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Between Solidarity and Punishment: The Motives Behind Sports Boycotts

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Between Solidarity and Punishment: The Motives Behind Sports Boycotts

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Sports events are increasingly held in countries without a significant sports tradition and a questionable human rights track record. This ‘sportswashing’ enables regimes to show their soft side and improve their image. Recently, it led to a countermovement in which domestic and international calls for boycotts are heard more frequently.

This thesis examines the motives of athletes, civil actors, international sporting organisations, international organisations and countries behind these calls. Political scientists often use Doxey’s approach to find the underlying rationale for boycotts. She describes eight different motives to call for a boycott. Only a limited number of scholars have studied sports boycotts in general since they mainly focus on a specific case and link this to a general theory (inductive reasoning). Studying the motives behind a call for a boycott deductively by applying Doxey’s model has not been done before. The study modifies economic models by differentiating six possible motives to call for a boycott, namely punishment, destabilisation, solidarity, symbolism, delegitimisation and signalling.

All cases are studied via a discourse analysis in which the language of articles comes from six English-speaking news platforms with a global reach is checked for keywords and context. This thesis finds that although there is no single motive for all boycotts, ‘easy’ boycotts without a political layer are likely to be driven by policy change or punishment, whereas more political boycotts are in most cases motivated by solidarity and delegitimising. However, sports boycotts have an intermediate effect and are therefore very effective as a response to unexpected events.

Keywords: Sports boycott; Motives; Economic theory; Doxey; Discourse; Deduction.

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"Russia must not be allowed to exploit sporting and cultural events on the world stage to legitimise its unprovoked, premeditated and needless attack against a sovereign democratic state" (Nair, 2022)

(UK Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries calling for a sports boycott for Russian and Belarussian teams, February 26, 2022)

1. Introduction

The boxing match between Andy Ruiz Jr and Anthony Joshua in Saudi Arabia (2019), the Winter Olympics in China (2022) and the FIFA World Cup in Qatar (2022) are recent examples of sporting events in countries with a questionable human rights track record. They must be seen as part of a larger trend of sports contests in countries without a major sports tradition (Neuland, 2016, p. 5). Simpson (2021) considers the eagerness of autocratic leaders to host big events with a high publicity value as ‘sportswashing’. It enables regimes to show their soft side and improve their image (Giebels, 2021).

The shift towards events in countries without sports tradition and a questionable human rights track record recently led to a new wave of calls for boycotts coming from two different directions. On the one hand, domestic actors such as politicians (e.g. Capar, 2021), athletes (e.g. Deutsche Welle, 2021) and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (e.g. Rabemanantsoa, 2022) lobby for boycotts, whereas on the other hand international sporting associations (ISAs) (e.g. WTA, 2021) and international organisations (IOs) discuss boycotts. But when do boycotts occur? Why would actors engage in it? And what are the motives behind such a call?

Most academic approaches to boycotts are about consumer boycotts (e.g. Klein, Smith & John, 2004) and their influence on political and corporate decisions. Other scholars focus on the

political power of social activists that use the threat of boycotts to make political gains (e.g. McDonnell & Werner, 2016). Political scientists often use Doxey's book *International Sanctions in Comparative Perspective* (1996) to find the underlying rationale for sanctions or boycotts. She describes eight different motives to call for a boycott. Her approach has often been used in an inductive – observing a pattern and linking it to a theory – way (e.g. Little, 2011). Applying Doxey's theory to sports boycotts deductively – testing the theory – to a large number of cases has however not been done before. This thesis therefore has the following research question:

What are the motives for domestic and international actors to call for a sports boycott?

This thesis studies the motives for arguing for a sports boycott. To do so, this research uses an economic model of motives for boycotts by combining and modifying the theory of Doxey (1996) with the empirical examples of Black (1999) and Booth (2003). This leads to six possible explanations for a call for a boycott: policy change, punishment, destabilisation, solidarity, symbolism and delegitimising.

This thesis adds to the literature a study of twenty-one different sports boycotts to make generalisable conclusions about the rationale behind them. To answer the research question this thesis applies a deductive method in which six different motives to call for a boycott is being tested by the most relevant sports boycotts throughout history. They are systematically being studied via a discourse analysis in which the discourse of 79 articles derived from six authoritative English-speaking news outlets is checked for the underlying motives. This thesis finds that although there is no single motive for all boycotts, 'easy' boycotts without a political layer are likely to be driven by policy change or punishment, whereas more political boycotts are in most cases motivated by solidarity and delegitimising. However, sports boycotts are an effective tool to respond to unexpected events because of their immediate effects. This makes it an excellent tool to punish, signal or enforce policy changes.

This thesis has the following structure. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the existing literature and the gaps the sports boycott literature has based on the eight motives of Doxey (1996). Chapter 3 describes the theoretical expectations of the thesis. Chapter 4 explains and justifies the chosen methods, whereas Chapter 5 analyses the thesis findings. Chapter 6 is the conclusion in which the research question is being answered and where possible directions for further research are being described.

2. Literature Review

The literature review introduces several approaches to boycotts in general and sports boycotts specifically. Section 2.1 is divided into eight different paragraphs based on Margaret Doxey's book *International Sanctions in Comparative Perspective* (1996). Based on these motives, approaches from other scholars are analysed and compared with Doxey. In paragraph 2.1.9. other approaches to boycott motives are being reviewed and their applicability is being analysed. Section 2.2 describes the critical gaps in the literature and the different possibilities to answer the research question.

2.1. Boycotts

According to Lee (2021), a political boycott is a 'refusal by consumers to buy goods or patronise businesses to effect political or social change' (p. 533). On the international level, they are used as a 'declared consequence of the target's failure to meet international standards or observations' (Doxey, 1996, p. 4). Boycotts are powerful since they impose costs on the targeted actor. They can also have unintended consequences when targeting actors outside the sanctioned environment (Lee, p. 534). The political science and economics literature tends to conflate sanctions, embargoes and boycotts (MacLean, 2014, p. 1838). Crawford and Klotz (1999) differentiate between strategic, economic and social sanctions where sports fall under social sanctions. Social sanctions are often the 'mildest' form of sanctions with a significant role for symbolism (p. 195), whereas economic and political sanctions have more implications for both the imposer and the targeted actor. This means that social boycotts can be seen as a symbolic first step or a warning with little consequences (just for the targeted actors and the athletes involved), whereas economic or political boycotts have broader consequences. Kobierecki (2015) views it differently by arguing that boycotts often overlap and take advantage of one level by boycotting the other (p. 94).

