

# Doped and disclosed

## *Anatomopolitics, biopower, and sovereignty in the Russian sports industry*

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**ABSTRACT.** In this article, we scrutinize a policy area in which the Russian government has had to react to negative publicity in the last few years, namely, the doping scandal surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. This scandal uncovered important aspects of Russia's vulnerability in the global sports milieu, yet so far, it has remained almost unnoticed in the literature on mega sports events in Russia. Our analysis is premised on the convergence of two types and techniques of control and regulation: anatomopolitics, which presupposes, in Michel Foucault's interpretation of the term, measures of control over individual bodies, and biopolitics, which refers to policy practices that target and concern the entire population. Their conflation in the Russian context results in a controversial effect: it strengthens relations of hegemony yet also exposes the sovereign power to the regulations of global sports organizations.

Key words: anatomopolitics, biopolitics, sovereignty, doping, Sochi winter Olympics

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In recent years, the use of doping in sports has become a contested political issue, extending into the fields of national sovereignty, international relations, and global governance. In this article, we scrutinize a policy area in which the Russian government has had to react to negative publicity in the last few years, namely, the doping scandal surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. This scandal uncovered important aspects of Russia's vulnerability in the global sports milieu, yet so far, it has remained almost unnoticed in the literature on mega sports events in Russia. The biggest doping scandal in sports history erupted in 2015, when the International Association of Athletics Federations banned the Russian Athletics Federation from participation in all international competitions under its aegis. Since then, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has issued a series of public reports revealing the large-scale government-supported system of doping in many sports in Russia. The international media has published eyewitness accounts accusing the Russian Sports Ministry and the Federal Security Service (FSB) of destroying proof of the positive doping tests of Russian athletes, evidence of the

widespread use of the performance-enhancing drug melatonin in Russian sport.

The ensuing debate went far beyond sports and touched on deeply political issues related to the nature of power and sovereignty. As a central part of its sanctions package implemented in November 2015, WADA canceled the membership of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) and put it under the supervision of the U.K. anti-doping organization. In July 2016, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided not to "organise or give patronage to any sports event or meeting in Russia" and to freeze "preparations for major events in Russia."<sup>1</sup> Within a few months of this decision, Russia was banned from a number of high-profile international competitions under the aegis of the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation, International Biathlon Union, International Skating Union, and International Ski Federation. Furthermore, Russia was expelled from the Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro and then was banned from partaking in the 2018 Winter Olympics.

As the scandal progressed, two Russian sports functionaries—the deputy sports minister, Yurii Nagornyykh, and an aide to the sports minister, Natalia Zhelanova—resigned, and dozens of Russian athletes eventually had to return their medals to the IOC. In order to have the sanctions lifted, the Kremlin was required to guarantee

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access for the international team of WADA-appointed experts to materials from the Moscow Anti-Doping Laboratory and to recognize the validity of accusations that the Russian government had created a state-protected system of doping among athletes (outlined in the so-called McLaren report). In September 2018, WADA agreed to lift sanctions against Russia on the condition that a double compromise was met: that by the autumn of 2018, Russia pledged to open to international inspection a significant part of the biomaterials that are of interest to WADA and to recognize the Samuel Schmidt report issued by the IOC, which provided evidence of doping among Russian athletes but refrained from directly claiming the complicity of the Russian government. At the end of December 2018, the head of RUSADA, Yuri Ganus, made a public appeal to President Vladimir Putin, informing Putin of Russia's failure to fulfill its commitments and, in an alarmist tone, warning of the further isolation of Russia in international sports organizations, including possible bans on participation in and hosting of major sporting events in the future.<sup>2</sup>

Against the backdrop of these dramatic developments, we premise our analysis on the convergence of two types and techniques of control and regulation: *anatomopolitics*, which presupposes, in Michel Foucault's original interpretation of the term, measures of control over individual bodies, and *biopolitics*, which refers to policy practices that target and concern the entire population. Their conflation in the current Russian context results in a controversial effect. On the one hand, the blending of anatomopolitics and biopolitics solidifies the "apparatus of domination ... to produce violent and totalizing effects."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the two regulatory mechanisms clearly clashed in the Russian debate on the doping scandal and the subsequent ban on Russia's participation in the 2018 Winter Olympics. As a result, the sovereign power was forced to maneuver and search for compromises with global sports organizations, thus exposing itself as an object of their regulatory policies rather than a sovereign subject on its own.

