Deterrent Role of Sport in Military War (Case Study: Netnography of Russia-Ukraine Conflict)

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of war in Ukraine at the same time as the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics once again called the world sports to engage in international military warfare. The aim of the present study was to investigate the role of sports deterrent in the prevention of international military wars. The present study was a qualitative-netnogeraphy method, which was conducted by studying various websites and social networks such as Instagram and official websites of BBC sport, CNN sport, ABC sport, Varzesh TV, Olympics and FIFA World Cup pages. The results indicated that sport sanctions of Russia categorized to personal (8) and organizational (21) concepts. Although Sports is a non-political phenomenon, it can play as a peace-making factor to decrease the political and military pressure on nations. Today, athletes, because of their billion audience on social media and messengers, have an irreplaceable impact on the public, including efforts to curb violence, aggression and incitement to war, including effective sports in promoting international peace.

Introduction

Peace is a universal ideal and one of the most important necessities of our time. It forms the foundation of human life. By society development safety, peace and happiness all need peace to be realized. Peace is not just communication but peace is the exchange of thoughts and mindsets, mutual love and acceptance of one another (Rouse, 2020). Nowadays, modern sport has found a lot of interaction with domestic and international politics and the belief has been created that sport can play

a role in promoting the level of development, creating peace and resolving conflicts. International sports organizations which involve a combination of governmental and non-governmental actors are sometimes seen as the subject of diplomatic debate (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2017).

Today, sports and its competitions have widely entered the private and public lives of the people and affect the behavior of individuals, communities, governments and the media (Ubaidulloev, 2018). This phenomenon also has a political consequence that overshadows the relations between governments and social groups with concepts such as national power, competition, convergence, divergence, conflict, nationalism, national unity and the likelihood (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). It connects and affects the attitude and behavior of governments and nations towards each other. Sports diplomacy, as an efficient and flexible tool in foreign policy, paves the way for the promotion of government relations and consequently, the increase of understanding between nations and the establishment of international peace and stability (Nicholson & Taylor, 2020). Overall, with the inefficiency of military solutions in resolving global conflicts and international security, the need to use this phenomenon as a fundamental solution among governments is felt more than ever.

Many literary, philosophical and moral comments have been made about the functions of sport. But each emphasizes an aspect of it and refrains from considering the other current socio-political functions of sport. For example, from the point of view of a passionate revolutionary like *Che Guevara*, "football is not just a simple game, but a weapon for revolution". *Albert Camos* seeks morality and social commitment in this game and writes: Everything I know about morality and commitment owe football. Some, like *Marley Kessler*, have blamed the game and believe that football players are prostitutes who have used their limbs for the pleasure of strangers, and even some, such as George Orwell, have considered football a source of immorality (Dousti, Goudarzi, & Asadi, 2021). According to (Giulianotti, Coalter, Collison, & Darnell, 2019), the functions of sport in the UK are:

- Community cohesion: Using sporting events to bring in contact between tribes and clans
- Crime reduction: Organizing sports activities for juvenile delinquents
- Social solidarity: Using sports to encourage people to practice, work and train

Murray (2012) believes that sport can blur boundaries, provide security against aggressors, and thaw communication ices (Murray, 2012). Through sport, one has an opportunity to change dangerous relationships into friendly and acceptable ones; Weak political guidelines, illiteracy rates in the world, sustainable development, human security are examples that the world of sports can use to improve them(Murray, 2018). On the other hand, Grix and Houlihan (2014) categorize sports events into three categories: murder (such as the 1972 Munich Olympics), sanctions (such as the 1980 and 1984 Olympics), or political disputes (such as the water polo match between Hungary and the Soviet Union) (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). Murray (2018), in his article entitled "Sports Diplomacy; A Combination of Two Halves", examines in detail the relationship between the two categories of sports and international relations; he makes some points in the apparent distinction between the two categories of sports and diplomacy; athletes with adrenaline rush are different from diplomats in face and gesture; The hustle and bustle of sports stadiums is quite different from the peaceful atmosphere of diplomats (Murray, 2018). He combines diplomacy and sport not only in theory but also in practice, while presenting seven reasons why diplomacy is sporty. From this research, the reasons for the combination of sports and diplomacy, the governments' belief in sports diplomacy and why they use sports as a diplomatic attractive tool. *Jim Cain* (2009) the former US ambassador to Denmark believes Business diplomacy demonstrates peace; he believes "Sports can be a powerful tool for achieving and even building relationships between governments". A positive message in the context of sport that carries common values such as mutual respect, patience, compassion, order and equality of opportunity can be seen as a more effective foreign policy than the promise of promises or rewards to individuals. The German federal minister of foreign affairs first used sport as a "peaceful political tool" in 1961 in developing countries and crisis-ridden regions to break down prejudice and bring minorities closer together. Mangan (2004) considers one of the goals of the establishment of Japanese J-league to be the request of the ministry of foreign affairs, so that after 40 years of the Cold War (1990), football can strengthen economic achievements and promote progress and peace in Japan

