture that the rich legacy of political reading of sovereignty (Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler and other thinkers) can be reconceptualized, with an emphasis on its ability to constantly (re) produce itself by extending sovereign powers through deferral/suspension of the law. Changes in legislation at the preparatory stage of hosting mega events toughen state's control over procedures of urban reconstruction and rezoning, facilitate evictions, and invalidate democratic elements (public hearings, environmental expertise and so on). This extends to the concept of police as developed by Jacques Ranciere and Slavoj Zizek, which denotes a de-politicized/post-political maintenance of social order; as well as the idea of biopolitical regulation—derived basically from Michel Foucault and his followers—that constitutes a momentous element of sovereign power and policing as its key instrument.

On the other hand, as a payoff for their international socialization through inclusion in the global politics of mega events, authoritarian hosts—in spite of their traditional rhetoric of nationalism and sovereignty—voluntarily expose themselves to the forces of globalization that may challenge and perforate their otherwise sacrosanct independence and autonomy. Many non-Western mega-event hosts embrace a neoliberal logic of entertainment and consumption. Therefore, sports mega-projects are 'examples of neoliberal development that produce spectacular sites for the promotion of consumer-oriented commodity capitalism, fuelling displacements and gentrification, and thereby deepening social and economic exclusions' (Wills 2013: A2) that are accepted as inevitable effects of global events.

In many respects regulative practices of global sports institutions challenge conventional understanding of sovereignty and limit autonomy and freedom of action for host states. Mega events can be viewed as mechanisms of imposing a wide array of regulatory practices that constantly redefine/redraw borderlines between the permissible and the forbidden. More specifically, sovereignty is challenged/perforated through multiple regulations imposed by global institutions (the IOC, FIFA and so on) that take away parts of sovereign rights from national governments, making them comply

with international technical standards. Even authoritarian regimes, with all their claims for uncompromising sovereign statehood, have to plug into the cosmopolitan milieu with the global media, territorial branding strategies, and concepts of sustainable development and environmental security, and they must heed expressions of human rights concerns.

The sovereign power both strengthens itself through biopolitical, financial, administrative and managerial regulations, and simultaneously challenges its basis by means of relegating significant parts of sovereign prerogatives to international sports institutions. This transfer is aimed, first, at cementing societal consensus, and second, at marginalizing and ostracizing those social practices that hardly fit into the hegemonic power discourse. Mega events usually produce overregulated spaces where not only issues of security, but also everyday lives are put under strict mechanisms of pervasive surveillance.

By the same token, sovereign entities become part of a global market of countries and cities competing with each other for global visibility and traction for investments and tourism (Sevin 2014), yet it is exactly this visibility that attracts multiple protestors seeking to build trans-national coalitions for the sake of raising awareness and promoting their agendas ranging from environmental protest to human rights campaigning (Cottrell 2010). Due to these campaigns, mega events can be used for pressurizing host governments (Ukraine under Yanukovich, Belarus under Lukashenka, Russia under Putin, and so on); however, the practical efficacy of boycotting remains dubious.

Host states inscribe political discourse (aimed at constructing the Collective Self) into a global framework defined by the logics of post-political rationale. As authors of many individual chapters in this book assume, mega events can be instrumental in bringing about power consolidation through sports nationalism (national pride, medal count and so on), defining the rules of belonging to a national community (for many authoritarian governments, the mega event is a peculiar kind of loyalty test) and the practices of legitimate exceptions. At the same time, power relations can be contested through mega events by bringing global attention to human rights abuses (discrimination of minorities, enforced evictions), environmental concerns (extermination of stray animals, ecological decay), as well as to corruption, embezzlement and mismanagement behind exorbitant expenditures for hosting the events. It is this intricate interlacing of power consolidation and contestation, along with differently resonating normative discourses, that makes regional cases collected in this volume academically illuminating and politically relevant.

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PART I

Mega-Events and Social Issues

CHAPTER 2

Mega Events as Agents of State Socialization: Human Rights Protests in Beijing, 2008, and Sochi, 2014

Richard Arnold

Until recently, mega events such as the World Cup and the Olympics were hosted almost exclusively in 'Western' countries (i.e., those in Europe, the Americas, and Japan). Roughly since the millennium, however, the international bodies that govern site location have awarded them to other states, such as the 2010 World Cup in South Africa or the 2016 Olympics in Brazil. Some mega events have even been awarded to non-democratic states. While the attractions for autocratic regimes in hosting such events are obvious—increasing international legitimacy, boosting the country's reputation in the world, and fortifying domestic legitimacy to name but three (Grix and Houlihan 2014; Hoberman 2008)—the opportunity to be the center of world attention also allows a focus on the darker side of such regimes. The spotlight also illuminates human rights abuses. Indeed, it is partially in hope of ameliorating such atrocities that the host application is approved. As one commentator on the 2008 Beijing Games put it, 'the IOC was well aware of the risks when it awarded the Summer Games to Beijing in 2001. But committee members believed in the inherent power of the Games—that they could foster change by focusing world attention on China, just as the 1988 Summer Games in South Korea helped advance that country's transition to democracy' (Longman 2008). Yet the impact of mega events on human rights claims awaits theorization and has yet to garner scholarly attention.

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Mega events offer an opportunity for states to showcase the culture and history of their nations as well as the chance to engage in friendly competition with others. They offer a country the chance to increase its 'soft power' (Brownell 2013; Ding 2012; Nye 2004), wherein the attractiveness of the state is improved by the paraphernalia surrounding the event. Conversely, advocates of human rights attempt to use mega events to show a different side of the state and so threaten the soft power image-boosting effect. Understood in theoretical terms, this makes mega events an essential component of the evolving world order and the spreading of human rights norms. Mega events may help to create a 'sort of moral community, [that] sense of Kantian reciprocity and ability to take the role of the other which at minimum rules out the contemplation of genocide—at the very least it requires some such sense of community among those who act on behalf of states, and, if order is to be enduring, potentially among the populations they represent' (Dore, in Bull and Watson 2004: 408). One intended effect of mega events in non-traditional host states is to socialize more states into the international human rights regime.

That host states care about how the global audience views these events can be seen in their enormous cost. Hosting the Olympic Games is enormously expensive for any country, but particularly so in the case of authoritarian states. Estimates of the cost of recent Olympics in non-authoritarian states include: Athens in 2004, $15 billion; Salt Lake City 2002, $2 billion; Vancouver 2010, $1.5 billion; and $10 billion for the London 2012 Olympics. We can compare this with the $40 billion for Beijing 2008 and $51 billion for Sochi 2012. While differences in business climate and more opportunities for graft in non-democracies undoubtedly account for much of the difference, this underlines rather than refutes the state's willingness to pay such astronomical sums for a lavish 3-week party. With host states having such a stake in their meaning, mega events present an ideal opportunity for human rights advocates to socialize states by pressuring offending states into observance of internationally-recognized human rights. How does this theoretical premise play out empirically? Do mega events increase human rights criticisms? Why do states protest some mega events more than others? This paper attempts to answer these questions through a comparison of the cases of the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the Sochi Olympics in Russia in 2014.

These questions are interesting for both theoretical and empirical reasons. Theoretically, the connection of mega events to human rights offers insights into the evolution of world order (Bull and Watson 1984; Donnolly

2007; Moyn 2010, 2014; Rowe 2012; Wendt 1999). Simply bringing states together to compete in sports with defined rules implies a prior acceptance of those rules by the participants: by providing an opportunity for states to come together at a symbolic level, the hope of non-lethal competition is realized. In short, mega events manifest the concept of a global 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983; Brownell 2012). Understanding how issues of human rights contribute to this process of imagining—and why some events are more criticized than others—is therefore a promising area of theoretical development. Similarly, the expansion of mega events to states on the periphery of Western globalism poses questions about how such states may be brought into the international human rights regime.

Empirically, these questions are also important. The range of countries considered viable locations for mega events has increased in recent years; the next two host nations for the FIFA World Cup are Russia in 2018 and Qatar in 2022. There have been many complaints against the selection of these countries as hosts, especially of the latter where temperatures in the summer when the matches will be played are usually in excess of 40 °C. At the time of writing, there was even speculation that both World Cups would be relocated due to bribery accusations. Similarly, the 2022 Winter Olympics is scheduled to be held in Beijing, the first city to host both sets of games. Understanding how human rights criticisms have impacted a state's delivery of mega events in the past offers insight into the likelihood of a boycott of a future World Cup or Olympics and, most immediately, the host of the 2018 World Cup being switched.

Although the term 'mega events' covers both the World Cup and the Olympics, this essay concentrates on the Olympic Games for a couple of reasons. First, the Olympic Charter commits the organization to values of human rights and to creating a better and more peaceful world (Mastracola 1995). Some have even described the Eurocentric character of the Games as tantamount to cultural imperialism (Pandektis 2013: 35–37; Posner 2014). To be sure, western commentators did view the hosting of an Olympics as evidence of a country's deeper integration into the world community. Indeed, 'the presence of so many international leaders underlines the importance that China places on the games as a symbol of its intergration with the world community' (Watts 2008a); '[c]ountries with repressive governments often seek to host the Olympics to improve their global reputation' (Worden 2013). Second, the Olympics have paved the way for the World Cup to be held in more exotic locations and so it makes sense to begin the study with this event.

China and Russia are also states well-suited for comparison: they are both rival states to the Western-led world order; both countries have bad records on human rights; and both countries have recently held Olympic Games. Of course, there are also many differences between the two countries including size of economy, international sporting prowess and culture. The most salient distinction for this paper is that Beijing hosted the Summer Olympics in 2008 whereas Sochi hosted the 2014 Winter Olympics, which are generally perceived to be less prestigious. However, given the greater expenditure on the Sochi Games ($50 billion opposed to $40 billion) and the enthusiasm for the Winter Games displayed by the regime in announcing Russia's return to the mainstream of international relations (Arnold and Foxall 2014), the two cases are readily comparable.

It is the contention of this essay that human rights criticisms were greater in the case of China than Russia because of China's relative power and because it needed to realize an increase in soft power from the Olympics less than Russia. The next section provides evidence that mega events increase human rights criticisms and that those criticisms were greater prior to the Beijing Olympics than the Sochi Olympics. The following section reviews the suggested means of pressuring host states to adhere to international norms regarding human rights. The final section details the reactions of host states to these criticisms, arguing that Russia was more willing to make concessions to its critics than was China, thus showing its greater concern with and need for a boost in image from the Olympics. In all, this demonstrates the use of mega events as agents of state socialization.

Human Rights Complaints at Beijing 2008 and Sochi 2014

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was signed in 1948 introduced the notion of human rights to international relations, although arguably it was not until the 1970s that human rights were taken seriously (Donnolly 2007; Moyn 2010, 2014). Some theorists trace a longer lineage for their current form, but 'human rights as we understand them today crystallized in the moral consciousness of people only in the 1970s, whether in Europe, Latin America, or the United States' (Moyn 2014: 136–137). With the collapse of the Soviet Union and China's renunciation of devotion to Communism, states became freer to promote human rights in their foreign policies. One consequence of their invigoration in the 1970s, however, was that such rights were shaped and influenced by

Western values and suited for a fundamentally Western international order (Hopgood 2013). It is no surprise, then, that practices of cultures outside of the West did not measure up. The Olympics offer a chance to highlight that difference. This section provides evidence that human rights complaints against China and Russia increased in the period leading up to their hosting of the Olympics. It also demonstrates that such human rights criticism was greater in the case of China than of Russia.

In order to uncover the main human rights areas of contention preceding the two Olympic Games, I performed an inductive content analysis of two high-circulation Western dailies, *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, having influence over policymakers and human rights actors more generally. While human rights sources from non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International may have been more comprehensive, the report for 2014 had not been published at the time of writing. Newspapers also reflect better the intensity of discourse around human rights more than a source suffused with the values of an organization. Therefore, using LexisNexis, I searched for every article containing the term 'human rights,' and 'Russia/China,' for a 6-month period before the Games began. For comparative purposes, I also conducted a search for 'human rights' and 'Russia/China' for two randomly selected 6-month periods since the beginning of the so-called War on Terror.

Table 2.1 below provides evidence that instances of human rights criticisms increased as a result of the Olympics. As can be seen from the table, in the case of Russia there was almost a doubling of human rights criticisms in the advent period to Sochi, whereas in China human rights criticisms prior to Beijing were significantly higher. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that mega events do increase attention to human rights.

Table 2.1 Articles mentioning 'human rights,' and 'Russia/China'

Item	*N*
Russia Aug '13–Feb '14	424
Russia Jan '05–Jun '05	205
Russia Jul '09–Dec '09	231
China Feb '08–Aug '08	632
China Jan '02–Jun '02	138
China Jul '04–Dec '04	172

In order to discover how many of those criticisms specifically concerned the Olympics, I examined data involving human rights criticisms for the advent period (defined here as 6 months prior to the event) to the Games and search within the data for articles that contained the word 'Olympics'. Adding this condition ensured that the Olympics were at least mentioned in the article concerned, although admittedly it also included those articles where the Olympics were only tangentially related to the criticism. For China, 421 of the 632 articles (or 66.6 %) met this limiting condition, whereas for Russia the number was 124 of 424 (or 29.2 %). Once again, therefore, there is strong evidence that human rights criticisms increase in response to mega events.

The data also demonstrate that China was subject to greater human rights criticisms than Russia in the advent period to their respective Olympics. This was despite the fact that in the randomly selected periods Russia faced more human rights criticisms than China by a substantial margin. In the case of the Beijing Olympics the main issues that newspaper articles criticized concerned Tibet, China's protection of Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir from international sanctions, and corruption. For the Sochi Olympics, the main criticisms were of Russia's law against the promotion of homosexuality to minors, the jailing of the punk rock group Pussy Riot and environmental degradation. The remainder of this section discusses these issues.

The most popular issue prior to the Beijing 2008 Olympics was the issue of Tibet, which was mentioned in 282 of the 421 (67%) criticisms of China connected with the Olympics. Tibet-related criticisms were especially salient following protest in early March by Tibetan monks and the ensuing governmental repression. Articles framed the Olympics as a way of extracting concessions for Tibetans from China: 'Tsering Jampa, executive director for Europe of the International Campaign for Tibet, said the Olympic Games were the best hope Tibetans and human rights campaigners ever had to extract concessions from Beijing' (Erlanger 2008). Others sought to expose the issue, like former NBA star John Amaechi who, it was reported, would 'use the platform provided by his sporting pedigree, and his role as a BBC commentator, to highlight China's broken promises over human rights [including Tibet]' (Kelso 2008a). Finally, celebrity activism sought to embarrass China; for example, 'Joanna Lumley… said yesterday China's policies in Tibet were in direct contradiction of the Olympic charter' (Kelso 2008b). The Tibet issue was clearly a thorn in the side of the Chinese authorities' using the Games to promote the most positive image of their country.

Another issue of major concern at the Beijing 2008 Olympics was Chinese protection of and supplying weapons to Sudan's dictator Omar al-Bashir, which was mentioned in 135 of the 421 (29.7%) articles. The Darfur genocide began in 2003 when Janjaweed militias began killing and purging darker-skinned ethnic Darfurians under the cover of a civil war. While China did not initiate the conflict, human rights groups were furious at the threatened use of a Chinese veto regarding sanctions on Sudan. The Chinese also failed to stop providing arms to Sudan. Critics of China's policies relating to Sudan thus tried to have Beijing 2008 dubbed the 'genocide Olympics". The non-governmental organization 'Dream for Darfur' set out 'to convince China's government that the Games are imperiled unless it halts its support for Sudan's regime' (Greenburg 2008). Celebrity activism garnered attention when director Steven Spielberg resigned as the director of the opening ceremonies (Weaver and Hodgson 2008). Finally, more than 200 athletes aimed to embarrass China by participating as 'Team Darfur' (Thomas 2008). Corruption also featured as a complaint in a number of newspaper articles.

In the case of Sochi, the most popularly mentioned human rights concern was the so-called anti-gay law, which was mentioned in 81 of the 124 articles. This law was signed in June 2013 and banned the 'promotion of non-traditional sexual relationships' to minors. Further, the passage of the law came at a time when states in the West were embracing the idea of gay marriage. It was famously described as a 'fascist, barbaric law' by the actor and comedian Stephen Fry, who called for a boycott of the Sochi Games (Arnold and Foxall 2014). Criticisms in the newspaper articles included mention of protests against the law ('on the eve of the Sochi Winter Games, more than 50 current and former Olympians have called on the Russian authorities to repeal recently introduced anti-gay laws and criticized the International Olympic Committee [IOC] and multinational sponsors for not doing more to force them to do so' (Gibson and Walker 2014)); celebrity activism against it (Blake Skjellerup, gay Olympic speed skater, said 'I would tell [Putin] how much I disagree with his oppressive anti-gay propaganda laws, and that he has a responsibility as the president of Russia to represent all the people of his country' (Ingle 2013)); and calls endorsing the boycott.

The other two most frequently mentioned issues were those of the jailed punk rock group Pussy Riot and Russia's environmental degradation. Thirty-one articles mentioned Pussy Riot, a band jailed after singing a punk protest hymn on 21 February 2012 in the cathedral of Christ the

Savior in Moscow entitled 'Mother of God, Chase Putin Away!' There were 'concerns over Putin's crackdown on freedom of expression, best exemplified by the Pussy Riot case' (Gibson 2013) as well as reporting on Russia's attempt to improve her image by declaring an amnesty for certain prisoners on 23 December 2013, close to the Olympics. Also released in this amnesty were the detained Greenpeace activists who had stormed a Russian oil rig in September 2013 from their vessel *The Arctic Sunrise*. The activists had been charged with piracy and hooliganism—offenses for which they faced prison time according to Russia's laws.

This section has demonstrated that the mega events held in China and Russia led to increased criticism of the human rights situation in each country and the return of human rights to the agenda of international relations. It also demonstrated that human rights criticisms were greater in the case of China and the advent period to the Beijing Olympics rather than Russia and the advent period to the Sochi Olympics. The next section presents three plausible explanations for why this could have been the case and the following section evaluates those explanations.

The Reputation of the Olympics as a Site of State Competition

The last section provided evidence for the contention that there were more human rights criticisms preceding the Beijing 2008 Olympics than there were of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics, as well as an overview of the issues that made up those criticisms. This section reviews the ways in which human rights groups within states protested against those human rights abuses to bring pressure on an Olympic host. By raising human rights issues and embarrassing hosts, social movements threaten the soft power benefits that accrue to a regime from holding the Olympics (Brownell 2012; Rowe 2012). Just as states compete to be awarded the Games, so too do they struggle over the reputation of those Games.

This was the stated aim of some human rights groups. Indeed, 'Mike Blakemore, from Amnesty International UK.… [t]old BBC Radio 4's The World at One…[that] the Beijing games… provided a "fantastic opportunity" to focus attention on China's human rights record' (Weaver and Hodgson 2008). By embarrassing the host of the Olympics and detracting from the benefits of the Olympics, activists hoped to use the event as an

occasion for socializing states into the international human rights regime. The most powerful opportunities for protesting the host state took the form of boycotts, actions at opening ceremonies and civil protests before the start of an Olympics.

Boycotts: Ever since the American boycott of the Moscow 1980 Olympics and the retaliatory Soviet boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, boycotts have become the main way to protest an Olympics host regime's policies with regard to human rights. In part, this is due to a sense of regret over Western participation in the Berlin 1936 Olympics, which provided a huge propaganda opportunity for the National–Socialist regime. Yet although they are often the first recourse for protestors, there are many reasons for states not to involve themselves in a boycott, which remains the 'nuclear option' in soft-power terms and an attempt to ostracize a state from the international community. For precisely this reason, then, the calls for boycotts often loom larger than the reality.

Before Beijing 2008, there were calls for a boycott as a protest against human rights abuses. The two main issues over which there were calls for a boycott were Darfur and Tibet. There was some concern that one boycott could impact on the decision on the likelihood of another, so that 'it is also possible that the Tibet situation could deteriorate to a point where the Darfur activists will feel they have no choice but to go along with a boycott' (Greenburg 2008). The clamor for a boycott was sufficient for Jacques Rogge, the chair of the International Olympic Committee to address the issue. Rogge continued, stating that 'there is no momentum for a general boycott' (Bennhold and Rosenthal 2008).

However, despite the fact that a total boycott of Beijing 2008 would not be feasible, actors still searched for ways to register disapproval though 'partial' boycotts. The fact that the language of 'boycott' was even used in regard to components of a delegation attending an event or not is indicative of the close relationship between the Olympics and the chance to pressure regimes. By attending all or part of an Olympic Games, states implicitly condone or rebuke host regimes. Partial 'boycotts' were a measured way of sending such a message. As one article put it, 'a boycott of the Olympic Games themselves is a nonstarter. [But] House speaker Nancy Pelosi has raised the possibility of a boycott of the opening ceremony, and that is plausible' (Kristof 2008). Similarly, French President Nicholas Sarkozy left 'the door open to a partial boycott of the [Olympic] Games' (Erlanger 2008). The oxymoronic idea of a 'partial' boycott became a weapon in the soft-power contest before the Games.

Even the non-participation of individuals in preparing for the Olympic Games or attending them was described using the language of 'boycott.' In the context of the Olympics, 'boycott' became a verb employed by individuals. After one of the leading advocates of the Save Darfur campaign, Mia Farrow, compared film director Steven Spielberg's role in the opening ceremonies at Beijing to that of Nazi director Leni Riefenstahl ('for the director of 'Schindler's List' to have a role in China's Olympics was unacceptable: she called him a "key collaborator" (Greenburg 2008)), Spielberg decided to relinquish his role. This principled resignation was described as 'the Spielberg boycott' (Watts and Kelso 2008), again suggesting the centrality of using participation in the Olympics as a way of pressuring other states to conform to Western human rights norms.

There was a similar story before the 2014 Sochi Olympics. Once again, there were calls for boycotts as a means of socializing the Putin regime: newspapers reported that 'the Olympics have refocused international attention on the hard-line policies Mr. Putin's government has pursued since he returned to the presidency in 2012 after 4 years as prime minister, and prompted calls for protests and even boycotts' (Myers 2014). The most salient call for a boycott came from the gay community in the West, although other groups like the Circassians also called for a boycott as well (Arnold and Foxall 2014). The proposed boycott over gay rights was championed by British comedian Stephen Fry: 'Stephen Fry, among others, has already called for a boycott of the Sochi Games over new laws that forbid "gay propaganda"' (Gibson 2013). The language of the boycott thus became an essential element in contesting the staging of the Olympics in regimes outside of the West.

Just as in the case of Beijing, however, no countries comprehensively boycotted the Sochi 2014 Olympics. To be sure, this did not mean that protest died away, as individuals promoted the idea of personal boycotts both of the Olympics themselves and through the companies that sponsored them. One article justified the author's decision not to purchase the products of 'the brands supporting the Olympics…. Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Procter and Gamble, Panasonic, Visa' saying that 'my boycott may not change the world, but it's the only economic decision I can live with' (Moore 2014). Although almost certainly only minimally damaging to such companies, the corporate boycotts mark an attempt on the part of individuals to protest violations of the normative international order.

Moreover, just as in the case of Beijing, the term 'boycott' became applicable to individuals as well as country delegations. For instance, 'Denis MacShane, the former Labour Europe minister, said that the Prime Minister should make a principled stand and boycott Sochi' (Harding and Ebel 2013). The same article goes on to claim that it is only the release of the 'Greenpeace 30' which saved Russia from a more general boycott. This almost certainly overstates the case. Once again, the implication is that international sporting events such as the Olympics may, perhaps should, be used as a means to pressure other regimes to do things differently and that the appropriate way to contest this proposition is through the language of a 'boycott.' Yet boycotts were not the only means of socializing states, as the opening ceremonies presented another chance.

Olympic opening ceremonies are a chance to showcase a host nation and put forth an idealized view of the values that nation represents. As such, they are a quintessential part of the global 'imagined community' put forth by the Olympic Games. Yet in being an occasion of value to the host state, such ceremonies simultaneously offer that community a moment of leverage over the host and an opportunity to express disapproval at the host's deviance from Western human rights norms. This disapproval took the form of dissenting parties either not attending ('boycotting' once again) opening events or designing delegations in order to send a message to the host nation, whether China or Russia, as well as the global audience.

Regarding China, there was a sense in the Western media that attendance at the opening ceremonies could be used as a sort of bargaining chip to extract concessions from the Communist Party. Representative Frank R. Wolff (R-Virginia) and Christopher H. Smith (R-New Jersey) 'called on President Bush to boycott the Olympic opening ceremonies if the detained lawyers [recently arrested] were not released and if there were "no progress" on releasing 734 political prisoners on a list that the two representatives presented to the Chinese" (Yardley 2008). Here participation is framed as conditional and dependent on the actions of the Chinese authorities, explicitly framing a successful completion of the mega event as a reward for complying with the norms of the international human rights regime.

In total, over 80 leaders attended Beijing's opening ceremonies (Reuters 2008). American President George Bush did attend the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Games as did French President Nicholas Sarkozy, albeit after considerably more controversy. Bush's decision came despite a resolution

from the US House to condemn Beijing's human rights record and Bush's previous reception of individuals connected with human rights at the White House (Watts 2008b). China's might in the world and the size of its economy meant any move that destabilized the bilateral relationship had to be avoided. By calibrating the message inherent in his actions, Bush was able to navigate successfully between the Scylla of public disapproval at home and the Charybdis of a Chinese reaction.

Of the major Western powers, only the leaders of the UK, Canada and Germany did not attend the opening ceremonies at Beijing 2008. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown did attend the closing ceremony, however, which both avoided embarrassment and the possibility of a retaliatory partial boycott of the London 2012 Olympics. Brown's move was framed in such a way as to avoid embarrassing China but also to permit the inference of domestic proponents of human rights that he was addressing Chinese infractions of international norms and thus using the Olympics as a way of enforcing human rights. The opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games thus presented a golden opportunity to socialize China into the global human rights regime.

This was not the case with Russia, where there were no calls for heads of state not to attend the opening ceremonies of the Sochi 2014 Olympics as a way of protesting the human rights record of the host nation. In point of fact, many heads of state did not attend the opening ceremonies or the Games whatsoever, but it is noteworthy just how little pressure was applied to them to do so. As it turned out, only 40 world leaders attended the opening ceremony; US President Barack Obama, French President Francois Hollande and British Prime Minister David Cameron were not among them. Far from being a soft power coup showing how respected Russia was, the opening ceremonies of Sochi 2014 underlined the country's peripheral status.

Even if heads of state were not in attendance at the opening ceremonies, political leaders still used the opportunity to nominate controversial delegations. Most famously, President Obama nominated gay tennis star Billie Jean King to lead the American delegation (although King had to drop out due to the last-minute illness of a family member) as well as a team containing two gay athletes (Associated Press 2013). *The Guardian* praised the tactic, saying, 'Obama's move is carefully calibrated. It signals US displeasure but stops short of a full-blown boycott that could escalate tensions with the Kremlin, at a time when Washington still badly needs Moscow's help on Syria, Iran and other thorny international problems'

(Harding and Ebel 2013). By appointing a delegation that could potentially fall foul of the 'gay propaganda' law, the US attempted to use the Olympics to pressure Russia either not to enforce the law or to repeal it, so coming into line with international human rights norms. Daring Russia to arrest its guests, the composition of the delegation acted as a rebuke of the host.

Distinct from the protests that preceded the Chinese Olympics, however, protest groups did call on athletes at Sochi 2014 to subvert the meaning of the opening ceremony and use it to undermine the ceremony itself. The protests that activists discussed concerned events at the Olympics themselves, which could be used to embarrass the host. Indeed, 'in private meetings, some LGBT rights advocates … envisioned the following: during the parade of athletes at the opening ceremonies, pairs of two men and two women would hold hands, sending a message of solidarity with LGBT people without saying or brandishing anything overtly political' (Bruni 2013). If Russia then prosecuted people for holding hands, it would lead to international ridicule and so diminish the value of hosting the Olympics in the first place. The final way human rights advocates used mega events to socialize the two countries was through regular protests before the Olympics.

Protest actions before the Olympics: Of the three mechanisms of message-sending (or socialization) discussed in this essay, the protest actions by ordinary people were the least effective, as measured by their ability to garner media attention. If one of the benefits that states gain at an international level from hosting the Olympics is an increase in soft power, then it makes sense that these returns can be diminished by protesters tarnishing the reputation of the Olympics. This came in a number of forms, from trying protesters to have particular events associated with the Olympics to disrupting celebrations. This section analyzes the protest events prior to the Beijing 2008 and the Sochi 2014 Olympics, arguing that the state socialization perspective gives us the greatest insight.

Protest actions before the Beijing Olympics took two particular forms, the labeling of Beijing 2008 as the 'genocide Olympics' and protest actions at the torch relay prior to the opening ceremony. The label 'the genocide Olympics' originated with Hollywood actress Mia Farrow in protest at China's support of the Sudanese government. Originally written in a Wall Street Journal editorial, the group Dream for Darfur appropriated the slogan and tried to popularize it, designing 'white T-shirts emblazed with "genocide Olympics"' (Greenburg 2008). There were other attempts to

associate the slogan with the Olympics also, including television appearances and its repeated use in interviews. Similarly, many of the protestors who turned up at the rallies for the Olympic torch prior to the Games wore T-shirts or had other paraphernalia which bore this legend. Far from being a meaningless slogan, the phrase epitomized attempts to subvert the meaning of the 2008 Olympics.

Protest groups also used the rally of the Olympic torch to illustrate their causes. The Olympic torch relay is a ceremonial journey from Olympia, Greece, on a more or less circuitous route to light the Olympic flame at the main stadium of the host country. The torch's route is not always international, although sometimes regimes have opted to make it so. The 2012 London Olympics and the 1996 Atlanta Olympics saw primarily national tours of the torch. As an attempt to increase the international prestige of the Games, the Beijing Olympic Committee planned for the most extensive tour ever—six continents and a later trip around mainland China. The symbolic purpose was widely interpreted to be a declaration of China's entry into the mainstream of international politics. By damaging the public relations value of the exercise, protestors threatened the reasons for Beijing hosting the Olympics. The torch was subject to protestors everywhere it went, with the relays in San Francisco and London particularly disruptive. Indeed, with its 'intense scuffles' the London rally forced China's state media to condemn the '"vile misdeeds" of the London protests' (Burns 2008). The Olympic torch thus became an opportunity to protest and contest China's place in the premier league of global powers.

The Sochi 2014 Olympics did not experience the same volume of protest actions as Beijing 2008. The reason was at least partly due to the fact that the torch parade before the Sochi opening Ceremony visited only two countries—Greece and Russia—as well as outer space. Nonetheless, protest actions were not completely absent. First, activists took to social media to bring attention to violations of gay rights in Russia. Second, activists once again put pressure on sponsors to counter 'the rising tide of discrimination, harassment and threats against LGBT people' in Russia. Indeed, 'Stuart Elliott of The Times reported last month that activists [had] been trying to hijack promotions by sponsors of the Sochi Olympics in protest over LGBT discrimination in Russia' (The New York Times Blogs 2014b). However, in contrast to Beijing there were considerably fewer—and considerably less demonstrative—protest actions.

This section has identified three ways in which the international community uses the Olympic Games to attempt to embarrass host states for their human rights abuses. This can be understood as an effort to socialize these states into the normative world order. The section looked at proposed boycotts (both comprehensive and partial), attendance or otherwise at the opening ceremonies to the Games (and the nomination of controversial placeholders) and more conventional protest actions against the human rights policies of host nations. What is striking is that for all three ways, activists and states brought greater pressure to bear on Beijing 2008 than on Sochi 2014. The next section asks why that was, using the understanding of state socialization to interpret events.

Why More Human Rights Criticisms Prior to Beijing than Sochi?

The last section demonstrated some of the ways in which states apply pressure to host nations during mega events such as the Olympic Games. Boycotts, opening ceremonies and protest actions were all used to express popular anger at host failure to live up to the normative standards of the Western public prior to the Beijing and Sochi Olympic Games. This section asks why there were more criticisms of Beijing than Sochi and argues that the relatively greater importance of China, Russia's response to such criticisms, and Russia's earlier entry into international society account for the difference.

Before we proceed, however, we need to dispense with the immediate and obvious answer, which is that human rights criticisms prior to Beijing 2008 were greater than prior to Sochi 2014 due to the greater human rights violations in China. To begin, it should be stated that there is no agreed hierarchy of rights abuses. This is illustrated by determination of the US State Department that Civil and Political Rights rank as primary to Economic and Social Rights, whereas the 1993 Bangkok declaration following the first United Nations Conference on Human Rights supported exactly the opposite ordering. Even if one could compare horrors, however, it is surely the case that systematic violations above a certain point would merit comparable levels of attention from critics. As the plethora of Amnesty International stories (from www.amnesty.org) concerning rights violations testify, both China and Russia are well above any reasonable bar we might wish to set. With this proviso in mind, the section turns to the reasons for the greater criticism of Beijing 2008 than Sochi 2014.

First, China is plainly a more important country to the international system than Russia. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF 2014), in 2007 China was, at $4.5 trillion, the second largest economy in the world. The USA was the largest economy at $14.8 trillion. Russia, on the other hand, 6 years later, in 2014, was only a $2 trillion economy. While admittedly the average person was richer in Russia than China, potential growth forecasts for the Russian economy were and still are outstripped by those of China. China is also integrated into the world economy in a way as yet unimaginable for the Russian economy. In economic terms, China in 2008 was far more important than Russia in 2014.

There is a similar story with the size of the military in each of the two countries. While both countries are members of the United Nations Security Council, China wields a greater military force than Russia. In 2008, China's defense budget was $57.2 billion (Xinhua 2008) versus Russia, whose defense budget in 2013 was $68.2 billion [in 2013, for comparison, China's defense budget was then $112.2 billion (see Young 2014)]. China has a much larger conventional military than Russia, and there was a growing perception even in 2008 that China would have to be included in the construction of any international apparatus to prevent international conflict in the Asian region. For Russia, the relative ease with which sanctions were imposed on large sections of the economy in the wake of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is indicative of its lack of integration into the world economy. The opening ceremony to China's Olympics was one that the American president could not afford to miss, whereas the opening ceremony for Russia's Olympics was one they could barely afford to hold.

Second, Putin showed a greater willingness to adjust policies connected with human rights prior to the Sochi Olympics than Hu Jintao displayed prior to Beijing. In an attempt to sway Western public opinion, the Kremlin granted an 'amnesty' to Pussy Riot and the Greenpeace Arctic 30, which was seen as 'a classic PR [public relations] masterstroke' (Harding and Ebel 2013). While the amnesty did not by any means address all human rights violations in the Russian Federation, it took two of the most salient issues to Western audiences and changed the policy to comport with international norms. In doing so, Putin showed that Russia was willing to be socialized to a certain extent and the logic of reciprocity would predict a decline in human rights criticisms.

Indeed, this PR move was, if anything, trumped by the release of long-time Kremlin critic and onetime Putin rival Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The move was additionally surprising due to the lack of connection to

the coming Olympics. Khodorkovsky, the former owner of the Yukos oil company arrested in 2003 as a reaction to his opposition to Vladimir Putin, was released on 20 December 2013 (Gorst 2013). To be sure, his case was an ongoing human rights concern and negotiations to free Khodorkovsky involving former German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher had been underway since 2011 (Martin and Kelly 2013). But it is hard to see his early release was anything other than a general attempt to appease human rights critics in the period preceding the Olympics.

Indeed, another article noted 'an apparent thaw in the weeks leading up to the Winter Olympics, with Mr. Putin releasing imprisoned members of the rock group Pussy Riot, a group of Greenpeace protesters and a billionaire who had opposed him politically. He even eased a ban on protesting during the Olympics' (Marshall 2014). While the amnesties may have been good moves for attracting publicity and easing the attention on the Kremlin's violation of rights, the opening of protest zones by the regime to allow open objection marked a substantial comportment to international norms and indicated a desire to silence critics. One might object that these moves were not genuine, designed only to manipulate those who were voicing such concerns. Although this objection is probably at least partially true, such moves nevertheless dampened criticism of the Russian regime which was making moves to implement international human rights standards.

This can be contrasted with China's approach to human rights criticisms prior to Beijing 2008. Aside from re-opening negotiations with the Dalai Lama following the March 2008 riots in Tibet, China made no moves or gestures to ameliorate its image on the world stage regarding human rights (Rowe 2012). This was despite calls to release 100 prisoners still in jail from the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre (The Guardian 2008). Although the Games were awarded to China with the hope that the human rights situation might improve, 'China … patently failed to deliver on its promise to use the Games to improve the human rights situation' (Kelso 2008c). Edward Sanschneider, a China expert at the German Council on Foreign Relations, explained the rationale: '[T]he Olympics are important to the Chinese, but not as important as Tibet. Sovereignty and stability will always outweigh public relations' (Erlanger 2008). In Sanschneider's pithy phrase is encapsulated the rationale for China's absence of moves to pacify its critics as well as Russia's rationale for acting otherwise. The Russians needed the approval of the international community prior to the Games and so had to at least outwardly seem to make moves on human rights. The Chinese, did not.

The third reason for greater human rights criticisms prior to the Beijing 2008 Olympics compared to the Sochi 2014 Games concerns the nature of the violations themselves. In an analysis of human rights criticisms solely from *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, it was clear that critics largely attacked China for violations of human rights occurring outside of the country whereas Russia was criticized for domestic violations. In the case of China, this principally meant the conflict in Darfur but also included Zimbabwe a few times. Of course, there was a huge amount of protest concerning the occupation of Tibet as well, evidenced by the fact that Tibet was the most frequently mentioned human rights issue, but when it is considered in relation to the situation in Russia the percentage of criticisms regarding external issues diminishes steeply. The leading areas of criticisms of Russia—homosexual rights, Pussy Riot and the environment—were all domestic issues. Only Russia's protection of Bashar Al-Assad's Syria and fears about Ukraine received any attention as issues outside of the Russian Federation. The implication was that China had already been accepted as a legitimate actor in international society and now only her negative externalities were the focus of criticism; for Russia, however, the case was quite different.

This section has presented reasons for the greater focus on human rights violation prior to the Beijing 2008 Olympics than those in Sochi in 2014. The absence of a commonly agreed system for comparing the severity of violations suggests that other motives were at work in the minds of human rights protestors. Reasons that emerged from the data were first, the greater relative power of China in the world economy and in sheer military terms; second, the Russian moves to placate some of their critics by declaring amnesties, even of figures whose cause had not been taken up by human rights protestors before the Olympics; and third, the greater focus on China's external violations of human rights when compared to the near-exclusive focus on Russia's internal violations. In this way, the Olympics prepared the stage for China to be socialized into the international society.