This article attempts to fill two important gaps in the scholarship on sports and politics. First, the bulk of the literature looks at post-mega-event dynamics from the vantage point of reaping the benefits of infrastructure development<sup>4</sup> and soft-power projection. Yet the case of Russia is indicative of negative externalities embedded in the hosting of mega sports events by countries that place sports at the core of their national identity politics. It is in

this context that we discuss the structural and large-scale problems with doping that exist in Russia. Second, in contrast to the predominant institutional analysis of the established anti-doping infrastructure,<sup>5</sup> we intend to investigate victimized and traumatized national narratives reacting to the global crusade against doping, with Russia being one of the most illuminating cases. In this respect, the novelty of our approach consists of conceptualizing the whole spectrum of doping-related power relations from the viewpoint of the Foucauldian vocabulary of biopolitics, a concept that is well known in many academic disciplines, and anatomopolitics, a much less explored notion that we consider appropriate and expedient for our analysis.

### The Soviet doping legacy and beyond

There is nothing specifically Russian about doping. It is one of the key characteristics of late modern civilization, which is obsessed with effectiveness and success; since the second half of the twentieth century, doping has been increasingly used in various professional communities—among truck drivers and miners, policemen and security guards, and students and academics. Testing and expanding the limits of the human body has been the goal of modern sports, which has developed hand in hand with modern science since the eighteenth century; professional sports, as well as the bodies of top athletes, have become the cutting edge of experimentation and the frontier of humanity. Indeed, as John Hoberman observed, "the use of hormones in high-level sports can be regarded as an avant-garde form of libertarian pharmacology, endorsed by the entire society and promoted by advertising from the pharmaceutical industry. This kind of pharmacological practice has become possible due to medics willing to reach beyond the traditional limits of the school medicine."<sup>6</sup>

There have been numerous well-known cases of doping in international sports, from the Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson at the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics and the entire Finnish cross-country skiing team at the 2001 World Championships in Lahti to multiple cases in cycling, including the 1998 Team Festina affair and the American cyclist Lance Armstrong, who was stripped of his seven Tour de France titles in 2012 for doping. However, none of these cases of doping, though they implicated teams or national sports federations, reached the level of government or national policy planning. The situation was quite different in the Soviet Union, as well as in the socialist states of East Germany, Romania, and

Cuba. Doping practices were deeply embedded in the Soviet sports system, as the Soviet Union conducted an extensive doping program. The structure of Russia's doping program and its problems with WADA can certainly be seen as legacies of a state sports system designed to achieve victories for the state through promoting doping and protecting dopers.

Doping in Russian sports has a long tradition, rooted in the rituals of symbolic dominance typical of the Russian state, in the politics of the Cold War, and in Soviet ideological doctrine. In the Soviet and other socialist sports machines, the emphasis was on creating effective bodies, or "laboratory athletes," for the glory of the state. To this end, the state turned the bodies of individual athletes into medicinal and pharmaceutical machines, eliminating their innate characteristics and, in some cases, even their sex (as happened with the East German shot-putter Heidi/Andreas Krieger, who transitioned from female to male through the extensive use of steroids and hormones).<sup>7</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s, international sport, and especially the Olympics, was regarded in the Soviet Union as a bourgeois excess. However, after World War II, as the Cold War unfolded and ideological controversy heightened in the early 1950s, the Soviets decided to send a team to the 1952 Olympic Games in Melbourne. From that time, the goal of the Soviet sports machine was to prove the superiority of socialism in international athletics arenas. Sports became an arm of the ideological apparatus, controlled directly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with the Olympics as a testing ground. The entire system of Soviet sports, previously organized for mass mobilization and war, was reorganized for the goals of international competition, to provide evidence of Soviet superiority. To these ends, the so-called Children and Youth Sports Schools of the Olympic Reserve carefully selected genetically gifted athletes and empowered them with state support and resources, launching them into the international arena as emissaries of socialism.<sup>8</sup>

The first evidence of Soviet doping can be traced to 1954, when John Ziegler, a physician for the U.S. weightlifting team at the World Championships in Vienna, learned from his Russian colleague that the Soviet team was using testosterone as a performance-enhancing drug (a confession that led to the development of oral anabolic steroids in the United States). With early advances in sports doping in the 1960s, from amphetamines to anabolic steroids, and mechanisms of detecting them still lacking, the Soviet sport machine adopted

new technologies and created laboratories for sports pharmaceuticals and testing, such as the Research Laboratory of Training Programming and Physiology of Sport Performance at the State Central Institute of Physical Culture in Moscow<sup>9</sup> and the Central Institute of Hematology and Transfusiology. Many of the country's elite athletes, including Olympic swimmers, cyclists, rowers, skiers, biathletes, and skaters in the 1976 and 1980 Olympic Games, were involved in their activities.

