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Master's Thesis of Global Sport Management

Examination of Inter-Arab Relations
from Sport Diplomacy Perspective
Diplomatic Challenges and Opportunities
of the Pan-Arab Games

스포츠 외교적 관점에서 본 아랍국가간 관계 고찰:
Pan-Arab 경기 대회외의 외교적 난항과 기회

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이 논문은 문화체육관광부와 국민체육진흥공단 지원을 받아 수행된 연구임

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Abstract

Examination of Inter-Arab Relations from Sport Diplomacy Perspective

Diplomatic Challenges and Opportunities of the Pan-Arab Games

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Like many aspects in Arab history, public diplomacy in general and sport diplomacy specifically has tended to remain isolated from broader trends in recent history and the social sciences and specifically from the uprising study of sport diplomacy.

This thesis aims to clarify the ways sport diplomacy is used by Arab countries through sporting events, and explains the influence of the pan-Arab Games on the diplomatic relation between these countries through examining the diplomatic challenges for the games and the future

opportunities of the proposed next Pan-Arab Games in Iraq, to better diplomatic relationships between these countries.

Using in-depth interviews to gather data, and through a purposeful sampling technique, high-ranked participants in positions at Arab National Olympic Committees of the last five countries that hosted the Pan-Arab Games were selected for interviews.

The findings showed a clear contradiction between using inter-Arab sporting events to promote Pan-Arab ideology (Arab unity); and individual state interests. For Arab countries, the most used sport diplomacy mechanisms are in favor of individual state interests, whereas other mechanisms have the potential to regain trust and create a state of peace between conflicting countries in the region.

The lack of credibility in countries proposing to host the games and the political differences that cause conflicts and instability in the region that were reflected in protests or boycotts of the games are the perceived challenges by participants, to any diplomatic scopes behind hosting the games.

As for a Pan-Arab tournament hosted by Iraq, findings showed

that with proper marketing the country can boost its economy and bring together the different factions of the Iraqi society around the goal of delivering a well-organized tournament which is expected to help improve or reinvent the image of Iraq into a safe, developed sporting powerhouse. A matter that would create a platform of reconciliation and cohesion for the games to create a legacy of a country that brought back the games to the scene and their origins.

Keywords: Sport diplomacy, Pan-Arab Games, Pan-Arabism, Arab world, Arab sport.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Study Background

Sport is a complex phenomenon; yet, this research focuses on the diplomacy of international sport events, particularly in the Arab world. The core of international sport – from the Greeks to the present – is clear: being the best you can be, seeking athletic excellence, and, ideally, winning (Murray & Pigman, 2014a).

Sport also plays a very ambiguous role in politics, international policy, and the diplomatic sphere (Jackson & Haigh, 2008; Kuper, 2006; Levermore & Budd, 2004). The claim that sport and politics do not mix is decreasingly being heard in a world in which these two major human activities collide in very visible ways. As C.L.R. James described, sport has the power to drive people into politics before they even realize what is happening to them (Mellette, 2015).

There are still some sport administrators who deny the existence of a near connection between sport and politics or who at best admit that from time to time the world of politics interferes with the world of sport, almost always with harmful effects. Avery Brundage, former president

of the International Olympics Committee, once stated that "sports are completely free of politics" (Guttman, 1984). That isn't the case in practice. Politics is an important part of every sporting event with an interactive relationship, where sport influences politics and vice-versa (Qingmin, 2013).

After all, although some might argue that sport "should" remain pure and above politics, or not, the truth is that it could not be otherwise — sport was and will always remain a part of political life (Allison, 1993; Houlihan, 1994).

When traditional diplomacy is the attempt of a state to informing and influencing other states to manage the international environment, happening usually in private. In the past few decades, Public diplomacy has been generally regarded as a straightforward way of engaging with the publics in other countries aimed at informing and influencing audiences abroad to foster national interest and advance their foreign policy objectives (Brown, 2009). Sport diplomacy falls within the framework of public diplomacy, which is used to strengthen intermediate and long-term relations between States by influencing the general public to achieve foreign policy goals (Gilboa, 2008).