Most academic approaches to boycotts are about consumer boycotts (e.g. Klein, Smith & John, 2004) and their influence on political and corporate decisions. Other scholars focus on the political power of social activists that use the threat of boycotts to make political gains (e.g. McDonnell & Werner, 2016). One of the leading scholars in the world of sanctions and boycotts is Margaret P. Doxey. In *International Sanctions in Comparative Perspective* (1996) she analyses the complex political and economic problems sanctions and boycotts pose for imposers and targets. She argues that imposers of boycotts do not always specify their objectives (Doxey, p. 144). Following her theory, numerous scholars identify motives and goals for boycotts inductively. Therefore, this section is based on her eight motives for sanctions or boycotts (p. 54-57).

Deterrence

Boycotts and sanctions do not have to aim to punish undesirable behaviour as a means of revenge (Blair & Durrance, 2008, p. 646). Instead, their purpose is to ‘deter to such behaviour so the punishment will not be necessary’ (p. 646). According to Doxey (1996), it is the ‘prime function of threatened sanctions or boycotts’ (p. 55). This can also affect third actors since it gives a deterrent signal to actors who might consider similar actions. Deterrence is primarily concerned with preventing and deterring further non-compliance than punishing past rule breakers (Mooijman, van Dijk and Ellemers, 2017, p. 577). Boycotts motivated by deterrence are therefore mainly aimed at actors who are deemed to break the rules in the future.

Deterrence aims to make objectionable behaviour unprofitable or otherwise unattractive to the potential wrongdoer without taking firm actions (Blair & Durrance, 2008, p. 646). This makes a ‘firm system of norm enforcement’ necessary (Doxey, p. 55). Mooijman et al. (2017) however argue that the effectiveness of sanctions or boycotts based on deterrence has a decreased effectiveness since it sends a signal of distrust to people ‘who have not broken any guidelines or rules’ (yet) (p. 577).

Compliance

When compliance is the motive for a boycott, the targeted actor is according to Doxey (1996) expected to ‘change some aspect of its foreign or domestic policy’ (p. 55). However, the big issue with compliance with international law is that there is no global regime that can enforce compliance at the international level.

To enforce compliance, the imposer often tries to inflict pain through diplomatic, cultural, communicational or economic sanctions (Doxey, p. 55). Little (2011) gives an example of a boycott driven by compliance by describing how the sports boycott against South Africa, was initially focused on pressing the apartheid regime to comply with demands for the removal of racial discrimination within its domestic sports system (p. 195).

More focused on individual incentives, Klein, Smith and John (2004) argue that boycotts can be driven by a ‘belief that an actor engaged in conduct that is strikingly wrong’ and that has negative and possibly harmful consequences for various parties (p. 96). It is therefore necessary to convince them to comply with international or domestic standards. Individuals can start a movement to make an actor comply with standards, but enforcing compliance depends according to Grant and Keohane (2005) on whether ‘some actors have the right to hold other actors to a set of standards to judge’ whether they have fulfilled their responsibilities in light of these standards and to impose sanctions if they determine that these responsibilities have not been met (p. 865).

Punishment

When compliance is an unrealistic goal or has not worked previously, punishment can also be a driver for boycotts. For Doxey (1996), certain sanctions ‘exact a price for international misbehaviour’ (p. 55). MacLean (2014) adds that they ‘deprive them of some value’ (p. 1838). They try to coerce an actor to abandon his previous position or to punish certain behaviour.

MacLean further states that boycotts might be driven by inflicting as much damage as possible to the actor who faces the boycott (p. 1839). This might lead to internal pressure to change policy and targeted actors can also become an example for others (p. 1839). The risk however is that the punishment does not work and that an escalation occurs.

A different take comes from Crawford and Klotz (1999) who warn that punishment may only be a 'satisfying theatre' (p. 4) since punishers feel better disciplining offending behaviour, but they 'often do not accomplish what they set out to do' (p. 4).

Destabilisation

Doxey (1996) describes destabilisation as an often implicitly mentioned goal (p. 55). She explains that although destabilisation of a regime or organisation is only the driver in exceptional cases, it has happened in instances of regimes that excessively violate international norms (e.g. Haiti) or when (a part of) the international community is seeking a regime change with the removal of the current leadership (e.g. Khadafi in Libya) (p. 56).

Little (2011) finds the international sanctions in the sports area against the Apartheid regime an example of destabilisation by isolating the 'white South African from the rest of the international community' (p. 196). Booth adds that this case proved that destabilisation could be an effective tool to enforce change by stating that 'play and sport are strong enough to cause political and economic relations to flourish or collapse' (p. 480). However, it is important that there is enough solidarity and legitimacy with the repressed or marginalised group to let a boycott aimed to destabilise happen (MacLean, 2014, p. 1848).

Limitation of conflict

Boycotts or sanctions can be aimed at reducing an ongoing conflict by sending a signal as a third actor. However, the risk according to Doxey (1996) can lead to 'accusations of partiality'

(p. 56) when one party feels targeted harder than the other. Therefore, boycotts to limit the conflict have mostly to do with weapon embargos to prevent further human suffering.

Solidarity

Boycotts can be a way to show solidarity with allies or repressed actors. Crawford and Klotz (1999) describe this as the 'rally round the flag' motive (p. 206). For Doxey (1996) showing solidarity can be 'quite powerful, particularly at the rhetorical level' (p. 56). It is important to stress that solidarity cannot be taken for granted, as interests or motives can change. Furthermore, there is always a cost-benefit calculation by the imposer that can influence the motive (p. 57).