The results of this clandestine government-sponsored research were partially revealed in 1990 in an abbreviated doctoral dissertation report by Russian scientist Dr. Nikolay Volkov, who was awarded a gold medal by Russia's Sport Committee for his research. When the Soviet Union collapsed, many sports biochemists and pharmacologists, including Dr. Volkov and Dr. Sergei Portugalov, remained in their positions in Russian sports management. Volkov was chair of the Department of Sports Biochemistry at the State Central Institute of Physical Culture until his death in 2014.<sup>10</sup> Portugalov was deputy director of the Research Institute for Physical Culture and Sport until he was disqualified for life by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne in March 2017.<sup>11</sup>

One of the highest points in the history of doping in Soviet sport was the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics. As a result of lax doping controls at the time, there is little material evidence left, but according to British journalist Andrew Jennings, KGB officers made "tremendous efforts"<sup>12</sup> to destroy some doping tests to rescue Soviet athletes. Likewise, an Australian study reported in 1989, "There is hardly a medal winner at the Moscow Games, certainly not a gold medal winner, who is not on one sort of drug or another ... The Moscow Games might as well have been called the Chemists' Games."<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, some world records in track and field that were set during the 1980 Moscow Olympics still hold today.

Therefore, in the Soviet Union, sports became part of the large distributive economic machine. As Soviet sports scholars have observed, the industry of physical culture and sports is a "system of industrial production of a special sort" in which the objects of labor are the bodies of the athletes.<sup>14</sup> In exchange, the state provides the athletes with all the necessary equipment and training camps, relieves them of army duty and university exams, and pays a competitive salary, which is especially significant for younger athletes from unprivileged classes. The state issues annual plans for winning medals and fulfilling qualification norms (e.g., Master of Sport) and rewards those who meet the planned targets with

bonuses. To fulfill the medal plan, the sports federations, youth sports schools, trainers, and athletes would routinely use doping in competition, not just among themselves but also for state resources. Indeed, the state would even encourage the use of doping by Soviet athletes at international competitions as a way to maximize symbolic and ideological gains for the sovereign power.

The Soviet/Russian doping program can be seen not just as a political and ideological phenomenon but as part of the peculiar economic mechanism typical of the Russian state. In this traditional mechanism of the Russian economy, dating back to the times of medieval Muscovy, the state controls of all the nation's available resources (thus preventing the development of a market economy) and distributes them to various agents in exchange for service to the state. In biopolitical terms, the "resource" is the athlete's body, which is sacrificed to the higher ideological or symbolic goals of the state.

### Sovereignty á la Russe: Between anatomopolitics and biopolitics

The Russian doping program, having inherited many nefarious practices from Soviet times, culminated at the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. WADA appointed Professor Richard H. McLaren as an independent expert to investigate multiple cases of suspected drug use by Russian athletes and to verify the allegations made by the former director of the Moscow Anti-Doping Laboratory, Dr. Grigory Rodchenkov, published in the *New York Times* on May 12, 2016, and aired on *60 Minutes* on May 8, 2016. Eventually, McLaren's team established that the Russian sports authorities used doping manipulations during major sporting events. According to McLaren's report, more than 1,000 doped athletes acted not individually but as part of an organized infrastructure of doping that included, among other wrongdoing, the swapping of urine samples. In its key findings, McLaren's report disclosed an institutional conspiracy that between 2011 and 2015 involved athletes from Russian summer and winter sports, along with Russian officials from the Sports Ministry, RUSADA, Centre of Sport Preparation of Russian National Teams, and the Moscow Laboratory, along with the FSB.<sup>15</sup>

The doping scandal that isolated Russia from the international Olympic movement and imposed severe sanctions on it can be viewed through the double lens of anatomopolitics and biopolitics. Based on Foucault's interpretation, the two concepts are distinguished by the

level of analysis. Anatomopolitics is "centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities ... the parallel increases of its usefulness and its docility, [and] its integration into systems of efficient and economic control."<sup>16</sup> Biopolitics applies to the whole population as a collective object of regulatory practices of governance. Biopower regulates the body politic through special administrative practices that treat people as a biological, medicinal mass. Sports, as constructed in twentieth-century mass politics, is itself a form of biopolitics, sanitizing and mobilizing the population; deindividualizing, streamlining, and regulating bodies; and—in the cases of authoritarian regimes—preparing them for war.