(Mangan, 2004). Another activity of this league is to bring together young Palestinian and Israeli players in their training camps in Japan, in order to strengthen their peace in the international community, in addition to making them know each other.

Large sports communities such as the Olympics and the World Cup can bring countries together and lead to closer and more cordial relations between countries, in which case sports diplomacy works best and nations can show peace, friendship and cooperation. One of the goals of the Olympic movement is to be effective in ending international and political conflicts and promoting peace. Among the areas of Olympism (Fig. 1), peace through sport can be considered as one of its most widely used scenarios (Armour & Dagkas, 2012) :

Figure 1. Olympism Parts (Feizabadi, Delgado, Khabiri, Sajjadi, & Alidoust, 2015)

After the end of the Cold War, international actors have made significant changes in the management of their foreign policy and diplomacy (Simbar & Ghorbani, 2008). Undoubtedly, the scope of diplomacy goes beyond the limited political-strategic understanding given to the term. The narrow-mindedness and restrictive attitude of the diplomatic apparatus towards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and members of the diplomatic service are no longer justified. Today, the atmosphere of diplomacy is a space full of various actors, including political diplomacy, advisers, representatives, international organizations, etc. (Ganji Doust, 2008). Meanwhile, non-governmental actors try to present themselves as the main defenders of deprived, oppressed, persecuted and marginalized individuals and groups. These actors have a huge impact on foreign policy decision-makers. Therefore, non-governmental actors have been recognized by the United Nations as one of the main actors in the world peace meetings held by the organization itself (Simbar & Ghorbani, 2008). Sport, and in particular sports diplomacy, as an efficient and flexible tool in foreign policy, paves the way for the promotion of government relations and, consequently, the increase of understanding between nations and the establishment of international peace and stability. Today, with the inefficiency of military solutions in resolving global conflicts and international security, the need to use this phenomenon as a fundamental solution among governments is felt more than ever (Ghadami & Mostafavi, 2009).

Most people believe that sport plays important roles and functions in international relations and world peace (Dousti et al., 2021); Liston (2021) believed that Sport is a tool for social change, and studies of youth in Jordan, Tajikistan, and India have concluded that sport has been a lever to prevent youth conflict and violence, extremism, and bigotry. According to these researchers, sport is the most important tool in reaching a solution to social conflicts (Liston & Maguire, 2022). Tovar (2020) impressed that World War II and the Corona virus have completely shut down football as a global industry between 2020 and 2022. In his article, he sought to compare the effects of the outbreak of