For all the discourses on the distinction between sport and politics that are currently supported by international sporting organizations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Sport resulting from the nation-state structure has always been a political arena, particularly in the Arab world (Amara, 2012). Sport helped to support the national fight for independence against foreign interventions (French and British) during the colonial era, and in post-independence, the Arab world's regimes and political leaders have participated in sport, at various levels (Amara, 2014). Of course, the motivations and extent of a state's involvement may depend on the nature of the political structure - whether it is democratic or authoritarian, capitalist or socialist, centralized or decentralized, stable or unstable (Amara, 2012).

Sport was also one of the principal practices used to unify the Arabs. Several tournaments and games have been created to allow Arab to participate in sports, to bring Arab world members closer to each other. The Pan-Arab Games were the major event serving this purpose (Rolim et al., 2012). Established in 1953, the Pan-Arab Games were first hosted by Alexandria, for mainly very political and diplomatic reasons (Henry et al., 2003).

Throughout the years, the games came to include most of the Olympic events, and like the Olympic Games, the games were supposed to be held every four years. Several political and military crises in the region have complicated that (e.g. the Algerian revolution 1954-62, the triple attack of Israel, France, and Britain on Egypt 1958, the Israel-Arab Wars of 1965 and 1973, the Gulf War 1991, the Arab Spring 2010s) (Henry et al., 2003).

Although the Pan-Arab Games, were supposed to be based on feelings of non-nationalism that oppose the borders drawn by colonial powers, throughout its history, it has become another arena of political struggles and regional conflicts which could lead to more regional solidarity-based fragmentation rather than unity (Henry et al., 2003).

The last edition of the tournament was held in Doha, Qatar, in 2011, Lebanon was scheduled to host that but had to step down giving up its turn due to the general political turmoil in the Middle East (the reason to which the games had to be postponed for many years later), after which the 13th edition of the tournament was scheduled to be held in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2015 (Kurdistan 24, 2019).

In 2019, following meetings with Iraqi and Lebanese sports ministers, Beirut decided to withdraw their right at the behest of Baghdad but did not intend to stop hosting the Games. Iraqi Minister for Youth and Sports Ahmed Riad (@AhmedObeidii, 2019) said on his official Twitter page (2019) that an agreement has been made for Iraq to host the 13th edition of the Arab Games in 2021. This was later agreed by the Executive Office of the Council of Arab Youth and Sports Ministers. Nevertheless, the instability of the region and the security situation of Iraq keeps the tournament subject to being postponed (Kurdistan 24, 2019)

In 2020, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, all sporting events worldwide have been either canceled or postponed, including the Olympic Games. In a video-call meeting, the Council of Arab Ministers for Youth and Sports acknowledged that Baghdad and Beirut will host the 14th and 15th editions of the Arab Games respectively, postponing the two sessions at one time, depending on the health conditions prevailing in the world (Al Jadeed TV, 2020).

1.2 Purpose of the Research

This thesis aims to clarify the ways sport diplomacy is used by Arab countries through sporting events, and explains the influence of the pan-Arab Games on the diplomatic relation between these countries through examining the diplomatic challenges for the games and the future opportunities of the proposed next Pan-Arab Games in Iraq, to better diplomatic relationships between these countries.

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1. What are sport diplomacy mechanisms used by Arab countries through sporting events?

RQ2. What are the diplomatic challenges for the pan-Arab Games?

RQ3. How would the next proposed pan-Arab Games in Iraq influence future opportunities to better relations between Arab countries?