Foucault mentioned a "great bipolar technology"<sup>17</sup> of power that combines anatomopolitics and biopolitical strategies that both individualize and totalize, with international sports being a lucid illustration of this merger. Against this background, it is important to look at how the individual bodies of athletes in Russia's hegemonic discourse become "nationalized," or biopolitically appropriated by the state. Sports seems to be one of those fields in which anatomopolitics and biopolitics merge to produce and shape strategies and relations of sovereign power. Sporting life is a domain of radical anatomopolitics in which all physical characteristics of the performing human bodies are absolutely essential for its fulfillment: weight, height, age, gender, muscular stamina, emotional drive, and so on. It is the individual bodies of athletes who train, exercise, compete, and win or lose. In the meantime, biopower in the domain of sports manifests as a productive force for establishing affective communities of fans and supporters who celebrate as collective biopolitical subjects and whose emotional investments are crucial for national identity making. This pivotal feature of biopower was, in particular, aesthetically visualized in an episode during the opening ceremony of the Sochi Olympics, with six youngsters wearing T-shirts bearing the letters R, U, S, S, I, A; when standing together, they symbolically incarnated Russia as the host country.<sup>18</sup>

The creation and functioning of the emotive biopolitical community is possible only on the basis of representational relations, in which sporting bodies play an anatomopolitical role of human signs and embodiments of the spirit of nationhood, with the concomitant connotations of pride, glory, and muscular force. These inclusive relations of symbolic representation are politically constructed and manipulated as one of the key functions of sovereign power and a condition of its existence.

Sports, therefore, appears to be a domain in which sovereignty constantly reasserts itself through sophisticated mechanisms of regulation and control over athletes' bodies. By losing their physical individuality, athletes become the ultimate objects of sovereign control, the corporeal threshold of state sovereignty, subject to the Schmittian *Ausnahmezustand*, "state of exception,"<sup>19</sup> and an investiture of Agambenian "bare life."<sup>20</sup> The logic of sovereign exception was fully applied at the 2014 Winter Olympics. Four years before Sochi, at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, the Russian team failed by national standards, ranking in 14th place in the medal standings; therefore, winning at Sochi became a matter of national pride and prestige. Thus, the Sochi Games became a pinnacle of President Putin's drive for sovereignty, as stressed by the unprecedented Olympic torch relay, which circumnavigated the entire perimeter of Russian territory (and even traveled to the North Pole and the International Space Station). The Games were supposed to stress Russia's role as a global superpower, and overall victory in the Olympic medal count was crucial.

Against that background, a space of exception was created for the Olympics in which neither national legislation nor even the Russian Constitution applied fully (homes were expropriated for Olympic needs without proper court decisions or just compensation, national parks were destroyed, etc.). Part of that space of exception was a carefully designed state-sponsored doping program for almost all athletes on the Olympic team, as testified to by the mastermind of this program, Dr. Grigory Rodchenkov, in the Oscar-winning documentary film *Icarus* by Brian Fogel and later verified by the McLaren report. Athletes' bodies were excepted both from normal medical practice and from international doping rules and codes of fair play. Even more importantly, the Sochi doping operation was conducted under the supervision of the FSB, a powerful heir to the feared Soviet-era KGB, itself a descendant of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission from the times of the 1917 October Revolution. The extraordinary and illegal doping operation, which included the nighttime swapping of the dirty urine samples of Russian athletes for clean ones through a hole in the lab wall masked by a cupboard, was the high point of the Sochi sovereign exception, defying rules of international sports governance.

It is crucial for our analysis to discern the constitutive controversies embedded in the Kremlin's reaction to the doping scandal. In one situation, Putin recognized the validity of the accusations against Russian athletes: "Our sports managers miscomprehended the topicality of this

issue, failed to update the corresponding lists (of illicit substances—Authors), and did not properly inform the athletes and coaches about the new WADA prohibitions. We don't need to politicize the whole story and look for conspiracies. We need to react systematically and in a timely fashion to the decisions of the international sports organizations."<sup>21</sup> Yet in other episodes—without directly negating the veracity of specific information leaked to the media—he adhered to a political interpretation of the accusations against Russia; thus, in one of his talks, he directly related the IOC ban on the Russian Olympic team in February 2018 to the presidential election in Russia in March 2018: "There are huge suspicions that all this was done to create an atmosphere of dissatisfaction among sports fans and athletes, and make the state responsible for wrongdoing."<sup>22</sup>

Against this background, an analysis of Putin's narrative identifies two possible reactions to the accusations against Russia in fostering the state-covered doping system. As a sovereign ruler, he could play the role of protector and defender of "our athletes," who were allegedly being persecuted and intentionally discriminated against by the malign West, which would be structurally homologous to the Russian world rhetoric of self-inflicted victimization. Or he could accept the liability and start developing new regimes of practices aimed at rectifying previous wrongdoing. Putin's predilection for the second option indirectly acknowledged that the ideology of national self-assertion faces limitations and ultimately has to give way to practices of governmentality conditioned by compliance with international standards and more autonomy to—at least formally—nonstate units.