the virus on football with the great historical event of World War II. He believes that the effects of the Corona pandemic were greater and more destructive than World War II, because in World War II, football could continue wherever possible, while in the Corona pandemic, football matches around the world were stopped all at once. In a part of his essay mentioned: "ohe impact of World War II on football was devastating, with matches being changed, suspended or canceled in almost all European countries. However, the corona virus has diminished its effects on football. For the first time in history, almost every football tournament in the world has been stopped. In addition, uncertainty remains about when it will resume. Such uncertainty was also an issue in the 1940s, but as the Nazis pushed back to Berlin, it became clear that football had returned to normal sooner. Hence, the current uncertain situation can be compared to that time. But today there are many plans to resume football. This generation has never seen a Sunday without football on a global scale". Dichter (2021) examined the role of NATO and West Germany as allies after World War II and the increasing pressure on communist East Germany in the midst of the Cold War and through sport. He believes that sport, as a tool in the hands of NATO and its allies, prevented communist East German athletes from attending any event during the 1950s until the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City (Dichter, 2021). Mitchell & et al (2020) by studying the people of Northern Ireland showed that sports for peace and development (SDP) movement as a means of bringing multi-ethnic communities closer together; these scholars believe that the attitude of the people of a region towards sports plays an important role in removing socio-political barriers and certain dispersing ideas(Mitchell, Somerville, Hargie, & Simms, 2021). Engle (2014) analyzes the Russia-Ukraine war and believes that after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, more than 100,000 Russian troops behind the Ukrainian border are seeking to dominate the heart of Europe and overcome NATO in the region. He believes that the former Soviet sanctions, which led to its collapse in 1991, are itself a reason for NATO's efforts to create a united and free Europe, which at the moment the war between the two countries will not benefit either side (Engle, 2014). According to Engle (2014), reforming the economy, clearing corruption, preventing the outflow of Russian wealth, and restoring a sense of community pride will certainly contribute to a healthier society and sports system in Russia and the rest of the world. But in a country where more money is spent bribing officials, there will be no people who want this change.

The advent of social media has led to the development of web-based communities, hosting services and web-based applications such as online shopping sites, video sharing sites, wikis and blogs. The end user of production media, such as personal and corporate blogs, is not only a great tool for social media, but also an effective interactive communication medium in business (Bartl, Kannan, & Stockinger, 2016). This has necessitated the study of online ethnography, including viewing and reviewing posts and comments on an online site or forum, and interviewing online users or collecting data online. In recent years, new names such as biogeography, digital ethnography, and ethnography have been attributed to virtual online ethnography (Kozinets, 2015).

Netnography, which is largely based on the reflection of online statements and opinions. The word netnography is a combination of the words internet and ethnography. While Ethnography is considered by collecting anthropological, oral, cultural and social data for a given population, along with their application in descriptive and analytical study, Netnography is a qualitative method for examining online interactions between Internet users, which today is widely used in the topics of online consumer behavior and online marketing studies and analysis of the views of participants and users in social and political spaces (Kozinets, 2015). Netnography is a descriptive and detailed study of people, especially in the cultural fields related to ethnicities and small and large groups of people. Ethnography is usually explicitly or implicitly based on the participation of the researcher and is highly dependent on the ingenuity of the researcher as a tool‾

Netnography is a way to understand the attitudes, perceptions, images and feelings of users in online communication. As Kozinet (2015) points out, the Internet increases opportunities for social group participation. Netnography was first developed as a kind of online marketing research technique to study the "unique features of online communities". Today, netnography is widely used in Internet user behavior research and online marketing studies. Webmasters are interested in netnography for two reasons: The first is the growing importance of the internet and active users of online communities. Online communities are places where consumers discuss information goals and

users' personal impressions of products and brands. Second, one of the main goals of research is to identify and understand the tastes, desires, systems, symbols and influences of decisions of users and specific consumer groups. As the advent of the internet creates new opportunities to engage with Internet users, so does marketing researchers have the opportunity to study the tastes, wants, and other needs of consumers in interacting with online communities (Kozinets, 2015).

The role of sport and its main function can be considered as reducing friction in international affairs (Murray & Pigman, 2014). Although most researches on the Russian Federation is limited to discussing doping about Russian athletes, this study tried to tackle the question how sport can prevent military war?

Methodology

The present study tried to investigate role of sport and athletes to reduce the military challenges. The present study was a descriptive correlation in terms of applied purpose and in terms of data collection, which was done as a library study. The statistical population was equal to the statistical sample and equal to 29 individuals or sports legal entities related to the subject of the Ukrainian military war in the region. Like ethnography and according to figure 2, one of the main assumptions of a Netography research project is to find and define a context for research. The researcher must first identify potential communities and then carefully select one or more communities based on predetermined criteria for gathering information. The researcher then enters the community (with or without introducing his or her presence and by observing and participating in community interactions, collects data and gains a deep understanding of community culture (Ashmore, 2021). Netnography due to more access to a wide group of users, more research continuity, economic and time savings than usual methods, high capacity and more flexibility in viewing and analyzing data, more quality reflection in online discourse, originality audience and moral sensitivity are important to researchers.