Conclusion

Mega events are clearly an important opportunity for states to showcase their national cultures, but they also open the door for criticism of the human rights policy of sovereign states. Using a perspective on human rights derived from the English School of international relations, this

paper demonstrated that mega events can be considered agents of state socialization into the normative world order. The evidence demonstrated that criticisms of human rights policies increased greatly in the period prior to the hosting of the Olympics in Russia and China and that China was subjected to more intense criticism than Russia. The three main ways in which these protests were voiced were suffused with the logic of socializing mechanisms. The final section offered reasons why China was more targeted, noting in particular Russia's moves to placate its critics as compared to China's staunch defense of its sovereignty. In being expanded outside the West, then, mega events offer both the chance for the host nation to integrate into the global community and for the global community to impress its values on the host nation.

The ramifications for the world order and whether it will be one that values individual human rights remain to be seen. Certainly, human rights complaints do not seem likely to become an obstacle for states in the immediate future. The furor over human rights in 2008 did not prevent China being awarded the 2022 Winter Olympics, a prize which, as one observer put it, 'will surely make more people know about China, that we are a major power now, and we are no worse than the United States' (quoted in Borden, 215). Admittedly, the selectors could not pick a regime with a stellar human rights record, as the other candidate city of Almaty, Kazakhstan, had problems of its own. Yet, making Beijing the first city in history to host both the Winter and Summer Games suggests that human rights claims do not motivate politicians as greatly as pragmatic concerns. Similarly, the recent Brazilian 2014 World Cup, which saw FIFA's failure to criticize human rights abuses (Bloomer and Nieva 2014), implies that the situation is no different with soccer. Current concerns over the hosting of the World Cup in Russia stress the possible impact of Russian racism on the safety of the players and fans, even leading Ivory Coast striker Yaya Toure to threaten a boycott of the event (James 2013). It may be the case that concerns over human rights are the pretext for a boycott of the World Cup although authentic concerns will be quite different.

Finally, it should also be added that a comparison of what I have characterized as the 'soft power gains' from each Olympic Games has ramifications for our understanding of the forces that led Russia to intervene so openly in Ukraine so soon after the Olympics. Had the human rights situation in Russia been less heavily criticized before the Games (so effecting a bigger 'boost' to the nation's soft power), Putin may have faced more resistance to turning Russia into an international pariah. The *siloviki* in

the Kremlin would have jeopardized greater reputational gains. Yet Russia has increased internal repression in the wake of the annexation of Crimea. It will be highly ironic if after all human rights protests made the human rights situation worse in Russia.

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CHAPTER 3

The 2014 Winter Olympics Bid Book as Site of National Identity Constitution

Philipp Casula

Despite the official line held by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to keep politics out of the Games, politics have long been part of the Olympics. The idea of an Olympic truce, for instance, points straight at the relationship between politics and the Games: the Games introduce a cease-fire, interrupt hostilities and thus temporarily depoliticise a conflict. However, there are many other areas in which politics and the Olympics intersect. Most obviously, politics has always tried to hijack the Olympics for political ends. The various boycott threats or actual boycotts, especially in 1976, 1980 and 1984, fall in this category. Host states use them to convey a certain picture of themselves to the outside world and to deliver a message about what the nation is to a domestic audience. The Olympics are also political in the sense that they are a site on which political identities are formed. Olympic Games have a strong normalising force, determining the boundaries, for instance, of gender, which is regularly 'tested' to ensure no 'men' compete in female sport events, or advocating certain lifestyles or consumption preferences, as shown by commercialisation of the Olympics especially after 1984. The Games are thus a mega event which pretends to stay out of politics but which is permeated with politics. It is this political dimension of identity constitution that is of concern in this paper. More specifically, the paper discusses how the Sochi

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Olympics reflect the political boundaries of the Russian political discourse, determining who is part of the political community and who is not. It elaborates how Russian nationalism, concepts of democracy and modernity manifest themselves in the context of the Sochi Winter Olympics. To assess these identities, this paper will propose a discourse analysis of the Sochi Olympic bid book, placing it in the context of the Russian official political discourse, focussing particularly on the issue of identity constitution and paying particular attention to the representation of the issues of security and multiculturalism. The paper loosely follows the understanding of discourse analysis advanced by Ernesto Laclau (1993). He argues that 'demands' are the smallest unit of analysis (Laclau 2005: 72–73). Furthermore, it will draw on a regulatory understanding of security and its link to nationalism. As will be seen, this political understanding of the bid book does not contradict a depoliticised understanding of the official Russian discourse it reflects: the bid book is political because it proposes certain identities; at the same time, it seeks to shield certain identities from contestation, drawing them out of politics and presenting them as widely consolidated.

The analysis will be based on the official bid book or candidature file. This source represents most palpably how the Games were designed and intended by its organizers. It is most clear-cut in the identities it reflects, and it depicts the Games as they ought to be, in contrast to their actual implementation, which is never as 'perfect' and 'pure' as planned. The bid book is a standardized document meant for the specific purpose of winning the acceptance of an international expert audience. While it thus contains many unchanging themes, partly or wholly dictated by the IOC, these are always filled with contents that are very specific to the respective host country, underscoring what distinguishes the proposed Games not only from those proposed by other contenders but also from those that have taken place in the past. Indeed, all Olympic themes are filled with a 'national' content in the bid book, making it an ideal source to track manifestations of national identity as such.

After a brief theoretical and methodological section, I will focus on how four issues have been tackled in the candidature file: (1) modernisation, (2) democracy, (3) diversity, and (4) security.

Theoretical and Methodological Premises

British cultural studies have established a tradition of critical inquiry into cultural phenomena, to which also Olympic Games belong. From one of its founding fathers, Stuart Hall, two insights are crucial for the following analysis: first, the idea that culture always is *political* because it is the site

on which identities are produced; and, second, that the analysis of culture allows for a critique of *ideology* (Hall 1981; Emmison 2012). Cultural representations always reflect the 'moral-political discourse in…society' (Hall 1981: 231). It is precisely behind technocratic policies and managerial policies that we can discover ideology, because the latter disguises itself as apolitical, technical, or natural. Gender relations are a good example because they are presented as forthrightly 'dictated by nature', while they are the result of historical processes and contestation. The references to nature, as well as to technocratic or economic imperatives, attempt to remove issues from the sphere of the negotiable and hence from politics (Rancière 1999). Such depoliticizing moves have been a recurring feature of 'Putin's Russia' (Makarychev 2008; Casula 2013).

Stuart Hall has also delivered key insights to analyse the production otherness (Hall 2000). His considerations on this topic echo those of the social activist bell hooks, who underscored how ethnicity is commodified in capitalist culture. In her seminal paper on 'Eating the other', she stresses that 'within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes a spice, a seasoning that can live up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture' (hooks 1992). This discussion is also highly relevant in the context of the Olympic Games (Giardina 2012), not least of Sochi-2014. The Games have always exploited ethnicity to spice up their outer appearance. What particularly came to the fore in the case of the Russian Olympic bid is that the issue of a 'seasoned' identity is already built-in in the official vision of Russianness. Russia is a 'multi-national people' (*mnogonatsionalny narod*), however, this multi-ethnicity is all but free of tensions and riddled with hierarchies of Russianness and with the contrast and relation between *russkie* and *rossiiane*, the cultural and the political belonging to Russia.

Adams and Rustemova have shown how 'mass spectacles orchestrated by the state…enable us to look at how states attempt to channel power through ritual action and carefully selected symbols of the nation' (Adams and Rustemova 2009: 1250). Similarly, I assume that Olympic Games are used to convey national values, the nation's visions of the past and its visions of the future. In the case of Sochi-2014, for instance, Russia's history, including its Soviet past, was particularly highlighted during the opening ceremony. It was thus a contribution to identity-making. The ideas about what Russia was and about what it is also permeate the bid book. National identity is a key concern reflected in the bid book (herein, I use the terms "bid book" and "candidature file" interchangeably). Following Adams and Rustemova, national identity is not simply a phenomenon arising 'from

below' but can be actively sponsored by the state, which seeks to promote an official vision of identity. This attempt to craft a national identity is a typical phenomenon in all post-Soviet states, including Russia.

Drawing on Mitchell Dean, Adams and Rustemova distinguish between the *telos* and *ethos* of power. The *telos* of government encompasses ultimate ends and utopian goals. The ethos, by contrast, is a governmental rationale, a path for reaching a certain *telos* (Rustemova 2011: 33). In this sense, the Olympic Games reflect certain *teloi* of any country hosting the Games. Moreover, the Olympics themselves are an ethos, which helps to achieve the *teloi* and simultaneously highlight various types of possible *ethoi* that can be employed to reach the utopian goals of the respective programmes of government.

Achieving certain goals requires a state to provide basic security. Security has been a concern of growing importance in the context of modern Olympic Games. There are plenty of studies concerned with security at Olympics, both in terms of crime prevention and of surveillance (Boyle and Haggerty 2009; Samatas 2011; Boyle 2012: 399–400). Security has been discussed adopting various perspectives on this term, and it has been elaborated from many different sides, including from the Copenhagen School of international relations (Buzan 1991; Buzan and Waever 1998) and the French School (Bigo 1998). The latter has focused especially on the issue of migration, partly adopting a Foucauldian perspective (Huysmans 2006: 85–104).

I follow Huysmans in considering security to be more than just a speech act, as argued by Copenhagen School. Rather, it is a relationship between knowledge, power, and discourses. Also, I will embed discourses of security in technologies of government (Huysmans 2006: 93), drawing attention not only to the preventive side of security but also to the permitting dimension. I will build my argument around a Foucauldian understanding of security and focus on the issue of ontological security, that is, that sphere of security which concerns identity (Browning and Joenniemi 2013). For Foucault (2009, 137), security is cast in terms of regulation, as "perfection, maximization, or intensification" of processes. Frédéric Gros puts it succinctly, when he writes that "regulation supposes notions of flux, milieu and equilibrium[;]… security is a mechanism concerned with regulating instead of submitting, command, direct, command or normalize" (Gros 2012: 211–212). Hence, my focus will be on the admissible and the inadmissible and on the balance that is sought between the two.

In the context of the analysis of Sochi-2014, security will be analysed in direct relation to diversity because it is the candidature file itself that

establishes this link. However, which diversity is acceptable and which not? Both dimensions, the forbidding and the permitting, are interconnected. Security is hence an intersection at which surveillance and hospitality, acceptable and unacceptable diversity meet. The Olympic Games present a big security issue also in the sense that the Games must strike a balance between the diversity they accept, since it is demanded by the IOC vision of the Olympics, and the diversity they refuse, since it can run against tenets of official discourse.

The Russian Olympic Bid: A Look at the Official Candidature File

Bearing this terminology in mind, in the next section, the paper will discuss key themes of the Sochi bid book elaborated by Helios Partners Inc. and BDO Unicon, and place them in the context of official Russian discourse, paying particular attention to the issue of nationalism. Helios Partners Inc. is run by ex-IOC staff and has been repeatedly entrusted to draft bid books (Theodoraki 2010: 95). They are thus familiar with key themes of the Olympic Games and they align them to the requisites of the respective host country. BDO's auditors again are assisting Russia in hosting the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Modernisation and *democracy* have been recurring topics in Russian official discourse since Putin's take-over of power in 1999. Also Medvedev's interregnum has been characterised by a special emphasis on these two *teloi*, and by a concern for their relationship. Medvedev's presidential bid in 2007 was characterised by many efforts to present Russia as a modern and modernising country (Devjatkov and Makarychev 2012). More specifically, Medvedev ran supervising the so-called national projects that identified key areas for modernisation. When commenting about the link between the modernisation and democracy, he argued that a more modern society would also give rise to a more democratic one (Gazeta.ru 2009a, b), hence giving precedence to the former over the latter. Such tensions are also reflected in Russia's Olympic bid.

Sochi is cast as an example for a modern Russia: from the start, the Sochi-2014 candidature file highlights the long-term development of the Sochi region as a key goal in the context of the Winter Olympics. The bid declares that 'the Sochi region will be transformed into a modern, world-class, year-round destination for sport, tourism and commerce, and Russia will develop its first world-class, elite alpine sports training and competition infrastructure' (Sochi-2014 2007: 3). What strikes the reader

is not only the pathos of modernisation which runs through these lines and which is not atypical for Olympic bids, but also the allusion that this modernisation is not necessarily steered to serve the local population or the wider public but rather those who can afford 'elite' and 'world-class' infrastructure, wealthy tourists and those Russians successfully engaged in 'commerce'. Judging by these lines, the development of Sochi will lead, on the one hand, to rapid modernisation, while on the other, the beneficiaries seem to be a small circle of persons. While such statements partly derive from IOC requirements, they perfectly echo the Russian vision of modernity, which is material and not political, which is for those who can afford it and not for the wider public.

This interplay between IOC and Russian discourse is also visible in the following statement, which underlines that a key aim of the Olympics is 'to develop in Sochi [the] greatly needed sports and resort infrastructure in a sustainable, inclusive, environmentally responsible manner' (Sochi-2014 2007: 17). The candidature here successfully picks up the theme of sport infrastructure development and, more importantly, key terms of sustainability and inclusiveness, which certainly are not high on the agenda of Russian national discourse.

The candidature also clearly states that the Russian government plans to achieve the 'long-term goals of modernising and expanding the city's tourism infrastructure to establish Sochi as an international tourist destination' (Sochi-2014 2007: 17) as well as 'creating a world class tourist destination that will also serve as Russia's premier winter sports training and competition centre' (Sochi-2014 2007: 25). This underscores the international standards that Sochi strives to achieve in a long-term perspective, alluding to a Russian modernity, which is on par with a Western understanding.

The modernisation discourse that dominates in Russia is a mixture of a depoliticised understanding (focusing on technological innovation) and of the recognition of the compatibility of modernisation with authoritarian power relations (Devyatkov and Makarychev 2012). Modernity as conceived in the candidature file is focused on infrastructure. There is no mention of possibly modernising effects in the social or political spheres, for instance by opening of channels of participation or dialogue with Sochi's local population, which is completely absent from the candidature file. Their consent with the candidature and its goals is seen as a given. Sochi is to become a city of world-class infrastructure, while politics and society are omitted. However, there is no direct hint at the compatibility of modernisation and authoritarianism, or at least, temporary authoritarian methods, as suggested by Medvedev (Gazeta.ru 2009a, b). One reason

is that the strictly political issues are presented as basically solved, as I will show below.

Democracy is presented as a *telos* that has been achieved successfully: politics and, more specifically, democracy are widely neglected issues in the candidature file. Russia portrays itself as 'a representative democracy [that] provides all Russians with the right to pursue their interests through free democratic elections, freedom of expression, and a balance of power in a climate of social, political and economic stability.' Also, 'the Russian government provides all Russians with a stable political and economic environment in order to improve and enhance their quality of life. The government is based on free and open elections, freedom of expression and a constitutionally guaranteed balance of power' (Sochi-2014 2007: 31).

What is striking about this depiction is the close connection that is established between the signifiers of democracy and stability. Not only is democracy depicted as an aim which has been successfully achieved—this is a recurring issue in many speeches since Putin regime's takeover; moreover, political and economic *stability* is a key feature of the Russian version of democracy. As Putin underlined in 2001: '[W]e do not and should not fear change.…But it is time to say firmly that this period is over and there will be neither revolution nor counterrevolution' (quoted in Putin 2008: 80). Both stability and democracy together allow and provide Russians with sufficient room to pursue their wishes and increase the quality of living. Interestingly, in a very liberal guise, the state seems to provide just a framework for its citizens in which they are supposed to live freely according to their own interests and aspirations. This perfectly reflects what various authors have dubbed Russia's political and economic system as the 'conservative liberalism' of Putin's Russia. While Tarusin (2008: 145–146) argues that it is the most elaborated contemporary ideology of Russia, he shows that its representatives display uncertainties in what it actually means, arguing that it unites traditional or national values with those of freedom and democracy. Prozorov highlights that 'conservative liberalism' seeks to preserve the gains of the post-communist revolution while getting rid of a revolutionary disposition, that is focussing on the 'consolidation, sedimentation and depoliticization of social life' (Prozorov 2005: 130).

Nationalism and diversity figure prominently in official discourse and perfectly coexist. In two recent speeches before the Winter Olympics, Vladimir Putin has explicitly addressed the issue of Russia as a multinational state. On the first occasion, Putin (2013a) sent a warning to nationalists, stating that 'Russia was formed specifically as a multi-ethnic and

multi-confessional country from its very inception'. Putin equally issued a warning message to minorities striving for more autonomy, putting once more the integrity of the Russian state high on his agenda. However, 'multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity lives in our historical consciousness, in our spirit and in our historical makeup' (Putin 2013a). This is the side of the Russian official discourse on nationalism and diversity that stresses equality among the various nationalities, its 'equality-end'.

On another occasion, Putin emphasised the primacy of ethnic Russians in a multicultural society: 'Over 80 per cent of our population consists of ethnic Russians, and they are certainly the group *that drives our nation's development*, both culturally and demographically' (Putin 2013b [my emphasis]). However, Putin adds that 'Russia's strength lies in the fact that it is a multi-ethnic and multi-faith nation. If we want to preserve this, we must give this matter our utmost attention. And there is just one correct approach: all citizens of the Russian Federation are equal regardless of their faith or ethnicity' (Putin 2013b). In contrast to the official translation of the first quote, the Russian original speaks more bluntly of Russians not as just driving the nation but as a *gosudarstvo-obrazujushchij narod* or 'state-forming nation'. Thus, ethnic Russians are given a special place in the Russian state that elevates them above other nationalities, to whom equal status seems to be denied despite the fact that they also are Russian citizens. This is the side of the Russian official discourse on nationalism and diversity that stresses hierarchy among the various nationalities, its 'difference-end'. Thus, on the one hand, there seems to be a clear commitment to diversity and multiculturalism, on the other, this commitment is jeopardised by the clear preference given to ethnic Russians. Hence, the ontological security of this double Russian identity is threatened by both extremes, Russian nationalism as well as the nationalism of the other peoples making up the Russian Federation's population.

Things get even more complex when one considers what qualifies Russians as Russians. Here, it is particularly worthwhile to look at the definition of Russian 'compatriots abroad', which can shed light on Russia's official stand concerning citizenship and nationality. Oxana Shevel (2011: 89) argues that the definition given by current Russian legislation institutionalises ambiguity since 'a virtually infinite combination of ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, and even professional characteristics' can define Russianness. Given such a potentially broad understanding of Russianness, we could ask 'what about Russian citizens who are not ethnic Russians?' Do they not figure as 'compatriots' and hence as Russians, too? Still, they do not belong to the

'state-forming people'. Are Chechens or Circassians or other people from the Northern Caucasus Russians on par with ethnic Russians? This question is open to debate. From a legal standpoint they are as much Russian citizens as ethnic Russians; however, given Putin's above mentioned definition of ethnic Russians as a 'state-forming nation', Chechens or Circassians are merely second-class Russian citizens, as they have not established a state or contributed to forging it. This lack also posits them at the lower end in an imagined hierarchy of modernity.

The Sochi-2014 official bid clearly reflects these ambiguities: diversity and multinationalism are both presented as an *asset* and as a *risk*. Furthermore, the borderland location of Sochi makes the issue of nationalism resonate particularly strongly. Hence, these tensions are inherent in the Russian official discourse and thus in the bid book; however, they are further emphasized by the specific context of the Olympic Games. I will briefly mention two contexts which further accentuate the issues of nationalism and diversity: the Circassian boycott campaign and the volatile Northern Caucasus security context.

First, the Circassian global campaigning for boycotting the Games. According to this campaign Sochi-2014 fails to address the 1864 alleged genocide committed by Russian imperial troops against the Circassians, making room for the colonization of their lands by Cossacks. The Circassians thus present a counter-narrative to the bid book, referring to an on-going 'Russian subjugation of the Circassians in the Caucasus' (Persson 2013: 82). At the same time, this campaign poses also a counter-narrative to the equality-end of Russian official discourse and its embrace of all peoples of the Russian Federation, and confirms its difference-end: not all peoples of the Russian Federation are state-forming, rather, Russian state-formation explicitly depends on state-deprivation of other nationalities. Against this backdrop, the creation of a Cossack police, an initiative already expressed by the then Krasnodar governor, Aleksandr Tkachev, in 2012 (Makarychev 2013: 153) was an additional expression of preference of Russianness over diversity, and especially over Circassian concerns.

Second, the volatile Northern Caucasus neighbourhood of Sochi also contributes to heightening concerns about nationalism and diversity. While official discourse 'seems to be interested in de-securitizing the whole range of its policies in the Caucasus and to downplay the problem of armed resistance by Islamic and nationalist radicals' (Makarychev 2013: 152), these discourses of resistance and armed conflict, but also of poverty and underdevelopment, contrast with the official vision of Russia as an harmonious

whole under Russian supremacy, embodied in the Sochi Olympics. Furthermore, they threaten to reduce social tensions to cultural ones.

National unity is another important *telos*: an entire section of the candidature file is devoted to the issues of values. Interestingly, here we find the only allusion to the Moscow 1980 Olympics, which are said to be recalled 'with great pride' by many Russians. The bid book openly states that, according to polls, Sochi-2014 'would help re-kindle a sense of national pride and purpose.' Even more, 'Sochi-2014 will utilise the Olympic values and ideals to galvanise and unite the nation, and in doing so, inspire a new generation of Russians who have never experienced an Olympic Winter Games in their country' (Sochi-2014 2007: 27).

This statement reflects the difficult relationship of the Olympic Movement in general to the issue of nationalism (Keys 2006; Allison 2005; Parks 2009: 5–6, 45–47). On the one hand, it stresses the peaceful get-together of peoples from all over the world. On the other hand, these peoples remain distinct, each representing a certain national state that enters into a competitive setting with other nation states. The statement also reflects a 'selfish' goal of the Games for Russia. The nation ought to be *galvanised* by the Games. However, if the Games follow this aim, does it mean that national unity has not been yet achieved? Russia, according to this interpretation, seems to miss both national pride and national purpose. The Olympic Games are openly stated to further the achievement of these goals. This points straight at the issue of diversity. Diversity is both an asset and a threat to national unity. On the one hand, it is said to be constitutive for Russia, and is accordingly presented as such in the bid book; at the same time it is the problem, which prevents unity from being achieved, and even threatens this unity. The way the issue of diversity is discussed in the bid book will be discussed here below.

Diversity: Asset and Security Threat

On the one hand, *diversity is presented as a key asset* of Sochi: the emphasis put on 'galvanising the nation' contrasts with the letter of Sochi's Mayor, Viktor Kolodjazhnij, to the IOC, which is an integral part of the bid book. In this letter, the mayor openly plays the multicultural card, implying unity in diversity. The Games are deemed to be a 'celebration of humanity', and because in Sochi 'people from 117 nationalities [live] in peace and harmony', his city is cast as being particularly apt to live up to this value: 'Sochi mirrors the Olympic Movement in cultural diversity and mutual respect' (Sochi-2014 2007: 15), Kolodjazhnij underscores.

However, all this is not new to Olympic Games, at least not since the 2000 'Celebrate Humanity' campaign funded by the IOC to which Kolodjazhnij implicitly alludes. According to Giardina et al. (2012: 344), this campaign:

> 'depoliticised the progressive imperatives of multiculturalism, co-opted multiculturalism's empowering political rhetoric, and replaced it with the IOC's own preferred vision of racial unity; which is to say, a thoroughly effaced, normalised, and thus non-political enactment of conservative, commercial 'multiculturalism'.

Multiculturalism emerges with two faces. Firstly, multiculturalism is commercial because it exploits diversity as something exotic, something positive that adds 'spice' to the Games. As in the context of the Sydney 2000 Olympics (Housel 2007) or of Beijing 2008 ('One world, one dream', see Giardina et al. 2012: 348), multiculturalism emerged as something tamed and controlled that enriches the overall appearance of the Olympic Games. Diversity is exploited for commercial purposes: in the example provided by bell hooks (1992) diversity was used advertise clothing, here it is for selling the product of an Olympic city.

Secondly, this multiculturalism is conservative. It is emptied of any emancipatory content. It leaves power-relations untouched, and essentialises, depoliticises and silences Otherness. Exactly this seems to be the point in Sochi. The Sochi Olympics remain essentially Russian Games; they are not, for example Circassian Games. In many visual depictions of Sochi-2014, representatives of the local populations are shown in their traditional clothing, reflecting the variety of cultures in the North Caucasus regions, but there is nothing emancipatory in this depiction. This Otherness is orientalistically contemplated, considered to be merely cultural and not political. It is just an accompanying feature of *Russian* Games.

This topic also points to the limits of acceptance of difference. Which kind of Otherness can be tamed and hence included? Which one 'sells'? Homosexuality might not only be excluded in the Sochi Olympics because of a homophobic climate in Russia, which undoubtedly exists: In one of his recent speeches, Putin has explicitly condemned homosexuality: '[M] any of the Euro-Atlantic countries are…implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan' (Putin 2013b). However, as in other countries, homosexuality also does not 'sell' as good as multiculturalism does. Homosexuality remains highly contested also in the West and in the global South. Furthermore,

all sports events rely on a strict dualistic conception of gender and hence leave little room for homosexuality. Hence, while homosexuality in Russian political discourse, at the Sochi Olympics and at sports mega events in general counts as an unacceptable difference, cultural or ethnic diversity seems to be—at first glance—a welcomed difference. Upon closer inspection, however, cultural diversity can also be seen as a problem, even as a threat, as I will argue below.

If on the one hand, diversity is an asset, on the other hand, *diversity is a threat* and becomes an object of securitization: multiculturalism reappears, surprisingly, in a whole subsection of the bid book concerned with security. The Organising Committee promises 'total security and safety of all members of the Olympic and Paralympic Family, media and spectators' (Sochi-2014 2007: 7). In the opening lines of volume three, section 12, which is dedicated to the issue of security, the bid book does not enumerate threats, risks and necessary precautions. Rather, it establishes a peculiar link between multiculturalism and security that reads as follows: 'The Olympic Games require an environment that celebrates diversity, an environment that honours difference, and an environment that is free of strife, conflict, and the threat of harm' (Sochi-2014 2007: 25). Hence, while multiculturalism is something to be hailed and diversity something to be appreciated, as we have seen above, multiculturalism and diversity now reappear in connection with security, right at the beginning of the topic of security! Why does a section on security open with the issue of multiculturalism? Why not mention social disparities, petty crime or, most obviously, terrorism? It is astonishing to see how an ethnically mixed society is put at the top of a security risks list. Apparently, for the Russian bid book, diversity also poses the number one potential risk to the games that requires to be tackled. Even more: 'multiculturalism' seems to be the signifier that actually implies such risks as social disparities, petty crime or terrorism. Multiculturalism or diversity are, in Laclauian terms, nodal points in the discourse of security, which connect different signifiers.

Under the headline of 'Ethnic Diversity in a Tranquil Environment', the candidature file assures the IOC that the police authority 'considers the stability of inter-ethnic relations as one of its highest priorities. The likelihood of civil disobedience events within Sochi is considered low.' (Sochi-2014 2007: 26). Indeed, in Sochi various 'nationalities [are] living in peace and harmony' (Sochi-2014 2007: 179). There is no further explanation why inter-ethnic relations should be linked with 'civil disobedience' unless this

is a veiled hint at the Circassian question, which has loomed in the background of the Games since their inception.

At least since 2010, Circassian activists tried to draw attention to their people's fate under Russian rule, and 'visited and demonstrated both at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and again in London in 2012. … Sochi has been produced and reproduced as a symbol of the tragedy of war and forced expulsion in the nineteenth century that is now widely referred to as the Circassian genocide' (Hansen 2013: 116–117). However, in the whole bid book there is not one single reference to the Circassians or to the Adyghe people, nor of the Kabardin, nor is any other group mentioned explicitly. However, this reference to the Republic of Adygeya in Volume II, Chap. 8 relates to electricity provision (Sochi-2014 2007:93). Otherwise, diversity remains anonymous. While diversity is praised and honoured, as seen above, it is muted at the same time, rendered invisible. Different groups that make up this diversity are simply clustered together as something which is both an asset and a risk. This double assessment apparently regards all ethnic groups in the region.

'Sochi is a diverse, multi-cultural city…representing more than 100 nationalities who welcome almost four million tourists each year', and at the same time, 'Sochi also has an extremely low crime rate, which is a reflection of the proactive policing programmes which have been implemented' (Sochi-2014 2007: 25). Put differently, in one and the same sentence, multiculturalism is presented as something positive, and still as a problem that has been successfully tackled by the authorities. Also, any detailed discussion of what 'proactive policing programmes' means is completely missing. 'Police', then, is reduced to the function of ordering the space, of administering the 'proper distribution of identities, roles and groups' (Darling 2014: 75) in a depoliticised and post-political security governance. What remains is a post-political policing of difference and diversity, instead of an accepting of possible challenges and politically dealing with antagonisms.

Multiculturalism as a threat, however, has been successfully countered according to the bid book. Multiculturalism is not something inherently peaceful or neutral, but rather something riddled with problems and risks that have to be countered, either by 'proactive policing' (otherwise diversity might translate into higher crime rates) or by special consideration of the authorities (otherwise leading to civil disobedience). In any case, diversity is something ambiguous which must be managed, and the bid book declares that this management has been successful in Sochi.

What does it mean to frame difference and diversity as a security threat, as a risk to be managed? According to Darling (2014: 79) it means displacing political antagonisms. Like asylum seekers in Darling's case, so is ethnic diversity in Sochi 'an issue of managerial organisation, coordination and provision' (Darling 2014: 81). Here the Foucauldian, regulative, prohibiting and permitting understanding of security comes to the fore. The point is neither to forbid diversity, nor to allow its free play. The point is to gauge the right *degree* of diversity.

Also terrorism is presented as a problem successfully solved. Again, the only possible terrorism mentioned is the one coming from an unregulated diversity, that is, from 'Chechen illegal armed groups'—beyond that, the explicitly mentioned 'ethnic risk factor' is presented as under control. Other possible risks mentioned are protest by the anti-globalisation movement and by 'citizens concerned by the increase in the cost of housing'. Recently, however, other protest groups have been added to the list, like LGBT rights activists, triggering the authorities to establish a 'protest zone'.

While it comes as no wonder that Chechen terrorism is mentioned in the bid book, since this concern was also voiced internationally, it is telling that, when discussing the 'the threats of diversity' the bid book singles out a certain group, while it remains unspecific when highlighting the advantages of diversity.

The whole approach to diversity in the context of the Olympic Games reflects well the approach to diversity in Russian official discourse, which is full of ambiguities and of hidden and overt preference for everything ethnically Russian. So, while it might be argued that these statements are aimed at countering IOC and Western fears to have the Olympics taking place in the volatile North Caucasus, they tell more, both about the Russian stance on diversity and about international views on multiculturalism. Russia is no different from the international mainstream when it comes to these issues: on the one hand, Russianness is 'spiced up' by diversity, on the other, diversity must stay under control and tutelage. What Slavoj Žižek (1997: 44) claimed concerning the currently prevailing mainstream to multiculturalism in much of Western Europe could also be said about the Russian one in the bid book:

> [*M*]*ulticulturalism is a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a 'racism with a distance'—it 'respects' the Other's identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed 'authentic' community towards which he, the multi-*

culturalist, maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position…. [T]he multiculturalist respect for the Other's specificity is the very form of asserting one's own superiority.

The bid book professes exactly this kind multiculturalism as Žižek describes. On the one hand, it respects, celebrates and even sells diversity, yet on the other, it claims diversity to be dangerous phenomenon that is not allowed to go beyond the role assigned to it from the distance of a privileged universal position.

To counter threats from civil disobedience to terrorism, Sochi is particularly proud of having integrated various security services coming from different levels of the state structure. 'The Russian Federal government and its ministries are fully committed to ensuring the success of the Sochi-2014 Olympic Winter Games through involvement and cooperation of all key security authorities.' (Sochi-2014 2007: 35). The bid book also highlights the lessons learned from other Games, confirming the networking of Olympic cities in terms of security (Boyle 2012: 400).

Boyle also claims that securing the Games is an activity that has become increasingly visible, contending that a semiotic shift occurred which compels the organisers to literally show that all risks have been taken into account (Boyle 2012: 402). On the one hand, this idea is reflected in the Sochi candidature file: it even discusses natural disasters under the general topic of security (Sochi-2014 2007: 27). The bid book also confirms that candidature files are increasingly full of 'projections detailing how many officers and volunteers can be mobilised to protect the Games, what sorts of technological innovations can be deployed, the country's level of expertise developed through previous major events, guarantees from various levels of government, the organisational structure that will coordinate security efforts, and the financial cost of it all' (Boyle 2012: 403). Yet, when it comes to the visuality of the security efforts, the bid book remains widely unspecific. The visual section features generic depictions of sports events.

Conclusions

I have discussed the representation of diversity and security in the Sochi-2014 Candidature file. I have been particularly interested in the representation of the *teloi* and *ethoi* of government reflected in bid book. I have highlighted four issues: (1) modernisation, (2) democracy,

and most prominently (3) the issue of diversity that is tightly connected with (4) the one of ontological security. The first and second topics bear few surprises. Russian officials are proclaiming since a while that Russia has reached the safe haven of modern democracy. The bid book is pretty blunt and direct in this regard and depicts Russia as a country that easily fulfils 'political criteria', to which in fact the IOC has never paid much attention. These criteria seem more administrative or managerial, as the IOC is more concerned with a smooth execution of the Games.

Modernisation has always been high on the Russian political agenda, not least during the Medvedev presidency. Modernisation is also a key issue in the Olympic bid. However, this does not represent a specific feature of the Russian candidature. As a matter of fact, the long-term, sustainable modernisation of the host cities has always been a central topic for all contenders. What can be assumed is that this Olympic aim resonates particularly well with the Russian domestic discourse, while sustainability is included as a must in order to comply with IOC expectations. The single aspect that stands out in Sochi's bid is that modernisation in is straightforwardly presented as serving a narrow elite and not the local population at large.

The question about the exceptionality of Sochi's bid can also be raised regarding multiculturalism. 'Critical Olympic Studies' have shown that the Olympics have regularly exploited the issue of diversity, at least since the 1990s (Giardina et al. 2012). Arguably, the Russian case is characterised by a couple of specific features. First among them is the complex multinational character of the country and of the Sochi region, a complexity that exceeds that of many other societies. In the Russian setting, the relations between ethnic Russians and the other nationalities are in flux, and being Russian is not a matter of citizenship alone. As a matter of fact, not all *rossiianie* (Russian citizens) are *russkie* (ethnic Russians) and not all *russkie* are *rossiianie*. The evidence presented above shows that a special role is assigned to ethnic Russians as 'state-forming people'. No wonder then, that the diversity of the Sochi region itself is not accounted for in any detail. Neither are all the nationalities present in the Sochi region mentioned in detail. The diversity of Sochi seems unspecific and silenced: It is only visible and audible to the extent it suits the commercial aims of the Games. Further complexity is added due to the volatile security situation in the Northern Caucasus. In this regard, the bid book mentions briefly the threat posed by terrorism, which for the organizers seems just to be a threatening form diversity can take. The bid book sells diversity mostly as an asset but interestingly casts it as a possible threat, a threat, however,

which has been tackled successfully by the authorities, according to the bid book. Here, a regulatory understanding of security seems particularly helpful to grasp Russia's stance on multiculturalism: diversity has to stay within its limits, it has to spice up the Olympic bid, however, politically, it is expected to remain silent. The Circassian issue, for example, is completely ignored, because it would cast shadows over the harmonious ethnic picture the bid book tries to draw regarding interethnic relations. The other diversity threat, terrorism, is directly linked to Chechen groups, which, however, are presented as being under control. Hence, this type of diversity, despite its risks, does not threaten Russia's ontological security, rather, it confirms it, because this tamed diversity is part of multi-ethnic Russia.

Hence, all in all, while there might have been differences in the preparation and implementation between the Sochi Olympics and other Games, in its self-promotion, Sochi-2014 widely corresponds to the Olympic mainstream in its discursive repertoires. While there are areas of difference, including the instrumental role the Olympics might play for Putin staying in power, or in the relations to civil society (Orttung 2014: 19), in the way Sochi tried to sell itself as host city, it seems very conventional. That Russia promotes an idealised picture of itself, the problem of overspending, the tightened security, or the combination of sports and politics (Orttung 2014: 18–19), are hardly unique features of Sochi-2014.

The most remarkable element in Sochi's Olympic bid that makes it stand out from other submissions is that diversity assumes a peculiar role in the bid: it is not only hailed as an asset, but it is also introduced as a source of unrest, terrorism or strife, which however has been successfully contained.

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CHAPTER 4

Vanished in the Haze: White Elephants, Environmental Degradation and Circassian Marginalization in Post-Olympics Sochi

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Before the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in 2014 there was an intense international discussion on the wanting Russian record on democracy and human rights and the appropriateness of organizing such mega events in authoritarian settings. These kinds of discussions had a familiar ring to them; similar voices were heard before the Beijing Summer Olympics in 2008. However, what was notable in the scholarly discussion after the Beijing Olympics was a lack of substantiated follow-up with regard to political and social consequences of the Games. Once the Olympic Games were launched, the sports events themselves took over the public limelight. Further to this, media logic seems to dictate that once any Games end, critical discussions are over and done with, and the attention is gradually shifted to the next mega event, in the Sochi case the Summer Games in Rio in 2016 and the FIFA World Cup in football, which will be arranged in several locations in Russia in 2018. In the case of the Sochi Games, the fading from attention was exacerbated by the dramatic events which unfolded around Ukraine and the Russian role in them, which came to dominate newscasts from a time when the Games had barely been concluded.

With regard to Sochi, as for all sites of major sports events, continued critical attention is called for to assess political developments on the local, regional and central levels of the state even after the conclusion of

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the Games. It is essential to try to gauge the extent to which predicted problems materialized, what happened afterwards and what have been the more long-term consequences for the local population and in a wider regional perspective. Post-Olympic Sochi offers an interesting post of observation for scrutinizing local effects of meso-level policies and mega-event arrangements.

The need for a thorough follow-up to what actually befalls the host city after any Olympics can be argued for many reasons. When such a mega event is organized in the setting of an authoritarian political system the need is exacerbated even further, and it could indeed be argued that it is a duty on the part of critically minded scholars to continue to engage with the matters that were of concern before the Olympics. Simple logic says that if these matters were of interest before the Olympics they should be so even after the circus has left the town. In this chapter, we will turn our attention to three areas that before the Sochi Olympics were often discussed as particularly acute problems. The first of these is related to infrastructural investments in the area and the risk of them being turned into so-called white elephants, costing a lot of money and being of no actual use, either by the local population or by tourists to the region. The second theme regards the feared environmental degradation due to the organization of the mega event and the extent to which the prognosticated problems have come to materialize. These two are matters that in one form or another seem to be brought up in relation to all Olympics in contemporary times, possibly with the exception of the Lillehammer Olympics of 1994, which was generally praised for its modesty, small-scale format and back-to-the roots quality (Taras 2013). The third theme, which enjoyed substantial attention before the Olympics, is however specially related to the Sochi Games. It deals with the indigenous Circassian population and the extent to which its members were maltreated, marginalized and squeezed out from the geographical area which constitutes their homeland. Despite their seeming disparity, the basic reason for bringing up the three subjects in the chapter is the same: to argue the need for continued attention to perceived trouble-spots even after the close of the Games.