However, the recognition of guilt engendered another controversy. On the one hand, the Russian government insists on individual responsibility for doping, arguing that it should be tackled on a case-by-case basis without overgeneralizations that might ostracize the whole nation.<sup>23</sup> The former sports minister, Vitaly Mutko, assumed that "there is no collective guilt in the doping issue, only individual ones."<sup>24</sup> He vehemently denied that the state could have been aware of individual athletes doping and, in the meantime, emotionally defended individual athletes: "How can one that easily accuse Sasha Tretyakov, who year after year devotes his whole life to sport, and deprive him of the gold medal? That would be against the whole philosophy of sport ... [Alexander] Legkov resided in Switzerland for four years, won the Tour de Ski, the World Cup and the Royal Marathon in Oslo—why would he need a 'cocktail' in Sochi?"<sup>24</sup>

Yet, on the other hand, the Russian official discourse framed the issue as affecting the whole nation, whose pride and self-esteem had been hurt. Before the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Sports Minister Mutko publicly apologized for individual doping cases in an attempt to avoid IOC sanctions against Russia.<sup>25</sup> The major controversy at this juncture was that the restoration of Russia's sovereignty in the domain of major international sports events necessitated, as an indispensable precondition, the acknowledgment and acceptance of the authority of WADA and the IOC. From the outset of the doping scandal, RUSADA claimed that it fully conformed to international standards of anti-doping control, committed its operation to the principles of independence and transparency, and recognized the rules and the timetable set by WADA.<sup>26</sup>

Feeling the impact of the doping crisis, the Russian government in a matter of months introduced changes to Russian legislation, including in the Labor Code and the Penal Code, and RUSADA developed and published its long-term strategy, along with All-Russian Anti-Doping Rules.<sup>27</sup> Yuri Ganus, RUSADA's director, confirmed that Russia's reformed anti-doping system fully corresponded with WADA's "Roadmap to Code Compliance,"<sup>28</sup> and he praised as highly useful the cooperation with many European anti-doping agencies in matters concerning education and sports ethics. The urgency applied in the introduction and implementation of all these measures attested to the determination of the Russian government to lift anti-doping sanctions and bring Russia back into the international Olympic movement, even if this strategy implied not only the painful admission of previous wrongdoing but also the acceptance of the higher authority of global sports organizations to set conditions and monitor the progress of their implementation.

### *Biopolitical sovereignty*

Russian biopolitical sovereignty is nourished by the general mood of denying the allegations widely spread across all mainstream media; as a popular meme has it, "everyone's doped but only Russians get caught."<sup>29</sup> The Russian public frequently cites well-known exceptions granted to Western athletes under medical prescriptions, such as to the U.S. tennis players Venus and Serena Williams or to many athletes on the Norwegian cross-country ski team who were diagnosed with asthma and taking anti-asthmatic drugs normally listed by WADA as banned substances.<sup>30</sup> For the Russian audience, this feeds into the popular theory of an anti-Russian global

conspiracy in which sports is one of many areas in which the West seeks to "humiliate" and "defeat" Russia. Generally speaking, taking offense at the outside world and reveling in self-pity is a peculiar form of Russian post-imperial trauma, a kind of Weimar *ressentiment*, which explains a lot in Russian foreign policy under Putin's leadership.<sup>31</sup> Paradoxically, the doping saga, rather than leading to calls to rectify the problems at home, fed into feelings of alleged injustice, transforming into a sense of isolation and confrontation. As a result, Russia reinforced the psychological base of sovereignty, using the doping affair to reaffirm the sense of injured national pride. The biopolitics of doping intersects with the geopolitics of Russian isolationism and postimperial accommodation.

A comic example of such "doping sovereignty" was the decision of the Moscow City Court in November 2018 to reject the ruling of the Court of Arbitration for Sport, which had stripped Russian bobsledder Alexander Zubkov of two Olympic gold medals for doping, and to reinstate Zubkov (who is also president of the Russian Bobsleigh Federation) as a "two-time Olympic champion on the territory of the Russian Federation." This absurd decision stresses the painful bifurcation that has caught Russia between national sovereignty and global sports governance and resulted in the grudging acceptance of international law, on the one hand, and hysterical outbursts of sovereign thinking, on the other.