In the present study, we tried to study the reaction of individuals such as athletes and coaches, and legal sports organizations such as FIFA and the International Olympic Committee via social networks and messengers like Instagram and official websites of them to investigate the quotations of Russia-Ukraine war. Beside the official websites, in this research we tried to investigate the Instagram Hashtags #russiaboycott, #russiasanction, #russiaukrainewar in different pages such as *bbcsport*, *cnnsport*, *abc_sport*, *varzeshtv.irib*, *olympics* and *fifaworldcup*. The results for russiaboycott were less than 100k, for *russiasanction* more than 100k, and for *russiaukrainewar* were more than 55.3 k. The procedure of study indicted in figure 2:
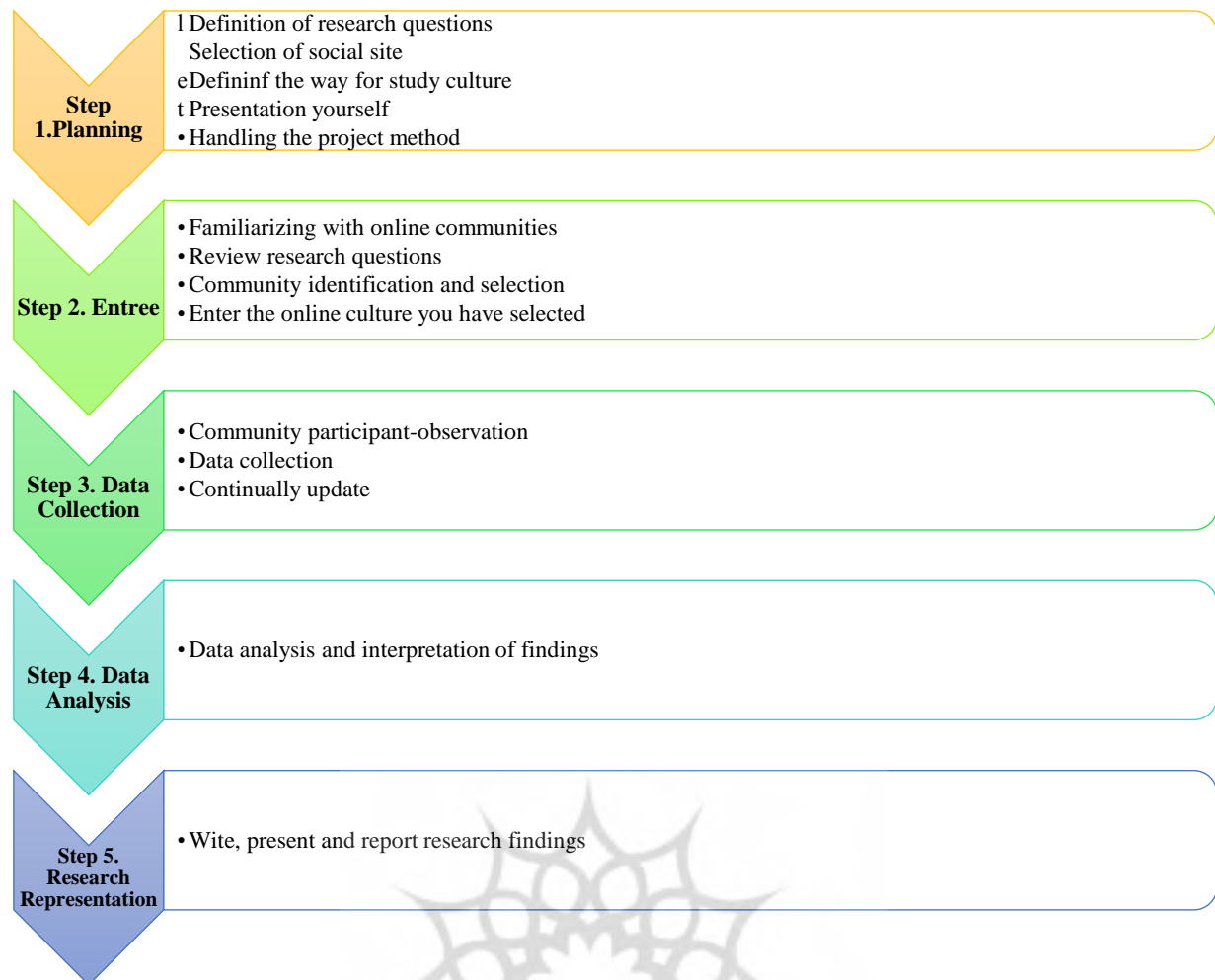
Figure 2. The procedure of netnogeraphy (Ashmore, 2021)