The chapter follows up on an inventory, edited by the authors in the year before the Olympics, of perceived potential problems related to the Sochi Winter Games. That particular inventory took stock of what the authors of this piece chose to call the Sochi predicament (Petersson and Vamling 2013). The point we would like to make is, thus, that this predicament still exists, even though the world's attention has faded,

and in some respects the problems may have gotten more acute. It is therefore vital to maintain the critical scrutiny, not least for the sake of the local population.

Infrastructure and White Elephants

During the run-up to the Olympics it was noted on several occasions on the highest political levels in Russia that infrastructural development in the region as a whole was a prominent governmental objective. Another aim was to successfully establish Sochi as a winter holiday resort for Russian as well as for foreign tourists (Petersson 2014). In the discussion in the media about effects in Sochi and North Caucasus following Sochi-2014 some observers have, indeed, on the side of benefits, noted modernizing effects such as higher standards of service, a more well-organized reception of tourists and other visitors, and a markedly enhanced availability of cafés and sites of accommodation. All this, it has been argued, makes Sochi a destination that can compete with European resorts as far as facilities are concerned (Kuzmina 2014; Grebennikova 2014). Moreover, the Games have resulted in a huge capacity of luxury accommodation, both in the Olympic village and the city of Sochi but also in the mountains in Krasnaya Polyana.

On the face of it, the Olympics have indeed meant a general improvement of infrastructure in the Sochi region, both with regard to main roads, railroads, air traffic and marine transportation (Kremlin.ru 2014). In connection with the Olympic Winter Games, the Russian International Olympic University opened in Sochi. Fittingly, it was profiled towards management of sport mega events, and it was funded by the Russian tycoon Vladimir Potanin's company Interros, which also owns the Roza Khutor complex in Krasnaya Polyana (Saakov 2014).

During the construction phase many commentators expressed doubts whether all arenas, hotels and other sites would be ready in time for the Games. As a matter of fact, they were. The demand for construction workers was huge during the run-up and attracted large numbers of migrant workers. According to Human Rights Watch (2013), over 16,000 guest workers, mainly from Central Asia, worked on the different Olympic objects. Construction workers interviewed by a local NGO made serious complaints such as that 'employers cheated workers out of wages, required them to work 12 hour shifts with few days off, and confiscated passports and work permits, apparently to coerce workers to remain in exploitative

jobs' (Human Rights Watch 2013). One year after the end of the Games the issue of wage arrears to (now departed) migrant construction workers is still on the agenda. Human rights activists estimate salary debts that have not been paid to Sochi construction workers at more than 30 million RUR (Krasov 2014). The migrant workers continue to try to act on their complaints, and appeals have been made to the Russian State Duma in the matter (Kavkazskii Uzel 2015).

In the post-Olympics phase Sochi faces the same problem as most, if not all, other Olympic sites: to find an effective and alternative use of the infrastructure that was created during a highly compressed period to meet a frantic demand which peaked during a very limited time. In this process the familiar attempt to deny the emergence of so-called white elephants has appeared. In the annual Direct Line broadcast live by the Channel One, Rossiya-1 and Rossiya-24 TV channels and the Mayak, Vesti FM and Radio Rossii radio stations, President Vladimir Putin was clearly annoyed when someone from the audience raised the question of whether the Olympic Park area in Sochi was not in fact turning into a white elephant. The president reminded his listeners that he had previously elaborated on the subject and again gave assurances that appropriate plans had been made for the sports facilities in the area. In doing so, his answer may not have come across as totally convincing: 'Some of them will be turned into exhibition centres, shopping malls; some will be used as concert halls; some ice rinks will still be used for their initial purpose' (Putin 2014b).

Different estimates are given concerning the actual number of visitors to Sochi in the period after the Games. Not very surprisingly perhaps, many of the new hotels appear now to stand almost empty most of the time (Saakov 2014). In a somewhat unexpected turn of the discussion during the aforementioned Direct Line with Putin in April 2014, one listener expressed his fears that the annexation of Crimea would have negative effects for Sochi since the competition for domestic Russian tourism would increase. Now, he argued, Russians not wishing or not being able to go abroad during their holidays would have one more destination to choose from. However, Putin reassured his audience, Sochi and Crimea were not likely to compete for the same segments of domestic tourism. Many tourists who would not be able to afford the price tags encountered in Sochi would opt for Crimea instead. In other words, Sochi with its top-notch hotels and luxury apartments would not focus on the same clientele as Crimea (Putin 2014b). Again, however, Putin's insistence rather

seemed to underline the risk for emergence of white elephants, especially as Russia at the time of his statement was hard hit economically by the combined effects of rapidly dropping oil prices, a weak world economy and the consequences of Western sanctions against Russia in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea. So, one could reasonable ask who could really afford going to Sochi on holidays?

Endeavouring to host other sport events is otherwise an evident option for using newly built arenas and hotels. In October 2014, Sochi organized the Russian Formula-1 Grand Prix (Sochi Autodrom 2014), which is planned to be an annually recurring event. In November 2014 the World Chess Championship convened in Sochi (Feeney 2014) and in December the ice hockey tournament Channel One Cup 2014 was organized there (Petersson 2014). In 2018 Sochi's Fisht Olympic Stadium will be used as one of the arenas during the FIFA World Cup in football.

For its part the World Chess Championship brought back high politics to Sochi in a somewhat unexpected manner. In a public meeting with Putin, the President of the World Chess Federation, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, heaped scorn on the defending World Champion, the Norwegian chess player Magnus Carlsen. With reference to the political climate not being sufficiently calm, the latter had first declined to defend his title in Sochi. Not until Carlsen was threatened with being stripped of his title and having to face a fine of several millions of dollars did he accept Sochi as a venue. Also, Ilyumzhinov went on, all previous world champions of chess, including the oppositional Garry Kasparov, had been invited to attend the opening of the game. Many prominent former champions had accepted, whereas Kasparov in principle had been willing to come but had expressed doubts whether he would actually be permitted to leave again if he were to turn up. According to the website transcripts, this observation drew some laughter, and considering the presence of Vladimir Putin, it is likely that he too joined in the merriment. At least he remarked that Kasparov was very welcome to attend. Putin noted that even if he had 'not turned out to be the most effective politician so far … he is an outstanding chess player' (President of Russia 2014a).

Environmental Degradation

In economic terms Sochi-2014 was the most expensive Winter Games so far in Olympic history (Müller 2014). Usually, the costs are measured in money alone. It is rarely mentioned that Sochi-2014 is also likely to have been the most costly Games ever in terms of the damage done to nature.

The most serious environmental issues that occurred in connection with the Olympics during the years 2006–2013 are summarized in Caucasian Knot (2014) and in a report by Gazaryan and Shevchenko (2014).

A circumstance that stands out in the choice of Sochi as the venue for winter Olympic Games is that it relied on combining winter sports facilities with a subtropical coastal climate and an adjacent alpine zone, which made construction work both complicated and expensive (Petersson and Vamling 2013). The Sochi region is also a region that is well-known for its ecological uniqueness, which posed additional challenges for the construction work. North of Sochi is the Sochi National Park, established in 1983 as one of the first national parks in the Russian Federation. Further to the northeast is the Western Caucasus Reserve that was inscribed into the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1999 with the justification that 'it is of global significance as a centre of plant diversity' and 'the only large mountain area in Europe that has not experienced significant human impact, containing extensive tracts of undisturbed mountain forests unique on the European scale' (UNESCO World Heritage List 2015). The Imeretian Lowlands, a coastal area in Adler where the Olympic coastal cluster was built, were well-known wetlands with unique flora and fauna and an important place for migratory birds (Genin 2013). Thus, notwithstanding the ecological uniqueness and sensitivity of both the mountain and coastal clusters, the authorities decided to build the Olympic infrastructure there, with little concern for environmental values that risked being lost. Notably, the detrimental environmental impact is glossed over in the official reports about infrastructural development in the Sochi region.

One area that has been particularly hard hit by the construction is the banks of the river Mzymta, which flows from Krasnaya Polyana to Adler by the Black Sea. For several years large quantities of gravel for construction were extracted there (Ria Novosti 2009), resulting in changes in the relief of the riverbed. The Olympic project included the building of both a highway and a railroad, from Adler to Krasnaya Polyana, connecting the coastal and alpine Olympic complexes. In this process relict boxwood forests were cut down to make way for the modern highway. Not only were vast areas of these forests cut down, but remaining parts of the forests were severely damaged and dehydrated (Gazaryan 2010). It was later agreed that new trees were to be planted to try to make up for this. However, the situation was made even worse by the fact that devastating box tree moths were accidently introduced together with the new plants into the habitat of the Caucasian boxwood tree. Even though the damage was discovered

in 2012, no appropriate measures were undertaken and the insects spread beyond the Sochi area, thereby threatening other relict boxwood forests in the Caucasus (Ekologicheskaya vakhta po Severnomu Kavkazu 2014).

The extraction of enormous quantities of sand and gravel occurred not only in Mzymta but also in other mountain rivers. This distorted the river banks and changed water levels, resulting in an increased number of mudslides and flooding. Akhshtyr is one example of a village in Sochi where all water disappeared (Kravchenko 2014b) due to the construction work. The disposal of waste from the huge building sites was another problem. Dumps, some illegal, sprung up in different places around the city (Digges 2014). Moreover, Sochi does not have sufficient capacity to take care of all its sewage, which means that some of the polluted water is flushed directly into the Black Sea (Kravchenko 2014a).

During the initial phases of preparations for the Games, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) cooperated with the Organizing Committee of the Sochi Olympics. Starting in 2009, the Committee formulated action plans for the ecological development in four key areas: Zero Waste Games, Climate Neutral Games, Games in Harmony with Nature and Enlightenment Games (UNEP 2015a). The organization undertook six expert missions to Sochi and Moscow and issued recommendations on how to improve the environmental standards of the event. Some of the results achieved were that the sliding venues and the Olympic Mountain Village were relocated away from the UNESCO World Heritage site and that a restoration plan was set up for the Mzymta river basin (UNEP 2015a). Among concerns that had been voiced in the first mission report were that all the buildings and infrastructure had to be built from scratch with resultant high environmental impact—and the added uncertainty of whether these brand-new structures would ever be adequately used after the Games (UNEP 2015b).

The authorities have claimed that the Olympic construction process has been fully in compliance with environmental standards, and Vladimir Putin has even asserted that water quality has improved in the river Mzymta thanks to the newly constructed roads that have resulted in less exhaust fume emission from cars passing up and down the mountain side (Putin 2014a). Some progress has no doubt been noted in the environmental area (Ria Novosti 2010), but the actual implementation has often been far away from the green standards that were set up before the Games (Time 2014). Environmental organizations have devoted much effort to the critical monitoring of the process.

WWF-Russia was one of the environmental organizations that together with Greenpeace gave advice to Sochi-2014 in the process of planning and implementation of the Games in accordance with green standards. WWF has long experience working with environmental perspectives on sports events, including the Olympic Games. However, in 2010 WWF-Russia and Greenpeace reached a point after which they decided not to continue and thus terminated their monitoring. On its webpage WWF-Russia comments on the main environmental mistakes occurring in connection with the Sochi Games (WWF-Russia 2015):

> *The location for the sites was chosen incorrectly. From the environmental point of view, the decision was bad because the whole mountain cluster is located on the territory of the Sochi National Park. […] Because of the haste, Olympic organizers did not conduct a topographic survey for construction. […] Due to lack of basic environmental information about the area (ungulate concentration sites, migration routes), Sochi-2014 organizers did not implement any activities to at least partly compensate the damage. […] Under the pretext of Olympic needs, the nature conservation legislation was significantly weakened, especially parts concerning protected nature areas and environmental assessment of construction projects. […] The Government refused to fund the post-Olympic environmental rehabilitation program […].*

This was in other words a harsh evaluation. Environmental organizations, as in the case of WWF-Russia and Greenpeace, either withdrew from the monitoring and consulting on environmental issues, or have been downright harassed by the authorities, as in the case of North Caucasus Environmental Watch (NCEW). Several activists of the organization have been detained because of their protests against the environment degradation caused by the Olympics. For instance, during the very days of the Winter Olympics, the environmentalist Evgeny Vitishko was sentenced to a 3-year imprisonment (Caucasian Knot 2014; The Guardian 2014), while others were forced into exile. In the autumn of 2014 the Court of the Adyge republic decided to suspend the NGO North Caucasus Environmental Watch (NatPress 2014b), which has since appealed to the High Court of the Russian Federation to have the sentence revoked.

The Circassian Issue: Before Sochi, After Ukraine

For the Circassians and their situation as the marginalized and squeezed out indigenous population of Northwest Caucasus, the mega event of Sochi presented an opportunity to draw the world's attention to their

plight. However, earlier research has shown that marginalized and socially excluded groups seldom profit from the organization of mega events on their home ground (Minnaert 2012). Did this apply also to the Circassians and the Sochi Olympics? Or was there at least one local collective winner due to the organization of the Sochi Winter Games?

The Circassian situation was therefore paradoxical in the sense that whereas this North Caucasian indigenous group fiercely opposed the very organization of the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, the Games themselves meant a unique chance for the Circassians to make their voices heard internationally. During the run-up to the Olympics the Circassian people suddenly had a global audience, large segments of which were ready and prepared to listen while they communicated their claims for recognition of their cause. This constituted, quite simply, their 15 min of fame, a rare and short-lived period of celebrity and world-wide attention (Petersson and Vamling 2013: 9).

Besides being the year of the Sochi Olympic Games, 2014 was also the 150th anniversary of the end of the Russo–Caucasian war and the deportation of the Circassian population from the Northwest Caucasian Black Sea coast and inlands. To the Circassians, the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi and Krasnaya Polyana played a special role. After a long and fierce resistance to Imperial Russia's conquest of their part of the Caucasus the Circassians were in 1864 finally defeated by the tsarist troops in Sochi (Hansen 2013). Sochi was the last 'capital' of the Circassians, and it was in Kbaada (now Krasnaya Polyana) that the Russians held their victory parade, following the last battles. Sochi had therefore gained a special symbolic significance for the Circassians. After the Russian victory most Circassians were forced into exile, resulting in a large diaspora residing mainly in today's Turkey, Syria, Jordan and the USA. The brutal warfare against the Circassians and their deportation is viewed as genocide by today's Circassians. In the Sochi area today, Circassians live only in a few scattered villages and in the North Caucasus, predominantly in the republics Adygeya, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria. According to the 2010 census (Vserossiiskaya perepis naseleniya 2010), the total number of Circassians (Adyghe, Cherkess and Kabardians) in the Russian Federation is 715,000. The Circassian diaspora is estimated to be two to five million (Hansen 2013).

In the turbulent years of Boris Yeltsin's presidencies, official Russia came close to recognizing the demands of the Circassians as legitimate. The parliaments of the two North Caucasian republics with the largest Circassian populations in 1992 (Kabardino-Balkaria) and in 1996 (Adygeya) adopted resolutions on the Circassian genocide. In 1994, at the

130th anniversary of the end of the war, president Yeltsin characterized the Caucasian War of the nineteenth century as a 'courageous struggle by the Caucasian peoples not only for survival on their native lands but also for the maintenance of their own culture'. At the time he also expressed readiness to approach the problems of repatriation, whereby 'the return of the Caucasian emigrants to their historic homeland should be solved on an international level through negotiations between all parties concerned' (Adygi.ru 2011). At the time, Yeltsin connected his recognition to the simultaneous processes of construction of rule of law and the prioritization of human values going on in Russia (Adygi.ru 2011). It is however a well-known fact that Putin's Russia in comparison has been characterized by the re-emergence of authoritarian policies. The contextual preconditions for the Circassian struggle are therefore vastly different than they were then. Indicatively, in May 2013, Circassian organizations appealed to Vladimir Putin and to the Federal Council of the Russian Federation to recognize the Circassian genocide by the Russian Empire during the Caucasian Wars (Adyge Heku 2013). In their appeal the Circassian organizations vainly reminded President Putin of the position of his predecessor. And the rest has been silence.

The resistance against Sochi and Krasnaya Polyana as the venue for the Winter Olympics served as a strongly mobilizing force for the Circassians, both in the diaspora and in the North Caucasian republics of Adygea, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria (Hansen 2013). The issue served to bring different groups of the diaspora together and strengthened, not least through the establishment of the oppositional nosochi.com website, transnational interaction in the diaspora (Kaya 2014). Since the Circassians were the only indigenous population of the Sochi region, they were deeply disappointed to be sidestepped during the Olympic opening ceremony in Sochi—as were indeed all other Caucasian nations (Kapaeva 2014). The official line was tough, however, and in a statement by President Vladimir Putin at a press conference during the Games not a trace of recognition of the legitimacy of the Circassian claims could be discerned. Instead, Putin stonewalled, and argued that the "Circassian factor" was used for undue attempts by the West to hamper and slow down developments in the Russian Federation itself:

> *A theory took shape in 'cold war' times—it was called the deterrence theory. This theory and practical actions were aimed at hindering the development of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, now we are seeing the same thing—the*

remains of this deterrence theory tend to come out into the open here and there. Whenever Russia demonstrates any positive development, the appearance of a new strong player, of competition, is bound to cause concern in the economy, in politics and in the security sphere. We see attempts to deter Russia here and there. Unfortunately, this had to do with the Olympic project and the Circassian factor was used as an instrument.

However, frankly speaking, as soon as I realized that such attempts are being made I did not have any doubt that this was a futile attempt. I know what the mood is among the Circassians, I know the leaders of the Circassian organizations personally, and I know what their attitude is to both their native land and to their home country—Russia. It was obvious for me that this had no prospect (*President of Russia* 2014b).

This is for several reasons a revealing statement. Not only was there a discernible attempt at connecting Circassian protests with the Western encirclement that often used to be part of Soviet-time rhetoric and has been brought to life in an increasingly harsh political climate of twenty first century Putinism; the argumentation also contains an opening towards condemning the Circassian demands as orchestrated from abroad and thus the results of action by a fifth column inside the country. It connotes a stern warning to the Circassian opposition not to rock the boat or else face the consequences. There is also a visible opening towards explaining away and dismissing the Circassian complaints by claiming that moderate and mainstream elements of the Circassians do not subscribe to this line of activism. This particular element is in short a display of the classical politics of divide and rule.

Two days before the Games were even closed, political events in Ukraine took over media attention and eclipsed the Circassian issue completely. This was the time of the mass killings at Maidan, the popular outrage against president Yanukovich and his ultimate ouster. The media in the West and in Russia were from now on only marginally interested in events in the North Caucasus. The Circassian plight was no longer hot news, not even news, to the global audience, and the group's 15 minutes of fame were gone (Petersson and Vamling, 2015).

Even so, in the context of the Ukrainian crisis and the deteriorated relations between Russia and the West, the Circassians have continued to try to accomplish that those acts once committed by tsarist Russia be more widely recognized as genocide. Quite clearly, however, the Circassians have become further marginalized in the bigger political game. Their voices are now barely audible due to the general

noise on the line. In May 2014, on the eve of the 150th anniversary of the end of the Russo–Caucasian war, the Circassian Political and Cultural International Center 'Fitingha' (a Circassian organization based in Israel) together with representatives from different Circassian organizations in North Caucasus, turned to the Ukrainian parliament and president with an appeal to recognize the acts committed by the Russian Empire against the Circassian people as genocide (Circassia Times 2014). In June 2014 a second appeal to the same effect was sent to the Ukrainian leadership from Circassians in North Caucasus and abroad (Kapaeva and Gutiakulova 2014). Their move to turn to the Ukrainian authorities for support of their cause is not likely to have increased their popularity in the Kremlin, though. The reason why the Circassians chose to make their appeal to Ukraine at this particular point in time was probably that the leaders in Kyiv had clearly embarked on a democratic political orientation and therefore were prone to support the Circassian cause (Shazzo 2014). Indicatively, commitments were made by representatives of the Ukrainian Radical Party in September 2014 and in February 2015 to raise the matter of recognition in the Rada, the Ukrainian parliament (NatPress 2015). The two appeals to Ukraine to recognize the Circassian genocide were also followed by an appeal from Circassians in ten countries to Polish leaders on Poland's Independence Day, November 11, 2014 (NatPress 2014a). However, so far Georgia is the only foreign country to have formally recognized the Circassian genocide (Parliament of Georgia 2011).

The Circassian movement in the homeland and in the diaspora includes numerous NGOs and activists with a wide range of different political agendas: nationalists, sovereigntists, centrists, culturalists, and accommodationists (Zhemukhov 2012). Although the appeals to Ukraine and Poland seem to have had widespread support among the Circassians, there is a certain split between diaspora activists and radical representatives in the homeland, on the one hand, and more moderate and mainstream elements in the homeland, on the other. This was the kind of division alluded to by Putin in his statement. The moderate sentiments are represented by the prominent Circassian activist Asker Sokht, leader of Adyge Hase, that is, the International Circassian Association branch of the Krasnodar region, who argues that the question of recognition is an internal issue that should be dealt with within the Russian Federation. This position is also shared by the Adyge Hase of Adygeya (Adzhieva 2014). However, Mukhamed Cherkesov, leader of Adyge Hase of Karachaevo-Cherkessia, supports the Circassian appeal to the Ukrainian leadership:

> [*W*]*e have turned to the leadership of our country several times, we have asked for meetings. Unfortunately, Russia has answered us with silence. We have said that the "Circassian question" is an internal issue, but Russia has not heard us.* […] *We were hoping that Russia finally would listen to us at the 150th anniversary of the end of the Russo-Caucasian war, but…* [*h*]*aving lost hope … that Russia would ever turn to the "Circassian question" many Circassian activists have begun to look for other ways* (Kapaeva and Gutiakulova 2014).

Andzor Kabard, a well-known Circassian activist, also seems to side with this standpoint: 'If you take Circassian activists who are citizens of Russia, then the level of support for the appeal to Ukraine is very high. In the diaspora, it's even higher' (Adzhieva 2014, 40–41).

The Russian authorities have responded to the appeals to Ukraine and Poland with tighter restrictions on the activities of Circassian activists (Dzutsev 2014). For instance, the editor-in-chief of NatPress, Aslan Shazzo, was interrogated at the Center for Fighting Extremism in Adygea for having published articles on the appeals (NatPress 2014c). In late July 2014, Timur Kuashev, an oppositional Circassian author, disappeared and was found dead on the following day (Shevchenko 2014). Earlier during the year Kuashev had approached the so-called 'Circassian question' from a legal perspective and discussed a number of, according to his views, interrelated issues, such as the mass arrests of young Circassians protesting in Nalchik in early February under the banner of 'Sochi—land of genocide', the unwillingness of Russian authorities to grant Circassian refugees from Syria repatriation; and double standards evident when Russian passports were distributed to Russian-speaking citizens in and from Ukraine (Kuashev 2014).

Another case against a Circassian activist that has attracted attention was the persecution in 2014 of Andzor Akhokhov of Kabardino-Balkaria, who organized the protests in Nalchik on February 7, 2014 against the Sochi Games. According to his own testimony he was subjected to torture and police abuse during his detention. After his release the police searched his home and criminal charges on illegal arms possession were raised against him. Despite pressure not to do so, in March 2014 Akhokhov made an official complaint to the Court and Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kabardino-Balkaria concerning the torture and abuse that he had been subjected to (Kavkazskii Uzel 2014). Akhokhov's case has gained attention also outside Kabardino-Balkaria. Protests were organized in Turkey in support of his case (Kapaeva 2014), and representatives of the Circassian diaspora in several countries signed a statement condemning the violence exerted by the

Russian authorities. By way of a general characterization of the situation, actions against North Caucasian human rights organizations and other NGOs as well, as individual activists continue as before, but with notably scant media coverage in Russia and outside it.

Conclusion

As this discussion of some of the key problems that were anticipated to hit Sochi in connection with the Winter Olympics has shown, the legacy of the Games is a rather heavy one for the city and for the region. In the first two cases discussed, on the emergence of white elephants and on feared environmental degradation, problems were to a large extent anticipated and the organization of the Games was rightly feared early on by activists. The problems were predicted to occur, and occur they did. They continue to fester even in the absence of international attention, and it is vital not to forget this. The international community has an obligation here, not least in view of future mega events that are likely to take place in other authoritarian states in the future.

Even if this basic obligation of course remains, the situation of the indigenous Circassians was somewhat different from the concerns about useless infrastructural overspending and environmental decay. For the powers-that-be, the Circassian activism and the international attention it evoked was no doubt one of the politically most vexing problems of the preparation phase, but for the Circassians themselves the occasion meant a rare chance to realize some collective goals and improve on their marginalized position in their homeland in particular and in the Russian Federation in general. The Sochi Games served as a strongly mobilizing factor for Circassians in the diaspora and also in the region itself; had it not been for the Games this mobilization and strengthening of the Circassian movement would not have taken place. The Sochi Olympics, both during the period before and during the Games themselves, brought the Circassians international media attention they would not have enjoyed otherwise.

Events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine have since had a profound influence on Europe, Russia and the Sochi region. In the wake of these dramatic developments the Circassian question—along with any remaining side effects of the capital injections forcibly made in the Sochi region in the run-up to the Olympics—seems to have completely vanished in the haze. For the international community it is again a moral obligation to keep up the attention and continue to hold the region under scrutiny. The problems remain even if they have been eclipsed by bigger events.

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PART II

Post-Soviet Autocracies and Mega-Events

CHAPTER 5

Ice Hockey World Championship in Belarus: Political Context

Ryhor Nizhnikau and Niko Alvari

In his interview with the TV channel Dozhd', Alyaksandr Lukashenka surprisingly admitted that after 20 years of his presidency 'Belarus failed to produce a national idea'. This statement seems even more striking in that it was articulated at a high point of the Ice Hockey World Championship (IHWC) in Minsk, which was designed to celebrate the successes of Lukashenka 'the Builder' in creating an independent and prosperous Belarus. What was planned as one of the main highlights of his presidency, due to quickly unfolding external circumstances, turned into an event of a different purpose, exemplified by the steps towards the convergence of official and opposition discourses united in their support of Belarusian sovereignty. These initial steps were contradictory and confusing, having combined elements of Soviet heritage with Europeanization, but they also showed the government understands that a more unifying nation-building process is necessary.

The role played by sports in Belarusian domestic politics makes this case of particular value. Sport has a special place in Belarusian politics and nation-building projects: it can augment the understanding of what motivates government actions and priorities. The Belarusian government has used sport to promote its policies and agenda both domestically and internationally. As we show below, mega events can effectively serve the purposes of the incumbent government. In this regard, the IHWC played a special role for the Lukashenka regime, fulfilling two major goals.

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Firstly, as originally contemplated in 2009 when Belarus won the bid to host the IHWC, the championship should have crowned the domestic socio-economic achievements of the regime. It would take its place among Lukashenka's major accomplishments, which frame him as the 'builder' of the Belarusian state and nation. As in Soviet mythology, vis-à-vis socio-economic achievements in a difficult geopolitical situation (NATO at the border), Belarusian 'official nationalism' (as Verdery would describe it) is built upon the major accomplishments of its 'enlightenment': the project of a national library, scientific exploration (the 'Belka' satellite project) and sport achievements. In his nation-building policies, sport is used to influence value orientations of citizens, instil patriotism and show the nation's independence and uniqueness. Hence, as Lukashenka said to the participants of the London Olympics in 2012, '[T]he key is not participation, but victory. This is my order to you on behalf of Belarusian people' (Belta 2012). Similarly, as Belarusian football players are well aware, failure is a 'shame for the nation' (Sport Express 2014).

Secondly, IHWC was intended to serve the purpose of external image building. Since Lukashenka stepped into office, the image of Belarus has changed from one of emerged mysterious, post-Soviet republic to the unpleasant status of last dictatorship of Europe. Since the deterioration of relations with Russia in 2007 Belarus regularly engaged with the West, leading to the suspension of EU sanctions and attempts to involve Belarus in EU neighbourhood projects. Yet, significant Russian concessions in energy and trade deals on the eve of the presidential elections in 2010 in Belarus resulted in a crackdown on protests and subsequently the deterioration of relations with the EU. After the crackdown, Belarus needed to improve its image abroad. For that, the IHWC would be useful.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the interaction between sport activity and nation building in the Belarusian context. The key question is How are sports used and who uses them, in particular, what role is played by the IHWC domestically and externally, and how do Ukrainian events impact it?

We will look at peculiarities of nation-building, the divided state of the 'unbuilt' society in Belarus, and follow with the official nationalism of the Belarusian regime and its alternatives, doing so to find out what role sport plays in Belarusian politics. The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows: First, the role of mega events in developing countries is outlined, including their domestic and external dimensions. Second, the extant ruptures within the Belarusian society will be put in this context. Third, the

IHWC is discussed using media analysis of the state and non-state major outlets to trace political reverberations of the event.

Mega-Events in Developing Countries

Sports comprise a popular cultural phenomenon that is a useful asset for governments to promote their domestic and/or international agendas. Sports are a part of popular culture, which can be used as a tool in different contexts (Black and Nauright 1998: 15) while potentially increasing a nation's 'cultural' and 'social capital' (Black and Van der Westhuizen 2004) or domestic pride in the national team's achievements. But it can also increase tensions and divisions within the society.

Sport and sporting mega events in particular have two important purposes: Domestically, besides the developmental and infrastructural gains achieved through mega events—sports are instrumental in building or reenforcing national identity, binding individuals around successes in the sports arena. Sport plays a supportive function for construction of national identity at different levels, in particular to alienate otherness and to glorify or to substitute one identity with another (Cronin and Mayall 1998). Mega events can potentially further legitimize emerging national identity and political order (Black and Van der Westhuizen 2004). In particular, in Soviet times sports were actively used for political manipulations in nation building (Lin et al. 2008: 26).

Internationally, sport as a form of transnational culture can promote interactions between people and foreign policy objectives (Merkel 2009). 'Image management' is a key strand of public diplomacy, which is an important soft power tool for shaping international relations (Grix and Houlihan 2014). Public diplomacy uses traditional diplomatic channels and is generally understood as an instrument for securing foreign policy interests, whereas 'branding' is an element of marketing to project a state's image abroad (Grix and Houlihan 2014: 576–7). As a state's 'image' is seen as one of its key assets in the international arena (Melissen 2005), the role of image management is increasingly important as it can help alter external perceptions of a country. Sports can play an important part in this process. Elite sport performance and the hosting of sports mega events are seen as key sources of international prestige effectively promoting a country's attractiveness and improving its perception abroad.

This process is especially important for states that are negatively perceived internationally and have negative national images, for example,

due to economic hardship or human rights issues in such countries as Belarus, which has been infamously dubbed by many as 'the last dictatorship of Europe' and the most 'Soviet' country. These countries have much to gain from using soft power through international sporting events to alter their images. As a cultural part of a state's soft power, sports can build positive imagery by attracting the attention of people and show the achievements and success of the hosting nation by projecting a particular identity on the international stage that is attractive to others (Melissen 2005) and also to distinguish the host country from others (Nye 2008).

However, mega events do not always produce a clear-cut benefit for host nations. Sports events may increase understanding, celebrate commonalities, facilitate cooperation and bridge differences, but they also reinvigorate political rivalries (Sugden and Bairner 1999). Although they provide an opportunity to boost international image or foster nation building, they also can lead to various unintended controversies. Sport can be a double-edged sword: it may bring divided nations together, but it can also increase tensions and conflicts (Merkel 2009). Thus, sport nationalism during mega events contravenes the 'official nationalism' promoted by the government. However, this side of sports and its potential to cause and reinforce differences is often neglected.

Finally, there is a particular value of mega events held in developing countries that lack democratic institutions. Sports mega events have a potential to catalyse democratisation and improve the human rights record in authoritarian regimes (Van Der Merwe and Van Der Westhuizen 2006). It is argued in the literature that the potential political impacts of hosting the events should be trimmed for authoritarian regimes (Van Der Merwe and Van Der Westhuizen 2007).

A human rights record and democracy can be promoted indirectly through the enhancement and building of 'social capital' in the civil society, or directly through a complex set of external incentives and pressures (Van Der Merwe and Van Der Westhuizen 2007; Black and Van Der Westhuizen 2004). As it has been shown, hosting a mega event may lead to eventual political liberalization, which may raise expectations from pro-democratic groups. In successful cases, this may result in an increase in the self-belief of the political elite, a reinvigoration of patriotism (effectively cornerstones of a national identity) among the general public, and economic gains through increased tourist flow and investment (Grix and Houlihan 2014). However, as examples of Mexico, Zimbabwe or Belarus

show, these outcomes are only hypothetical, and—contrary to expectations—mega events may lead to further regime entrenchment (Van Der Merwe and Van Der Westhuizen 2007).

Domestic Context: Incomplete Nation Building

To stay in power for 20 years, Lukashenka did not rely only on coercion and Russian support. More than that, he has developed a tailor-made ideology, which some referred to as 'self-delusional'. As Lukashenka commented, a state without ideology cannot live and develop: 'Ideology for a state is what the immune system is for a living organism' (Telegraf 2011). This ideology, applied with flexibility and skill, formed the cornerstone of Lukashenka's power in Belarus, much more than cheap Russian energy helped him to generate a wide domestic consensus over his policies. Yet, recent events in Ukraine showed that Belarus needs to put more effort into its nation-building process.

The Belarusian state chose to follow a model of 'socialist nationalism' (Verdery 1993), in which political rights and ethnic or cultural peculiarities were substituted with socio-economic rights and the overarching value of loyalty to the state. Official nationalism in Belarus has neither any cultural requirement, nor does it presuppose command or knowledge of the Belarusian language or history, but highly values political loyalty to the regime.

The foundation of the 'official nationalism' is the idea of the national exclusiveness of Belarus, its special model characterized either as a 'bridge' between Europe and Russia or as a 'third way' developmental model (Lukyanov 2006, cf. Bekus 2008: 280). Lukashenka's 1994 election programme was the first manifestation of the official state ideology, stressing patriotism, collectivism, social justice and Slavic unity. This vision emphasized the closeness to Russia, Slavic unity and Orthodox values; however, it was also used to highlight national sovereignty and the special role of Belarusian traditions and its unique development (Zaprudnik 2003, cf. Bekus 2008: 279).

This ideational cocktail was nevertheless sufficient to create a temporary consensus within the society supported by the rapid economic growth of the early 2000s as generated by Russian subsidies. Soviet legacy and tradition was the framework on which the nation-building processes of post-Soviet Belarus were put into practice. Moreover, it was instrumental in consolidating power domestically by instilling the values of the 'strong

hand' and strong presidential power, and highlighting ideas of Belarusian traditions, mentality and collectivist values as a counterbalance to the Western values of democracy and a market economy.

From this perspective, the Belarusian nation is a Soviet product. As Rubinau, once chief ideologue of Lukashenka's regime pointed out, today's Belarus appeared from a brotherly family of Soviet republics, where Russia played a particular role (Bekus 2008). Thus, one of the key foundations for the 'official nationalism' is its reference to the Soviet past and in particular the Great Patriotic War. Equally important is the exclusion of otherness, the eradication of dissent. Hence, dissenting groups are officially portrayed as not being Belarusians but rather as a 'fifth column', 'parasites' or 'traitors'.

Perhaps Lukashenka's most significant gain was his identification with national sovereignty and his ability to convince many Belarusians that he is the only guarantor of the Belarus independence. Most of his actions are identified as either fortifying or fighting for national sovereignty. Judging from opinion polls and reactions from Belarusian society, this part of official ideology does resonate with a part of the Belarusian population.

Yet, in light of the events in Ukraine and the existing domestic divisions, the lack of coherent and uniting nation building becomes a threat to national sovereignty. Official ideology played its role for the transitional period, but it seems insufficient for the proper nation-building project. With a firm statehood foundation, Belarusians still lack a cohesive and clear sense of their national identity, which formed an ideational vacuum 20 years after the independence.

Divided Society

Since the 1980s, proponents of an alternative Belarusianness promote their own visions of Belarus' identity, one built upon historical and cultural narratives that—despite being heavily criticized (and delegitimized) by the official discourse—are represented by a few competing narratives that envision a different political imagery. One key alternative sees Belarus a part of Europe; the other positions it as a self-sufficient country between the West and the East, a product of European values and a part of European history and culture. A second alternative favours neutrality and equal relationship with both Russia and Europe (Bekus 2008). These discourses are presented in the newspapers *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaya Volya*, along with online websites such as charter97.org or belpartisan.org.

Both alternatives are united against the pro-Russian official policies, and have popular appeal. The Russian vector is heavily criticized and regarded as potentially detrimental to national interests and sovereignty. Dissenters see Belarus as an integral part of Western civilization. Both visions share a disdain of the official language policies, emphasizing the Belarusian language as a key priority.

The co-existence of official and alternative discourses creates separate public spheres with their own sources of information and their own organizations. The latter does not have access to the state resources necessary for nation building, but the former could neither defeat nor displace the symbols of the alternative discourse without co-opting them. The divisions of the Belarusian society are well illustrated by opinion polls, in which around 40% of the population support the Russian vector and 40%—the EU vector (NISEPI 2014b). The division is highlighted by the self-identification of 52% of Belarusians with 'the Soviet people', yet in the meantime Alison et al. found that Belarusians show more Europeanness than do Russians or Ukrainians, and they know more about the EU than their Slavic neighbours. (Alison et al. 2006, cf. Bekus 2008: 278).

Interesting is the division between supporters of European or Russian integration. The number of proponents of the integration with Russia has decreased since late 1990s from a peak of 60% in 2003 to around 30% in 2013, while the opposite trend was observed among the supporters of European integration. Overall, the support for both vectors is equally strong and consistent, although the trend for EU support is growing (NISEPI 2014a). Moreover, this division extends to the trust/distrust in Lukashenka, government and business and the developmental model of the country (Shraiban 2014).

In light of Ukrainian events, the Belarusian society found itself in a controversial position: first, these events spurred support for Russia and integration with it to 60%. Secondly, a majority (67.8 %) found the annexation of Crimea legitimate, but only 28.4% supported the pro-Russian movements in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions; 39.9% opposed it (Vardamatsky 2014). A spinoff is the result of June 2014 poll, which showed that 14.2 and 16.5% respectively would fight with their arms or support Russia's intervention in Belarus, whereas 47.7% would adapt to the new situation (NISEPI 2014a).

This result only shows the absence of a unifying national identity. Lukashenka's ability to fill the existing void depends on his perception of the vulnerability of his position and on the availability of policy solutions

at hand (Leshchenko 2011). The prospect of merging the official and oppositional discourses is questionable; however, there are some common points between the two. First, both Belarusian elites and the opposition valorise the independence of the country. It is highlighted and prioritized by both official and alternative discourses and well represented in the policies of the government and the narrative of the opposition. Second, the Belarusian language can be a uniting value. Lukashenka recently brought up its importance, using several occasions to show his appreciation for the language and how he valued it. Thirdly, Russia's policies in the region can be a uniting factor for Belarus' state and non-state elites, as a jointly shared value of independence is seen as a threat by the larger power in light of the events in the Ukraine.