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Framework

2.1.1 The Arab World

There is no existing, universally accepted definition of the Arab World, but it is usually assumed to consist of the 22 Arab countries that are members of the Arab League (Seib, 2005). A majority of these countries are located in Western Asia, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa; the southernmost member, Comoros, is an island country off the coast of East Africa. The Arab World has its own body called the "League of Arab Countries," close concept to the UN, founded in 1945 to further Arab unity (Khan, 2013).

2.1.2 Arab National Olympic Committees

All twenty-two Arab countries have national Olympic committees. The first established Arab NOC was in Egypt in 1910, while Palestine was the last to be created in 1995. Table 1 lists the twenty-two Arab NOCs and the year they were created.

Table 1. Arab National Olympic Committees

Nation	National Olympic Committee	Created
Algeria	Comité Olympique Algérien	1963/1964
Bahrain	Bahrain Olympic Committee	1978/1979
Comoros	Comité Olympique et Sportif des Iles Comores	1979/1993
Djibouti	Comité National Olympique Djiboutien	1983/1984
Egypt	Egyptian Olympic Committee	1910
Iraq	National Olympic Committee of Iraq	1948
Jordan	Jordan Olympic Committee	1957/1963
Kuwait	Kuwait Olympic Committee	1957/1966
Lebanon	Lebanese Olympic Committee	1947/1948
Libya	Libyan Olympic Committee	1962/1963
Mauritania	Comité National Olympique et Sportif Mauritanien	1962/1979
Morocco	Comité Olympique Marocain	1959
Oman	Oman Olympic Committee	1982
Palestine	Palestine Olympic Committee	1995
Qatar	Qatar Olympic Committee	1979/1980
Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee	1964/1965
Somalia	Somali Olympic Committee	1959/1972
Sudan	Sudan Olympic Committee	1956/1959
Syria	Syrian Olympic Committee	1948
Tunisia	Comité National Olympique Tunisien	1957
UAE	United Arab Emirates National Olympic Committee	1979/1980
Yemen	Yemen Olympic Committee	1971/1981

At a conference of Arab Olympic committees held in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) in May 1976, the participants voted to form a union called the Arab Sports Confederation (ASC). The Confederation aims to support the Olympic movement and sports in the Arab countries to

establish and defend the Olympic rules and standards, to promote and preserve the hobby, and to collaborate with Arab and international sports organizations. Riyadh was selected as the headquarters of the confederation. The name of the Arab Sports Confederation was changed in 2008 to the Association of National Arab Olympic Committees (UANOC) (Al Qousi, 2008).

2.1.3 The Pan-Arab Games

Sport has become an element of the Pan-Arab ideology playing an important role in the politics of the Arab states; in the formation of nation-states and mass mobilization, also it was a measure of cooperation, integration, and unity among the Arab populations (Henry et al., 2003).

After World War II the Arab Games were founded in a period when many countries in the Arab world were independent or at least autonomous from Western powers (Rolim et al., 2012). In November 1946, members of the Arab League signed a Cultural Treaty that included elements of sport visits between Arab countries (Khalil, 1962), and supporting this treaty the Pan-Arab Games were established.

Noteworthy, the Arab Games were the brainchild of the first

Arab League Secretary-General, Abdul Rahman Hassan Azzam (1945–1952). Azzam sent a letter to the League in 1947, proposing a multi-sport tournament with all Arab countries involved.

In his words:

No doubt gathering the Arab youth every year is the best way for acquaintance, harmony, and the invitation to the spiritual unity in accordance with the second article of the Arab League charter [...] It is the best way to link the youth of Arab States and enable them to build the Arab nation's future (Egyptian Olympic Committee, n.d.)

The Arab Games, however, were not officially approved until 1953, when Ahmed El Demerdash Touny, an Egyptian member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), after proposing the first edition of the Arab games to many Arab countries, succeeded in convincing the Arab League leaders that an Arab tournament would be instrumental in the overall success of the Arab identity. The Arab League decided to set up the Arab Games in response to Touny's suggestion, making Egypt, Alexandria the first city to host the games in 1953 (Amer, n.d.).