The most important challenge to Russia's biopolitical sovereignty came from Russian athletes who participated in the 2018 Winter Olympics under the neutral IOC flag. In fact, they had to compete in their individual capacity, without exposing the traditional signs of belonging to a national identity (flags or anthems). Some nationalist commentators called these athletes "traitors," thus disconnecting them from the representation of nationhood. In particular, the Russian patriotic television channel TsarGrad ("city of tsars") put out several talk shows discussing the doping sanctions from a nationalist perspective, putting a premium on major sports events as elements of national prestige and self-esteem, rather than as playgrounds for competition between individual athletes. Pyotr Tolstoy, a television producer and member of the Civic Chamber, publicly spoke in favor of boycotting the 2018 Winter Olympics despite the interests of individual athletes, claiming, "We can wait as much as needed—what lies ahead of us is eternity."<sup>32</sup>

The most eloquent in this respect was an intervention by Alexandr Sherin, first deputy chair of the State Duma Committee on Defense, who took this argument even further: "The Olympics are not about individual athletes,

but about the whole country ... We can't afford to get out of the trench with our hands up. This is a matter of respect and national pride."<sup>33</sup> According to this narrative of biopolitical sovereignty, Russia should forbid its athletes to partake in the Winter Olympics—especially those recruited by the CSKA Army Club, who are formally employees of the Defense Ministry. Ramzan Kadyrov, president of Chechnya, publicly pledged that no athletes residing in this region in the North Caucasus would go to the Winter Olympics in their individual capacity.<sup>34</sup>

This type of straightforward narrative, grounded in the presumption of the dominance of sovereign biopower over anatomopolitics, is indicative in the sense of lucidly exposing a vast room that opens to political fantasies and conspiracy theories: “[Thomas] Bach, the German head of the IOC, has announced sanctions against Russia on the same day when Nazi troops launched their counter-offensive in close vicinity to Moscow during the Great Patriotic War ... We still need to find out where Bach's grandfather was at that time ... Obviously, with the assistance of Germany, Europe and the international community try to take revenge, with America standing behind all this.” With all his naive vernacular biopatriotism, Sherin articulated the prospect of turning sovereignty in sport into a parochial myth: “We ought to organize our own Olympic Games, invite our friends, produce medals twice as heavy as the regular ones, and then we'll see if our records would be higher.”

Like-minded social media posts were full of pejorative and disrespectful comments about the Russian team that went to the Winter Olympics without the national flag.<sup>35</sup> Those who did not go on principle were, on the contrary, dubbed “heroes.”<sup>36</sup> As for the athletes themselves, those who refused to perform under the IOC flag basically referred to “humiliation”: “I intended to win—but not a car or an apartment that the President might have awarded to me, this is of secondary importance; I was always thinking about higher values. I wanted to win for my country. I wanted to stand at the pedestal and see our national tricolour higher than all the other flags. I wanted to sing the anthem. I wanted my country to win the medal count, and contribute to that victory.”<sup>37</sup>

### *Sovereignty and through anatomopolitics*

Since the end of the Cold War, the structure of the Russian sports industry has dramatically changed, and the growing heterogeneity of athletic communities has pushed the mainstream discourse toward adopting anatomopolitical arguments as a second pillar of Russia's sporting

sovereignty. The biopolitical totality that we described in the previous section therefore decomposes into a series of individual or group-based professional strategies in which personal success and material benefits outweigh rhetorical commitments to the spirit of national identity and honor.

On a wider note, the Russian media discourse is usually very attentive to athletes who pursue their individual strategies and whose biopolitical connections to a Russian national identity are not unproblematic. One category is foreign-born naturalized athletes who received Russian citizenship and were included in the national teams through career considerations.<sup>38</sup> Although in most cases naturalization is accepted as a pragmatic, if not inevitable, solution to the shortage of local cadres, there are still critical voices who argue that it is basically second-rate players who wish to integrate with the Russian national teams. Besides, the argument goes, naturalized athletes, even having Russian passports, cannot be considered as “patriotic” as their Russia-born peers.<sup>39</sup> Other skeptical arguments assume that the growing number of naturalized athletes is an impediment to the development of national sporting traditions and that they are less attractive as objects of admiration for fans.<sup>40</sup> Apart from that, some sports experts deem that naturalized athletes might only exacerbate troubles with doping in Russia.<sup>41</sup> Another group is the Russian athletes who make their sporting careers abroad, again for pragmatic reasons. One example is Maria Sharapova, who failed a doping test in 2016, yet—in spite of the negative media coverage of the incident—remained a celebrity in Russia, though mostly because of her charity programs and media appearances.<sup>42</sup>