Sports and Politics

As in the Soviet Union, sports, and especially ice hockey, have a special place in Belarus. On one hand, sport successes have been an identity-building tool, a showcase of socio-economic development (the building of ice hockey palaces, for instance) and part of the personal image of Lukashenka. The president is an ice hockey enthusiast, and in 2014 he celebrated 20 years in the presidential office. The championship is the biggest ice hockey tournament in the world after the Winter Olympics—games that Belarus is very unlikely to host in the near future.

Administratively, sport is a part of the political system. As the ministry of sports and tourism highlights, 'Belarus is by right called a sports nation. The state is committed to and shoulders the responsibility for the development of the sports sector' (Ministry of Sport and Tourism 2014). In return, sports are used to show the achievements of the Belarusian model and frequently represent state media Lukashenka in the company of Belarusian Olympic winners and best athletes like Viktoria Azarenka or Darya Domracheva, whom Lukashenka, in his words, personally assisted to win the gold at the Olympics biathlon race.

Sportsmen get scholarships, a good salary, apartments and bonuses for good results. A good example is Vitali Scherbo, a six-time winner of the Olympics, who was described by Lukashenka as 'ambassador of Belarus' and in the words of Scherbo was 'loved' by Lukashenka (Kopachev 2014). In the mid-1990s, Lukashenka supposedly said at the meeting of the government, 'I wanted to buy four 'Cadillac' for the ministries, but will only [buy] three. The fourth will be given to

Scherbo. And don't tell me that I am wrong: for two hours at the Olympics he did more for the country than state enterprise 'Luch' for the whole year' (Kopachev 2014).

Ice hockey was made a national sport and became a tradition. As a part of it, a developed nationwide infrastructure was created in Belarus, in which ice hockey was made an integral part of a people's daily routine and urban landscape. The officials heading sports federations belong to the inner circle of the president. For example, for a long time, the Belarusian Ice Hockey Federation was headed by Uladzimir Navumau, minister of the interior.

Sports are used to improve or preserve the personal image of a president who occasionally used hockey as an instrument to improve relations with Russian political elites playing with Vladimir Putin and Russian officials and businessmen. Yet on many issues the society is divided, as many top sportsmen (for instance, Vital' Radzivonau or Aleksandra Herasimenya) support alternative discourses. Their popular expression of this in sports is the use of historic Belarusian symbols (the white-red-white flag and Pahonya, which is an alternative coat of arms for Belarus) forbidden by the state that tries to get rid them at sports events. To that pro-Ukrainian and anti-Putin chants were added to the repertoire. In practice, often both official and non-official symbols co-exist at tournaments abroad.

The Ice Hockey Championship: Political Context and Its Symbols

Before the IHWC was held in Minsk, the Belarusian regime was expected to use it to improve the international image of the country, as well as to strengthen the official ideology. Belarus was to be seen as a modern and successful state, not as the 'last dictatorship in Europe'. The infrastructure was improved not only in Minsk but also in other parts of Belarus in order to provide foreign tourists with the possibility of seeing the whole country. Entertainment was provided and hospitable surroundings created: for example, English-speaking volunteers were hired, 'zones of hospitability' were established, and the police were trained to speak English and to be polite and invisible.

Originally, the World Championship was mostly intended to reproduce the official vision of Belarus and alienate the alternative discourses. The symbols of the tournament contained only official state colours, leaving almost no room for the other Belarus. It was not only left out

but was also dispersed with force; for example, people wearing alternative Belarusian symbols were often disallowed in 'zones of hospitability' (Nasha Niva 2014c).

Through its symbols the tournament was linked to Belarusian and Soviet history, but at the same time it was creating a story of the modern Belarus. However, behind the scenes the regime still used old means to quiet the opposition and other potential 'troublemakers'. The state media were producing a picture of a great success and well-organized tournament, while non-governmental and opposition media were reporting stories of violations of human rights, freedom of speech and diminution of alternative symbols for Belarus.

The regime aimed to strengthen its domestic discourse and popular support through symbolic participation of the public. For example, the mascot for the tournament was selected in a competition, in which a skating bison named *Volat* was chosen to 'reflect peculiarities of the national culture and demonstrate strength and power'. In Eastern Slavic mythology, a Volat is a strong warrior who lived on Belarusian soil, and this imagery was supposed to link Belarusian/Eastern Slavic mythology and ice hockey performativity.

The tournament was planned to start on 9 May—a significant nodal point for the Belarusian and Soviet history, celebrated as Victory Day in the Great Patriotic War. The symbolism of the tournament starting exactly on that date speaks for itself. Lukashenka reminded observers of this symbolism for Belarus both in his speech at the opening ceremony of the Championship and at the Victory Day celebrations. He also reminded them that the tournament was held in Minsk, a Hero/City, which is also a direct symbol of Soviet identity (Kanashic 2014b).

In the meantime alternative narratives unfolded among opposition that was sensitive to the issue of language and monitored discrimination against it in Belarus. Since the events in Ukraine, Lukashenka has had to reconsider the overwhelming usage of Russian in Belarus. In Ukraine, regional divisions including the language issue have hindered nation building; it was used to destabilise the country and eventually was one of the reasons leading to the conflict (Polyakova 2014). During preparations for the IHWC new tourist information signs were installed in Minsk and new signposts in the metro. All the new signs were in Belarusian and English, while Russian was completely absent. Additionally, all the slogans of the tournament were in Belarusian, though these were alongside the Russian (Pankovec 2014a). And Lukashenka on a few occasions

showed his appreciation of the Belarusian language: After the tournament, he spoke publicly in Belarusian for the first time in almost 20 years (BBC 2014).

The protection of Belarusian independence as the cornerstone of nation building became one of the key leitmotifs for the official Minsk. For example, Russian fans wanted to arrange the so-called Russian march on 9 May in Minsk, but the Ministry of Internal Affairs forbade it (Nasha Niva 2014b). The Russian march could have been an impetus to a demonstration of pro-Russian attitudes while sparking nationalist feelings among other groups. During the UEFA Championships in 2012 in Warsaw, Russian fans marched, causing a serious fight between Poles and the Russians.

However, before the final match between Russia and Finland thousands of Russian fans arrived in Minsk while other foreign fans were already leaving the country. After the victory of the Russian team, central Minsk was full of Russian fans holding Soviet flags and that of the annexed Crimea (Svyatlanich 2014). After the final game the Ministry of Interior Special Forces purged the zone of those who planned to celebrate Russia's victory (Gudzilin 2014). Furthermore, in the official media the festivities and people celebrating on the streets at night were presented as a culmination of 'European spirit' coming to Belarus. (Pasiyak 2014). Although not all residents were happy to see thousands of Russians on the streets, many locals joined the celebrating Russians (Preiherman 2014).

The hosting of the World Championship was intended not only to unite the people of Belarus, but also to highlight the achievements of the national team on home ice to engender domestic pride. Belarus was not among the top ice hockey nations in the world, having finished 6th in the World Championship in 2006 and 4th in the Olympics in 2002. In 2012 two Canadians, Geoff Platt and Kevin Lalande, were granted Belarusian citizenship in so they could represent Belarus in the tournament and thereby allow it to compete successfully. The Canadian head coach, Glen Hanlon, who had before achieved the best result in Belarusian national team history, was rehired. After all the preparations, Belarus reached the quarter-final, where it lost to Sweden, this being the second best result in history. According to the captain of the team, Alyaksei Kalyuzhny, it was 'the success of our Olympians in Sochi [that] encouraged us to try to do something similar' (Komashko 2014).

The media—both official and oppositional—played a particular role in encouraging public interest in the tournament. After Belarus defeated

Switzerland, the largest Belarusian newspaper, *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, suggested everyone run to cheer on the national team. For the next game, against Finland, the Finns were told to get ready for the 'Belarusian sauna' (Kanashic 2014a). This state-run enthusiasm culminated in Belarus reaching the quarter-finals and state media asking whether sports could be the national idea of Belarus.

The success of the Belarusian team was widely reported also in the opposition media *Nasha Niva* (2014a). However, for them it was tainted by the fact that the team had lost all the match-ups in which Lukashenka was present in the audience. Moreover, *Nasha Niva* (2014a) combined sports news from the tournament with stories about political arrests and violations of human rights. Indeed, despite the policy of improving the international image of Belarus, numerous members of the Belarusian opposition and non-governmental organizations were 'preventively' arrested before the Championship began. The arrests were reported in the opposition media, for example, on the cover of the biggest opposition newspaper *Narodnaya Volya* (Lunyova 2014, 1), while the state-controlled media remained silent. Those arrested were mostly sentenced for petty crimes that were, according to some media, fabricated and politically motivated (Pankovec 2014b).

This tactic is well known from the Moscow Olympics of 1980, when dissidents, homeless and prostitutes were arrested or moved away from Moscow for the duration of the games. It was also used before the IHWC in Belarus to keep 'unwanted' people in prison for the duration of the tournament so as not to 'spoil Belarusians' festive mood' (Lunyova 2014). According to the opposition media, these arrests were a loss of opportunity to show Belarus in a good light to the rest of the world and would thus not wash away the dictatorship 'label' of the country (Pankovec 2014b).

Thus, the authorities prepared for the tournament by 'cleaning' Minsk of unwanted people and preventing any possible demonstrations that would have ruined the image the official Belarus was trying to build. Apart from the preventive arrests, there were also reports that foreign human rights activists were prohibited from entering the country before the tournament because they were persona non grata in Belarus (Vyasna 2014).

To sum up, both official and alternative discourses referred to Europe in different contexts, yet they understood it differently. At the same time, the government applied old methods against the opposition and non-governmental organizations. However, it was possible to see some small

concessions by authorities to an independent and self-realized—culturally, linguistically and politically—Belarus.

External Dimension

Aside from its domestic purposes, the authorities had also external goals for the tournament. They hoped that Belarus could be promoted abroad and that it would attract more foreign tourists to the country. However, many European governments and organizations were sceptical about Belarus hosting the tournament due to its human rights abuses. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that the Belarusian bidding committee was led by the Minister of Internal Affairs Uladzimir Navumau. Soon after Belarus was selected to host the tournament, Navumau was banned from travelling to the EU because of human rights violations in Belarus.

While Belarus was preparing for the Championship, many European civil organizations and politicians tried to get its selection overturned. The boycott was discussed in the German Bundestag, the European Parliament, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Ministry of Culture, the European People's Party, and so on, all of whom did not want to let Lukashenka use the tournament for promoting the regime. The resolution of the European Parliament said that the International Ice Hockey Federation should consider moving the tournament to a different country 'until the regime [could show] commitment to human rights and the rule of law' (European Parliament 2012). Before the games, different European human rights groups campaigned in order to cancel the tournament in Belarus, and Freedom House sent an open letter to International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) President René Fasel. The organization pointed to human rights violations and the poor conditions of freedom of speech. Numerous political prisoners were also mentioned frequently as a reason not to organize the tournament in Belarus (Freedom House 2012).

The boycott was discussed until up to the very beginning of the tournament. For example, the Finnish TV channels threatened they would not to send their journalists to Belarus if they had to apply for a visa in order to report events outside the hockey arenas, as this was seen as restriction of freedom of speech. However, the IIHF and numerous national ice hockey federations justified organizing the tournament in Belarus, saying that politics should be separated from sports. Lukashenka himself stressed this

separation many times (Kanashic 2014b). However, Lukashenka did warn that Belarus should prepare for a possible boycott before the tournament (Mel'nichuk 2013).

The Belarusian opposition did not support boycott groups in the EU, seeing it counter-productive. It considered the IHWC an opportunity to spread information about Belarus and themselves and raise public awareness about the regime domestically and abroad. Additionally, it regarded the Championship as a fest for their compatriots (Lukashuk 2014).

Although Belarus has a certain political reputation in Europe, it is quite an unknown country to Europeans in general. It is seldom referred to in the news and usually not considered a tourist destination. That is why the international hockey event presented the country with a great opportunity to improve its image and reputation. Before the tournament, Lukashenka pledged that the authorities would 'completely open their country to the foreigners' so that they could see a modernized country. According to Lukashenka, the Belarusian authorities had arranged everything so that 'the IIHF shouldn't be ashamed and the tourists would enjoy our country' (Polezhay 2014).

For EU citizens, Belarus and Russia are the last countries in Europe that require entry visas, which is a serious barrier for many international travellers. In order to make Belarus a more attractive destination, the visa regime was lifted for those who possessed tickets to the tournament. Attracting tourists was widely discussed both in Belarusian state and opposition media. These reports reflected different expectations: the state media looked for 'normalization' of the country's image for getting more European tourist visitors, while the opposition media hoped for changes that foreigners could foster within the country: the more foreign people that came to Belarus, the more intense contacts Belarusians would maintain with foreigners, and the sooner the country would change.

To accommodate fans arriving to Minsk, Fans' Village was created within the Student Village. Five student dormitories were cleared of their occupants, who were temporarily moved to the outskirts of Minsk, where they had to pay a high rent for cramped rooms (Sinyuk 2014). In the state media, there were very little mention of how the students coped with the eviction, but it was promoted how this move helped create affordable accommodation for the foreigners (Prupas et al. 2014).

On a technical side, all major international highways crossing Belarus were made four-lane. In Minsk, four new traffic interchanges were constructed near the ice hockey arenas, additional metro stations were built

and a city commuter train service was introduced (Belarus.by 2014). The organizing committee recruited 1000 English-speaking volunteers, mostly university students, to guide foreign tourists in Minsk. It was reported that there were 3.5 applicants for one position, exceeding the average competition in Belarusian institutes of higher education. This created an impression that the nation was eager to volunteer and help organize the Championship (Ruzhechka and Kostyukevich 2014). To improve the image of the country, the militia learned basic English in order to be able to help tourists coming to Minsk (Belta 2013). And there were other European features introduced in Minsk; for example, smoking was prohibited in restaurants and near ice hockey arenas.

Conclusion

The IHWC was originally planned as a triumph of the official ideology, a unifying event to symbolize achievements of the Belarusian model of development, its international recognition and the increased international attractiveness of the regime. However, the Ukrainian events, which had been rapidly unfolding at the time of the Championship, added new accents to the original script: a certain distancing of the regime from Russia and reinvigoration of Belarusian identity became increasingly relevant for Minsk. The annexation of the Crimea and Russia-supported separatism in Eastern Ukraine frightened the Belarusian leadership given its dependence on Russia, the resonance and circulation of Russia-produced discourses in Belarus and incomplete nation building.

The regime tried to adapt to the fast-changing external circumstances but understood the limitations of its strategies. It started to make first steps toward alternative nation-building narratives in which references to Russia and the 'Russian world' were carefully monitored and, when possible, avoided.

At the same time, the attempts to unite Belarusians over the event and successes of the national team did not bring a lasting and unifying effect. Preventive arrests, temporary eviction of students and the immediate purge of the 'zone of hospitality' by special police forces made public attitudes toward the event ambiguous. Alternative discourses remained sceptical to the regime's policies and did not take seriously Lukashenka's intentions of supporting the Belarusian language and Russia. Meanwhile, the regime simultaneously detained and jailed opposition activists. Celebrating the event as such, the opposition media criticized the government at any available opportunity.

However, subsequent domestic developments confirmed the intentions of the regime to reach out to alternative visions of Belarusian nation building and to further distance itself from Russia. Lukashenka's efforts were not only recognized but also supported by prominent members of the Belarusian opposition such as Iosif Seredzich, the editor of a newspaper *Narodnaya Volya*, or Ales' Lahviniec, deputy leader in *Za Svabodu* movement. It was not democratization of the regime but prevention of the Ukrainian scenario in Belarus that became the topic of utmost importance for the discourse of opposition. In this sense Lukashenka's hegemonic discourse and the alternative projects of its political opponents paradoxically merged—at least, for some time.

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CHAPTER 6

Kazakhstan and the Global Industry of Mega Events: A Case of Autocratic Management

Adilzhan Nurmakov

As post-Soviet autocracies have completed their transition period without reaching the initially declared purpose of democratization, and by creating a variety of highly centralized political systems instead, many have ventured into hosting international events of varying scope, nature and objectives. Arguably, there is a connection between a country's wealth, underpinned by booming extractive sectors, its autocratic form of rule and the scope and frequency of grandiose happenings held by its government. The correlation is driven by the uneven distribution of resources, the closed manner of political decision-making and unaccountable elites—and by their ambitions for international recognition and external self-legitimization despite poor human rights records.

On the other hand, the industry of international sports competitions has transformed over the past decades. World media have been intensively reporting scandals with match-fixing and corruption at point of selection of host countries for major sport tournaments starting from the Olympics corruption scandals prior to 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City and London's bid to host the Summer Olympics in 2012 (Fordyce 2004) up to the awarding of 2022 FIFA World Cup to Qatar. Concerns about host nations' respect for human rights and political course had been visible ever since the 1936 'Hitler Olympics' and the 1980 'Cold War' Games in Moscow, and were raised again during the Beijing Olympics in 2008. But

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discussions of the intrinsic authoritarianism, gender imbalance, elitism, and lack of transparency and accountability of international bodies like the IOC and FIFA are more recent. They include questions about the internal governance, openness to public scrutiny and centralization of decision-making processes in personalities or structures holding as tight a grip on financial and political powers as their position in sport events industry gives them. Oslo's bid for the 2022 Winter Games was withdrawn not only due to fears that hosting the tournament would prove too costly for the budget in times of low oil prices, but to a larger degree because the public was offended by 'very strange demands from the IOC', which listed specific luxury treatment for its members to be provided by the host country (Wilson 2014).

These developments allowed a revealing of further similarities that the international sports bureaucracy may have with non-transparent unaccountable autocracies, for whom major sporting events are 'also a chance to defraud state coffers by awarding fat contracts to cronies. Tournaments that ought to be national celebrations risk becoming festivals of graft', (Economist 2014). At the same time, international sports associations do use certain, well-elaborated criteria that are updated to reflect modern understanding of progress and human development. Their manuals for host cities or countries still contain provisions for sustainable and environment-friendly infrastructure, promotion of sports culture and respect for minorities et al., but they are mostly concentrated around the acceptability of the host's sporting, transport and hospitality facilities, either presently available or prospective, to fit the level of competition. The economic capacity and general openness of a candidate city or country is also part of the bid's review, but the procedure does not take into consideration corruption, quality of governance and that macroeconomic successes may not entail improvement in the living standards of the populace; furthermore, —considerable, unplanned public spending for hosting the mega event may divert funds from more vital investments into social welfare.

Besides, in some instances the criteria or approaches to analysing the data, as provided by applicants, are imperfect. Thus, the IOC checklist includes questions on whether the bid enjoys support 'on various levels of the government', and by the population. The presumption is that governments are all established in a democratic fashion with proper division of branches of power and local self-government, and that the level openness of society in general (public discourse, that is, prolificacy of critical views

that are inclusive in the state-society relations) supports public manifestations of discontent. In other words, such an approach does not account for situations in many of the former Soviet states, where post-ideological patterns did not result in establishment of free markets and liberal democracies, producing a variety of hybrid regimes instead. Presence of organizational attributes akin to democratic structures rarely establishes genuine institutions. Political systems are often dominated by *apparatchik's* elites that have remained in power since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Bids are essentially government initiatives, for which they garner public approval with massive propaganda via controlled media or simply by fabricating polls, which the IOC would then count as a sign of popular support.

Since the early 2000s, the extractive economies in the post-Soviet space have ventured into 'showing off' and displaying a desire to be accepted by the international community as equals. This was a time when global markets started seeing a growth of demand and an increase of prices for oil and gas. This trend represents a complex of political and post-political aspirations and identities of the elites, as well as purely economic patterns—both declared and underground.

The following chapter aims to look into the roots of the Kazakhstani regime's aspiration to invent its own and host significant international events of both political and sports character, and to unveil how such ambitions have been evolving over the past two decades, and how are they being represented to the public—both domestically and internationally. The study empirically relies on official, informal and academic discourses, and intends to give a push to the further research of this ongoing trend.

External Legitimization Through Symbols and Spectacles

Practices of non-rational symbolization have long been a subject of study of many researchers of post-Soviet authoritarianism. Two vectors of nation branding—for foreign audiences and for domestic consumption—are effectively channelled by regimes through the imagery of their successes, embodied in the form of spectacular international events. This tendency can be also traced in architectural self-aggrandizement as a method to turn the scenery of ultra-modernized cityscapes of capitals into the manifestation of well-managed economies, even when the rest of the country is still resting in the obsolete Soviet infrastructural legacy, ill-managed by inefficient administrations.

In 1997 Kazakhstan president Nursultan Nazarbayev, by direct decree, moved the capital from Almaty to Akmola, rebranding the city to Astana (translated as 'capital city' in Kazakh), and construction of a new administrative centre was begun from scratch. In 2014, it was reported that over US $27.6 billion has been invested in its development (Tengrinews 2014)—a figure that is only a rough estimate that continues to climb. The project has been extensively used for 'globalized Astanization' (Fauve 2015), 'the state-driven promotion of Astana as the main symbol of contemporary Kazakhstan … the cornerstone of state-and nation-building, a brand that is broadcast on the world arena.' Nazarbayev claims to be its 'main architect', personally supervises major constructions and often presides over the city administration's sessions. The continuous development of Astana is sometimes presented as a national idea, a memorialized, 'symbolic capital' much like Moscow was in the Soviet Union (Forest and Johnson 2002). Recent studies point to a post-structuralist interpretation of Astana's roles, noting how it has become a signification idea, based on concrete and material spaces (Koch 2013; Laszczkowski 2013).

To promulgate the representation of Astana as the symbol of the regime's accomplishments, especially among an international audience, it was not enough to rely solely on domestic mass spectacles—events that articulate power through 'ritual action' during national holidays (Adams and Rustemova 2009). Earlier strategies employed included inviting international organizations to hold their meetings in the newly furnished capital of an authoritarian state, or inventing and branding new spectacular events to secure an uncontested right of hosting them. For example, by Uzbekistan (EBRD meeting in 2003) and Tajikistan (CIS Summit in 2011); these tactics are used currently, for example, by Azerbaijan (1st European Games 2015). Usually, such undertakings involve huge expenditures for new construction projects and refurbishment of older properties. The case of Azerbaijan, where the government pledged to cover costs of all foreign athletes during the 1st European Games, demonstrates how far regimes can go to ensure that the event they orchestrate would actually take place.

Kazakhstan has been very active in self-promotion since the early 2000s. After a decade of economic turmoil, social insecurity and consolidation of power by the post-Communist elite, the authorities managed to secure macroeconomic stabilization. The regime started feeling more comfortable, having the ability to buyoff protests, but not more confident in terms of its legitimacy, which remains doubtful.

Most parliamentary and presidential elections in 25 years of independence have been held ahead of schedule and votes were never recognized, none of which was recognized by international monitors as free and fair. The Constitution of Kazakhstan has been revised three times in its 20-year-long history; each of the versions further empowered the first president with unrestricted mandate, extra privileges and protections. The opposition, representing an ideologically fractioned and politically dysfunctional substance, could be easily managed at home with restrictive legislation, concentration of mass media, direct repressions or by crafting divisions between the regime's critics. At the same time, politicians and NGO leaders were vocal abroad, using international institutions, conferences and the media to challenge the autocratic government. The 'older opposition' had even established its Foreign Bureau in early 2000s after the first major crackdown on opposition when part of the regime's opponents fled to the West seeking political asylum. When a handful of high-ranking officials and businessmen from the president's inner circle had fallen from grace in 2007–2009, they also defected to European countries, joining their financial and political capitals with the purpose of undermining Nazarbayev's regime.

In this situation, the regime started exploring soft power techniques to ameliorate its image. With the 'multi-vector foreign policy' that Kazakhstani government has been sticking to, it was always reluctant to engage in outright war of words with the international community. Despite reproaches that president Nazarbayev has been making occasionally, asking the West 'not to preach democracy' and emphasizing the special 'Kazakhstani way' to it, he seeks international attention, respect, recognition and reward (like a pursuit of the Nobel Peace Prize for contribution to global nuclear disarmament). Ultimately, the unstated goal is external legitimization—both for his long time presidency and for the style of governance when stability is ensured by the personal rule and neoliberal economic reforms, rather than by democratization and transparency.

Legitimacy in early years of independence has been centred on external recognition broadcast inward to domestic audiences, due to inability to shape a solid claim based on domestic aspects of legitimacy—like historic legacy of Kazakh statehood apart from nomadic proto-states, ethnic self-determination or democratic institutions (Schatz 2006). An internationally recognized, newly obtained statehood that is open to the world beyond regional Central Asian or pan-regional post-Soviet space, thus, had meant to secure the positioning of Kazakhstan as an established nation

state. This strategy included not only traditional diplomacy, like bilateral relations, official visits and membership in international organizations, but also ambitious steps in the security and confidence areas, such as to broker talks on resolution of conflicts in the Caucasus and in Afghanistan, as well as numerous integrationist steps, including championing deeper ties within the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States, proposing a project of the Central Asian Union, and so on.

A certain degree of the Kazakh government's quazi-democratic façade had been predetermined by the choice of legitimization strategy. To bet on a backing from foreign counterparts and seek their praise required tolerance to opposition, independent media and civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) funded by foreign donors. More notably, it presumed giving them an access to international actors critical of the regime, which tried to play on the same field and make concessions in the form of at least 'superficially plausible accounts of … democratization' (Schatz 2006). Over the years, when diplomatic methods of substantiating legitimacy claims were accomplished, the regime went on to instrumentalize external recognition tools for the promotion of its own image and justification of undemocratic practices in the name of stability. Peace and accord in Kazakhstan—'internal political stability'—had soon become an ideological mantra and a symbol by itself. By effectively equating stability with the uninterrupted retention of power by the elites, the regime gained an instrument for legitimizing crackdowns on critics and undemocratic forms of governance.

In the second decade of independence, Kazakhstani authorities have been able to rely on improved economic performance, fuelled by stabilized growth from oil extraction and the global rise of the prices of oil, for additional legitimization of their policies. The symbolic legitimacy claim in the form of a Soviet-style social contract: 'economy first—then politics', coupled by stability sloganeering, meant that in exchange for security and welfare guarantees, the people are required to comply with the regime was required to act compliantly (Dave 2007). As the country's wealth was rapidly growing, the leadership began to portray itself not only as the sole provider of economic progress and political stability, but also as a promoter of sustainable development (Del Sordi 2015). The *Kazakhstan—2030* strategic plan prioritized economic development without even mentioning political reforms; it was adopted in 1997 and declared completed in 2013. The newly proclaimed plan extends until 2050 and also focuses mainly on economic issues.

Although for most Kazakhstanis the social contract is still deeply implied and largely uncontested, the legitimacy frame provided by it is weak and not sustainable. The economic performance in non-extractive sectors is negligible, and volatility on global markets is inevitably elevating the level of uncertainty about Kazakhstan's trade balance and its national currency. Continuous tightening of legislation to restrict the exercise of civil and political rights by citizens—even when today there is no legitimate political opposition and an independent media landscape stands almost uninhabited—demonstrates the regime's legitimization concerns.

Political inertness and economic stagnation that puts at risk the social contract are rooted in the nature of counterproductive authoritarianism, spoiled by cronyism and corruption, thus failing to mimic the example of Lee Kuan Yuw's Singapore, President Nazarbayev's role model. Kazakh elites must therefore return to viewing external recognition as a primary source of regime's self-legitimization. This is where this research now turns.

From Political Events to Sports Spectacularities

The first phase of Kazakhstan's quest for additional international recognition and, essentially, approval of its domestic policies represented a symmetric response on the grounds of foreign or international discussion, where political opposition, human rights NGOs and other critics were active. The latter included a variety of forums of foreign, intergovernmental and nongovernmental entities from the UN to Chatham House, among which annual Human Dimension Implementation Meetings and thematic roundtables hosted by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) constituted the most important elements. The ODIHR is the human rights and democracy promotion branch of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

A diplomatic period of securing external legitimacy through the establishment of bilateral and multilateral ties had been accomplished in the mid-1990s, but it rested upon assuring the West of several key strategic messages about Kazakhstan's aspirations: to be a reliable partner in maintaining both regional stability and energy supplies; to be open to foreign investments and develop free market economy; to develop democratic institutions and procedures as a historic choice for the newly independent sovereign nation. By the late 1990s it became clear that Kazakhstan was

set to transform from the category of 'countries in transition' to a hybrid, autocratic regime. It, therefore, had to find new representations for itself to communicate with the West.

Many regimes that opt for authoritarianism justify it with the rhetoric of primacy of sovereignty, inadmissibility of external pressure, or of national identity being unprepared or unfit for Western norms of democracy. Often such frames, stirred up by reasonable domestic approval, innately imply a certain degree of confrontation, consecutively leading to closing societies and estranging nations from the schemata of civilized international relations. The Kazakhstan regime neither experienced sufficient anti-Western passion among the citizenry, nor did it want to behave in such fashion itself. Quite the contrary, it constantly seeks praise and approval from Western institutions (although this rarely implies any substantial self-reform; rather, in a Singaporean scenario the regime wants to be accepted by the international community as it exists), often by setting goals of achieving certain positions in influential country ratings and rankings, such as '50 most competitive states' or '30 most developed countries'. These objectives are heavily propagated domestically in the media and in official discourse, almost to the extent of becoming parts of a national ideology. As scholars note, the Kazakhstani leadership promotes similar sets of ideas both internationally and internally (Marat 2009).

The second decade of Kazakhstan's independence coincided in time with a better situation in the economy and massive inflow of petrodollars, which were partly used for monumentalization of the president's image and the regime it embodies. The personality cult of Nazarbayev as leader of the nation and sole guarantor of stability was utilized to justify his rule in the eyes of citizens and buttressed by the trend of 'Astanization', that is the crafting of a highly personalized symbol of independence, economic prosperity and regime competence out of the ambitious urban development project. Other personified signification techniques in Kazakhstan included personalization of history ('creator of the Kazakhs' first statehood') and of state denominators (Nazarbayev's signature and handprint are on the national currency; he co-authored the national anthem; and finally, he moved the capital to Astana). These cultish messages seemed unlikely to be met with enthusiasm by the international community, so a different approach was to be developed.

Since 2006, Kazakhstani authorities have drifted into the second front of the battle for the country image. In addition to continuous efforts to outweigh the criticism from foreign governments, NGOs and international

organizations concerning poor human rights record and slow pace of democratic reforms, the *Borat* movie by the British actor, producer and filmmaker Sacha Baron Cohen, released in 2006, went viral globally and had a negative effect on the overall image of Kazakhstan. Although it had absurdly fictitious and largely irrelevant references to Kazakhstan, ostensibly a home country of the main character, for many viewers abroad the movie conveyed a stereotyped idea about Kazakhstan. The aftermath of this effect is still visible in many international media that often use Borat's picture or references to 'Borat's country' in their rare reports about Kazakhstan. The film produced an outrage in Kazakhstan, both among the general public, which felt offended by the mocking, and among officials, who banned the film and blocked its website in Kazakhstan (Fletcher 2006; Wolf 2005). In November 2006, President Nazarbayev, while visiting the UK, said in response to a journalist's question about his attitude to *Borat*: 'The film was created by a comedian so let's laugh at it', and added that 'there is a positive side ...—all publicity is good publicity' (BBC 2006). In 2012, Yerzhan Kazykhanov, Kazakhstan's then-foreign minister, thanked Sacha Baron Cohen for attracting foreign tourists, alleging that 'after this film the number of visas issued to Kazakhstan grew by ten times' (Kilner 2012).

To redress its international profile, Kazakhstan hosted a number of the so-called political events to address issues unrelated to the promotion of democracy or human rights, but showcasing 'good practices' of the Kazakhstani regime that was eager to (a) positively position itself instead of opposing the criticism shared by political opponents abroad, and (b) promote a proper profile […], echoing the domestic propaganda of the incumbent regime. They were also in line with constant drive for regional integrationist projects, aiming to strengthen Kazakhstan's importance in the world, which explain why Kazakhstan often sought to host international summits (of CIS, the Customs Union, the Eurasian Economic Union, Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and so on).

In addition to more formal intergovernmental events, three major events as described here consistently involve prominent scholars, media people and politicians (many upon their retirement). Some are signature events of key personalities from the political elite—like the Eurasian Media Forum of Dariga Nazarbayeva, the Kazakh president's daughter and media tycoon. Since 2002, her forum's agenda aims to address pressing topics of international relations, regional security and global politics, all while avoiding issues of free speech. The Congress of the Leaders of

World and Traditional Religions (CLWTR) was pretentiously established by the president in 2003, and since then chaired by him. The stated purpose of this triennial event is to promote Kazakhstan's 'unique experience' of tolerance and peaceful coexistence of various ethnicities and religious groups at the global level through the dialogue of religious leaders of the world community (Kazakhstan MFA 2015); and, more broadly, to search for 'universal guidelines in world and traditional forms of the religion, create permanent international interdenominational institute for realizing the religious dialogue and accepting coordinated decisions' (Congress 2015).

President Nazarbayev also inspired the establishment of the Astana Economic Forum (AEF), a would-be copycat of the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2008. CLWTR and AEF serve as examples of a more prolific and sophisticated approach, elevated from simply hosting a large-scale event to having an institutionalized permanent body, and to attach a formal international status to it. AEF was established as an international non-profit organization, formally run by the Eurasian Economic Club of Scientists, an international scholarly association, but in reality both are organized by the Kazakhstani government. The forum is actively forging partnerships with various think tanks and international organizations, such as the World Bank, OECD, ADB et al. In 2013, it managed to receive the UN endorsement for AEF's side event titled the 'World Anti-Crisis Conference'. The UN General Assembly's resolution then supported the initiative of … Kazakhstan to host an international conference dealing with effective measures against global uncertainty and the economic downturn. This fact of symbolic appreciation was, nevertheless, promoted by the organizers as if the United Nations were co-organizing the event.

CLWTR has not received any special status within the UN system, but since 2008 it has been seeking some kind of assistance from the UN and advertised this collaboration in all messages communicated to the press. In 2015, Kazakhstani mass media reported that president Nazarbayev invited UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to take part in the Congress (KazakhTV 2015).

None of these initiatives, concentrating on security, tolerance and economic development, were sufficient to improve the political image of the regime. This also includes Kazakhstan's bid to chair the OSCE, a major multi-stakeholder inter-state institution for facilitation of political cooperation in Europe and Eurasia. The subversive idea to lead an international organization that is among the most active critics of Nazarbayev was ambitious for the Kazakhstani government—and unexpected in the

West. A series of intense activities involving political bargaining and diplomatic blackmailing were enacted by Russia along with its allies from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region, who issued a "collective mandate" to Kazakhstan, effectively threatening to boycott any alternative candidacy (Austria 2007); this led to the OSCE granting to Kazakhstan the chairmanship role in this organization in 2010.

Despite concerns of some local and foreign observers, that the Kazakh government would try to pursue Russia's agenda of diminishing the role of OSCE's Office on Security and Human Rights, Kazakhstan did not push in this direction. Its presidency was inconspicuous and relatively quiet, especially compared with the run-up to it. Instead, the regime utilized this strategic post to position itself as a credible and civilized partner for the West, and to boost its international visibility. Kazakhstan diplomats were insulted and outraged when OSCE member states postponed its bid (initially filed for 2009) for one year and conditioned it by a package of legislative reforms, which Kazakhstan committed to meet, but implemented only an insignificant part of it. However, 2010 appeared to be more advantageous for the regime in its self-promotion endeavours, when Kazakhstan came up with the initiative of holding the 'jubilee' OSCE Summit, dedicated to 35th anniversary of the organization and 20th anniversary of the key Paris Charter in Astana. President Nazarbayev, opening this first OSCE Summit in 11 years, called it a 'triumph of common sense' and urged participants to revitalize the organization enabling it to tackle the changing paradigm of European security (OSCE 2010).

Of 56 member states, 38 were represented by heads of states and governments; none of the major EU leaders came to Astana, thwarting the plan of bringing together top global decision-makers in the new capital of Kazakhstan. The Summit failed to produce any meaningful result beyond the Astana Commemorative Declaration, in which delegations simply reaffirmed commitments, principles and values of OSCE and promised to continue the reinvigoration of the alliance. To reiterate the country's image as the West's partner in the region, Nazarbayev also stressed that Kazakhstan became independent in large part due to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. To a domestic audience, the Summit was advertised as a diplomatic success, a sign of recognition of the country's increasing role in the OSCE region (Ak Orda 2015) as well as a sign of the international community's approval of the regime's political course. The large message implies that Kazakhstan sees itself as equal among Western democracies—and that it is seen as an equal by them. The special symbolism of its being the first post- Soviet state

to chair in the OSCE was emphasized, too. The Kazakhstan National Bank issued a banknote dedicated to the chairmanship in 2010.

The OSCE Summit garnered considerable attention from the international media, as nearly 1200 foreign journalists had been accredited to attend the gathering (TheNews 2010). However, most of them did not take this opportunity to produce explicit stories about Kazakhstan's successes or about Astana, in particular. Many pointed out that Kazakhstan uses the event to boost its international image, but concentrated primarily on outcomes of the talks, which were fruitless (Orange 2010; Solovyov 2010; Sharip 2010; Demytrie 2010). This was reminiscent of the Uzbekistan government's unfortunate betting on the PR effect from the high-level European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) meeting in Tashkent in 2003 (Islamov 2003).

In parallel, starting from mid-2000s, the Kazakh government commenced a political 'direct marketing' campaign, buying pages and supplements in the international media (International Herald Tribune and BBC), and inviting foreign TV crews to shoot features about Kazakhstan (National Geographic, Euronews, CNN). 'CaspioNet' (now in operation as 'Kazakh TV'), a state-owned, partly English-language satellite TV channel, was launched in 2002 to reach overseas audiences. Reports also indicate numerous contracts that the Kazakh authorities concluded with PR and lobbyist groups in the USA and the EU, including for making use of former heads of states and governments of foreign countries (Corporate 2015), and of academic circles (Schwartz 2008). Public diplomacy channels, aimed at bringing more foreign investments, were institutionalized in the form of interstate 'friendship associations'. These, as well, are directly controlled by the Kazakhstani government, and play their role in the government's attempts to frame the favourable discourse about Kazakhstan, its regional leadership and its primary role in securing stability inside the country.

Sports as a Means to Massage Image

Researchers believe that Kazakhstan's regime is more 'pragmatic', compared to, for example, the more ethnically centred—and, thus, more dogmatic and paternalistic—Uzbek government (Adams and Rustemova 2009). This tendency is also reflected in the approaches to organization of spectacular events as signifiers for a regime's self-positioning, with Kazakhstan proving its flexibility in staging various types of events to raise its international reputation. And, unlike in Uzbekistan, the wheels of Kazakh ambitions have been oiled by petrodollars.