The goals of the Pan-Arab Games are:

1. Increasing the interest in sport as an educational tool and strategy to

prepare strong young people who believe in their Arab identity (uruba') (Henry et al., 2003)

2. Providing Arab youth with a competitive environment to improve their sporting abilities, enabling them to better represent their nations (and their Arab identity) at international sport festivals (Jordanian Olympic Committee,1999).

Henry et al. (2003) mentioned two main sources of financial contributions to the games:

- 1 The Arab League has dedicated itself to making a financial contribution to hosting the Pan-Arab Games. Consequently, it is necessary to ensure that part funding is provided to the organizing committee one year before the games are held.
- 2 The Minister of Arab Council through the fund for activities and sport facilities.

While the Pan-Arab Games follow international rules and regulations on sport and support the amateur sport code, they are not under the patronage of the IOC, for They were classified as regional ethical games with which the IOC had prevented any association. Henry et al. (2003)

thought it was interesting that the IOC and International Sport Federations (ISFs), which essentially resisted all attempts to divide international sport space or organize any parallel (ideologically) competitive games, did not object to the creation and development of the Pan-Arab Games. This was not the case for the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO Games) that were initiated in 1963 by leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement (Dodds, 2000).

The Pan-Arab games have been held twelve times in different Arabic cities (see Table 1).

Throughout its history, the games were one of the biggest sporting events offering Arab states the opportunity to promote and demonstrate their sense of Arab identity and unity across geographical boundaries., Supposedly based on non-nationalist sentiments, The Games have become another arena for political struggles and regional conflicts which could lead to more fragmentation based on regional solidarity rather than unity (e.g. the Maghreb Union, Gulf Council of Co-operation, the West Asian partnership) (Henry et al., 2003).

Despite the noticeable increase in numbers of nations and athletes

participating in the games (see table 1), on many occasions, some countries have chosen to abstain from taking part in the Pan-Arab Games to prepare for or participate in other international sporting events that they consider more important. These raised the fear of a decline in the significance of the Pan-Arab Games (Henry et al., 2003).

Table 2. Hosting cities of the pan-Arab Games, number of nations, competitors, and sports

Cities	Country	Year	Nations	Competitors	Sports
Alexandria	Egypt	1953	9	650 M	10
Beirut	Lebanon	1957	10	914 M	12
Casablanca	Morocco	1961	9	1127 M	11
Cairo	United Arab Republic	1965	14	1500 M	13
Damascus	Syria	1976	11	2174 M&F	18
Rabat	Morocco	1985	17	3442 M&F	18
Damascus	Syria	1992	18	2611 M&F	14
Beirut	Lebanon	1997	18	3253 M&F	22
Amman	Jordan	1999	21	5504 M&F	26
Algeria	Algeria	2004	22	5525 M&F	32
Cairo	Egypt	2007	22	6000 M&F	32
Doha	Qatar	2011	21	~8000 M&F	33

2.1.4 Significant Cases

At a regional level, sport has been used to strengthen Arab solidarities through the staging of the pan-Arab Games, initiated by the Arab League in the 1950s (Henry et al., 2003). Throughout the years,

sport has been deployed in the process of nation-state formation, sometimes for political legitimization and image-making in the Arab world, also, political transitions in the region affected sports in general and the Pan-Arab Games in particular (Amara, 2016).

a. *50s-60s*

In the Beirut Pan-Arab Games in 1957, it was said that the different paths of Lebanon and Egypt in interacting and trading with the international community (Rogan, 2009) was an indication of and may have prevented Egypt from competing (Rolim et al., 2012).

In 1961 the Arab League appointed Hadj Mohammed Benjelloun – an elected Moroccan member of the IOC in 1961 (Moroccan Olympic Committee, n.d.) - to stage the Games after Tunisia had declined to host them because of a political crisis involving France (Rolim et al., 2012).