Solidarity is one of the foundations of (international) alliances, but it can also be part of a civil actor campaign against a regime. MacLean studies the Apartheid boycott driven by solidarity with the oppressed population, gaining legitimacy to the domestic audience of the imposer and as supportive of the 'national psychological well-being' p. 1842. MacLean proposes two criteria necessary to gain support for a boycott out of solidarity from the civil society. First, it must convince the audience of the potential imposers that the indigenous call is worthwhile and second there must be an attractive alternative (p. 1842). The role of civil actors is crucial in this motive for a boycott as there are often the first to demand more from their government (Crawford and Klotz, 1999, p. 266).

Symbolism

Doxey (1999) describes symbolism as 'gestures of disapproval' without a serious intent (p. 57). They provide public evidence of disapproval while abstaining from a boycott might send a signal of approval. Boycotts are motivated by symbolism and give according to MacLean (1999) a sense of morality and justice as well (p. 1839). Symbolism can further maintain a

positive image and reputation, relieving domestic pressure or inflicting symbolic revenge on the target (p. 1839).

Crawford and Klotz (1999) add a domestic dimension to this by arguing that boycotts driven by symbolism can only be perceived as successful when the ‘the symbolic and material costs of policies rise above a level that the targeted actor is willing to bear’ (p. 30). They further argue that symbolism can also work the other way around. This is when actors decide not to boycott a violator which gives a symbolic approval of a policy act (p. 224).

Signalling

Boycotts motivated by signalling are mainly driven to send a sign to the public of the imposer (Doxey, 1996, p. 57). They indicate disapproval but are also essential to satisfy the emotional needs of the sanctioner and its electorate. This is what MacLean (1999) considers as ‘relieving domestic pressure’ (p. 1839) by imposing sanctions on a norm violator.

Little (2011) further specifies signalling by adding that boycotts or sanctions driven by signalling are designed to send messages to various constituencies (p. 195). This can be a domestic or an international audience, as in the Rhodesia boycott in the 1960s and 1970s. For Crawford and Klotz (1999), signalling further stresses that the imposer is willing to ‘pay the cost of imposing boycotts’ (p. 28). This signal can be more important than the boycott effect (p. 28). They call this a ‘teaching method’ (p. 32).

Other scholars

Besides the eight motives of Doxey (1996), some other motives are also derived from the literature. Black (1999) for example, agrees with Doxey that punishment is an important motive, but adds the delegitimation of a political regime or a precedent for other actors to pave way for social change can be motives as well (p. 214). Sorek (2021) also argues this by describing delegitimation as a crucial motive for a boycott (p. 2). He studies this by analysing the public

opinion in Israel towards sensitive domestic and international policies. Edelman (2015) suggests that calls for boycotts can be driven by a feeling of revenge as well. This was according to him the case with the 1984 Olympic boycott by the Soviet block after the West boycotted the 1980s Olympics.

Booth (2003) makes an essential contribution by stating that the motives of boycotts can change over the years. He uses the Apartheid boycott as an example to claim that the objectives changed from deradicalising sports into a neutral environment, to isolating the country and its athletes, to policy and regime change (p. 477). Little (2011) observes a similar shift from ‘the removal of racial discrimination’ (compliance) to isolation and destabilisation of the regime (p. 195).

2.2. Literature Gap

The literature review clarifies that there are significant differences between the general (economic) theory and the application to sports. Boycotts can occur in various forms, ranging from strategic boycotts, such as economic sanctions to cultural boycotts (e.g. cancelling performances from artists from a country). Sports boycotts – part of cultural boycotts – must be seen according to Crawford and Klotz (1999) as a mild form of a boycott with fewer consequences.

The literature review shows the importance of Doxey’s (1996) theory on sanctions and boycotts. Her eight motives can explain the rationale behind most academic approaches to boycotts. While her model is mainly used to study consumer boycotts or boycotts initiated by civil actors, many scholars use Doxey’s approach to study sports boycotts.

Scholars who study sports boycotts mainly engage in single case studies applying Doxey’s (1996) theory inductively. This is what Little (2011) did in his study about the Apartheid boycott. They observe patterns and use the motives of Doxey to label this.

Other scholars such as Booth (2003) conduct an empirical study that is not using an existing theory. The motives derived from these case studies can however be helpful. For example, policy change (coming from Booth) is not discussed as the motive in one of the economic models. The same goes for Black (1999) who finds that delegitimising a political regime can be a reason to call for a boycott. Both are not part of Doxey's (1996) economic model but might be able to explain several sports boycotts.

To sum up, Doxey's (1996) theory has been used frequently to study the motives behind sports boycotts in an inductive way. However, applying her model to multiple cases deductively has not been done before. Doxey's motives may not be all suitable for studying the motives of sports boycotts. Following Little (2011), the most relevant motives of Doxey's selection to study sports boycotts are punishment, destabilisation, solidarity and symbolism (p. 195). Based on the literature review, this thesis adds policy change (coming from Booth, 2003) and delegitimation (coming from Black, 1999).

3. Theoretical Approach

The theoretical chapter describes the theory and the critical concepts of this thesis. This section further defines the six different explanations for a boycott based on the economic model of Doxey (1996) and the additions of Black (1999) and Booth (2003) as discussed before. They represent the six different theoretical expectations that this thesis tests. Even though all motives come from the economic school, some might be more realistic as a motive for sports boycotts than others. As mentioned, sports boycotts must be seen as the ‘mildest’ form of sanctions (Crawford & Klotz, 1999, p. 195). Therefore, it is more plausible that imposing sanctions is motivated by symbolism or as a soft punishment.

3.1. Conceptualisation

Sports boycotts are conceptualised following Chhichhia (2008) as the weapon of choice for an actor signalling disapproval or taking action against regimes or political systems they disapprove via sports (p. 1). They are powerful since they impose costs (e.g. no participation or reputational damage) on the targeted actor, but can have various underlying motives including those that this chapter discusses.

3.2. Theory

The theory that will be tested is derived from the economic model from Doxey (1996) and the applications of Black (1999) and Booth (2003). The literature review distinguishes six different motives that are mutually exclusive and can be applied or are applied to sports boycotts. These are policy change, punishment, destabilisation, solidarity, symbolism and delegitimising.