The outcomes of Kazakhstan's hosting self-invented events in the established international organizations have been mostly unsuccessful. The latter might require intensive negotiations and demands upon the host country to abide by the standards of governance, demands often seen by the regime as an intrusion in to its internal affairs. This result has pushed the government to exploit other ways of drawing recognition, which, though possibly more costly entail less of a political sacrifice.

So, Kazakhstan started investing in sports as a vehicle to boost patriotic sentiments at home and to foster a positive image internationally in the late 2000s. No clear and reasoned prioritization of sports had been made obvious. Kazakhstani athletes traditionally perform well in boxing and wrestling, but the first major instance of using sport as a medium for prestige building was in cycling. Most sports associations in Kazakhstan are headed by top government officials or oligarchic cronies of the regime, and the emphasis on a certain type of sports may well depend on these parties' personal initiative. In 2007, Prime Minister Danial Akhmetov, who was then president of the Kazakhstani Cycling Federation, supervised the establishment of the Astana Team, the professional cycling team led by Alexander Vinokurov, who since 1998 had already won international races. Kazakhstani authorities deem the Astana Team one of the most successful of public diplomacy projects (Fauve 2015), as it helped raise international awareness about the nation within the *Astanization* frame, and popularized the Kazakh flag's image.

A clear trend developed of recruitment and naturalization of foreign professional and amateur athletes: tennis players, wrestlers, weightlifters et al. from Russia and Central Asian states who have since accepted the Kazakhstan citizenship. Some personally excel more as part of the Kazakh national team than they could have done at home, and they deliver champions' medals and glory to Kazakhstan. The Astana cycling team, as well as Astana Arlans, a boxing team, Astana Dakar Team in rallying, and so on—overall, eight teams and a handful of individual athletes in various disciplines—constitute the multi-sports Astana Presidential Sports Club, founded by Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2012 to ensure their operation 'under the single brand of Astana, aimed at promotion of Kazakhstan's image on the global arena'; the teams themselves were identified as 'image-making projects' (Tengrinews 2012). The club is sponsored by the national welfare fund, Samruk-Kazyna.

Popular actors from the sports community who achieve professional success in international tournaments receive considerable media exposure

and boost banal nationalism and pride. The authorities quickly seek to capitalize on these athletes' successes, co-opting them as agents of the regime's self-legitimization. Champions become the faces of the incumbent president or his party's election campaign. The most prominent celebrities, who coincidentally represent ethnic minorities (Alexander Vinokurov, figure skater Denis Ten, world boxing superstar Gennady Golovkin, weightlifter Ilya Ilyin) help promote Nazarbayev's image as a guarantor of inter-ethnic accord, doing so by becoming his personal friends. He takes their personal phone calls immediately after yet another victory, and they informally take selfies with him.

Recently, the growing tendency to turn sports champions into regime's tokens domestically serves mainly as a tool for promotion of self-image within the country. Though the international visibility earned by the winning Kazakh athletes helps put the country on the map, it only partly promotes the regime's promulgated virtues. An average Westerner, astonished by a Kazakh sportsman's performance, goes online to read more about Kazakhstan, and there sees numerous articles on international media websites highly critical of the Kazakh government. In 2011, the authorities reportedly paid foreign PR firms to edit Wikipedia entries about Kazakhstan and President Nazarbayev [See the 2015 report: 'Spin doctors to the autocrats: how European PR firms whitewash repressive regimes', Corporate Europe Observatory].

A host country may believe that inviting major established international sporting events to its soil, or coming up with new events, like the ostentatious 2015 European Games in Azerbaijan, is a more effective PR than relying only on personalities. First, individual athletes might be associated more with their professional, internationalized teams, which train and reside permanently abroad; second, an individual's image is vulnerable, as in cases of doping scandals, personal misbehaviour, controversial statements and other human situations that show a star athlete to be a 'mere mortal'. Negative reports can be extrapolated to the country/regime image. Instead, having more control of the media and better chances to position the regime's leadership positively, more distinctly, by giving welcome speeches at opening or closing ceremonies—accommodates more branding opportunities.

Single-sport international events have been hosted by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan's long-time rival in regional leadership, since the 1990s, with an emphasis on those sports which local athletes are traditionally strong at, namely boxing and wrestling. Sometimes the potential of sportive achievements is downplayed by strong politicization of decisions made by sports officials. Kazakhstan's exit from the Asian

Football Confederation to join UEFA in 2002 was publicly explained as the country's move to a more 'prestigious' league and presented as a diplomatic success (Gafurov 2002). It was also in line with then-popular European aspirations of Kazakhstan, although it meant a much harsher competition and poorer results for the national team, and demolition of any prospects for it to reach any success even at the qualifying stage. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan has been bidding to co-host the UEFA EURO-2020 matches, and plans to prepare bids to host the UEFA Super Cup in 2017, FIFA U-21 World Cup in 2019 and FIFA World Cup in 2026 (Manaspayev 2014). Unlike with the UEFA admission, there have been no public campaigns in support of these bids recently, except for random mentions in interviews by football bureaucrats.

The isolated instances of multi-sport events in the 1990s (the Central Asian Games, first held in Tashkent in 1995, then for the second and the last time in Almaty in 1997) demonstrated early ambitions of the Uzbek and Kazakh leaders (both still enjoying power since the collapse of the Soviet Union) to claim regional leadership. The identity discourse on hosting this tournament in Kazakhstan included solidarity and good neighbourly relations between the brotherly nations, as well as the hospitality of the Kazakhs. The central installation on the stadium during the opening ceremony in Almaty was shaped in the form of Kazakh symbol of hospitality—*shanyrak*, the top element of *yurt*, a nomadic traditional felt house.

The chapter looks into the roots of the Kazakhstani regime's aspirations to host significant international events of both a political and sports character and unveils how such ambitions have been evolving over the past two decades. The author discusses how mega events were represented to the public, both domestically and internationally. The chapter claims that mega events are driven by the ambitions of the elite to affirm their status in the eyes of the international community and legitimize their domestic practices, as translated in the subsequent campaigning for internal approval by drumming up patriotic sentiment and diverting attention of the public from political and socio-economic issues.

Also, the Central Asian Games implied a longer-term pragmatic vision. In April of 1994, then-president of IOC Juan Antonio Samaranch visited Tashkent and was asked by the Uzbek president, Islam Karimov, about the possibility of his nation hosting an Olympic Games. The answer was that, according to the Olympic Charter, a potential applicant has to have a track record of serious sports tournaments, at least regional. 'This is how the idea of Central Asian Games emerged', reads the official website of the Kazakh National Olympic Committee (National Olympic 2015). J.A. Samaranch

attended the opening ceremony in Almaty in September 1997, awarding Nazarbayev the Gold Olympic Order for contribution in the development of sports. Nazarbayev then stated that the Central Asian Games were a test for the country's ability to conduct major international competitions (Pravda 1997). This idea had been reiterated repeatedly in the official press, signifying the early example of future *Astanization* in claiming that 'now we need to move the epicenter of sports life to the new capital and build the same—and even better—facilities there' (Lifintsev 1997). The decision to relocate the capital to Astana was made in 1995 and finalized in 1997.

In 2005, Kazakhstan had applied to host the 2014 Winter Olympic Games, but the bid was not short-listed because of its limited experience in hosting international events, in general, and major winter events, in particular (IOC 2006).

The Asian Winter Games

The 7th Asian Winter Games were held in Kazakhstan in 2011. Asian Games were first held in 1951 and since then conducted irregularly. In January 2006, the Olympic Council of Asia chose Almaty as the host city. In late 2007, after a series of negotiations between the Council and the Kazakhstani government, part of the tournament was moved to Astana, despite the fact that traditionally the bid is made by a city, and nations do not have the leeway to arbitrarily move the event within their boundaries. By that time the Kazakh economy started experiencing early signs of financial crisis, especially on the mortgage housing market, and this initiative might have been both a result of the authorities' desire to reduce costs and a part of the *Astanization* strategy. It was not the first time that a spectacle was *Astanized*; previously, a number of ambitious events that had been initially set up in Almaty were relocated to Astana (like the Eurasia International Film Festival and Eurasian Media Forum).

The Asian Games, or *Aziada*, were positioned as 'the main image-making project of the country' in the official discourse. It was steadily claimed that the tournament would drive the influx of foreign tourists, and ultimately 'elevate Kazakhstan in the eyes of global community' and "demonstrate hospitality as the main trait of the Kazakh nation" (Abuova 2010). Officials said they had been expecting from 5 to 10 thousand tourists, each capable of spending US $2000 in Kazakhstan during their stay. This—and the supposed commercial after-use of the facilities—was deemed as the principal warranty of the payback for investments.

As the event was looming, it was becoming more and more obvious that the construction and refurbishment works risked not meeting the deadline, and that a poor promotion campaign would not return enough media coverage and tourists. In fall of 2010, Talgat Yermegiyaev, then vice-minister of tourism and sport, personally charged with preparations for the *Aziada*, said that 'one should not expect full payback from an image-making project' (Novosti 2010). Since 2008, the government and businesses (including those involved in construction of facilities for the Asian Games) were struggling with a harsh financial crisis, and expensive sportive tournament was increasingly becoming a burden rather than a sought-after privilege. In September 2010, five months prior to the grand opening ceremony, the Sovereign Wealth Fund Samruk-Kazyna was approved as a general sponsor of the Games for $20.4 million—essentially when it became clear that no other sponsors were coming, whereas the organizing committee was running out of budget funding.

While domestically the government engaged in the patriotic rhetoric and set abstract image-building goals, it also employed reasoning, based on expectations that *Aziada* would give an additional impulse to the national economy and help develop tourism. Both failed quite interdependently, as the prospects for commercial after-use of new sport facilities were hit by the failure to attract tourists. One of the reasons for the latter was that the 7th Winter Asian Games were held at exactly the same time as was the 25th Winter Universiade, a more important and internationally popular sporting event, which took place in Erzurum, Turkey. Besides, the procedure for obtaining a Kazakh visa remained very expensive and unconducive to the goal of boosting the tourism sector. Yet, even if the expected number of tourists were to visit Almaty and Astana, the hospitality sector would have failed to live up to such influx, first of all because of the deficit of hotel rooms and lack of tourist-friendly navigation in cities.

Official statistical data show there were roughly 10,000 hotel rooms in Almaty and Astana combined by the end of 2010, including very basic accommodation options and private apartment rentals. Although in January–March 2011 there was a 30% increase in the number of hotel services provided in two host cities compared to the same period in 2010, it mostly accounted for official delegations, rather than tourists, and it was 12–15 % lower than in January–March of 2006–2007. The hotel occupancy rate in two cities in January–March 2011 stood as low as at 27.2%, according to reports of the Committee on Statistics under the Kazakhstan Ministry of National Economy (Statistics 2010). The Organizing Committee of the *Aziada* had to make entrance free for most

competitions and even use administrative resources, coercing students to attend the Games in order to fill the stadiums.

The privilege of hosting mega events does not only serve the goal of meeting the image-polishing ambitions of the elite; it is often seen as a means for inventing extensive corruption schemes at the top administrative level. The 2014 Sochi Olympics with its $51 billion budget was the most expensive winter sports event in history—and the most corrupt. Reports by the Kazakh authority overseeing public expenditures after the 2011 Asian Winter Games indicated numerous gross financial violations, including embezzlement and theft. Initially, the planned expenditure was $726 million, but the event's total bill amounted to $1.65 billion; 85% of these funds were spent on construction contracts and buying out of land for construction sites from private owners. Against the background of extensive state propaganda, vast amounts of public finance were poured into construction of facilities that are barely used now but still require significant subsidies to cover maintenance costs.

Still, Kazakhstan continued to seek hosting major sports events, despite the harsh and lingering effects of the global financial crisis, shrinking the economy, sending the banking sector into an abyss with a cut-off of its access to external funds, and, overall, slowing the country's GDP growth from 10.6 to 7.5% between 2006 and 2011, with a major dip down to 1.2% in 2009. Nine months after the *Aziada* closing ceremony, FISU, the International University Sports Federation, nominated Almaty the host of the Winter Universiade in 2017, which stood unopposed, since its only competitor Trentino (Italy) had withdrawn its candidacy due to a difficult economic situation in Italy and high financial obligations (FISU 2011). The news about Universiade in 2017 went largely unnoticed in Kazakhstan and remained so. Although some major constructions were envisaged by the bid, the public remains mostly unaware of the scope and importance of this event.

Unlike Universiades, knowledge of the Olympics is ubiquitous, and awareness that the Games' recent history of having a devastating effect on economies of host countries is quite broad as well. For the regime, too, the significance of the Olympic Games is much greater and more useful for self-promotion. Kazakhstan was the first country to bid for the Winter Games in 2022. The decision to run for Olympics was formalized at the meeting of the state Agency for Sports, with the Almaty city administration and National Olympic Committee following the order by President Nazarbayev in 2013, but early claims had been made since 2011 (Tengrinews 2011).

Official discourse revolved around the standard 'recognition of Kazakhstan's achievements' and 'becoming a world leader in sports'. In

2013, Nazarbayev announced the upcoming bidding and proclaimed that 'our champions—just like our new capital [Astana]—form the national brand of Kazakhstan' (Baimanov 2013). Shortly after that, Yerlan Kozhagapanov, head of the state Agency for Sports, said that the 2022 Olympics would be a 'great present from Nazarbayev to all Kazakhstanis', adding, 'we will talk about money later' (Zhdanov 2013).

However, against the background of mounting public criticism of extra expenditures in times of austerity, the rhetoric was strongly upheld with an argument that 'all conditions [for hosting the Olympic Games] are already in place', meaning that the legacy of the Asian Games and the Universiade would generally suffice. This sentiment has been reiterated repeatedly in public since President Nazarbayev admitted that the country's economy was in crisis caused by the drop of oil prices and the West's sanctions against Russia, and started calling for austerity measures. Despite economic constraints and budget cuts, which have affected some of the investment and social infrastructure development programs, image-making projects remained intact. The possibility of withdrawal of the Olympic bid has never been discussed officially. In June 2015, the Almaty city hall provided a USD 75 billion financial commitment to the IOC in an attempt to dismiss concerns about the bid and Kazakhstan's capability to host the games (Butler 2015). The money would come from the Sovereign Wealth Fund Samruk-Kazyna, which is expected to rely primarily on transferts from the National Fund that accumulates oil revenues to stabilize the economy in crises and to save money for future generations. It has accumulated nearly USD 70 billion as of March 2015 (Kapital 2015).

The process of bidding and bid evaluation has not been transparent. The media provided only isolated reports about discussions between the government and the IOC. For example, in February 2015, after the IOC evaluation visit to Almaty, it was reported that Almaty allegedly came up with a suggestion to organize dedicated traffic lanes for the Olympic delegations. However, earlier in 2014, when Oslo withdrew its bid, it had become known that the IOC requires such lanes (Roan 2014). Thus, Kazakhstani officials signalled that they were readily available to serve the demands from the IOC, which were dismissed as both 'offensive and expensive' by the Norwegian politicians, and presented it as the Kazakh bid's advantage (Almaty 2015). As a promo campaign involving sportsmen and pop stars had been unwrapped in support of the bid ahead of and during the IOC visit to Almaty, the evaluation team noted in its report that despite advantages, such as the compactness of facilities, major concerns existed pertaining to a severe lack of quality accommodation, obsolete

urban transportation system, unskilled security personnel and workforce in general, and environmental concerns, because some of the new venues were to be erected on the territory of national parks.

It has been specifically noted the volatile market conditions and economic problems, such as low oil prices and exchange rate issues, were among factors that could negatively impact preparations for the games and therefore the government's capacity to live up to its promise (IOC 2015). While the IOC was concerned about the ability of the Kazakhstan's government to host the Olympics decently, little attention was paid by the government itself to whether it would be able to provide basic social services and fulfil its economic programs. By the end of the selection process, competition got fiercer after only Almaty and Beijing were left in the list of candidates, while other bids had been withdrawn, these due to overall economic concerns in Poland, Norway and Sweden.

On July 31, 2015, the IOC special session in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, voted on the host city for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. A populous Kazakhstani delegation, led by Prime Minister Karim Massimov and the Almaty mayor, Akhmetzhan Yessimov, behaved in a quite self-assured manner, boasting the advantages of the Kazakh bid, like the compactness of the venues and availability of natural snow in winter. In Almaty and Astana, local authorities called city residents to watch the ceremony in public spots and mobilized youth for celebratory flash mobs, to which the mass media were invited *en masse*. Mayor Yessimov mentioned in his speech that the country needs Olympics 'not just to build infrastructure', but also to 'give our people a better future…. Only the Olympic Games can provide that', he added (YouTube 2015). Although it was more a declarative part of the Almaty presentation, it was an eyebrow-raising statement to many Kazakhstanis, as, in fact, infrastructural development serving the people had been conditioned by the IOC. Additionally, on the eve of the voting day, Kazakhstan vowed to improve the human rights situation and 'work very hard to be integrated into international community, to be fully member of new modern world' (UAToday 2015).

In spring 2015, President Nazarbayev said that 'selection of Almaty as the host city for the 2022 Games would be a sign of openness of the Olympic movement…give a hope to the whole region of Central Asia… [and]expand the limits of thought' (Ospanov 2014), thus highlighting the regime's ambitions for regional leadership and global recognition. Such pressure resembled Kazakhstan's bid for the OSCE chairmanship, when the same argument was employed.

In the run-up to the Olympics, the Kazakhstan Constitutional Council withdrew the draft law that had proposed a crackdown on LGBT people through the introduction of a Russia-like ban of 'gay propaganda' (Armitage 2015). The Council's comments had been technical, talking merely about inaccuracies in some of the provisions that could lead to violation of constitutional rights. Yet many viewed this step as a concession to the novelties in IOC's non-discrimination rules, once again bringing back the memories of the OSCE chairmanship bid, when democratization and liberalization of the civil rights legislation had been put in the centre of the regime's bargain for chairmanship. Similar to that affair, when actual reforms had not lived up to the promises, being too insignificant and symbolic, initiators of the draft law on 'gay propaganda' said they would amend the bill and resubmit it (Mamashuly 2015). It appeared to be a blackmailing of the IOC and the international community at large, and implied that should Kazakhstan be beaten by China, the draft law could well be expected to be back on the table.

Following the voting—and the repeated voting, which was initiated by an unidentified party, who questioned the integrity of e-voting and insisted on paper ballot re-voting (Vassilenko 2015)—Almaty lost the bid to Beijing in a narrow close-run of 40 to 44 votes. According to the observers, Beijing has already proved its capacity as a successful Olympic host and was 'a safe choice' for the IOC. Its record as a top tourism destination with the infrastructure to handle large events, and the efforts to control air pollution also added to the success of a Beijing's pitch (Piper 2015). Swiftly, the media in Almaty and Astana were informed that flashmobs had been curtailed, and people in places of public screening of the ceremony started leaving the spots immediately after the winner announcement, revealing the lack of Olympic spirit, the fact that many spectators were drawn there by administrative pressure, and the absence of a 'plan B′ in the local administrations. Most notably, just after the weekend following the IOC vote, which was hoped to end in Kazakhstan's favour, president Nazarbayev reiterated the need for 'major savings' and comprehensive austerity measures amid deteriorating market conditions, the state of the national budget and the decreasing prices for [its] key export products (Isenov 2015).

Beyond Sports: The Expo

Preparations for the international Expo to be hosted by Astana in 2017 are currently under way amid a retrenchment of the welfare state and calls for austerity from the government, the experiencing of a hard time in the

national economy following a sharp drop in oil prices and the sanctions war between the West and Russia. The right to host this specialized exposition with the theme 'The Future Energy' was awarded by the organizing body, the Bureau of International Expositions, in 2012. It is meant to focus on alternative sources of energy and innovative solutions for conventional ways of energy production. The government expects more than 100 countries and 10 international organizations to take part, and 2–3 million people to attend the exhibition.

Current official estimates claim that $3 billion would be spent to erect the venues for Expo (Expo 2015). T. Yermegiyayev, a top official who had been responsible for organizing the Asian Winter Games in 2011, has headed preparations for Expo 2017 as CEO of the newly established National Company 'Astana Expo 2017', a joint-stock company with the Kazakhstan government as its sole shareholder. While *Aziada* returned only 2.3% of the investments as of now, Yermegiyayev promised that Expo would 'produce a multiplicative effect' and 'guaranteed' a payback of investments (Tukusheva 2015).

The government has notably tried to learn a lesson from *Aziada*, and moved on to lift visa requirement for citizens of the developed countries tentatively in 2014 (Kasenova 2014) and discussed introduction of permanent visa-free entry for the citizens of 26 nations in 2015 (Kasenova 2015). 'We hope this will help us during the EXPO', said Gulnar Kurbanbayeva, the Deputy Chairman of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, which had developing the visa-free entrance project together with Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Interior Ministry, National Security Committee and the Ministry of Investments and Development. As of June 2015, the appropriate decision was not yet formalized.

The authorities have been employing two main narratives in promotion of the bid and the event itself. First, they have been proudly emphasizing that it is the first time that the major branded international exhibition is going to take place in a post-Soviet country. Yet again, such sentiments of exclusiveness are serving the purpose of the regime's—real or wishful—external legitimization.

The second narrative that has been actively propagated includes the exposition's theme, 'Future Energy', which mainly means renewables with its official logo picturing windfarm blades. The government has been underscoring their interest in diminishing the country's dependence on the extraction of hydrocarbons to position the mega event favourably both externally and internally. These speculations included statements about

the need to learn how to 'live after oil ends' and transform the whole national economy to make it more sustainable and less energy-consuming. But in fall 2014, president Nazarbayev made an eyebrow-raising statement during his meeting with Russian president Vladimir Putin, saying that petro-states 'should not be ashamed' of such definition, and that he 'does not believe in the renewables, like solar or wind power' (Sorbello 2014), although he personally had lobbied for Expo-2017 to take place in Astana. This can testify that the self-promotion and external legitimization purposes are more palpable than the claimed 'pragmatic' substantiation for this mega event.

Domestically, PR of spectacles sometimes includes misleading messages about the scope and importance of the events. For example, the Asian Winter Games, which remain a rather low-key competition without proper regularity and strict set of disciplines, were referred to as 'next after the Olympics' in the hierarchy of sports events by the state media and officials. Likewise, Expo-2017 in Astana will be a second-level, thematic 'recognized' exhibition unlike the quinquennial World Expos, officially registered by the Bureau of International Expositions. This distinction is not particularized by the officials when they promote the event inside Kazakhstan.

Messages and Implications

Communication strategy for mega events in Kazakhstan is usually centred around *three main messages*: tourism sector promotion as a diversification and employment strategy (the rational component of mega events' positioning and substantiation); patriotism (a general propagandistic stance, but also an argument to subvert criticism regarding excessive expenditures); and image making (a nation's prestige in the world arena). The first two are popular slogans for internal consumption, and the third constitutes a crosscutting agenda for both audiences.

Facts and figures from the *Aziada* experience casts doubt on the sincerity of the tourism-centred argument. Additionally, the literature tells us that tourism, indeed, can be a solid factor in economic growth, being a labour-intensive industry with a relatively high proportion of female and semi-skilled workers (Croes and Vanegas 2008). Yet, other scholars note that these jobs are of poor quality and low sustainability because they tend to be seasonal and do not fairly contribute to the workforce and community improvements (Hughes and Shields 2007). Prioritization of tourism

as a developmental strategy has a stronger potential when focused on less developed regions and aimed at regional redistribution of wealth between centre(s) and remote areas, mitigating regional economic discrepancies. In Kazakhstan, the government steadily puts a stake on reinforcing the already disproportionately advanced cities.

Positioning of Kazakhstan in TV commercials and other promotional materials usually also lacks appeal to conventional touristic values or attractions. More often this kind of publicity articulates political stability, economic growth or the geopolitical importance of Kazakhstan as the 'Heart of Eurasia'. Such messages are hardly capable of bringing more tourists to Kazakhstan, but are mostly designed to address investors and policy makers in the West. Promotion of national identities is rarely visible in the textual or visual materials designed for framing Kazakhstan as a touristic destination. The official ideology presumption that Kazakh statehood started after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and that it has been led by the incumbent president into the global community as a reliable partner, reflects a less national and more international approach. Patriotism is employed to channel the sense of national pride inwards and outwards, but it is transmitted via imagery and messages that seek domestic consolidation via international recognition of the regime and its policies that ensure regional leadership in Central Asia, economic growth and a 'successful nation' model on the whole. Some loyalty to national identities—Kazakh traditions and values—is manifested in appeals to hospitality and tolerance as distinctive features of the Kazakh national identity, but it would yet again be ascribed to achievement of a regime that managed to preserve stability, in which multi-ethnic and multicultural community could flourish in peace and harmony.

Patriotic and national pride rhetoric is important for the government to tackle the challenges of post-Soviet *nation-building* in the conditions of lingering influence from the former centre of the Soviet empire—a difficult task of 'creating a nation out of a state, rather than the other way around' (Geisler 2005), in which symbolism is charged with a crucial role of a power display. 'Exercising its capacity to appropriate meanings' (Wedeen 1999), the regime advertises itself and its power domestically to get compliance of the populace by mixing coercion and incentives, like security and economic growth being set as top priorities and achievements of modernization.

As mentioned before, signification is mostly done through external actors, their approval of the status quo and international recognition of

the regime's adequacy. But domestically propaganda reinforces these signs with the politics of fear claiming that democratization brings chaos and insecurity, and stability is an ultimate value. Comparisons that the state propaganda draws against those post-Soviet nations, which had undergone 'coloured revolutions', are especially persuasive for the citizens. Such delicate intimidation aims at building the perception of a lack of choice, other than to support the regime.

Finally, mega events are about *nation-branding*, construction and communication of the country's image for foreign audiences. Scholars argue that Central Asian leaders has been attempting 'to present themselves favourably to the international public, not just to improve the image of the country in general', and Kazakhstan's highly impersonated regime is specifically interested in making clear links between the country and its president (Marat 2009). It is done through direct advertisement, public diplomacy and spectacles as a strategy to ensure external self-legitimization of the regime.

The focus of the official narratives on building the country's international identity, prestige and image functions as a medium for communication with diplomats and international investors; therefore, these traits manifest the ruling elite's self-representation, not the collective of people living in the country. The state, setting the agenda for this strategy, acts unilaterally in autocratic manner and does not invite the public for consultation.

Conclusion

Despite the controversies and inconsistencies in staging the 7th Asian Winter Games—the first relatively major and mass sportive event hosted by Kazakhstan—it was used by the authorities pragmatically. Having learnt a lesson from the first Olympic bid in 2005, the government used it in managerial fashion as the first regional step towards higher profile sport mega events. Currently, having a better infrastructure for winter sports tournaments, inherited from the *Aziada*, Almaty has won the right to host the Winter Universiade in 2017 and was a finalist candidate city to host the Winter Olympics in 2022.

At the same time, no matter how smart the regime may look in paving its way to the Olympics, its motives are still servile to the elite's ambitions of self-affirmation in the eyes of the international community and external legitimization for its domestic practices, translated in the subsequent campaigning for internal approval by drumming up patriotic sentiment and diverting attention of the public from political and socio-economic issues. The regime

often positions political, cultural and sports mega events not only as a proof of its international recognition, but also as a device to bring about improvements into urban infrastructure (for example, a better transportation system to be introduced as part of the lead-up) or to facilitate the transfer of technologies (like, 'greener' energy sources with the Astana Expo). Thus, the society's qualitative progress in areas that normally require better governance, public administration and stronger political will appears to be conditioned on whether the government would reach its image-promotion goals, or not.

Further academic discourse about the uses of the regime's country PR exercises, various internationalized assemblies and mega events for external legitimization as a means to convince its population that their rule is the most appropriate for a particular society and/or specific time period, may include the desire to frame the nation globally not only as a regional leader (especially, since Central Asia as a region is largely unknown for international mainstream media and audiences), but also to reaffirm itself as a sovereign polity, an autonomous player, and to separate from the former Soviet Union. Still, the elite's claims are aiming primarily at justification of the regime and retention of power. Another area for further research includes the question of how framing of the regime's legitimacy in the context of recognition by established democracies (even if all efforts do not produce real legitimization externally, they are advertised as such domestically) affects the Kazakhstani population's trust in democratic values and consistency of the West's policy.

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CHAPTER 7

First European Olympic Games in Baku: New Articulation of Azerbaijani Identity?

Anar Valiyev

Cities competed for the honour of hosting the various sport events throughout the twentieth century. Within that context, development connected with sports was regarded as part of a strategy which cities followed to create cultural and leisure capital to reinforce place promotion and consumption-based economic development' (Bourdieu 1997; Euchner 1999; Gospodini 2006). Seoul, Barcelona, London and many other cities used large-scale sport events not only to advance economic development but also to put themselves into the list of grand cities. Although such development often tends to absorb a disproportionate share of resources that hypothetically might go to other projects or places in the city' (Eisinger 2000), still a number of developing cities are promoting this cultural dimension and remarking cities as 'places to play' (Eisinger 2000).

Cities try to compete to get noticed. As the literature suggests (Gotham 2005), urban spectacles or one-time events similar to Olympic Games are large-scale spectacular productions where advertisement, entertainment, TV and mass media feature increasingly to stimulate consumer demand and tourism-oriented development. Spectacular urban development agendas are frequently justified on the basis of developmentalist thinking, which equates national progress and 'modernity' with economic development, 'defined for policy purposes in terms of growth, productivity, and competitiveness rather than in terms of welfare' (Olds and Yeung 2004: 511). These types of events, a key example of which is the Olympic Games, are of short-term time span and demand massive

A. Makarychev, A. Yatsyk (eds.), *Mega Events in Post-Soviet Eurasia*,
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investments. The classic example of the failure of the Montreal 1976 Olympics, which left the city with 'white elephant facilities' and financial burden (Chalkley and Essex 1999), have haunted policy makers for the last couple of decades. Nevertheless, such events attract a large number of tourists and high level of international media providing opportunity for host nations, especially small ones, to showcase their achievements. Moreover, this kind of event boosts national pride and even identity.

The first European Olympic Games in Baku, held in June of 2015, became one such event. Authorities in Azerbaijan assured the population that hosting the European Games would reinvigorate self-assurance that the nation was capable of staging mega events. As Grant put it: 'Horizons of pleasure, of excitement, of possibility are all wrapped up in such projects. It buys the government an extraordinary amount of time' among locals for its policies' (Eurasianet 2005). However, it might be highly speculative to claim that sport events can significantly impact identity building. Thus, we can argue that the government's strategy was not to build identity but to promote the country and the city, and to build a positive image of Azerbaijan, which did not stipulate meaningful domestic changes.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Baku, a city that never hosted a major global event, develops its potential for sports as part of its quality-of-life and place-making agenda. I examine urban transformations in Baku, especially in terms of its strategy of becoming a 'place to play'. In this context I also discuss the correlation between identity building and marketing the place, and will try to answer the question of whether the government was able to succeed in either of these strategies. This is followed by discussion of issues of urban policies, national identity and the impact of European Olympic Games on urban transformations within the city.

Baku: From City of Industry to City of Fun

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan and the largest city in the Caucasus, is not an exception among the list of cities that follow a consumption-oriented policy. The city is located on the Absheron peninsula with a territory covering over 2130 km^2, which is divided into 12 administrative districts that also include 59 settlements. From an historical perspective, Baku was always an industrial city, and oil was the major commodity that turned the small fortress into a city. The birth of a new industrial Baku can be dated to 1847 following the drilling of the first industrial oil well. The period

from the 1870s until the World War I has been called the 'first oil boom', or the 'golden period', in the development of Baku. From this period until 1918, Baku witnessed the rise of magnificent buildings in a baroque style, which was completely alien at the time to the architecture of a typical Moslem city. By 1913, Baku was producing almost 95% of all Russian oil and 55% of the total global oil production (Hasanli 1997).

Geographical location as well as the availability of natural resources predetermined the course of urban planning in Baku. Located on a peninsula surrounded by the biggest lake in the world, its profile is defined by several natural factors including the sea, the landscape, the climate and the limestone, which is used for construction of many of its historical buildings. The Soviet period of Baku was marked by the expansion of the oil industry and accommodating the needs of the growing population. Between the late 1950s and the mid-1980s, a special emphasis was also placed on housing. Specifically, in order to solve the housing problem due to immigration of rural people into the city, the Soviet administration heavily invested in the construction of cheap five-story buildings. This was also the period when many micro-districts were constructed in Baku reflecting the central socialist urban planning concept of 'ideal communist city planning'.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Baku has undergone a tremendous transformation. In this context, demographic trends for the last decade have been quite favourable to the development of Baku, with a constant increase of population due to high net in-migration from rural areas. The official population of the capital reached 2.2 million in 2014, while Ganja, the second largest city of Azerbaijan, has only 322 thousands inhabitants (State Statistical Committee 2014). However, unofficially, it is estimated that up to 3.5–4 million people live in, or commute, to the city every day. As a consequence, it is not surprising that Baku exerts a disproportionally significant influence on the national economy. The total GDP of Azerbaijan in 2014 was $63 billion, of which almost 71% was produced in Baku (State Statistical Committee 2014). The city continues to be the leading recipient of investments and much of this is funnelled into the construction industry. In addition, government investments also favour Baku, where major funds are directed toward infrastructure projects, city gentrification (beautification) and renovation. Demographic pressure and the demand for new apartments had forced the city to heavily invest in construction, with new high-rise towers constantly being erected across the downtown area. The post-Soviet transition toward a market economy enabled Baku to make tremendous progress in urban development and

become one of the fastest growing cities in the Caucasus and Central Asia. As in many Central and Eastern European countries, the rate of post-socialist urban change in Baku was striking, with privatization being 'the leitmotiv of post-socialist urban change' (Bodnar 2001; Stanilov 2010). Specifically, the post-Soviet urban transformation in Baku was characterized by many positive characteristics. Within the two post-Soviet decades the city's landscape has changed completely. Most notably, new high-rise buildings, plazas and business centres were built. Continually, billions of dollars of investments poured into city's economy, while a variety of international events have put Baku on the global media map. For example, the Eurovision Song Contest was held in Baku in May of 2012, making the city the focus of regional and European attention. The logic of this development in Baku highlights that the government and urban elite are trying to turn the city into the main tourist destination of the region as well as an economic powerhouse. Baku's development after 2004–2005 resembles Dubai's rapid expansion. But the work that Dubai carried out for almost 45 years Baku tried to accomplish within a decade. As in Dubai, new brand hotels such as the Marriot, Hilton, Jumeyrah, Kempinsky and Four Seasons opened in Baku. Moreover, many image projects have been implemented in Baku in the last decade. One of the examples of a grand project of the post-Soviet period is the construction of the Baku Flame Towers, which are gradually becoming a symbol of the city (e.g., they are frequently pictured on postcards bought by visitors). The towers symbolize the long history of fire worshippers that considered Azerbaijan a birthplace for the prophet Zoroaster. The Baku Flame Towers include a residential tower that can accommodate 130 residential apartments over 33 floors; a hotel tower for 250 rooms and 61 serviced apartments; and an office tower that provides a net 33,114 square metres of office space.

The Heydar Aliyev Center is another pearl of the construction boom in Baku. Occupying 57,519 square metres, the Heydar Aliyev Cultural Centre, which hosts a conference hall, library and museum, was opened in May of 2012. Designed by famous architect Zaha Hadid, the centre is one of the many buildings that have been built in Baku over the last years that represent a move away from the Soviet-dominated past and toward a national identity. The Centre is part of a larger redevelopment area and is expected to be the hub of the city's intellectual and cultural life. Last but not least of the endeavours in this list is the Khazar Islands project. The project, spearheaded by the local company Avesta, covers an area of 3000 hectare. It will consist of 41 different-sized islands and 19 districts

in the Caspian Sea. The archipelago will cover an area 24 km^2 by 8 km in length and 3 km in width. The total length of the boulevard islands will be 50 km; construction of 6–7 residential buildings is underway on one of the biggest islands. It is expected that in 2022–2023 the city will host 1 million residents. Overall, it is expected that construction of these artificial islands will cost $100 billion, of which $30 billion will come from foreign investors and another $30 billion from apartment sales. According to the project, completely renovated apartments will cost around $4000–$5000 per square metre (Ahmadov 2012). One does not need to be an expert to see the striking similarity between the Khazar Islands and the Palm Islands in Dubai. What is surprising about this project is how enthusiastic business people and government officials are about it. None of the involved parties seems willing to imagine the huge problems and dangers that may plague this ambitious project. At the same time in an attempt to establish Baku as a booming centre, or tourist Mecca, the government is trying to market the city for various international events and sport competitions:

> Ancient Baku has its own beauty, and it is a source of our pride. At the same time, the rejuvenating and modernizing Baku has already secured a rightful place on the world map. … We are turning Baku into a city of gardens, parks and boulevards. Baku is our beautiful city, and I can say with full responsibility today that it is one of the most beautiful cities around the world. … So we are creating an unprecedented environment in the city that will be very difficulty [sic] to match. Such development and such investments really show the dynamic development of our country over a short period of time.—President Ilham Aliyev (President.az 2012)

In 2012 Azerbaijan had a chance to test the ability of Baku to host high-profile international events. The year before, in 2011, an Azerbaijani team of singers had won the Eurovision song competition, and in accordance with the rules of the competition, Baku had to host the 2012 Eurovision event. Initially Baku was not ready to do so. The city lacked a major venue for holding it; the absence of infrastructure facility was also an issue. Baku has invested hundreds of millions in the event, most of which went to infrastructure projects. During the short period of 9 months, the government built and launched the Crystal Hall, a new convention hall for holding the song contest. Moreover, the government spent overall up to $600 million for additional projects associated with beautification and city development, while direct cost for organization of the event totalled only $34.3 million. Eurovision was the first event to put Baku and Azerbaijan at

the centre of entertainment in Europe. It was the first time Azerbaijan was able to symbolically associate itself with the rest of Europe. Thus, according to an independent NGO, *Internet Forum of Azerbaijan,* searches for Azerbaijan in Google increased eight-fold during the month following the 2011 song competition victory, while searches for Baku as a destination doubled. Meanwhile, interest to Azerbaijan grew by over 40 times on *TripAdvisor*. Finally, Baku hosting the Eurovision in May of 2012 put queries for Azerbaijan in a group of the ten most popular searches of May (Ismayilov 2012).

Beyond the visibility, Eurovision had a certain impact on the identity of Azerbaijani population and especially the political and cultural establishment. Azerbaijani population was able to obtain a first-time opportunity to actually 'live' in a European cultural milieu. For many people it was fundamental to re-appraise the roots of belonging to Europe while keeping national traditions and values (Ismayilov 2012). The opening and closing ceremonies of song contest featured the motives from Azerbaijani culture and traditions, while the rest of the show represented European traditions.

As it was mentioned elsewhere (Ismayilov 2012; Valiyev 2013), for the last two decades of the oil boom in Azerbaijan, the country has earned huge resources from oil sales. Starting in 2010, official Baku began to move away from oil as the sole source upon which to build the state legitimacy at home and abroad and began to invest in national culture, sport, cuisine and other elements to construct state identity. From this perspective, the European Olympic Games became the second grandiose project after Eurovision, wherein Baku tried to brand itself in Europe and the world.