On another level, Iraq and Kuwait became embroiled in a conflict: on June 19, 1961, Kuwait had only recently declared its independence therefore the Iraqis boycotted the Games instead of participating in the same Games as the Kuwaitis (Rolim et al., 2012).

b. *70s-80s*

Syria hosted the Games twice in less than two decades, with its first hosting in 1976 helping restart the Games after an 11-year hiatus brought on by regional instability, including domestic coups and transfers of power in countries around the region, as well as two wars with Israel (Stanton, 2014b).

c. *90s-Present*

Syria hosted were the Arab Games again, in 1992 and this was the last time it hosted major regional games (Henry et al., 2003). Even for a state with such a strong commitment to Arabism, Syria was pressured by Gulf countries, members of the GCC, which helped finance its hosting of the 1992 Games, to dis-invite Iraq, as punishment for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. And so Iraq was refused permission to participate in the 7th Pan-Arab Games by decision of the Syrian Organization Committee (Henry et al., 2003; Stanton, 2014).

The 1997 Pan-Arab Games held in Beirut, was an occasion for this country to show that it had returned to normality (Henry et al., 2003), and to -as expressed by its Prime Minister Rafic Harriri in his opening

speech- re-establish its credibility within the Arab League after long years of civil war and destruction and to reinforce Arab unity against the Israeli occupying army (Amara, 2014; Henry et al., 2003).

The Iraqi team was banned from participation in the 1997 Beirut Games, according to the General Secretary of the Arab League, the 'least harmful (option) had to be chosen (Henry et al., 2003), the Lebanon Foreign Minister stated that Lebanon has been placed in a tough situation, welcoming Iraq and sacrificing the participation of countries whose (economic) ties with Lebanon are of vital importance, or barring Iraq from safeguarding a limited inter-Arab acceptance; complete acceptance was unlikely (Games, 1997).

The Iraqi athletes, trapped at the Lebanese border point Masnaa, and in an attempt to express their stand carried banners which read "Saddam Hussein's athletes are the first to call for Arab solidarity", and "Yes, to sports that unite people and no to sports that separates the Arabs". Head of the Iraqi team Assil Tabra said "The athletes endured a hard trip by land to participate in the games and it was a sign that they held a deep respect for Arab nationalism" (Games, 1997).

The Amman Games case contains all indicators of old unity and Pan-Arab solidarity, as well as hyper-localism and nationalistic feelings. The return of Iraqi athletes following their exclusion from the previous two games is an example of unity but also was viewed by Henry et al. (2003) as an effort on the part of the Arab League to restore ties with Iraq, launching the slow phase of settling internal Arab dispute resulting from the Gulf War (Henry et al., 2003).

Kuwait, however, boycotted the games in solidarity with Kuwaiti prisoners-of-war still kept in Iraq (BBC News, 1999; Ryan, 2000) and decided to assign diplomatic (instead of athletes) delegates to the opening ceremony (Henry et al., 2003). Other Gulf countries, which perceived their participation as essential to the interests of Arab solidarity, did not follow that unilateral action. As a result, Sheik Ahmad Al-Fahad al-Sabah, president of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee, resigned from his role as president of the Arab Sport Federation three days after the opening ceremony protesting what he described as the Arab League's intervention in sports matters (Henry et al., 2003).

Syria boycotted the most recent Arab Games, which were held in Doha in December 2011, as a source of contestation and cited the Arab

League's suspension of Syria as its reason for doing so (Aji, 2012). Analysts also suspected that officials were afraid of athletes defecting when at Doha (O'sullivan, 2011).

2.1.5 Pan-Arabism

Pan-Arabism is the idea that the Arabs are distinct people with a common language, history, and culture. This ideology has been described by Tibi (1990) as ' a macro-nationalism, or the projection of micro-nationalism onto the wider geographic area, based on common interests as the basis of political entity ambition in more than one state'.