3.2.1. Policy Change

Policy change as the motive for a call for a sports boycott is derived from Booth’s (2003) paper on the Apartheid boycott. For him, a policy change by creating a new (sporting) structure was

the main driver behind the call for a sports boycott during the late 1980s (p. 477). In other words, calling for a sports boycott can be driven by a wish to enforce changes in the structures of an event or a country. These motives can be mentioned explicitly or are implicit goals.

The apartheid boycott was according to Booth (2003) an explicit example where the openly stated motive for an extension and deepening of the boycott changed from deradicalisation and isolation to aiming for abandoning Apartheid and changing the entire society (including the sports infrastructure) to a 'post-Apartheid society' (p. 477). Therefore, this leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: *The call for a boycott aims to change a policy*

3.2.2. Punishment

A call for a boycott can occur as a reaction to a political or sports-related event. When actors find the action unacceptable, they can try to punish them by boycotting their athletes and events. A boycott call can be driven by punishment for an act of wrongdoing (Black, 1999, p. 219). This is mainly effective when the targeted actor suffers 'an acute sense of pain and loss on their account (p. 219).' Punishment can also be seen as an encouragement for actors who oppose the wrongdoers. Punishment can only be the motive when the organiser is hosting the event or when athletes are banned from an event. According to Little (2011), the boycott of the 1980 Olympics was an example of a punishment for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (p. 195). Therefore, this leads to the following hypothesis:

H2: *Punishment is the main driver for the boycott call*

3.2.3. Destabilisation

Destabilisation is used as a tool to put pressure on a political regime. Sports can be used to isolate a nation on a different level than the political level. It is expected to create internal

pressure on a regime since sports is vital for many constituents. Doxey (1996) describes how a boycott influences internal stability and might even be a threat to sovereignty (p. 56). Destabilisation often occurs when the call for a boycott comes from a big group of actors (p. 56). An example is the Apartheid boycott, where the regime was further pressured and isolated by boycotting South-African teams and athletes (Little, 2011, p. 195). Therefore, this leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: *Destabilisation is the primary driver of the call for a boycott*

3.2.4. Solidarity

Boycotts can be a sign of solidarity to a disadvantaged third actor. By calling for a boycott an actor shows that they disagree with the actions of the other. Calling for a boycott to show solidarity is according to Doxey (1996) a 'quite powerful tool, especially on the rhetorical level' (p. 56-57). Solidarity is something that cannot be taken for granted, as other actors might have different motives to not call for a boycott (p. 57). Solidarity on the rhetorical level has few consequences, making it relatively easy to conduct. It might therefore be a popular motive.

An example of a boycott to show solidarity is the 1956 Olympic Games boycott by the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland to show their dissatisfaction with the Soviet repression of the Hungarian Revolution. However, this boycott was however not shared by other countries, which limited the solidarity with Hungary. Giving a boycott out of solidarity an actual weight can be combined with a desire to punish. Therefore this leads to the following hypothesis:

H4: *Showing solidarity is the primary driver to call for a boycott*

3.2.5. Symbolism

Demanding a boycott is sometimes only symbolic as it does not have substantial effects. An example is the call of Norway's Green Party to boycott the 2022 FIFA world cup, while Norway

did not even qualify for the tournament (Capar, 2021). Symbolism overlaps with signalling, as the call for a boycott is mainly sent as a signal to other actors. This can be either a strong or a weak signal. For example, Little (2011) describes how the Rhodesian boycott between 1965 and 1979 was mainly a case of the British government sending a signal to other Commonwealth countries to stay away from blunt actions (p. 195). Symbolism must therefore be seen as a tool to send a message to the outside world, which is a relatively easy step to conduct. Therefore, this leads to the following hypothesis:

H5: The call for a boycott is a symbolic or signalling action

3.2.6. Delegitimising

A call for a sports boycott can be seen as an attempt to delegitimise the authority of a regime. By boycotting, sports can no longer be used for sportswashing and it can pave the way for social changes (Black, 1999, p. 222). Delegitimising can only be done to a country that organises an event or to athletes from that country since they otherwise would not feel the consequences. It must be perceived as the last attempt when all other options are exhausted and is not likely to happen very frequently.

According to Black (1999), delegitimising combines promoting social change with punishments (p. 222). He further describes how the Apartheid boycott was used as a tool to ‘delegitimise the hegemony of the white state’ (p. 214). He claims that this was a sensitive point for the Apartheid regime. Delegitimising must be considered one of the toughest options as the targeted actor is excluded from regular interactions. Therefore this leads to the following hypothesis:

H6: The boycott caller aims to delegitimise a country or actor

4. Research Design

To answer the research question, this thesis uses a deductive method by testing the economic model of Doxey (1996) combined with additions from Black (1999) and Booth (2003). To do so, discourse analysis is conducted by analysing empirical articles from six different authoritative English-writing news outlets to find a deeper explanation and justifications for boycott calls.

4.1. Case Selection

Every call for a sports boycott occurs under different circumstances. Some are part of a broader political game, while others are just a matter of revenge for previous actions. This makes it hard to conduct a study with results that apply to all sports boycotts. To overcome this problem, all sports boycotts in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that can be found in the online archives of six different English-speaking news outlets are analysed. By using the Proquest database, Web of Science, Google and openly available archives all relevant articles from BBC, the New York Times, Al Jazeera, Reuters, the Guardian and the Washington Post are being analysed. At least two sources from different platforms must be available to be considered a relevant case. This leads to the following list of cases:

Figure 1: Overview of the studied cases

Event/ Country	Initiative	Other participants
Olympic Games 1936	US trade unions and Jewish and Catholic groups	None
Olympic Games 1956	Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland.	None
Olympic Games 1956	Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon	Cambodia
Olympic Games 1956	The head of the organising committee wanted to boycott Israel	None
FIFA World Cup 1966	Sub-Saharan African states	None

Olympic Games 1968	Olympic Human Rights Project	None
Rhodesia at the 1972 Olympics	United Kingdom	International Olympic Committee
Chile 1973	Soviet Union	None
Israel 1974	Arab countries	None
Olympic Games 1976	Taiwan	None
New Zealand at the 1976 Olympics	28 Asian and African countries	None
South Africa 1980	United Nations	The entire world
Olympic Games 1980	Russian dissident Sakharov	65 Nations
Olympic Games 1984	Soviet Union	14 Nations
Olympic Games 1988	North Korea	Cuba and Ethiopia
Zimbabwe 2003	England	Cricket association
UEFA under-21 Championship 2013	BDS Movement	None
FIFA World Cup every two years 2021	UEFA	In progress
Beach volleyball World Tour in Doha 2021	German players Karla Borger and Julia Sude	None
Olympic Games 2022	Civil actors	Only diplomats from Western countries
FIFA World Cup 2022	Football club Tromso IL	Norwegian football clubs

Given that the circumstances and the scope under which the call for a boycott occurs vary, the cases can be considered as a diverse case selection (Gerring & Seawright, 2008, p. 297) as they try to represent the total variation of the population. In that sense, they produce enough variation to produce generalisable outcomes (p. 297).