The Baku European Games and the Aftermath: A Golden Opportunity

After the success of Eurovision and the holding of some other events of regional significance, Azerbaijani authorities felt the country was able to host a larger event of international scale. In particular, Azerbaijani authorities bid for the 2020 Olympic Games. Based on initial studies that put the hosting cost at $20 billion, they suggested that oil revenues and private investment could finance it. By the time of the bid, Azerbaijan had already built 13 new sporting complexes to bolster Baku's candidacy, with 23 additional buildings scheduled by 2014. However, Baku lost the Olympic bid to Tokyo in 2012. Thus, planners shifted their strategy to attracting smaller-scale events or second-tier events, ostensibly with the

aim of improving the city's portfolio for another Olympic bid in 2024. On December 8, 2012, members of the 41st General Assembly of the European Olympic Committee (EOC) in Rome decided to hold the first ever European Games. Baku has been awarded the rights to host the inaugural European Games in 2015. The decision was made as a result of the secret balloting, where of 48 votes, 38 were cast in favour, 8 votes came against, and 2 abstained from voting. EOC President Patrick Hickey stated after the voting:

> 'We stand at the origins of one of the greatest events in the sport history in Europe. I am proud to say: the first European Games will be held in 2015 in Baku. Our long-awaited baby has been finally born. And now we'll look after him carefully and raise it to make everything [is] at top notch in the beautiful city of Baku. And most importantly, that it was only the beginning—the first page of a multi-year, full and vibrant life of European Games.'

Azad Rahimov, Minister of Youth, reinforced Hickey's words:

> It is very important for a country that gained independence only 23 years ago to position itself on the map of Europe as a European country. Very often the question [is asked,] 'Where is Azerbaijan?' After the Eurovision [S]ong [C]ontest [which the country hosted in 2012, after winning in 2011] and after the European Games, most people will know the answer. (Gotev 2015)

Planners were highly focused on preparing for the 2015 European Games, which were expected to bring 6000 athletes from 49 countries to Baku. The European Games featured up to 20 sports including 15 Summer Olympic and 2 non-Olympic ones. 'This is going to be the most fantastic show ever staged in Azerbaijan, one that will make the Eurovision Song Contest seem like a small, local event,' the Baku European Games Operations Committee (BEGOC) Chief Operating Officer Simon Clegg stated.

Attracting high-quality athletes was an important first step, Clegg contended, and it was accomplished by ensuring that 16 of the 20 participating sports could use the Baku Games as a qualifying or ranking event for the Rio 2016 Olympics. Baku wanted to ensure the Games would be broadcast all over the world, from Australia to South America. The government altered its immigration policy to waive visa requirement for all participating athletes and officials in possession of accreditation card.

In addition, all foreign spectators received visas upon arrival based on proof of purchase of tickets. Some 6000 athletes and 3000 officials from the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) of Europe participated in the Games, which, as Clegg believed, became the 'second most important event in the history of Azerbaijan after the signing of the contract of the century in 1994', referring to the deal with an international consortium to develop the giant Azeri, Chirag and deep-water Gunashli (ACG) oilfields. It was estimated that the 1600 staff that BEGOC hired and the 12,000 volunteers would walk away with new skills and an appetite for volunteering in sporting and other types of events. Azerbaijan is to host a Formula 1 event in 2016, the Chess Olympiad, the Islamic Solidarity Games, and, having bid twice for the Olympic Games, it may ultimately host the event in 2024 or 2028.

Initial estimates placed the costs of the 2015 Games at around $1 billion, including the construction of a $720 million Olympic Stadium, which was inaugurated in June 2011 by Azerbaijan's President Aliyev, together with presidents of FIFA, Sepp Blatter, and UEFA, Michel Platini (Trend.az 2011). The construction was finished by May of 2015, with a seating capacity of 65,000 viewers (BEGOC 2014). Within the stadium precinct there are warm-up and training facilities for athletes that include seating for up to 2000 spectators, parklands and parking facilities, as well as a new Athletes Village. Meanwhile, numerous other facilities were constructed to host this event, including 13 newly constructed, luxurious buildings for 5000 athletes. Although preparations have concentrated on new construction, planners intend to temporarily repurpose some older Soviet-era structures, as well as the recently built Crystal Hall.

For Baku the major concern was to ensure international recognition and good image. The appointment of Dimitris Papaioannou, the artistic director of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games ceremonies, at the similar position at the Baku 2015 opening ceremony speaks volumes about the intent to stage a show to remember. To impress the visitors it is essential a host city have all the attributes of major cities: international airport, a signature building designed by prominent architects, and other impressive buildings and cultural complexes (Jonas and Wilson 1999). By the end of 2014 most of these attributes had been built. The newly inaugurated terminal in the Baku airport is the masterpiece of architecture: constructed in a triangular shape with rounded off angles, it was designed to maintain about three million passengers per year. Several new magnificent buildings have been constructed in Baku. The SOCAR Tower—the tallest building in Baku and

the entire Caucasus—became home to the State Oil Company starting in 2015. Similar to the Lakhta Center (formerly known as Gazprom City), it was meant to symbolize the might and power of the largest taxpayer of Azerbaijan and Georgia—SOCAR. Built in the style of structural expressionism and designed by Heerim Architects from South Korea, the two-towered project rises from an elongated, canopy-like podium and snakes its way skywards. The towers have 32 floors, at a height of 173 metres. Covering an area of 12,000 square metres and providing 100,000 square metres of usage area, the headquarter mainly houses office space but also has conference and sports facilities, a guest house and retail spaces, and food outlets to keep the 2000 employees in the tower firing on all cylinders.

The opening ceremony of the European Olympic Games, held at the new Olympic stadium, in the opinion of the local media commentators, had exceeded all expectations. Baku spent around $100 million for a show to bring even Lady Gaga singing the John Lennon song 'Imagine'. Traditional music and about 2000 female dancers and artists set the stage for the flame-lighting ceremony, which officially opened the Games, followed by an exposition dedicated to the literary writing of the famous twelfth century Azerbaijani poet, Nizami Ganjavi. Another $140 million were spent for the closing ceremony that concluded the 17-day event.

Presidents of Russia and Turkey as well as several other former Soviet Republics attended the event while major leaders ignored it due to frequent accusations of human rights violations by official Baku. The government of Azerbaijan was criticized for jailing journalists and human rights activists as well as crashing civil society. For example, Germany refused to send an official delegation to the opening ceremony due to the 'presence of more than 100 political prisoners—opposition activists, journalists and human rights defenders—in Azerbaijan' (Contact.az 2015). Moreover, Human Rights Watch, an international watchdog, sent a letter on Azerbaijan to the EU Commission, declaring: 'no EU member state will be sending high-level government delegations to the opening ceremonies of the European Games in Baku'. (Human Rights Watch 2015a).

Despite this criticism, Azerbaijan was able to fulfil the goal of image-making and branding. The country was able to bring attention of Europe and to bring part of Europe to Baku. The European Games were successful for Baku since they presented evidence of Azerbaijan's modernity and its rise to international prominence. Officials claimed that the Games were a promotion opportunity for Azerbaijan, a nation that not many people knew much about. The rights for showing the Games were sold to

European, US and Canadian companies. They also secured transmission of the Games to the Middle East and North Africa. 447 million households in China also were able to watch through CCTV, 56 million households in Japan, and 30 million households in India.

After the Games

Even before the European Olympic Games, Azerbaijan confirmed bringing the Formula 1 European Grand Prix to Baku in July of 2016. For this event Hermann Tilke's architectural firm has produced an urban highway in the city centre. Baku as the host of the Formula 1 will stand in the same line as Monaco, Singapore and other major cities. As organizers predict, during the race in Baku, the cars will move in parallel with the boulevard and make a circle around the Old City, a national historical and architectural reserve, which is considered the most ancient part of Baku and included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Azad Rakhimov, Minister of Youth and Sport, spoke of the country's location at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia as a new 'frontier': 'Azerbaijan is a modern European country that has established a reputation as a centre of sporting excellence. The deal to bring Formula 1 racing to Baku is a very significant new chapter in our ongoing success to attract the world's largest sporting events to our country' (Benson 2014).

Apart from the Formula 1 event, in April of 2015, Baku has signed an agreement with Islamic Solidarity Sport Federation on holding IV Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG) in 2017. The procedure for voting on the location of the IV Islamic Solidarity Games was held in Jeddah on 23–24 July 2013. The banner of the Federation was already transferred to Azerbaijan during the opening ceremony of the III Islamic Solidarity Games in the Indonesian city of Palambang on September 22, 2013. The Islamic Solidarity Games will be held in May 2017. The program includes competitions in 20 sports. Participants will be placed in the Athletic Village built for the European Games of 2015. 'We are delighted to have secured this highly important and prestigious event for our nation,' said Konul Nurullayeva, the head of International Relations department of the National Olympic Committee of Azerbaijan (NOCA). 'We strongly believe that the Islamic Solidarity Games is one of the most significant and exciting initiatives for Muslim communities around the world and we are proud to contribute to the development of the event'. Similarly, speaking at the ISG selection ceremony, Vice-President of the National Olympic Committee Dr. Chingiz Huseynzada, affirmed Azerbaijan's leading role in

the regional advancement of sport: 'After our success in securing the 2015 European Games, the hosting of the fourth ISG in 2017 will make another important contribution to our standing both in the Muslim and international communities. We are a strong Islamic nation and are committed to helping and inspiring our friends around the world' (Contact.az 2015).

Finally, the success of European Olympic Games bolstered the Azerbaijani government to think about bidding for the 2024 Olympic Games. As sports minister Rahimov stated, Azerbaijan could host the event if the IOC reduced the rigidity of its requirements. Baku bid for the 2016 and 2020 Olympics, but received poor ratings on infrastructure by IOC inspectors. However, the city was inspected before the major building program for the European Games. (NZHerald 2015). The good news for Baku is that the IOC has adopted a reform package entitled 'Olympic Agenda 2020', which aims in part to cut the costs for hosting the Olympics and the maximum use of existing venues. The IOC also instituted a new 'invitation phase' for potential bid cities to discuss their plans and visions with IOC officials.

Unfortunately, debates—either within or outside of the country—on the role of sports events in nation building and identity construction are scarce. Did the European Games serve the purpose of bringing the country closer to Europe and European values? Ever since independence Azerbaijan was not able to identify itself with any part of the world. Identification with the Islamic world was denied right from the very beginning because of the widespread perceptions of its backwardness. Exemplified mostly by regimes in Iran and Saudi Arabia, Islamic ideals did not appeal to average Azerbaijani. Meanwhile, the successful regional policy of the EU in the 1990s and 2000s, along with its economic power, made Europe rather attractive for the country. The Eurovision Song Contest held in 2012 was the apex of the pro-European drive of Azerbaijani elite and public. That was the first time when Azerbaijan was able to send a message to the whole of Europe of its existence and show its inclination to culturally associate itself with a European identity. However, institutionally the elites hardly wanted to integrate into the European normative order with corresponding commitments, since it would require massive institutional reforms. Elites want to be culturally close to Europe, but would hardly be eager and able to play by the rules of European institutions. The atmosphere of criticism and animosity that led to political boycotting of the Baku European Games by EU leaders triggered reciprocal Euro-sceptic attitudes. As the president of Azerbaijan stated in his speech to the government:

> *'The spiritual and economic crises have already become a reality in Europe, which makes us think, and we must think about how Azerbaijan should integrate into European structures. In general, should we get integrated or not? Personally, I have some time been thinking about it and I think that in the coming months it is necessary to prepare a new mechanism, format and concept of cooperation.…Sometimes I hear from government officials, MPs and public figures that we should integrate into Europe. Just think when you talk about it. First, you must know the position of the President. Secondly, what is the form in which you will integrate? Do you need this integration or not? In what capacity do they want to take Azerbaijan there—as a secondary member, associate member, or something else? We do not need such a form'* (Contact.az b. 2015b)

Thus, instead of opening Europe to Azerbaijan and, vice versa, opening Azerbaijan to the EU, in contrast, the first European Games actually deteriorated relations. It is too early to judge the actions of the government in relation to the boycott of games by leaders of the EU. It is too early to analyse the actions of elites. However, it is hard to imagine that Azerbaijan would give up its European vector of development. Most of the strategic projects of Azerbaijan are primarily connected with Europe. The oil pipeline Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan; the Trans Anatolian Pipeline; the transport corridor from Central Asia to Europe and many other projects require European involvement. The Azerbaijani establishment would hardly be able or willing to sever relations with the EU. We can expect that the war of words may continue for some time, but it would hardly affect the projects that Azerbaijan finance or implement together with EU.

Furthermore, despite the harsh rhetoric and a halt on integration, the cultural image of Europe in Azerbaijan remains largely positive. Many students choose Europe as their destination for study, and many Azerbaijanis are frequent travellers to the EU, especially after the visa facilitation agreement. Meanwhile, according to a Caucasus Barometer poll, the number of people who fully distrusted the EU in 2013 amounts 12 %, while 2 % either trust or fully trust. A large group of people—around 47 %—are neutral or undecided (Caucasus Barometer 2013). It is worth mentioning that trust toward the EU was at its peak in 2008 with record 45 %, and then went down because of the EU inability to intervene during the Georgian–Russian war in 2008. Against this backdrop, the European Games and Formula 1 are more elements of marketing strategy than identity building. For the elites these projects are not meant to reinforce their European identity. Instead, the purpose is to market the country and its leaders across Europe in order to get political benefits. In the same context, the

Islamic Games to be held in Baku in 2017 do not serve a purpose of strengthening the Islamic identity of Azerbaijan; rather, they are designed as another step in promotional strategy that might potentially bring some political advantages.

Political Economy of Games: Who Benefits?

It is difficult to say who really benefited from the Games. As Simon Clegg claimed, out of 2020 full members of the BEGOC staff only 440 were expats while 1580 were young Azerbaijanis:

> *'It was very rich mixture, and the reason why this was necessary, why there are so many expats, in senior positions, is twofold. First this event's preparation was condensed [to] just 30 months, and secondly, Azerbaijan doesn't have a big history of organizing major international multi-sports events of this scale. Therefore, we brought in a significant number of expats. Part of the responsibilities of the expats is to hand over knowledge and train the Azerbaijanis. So that when Azerbaijan hosts Formula 1 next year, the Islamic Solidarity Games in 2017, Euro 2020 football matches, Azeris will be much more capable of filling the senior management positions'.*

Despite such optimistic statements about benefits for Azerbaijanis, it would be great to look at the forces that drove the process and benefited from such kinds of mega events. Urbanization and de-industrialization of Baku has helped to promote social class structures that are similar to those in all large global cities. In contrast to Soviet times when the decision-making process was in the hands of the city administration, today the urban elites of Baku—consisting of wealthy businesspeople, government officials, real estate developers, large-scale retailers and wholesalers—are among the key decision-makers. Thus, many projects in the city are being implemented following the logic of these urban elites. More than 35 years ago, Molotch (1976) introduced a concept of the 'growth machine' that became popular in the urban literature (Jonas and Wilson 1999). Molotch claimed that urban development is not driven by supply and demand, but simply by coherent coalitions of elites who benefit from local population growth. In other words, a 'growth machine' is a post-political combination of entrepreneurs and urban politicians, based on powerful, pro-development networks of business interests and local politicians who favour increased economic development at the expense of neighbourhood residents and other, potentially vulnerable, stakeholders. As mentioned

elsewhere (Makarychev and Yatsyk 2015), the logic of this growth coalition is largely based on post-political thinking with a major priority of building consensus, securing public order, renovating and gentrifying urban areas and branding the city for marketing and political purposes.

Although the environment for post-politics or the growth machine might be different for various places (depending on history, socio-economic context and other factors), and as the whole concept functions differently in democratic and authoritarian societies, the core components of the concept—the elite coalition, the self-interested promotion of urban development and the unequal benefits of this growth—are the same in all contexts (Kulcsar and Domokos 2005).

From this perspective, applying growth machine theory to Baku seems quite appropriate. The city, capital of the oil-rich country, has increased its visibility and economic power thanks to oil money and international sports events hosted by the country. Past and current debates focus on power distribution in the city and the impact of certain groups on urban development. In fact, urbanization and de-industrialization of Baku have helped create social class structures that are similar to those in virtually all large cities of the world. Government officials, wealthy businesspeople, and professionals in Baku together constitute an urban upper class constitutive of a decision-making system. The growth machine in Baku is diverse and generally includes large-scale retailers and wholesalers, real estate developers, construction firm and hotel owners, transportation company operators and leasers (Valiyev 2009). The growing demand for new apartments has turned the city into a huge construction site. Meanwhile, the influx of oil money allowed Baku to create many businesses whose interests are closely vested in the development of city. Most of the capital investments that poured into Baku went mainly into construction and tourism. Growth is the major component of both. The Eurovision contest, the World Cup Soccer among girls under 17 and other international events held in Baku in 2012–2013 had a positive impact on the number of tourists visiting the city. For example, in 2012, the number of people staying in hotels and hotel-type complexes in Azerbaijan increased by 22.5% compared to 2011 and amounted to 624,900 guests (State Statistical Committee 2013). The lion's share of the visitors entered the country through Baku. Meanwhile, the number of overnight stays also increased compared to previous years. At least 57.3% of the total number of overnight stays was registered in Baku, with the remainder in other regions of the country. However, low-occupancy rate remained the main problem for hotels and hotel-type

facilities in Azerbaijan. In 2012, the occupancy rate was around 13.7% while in Baku it was only slightly higher (State Statistical Committee 2013). It is worth mentioning that without international events the occupancy rate would be much lower. Nevertheless, the number of luxury hotels in Baku is increasing every year. In 2012 top brand hotels such as Jumeirah, Marriott and Four Seasons opened in Baku, which now boasts 17 five-star hotels. In 2013 the Fairmont Hotel was added to the list, located in the Flame Towers as is the Kempinsky. According to Marina Usenko, the Moscow-based executive VP of Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels, in 2009 Baku had only 4400 hotel rooms. In 2010, the number increased by 1200 rooms (29% increase), 800 more rooms were added in 2011 and around 1200 appeared in 2012–2013 (Jones 2012). The growth in the number of five-star hotels is understandable. Most clients are corporate business people either working in the Azerbaijani government or having close ties with it. On paper, all these new hotels are investments from abroad, but in fact these investments are unaccounted funds and money received from various operations inside the country.

The hotel business is an easy investment and a lucrative enterprise. However, a problem arises. Despite the fact that the government claims an increasing number of tourists in Azerbaijan, in fact all these numbers are bogus and constitute mostly ethnic Azerbaijani living in Russia or Georgia who frequently cross the border. The Ministry of Tourism boasts them as tourists, making the statistics attractive. In reality, it is difficult to calculate the real tourist numbers, which apparently are not high. Expensive hotel prices, unreasonable costs for entertainment in downtown as well as the visa regime introduced in 2010 have made Baku Less attractive. Usenko predicted that by the end of 2015, the number of hotel rooms would increase by 260%, thus raising the question of whether the city is in danger of becoming 'overhoteled', at least in the luxury category. 'Baku is a nice and attractive city, but for a city of just two million people [the] current number of rooms is redundant. Concerning business travellers, most of the impact from the construction and installation boom related to the petroleum business is now over. So unless the Azerbaijani authorities reposition the country to attract more business and leisure travellers (business meetings, conferences and other events), I don't see the high-end hotel market as sustainable,' she said (Jones 2012). Kemal Bayik, the director of marketing for the Four Seasons Baku, echoes her argument that demand is now primarily from the UK and the US where major oil companies are located (Jones 2012).

The Eurovision Song Contest opened new perspectives for hotel owners. They understood clearly that foreign tourists would not come en masse to stay in five-star hotels. Most of the package tourists from EU countries and the US would prefer budget hotels. Thus, government-sponsored conferences, along with sports tournaments were among the best solutions for hotels to realize profits. Even unsuccessful bids for some sport events (World Summer Olympics in 2016 and 2020, as well as for UEFA Euro 2020) can create a positive city image and boost the international profile and capital improvement program initiated by the bid process (Cochrane et al. 1996).

Despite many commonalities with other cities of post-Communist states, Baku nevertheless differs significantly from any other locality. A hybrid regime of governance, weak civil society, a massive influx of oil money, as well as grand ambitions to become a major city, has made Baku a unique case. It would be hard to extrapolate Baku's example to other cities of the former Soviet Union since none has had the same historical path and current conditions, although Moscow or Almaty could be comparable cases, taking into consideration the significance of each city to their respective economy. What is particularly important about the application of the growth machine model to Baku is that it not only helps us to better understand the dynamic of the creation of a growth coalition in many cities of the former Soviet Union, especially those of the Caspian region, but it also shows the role that urban growth can play in national development. The explosive regime of destruction and construction that has been manifested in Baku is to some extent a function of place-making as that term has been used by Golubchikov and Phelps in their study of edge city development in Moscow (2011). Individual neighbourhoods and specific construction sites are, of course, locations in which recognizable developments occur, be they residential or commercial. Yet it is also the case that what is happening in Baku cannot be separated from the aspirations that are held for Azerbaijan by its leaders. The intended outcome of urban growth is not restricted to the urban area itself, and can only be understood in the broader national context. The construction of luxury hotels, to take one example, is designed to help turn Baku into an international tourist destination; but that is only comprehensible as a component within the improvement of the national profile. Sports events represent a context in which one can see an essential relation between what occurs on the ground and what is part of the transformation of

nations within the region. Political economies in rapidly growing countries, including Azerbaijan, are new and dramatic examples of how transformations of the urban fabric are implicated in transitory changes within the nation itself.

Conclusion

The First European Olympic Games in Baku could be considered as one of the elements of post-political urban boosterism, or active promotion of a city. In Baku it has evolved into large-scale urban development schemes, including construction of iconic new buildings, revamping of local infrastructure, and creation of a new urban imagery. However, while such a popular tactic was an element of free market economies that justified speculative building, now it is increasingly at work in settings less committed to democratic freedoms. Urban planners in closed countries are increasingly seeking to create new images for their cities and states through grandiose urban development and hosting of major international spectacles. As citizens and their leaders in liberal democracies grow increasingly fatigued by—and intolerant of—the skyrocketing expense of hosting such spectacles, leaders in non-democracies have been quick to pick up the slack and are beginning to win first-tier event bids (for example, China's Olympics 2008; Russia's Olympics 2014 and World Cup 2018; Qatar's World Cup 2022 and so on.). While urban boosterism in liberal democratic settings is also used to solidify position of the 'post-political' elites, the unprecedented $8 billion price tag for Baku's European Olympic Games shows that resource-rich, nondemocratic states are positioned to develop such projects on a dramatically larger scale. The 'Sochi syndrome' that prevailed in urban development after 2014, paved the way for many other countries to use such a platform to consolidate systems and to promote state-dominated, elite-based financial interests. Boosterist agenda in Baku were serving three purposes: (1) distributing financial and political patronage; (2) promoting a positive image of the state for both international and domestic consumption; and (3) creating a sense of unity in the society. Moreover, elites have been able to also use these projects in their state-making efforts—using resource wealth, officially and otherwise, to cultivate the credibility for transforming the country and setting it on track for a new era of modernity, all the while painting these three developmental goals as a 'gift' to the people from the state.

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PART III

Global Norms and Local Governance

CHAPTER 8

Fiscal Framework for Mega-Events in Post-Soviet Eurasia: Shifting the Borderline or Raising the Bar?

Karolina Tetłak

Following the financial crisis in the US and Europe, ever-more-expensive sports mega events are increasingly being hosted by Eurasian countries. The financial and legal framework adopted for such events in the Western world is therefore being adapted to non-Western legal systems and cultures. The focus of this chapter is the influence of the emerging supranational mega-events law on legal systems of Eurasian host countries and the impact of their legislation on the evolving practices connected with the preparation of such events. Based on the examples of the UEFA Euro 2012 co-hosted by Ukraine, the 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship in Minsk, the 2014 Sochi Olympics, and the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, this chapter will explore how host countries responded to the expectations of international sports organizations regarding the legal and tax framework for sports mega events. As a rule, UEFA, FIFA and IOC encourage host countries to introduce special regulations that implement the organizations' own policy, impose uniformly worldwide, despite differences in legal systems of the hosts. Trying to keep the legislative implementation of their policies in harmony with national procedures, sports organizations promote their interests to an extent that often challenges

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national sovereignty and competencies of nation states (Tetłak 2014a: 173). This chapter will analyze how post-Soviet Eurasia has adapted to this practice and whether the legislative reaction of the post-Soviet hosts results in shifting borderlines of inclusion and exclusion in terms of law, tax policy and administration for sports mega events or whether it has actually raised the bar for candidate countries. Hosting mega events in post-Soviet countries may affect the expectations and requirements put forward by sports organizations and, consequently, the bidding for, and legal conditions of, hosting mega events.

The methodology used in this chapter includes literature research, legal analysis and evaluation of existing national tax law, including the solutions adopted specifically for sporting events. Primary source materials (legislation) were used to present the tax regimes created by Russia, Belarus and Ukraine for sports competitions organized in these countries. Using the comparative method, the approach to sports events taxation, which took shape in the last decade, has been presented. In inferring some general conclusions from the examples of tax regimes, the inductive method of reasoning was used. The legal analysis of source materials and other relevant documents (such as bid books) leads to the short characteristic of modern championships, with particular emphasis on the legal and regulatory aspects.

Geopolitics of Sports Mega-Events

Originating in the ancient Roman and Greek empires, sports events have their birthplace in Western civilization. Although the modern games have become global festivals celebrated worldwide, they are still closely tied to the homeland of democracy, with most sports governing bodies based in Europe. As a result, by 2012, the Olympic Games were hosted by 42 cities in 22 countries, yet by cities outside Europe and North America on only 7 occasions. In recent years, there has been a profound shift in the geopolitics of sports mega-events with a growing number of the events moving to non-Western countries. The growing importance of major sports events encouraged host countries to spend generously on these celebrations. However, with a financial crisis hitting the global economy, lavish budgets for sports mega-events were no longer acceptable in the US and Europe. There were cases where cities (Munich, Oslo, Stockholm, Toronto, Krakow) withdrew their bids for the Olympics, confronted with the financial realities and expectations for the event and a negative reaction from the general public. Heated debates on over-spending on circuses and

under-performing in other crucial areas forced Western cities to refuse to bid for the games. The governing bodies for sports turned their eyes to non-Western players who not only proved eager to play but also committed to play by the rules. These rules, including the legal and contractual environment for sport, evolved over years and were shaped by the Western culture. The question now arises what influence will this shift towards non-Western hosts have on the global outlook of sports events.

One of the regions that attracted the global industry of sports mega events is Eurasia, in particular post-Soviet countries. Striving for recognition in the upscale international arena, these countries have taken the sporty way to stir the waters of hospitality. Recently, numerous sports events have been hosted in East Europe and Eurasia. In 2010, Ukraine co-hosted the UEFA EURO championship, Russia organized the 2014 Winter Olympics and will host the soccer World Cup in 2018, Belarus hosted the World Ice Hockey Cup in 2014 and Kazakhstan was a candidate for the 2022 Olympics. Less important international events are also welcomed in Eurasia, including the 2013 Summer Universiade in Kazan and the First European Olympic Games 2015 in Baku.

Mega events such as the Olympics or World Football Cup have since decades been used by countries to showcase their power and as a mighty tool of propaganda and political persuasion. More recently, they have served as a powerful instrument of nation branding, political positioning and a catalyst for major infrastructural projects. The perceived benefits of hosting sports mega events have resulted in fierce competition between candidate cities. Towards becoming the successful bidder, bidding committees make promises regarding the conditions for staging the events.

Legal Nature and Theoretical Aspects of the Fiscal Framework for Sports Mega-Events

The host country selection procedure for sports mega events requires candidates to present a plan for the organization of the event in the form of bid documents to facilitate the evaluation and comparison of candidature files. The bid books are prepared in response to a questionnaire covering a series of key organizational issues, arranged thematically, from venues and security to legal and financial framework for the event. The questionnaire is accompanied by a selection of relevant documents, including a set of guarantees to be granted by the authorities of the host country. A separate guarantee is required as to a tax-free treatment of event-related income and duty-free import and export of certain goods during the preparation

and organization of championships. The candidates are also presented with a model host city contract that contains non-negotiable terms and conditions for organizing the event and imposes uniform expectations on all candidate countries. In the bidding phase, the bidding governments commit to issue new legislation necessary for the proper staging of the event in line with the expectations of the sports organization. Therefore, the bidding procedure and the conclusion of the host city contract have an extremely weighty impact on the legislative process in the host country. For contractual provisions regarding taxes, as contained in the government guarantees and host city contract, to become effective a further transposition into national law in the form of generally binding legal norms is required. From a legal point of view, the host city contract is an agreement of a private nature, yet it creates responsibilities within the sphere of national public law (Tetłak 2012: 33–37). The procedure for concluding a contract to host a sporting event and adopting tax rules for the event under the contract leads to a situation in which the government guarantees the enactment of tax legislation with a fixed wording, unilaterally specified by the sports organization. Although legislative procedures may formally be maintained for the adoption of tax provisions for championships, in practice it is not the state legislature that determines the shape of the legal regime for the event. Draft legislation setting out the tax regime for a sporting event is, at least to some extent, developed by the organizing committee of the event in consultation with the sports organization.

Since the demand for a tax exemption became a standard in the practice of major sports events, countries wishing to host global championships must adapt to the prevailing practice of granting tax privileges to maintain a competitive attractiveness of their offers. In the process, governments de facto cede fiscal rule-making authority to international sports bodies and perpetuate or even legalize fiscal self-regulation imposed by the powerful owners of sports circuses.

Bold Bidding Promises: The Example of the 2014 Sochi Olympics

Already at the bidding stage, ambitious post-Soviet candidates try to gain an upper hand over competitors by making bold bidding statements and generous promises. For example, in response to the questionnaire presented by the IOC for the Olympic Winter Games in 2014, the Sochi Bid Committee put forward an enthusiastic bid book in which a clear statement

was made: taxes in the Russian Federation will not impact the staging of the Games (Sochi 2014 Bid Committee 2006, p. 95). Driven by its desire to host the event, Sochi indeed took a very proactive approach in making tax promises to the IOC. While most candidature files briefly described the domestic tax systems and carefully suggested that tax issues not have a significant impact on staging the Games, the Russian bid committed to adopting special Olympic legislation to bolster existing law pertaining to Olympism (Sochi 2014 Bid Committee 2006: 95); and to exceed all the legal requirements of the IOC Referring to the Olympics hosted in 1980, Russia claimed to be prepared, from a legal viewpoint, to host the Olympic Games in 2014. In particular, the Sochi bid book promised that if Sochi were selected as the host city of the Olympic Games in 2014, the Russian government would ensure that equipment and goods for the Olympics that are imported and subsequently re-exported would not be subject to customs duties. The IOC would not have to pay corporation tax, but would recover VAT on their costs incurred in the Russian Federation. Athletes' performances would also be tax-free (Tetłak 2014b: 14–18).

The promises made during the selection procedure by cities interested in hosting sports events are often a bargaining chip in the bidding process. Given the fierce competition for the biggest sports events, the strategy of the candidates is to create a competitive offer and showcase its unique characteristics. The contents of the applications are often dictated by personal ambitions to eliminate competition, rather than by rational management. By offering favorable tax conditions, the cities have a chance to distinguish themselves from other candidates, and gain favor with decision makers in the selection of the Olympic host.

The bargaining power of the IOC has long enabled it to demand tax-free treatment beyond the law. The scope of responsibilities to be taken by the Olympic host is presented to the candidate cities in the bidding phase, when they have the opportunity to become familiar with non-negotiable terms and conditions for organizing the Olympics, including tax exemptions required by the IOC. Compliance with these requirements is ensured by government guarantees that express support by the government and provide legal and financial security of the event. The IOC, as the owner of the Olympic Games, expects the host to introduce legislative changes that are necessary for the proper course of the Olympics, in line with the expectations of the IOC. Meeting the expectations of the sport organization and the provision of appropriate financial and legal guarantees are preconditions for getting the right to host the event.

Having won this right for the 2014 Olympics, Russia complemented its existing law with new legislation (Russia 2007, 2010) to create a comprehensive legal framework for the Games. The package of special legal measures for the Games secured an exceptional tax status for the IOC and minimized the tax consequences for the IOC and its local partners, for whom the normal rules were suspended for the Games.

As promised in the Sochi candidature file, Russia established a powerful legal framework for the Sochi Olympic Organizing Committee (SOOC), which was incorporated as an autonomous not-for-profit foundation, a legal form that minimizes its tax exposure. According to Russian law, foundations are exempt from corporate profit tax on donations and governmental subsidies, provided their revenues are used for the purposes established by the foundation's charter. Payments related to Olympic activities, including contributions from the IOC and any money paid to the SOOC for its share of television rights or marketing rights, were not to be subject to corporate tax under the provisions of the Olympic Law.

The Sochi bid book guaranteed that there would be no corporate profits tax levied in Russia on income of legal entities received in the course of, and due to the organization of, the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. Accordingly, the provisions of the Russian Tax Code were amended to ensure that certain organizations not be recognized as taxpayers. The personal scope of the tax immunity covers foreign organizers of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi and official broadcasters, in respect of operations involving the production and distribution of media products (including official television and radio broadcasts) carried out in accordance with a contract concluded with the IOC. It also covers foreign market partners of the IOC, as well as branches and representative offices in Russia of foreign market partners of the IOC, in respect of transactions in relation to the organization of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. No tax is levied in Russia on proceeds from the sale of broadcasting, marketing or any other proprietary rights associated with the 2014 Olympic Winter Games to Russian companies or individuals. The exemption applies until 1 January 2017.

The tax arrangements likewise benefited athletes and other individuals officially involved in the preparation and staging of the 2014 Sochi Olympics Games. Special tax exemptions were introduced to ensure that awards in cash and in kind granted to Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Games winners be exempt from personal income tax in Russia.

The exemption applies to income received by athletes and members of national teams who have an Olympic identity and accreditation card.

Tax privileges were also introduced for temporary staff. Individuals working temporarily in Russia to carry out Olympic-related business (for example, persons working for broadcast rights holders and other commercial partners, team doctors and so on) are not required to pay the personal income tax if they stay in Russia less than 183 days in a 12-month period and if they derive their income from companies outside of Russia. Income in cash and in kind received during the period of the organization of the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi by individuals who have entered into an employment contract with a marketing partner of the IOC or official broadcaster to perform activities related to the planning and staging of the Sochi Olympics is considered non-taxable. Income in kind received from the SOOC and the Sochi administration by the representatives of the IOC and NOCs, representatives of international and national sports federations, and SOOC employees or volunteers is not subject to taxation, including premiums for insurance paid by SOOC. The relief from taxation of such income is allowed on the basis of an approved list of temporary staff or on the basis of the Olympic or Paralympic identity and accreditation cards.

The Olympic Law released from tax income in the form of expenses paid, for example, for the issuance of visas, invitations and other similar documents, the cost of travel, accommodation, food, training, communications, uniforms and clothing equipment, transport, linguistic support and articles with symbols of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi. Work permits issued to personnel employed at the 2014 Olympic Winter Games are exempt from work permit taxes.

In the Krasnodar region, where Sochi is located, a Special Tourist and Recreation Economic Zone was created. As a result, certain property and land owned by the residents of this zone is exempt from property tax and land tax for 5 years.

The Russian bid book for the 2014 Games promised that there would be no VAT levied in Russia on the sale of broadcasting, marketing or any other proprietary rights of the IOC associated with the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. Indeed, the Olympic tax legislation contains a VAT exemption applicable to media and commercial rights payments between the IOC and its commercial partners, such as broadcasters and sponsors of the event. Russian VAT is not levied on the sale of broadcasting and marketing rights by the IOC to companies not registered with the Russian tax

authorities. The SOOC must charge VAT on the sale of merchandise but it is not, in this instance, adverse for the sports body because, thanks to its taxpayer status, it can deduct VAT on goods and services purchased in Russia, as well as obtain a VAT refund due to excess input VAT. In general, the sale of tickets for sports events is exempt from VAT in Russia.

Russian Olympic law provides for customs duty-free importation, use and re-exportation of goods and materials imported into Russia required by the IOC, national Olympic committees (NOCs) and their delegations, media, sponsors and suppliers to conduct their official activities and obligations. Fiscal privileges offered by the Russian Federation to all Olympic constituents created a highly favorable environment for the Sochi Olympics. Indeed, Russia actually exceeded the expectations of the IOC as regards tax exemptions because unlike European Union jurisdictions it was free to change its VAT rules. It also offered a full tax exemption for any Olympics-related income. The fiscal immunity for businesses involved in the Olympics raises considerable controversies given that the Russian taxpayer is, in effect, paying twice for the privilege of staging the Sochi 2014 Olympics, firstly in the cost of the Games themselves of some $50 billion and also in the lost tax revenue as a result of the Olympic tax exemption.

The Olympic tax package instituted for the most expensive Olympics in history is also controversial in that it suspends and/or complements the general principles of taxation in force in Russia. As a result, the Olympic Games in Sochi have their own tax regime which effectively secures an above-the-law position for the IOC and businesses involved in the Olympic Games (Tetłak 2014b: 14–18). The scale of tax concessions offered to the Olympic Movement not only allowed Russia to gain an upper hand in the bidding process, it also raised the bar for the future legal framework for this privately held sports event financed from public funds. The IOC had already been able to demand tax-free treatment for itself and its commercial partners, but increasing readiness of host countries to offer special tax arrangements for the Olympics definitely increases the stakes in the bidding game. Apart from covering the enormous cost of staging the event, the Russian government offered an exceptional tax status to Olympic tsars and their whole court and troops, which further encourages the IOC to demand a highly favorable environment for the Games. In this respect, the participation of post-Soviet countries in the bidding race may propel the appetites of sports governing bodies. The hands of the taxman in these countries are not tied so Olympic anti-tax legislation is more generous, which sets a standard below which Olympic tsars might not want to go.

2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia

The tax package for the Russian World Cup differs to some extent, although Russia referred to its Sochi experience in supporting the hosting and staging of a major sports event. In its World Cup candidature file, the bidding committee showed its willingness to make material concessions and accommodate concerns of the event organizers (FIFA 2010: 29). The country provided all government guarantees in full compliance with FIFA's template documents. In its Government legal statement, the Russian government undertook, at least five years in advance of the FIFA World Cup, to take all measures required to pass and bring into effect all the necessary laws, orders and resolutions that might be required to ensure full compliance with the government guarantees. The legal issues arising from organizing the 2018 FIFA Football World Cup and the 2017 FIFA Confederations Cup in Russia are regulated by the Federal Law on Organizing the FIFA 2018 Football World Cup and the FIFA 2017 Confederations Cup in the Russian Federation and on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation (Russia 2013). The law defines the legal status and powers of the Russia 2018 Organizing Committee and the regional organizing committees. 'Russia 2018' is an autonomous non-profit organization established by the Russian Federation and the Russian Football Union to prepare and conduct the World Cup and Confederations Cup in accordance with the requirements of FIFA. The law creates a favorable tax environment for the event by ensuring that taxes will not be due on transactions and event-related income.