Results

Based on the nature of the qualitative research method, it can be said that netnography offers more insight in cyberspace in relation to the needs and desires of users, choice, symbolic meanings, etc. In this research, this research tried to investigate the concepts that is forbidden the Russia to invade the Ukraine. Finally, 29 codes in two areas were identified (table 1):

Table 1. The antiwar concepts of organizational and personal

No.	Name/Organization	Quotations	Personal	Organizational
1	Cristiano Ronaldo	We have to create a better world for our children	*	
2	Minister of Sports of Ukraine	Russia is an usurper country and those who do not follow the rules should be excluded from sports		*
3	Javad Nekounam	Living in war-torn cities doubles the hardships of the people	*	
4	FIFA	President of the Russian Football Federation Russia is banned from the 2022 World Cup in Qatar in violation of world sports standards		*
5	Thomas Tukhl	This situation is painful for me and my players	*	
6	Apostles Malinowski	End the war in Ukraine	*	
7	Sebastian Vettel	Did not compete in the Russian Grand Prix	*	
8	Andrei Rublov	Please do not fight in Dubai ATP tennis tour	*	
9	Hamilton	When a country is at war, it is not right to drive there	*	
10	Lewandowski	We cannot even have pictures of a football match with Russia	*	

11	Liverpool	Fans support the Ukrainian people with your flag You will never walk alone	*
12	Adidas	Suspended cooperation with the Russian Football Federation	*
13	Automobile International Federation (FIA)	Cancelled the Grand Prix Formula One in 2022 in Russia	*
14	World Judo Federation	Suspended Putin from the honorary presidency	*
15	Taekwondo Federation	Putin's black Taekwondo belt taken from him	*
16	World Volleyball Federation	Cancelling the hosting the League of Nations in Russia	*
17	Manchester United F.C	Cancelling Roof sponsorship of the club	*
18	Schalke F.C	Eliminated as the largest gas company from the team's shirt	*
19	Chelsea F.C	Dismissal Abramovich from the presidency	*
20	Frankfurt Ice Hockey Club	Ended contract with VTB Bank	*
21	UEFA	Hold Russian football team matches on neutral ground	*
22	UEFA	Take back the hosting of the Champions League final St. Petersburg to Paris	*
23	Napoli F.C	Stop the war banner with Barcelona match	*
24	Poland and Sweden National Teams	No confrontation with Russia through 2022 World Cup qualification games	*
25	Finnish Ski Association	Boycott Russia to participate in the final round of the Ski World Cup and ski jumping	*
26	International Olympic Committee	Condemn Russia for violating the Olympic ceasefire and requesting all world federations to cancel or relocate their hosting events in Russia and Belarus	*
27	World Swimming Federation	Cancelling the championships competitions in Russia	*
28	Eintracht Frankfurt F.C	Stop chanting Putin's slogan	*
29	Manchester-Watford Football Match	Presenting the word peace in six living languages of the world	*