Figure 1 shows that the character of boycotts has changed over the years. Whereas the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were times of prominent boycotts of multiple countries in a reaction to international events, the last twenty years must be seen as the time of public calls for a sports boycott. The strength of these demands often depends on the amount of media attention it receives. This recent shift might be explained by the increased globalisation and the rise of social media. In other words: traditional media such as television and newspapers are no longer needed for petitions or investigations, making reaching a big audience much more accessible.

4.2. Discourse Analysis

To have a complete overview of the motives behind all sports boycotts, discourse analysis is conducted. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2011), this is a method to find the ‘relations between discourse and social and cultural developments’ (p. 2). Furthermore, it provides a general framework for ‘problem-oriented social research’ (Wodak, 2008, p. 2). A discourse analysis focuses on the relationships between different texts or the context of a situation. A benefit of conducting a discourse analysis over a content analysis is according to Wodak its ability to ‘focus on larger units than isolated words and sentences’ (p. 3).

This study conducts a textual analysis as guided by Creswell (2013). This method has the following steps:

1. Read all texts and make notes to capture initial impressions and early analysis;
2. Organise the data by themes and relevance, reflecting a deductive approach;
3. Read the data multiple times to identify as many patterns as possible;
4. Form preliminary groups based on emerging themes without applying preconceived categories, reflecting an inductive approach;
5. Analyse the themes following existing research to connect the findings to the larger meaning of the data and derive implications.

Interpretation is crucial in conducting discourse analysis. To avoid arbitrary classifications, a framework based on the definitions of chapter 3 is created. This sets the range in which the motives can fall. Figure 2 gives some examples of this.

Figure 2: Coding Frame

<i>Motive</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Policy change	‘CAF decided to boycott the 1966 World Cup unless Africa was given a place of its own’ (BBC, 2016)
Punishment	‘Talk that Britain, France and Israel would be banned from the Olympic Games because of their warlike operations in the Middle East’ (The Washington Post, 1956)
Destabilisation	‘Objections by black athletes from other African nations to Rhodesia's participation in the Olympics because of that country's racial policies (...) represented a sense of unity that is likely to increase as black nationalism begins to assert itself politically on the African continent against some white regimes’ (Amdur, 1972)
Solidarity	‘The Lebanese Olympic Committee has withdrawn its participants from the Olympic Games at Melbourne in solidarity with Egypt’ (The New York Times, 1956)
Symbolism	‘North Korea has said that it will boycott the Olympics unless it is allowed to co-host the Games, but the IOC says the proposal is out of question and unrealistic’ (Breen, 1988)
Delegitimising	‘South Africa has been banned from Olympic competition because of the racial apartheid system practised in that nation’ (Solomon & Barnes, 1981)

4.3. Data Selection

Empirical articles from the six new platforms are analysed to conduct a reliable discourse analysis for any of the twenty-one sports boycotts. These authoritative outlets are BBC, the New York Times, Al Jazeera, Reuters, the Guardian and the Washington Post. Articles are

being searched by extensive searches in the Proquest database, Web of Science, Google and via historical achieves using keywords such as “Boycott”, “Sports”, the year, event and news platform.

Because not all news outlets have easily accessible archives or were founded only recently (Al Jazeera emerged only in 1996), there might be a bias towards one or two platforms. By using multiple search tools, there is tried to find as many articles as possible. Another criterion at least two sources from different platforms must be included in the list. In total 79 articles are being analysed. A complete list of all used literature can be found in Appendix A.

Another problem might be the Western bias of the platforms. Except for Al Jazeera, all outlets are English or American which might lead to a Western bias. Therefore it is crucial that only factual articles specifically about the event are chosen and the articles from the opinion section are excluded. To ensure that the research method of this thesis can be verified or replicated it is enviable that the sources are in English and easily accessible.

5. Analysis

This chapter discusses the outcomes of the discourse analysis. The most important results are being discussed and the hypotheses are being confirmed or declined. Figure 3 below summarises the outcomes of the discourse analysis.

Figure 3: Frequency table boycott motives

Motive	Frequency
Policy change	###
Punishment	####
Destabilisation	
Solidarity	### ##
Symbolism	
Delegitimising	### ##

5.1. Policy Change

A change of policy was described in the theory section as the desire to enforce structural changes in either an event or a country. This could occur implicit or explicit. The data shows that policy change is an often occurring motive for a boycott.

Policy change mainly occurs as a reaction to (perceived) unfair rules or new policies that disadvantage the actor that calls for a boycott. The call for a boycott is therefore used to demand significant changes. In 1966 for example, Sub-Saharan African countries demanded that FIFA would allocate more places at the World Cup. By calling it ‘unfair’, the African countries decided to boycott the World Cup unless it was given a place of its own (BBC, 2016, p. 3). This was also the case with North Korea which demanded to become co-host of the Seoul Olympics.

It is interesting to see that policy change has a ‘pure’ sportive aim in most cases, whereas most other motives are part of a bigger political game. Except for the Olympic Human Rights Project (BBC, 1968) before the 1968 Olympics, which linked the participation of Black American athletes to the societal civil rights movement in the US, other cases demand a change of policy on sportive grounds.