When it comes to the doping scandal, Russia's anatomopolitical strategy bifurcates into shaming individual athletes for using illicit substances and bemoaning those who are portrayed as victims of unfair treatment by global sporting institutions. Doped athletes are anatomopolitically detached from the national biopolitical community and are often said to have “shamed” the nation, and therefore must pay a price for their misbehavior. For instance, Vladimir Saraev, deputy head of the Expert Committee on Physical Culture and Sport at the Federation Council, blamed coaches and medical staff, along with the athletes themselves, for either negligence or intentional rule breaking.<sup>43</sup> After the eruption of the post-Sochi doping scandal, the Russian state reserved the right to retrieve funds that had been spent on coaching and other sporting expenses,<sup>44</sup> yet the government decided not to reclaim honoraria from athletes who had been exposed as engaging in doping.

Much more visible in the Russian mediascape are stories about the victims of WADA's allegedly biased and discriminatory policies. Most of the athletes accused of taking prohibited drugs do not accept their guilt, resorting to different arguments.<sup>45</sup> Not surprisingly, Russian media is replete with stories about former targets of doping accusations who have been conveniently employed by the government as sports officials, managers, and administrators.<sup>46</sup>

Emblematic in this respect was the 2016 NTV documentary titled "Doping WADA-measurer,"<sup>47</sup> which looks at the doping story not as a plot against Russia, but rather as a conflict between, on the one hand, the forces of totalitarian control and regulation exemplified by WADA and the IOC standing behind it, and, on the other, the athletes' bodies that are subjugated to unfair procedures. In this dichotomy, global sports organizations are portrayed as unduly imposing their malign and morally humiliating policies over the testing of athletes' bodies. This is ultimately detrimental for the individual careers of outstanding sport personalities—Russians and non-Russians—who were discriminated against and wrongly sanctioned for something they did not do.

The major distinction of Russia's anti-WADA discourse with the plethora of seemingly similar accusatory voices in the West<sup>48,49</sup> is the Russian interpretation, in which WADA is referred to not simply as a networked imperial entity that annuls athletes' dreams and makes them completely defenseless and unprotected, but also as part of the so-called "Anglo-Saxon world," which is inherently inimical to Russia. The documentary illustrates the pathos of this through a series of individual cases in which the main protagonists are the swimmer Yulia Efimova, a three-time Olympic medal winner, three-time champion of Europe, and four-time world champion; weightlifter Alexei Lovchev, European champion and World Championship medal winner; the world record holder in the walking race, Denis Nizhegorodov; three-time Olympic champion in cross-country skiing, Yulia Chepalova; and other sporting celebrities. Particularly emotional was the story of the Russian Paralympic team banned from the 2018 Paralympic Games.

However, the anatomopolitical view of the doping story, when it reached its rhetorical peak, transformed into yet another element of Russia's claims for sovereignty as the only political instrument that might protect individual athletes from the alleged Russophobia of WADA in particular and the West in general: "Russians are treated as suspects because they are the best," the narrative of the documentary suggests. This discourse ends up creating a

hyper-Schmittian world of triple exceptions, where WADA stands out by denying the presumption of innocence and adhering to the principles of collective will, makes exceptions for certain athletes by allowing them to use otherwise prohibited drugs for therapeutic reasons,<sup>50</sup> and ultimately makes an exception of Russia as the only country banned from the 2018 Olympics.

Yet—paradoxically—having reached its apex, the sovereignty-centric appeal loses its coherence and consistency. On the one hand, the fascination with sovereignty made the authors of the documentary refer positively to the U.S. experience of disregarding some of the regulations of international sports organizations, implying that Moscow officials should have behaved in a similar way. On the other hand, one of the interviewees toward the end of the film agreed with the cosmopolitan idea of the total rejection of national symbols in the Olympics, thus turning the Games into competitions between athletes, not states. This confusion reflects yet another controversy that stretches far beyond sports politics: it reveals the dislocated nature of the Russian hegemonic discourse and of the entire sovereign body politic. The whole fabric of Russian sovereignty is torn apart not only by the binary structure of its conceptualization from both anatomopolitical and biopolitical standpoints, but also by the insoluble conflict between striking deals with global sporting organizations and thus accepting their normative power, on the one hand, and reinvigorating Russia's sovereign authority over athletes and their bodies, on the other. Contradictions and struggles between these two strategies will be decisive factors in defining the compromised and incomplete sovereignty of Putin's regime.