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the role of sport in reducing military wars by a case study of the military war between Ukraine and Russia. Many authors have argued that sport reduces tensions between competitors and competitors in the international arena, while at the same time integrating the set of inequalities of people in a country (Dart, 2016; Dimeo, 2012; Dousti, Goodarzi, Asadi, & Khabiri, 2013). Feizabadi (2015) in their article tried to explain subordinate and accelerator role of sports in providing peace between governments, large sports communities such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup - an arena for establishing intimate and close relations between countries They know and believe that this issue brings peace, friendship and cooperation to the countries. According to these researchers, cooperation with major international sports organizations such as FIFA or the International Olympic Committee has a significant role in promoting world peace and these results are aligned to our findings. Rouse (2020) consider sport as a soft power inside and outside the countries, and believe four ways to achieve peace and nationalization through sports diplomacy: 1) illustration 2) building a space for dialogue, trust and reconciliation 3) integration 4) fight against racism. According to the findings of these researchers, it can be said that the present study in terms of the use of sports space and especially athletes and sports institutions has been able to play a deterrent and peace-building role in the war between Ukraine and Russia.

Sports diplomacy is an efficient and flexible tool in the foreign policy of all government relations and, consequently, increasing understanding between nations and creating international peace and

stability. Today, with the inefficiency of military solutions in resolving global conflicts and disputes and the establishment of international security, the need to use this phenomenon as a fundamental solution among governments is felt more than ever. Sport can bring together representatives of all countries of the world, regardless of their obvious differences in language, color, race, ideology and culture, and create exciting human scenes.

In industrialized world, Sport is recognized as a very important social, political and international factor. This social phenomenon also has a very positive effect on the formation and strengthening of solidarity, small and large group, ethnic and national identities and has the necessary capacity to convey various other messages, such as the development of peace and friendship and cooperation. It has a deep effect on bringing countries closer together.

Football as the most popular sport in the world can play a major role in creating peace as an international language. Large sports communities such as the Olympics and the World Cup can provide a good place for countries to show off as a peace-loving nation, as well as sports diplomacy that promotes cooperation between countries (Simbar & Ghorbani, 2008). It is rooted in the nature of sport, which is a natural place for international encounters. The ability of sport to mobilize the public and stimulate emotions, to use it for economic development, media propaganda, legitimacy and nation-building, national integration and the role in the development of peace are special attractions that have forced governments to pay attention to sport (Murray, 2018). The creation of new concepts such as sports diplomacy between the powers involved in the field of international politics indicates the creation of a new arena for political interactions and cultural manifestation.

Sport reflects both the dominant discourses of nationalism and reproduction. Moving from the general principle that sport is important to nationalists in terms of symbolism and credibility, it identified three research paths: sport as a repository of nationalist mechanisms, sport, globalization, and major sporting events as a space for international integration. Athletes, coaches, referees and other sports personalities, along with international sports organizations, have a significant role to play in condemning and condemning military wars in the international arena. Sport as a peace-making concept has tried to promote international friendship among countries by holding mega and small events such as Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, Europe Champions League, Volleyball Nations League and the NBA Basketball League. It encourages the use of diplomacy in solving problems. According to Table 1, it can be well understood that athletes as ambassadors have played a significant role in boycotting Russian military activities in Ukraine, to the extent that an athlete like Ronaldo with nearly 500 million followers has been able to use virtual networks, especially Instagram to influence and direct public opinion. The International Olympic Committee, as the main trustee of world sports, with the order of the world federations to sanction Russia in various sporting events, as the largest international body, has been able to play a significant role in supporting athletes and the people of Ukraine.

Although it seems impossible to eradicate international violence, its severity can be reduced, and in this regard, international sports institutions and legal entities can play a preventive and anti-war role against violence and extremism. In order to use sport to achieve world peace, cooperation must be established between governmental and non-governmental organizations. The United Nations should work more closely with major sports organizations such as the International Olympic Committee and international sports federations. Creating peace and cooperation is one of the main reasons why nations openly encourage participation in sport events. Sport, especially football, which has a high commercial profit, can play a significant role in achieving these goals. Participation in international sports requires participation in a network of organizations that have a global presence. Sport provides a mechanism for organizations to connect with each other and even to develop managerial and administrative skills among indigenous peoples. Sport brings all the nations of the world together in spite of economic, political, racial, color and religion differences, although sport may be the last factor in this regard.

Acknowledgments

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