In contrast to what the theory expects, all seven cases in which policy change is the main driver for a boycott are reasonably explicit in their demands. Only the ambiguous regime of North Korea demanded changes shortly before the 1988 Olympics in Seoul which were unrealistic and ambiguous to observers (Philips, 1988). Breen (1988) observes that these demands were a tool to put pressure on their South Korean rival, to enforce concessions on other (political) points.

5.2. Punishment

According to the theory, punishment only is the primary motive when the organiser is hosting the event or when athletes are banned from the event. When this is not the case, it is more of a symbolic act. Punishment motivated eight different cases. A well-known example of punishment was the boycott of the 1980 Olympics as a punishment for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Urged by various Soviet dissidents who considered a Western boycott as ‘a staggering jolt to the leadership’ to help the population realise that the government was not always telling the truth the boycott was joined by 65 nations (Getler, 1980).

Punishment further explains the call for a boycott by the head of the Olympic Committee in 1956. Zervigon (2021) describes how the war between Egypt (which eventually boycotted the Games) and Israel led to various calls to ban the aggressor (Israel) from the Olympics because of their ‘aggressive role in the conflict’ (p. 3).

The data section further shows that punishment is often combined with solidarity or delegitimising. This can be explained by Doxey's (1996) claim that solidarity is often not enough and without any consequences and therefore is likely to be combined with a punishment (p. 57).

5.3. Destabilisation

Doxey (1996) explains destabilisation as a tool to put pressure on a regime. Sports can help achieve this since many constituents perceive this as necessary. Destabilisation can only occur when a big group of actors calls for a boycott at the same time. This perhaps explains why destabilisation only occurred in two quite similar cases.

One is the Apartheid boycott, where the regime was further pressured and isolated by boycotting South-African teams and athletes (Little, 2011, p. 195). By putting all international athletes on a so-called 'blacklist' the initiators of the boycott hoped to isolate the South African society and to create pressure from within the regime to enforce changes (Rodda, 1981).

The other case where destabilisation is the motive is the boycott before the 1968 Olympics when the United Kingdom (UK) together with Black athletes from African countries demanded to expel Rhodesia from the Games. According to Amdur (1972), this was the start of 'black nationalism to assert itself politically on the African continent' (p. 4). Eventually, the Rhodesian regime faced internal pressure to change its policies.

An explanation why this type of boycott does not occur more frequently is the necessity of a big group of countries to join the boycott. This is something that civil actors without much formal power cannot achieve. Therefore, there are simply not in the position to destabilise a regime or event. Other motives are easier to accomplish, leaving destabilisation as a long-term goal.

5.4. Solidarity

Following the expectations of Doxey (1996) solidarity is the most critical motive to call for a boycott (together with delegitimising). Solidarity often occurs when the organising country commits severe human rights violations against their people or a third actor. Crawford and Klotz (1999) describe this as the ‘rally round the flag’ motive (p. 206). The role of civil actors is crucial in this motive as they often start a call for a boycott (p. 266).

Zervigon (2021) describes how the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland boycotted the 1956 Olympics to ‘show support for Hungary’ after the brutal Soviet invasion (p. 4). Remarkably, Hungary did participate in the Games and even won from the Soviet Union in a remarkable water polo game (the ‘Blood in the water’ game). Iraq, Lebanon and Cambodia boycotted the same event as a reaction to the invasion of the Suez canal to show their solidarity with Egypt. A boycott can also occur when a country wants to be solidary with the victims of human rights violating regimes. This was for example the case in Chile (1973) when the USSR refused to play and the boycott by Arab countries of Israel for their behaviour towards the Palestine people. Since ISAs often penalise withdrawing from events, solidarity with a third party has been less prevalent in the last years. Another problem with being solidary is that other athletes often suffer as well. This makes the costs of boycotting much higher.

It is important to remember that although solidarity is vital at the rhetorical level it should never be taken for granted as other motives might prevail in the future (Doxey, p. 57). In other words, solidarity by boycotting can change when other motives prevail. As predicted in the theory section, solidarity often goes together with punishment as the motive. In most cases, solidarity is not enough and the organiser must – according to the actor calling for a boycott – be punished as well. An example is the boycott of the Western world of the 1980 Olympics. With calls from many different actors, but with a deciding role for the Russian dissident Sakharov, the US and later the Western world decided to boycott the Games. Getler (1980) describes it as a

‘punishment in a specific, concrete and forceful way for its invasion of Afghanistan’ and a sign of solidarity for the Afghan people who are ‘heading into a frightening era of repression’ (p. 1).

Another example of this combination is the call to boycott the FIFA world cup in Qatar after allegations of corruption and exploitation of migrant workers (Al Jazeera, 2021). According to Lloyd (2021), this was a combination of punishment, solidarity and symbolism. Nordic football club Tromso IL and NGOs wanted to boycott the tournament because of the treatment of migrant workers and were hoping to enforce changes in the Qatari system. However, this was a symbolic move as well since Norway had not qualified themselves since 2000. Moreover, Lloyd describes that Tromso IL itself found it a mainly symbolic move as well by stating ‘we didn’t think we could change the World Cup in Qatar (...) it was about making ourselves sleep good at night’ (p. 2).

5.5. Symbolism

Despite being perceived in the theory as a relatively low-effecting boycott and therefore often occurring boycott, only four cases can be seen as symbolic. Little (2011) describes symbolism as a diplomatic tool to send messages to a wide range of actors (p. 195).

Demanding a boycott is sometimes only symbolic as it does not have substantial effects. An example is when the North Korean regime in 1988 demanded impossible concessions from the South Korean organisation which was according to Radchenko (2012) a manner to ‘manoeuvre themselves into the corner in the botched-up negotiations with South Korea and the IOC before the Games’ (p. 1244). The North Korean leadership was not seriously interested in negotiations but wanted to make a symbolic statement by boycotting the Games eventually.

Another symbolic call for a boycott is the recent Scandinavian debate about whether their national teams should or should not participate in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. In Norway, a football club – Tromso IL – initiated an extraordinary congress on whether the Norwegian team

should participate in the World Cup (Al Jazeera, 2021). However, this vote was slightly symbolic since Norway had not qualified since 2000 and was not at a qualifying spot at the moment of the boycott. Eventually, the congress decided to make various statements but to renounce a boycott.