Roberson (2018) discussed that Arab nationalism is generally referred to as Pan-Arabist ideology that incorporates three main ideas and understandings; one is that pan-Arabism arose as a replacement for pan-Islamism, concentrating more on Arabs than Muslims. For others, it was an act of opposition to France and Britain's colonialism that put on the region a territorial division. For yet others, it was an act of resistance to the mandate's attempts by the newly formed states and governments to establish separate national identities.

This ideology; Arab unity or Arab Unification, was interpreted

in two main views. One was that of the Ba'athists in Syria, as the meaning of the establishment of a single independent Arab State integrating the Arab nation; the notion of no-borders between Arab countries based on the idea of a collective cultural-historical background and the mutual rejection of boundaries created by the Europeans. While that was associated with Jamal Abd al-Nasir in Egypt, it was cooperation among Arab governments that were less concerned with the definition of nationalism than with real economic and social issues and with the importance of the Arab world's unity in the face of imperialist blocs; to maintain the sovereignty of the States among the Arab countries themselves, including to look for one's interest (Khalidi, 1991; Mansfield, 2010; Roberson, 2018).

While the Islamic element was not denied in Arabism, the base of the ethnos in Arab nationalism, the evolving Pan-Arab nationalism was secular. This ideology attracted the hopes and interests of the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa until Israel's humiliating defeat in the June 1976 war. It was obvious that Arab governments were neither inclined to integrate, nor capable of uniting on a solidarity basis, nor cooperating to overthrow Israel's Zionist state (Roberson, 2018). From

this point onward, Pan-Arab Nationalism or secular pan-Arabism has gradually ceded ground to pan-Islamic ideology or Political Islam (Henry et al., 2003; Roberson, 2018).

Pan-Arabism had limited effects on individual Arab states' policies, the influence on the intellectual and cultural movements in the Arab world was significant. The Arab Games from 1953 to 1965 to some degree reflect this concept of cohesion, while at the same time showing characteristics of individual State interest (Rolim et al., 2012).

The word 'Pan' prefixing the title of the Arab Games, makes it made for that period. The congregation of all 'Arabs' or all who hold the same 'Arab identity' was for that time one of the mottoes of the Arab leaders (Rolim et al., 2012). As article 1 of the Arab Games rules states:

Just like the Olympic Games, there will be Regional Games between the states of the Arab League taking place once every 4 years, starting in 1953. These will be named The Pan-Arab Games. Arab Countries, that are not a member of the Arab League, may also participate.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Sport Diplomacy

Sports are, by their very nature, highly sensitive, coherent, ambivalent, and conditional means of communication. States have always used sport in their foreign policies because while sport diplomacy risks unpredictable outcomes, it is commonly regarded as a low-risk, low-cost yet high-profile instrument of foreign policy. Sport diplomacy has been defined as “the whole range of international contacts and competitions that have implications for the overall relations between nations concerned” (Keech, 2001). Through sport diplomacy, state and non-state actors can express their views and objections to the actions, policies, and practices of others.

Some nations use athletes as "diplomats in tracksuits" (Gilbert et al., 2009) demonstrating the importance of sport for a nation that wishes to make a statement of foreign policy through the sporting arena. Despite the clear connection between sport and diplomacy, and the numerous instances of sport's usefulness in facilitating the achievement of a diplomatic goal, numerous scholars questioned the effectiveness of

sport diplomacy in general (Keech, 2001).

Sport diplomacy has been used to strengthen rival nations' bilateral relationships (Esherick et al., 2017). In this context, sport diplomacy is used as the first point of contact in the cycle of rapprochement between the two countries, after that reconciliation has been frequently expressed before. Sport exchanges and competitions can effectively contribute to the elimination of ideological conflicts, nationalism, and propaganda, while, on the other hand, they can increase mutual understanding and a platform for dialogue. The Ping Pong diplomacy between the USA and China and the US-Iran Wrestling diplomacy had been characteristic examples of the use of sport diplomacy (Murray, 2013; Trikaliotis, 2011).