For taxpayers involved in the organization of the event, a special registration procedure is in place whereby organizations are registered on the basis of a notification they forward to a tax authority. The law stipulates a relief from paying the state duty for the state registration of legal entities and accreditation of branches and representative offices of foreign companies established in the territory of the Russian Federation by FIFA, its subsidiaries, confederations, national football associations (including the Russian Football Union), the Organizing Committee 'Russia 2018' and its subsidiary, suppliers of goods (works, services) to FIFA, producers of media information for FIFA, FIFA broadcasters, FIFA commercial partners and contractors.

FIFA and its subsidiaries, national football associations, foreign producers of media information and suppliers of goods (works, services) to FIFA are not recognized as VAT taxpayers in respect to the World Cup-related

activities. Any operations for the sale of goods (works, services) and property rights of these organizations are not taxable. At the same time, a 0 % tax rate is imposed on the sale of goods and property rights by FIFA and its subsidiaries, as well as goods and property rights in connection with the activities of the Organizing Committee 'Russia 2018' and its subsidiary, the national football association, the Russian Football Union, producers of FIFA media information and suppliers of goods to FIFA. This solution allows the listed entities to deduct VAT paid on their purchases without charging tax on their sales.

FIFA and its subsidiaries are not recognized as taxpayers of the tax on profit of organizations. The same exclusion applies to confederations, national football associations, foreign producers of media information for FIFA and suppliers of goods (works, services) to FIFA in respect of income received for the performance of World Cup-related activities.

Moreover, in the definition of tax base, the following income is not taken into account in the case of Russian taxpayers: income received by the Organizing Committee and its subsidiary, the Russian Football Union, producers of media information for FIFA and suppliers of goods (works, services) to FIFA in connection with event-related activities, including exchange rate differences, fines, penalties and other sanctions for breach of contractual obligations, as well as property rights and damages caused by any use of stadiums, training centers and other sports facilities. Income in the form of dividends paid to such taxpayers is not included in the tax base if at the end of each tax period the share of income received in connection with the event-related activities is not less than 90 % of all income for the relevant tax period. There is no withholding tax on such income received in the form of dividends and assets. By the same token, when defining the tax base, the outlays incurred by the Organizing Committee 'Russia 2018' and its subsidiary, the Russian Football Union, producers of media information for FIFA and suppliers of goods to FIFA based in Russia, in connection with the specified activities are not recorded.

The activities of FIFA and FIFA foreign subsidiaries do not lead to a permanent establishment of these organizations in the Russian Federation. Similarly, a permanent establishment does not arise for the national football associations, producers of media information for FIFA, FIFA broadcasters, suppliers of goods to FIFA, registered or based outside the territory of Russia in connection with the implementation of event-related activities of the organizations in Russia. Such foreign taxpayers are thus treated as non-residents not performing an activity through a permanent establishment in Russia.

The obligation to withhold tax is waived in cases of payment of income to FIFA and FIFA foreign subsidiaries, as well as in cases of payment of income to confederations, national football associations, producers of media information for FIFA and foreign suppliers of goods to FIFA in connection with the specified activities. Payers of such income do not need to act as withholding agents.

FIFA and its subsidiaries, confederations, national football associations (including the Russian Football Union), the Organizing Committee 'Russia 2018' and its subsidiary, the producers of FIFA media information and suppliers of goods to FIFA are not recognized as taxpayers of the transport tax in respect of vehicles owned by them and used only for the purposes of the specified event-related activities. These organizations are also not recognized as taxpayers of the tax on the property of organizations in respect of property used only for the implementation of activities under the World Cup Law. The World Cup law exempts from personal income tax income in cash and in kind received by individuals for the execution of their duties for FIFA and its foreign subsidiaries, confederations, foreign national football associations, foreign producers of media information and foreign suppliers of goods to FIFA.

Furthermore, the exemption covers income in cash and in kind received for the supply of goods and services from foreign companies by the persons included in the list of FIFA who enter the territory of the Russian Federation and leave it within 60 days prior to the first match of the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the FIFA Confederations Cup 2017 and 60 days after the date of the last match of each of the sporting events. The following items of income are not taxable: insurance premiums payments made to foreign nationals and stateless persons under labor contracts or civil contracts that are concluded for works and services with FIFA and its subsidiaries, the Organizing Committee 'Russia 2018' and its subsidiary, as well as payments made to volunteers under civil law contracts that are concluded with these organizations and the object of which is to participate in the event-related activities, compensation of expenses of volunteers in connection with the execution of these agreements in the form of payment of the costs of registration and issuance of visas, invitations and similar documents, payment of the cost of travel, accommodation, meals, sports equipment, training, communication services, transport, linguistic support, souvenir products containing symbols of the FIFA World Cup 2018 or FIFA Confederations Cup 2017. No tax is collected on the issuance of visas and invitations or for the extension of the visa validity period to foreign citizens and stateless persons participating in the activities related to the event.

There are fundamental similarities in the Russian tax concessions for the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup. Common features include a profit tax exemption for the international sports organizations and their commercial partners and a special VAT status that combines an exemption from tax on sales with the simultaneous right to deduct VAT on purchases. One of the most remarkable differences is the lack of an express exemption for players participating in the football championship. There are differences in the personal scope of the exemptions as well as in the types of taxes waived. These differences show that the legislative interventions are designed to meet the requirements of the sports organizations rather than to create a coherent and consistent policy towards sports events. Russia responded to the particular expectations of the IOC and FIFA without trying to establish a comprehensive approach towards similar transactions and operations in the world of sports industry.

It seems that Russia's motives in hosting the events differ to some extent from those of other post-Soviet countries. While the Russian president calculates that the event's global popularity will feed his personality cult and promote his country as a global superpower worthy of respect, former Soviet republics have used the events as a means of overcoming their marginality and exclusion. Most mega-event hosts in Eastern Europe and other post-Soviet areas do not have recognizable international profiles and thus see the events as part of their strategy of establishing identities. Russia has a relatively well-established identity and focuses on developing its (re)branding strategies and looking for new pathways to reach international audiences. Winning a bidding war and defeating European nations in the application process can be seen within the context of both inclusion and competition. Russia successfully competes at the top level, attracting the most-followed events such as the Olympics and the World Football Cup. Striving for worldwide respect, Russia is willing to invest in filing a winning bid. Hosting a world-class tournament brings prestige and allows a country to show off its power, culture and values. Other post-Soviet countries focus on smaller and less exposed events in their search for global recognition.

2012 UEFA Championship

The European football championship in 2012 was co-hosted by Ukraine and Poland. Both countries offered significant tax incentives to create a favorable tax regime for the tournament.

Already in the host selection procedure, the governments of Poland and Ukraine committed to grant certain tax preferences to UEFA. The sports organization demanded an exemption from tax on its own income, including payments in connection with the sale of marketing rights, media rights and other commercial rights relating to EURO 2012 as well as dividends, service fees, royalties and distributions made by the organizing company (UEFA Event) to UEFA. The organizing company was likewise to be exempt from any taxes in the host countries. UEFA also demanded an exemption for designated non-resident persons, that is, UEFA employees, officials, referees, members of national football federations participating in the tournament (players, coaches, doctors, and so on), UEFA commercial partners and their employees, representatives of the media and other persons accredited by UEFA in connection with EURO 2012. The Ministries of Finance committed to take steps to maximize VAT refunds for UEFA, the event company and other designated persons (Tetłak and Molenaar 2012: 325–330). UEFA's strategy was similar to that of the IOC and FIFA whereby the requirements for a beneficial treatment of tournament-related income and transactions are already put forward in the bidding phase. Non-taxation thus amounts to a pre-condition for hosting the tournament.

Bringing its legislation in line with the guarantees given to UEFA, Ukraine changed its Tax Code by introducing appropriate exceptions to the general rules. Under the special tax statute for EURO 2012 (Ukraine 2011a), proceeds received by UEFA in Ukraine from holding the European Football Championship were exempt from taxes. In particular, the exemption covered UEFA's revenues from sale of marketing rights or media rights. Preferential taxation terms were also created for UEFA's foreign officers. Foreign citizens involved in the organization of Euro 2012 in Ukraine were exempted from income taxes irrespective of their participation in the championship, particularly the amounts paid for performed work or provided services (including reimbursement of expenses and daily allowances). The payment for work or services performed during the organization and hosting of the final part of EURO 2012 in the Ukraine by non-resident representatives or officials of UEFA member associations, members of teams participating in the tournament and individuals accredited by UEFA was not subject to personal income tax (Ukraine 2011b). A shortened period for VAT refund was introduced as well as a temporary norm that exempted from VAT imports of goods received by the UEFA Executive Committee's office in Ukraine. Since Ukraine is not bound

by European law regarding the value added tax, a special EURO 2012 exemption from VAT was introduced for transactions of sale of tickets and services integral to the tickets.

Ukraine introduced special legislative measures because contrary to the obligations towards UEFA, the general provisions of Ukrainian tax law impose a tax on income earned by non-residents from their activities carried on in Ukraine. For example, the country generally levies a 30 % withholding tax on income earned by foreign players participating in a tournament in Ukraine. The general tax legislation of Ukraine was thus incompatible with the guarantees granted by the government.

2014 World Hockey Championship in Minsk

Belarus hosted the 2014 Ice Hockey World Championship in Minsk and made it clear that the event was profoundly important for the regime. For that matter, a Presidential Decree was issued (Belarus 2012) to ensure that the goods, except for excisable commodity, imported to Belarus for the Ice Hockey World Championship in 2014 be exempted from import customs duties and value added tax.

The main condition for the exemption was a confirmation of the purpose target destination of the goods. This confirmation could be issued by the Minsk municipal executive committee in respect of goods imported for the construction, reconstruction and equipment of the sports facilities, hotels and other infrastructure, and by the Ministry of Sports and Tourism with respect to other goods. The organizing committee on preparation and holding of the World Hockey Championship in Minsk submitted supporting documents for such an exemption to the customs authorities, to confirm the purpose of the goods.

In the run-up to the World Ice Hockey Championship 2014, Belarus launched a VAT refund service for tourists to promote tourism. The Tax Free Shopping System included retailers, which were ready to support the government's tax-free initiative. The requirements for VAT refunds are as follows:

- the purchaser is supposed to be a resident of a foreign state;
- the value of the purchase must be higher than a certain minimum,
- cash VAT refund cannot exceed 500 euros per receipt,
- VAT refunds do not apply to commodities purchased for commercial purposes,
- a commodity subject to a VAT refund must be carried away from Belarus before a certain deadline.

A visa-free regime was set for the official participants of the Championship (athletes, coaches, staff, judges, heads of international and national hockey federations, accredited members of the media) and foreign tourists for the period from 25 April to 31 May 2014. The visa-free entry into Belarus for official participants was based on the Championship accreditation system. An original or electronic ticket to the match was such a basis for a visa-free entry of tourists.

Sport has a special place in Lukashenka's policies and is regarded as a means to promote his domestic and international agenda. By hosting the World Championship, he aimed to elevate the support of the regime domestically and showcase successfulness and rightness of the regime's policies and its ideology. Thus, this mega event was used to increase legitimacy and popularity of the regime domestically as well as make it a tool for nation-building. The Championship was also a good opportunity to present a different image of Belarus and advertise it abroad as a country that achieved significant socio-economic progress. The aim of the event was to promote Belarus in the EU and raise the attractiveness of the country for investors and tourists. The 2014 World Cup was therefore a policy opportunity for Lukashenka just as the 2018 World Cup is for Putin, and perhaps a chance to soothe the fractious relations he maintains with several Western nations.

Policy Analysis and Conclusions

The scale of tax concessions differs from event to event and from country to country. World Cups and Olympic Games, while struggling to make any profit for host nations, enjoy outrageous tax benefits because governments believe that they bring an immense political popularity and are useful in providing month-long free global advertising. The position of sports governing bodies translates into their expectations in tax matters. It is visible that for world-class events, more generous fiscal privileges are made while smaller events enjoy tax exemptions on a smaller scale. The example of Minsk shows that the tax privileges granted by the host of a sports event with less exposure are not as generous as the incentives offered to lure the IOC or FIFA. The demands of the sports organizations are not equal, hence unequal treatment in host countries that rarely offer more than is required. FIFA and the IOC strengthen their positions by having their requirements met by Western countries. The fact that also non-European countries accept these standards results in the emergence

of a global precedent. Based on it, the sports pseudo-governments can embark on further overseas conquests, legitimizing their demands by a coherent transnational practice. Interestingly, less powerful sports organizations, such as the governing body for ice hockey, do not achieve similar tax results although they usually deal with smaller players internationally. This naturally leads to the establishment of a sports oligarchy among international sports organizations.

Major international sports organizations serve as a bridge between Western and non-Western nations by imposing identical requirements regardless of the legal and fiscal realities of the host. By complying with these standardized expectations, mega-events hosts may erase certain political and administrative borders. While the financial and legal framework developed for sports events in the Western world, FIFA's and IOC's globalizing tax policy towards hosts requires these frameworks to adapt to non-Western legal systems and cultures. Or, actually, it is the other way round. Regardless of the normative, political and ideological borders, the most recent mega-projects enjoy similar tax concessions worldwide. Such mega-projects may thus have important effects for relinquishing the existing borders between the competing international actors and promote non-Western host cities and nations as open to connecting to the global world. However, the question of how mentally ready is Eurasia to welcome the world remains open. On the surface, host cities display the richness of their culture and heritage, but fierce criticism of their human rights record shows that non-Western nations remain closed at least to some extent. Russian legislation enacted for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games prompted a heated debate in the context of human rights. Moreover, behind the curtain of the Olympic Games in Sochi, the world witnessed the Russian intervention in the Ukraine. The tournament was supposed to open Russia up to the world, yet it seems no one expected that the former Soviet empire would expressly interpret its chance to reach to foreign markets and implement an inclusive strategy.

On the one hand then, the spirit of Olympism should promote transnational values, grounded in universal principles and facilitate the inclusion of the formerly closed nations to the Western world. On the other hand, however, the contrast between the statements made by the organizing committee and the actual actions of country rulers makes the referral to democratic values purely political. In such a case, sports events might actually have a divisive potential. With sports mega events based on the seemingly universal values, there is an expectation that host countries will conform to the existing standards.

Paradoxically, however, in tax and legal terms, these standards themselves do not conform to what is supposedly the democratic standard of bearing the fiscal burden by all taxpayers and fair and equitable tax treatment. Western countries adopt a double-standard approach when they criticize multinational companies for tax avoidance and make a U-turn at FIFA's and IOC's behest to allow their profits to go untaxed. This may explain why tax reliefs for sports events granted by post-Soviet countries do not face critical reaction from the West, unlike human right violations, corruption or low environmental standards. Western high-tax countries monitor the level of fiscal burden worldwide and do not hesitate to use various instruments to force other countries to match up to the level of their taxes, blaming them for tax competition, yet remain silent when tax-free status is granted to sports oligarchs. It shows the hypocrisy of Western governments who tighten domestic fiscal control while accepting the anti-tax rule of international sports organizations. It also shows that, although deeply rooted in Western civilization, international sports organizations are not themselves convinced of egalitarian values, at least as far as their taxes are concerned. These pseudo-governments from Switzerland with a global reach have long demanded special treatment from democratic European countries and have managed to set a widely respected precedent. Not surprisingly, this undemocratic practice met with acceptance in non-Western countries where granting privileges to oligarchs is not an unknown phenomenon. What then happens is that if the tax-paranoid sports organizations succeeded to have European governments acquiesce to their bloated demands, it is then no wonder non-democratic hosts in Eastern Europe and Eurasia not only comply with these requirements but also are willing to go one or two steps further as they do not have their hands tied by policies such as the European Union VAT. One might think that a politician as enforcing as Putin could have put his foot down and told the IOC and FIFA that Russia would not compromise. Yet even the Russian president accepts the demands of FIFA and the IOC if it means a month of global prestige and promotion for the country. The law Putin signed for the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup allows it to host the events tax-free on Russian soil and permits the two organizations to make the rules and enforce draconian exclusivity rights on local advertisers and traders, if only for a month. It seems that any government will give up its taxing rights if it allows infrastructure projects to get off the ground and gives the people a circus to soothe social and economic turmoil.

To summarize, while mega events hosted by non-Western countries might lead to legislative inclusion and standardization with Western practices towards sports, these practices themselves are not democratic. Taxation being based on the political logic of sovereignty, FIFA and the IOC have developed their own mechanisms of imposing regulatory practices that redraw borderlines between being taxpayer and taxman. This is done through a variety of instruments, with practices of administrative and legal regulation, but it is only possible where democratic standards are compromised. Interestingly, in 2013, FIFA's top administrative official, Jerome Valcke, said at a symposium in Zurich: 'Less democracy is sometimes better for organizing a World Cup' (Panja 2013). Indeed, from a tax perspective, it can be more difficult to host the World Cup in countries with strong democratic traditions than to cooperate with emerging superpowers. Host countries located at the intersection of different legal systems are definitely more flexible. In terms of taxation, major sports tournaments and championships thus have a huge de-bordering potential, but the inclusion of non-democratic countries can only raise the bar for offering special treatment. The willingness of post-Soviet hosts to grant special fiscal privileges to the sports oligarchs they are eager to please might not exacerbate the existing normative divisions between West and East, but create new dividing lines between the privileged and the rest of taxpayers. The establishment of an upper class of sports events, sports organizations and their partners and sponsors as well as athletes and other individuals involved in the preparation of these events is enhanced by post-Soviet hosts who welcome major international sports events with open arms and budgets. These authoritarian bodies feel at home in the former USSR given that, tax-wise, their own management and policies resemble oligarchic Russia more than those of a modern democracy.

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CHAPTER 9

Regional Dimensions of Global Games: The Case of Sports Mega events in Tatarstan

Alexandra Yatsyk

This chapter addresses practices of preparation to and hosting of sports mega events in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan. I mostly focus on the Universiade 2013, or the XXVII Summer World Student Games, that have been held in this city. Despite its rather modest ranking in the global sports hierarchy, the Games were important for at least three reasons. First, the Universiade 2013 was the first sportive mega event hosted by the post-Soviet Russia just one-half year ahead of the 2014 Sochi Olympics. Hence, both federal and regional authorities dubbed it a 'rehearsal' for the 'Big Games' (the Olympiad), and a symbol of '(re)joining' the prestigious club of mega-events holders, allowing Russia to enhance its soft power capabilities, mainly through nation (re)branding (Krasutskaya 2010). The fact that Russia sent to the Universiade a team of unusually top level athletes whose supremacy over competitors was unduly overwhelming attests to the importance of the Student Games for Russia's sports officialdom.

Second, being a 'test' version for a larger mega event, the Universiade 2013 triggered specific changes in practices of urban governance, which have been further institutionalized in the 2014 Olympics in Sochi and the World Aquatic Championship (FINA) 2015 in Kazan.

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Finally, Tatarstan, as a venue of the Universiade in 2013 and then of the FINA World Cup in 2015, a co-host of the FIFA World Cup in 2018, and a potential bidder for the 2024 Summer Olympics (Gazeta.ru 2015) can be considered an illustrative example of a meaningful regional dimension of global sports events. On the one hand, it demonstrates an integration of Tatarstan into Russia's policies through many 'innovative' programmes, like building of the Innopolis city—the Tatarstani analogue of Silicon Valley, or adopting the system of e-government. On the other hand, the Tatarstani identity is shaped by a strong Islamic element, which needs to be taken into account for understanding the complicated history of this region's relations with the Kremlin [see (Kinossian 2012a,b; Albina 2010; Ponarin 2008; Matsuzato 2004; Sharafutdinova 2003; Graney 2001; Slocum 1999; Rorlich 1999; Khakim 1998; Hanauer 1996; Khakimov 1996)], and local discussions about global mega events as toolkits for a region's self-promotion, as well as integration into the national narrative.

Research questions I tackle in the chapter address precisely these matters: What are specificities of global sports mega events in non-central Russian cities? How does Tatarstan, one of the most self-minded, culturally distinctive and peculiar regions within Russia, find a balance between integration into a nationwide agenda and promotion of its own subnational identity through major tournaments and championships?

The database of my analysis includes a series of semi-structured interviews, each between 30 and 60 minutes, conducted in 2012–2014 with artists, managers, practitioners, dancers, journalists and civil activists who participated in the lead-up to and hosting of mega events in Kazan (n = 35), group interviews with artists and cheerleaders of the Universiade 2013 opening ceremony (n = 24 in total), discourse analysis of local printed media and Internet materials in 2012–2015, and an opinion poll among visitors of the cultural programme of the Universiade 2013 (n = 418).

Structurally, the chapter consists of three parts. The first clarifies my theoretical approach, which is mostly developed within a post-structuralist framework with particular emphasis on post-political—including performative—components of identity building. The second section directly addresses practices of urban governance before and during the Universiade in 2013 and the World Aquatic Championship (FINA) in 2015. The third part focuses on identity making through the Universiade 2013 opening ceremony, which I compare with the 2014 Sochi Olympics case. In conclusion I summarize my findings for better inscribing them in the burgeoning scholarship on mega events in non-Western countries.

'Boostering' the City Through Major Events: A Post-Political Approach

My analysis is grounded in the application of the concept of post-politics (Swyngedouw 2009, 2011; Carter 2011), as used in the field of cultural and urban studies, for research on mega events. In the extensive scholarship on mega events in non-Western countries, their conceptualizations from a post-political perspective are still scarce. Although the mediatized nature of sports mega events is widely covered in many conceptual works (Roche 2003; Horne and Manzenreiter 2006; Horne 2011), what remains unexplored is the performative component of post-political identity-making, in particular grounded in the idea of 'athletic urbanism' (Carter 2011). My approach to sports mega events as a set of reproducible and temporally stable social practices is close to Stuart Hall's conceptualization of cultural production (Hall 1997). Based on his theory, I share the understanding of mega events as diverse practices of production, transmission, and interpretation of norms, grounded in particular cultural logics (Traganou 2010). This approach allows one to treat mega events as emerging landscapes of meanings represented by urban spaces that are transformed during the preparation to and hosting of mega events, or by national narratives constructed, for instance, through opening and closing ceremonies.

It is the post/late modern 'economy of appearance' (Carter 2011: 132) that determines the 'self-conscious making of spectacles necessary for gathering/attracting investment funds' for host cities and regions as an essential capacity to dovetail with the imagery imperatives of 'global', 'international' and world-class' places (Carter 2011: 133). Materializing these aspirations, cities transform themselves into attractive, festivalized and safe places designed for a 'tourist gaze' (Larsen and Urry 2011) in such forms as amusement parks (Bryman 2004), and sterilized and glurbanized 'capitals' (Taylor and Toohey 2011), whose utopian elitist images have no grounding in local meanings (Silk 2011: 738).

What substantiates these processes is fetishization of both 'consumer satisfaction' and 'controlling space' (Carter 2011: 134). In terms of urban development and discursive production it means construction of such kinds of landscapes that include only those meanings that are consonant with the dominant cultural systems and exclude the opposite.

Three basic characteristics of post-political practices as a set of toolkits of neo-liberal governance and administration might be emphasized. First, a policy of avoiding contestations and reaching societal consensus is key

for 'urban populism' (Paddison 2009: 1), often applied by authorities for legitimizing the role of mega events as drivers for the public good. The second element addresses place-making and territorial branding as based on operationalization of regional distinctiveness for searching global attention and investments (Parent et al. 2012, Xing and Chalip 2006: 49–78). Thirdly, post-political strategies are grounded in security and police functions, implying control, surveillance and supervision for the sake of public safety [see thesis 7 in Rancière 2001]. These measures range from the regulation of food consumption to military protection against possible terrorist attacks (Johns and Johns 2000: 219–234; Sugden 2012: 414–429).

What is common in all these practices is marginalization of voices of dissent and articulation of urban strategies based on more or less unified and even standardized discourses (Swyngedouw 2009: 601–620) that coincide with aims of city managers more interested in practices of policing and normalization than in public politics (Van Toorn 2007: 5). Swyngedouw, drawing on Jacques Rancière's distinction between police and politics, argues that 'the consolidation of an urban post-political arrangements runs... parallel to the rise of a neoliberal governmentality that has replaced debate, disagreement and dissensus with a series of technologies of governing that fuse around consensus, agreement, accountancy metrics and technocratic environmental management' (Swyngedouw 2009: 604).

For host cities, mega events are communicative performances that produce, transmit and represent 'commercial identities' (Kraft and Brummett 2009: 18). Most of them are not necessarily grounded in shared social meanings and communicative experiences between the collective Self and a variety of Others, but rather are image-making strategies created by policy consultants and public relations specialists. In this regard some scholars critically describe mega events as conducive to 'pseudo-democratic governance' (Friedman and Andrews 2010: 181) prone to politicization. An illuminating example of this is a competition between 13 Russian cities that originally were considered as potential venues for the FIFA World Cup Games: the contenders put much effort into distinguishing themselves from other Russian cities and regions, and in the meantime for integrating their publicity campaigns into the national narrative. In the next section I discuss in more detail this kind of inclusion/exclusion strategies as exemplified by practices of urban government before and during sports mega events in Kazan.

'Healing Machines' for Urban Spaces

During the last two decades, Kazan, the capital of the republic of Tatarstan, located 800 km eastward to Moscow, has put great effort into 'capitalization' of its image through mega events. The initial impulse came from the Kazan Millennium anniversary in 2005, which crucially transformed the city. According to commentators, the decree about the celebration of this date, signed in 1999 between then Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1991–1999) and the head of Tatarstan Mintimer Shaimiev (1991–2010) was, in fact, a result of the unspoken bargaining between Kazan and Moscow for delimitation of their powers and competences (Alaev 2015). In practice this meant large investments for Tatarstan in exchange for de-emphasizing its sovereignty claims both politically and economically. In its turn, Moscow got some assurances from Kazan of keeping peace and assuaging Tatar nationalist feelings that was especially important in circumstances of raising aggressive separatism in Chechnya at that time (Alaev 2015; Kinossian 2012b; Sharafutdinova 2003; Graney 2001).

Two large programmes of urban redevelopment, both focused on the historical centre of Kazan, were implemented between 1995 and 2005. As a result, about 9 % of the city population—which was almost 99 thousands of people at that time—were removed to the city outskirts, and 80.2 % of old buildings, each aged from 1 to 100 years, were demolished (Kinossian 2006: 322–323). The historical centre, in fact, ceased to exist. In the meantime, several lines of metro, a new river bridge and new roads were built in other parts of Kazan. Although later regional authorities recognized that mismanagement of the programmes caused unwarranted losses of entire streets and historical districts, nobody was persecuted. Those few unique eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings that survived were later dilapidated and ultimately turned into ruins (TatCenter.ru 2012).

In February 2012 the regional government launched a new programme of reconstruction of the historical city centre titled '500 Days before the Universiade'. 2012 was also announced as a year of the cultural heritage of Tatarstan. Two historical sites located beyond Kazan—the city-island Sviyazhsk and the old town Bulgar (a place where ancestors of the Kazan Tatars settled) were focal points of the programme. Some local historians and archaeologists have discussed those changes with a pinch of salt, criticizing the prospect of losing the authenticity of the places and transforming them into glamorous touristic objects (Khisamova 2014a). In 2014 Bulgar was included in the UNESCO list despite the fact that new

buildings were erected there, which contradicts UNESCO rules. This was not the first case of 'exceptionality' towards Tatarstan—the architectural ensemble of the Kazan Kremlin was also included in the UNESCO list in 2000, notwithstanding the construction of a new mosque, Kul-Sharif, inside its area.

Against this background, local authorities have defined the ongoing urban transformations as 'normalization and modernization' of the city and the region. According to the city mayor Ilsur Metshin, the Universiade would rid Kazan of the 'scurf of provinciality' and reimagine it as 'a civilized European city' (Kazan 2012). In the view of authorities, the key characteristics of the city's 'Europeanness' were of 'technical' background, mostly related to consumer spaces and clean and safe recreation facilities; in the meantime social issues (cultural diversity, grassroots activity, civil engagement) were side-lined. To reach the desired standards, the policy of 'aesthetization' of Kazan's urban spaces was implemented through practices of exclusion and displacement of 'unwelcome' elements from the city's landscapes. These were the cases of cleansing the city of homeless people (Idiyatullin and Afanasiev 2013), exterminating stray dogs, often executed in close vicinity to residential areas (Newsru 2013; Galindabaeva 2014), and enforced evacuation of old and dirty cars to parking areas during the Games (Sladkov 2013). Car removals were further practiced in July 2015 when Kazan hosted the FINA World Cup (Business-Online 2015). Strategies of 'beautification', mostly exemplified by practices of camouflaging old houses and wastelands, emergency planting and renovating facades of buildings located along the routes where facilities for Universiade 2013 and FINA Cup 2015 were located, also have been widely put in practice by host authorities (Pavlova 2012; Khisamova 2014b).

Having legitimized the logic of 'healing machines' (Boano 2011a: 43, 2011b), regional and municipal authorities usually appealed to values of public good and security. Thus, responding to urban activists who protested against demolition of the city waterfront system due to construction of the Kazan—Arena stadium on the north bank of Kazanka River, the authorities consulted local ecologists, who argued that those transformations salvaged city dwellers from marshes and mosquitos (Minvaleev and Makarov 2009). Another example is the construction of the rowing centre at the Kaban Lake that jeopardized some nearby settlements. Yet, authorities accused residents of dumping wastes into the water and thus ignoring environmental standards, whereas the construction of the Universiade sport object would contribute to clearing the lake (Dynnik

2009). A similar method—through appeals to local patriotism and a 'common cause'—has also been part of the official reaction to critics who raised the issues of exploiting rural teachers as a labour force for the Universiade's building sites (Regnum 2013), and of huge traffic jams and infrastructural inconveniences caused to city inhabitants before and during mega events.

These and other cases of urban conflict [see (Makarychev and Yatsyk 2015)] suggest that city authorities prefer consensual public procedures where citizen participation is well orchestrated and loyal. According to civil activists, the role of the public was often played by specially invited groups of municipal employees, who were meant to approve decisions made in advance. It is telling that voting at public hearings was never enacted. Hearings in some cases lasted for only 3–10 minutes (Interview with civil activists,). Strategies to make false promises, to hide essential information and to bureaucratize procedures of appeals are noted by local activists as widely practiced in Tatarstan (Interview with an urban activist, Kazan 2013). These post-political principles of excluding contestation and citizen participation both from the local political sphere and urban spaces before and during the Universiade might find its equivalent at the national level. The political analyst Sergey Medvedev has referred to this phenomenon as the 'syndrome of empty streets', arguing that the administrative logic and imperatives of security turn mega-event venues into socially sterile and totally controlled spaces where no human communication is possible (Medvedev 2013).

Practices of regulation and surveillance applied by mega-event organizers can be conceptualized as elements of biopolitical governance (see more (Finlayson 2010) aimed at taking care of population, especially its health and security domains, which is reflected in national discourses on normalisation and modernisation. What distinguishes Tatarstan's (and Russia's) biopolitics from its western counterparts is the dominant logic of cultural exclusion as a pivotal element of the philosophy of mega events. A comparison with the London 2012 Olympic award ceremony can give an eloquently contrasting picture of a team of people with different—including disabled—bodies (Pring 2012), while in Kazan the 'faces of the Universiade' were chosen among young fashion models (Desyatova 2013). Similar trends of biopolitical standard setting can also be found in the Sochi 2014 Olympics (Prozorov 2011).

Security, mentioned above as a momentous element of the administration of mega events, can produce the most controversial practices of biopolitical control. A scandal erupted in 2014 in Kazan when the police at

the stadium strip-searched female football fans (super_ska_ya 2014). The story was covered by international media (Guniyatullina 2014) and surprisingly commented on by the head of Tatarstan, Rustem Minnikhanov, who defended the actions of the police (Press Service 2014). Strong biopolitical notes were heard in Vladimir Putin's answer to critics of the Universiade 2013: the president advised them to take Viagra (Dozhd' TV 2013a) (and be happy and healthy) thereby reducing political statements to corporeal improvements.

Yet in some episodes beautification and glurbanization (Taylor and Toohey 2011) of Kazan as a mega-event venue were not aimed solely at purification. The programme of renovation of the Old Tatar Settlement launched in 2012 is a good example of how previously marginal and peripheral cultural objects could be (re)integrated into the hegemonic discourse. This city district is a historical place where Tatars have resided since Ivan the Terrible conquered Kazan in 1552. Despite this settlement's importance as part of the architectural heritage of the city, it has not been renovated within either of two post-Soviet waves of reconstruction of the Kazan city centre. According to a local historical preservation activist, the reason was more symbolic than pragmatic, since regional authorities wanted to extrude this place from the official politics of memory as reminiscent of times when Tatars lost their statehood and were humiliated (Interview with an urban activist, Kazan 2012).

However, when Kazan won the bid for the Universiade 2013, it started to globally promote its 'competitive identity' (Anholt 2007) based on an ethnic—mostly Tatar—resource as its key element, of which the Old Tatar Settlement was an essential material reification. As a result of this policy change, the neighbourhood has been deeply redeveloped and transformed into a glamorous and commodified district for tourists.

This last case testifies to two, at a first glance, paradoxical sides of post-political cultural production. On the one hand, it demonstrates how previously political meanings—related to old memories—have been depoliticized through cleaning urban spaces. Thus, the Mayor of Kazan initiated a weekly programme of cleaning courtyards of the Old Tatar Settlement and personally participated in it as a gesture of its inclusion into the officially promoted city landscape (Metshin 2011). On the other hand, having been included in the global identity promotion, this reinterpreted regional identity might be considered as acquiring a new—and much more politicized—resonance within the post-political trend of nation-building through sports mega events.

In the next section I am going to focus on various dimensions of that kind of politicization of competitive identity-in-the-making. In a pursuit of this aim, I analyse the opening ceremony of the Kazan 2013 Universiade, using, in particular, in-depth interviews with its cultural producers.

Celebrating the Regional? Identity-Making Through the Universiade 2013 Opening Ceremony

The concept of 'competitive identity' is mostly developed within discussions on national branding, which only rarely have been subject to critical analysis (Anholt 2007; Pope 2014). Being discussed in the framework of a neo-liberal logic, branding as a peculiar way of regional identity-making is meant to dovetail certain political, economic, cultural and social standards with a model of democratic society in its core (Anholt 2007: 20). This 'universalization' of practices, meanwhile, can reduce branding to a depoliticized tool for making social consensus (Browning 2015). Numerous cases of deviation from the declared universal Olympic norms of openness, tolerance, inclusiveness and friendly environment during preparation and hosting of mega events are pertinent examples of a contradictory nature of this mechanism. The universalization of key pillars of the 'Olympic philosophy' assumes the standardization of cultural formats as well, which excludes any dissident meanings. At the same time, sports competitions are media events with global coverage, which requires their narratives to be sensitive to different cultures and social groups and leads to neutralization of content (Garcia 2008: 366). As a result, images of the host country, as represented by opening and closing ceremonies, are enciphered in cultural codes whose meanings could be differently interpreted by a wider audience (Garcia 2008: 366). Regional narratives in those cases lose their political ingredients and are mostly reduced to a commodified ethnicity as exemplified by traditional folk songs and dances (Housel 2007).

Some scholars test this thesis on narratives and visual representations of opening Olympic ceremonies in such western countries as Great Britain, Australia, the US and Canada. With all their undeniable democratic credentials, their Olympic performances are critiqued for allegedly reducing the controversies of multiculturalism to picturesque and carnivalesque representations of cultural diversity through music, dances and artistic shows (Housel 2007; Pope 2014; Ellis 2012; Zhou et al. 2013). Sports ceremonies in China (Cui 2013; Jinxia 2010; Chen, Colapinto and Luo 2012; Qing et al. 2010; Liang 2010) and Russia are even more eloquent

examples of an imperial idea as the basis for national consolidation and supremacy (Gorokhov 2013; Petersson 2014).

A clear imperial statement could also be found in the very beginning of the Sochi Olympics opening ceremony, where each letter of the Russian alphabet was interpreted by symbols of the glorified Russian history and culture. The key words of this performance were 'We', 'Russia' and 'Empire'. Other imperial references could be found in the representation of Russian history from the episode of Argonauts and princes of the Ancient Ruthenia, through Peter the Great and up to the USSR. Strong connotations with Soviet times in the Sochi Olympic narrative could be exemplified by the Olympic teddy bear as a mascot of Sochi 2014 (resembling the famous Moscow 1980 Olympic 'Misha'), early Soviet avant-garde aesthetics as a means of representing the achievements of the twentieth century (the industrialization of the 1930s and 'the conquest of space' in the 1960s) and the Soviet-styled scene of the baby boom at the end of the opening ceremony. According to some western commentators, Russia has shown itself a unique civilization, which is not interested in integration with the West (Stent 2014) and has narrated a myth of resurrected sovereignty reminiscent of repressive Soviet isolationism (Freedman 2014). The annexation of Crimea in 2014, the 'hybrid war' in eastern Ukraine, and the ensuing tensions between Russia and the West with their mutual sanctions against each other are testimonies of these assessments.

Interestingly, the narrative of the Universiade opening ceremony that took place in Kazan only half a year before the Sochi Olympics contained far fewer references to Soviet times. Key symbols of that era—industrialization and the first space flight—were represented basically from a technological viewpoint, mainly as scientific breakthroughs. The last images of the ceremony were also short of imperial messages. On the contrary, the episodes designed in the style of news headlines highlighted a story of Russia joining the G8, and represented the Internet as a globally unifying force.

The idea of cultural diversity of Russia was also displayed differently in the two ceremonies. On a national level, the Universiade's opening narrative depicted Russia as a colourful, vivid, and carnivalesque assemblage of diverse identities, with mythic heroes of ethnic legends and fairy tales sharing the scene with people dressed in traditional ethnic costumes (Rossiya TV 2013). Yet in Sochi, the idea of multi-ethnic Russia was substituted by a show of the variety of its physical landscapes, while the human performers were assembled in a chain of people visually looking

alike. The representations of identities of both host regions substantially differed. If Tatarstan was portrayed as a multicultural and tolerant place where Orthodoxy and Islam peacefully coexist (FISU 2013), the identity of Sochi, despite its equally multicultural character, was not clearly articulated along these lines. One possible interpretation of this omission is the geographical proximity of Sochi to Chechnya and Dagestan, regions perceived by the global audience as problematic in security terms (Petersson and Vamling 2013). A second explanation is ethnic controversies, in particular the case of the Circassian genocide of the nineteenth century [see Chap. 4 of this volume], which questions the constructed image of Sochi as a peaceful and safe place. In any case, the competitive identity of the city was not duly articulated.