## Conclusion

The Sochi doping scandal added to the emerging image of a "toxic Russia" that had become the dominant perception of the country on the international scene by 2018. (It is also worth noting that "toxic" was named as Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year 2018). The poisoning of the Russian ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury (which revived memories of the earlier poisoning of another ex-agent, Alexander Litvinenko), the armies of Russian trolls and bots disrupting social networks in the West, the "toxic" Russian assets in the West, and attempts by Russian oligarchs to corrupt the authorities (e.g., the allegations against Russian potash magnate Dmitry Rybolovlev in Monaco in November

2018), the Russian trace in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, and the Kremlin's support for President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, who has been using chemical weapons against his own people—all of these “toxic” episodes, combined with the fallout from the Sochi doping scandal, created the image of “dirty bodies” as part of Russia's hybrid warfare against the West.<sup>51</sup>

Since the whole story questioned Russia's credibility as the host of future major events, the Kremlin had to engage in public communication and could not afford to disregard what otherwise could have been dismissed as an unfriendly attack against Russia. The doping saga illustrates not only the hybrid nature of Russia's model of governmentality in sport, but also the importance of its symbolic side: the fact that Russian champions and medal winners were publicly exposed as violators of Olympic rules and sporting ethics ruined the mythology of the Sochi Games as the high point of Russia's alleged soft power. In this sense, Putin's regime fell victim to its own policy of the consistent elevation of sporting events to the top of Russia's symbolic order as a playground for national consolidation and public mobilization. This explains why the doping issue is so sensitive for the hegemonic discourse: it not only put the Russian government in an uncomfortable defensive position, but also seriously damaged the Sochi triumphalist narrative of Russia's grandeur and supremacy.

The sovereign ambiguity and indeterminacy of Putin's response to the doping accusations can be discussed in the broader perspective of WADA's controversial role. The Russian government was obviously ill prepared for the growing power of this organization engendered by the IOC and performing as a part of the global sporting industry that for years Russia had sought to take advantage of. However, having profited greatly from the Sochi Olympics and subsequent mega sports events, Russia fell victim to the anti-doping agency and lost much of the symbolic power it had gained during the 2014 Winter Olympics. Despite being the first victim of WADA's policies on a global scale, Russia failed to produce its own discourse in this sphere and had to simply echo the arguments that have been articulated for years by WADA opponents, who questioned the legitimacy of this organization and the propriety of its anti-doping instruments.<sup>52</sup> Eventually, the Kremlin ended up reiterating two mutually incompatible—if not exclusive—versions of the doping controversy: on the one hand, Putin presumed that there might be some degree of political reasoning behind targeting Russia on doping charges; yet, on the other hand, he accepted the legitimacy of

international regulatory bodies in this sphere. The political logic is ultimately conducive to the “new Cold War” argument with its conspiratorial flavor and an oversimplified idea of the “collective West” behind the attack against Russia,<sup>53</sup> which completely ignores contradictions between WADA and the IOC,<sup>54</sup> or the harsh criticism of WADA's policy of urine testing and whereabouts in the Western media and academia.<sup>55</sup> Yet the logic of governance is by and large supportive of submitting Russia to the global biopolitical governmentality, and ultimately this implies that Russia was not an object of malicious and intentional ostracization, but rather a victim of the new system of surveillance and control; lacking due immunity and protection against WADA's policies, Russia exposed itself to global media scrutiny, which led to severe sanctions.

Overall, the foregoing analysis has revealed the critical junction between sovereignty, anatomopolitics, and biopolitics, as well as between national exceptionalism and transnational governance in the Russian sports industry. Creating a sovereign exception is no longer enough to claim sovereignty; today, sovereignty is a multilayered phenomenon that also includes “interdependence sovereignty” and compliance with international norms and procedures, which is necessary for the recognition of one's political stand. In a global domain like sports, this is more evident than elsewhere: Russia might have unilaterally claimed Crimea as a result of a “hybrid operation,” not bothering with international acceptance and being willing to tolerate the sanctions. But in the Olympic Games, Russia may not conduct a hybrid doping operation and claim victory unilaterally: international acceptance is crucial. At least in sports, there is hope for international governance as a constraint on Russia's hybrid tactics.

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