Symbolism further occurred when female beach volleyball players were required to wear specific clothes, whereas male players could wear whatever they liked. They decided to make a statement by refusing to play (German beach volleyball players Borger & Sude). This can be seen as symbolic since the beach volleyballers wanted to signal to the world and the organisation to question if it is 'necessary to hold a tournament there at all' (Deutsche Welle, 2021, p. 2).

5.6. Delegitimising

According to the theory, delegitimising can only be done to a country that organises an event or to athletes from that country since they otherwise would not feel the consequences. Delegitimising is a very political statement that is only used in the cases where ethnic groups were marginalised, imprisoned or murdered. Contrary to what the theory expected, delegitimising happened frequently.

An example is the boycott of Zimbabwe in 2003 where the British cricket team refused to play because of the 'human rights abuses by Robert Mugabe's regime and a looming famine' (Kelso, 2003). Dain and Calder (2007) add that it is 'unimaginable to play cricket, eat cucumber sandwiches and shake hands with those responsible for seven million people starving' (p. 98).

The same is the case with the New Zealand rugby team that played in South Africa under the apartheid, undermining the global boycott. By calling to boycott New Zealand at the 1976 Olympics, twenty-eight Asian and African countries tried delegitimising this trip and keeping the boycott in place.

Despite its significant political value, delegitimising happened not only in the past. The Olympics in China in 2022 was also being diplomatically boycotted by various Western countries because of the ‘ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses’ (Ni & Greve, 2021). This shows that actors still dare to use this heavy diplomatic tool, although diplomatic boycotts are different from expelling a country as has happened in the past.

6. Conclusion

Calls for sports boycotts are getting more and more attention from a bigger (Western) public. It remains however often ambiguous what the drivers behind such a call are. Not many scholars have touched upon a general theory testing study on sports boycotts. This thesis added to the literature an approach that tested multiple motives for a boycott based on Doxey's (1996) economic model with additions from Black (1999) and Booth (2003).

To do so, this thesis systematically studied twenty-one examples of sports boycotts, ranging from the boycott in 1956 by the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland as a reaction to the Soviet repression of the Hungarian Revolution to the so-called bikini boycott in 2021 of two German beach volleyballers who refused to play in shirt and long-shirt. Only articles from six authoritative English speaking news outlets were used to avoid bias as much as possible.

The discourse analysis did not find a single motive to explain calls for sports boycotts. While the theory predicted that (soft) punishments and symbolism would be popular and straightforward motives to call for a boycott, the results were different. In fact, no single motive can account for most of the boycotts.

The analysis showed that there are different layers of boycotts in which sports is often an 'easy' first step, which can explain the lack of a single consistent outcome. When the boycott is purely based on sportive grounds and has no political aspect, policy change or punishment are likely to be the main motives. They occurred relatively often in cases such as the 1966 boycott of African countries in response to FIFA's refusal to allocate more places for the World Cup.

When the sports boycott was part of a more significant political struggle, solidarity and delegitimising were the main drivers. Despite the often-heard phrase that sports and politics must be separated, boycotts are often reactions and signs of solidarity with countries or people that face war or repression from their government. Calling to be solidary is often a difficult

decision, in which the athletes suffer the most. This has made solidarity less popular and more costly in the past years. Delegitimising often occurs in combination with another motive to make the signal stronger. It can only be a motive when the targeted actor is organising an event or athletes are banned and mainly occurs in cases where ethnic groups were marginalised, imprisoned or murdered. Contrary to what the theory expected, delegitimising happened frequently.

It is however important to stress that sports boycotts are very relevant. While an economic boycott is often a long-term project with very complicated rules and many exceptions, sports boycotts are straightforward with instant results. Therefore, if an actor engages in a sports boycott they do that immediately, making them very effective in signalling and on the symbolic level.

It is essential to acknowledge that this thesis has several weaknesses. First, it is important to acknowledge that sports boycotts are often seen as a ‘milder’ form since political or economic boycotts have more profound implications (Crawford & Klotz, 1999, p. 195). Sports boycotts therefore can be seen as a signal to prevent further wrongdoing. This means that sports boycotts are often part of a bigger political game and that the real motive is hidden.

Moreover, the recent invasion of Russia in Ukraine and the following sports boycott are not being discussed in this thesis because of their recent emergence. Circumstances might change while writing the thesis and academic sources might be absent or incomplete. This case is however very suitable for follow-up studies.

Another research approach might be only using the eight motives of Doxey (1996) without modifying them towards sports. This might lead to even more division, given Doxey’s narrow categories. Therefore, replicating the research with empirical evidence from other news outlets might be a more interesting direction.

Overall, there can be said that there is no single explanation for sports boycotts has been found. This does however not make sports boycotts irrelevant. They often have an immediate effect and are therefore very effective. Especially as a reaction to unexpected events such as war, sports boycotts are an excellent tool to punish, signal or enforce policy changes.

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Appendix A

Figure 4: Overview of sources for the discourse analysis

Event/ Country	Sources	News-outlet	Motive	Citation
Olympic Games 1936	Beckman (2006)	The Guardian	Punishment	‘It is now up to Germany to overcome the presumption against it that it has been guilty of horrible and atrocious persecution of the Jews (The New York Times, 1935)’
	Frommer (2021)	The Washington Post	Solidarity	
	Reuters (2008)	Reuters		
	The New York Times (1935)	The New York Times		
Olympic Games 1956	Amdur (1980)	The New York Times	Solidarity	‘The Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland objected to the Soviet invasion of Hungary and withdrew (Scivener, 2008)’
	The Guardian (1980)	The Guardian		
	Scivener (2008)	BBC		
	Reuters (2008)	Reuters		
	Von Drehle (2000)	The Washington Post		
Olympic Games 1956	Von Drehle (2000)	The Washington Post	Solidarity	‘The Lebanese Olympic Committee has withdrawn its participants from the Olympic Games at Melbourne in solidarity with Egypt (The New York Times, 1956)’
	Reuters (2008)	Reuters		