As some authors assume, marginalization of regional narratives in national opening and closing ceremonies is a common practice (Ellis 2012; Pope 2014), since mega events are aimed at celebrating dominant cultures and demonstrating an unimpeachable linear past of the hosts, whereas historical traumas of ethnic minorities are silenced (Housel 2007: 450). A racy example of this trend was the representation of Tatarstani history in the Universiade 2013 opening ceremony, in which painful although meaningful moments of Kazan's relations with Moscow were substituted with relatively neutral episodes. One of them was the presentation of a popular legend about a beautiful queen named Suyun, who lived in the age of the Kazan Khanate. The queen danced against the backdrop of the Suyumbike Tower, which is a part of the Kazan Kremlin architectural ensemble. According to the legend, the queen jumped out of this tower, having refused to marry a Russian she did not love. This tale has no historical grounds even though Suyuun was real. What was more important were events that were left out of the scene. The story refers to 1552, a year when Ivan the Terrible conquered Kazan and put an end to the Kazan Khanate and the Tatars statehood. This fact was pivotal for the earlier post-Soviet Tatarstani elites in their discussions on relations with the federal centre (Khakim 1993), and some symbols of Kazan are designed at commemorating this event including the Kul-Sharif mosque, the Old Tatar District and the monument for perished Russian warriors.

Local participants of the Universiade opening ceremony were in agreement with the images of Kazan and Tatarstan presented at the event. Most of them emphasized spectacular folkloristic components of the show, which were positively perceived in terms of promoting competitive regional identity as an alternative to the dominating Orthodox version

of Russian national identity. As one expert noted, he was 'agreeably surprised' that there was no representation of the Orthodoxy at all in the 'parade of nations' scene of the opening ceremony (Interview with a historian, Kazan 2013). Others mentioned its multicultural colouring as a sign of respect to Tatarstan (Interview with an ethnographer, Kazan 2013). In the words of another expert, 'I am not ashamed for the portrayal of Tatars, although there were many fantasies there. But these fantasies were not humiliating. They were lucid, and this was unusual for us here' (Interview with an ethnographer, Kazan 2013). The rhetoric of positioning Tatar culture as one of key elements of Russian national identity was also shared by local intellectuals:

> *The question at stake is what Tatars gave to the world. It is duly understood that we are not China, we are not a civilization in a proper sense, we are part of the Turkish world, but we are contributors as well. Of course, there were many personalities, but I think the most authentic feature here is tolerance ….The Tatar culture is based on adoption. It is both East and West, inseparable from each other. Mutual permeability is nowadays a trend, and I don't see any problem here. It is imperative that people spot the Tatar people on the map of Russia. This is a bright and self-minded people, second in numbers in all Russia.* (Interview with a composer, Kazan 2013)

Against this background, many local experts duly noticed the factual absence of Ivan the Terrible in the historical part of the narrative of the opening ceremony. According to the director of the ceremony, this historical figure was not included into the script because the twentieth century 'deserves more attention from the viewpoint of its complexities and the projection of the past to the future' (Interview with director of the Opening Universiade 2013 Ceremony, Kazan–Moscow 2013). However, the non-inclusion of politically controversial elements of historical relations between Moscow and Kazan into the increasingly unified official narrative seems to be a meaningful sign of a shift from the active promotion of Tatar ethnic identity in 1990s to a more pragmatic and consensual integration of federal and regional narratives (Davis, Hammond and Nizamova 2000; Makarova 2010: 211–222). A good illustration of this trend is the revocation in 2012 by the Tatarstan government of the local law on transition of the Tatar language to the Latin graphic, which was initiated by the local authorities in 1999 (Kazantsev and Kuznetsova 2012). In this process of reciprocal adjustment the Kremlin-backed hegemonic discourse demonstrates certain flexibility towards regional variations: for example, in 2015

the federal and the regional educational authorities found a compromise in omitting the traditionally negative references to the Tatar–Mongol yoke in school textbooks (RBK 2013).

The cultural trends described above open some prospects for Kazan branding in three directions. The first one represents Kazan as the 'Islamic capital of Russia' (Bolshakov 2011) or, more globally, an intermediary between the Muslim and the Orthodox worlds. This brand was actively supported by Kazan's mayor, who successfully promoted the city across the global Muslim community through such economic, political and cultural events held in Kazan as the meeting of the Administrative Committee of the Islamic Capitals and Cities, International Summit of Islamic Business and Finance, and others (Bolshakov 2011). Kazan hosted such annual cultural events as the International Festival of Muslim Films, 'Golden Minbar' (*Golden Tribune*) and the International Theater Festival of Turkish peoples, 'Nauruz'. The main architectural symbol of Kazan—its Kremlin—was reconstructed in 2005, to embody a new post-Soviet image of Tatarstani 'statehood', as represented by the 'biggest mosque in Europe', Kul-Shariff. In 2014 the city adopted a programme titled 'Kazan, a Cultural Capital of the Turkish World' (which is similar to the programme of European cultural capital) and hosted the Turkivision Song Contest. Another pertinent example is the appearance of the dot Tatar domain aimed at promotion of Tatar culture worldwide (Tatarskyi Internet 2015).

This brand was also articulated by its image of a place for peaceful coexistence of Russians and Tatars, Orthodox and Muslims, which was the key point of Kazan's bid for the Universiade 2013. Unlike other regions of Russia with strong Islamic identity and conflictual relations with Moscow, such as Chechnya, Dagestan and the North Caucasus, in general, Tatarstan had a much more successful experience of regulating ethnic separatism in the early 1990s, which enabled it to use this experience as a source for enhancing the region's competitive identity.

The second brand of Kazan revolves around sports and was promoted by former President Mintimer Shaimiev and his team. During the last two decades Kazan's clubs were successful in different sports in Russia and Europe (*Ak Bars* in ice hockey, *Rubin* in football, *UNICS* in basketball, *Ogsintez* in handball, *ZENIT* in volleyball, *Kamaz* in rallies). Not incidentally, Kazan's first bidding attempt for hosting the Universiade dates back to 2006, in the aftermath of the city's millennium celebration. In 2011 Kazan was awarded the Effie Worldwide prize for successful brand

promotion as a 'Sports Capital of Russia' (Lenta.ru 2012). Later the same year, the President of Tatarstan, Rustem Minnikhanov, was nominated as the 'Person of the International University Sports Federation' (Lenta.ru 2012). Based on a positive experience of hosting the Universiade 2013 and the FINA in 2015, Kazan declared its interest in bidding for the Summer Olympics of 2024 (Gazeta.ru 2015).

Thirdly, a 'heritage' brand was designed by the Moscow company 'Apostol' and presented in 2014. According to its authors, it combines three cultural traditions inherent for Tatarstan—Slavic, Mongol and Bulgar—and aimed at promoting an integrated 'cultural code' of the region based on their legacies (Tatarstan 2014). This code is displayed by ten basic characteristics of Tatarstani: identity intuition, integrity, dignity and others, each of them visualized by certain symbols. Some of them directly bind politics, sport and branding like the emblems of a racing car, a horse, medals of the Universiade 2013, a tulip (symbol of the Universiade 2013), and the Universiade's torch. Indicatively, the first two refer to sport hobbies of two heads of Tatarstan—Mintimer Shaimiev (who initiated the development of horse racing in the region) and Rustem Minnikhanov (who is a car racer).

Beatriz Garcia notes that unlike universalized narratives of the opening and closing ceremonies of sports mega events, their local cultural programmes are more unrestrained in representing cultural diversity (Garcia 2008: 366). The programme of the Cultural Universiade 2013 duly reflected this multiculturalist approach to regional branding. This is corroborated by our informants, most of whom agreed that the programme of the Cultural Universiade was oriented more towards cultural inclusion than exclusion. Despite the top-down administration of the multiculturalist representation of Tatarstan, artists and middle-level cultural managers generally had some operational latitude for selecting and composing programmes of events. The resulting strategy of cultural production can be dubbed 'consensual distinctiveness': the post-political consent on genealogically neoliberal principles of brand promotion, advertisement and event marketization coexisting with commercial, commodified and tourist-oriented region—or city-specific imageries. An illustrative example is a Kazan rock band song that won the Universiade 2013 Song Contest not only due to the good quality of its music but mostly because of its English lyrics (Interview with PR-director of the rock group, Kazan 2013). The other illustration is a song of the Tatar singer Dina Garipova initially presented at the final of the Eurovision Song Contest 2013, in English, but performed in Tatar at the Universiade closing ceremony.

Conclusion: What Is Next on the Horizon?

The cultural format of sports mega events, grounded in the logics of spectacle, festivalization, glurbalization and security forms the dominant systems of cultural meaning, in which local identities integrate with hegemonic discourses. The post-political rationale of sports mega events aims at social consensus and excludes disruptive meanings. Regional narratives, produced within cultural formats of mega events, integrate into or conflate with national discourses of competitive identity based on logics of consensual distinctiveness. The principle of cultural diversity as the essential attribute of the Olympic philosophy is interpreted as a 'universalized plurality' and reduced to depoliticized commodified ethnicities and a 'parade of nations'. The flexibility of local interpretations of the universalistic global cultural norms characterizes the latter's more as 'floating signifiers' (i.e., concepts open to diverse readings) than as fixed constructs.

In the case of Tatarstan, mega events are a part of a complex system of relations with the federal centre, which can be understood in terms of bargaining for economic, social and cultural resources. On the one hand, for Tatarstan the role of a mega-event host might be seen as capitalization of its political loyalty towards the Kremlin and pursuing a policy of integration into Russia (as well as into a global community) through economics rather than politics, with projects in sports, along with energy, transportation, and finance, playing the pivotal role. On the other hand, the expanding space for mega events inflicts a sort of path dependency within the framework of the economy of eventfulness, which could be used as a matter of bargaining with the federal centre for resources. Consequently, a well-branded and event-dependent region such as Tatarstan may keep raising new initiatives, like bidding for the Olympics, that might not be openly rejected by the federal centre, even if they look dubious against the backdrop of a drastic austerity policy the federal government applies to the FIFA World Cup project.

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CHAPTER 10

From Sochi—2014 to FIFA—2018: The Crisis of Sovereignty and the Challenges of Globalization

Andrey Makarychev

Introduction

The FIFA World Cup to be held in Russia in 2018 is one of key tournaments in a series of global mega events in this country, of which the Olympics hosted by Sochi in 2014 was the most visible and intensely covered. In its scope the FIFA Cup can be compared with the Winter Olympics basically in terms of their symbolic roles for substantiating Russia's world-class status, and attempts of projecting Russian soft power abroad. What is also at stake in both cases is the making of Russian collective identity, and the construction of a bond constitutive for relations of belonging to a national Self.

However, these two major sports events substantially differ from each other in many important—and deeply political—respects. The core of the difference lies in the drastic changes in the structure of Russia's sovereignty, the pivotal concept justifying and legitimizing Putin's regime. The Sochi Olympics were held at the heyday of Putin's model of sovereignty articulated through the concept of Russia's normalization as a great imperial power, as evidenced by the narrative of the Opening Ceremony of the Games and multiple celebratory statements of key Kremlin speakers, widely shared by the population. The annexation of Crimea that Russia

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orchestrated a few days after the closing of the Sochi Games was portrayed as a gesture of strong sovereign power bent on raising Russia's role in the world, which ultimately led to symbolic legitimation of land grabs and forceful border changes.

Yet it was exactly Putin's idea of a strong Russia capable of defending its interests as it sees them, including the annexation of Crimea, that triggered a chain of processes ultimately conducive to the severe constraints of the Kremlin's rule. This is what seriously complicated Russia's lead-up to the FIFA Cup. To explain these complications, in this chapter I contextualize the concept of sovereignty and deploy it in the changing domestic and international milieu characterized by a triple crisis that serves as a starting point for my analysis.

First, Russia faces a severe foreign policy crisis that alienates it from its major partners in the West. As an effect of its Ukraine policy, Moscow is subject to international economic and financial sanctions, as well as diplomatic isolation, including travel bans for some government officials and business people close to the Kremlin. Never before were world football championships hosted by a country under international sanctions and in a state of de facto military conflict with its neighbor, which makes this case an interesting addition to the existing comparative scholarship on sports mega events. Preparations to the FIFA 2018 World Cup take place under economic isolation, with many Western businesses gradually leaving Russian markets. Besides, as a result of the Yukos affair, Russian property in some European countries can be arrested, which creates a strikingly negative background for implementing high-profile global events.

Second, the whole Russian football industry is in a critical condition. The most visible manifestation of this crisis is seen in the chronic arrears of payment to former national team coach Fabio Capello in 2015, coupled with his resignation, followed by weak performance of the team and the consequent criticism of his work. The resignation of the head of the Russian Football Union (RFU) Nikolay Tolstykh on financial mismanagement charges in July 2015 added to the picture of administrative decay.

Third, the organizer of the World Cup—FIFA—is in a deep crisis of legitimacy and confidence due to the widely publicized financial scandals followed by the arrests of a number of its functionaries on corruption charges and the subsequent resignation of the FIFA President Joseph Blatter. Many components of this crisis have directly affected the FIFA 2018 project and created an atmosphere of uncertainty around the prospect of the event to be hosted in Russia.

In the light of this triple crisis, my key argument is that its long-term repercussions stretch far beyond sports and elucidate the inherent weakness of the Kremlin's project of boosting Russia's role and status in the world through hosting exorbitantly costly and pretentious world-scale performances. Russia's deep engagement with the global industry of mega events betrays vulnerabilities of the sovereign model of power Putin is eager to reinstall as his primary political tool in a struggle against the increasingly post-national/post-sovereign West. A globalization perspective might help elucidate the key controversy addressed in this chapter: Russia intentionally exposes itself to global forces of the neoliberal market and mass entertainment, yet it is these linkages to and dependencies on external milieu that demonstrate the vulnerabilities and limitations of Putin's sovereign power project.

Sovereign Power, Politicization and Hegemonic Masculinity

One of the mantras embedded in the Kremlin's discourse is the denial of a strong political background for sports debates in Russia, and the ascription to Russia's Western 'ill-wishers' the malign intentions to put sports events in political contexts. 'Don't politicize sports', says Vitaly Mutko, Sports Minister of Russia (Belogolovtsev 2013); 'Sport is beyond politics', echoes Alexander Zhukov, the President of the Russian Olympic Committee (Gazeta.ru 2015p).

Yet despite these denials, sports remain a key component of power relations, in Russia and worldwide. First, sports events are always matters of political contestation. They are widely perceived as ineffective for boosting the Russian economy and even detrimental to economic growth (Nikolaev 2014). Opponents of the regime claimed that the World Football Cup 2018 could be harmful to the integrity of Russia, which, like Greece, might face the deplorable repercussions of a corrupt economy (Regnum Information Agency 2013). Commenting on the probability of revoking the FIFA decision to host the World Cup in Russia, the late opposition leader Boris Nemtsov argued that it is the Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine that can make this option feasible, but in the meantime this can help the country save huge amounts of money (Glavred 2014).

Second, politicization of sports is deeply rooted in practices of national identity building, in Russia and elsewhere. In many other countries 'the nation, imagined or real, is so central to sport as to present a constant potential interruption to the smooth passage of globalization…. Sport's compulsive

attachment to the production of national difference may, instead, constitutively repudiate the embrace of the global' (Rowe 2003: 288). In Russia this tendency is exacerbated by particularly strong accents on issues of sovereignty, a variable and contextual concept that politically functions as 'a metaphysical notion which totalizes power around the constitution of an autonomous, self-identical subject…. Sovereign power always bears an excess relative to law… it revolves around the problem of the declaration of a state of exception, the "temporary" suspension of constitutional law under 'emergency' conditions"' (Singer and Weir 2006: 451).

The idea of a sovereign and self-sufficient Russia can be expressed in cultural forms that are communicated through mega-events' imagery. This, in particular, is epitomized by the opening ceremony of the Sochi Olympics, an exorbitantly costly show meant to deliver to the global audience a set of messages pertinent to Russia's civilizational identity and self-perception as a great power and an autonomous pole in the world. The general framework of the opening ceremony narrative was grounded in two nodal points representing Russia as a part of a wider Europe and simultaneously as an imperial power. On the one hand, Russia's history was portrayed as culturally connected to Europe, with references to Peter the Great, Leo Tolstoy and other recognizable personalities that served as illustrations for European devotion to Russian identity. The Soviet period was represented as a peculiar way of modernization and industrialization, which is consonant with the concept of multiple modernities in which the Soviet Russia keeps a precarious balance between indigenous authenticity and integration with the West. On the other hand, the opening ceremony overtly emphasized imperial elements of Russia's narration of its historical Self. Illuminating in this respect is the scene with each letter of Russian alphabet referring to a certain name or concept of high symbolic relevance, with the 'I' letter symbolizing 'empire' ('Imperia'). Direct references to czarist legacy (e.g., Katherine the Second), as well as the cultural appropriation of the heritage of the entire Soviet Union (Tsiolkovsky, Malevich and so on) and its portrayal as a cultural representation of Russia add to the imperial connotations of the official Sochi narrative (YouTube.Portal 2014).

There are two major problems with consistency of this narrative as a cultural foundation for the Kremlin's conception of sovereignty. One is the tension between its two nodal points—Europe and Empire. They might co-exist in the Russian mainstream discourse, yet certainly are in disharmony as seen from the outside, since a neoimperial Russia would hardly be accepted as a full-fledged member of the West. A second problem

with the heroic and triumphalist story of Russia narrated through the Sochi Olympics is its evidently retrospective nature, which paradoxically voids today's Russia of its own specificity and authenticity. In this regard it is telling that the narration of key landmarks of Russia's identity in the opening ceremony discontinued sometime in the 1970s, on an optimistic note of a baby boom and valorization of family values. This testifies to a lack of cultural forms and language of representation that could integrate the experience of the fall of the Soviet Union and the appearance of the post-Soviet Russia in the hegemonic discourse. In the Sochi Olympic imagery, the Soviet Union has not disappeared; it still persists as the strongest reference point through which the story of Russia's identity can be narrated. In the meantime, this retrograde representation illuminates a constitutive void in the very concept of Russian identity—it lacks strong symbols and proofs of its self-sufficiency and vitality, which can explain a lot in the widely spread feelings of traumatic marginalization fuelling revisionist and revanchist attitudes in the society. It is this shaky ground of Putin's project of reinstalling sovereignty that triggered a 'schizophrenic' mixture of different attitudes to the Olympic Games—pride and shame, admiration and regret: Russians can be 'impressed by the Opening ceremony that depicted Russia as an empire of European culture… which does not prevent them from understanding that it was only a sweet dream of a little girl Liuba [a heroine of the episode], an export version of Russian history, akin to Russian 'Ladas' adapted to foreign markets, and that the post-Olympic awakening would inevitably bring us back to single textbooks, corrupt justice and state-sponsored Orthodoxy' (Medvedev 2014).

Unsurprisingly, this conceptual void is compensated by an explicit Putin-centrism of Russian sovereigntist discourse, which has a direct bearing on sports milieu. Indicatively, it is not rare for Russian athletes to personally thank the president for support and inspiration—as, for example, the boxer Alexandr Povetkin did, having characterized Putin as 'a patriot of Russia' (Gazeta.ru 2014). Povetkin is known for his sympathies to an extremist organization, the 'Northern Brotherhood' (Kloop Media Portal 2013); from his part, Putin expressed his sympathies to Povetkin on the eve of his fight with the Ukrainian Vladimir Klichko in 2013 (Khriunov 2013). Povetkin is a macho-style hero, a 'rough-hewn nationalist who entered the ring… to a kitsch medieval-style folk song celebrating a semi-fictional Russian golden age' (Ellingworth 2013). Another Russian boxer, Denis Lebedev, after having victoriously defended his world title, devoted his

triumph to the Great Patriotic War that unnamed forces, in his interpretation, 'make us forget, as this is the case in Ukraine' (Gazeta.ru 2015j).

These examples show that sports in Russia is a fertile ground for reproducing discourses and practices of hegemonic masculinity that spill over far beyond the Kremlin all across the entire society. Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of Chechnya, has publicly justified physical abuse by a referee of a football player who allegedly insulted him: 'I would personally kill him for this. He [the referee] did violate the law, but did it all right' (Dozhd' TV 2013b). Putin himself takes very personally all dissenting views in sports-related matters—thus, he once suggested that critics of the Universiade (World Student Games) 2013 held in Kazan should 'take Viagra' (Dozhd' TV 2013a)—a rude statement that reveals his hegemonic masculinity and medicalization of his political narrative.

The issues of racism, homophobia and sexism in Russia were widely discussed in the West among key hurdles for the 'Olympic spirit' to prevail in Sochi (The Olympic Spirit 2015). Yet the problem seems to be much wider: for example, President of the Russian Tennis Association Shamil Tarpischev was fined by the Women's Tennis Association and banned for one year for his remark about the 'brothers Williams', which was interpreted as offensive and sexist to the Williams sisters (The Guardian 2014a). Tarpischev was forced to apologize, yet later in an interview said that he would make the same statement again (Gazeta.ru 2015l).

The clearly identifiable notes of aggression in Russia's sports discourse betray a number of psychological problems the Russian collective Self faces, among which Julia Ioffe singles out obsession with how the West reacts to and appreciates Russia's successes, coupled with prolific conspiracy theories (Ioffe 2014). Russia's hegemonic discourse intentionally politicizes sports narratives through directly connecting them with beliefs in an inherently unfriendly international environment, combined with the predominantly materialist understanding of international politics. As many commentators in Russia noted, Russia's successful bids for major international sports events was interpreted in a broad sense of the almighty role of financial resources for achieving desirable results.

There are at least two concepts important for understanding the role of hegemonic masculinity in the sovereign power discourse in Russia. First, it is an important shaper of national identity and the spirit of patriotism. Sport events became one terrain where narratives of national identity are fermented. For example, the Russian boxer Fiodor Chudinov, who won the world title on May 9, 2015—Victory Day in the Great Patriotic War widely celebrated in Russia—against a German rival, in an interview afterwards

claimed that his overarching motivation was 'to shut up the flock of ill-wishers disrespectful to people from my country that defeated fascism' (Gazeta.ru 2015b).

President Putin himself is an important discourse maker in sports. Thus, he charged the head of the Continental Hockey League with making ice hockey the number one sport in Russia (Gazeta.ru 2015j). In many respects the Kremlin metaphorically perceives ice hockey 'as indirect war, as it used to be in the Soviet Union. If you can't send military jets to bombard Washington, at least let's send our guys to kill Uncle Sam in hockey' (Gorod 2015), a commentator says. In football, too, political exposure is often part of sports performance—thus, Russian fans waved imperial Russian flags and burned NATO flags during Russia's game in Macedonia in 2015 (Gazeta.ru 2015o).

Second, nationalism is boosted by practices of exceptionality and discontinuation of the 'normal' legal order. Sovereign power consists in the 'impossibility of distinguishing between an outside and an outside, norm and exception…. Sovereignty, in other words, marks the limit of the juridical order—and it is this very structure… that Carl Schmitt describes as that of the exception…. If the sovereign is, in fact, the one to whom the juridical order grants the power of proclaiming the state of exception—and, thus, the power of suspending the order's very validity—then we should properly conceive of the sovereign as standing outside the juridical order, while nevertheless belonging to it' (Minca 2007).

Yet in the meantime state sovereignty is severely restricted by Russia's de facto submission to regulations of international sports bodies. One of good illustration of this is the debate of inclusion of Crimean clubs in the Russian championship, which was a major political challenge that the RFU faced after the annexation of this Ukrainian peninsula. The records of the RFU session held in August 2014 and leaked to the media elucidated important facets of sovereign power in the specific context of the FIFA World Cup. The dilemma the RFU faced—to decide on whether Crimean clubs ought to be integrated into the Russian league—clearly demonstrated that this institution is capable of operating only as an appendage of the sovereign power. Its members recognized that their contribution to winning the bid for the FIFA World Cup was 'not more than 2–3 per cent, while you know who did most of the job' (Sukhotin 2014). Having rightly realized that the RFU needs to make a political (either/or) decision, they got stuck and ultimately adjourned the voting to clarify the Kremlin's position: '[I]f we are tasked with getting adjusted [to the Kremlin-approved policy], we'll certainly do so. Anyway we'll choose the motherland

over all the rest. If there is a direct instruction [to vote for including Crimean clubs]—then it's Ok'. Thus, the whole debate revolved around the question of 'whether the first man in the state needs this'.

As the sovereign, 'Putin put everything at stake' in his direct confrontation with Ukraine and the West and is the ultimate source of authority: 'The President is alone standing in the breastwork, and [if] you dare to mull over new sanctions… [e]ither you flee out of the country, or behave correspondingly', one of Putin's strongest supporters said. By the same token, in this illuminating discussion Putin featured as an enigmatic figure with uncertain preferences: 'Ok, let's image that I could give him a call and ask: Vladimir Vladimirovich, we've got a situation here. He would say—Get out of here. And he would be right.' Yet, in the case of making an 'incorrect decision' Putin, as one top-level participant presumed, might go 'looking for all of us sitting here'. The fears of being blacklisted by the West and 'losing what we've been doing for 25 years' were serious: 'Who will reimburse me or others 10 billion Euro of damage?', one of the sponsors of the Russian football industry asked. The evident politicization of this issue in fact immobilized the RFU and led one of its members to assume that given the complexity of political situation, 'the World Cup 2018 might not necessarily be the key card to play with' (Sukhotin 2014).

Ultimately (and ironically), the 2018 Football Cup became a constraining factor for the Putinite sovereign power, since international sports institutions (UEFA, in particular) are the only authorities that de facto—and indirectly, under the threat of sanctions—forced the Kremlin to implicitly recognize the limitations of its ability to fully incorporate Crimea: the RFU had to ultimately revoke its decision on including Crimean football clubs into the Russian league (Golovin 2015). This inclusion/exclusion 'game' reveals vulnerabilities and inconsistencies within the structure of the sovereign power that for the sake of hosting the mega event had to compromise on something that constitutes the core of Putin's ideology—the reincorporation of Crimea into Russia as a gesture of restoring 'historical fairness' and a boost to the 'Russian world' concept.

Crisis in Russia's Relations with the West

In this section, I address a comprehensive crisis in Russian–Western relations that has seriously complicated the business milieu and investment climate in Russia and made apparent its critical vulnerabilities and dependency on the external environment. The staging of the FIFA 2018

event takes place in a situation of declining economy and unstable national currency, which makes it much less celebratory. Russia is facing isolation, 'which, in the narrow footballing context, is bound to cast doubt on the viability of a World Cup that will serve president Vladimir Putin and his oligarchical cronies…. Already we are in the highly anomalous position of sending a World Cup to a country that is helping to destroy a European Championship host. Thus, the 2018 World Cup is effectively at war with Euro 2012' (Hayward 2015), a British journalist claimed.

However, Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko dubbed the World Cup an element of the anti-crisis plan, with import substitution at its core (Gazeta.ru 2015g). Due to financial problems caused by international sanctions, the Russian government had to authorize the substitution of imported construction materials by Russian analogues, which evoked serious doubts among experts concerning the ensuing quality problems (Sakharova 2015). Some other elements of the 'anti-crisis plan'—such as the idea of using convicts for building stadiums (Dozhd' TV 2015c), or utilizing student dormitories (instead of hotels) for accommodating international guests—attest to serious financial constrains the government faces in preparing for the World Cup.

Indeed, Mutko announced a 10 % cut in the budget for the event (Gazeta.ru 2015h) and encouraged local officials to seek financial support from private donors (Klimentyev 2014). Due to the shortage of financial resources, Russia asked FIFA's permission to reduce the occupancy of two stadiums—in Kaliningrad and Yekaterinburg—from 45 to 35 thousand (Russian government 2015). What complicates the situation is that Russian businessmen are reluctant to voluntarily invest in the FIFA World Cup project: for example, the head of 'Megafon', a major Russian cell phone operator and a partner of the Sochi Olympics, in April 2015 announced that it had no intentions of sponsoring the 2018 event (Gazeta.ru 2015f). Back in 2013 two other tycoons, Roman Abramovich and Suleiman Karimov, declared that they would stop financing or investing in Russian football (Dozhd' TV 2013a).

Sanctions on individuals and companies that are crucial for the FIFA Cup event have only exacerbated the extant hardship. Gennady Timchenko, a tycoon in charge of stadium construction, is on the US sanction list as a 'member of Putin's inner circle' (Financial Times 2015) and thus is constrained in his financial capabilities. 'Stroitransgaz', a Russian company in charge of building a stadium in Nizhny Novgorod, is on Canada's sanctions list (NTA News Agency 2014).

In this respect, the World Cup is a test to globalization theories that claim that the more a country is exposed to global forces, the less sovereign it becomes, with many policy areas increasingly dependent on both material (technologies, investments, human capital) and immaterial (symbolic capital, reputation, branding and advertisement campaigning) factors. This exposure erodes the basis for sovereign power, yet the sovereignty/globalization nexus always needs contextualization and does not work automatically. In Russia, sports mega events only strengthen practices of top-down mobilization—from administrative pressure over corporate business to enforced street cleaning by state employees (Chizhova 2014). Chances are high that being under Western economic sanctions, the Putin regime would increasingly resort to those practices conducive to the wider growing gaps between Russia and the West in terms of governance and management standards.

Crisis in the Russian Football Industry

The crisis in the entire industry of Russian football—from scandalous arrear payments to the national team coach (Maksimov 2014) to the ensuing non-confidence vote to the head of the RFU—is another problem Russia faces in the run-up to the World Cup. Indeed, the RFU for months failed to pay contract salary to Fabio Capello, and it was only two loans provided by the tycoon Alisher Usmanov that allowed the RFU to belatedly meet its financial obligations (Gazeta.ru 2015n). The obscure circumstances of the contract itself with an obviously exorbitant salary of tax-free 10 billion Euros per annum also became part of the public debates. The whole story of Capello's contract—the most lucrative in the world (Gazeta.ru 2015k) —became even more cumbersome with Tolstykh's exposure of the existence of a second contract with Capello, yet with whom it was signed remained enigmatic (Gazeta.ru 2015m). This story provoked some tensions within the ruling elite; thus, the former head of the Accounting Chamber, Viktor Stepashin, blamed Sports Minister Mutko for the trouble: 'It was him who brought Capello in, but then denied this. He assured [me] that has nothing to do with negotiations on his salary, but put his signature…. Now it is up to those who signed the contract to pay' (Stepashin 2015).

Yet the harshest polemics were between the then head of RFU and the national team coach. Tolstykh's remark that Russia has more urgent agenda—in particular, the celebration of Victory Day—than discussing Capello's salary and his employment, was a clear attempt to put the

issue of financial mismanagement in an artificially politicized context (Sports.ru 2015). In his response Capello dubbed Tolstykh's insinuations 'insane' and claimed that he had no intentions of relating contractual obligations of the RFU to the Victory Day 'that is widely celebrated in Europe, including Italy' (Dozhd' TV 2015a). In June 2015, after Russia's national team was defeated by Austria and almost lost chances to qualify for Euro 2016, the deputy chair of the State Duma Igor' Lebedev accused Fabio Capello of a applying a strategy of 'Italian strike' and in inflicting direct harm on Russian football (Gazeta.ru 2015e).

Under these circumstances it was expected that the sovereign power would intervene in the operation of the RFU. It was Sports Minister Mutko who ultimately took over the RFU as a crisis manager, claiming that RFU owed 1.5 billion RUR to its creditors (Gazeta.ru 2015i). Ultimately, it was the head of the presidential administration Sergey Ivanov who had a major say in appointing a new national coach Leonid Slutskiy in August 2015 (Dozhd' TV 2015b).

The Russian Echo of the FIFA Crisis

The scandalous arrest of FIFA functionaries in Zurich on corruption charges was another serious blow to the World Cup project in Russia. Years before Russian opposition leaders directly accused the IOC of corrupt liaisons with Moscow (Europe 2013), which unveiled global sports institutions' penchant for organizing mega events in non-democratic countries—a tendency that obviously stretches far beyond Russia. Multiple invectives against the IOC for lack of transparency and corruptive scandals (Boykoff 2014) could be matched only by evidence of corruption within FIFA, one of few global institutions that fully legitimized the Putin rule, in spite of its highly problematic practices of human rights violations, environmental deterioration, corruption, and the like. The former Ukrainan Foreign Minister Vladimir Ogryzko, along with a group of US Senators, claimed that Russia had to be stripped of the FIFA Cup (Ogryzko 2015), but these appeals remained largely unnoticed.

There were multiple accusations in the international media of corruptive links between FIFA officials, on the one hand, and the Russian government and its business associates—such as 'Gazprom'—on the other. In particular, the documentary film shoot by the *Deutsche Welle* on May 2015 and titled 'The Sold Football' (directed by Robert Kempe and Jochen Leufgens) made many of these facts public (Gurkov 2015). 'FIFA is now a multi-billion dollar business operating under Swiss charitable association

rules. That guarantees minimal disclosure about what they do with the money. But they make a lot of noise about their commitment to transparency' (Jennings 2011).

Against this backdrop, FIFA, the organizer of the World Football Cup in Russia in 2018, plays the same role in stabilizing the hegemonic regime in Russia as the IOC did in the case of the Sochi Olympics. Thus, the then president of FIFA Blatter, responding to the appeals of US Senators to strip Russia of the FIFA tournament as a reaction to Kremlin's militarist policy in Ukraine, suggested that his opponents should better 'stay home' (Gazeta.ru 2015a). This explains why Russia's reaction to the scandal that erupted around FIFA in May 2015 was explicitly political and defensive of the indulgent and gratifying policy of FIFA towards Russia. The head of the National Anti-corruption Committee Kirill Kabanov explained the arrests of FIFA functionaries in Zurich as a US-led operation designed and implemented as a reaction to FIFA's reluctance to deprive Russia of the World Cup (Gazeta.ru 2015c). Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the head of the LDPR party, assumed that Blatter was under fire because 'he has good connections with Russia' (Sport 2015). Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of Chechnya, has directly confirmed the Kremlin–FIFA liaisons by exclaiming after the re-election of Blatter on May 30, 2015: 'Putin means victory. The open and shameless provocation orchestrated by the US has completely failed…. Attempts to nationalize the world football and turn it into a puddle of Washington and London are doomed. Our national leader doesn't play these games', wrote he in his Twitter account (Gazeta.ru 2015d). Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko contributed to this narrative by assuring that 'all this is geared against Russia, with the aim to hurt it socially, morally, politically and image-wise' (Levchenko 2015). The speaker of the General Prosecutor's office Vladimir Markin claimed that the US uses corruption issues as a policy tool, in some cases supporting friendly regimes (like in Ukraine), and in other occurrences using corruption as a pretext for attaining its geopolitical aims (Markin 2015).

Finally, President Putin himself has called the arrests of FIFA functionaries 'weird' and qualified them as 'an attempt of the US to project its jurisdiction all over the world. One may imagine that some people from FIFA did something wrong, but the US has nothing to do with that, since the suspects are not American citizens', which is empirically false (Novoprudskiy 2015). Putin has invoked the principles of 'sovereignty' and 'non-interference' in the face of the arrests and extradition of corrupt FIFA officials, and interpreted the US- and UK-led anti-corruption campaign against FIFA as driven by these two countries' revenge for losing

their bids to Russia. Putin's comments to anti-corruption charges betray his deep mistrust of international mechanisms of transparency and accountability: 'If someone suspects someone in committing certain crimes, the appropriate data has to be collected and handed over to the prosecution institution of the state whose citizen is the suspect. This procedure has nothing to do with policies of one single country—regardless of whether it is large or small—whose authorities travel all across the globe, grab people at their liking and drag them to the jail' (Putin 2015). Based on his interpretation of the US–FIFA relations, Putin described American foreign policy as imperial, unilateral and expansionist, which led him to the direct apology of the FIFA ex-president: 'I don't believe a single word related to corruption said against him personally. I think that people like Blatter… deserve particular attention and gratitude from the public. It is these people who ought to be awarded Noble prizes, since they do foster mechanisms of cooperation between countries' (Putin 2015).

Putin's straightforward defense of Blatter and his associates only proved that 'autocratic regimes and the organizing bodies of mega sporting events have become deeply and unhealthily intertwined' (Walker and Orttung 2015). The rhetorical protection of the very image of Russia as a host country that might suffer from direct association with FIFA led Putin to de-facto justification of corruptive practices up to the absurd point of nominating Blatter for the Noble Peace Prize. This reveals a major problem with Putin's sovereignty—a key functional precondition for its implementation is the rhetorical acceptance and even legitimation of a set of exceptional privileges that the Russian government accords to FIFA for symbolically cementing the regime of sovereignty. The list of these exceptional measures is impressive: FIFA officials are guaranteed to make banking and cash transactions skipping existing financial regulations, to advertise alcoholic drinks during the games, to avoid paying taxes in Russia, to claim duty exemptions for importing foreign cars in Russia, and so on. (Gaaze 2015). Moreover, the Russian Sports Ministry and the Council of Eurasian Economic Commission drafted a bill that would facilitate the importation of certain types of merchandise into Russia, referring to its obligations to FIFA; the list of tax-free items, apart from sports equipment, includes alcoholic beverages (Ischenko and Skrynnik 2015). This episode is a clear signal of erosion of Russian sovereignty under the impact of its contractual—yet always opaque, secretive and exceptionalized—agreements with FIFA.

Conclusion

The attentive analysis of the Sochi 2014 narrative makes clear that the exorbitantly expensive Olympic show was used by the Kremlin to convey a number of political messages to the world. The most important of them—portraying Russia as a European empire with rich cultural traditions and as a direct heritor of the Soviet Union depicted as a peculiar type of modernization project not incompatible with Western experiences—represent different facets of sovereignty discourse constitutive of Putinism. Yet the various articulations of imperial sovereignty, sustained by visualized metaphors of Russia's civilizational self-sufficiency, proved to be of no help for tackling a new set of challenges Russia faces in the lead-up to the FIFA World Cup as another grandiose sportive event momentous for the growing international ambitions of an increasingly revisionist Kremlin. Indeed, the rhetoric and the symbolism of imperial sovereignty does not give practical answers to a set of acute questions raised by the three crises analyzed in this chapter: how to avoid detrimental consequences of economic sanctions for the FIFA-related infrastructural projects, how to overcome the negative effects of the current financial and administrative crisis within the RFU, and how to respond to the obvious facts of corruption within FIFA without compromising Russia's moral authority in the world.

The sovereign discourse valorized and promoted by Putin as the utmost political priority of the regime unveils its deficiency through critical dependence on external factors. Being unprepared to adapt to a more conflictual situation and parry the international pressure against Russia as an effect of its Ukraine policy, the Putin regime increased anti-Western (and particularly anti-American) pathos in its propagandistic discourse, reducing it to simplistic lamentations about a global conspiracy against Russia and absurd ideas of nominating Blatter for the Noble Peace Price. This devolution of the hegemonic discourse says a lot about its central concept of sovereignty that, as the story of the three crises makes clear, can function only under the conditions of the artificially created feeling of false self-sufficiency and de facto solidarity with the most corrupt global sports institutions.

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