	Scrivener (2008)	BBC		
	The New York Times (1956)	The New York Times		
Olympic Games 1956	The Washington Post (1956)	The Washington Post	Punishment	'Talk that Britain, France and Israel would be banned from the Olympic Games because of their warlike operations in the Middle East (The Washington Post, 1956)'
	The New York Times (1954)	The New York Times		
FIFA World Cup 1966	BBC (2016)	BBC	Policy change	'CAF decided to boycott the 1966 World Cup unless Africa was given a place of its own (BBC, 2016)'
	Doyle (2010)	The Guardian		
Olympic Games 1968	Garrison (1968)	The New York Times	Policy change	'Appealed to all black American athletes to boycott the games to demonstrate to the world that the civil rights movement in the US had not gone far enough (BBC, 1968)'
	Jackson (2018)	The Washington Post		
	BBC (1968)	BBC		
Rhodesia at the 1972 Olympics	Amdur (1972)	The New York Times	Delegitimising Destabilisation	'Objections by black athletes from other African nations to Rhodesia's participation in the Olympics because of that country's racial policies (...) represented a sense of unity that is likely to increase as black nationalism begins to assert itself politically on the African continent against some white regimes (Amdur, 1972)'
	Sikes (2021)	The Washington Post	Symbolism	
	Keatley (1972)	The Guardian		
	BBC (1972)	BBC		

Chile 1973	Lusinchi (1973) The Guardian (1973) BBC (2018)	The New York Times The Guardian BBC	Solidarity	‘But Moscow balked at playing in a stadium that, it said, had been turned by the military junta into an arena of torture and execution of patriots (Lusinchi, 1973)’
Israel 1974	Cohen (1974) Beaumont (2015)	The New York Times The Guardian	Policy change Solidarity	‘‘For years, I talked to anyone I could so that Israel would change its policy and be fair in how it treated Palestinian athletes (Beaumont, 2015)’
Olympic Games 1976	Cady (1976) The Guardian (1976) Ritchie (1981) BBC (1976) Westcott (2021)	The New York Times The Guardian The Washington Post BBC CNN	Policy change	‘Taiwan withdrew on the grounds that the Canadian government refused to allow her to compete under the name of the Republic of China (BBC, 1976)’
New Zealand at the 1976 Olympics	Simpson (1976) Cady (1976) Scrivener (2008) Reuters (2008)	The Guardian The New York Times BBC Reuters	Delegitimising Solidarity	‘More than 20 African nations boycotted the Montreal Summer Games over the participation of New Zealand athletes, after the country’s rugby team defied the United Nations to go on a controversial tour of apartheid South Africa (Westcott, 2021)’

	Westcott (2021)	CNN		
South Africa 1980	Rodda (1981) Amdur (1981) Solomon and Barnes (1981) Havely (2001)	The Guardian The New York Times The Washington Post CNN	Delegitimising Destabilisation Punishment	‘South Africa has been banned from Olympic competition because of the racial apartheid system practiced in that nation (Solomon & Barnes, 1981)’
Olympic Games 1980	Futterman (2020) Getler (1980) The Guardian (1980) Scrivener (2008) Reuters (2008) Havely (2001)	The New York Times The Washington Post The Guardian BBC Reuters CNN	Punishment Solidarity	‘President Jimmy Carter, who ordered the American boycott to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Futterman, 2020)’
Olympic Games 1984	Pick, Jackson and Reed (1984)	The Guardian The New York Times	Punishment	‘USSR claimed that the decision had been taken because of unwarranted political interference by the US government in preparations for the games and because of threats to the

	The New York Times (1984)	The Washington Post BBC Reuters CNN Reuters (2008) CNN (1984)		security of Soviet athletes and officials (Pick, Jackson & Reed, 1984)'
Olympic Games 1988	Janofsky (1988) Philips (1988) Breen (1988)	The New York Times The Washington Post The Guardian	Policy change Symbolism	'North Korea has said that it will boycott the Olympics unless it is allowed to co-host the Games, but the IOC says the proposal is out of question and unrealistic (Breen, 1988)'
Zimbabwe 2003	Kelso (2003) Hussain (2003)	The Guardian CNN	Delegitimising Punishment Solidarity	'To withdraw from the match because of human rights abuses by Robert Mugabe's regime and a looming famine (Kelso, 2003)'
UEFA under-21 Championship 2013	Montague (2013) McGreal (2012)	CNN The Guardian	Punishment Solidarity	'For much of the past year, campaign groups and famous names in soccer have called for a boycott of the U21 tournament due to Israel's treatment of Palestinians (Montague, 2013)'
FIFA World Cup every	Evans (2021)	Reuters	Policy change	'To play every summer a one-month tournament, for the players it's a killer (Evans, 2021)'

two years	Panja	The Washington		
2021	(2022)	Post		
	Ingle	The Guardian		
	(2021)			
	Smith	The New York		
	(2021)	Times		
Beach	The	The Guardian	Delegitimising	‘Karla Borger and Julia Sude have said they will boycott a tournament in Qatar because it is the only country where players are forbidden from wearing bikinis on court (The Guardian, 2021)’
volleyball	Guardian		Policy change	
World Tour in	(2021)		Symbolism	
Doha 2021	Kostka	The Washington		
	(2021)	Post		
Olympic	Ni and	The Guardian	Delegitimising	‘The Biden administration will not send any diplomatic or official representation to the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games, given the PRC’s ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses (Ni & Greve, 2021)’
Games	Greve		Solidarity	
2022	(2021)			
	Mather	The New York		
	(2022)	Times		
	Dichter	The Washington		
	(2021)	Post		
	BBC	BBC		
	(2022)			
	Reuters	Reuters		
	(2022)			
	Westcott	CNN		
	(2021)			

FIFA World Cup 2022	Al Jazeera (2021)	Al Jazeera	Punishment	‘Tromsø IL thinks it is time for football to stop and take a few steps back. We should think about the purpose of football and why so many love our sport. That corruption, modern-day slavery and a high number of workers’ deaths are the fundament to our most important tournament, the World Cup, is totally unacceptable (Melnæs, 2021)’
	Melnæs (2021)	The Guardian	Solidarity	
	Panja (2022)	The New York Times	Symbolism	
	Foxman (2022)	The Washington Post		
	Woodyatt (2021)	CNN		