Negative sport diplomacy has, however, been a much more common utility of sport diplomacy, which is used to communicate frustration and dissatisfaction with particular policies of the state, both internal and international. Such examples were the 1976, 1980, and 1984 Olympic boycotts, as well as Israel's withdrawal from the Mediterranean and Asian Games due to protests by the Arab countries (Esherick et al., 2017; Murray & Pigman, 2014b).

Several researchers, says Trikaliotis (2011), were worried about the motivations of negative sport diplomacy and its efficacy. Great and major powers, which have a range of economic, military, and diplomatic options to choose from, prefer sport if they want to make a highly public statement without raising conflict and significantly affecting the two countries ' bilateral relations. On the other hand, negative sport diplomacy is typically the only option poor and smaller nations might take to show their disapproval rather than being a well-calculated decision. If the negative sport diplomacy and sport sanctions work or not, there is a wide variety of opinions as to the efficacy. One thing can be assured, however, is that the athletes ' personal life and efforts, mainly in sport boycott occasions, are destroyed. And sport boycotts are generally used as an act of outrage when one country cannot change the policies of another.

Moreover, even though it is an NGO, the IOC itself serves as a diplomat when it comes to the interests of the Olympic Movement, the NOCs, or the Olympic athletes. This was the case both at the 1992 Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona and at the 1994 Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer, where the IOC managed to ensure the

participation of Yugoslavian athletes with the help of the UN. In fact, a significant accomplishment on behalf of the IOC was the restoration of the notion of the "Olympic Truce," which has been continuously on the agenda of the UN General Assembly since 1992 in the year preceding the Olympic Games (Trikaliotis, 2011).

Public diplomacy is defined as “an exercise in persuasion and influence that extends beyond traditional diplomacy by leveraging a much larger cast of players both inside and outside government” (Evans & Grant, 1995). Throughout a globalized world, public diplomacy has flourished, stressing interconnectivity, democratization, transparency, accessibility, and innovation (Gilboa, 2008). Murray (2018) explained that for many experts the spectrum of public diplomacy is almost as wide as the amount and type of diplomatic agents that a State might, in principle, co-opt.

2.2.2 Categories of Sport Diplomacy

Two sport diplomacy categories arise from an analysis of the complicated networks, actors, and platforms where international sport and diplomacy come together. The first category is to cover cases where

governments consciously employ international sport as a tool of diplomacy. A second category concerns diplomatic representation, communication, and negotiation between non-state actors arising from ongoing international sporting competition, that is to say: sport-as-diplomacy (Murray & Pigman, 2014a).

a. *Sport as a Tool for Diplomacy*

More and more modern diplomatic institutions, governments, and non-state actors are turning toward sports. For a long time, sport, politics, and diplomacy were compatible. If sport has a useful reason, it's often 'co-opted by politics' (Jackson & Haigh, 2008). Governments are well aware of the influence of the masses' opiates and have long drawn to sports and sport festivals. As Allison (1993) notes, all kinds of governments:

have endorsed international sporting competition as a testing ground for the nation or a political 'system'. German Nazis, Italian Fascists, Soviet and Cuban Communists, Chinese Maoists, western capitalist democrats, Latin American juntas – all have played the game and believed in it.

Researches have argued that in the contemporary diplomatic environment, there are at least four obvious benefits and the reason

behind this breach, where governments use sports as a tool for diplomacy:

First, there are significant public diplomacy opportunities for a host nation that can be offered by a sporting mega-event. Murray & Pigman (2014) discuss that such an event is a sign that the host country is a good international citizen, and if the diplomatic position, image, and message are carefully formulated and matched with positive sporting values, the view of international audiences can be changed.

Second, a nation-state's diplomacy can be expanded and complemented by sports and sportspeople, at a 'low-risk, low-cost and high profile' for sport diplomacy exchanges promote international understanding and friendship, as well as dismantle stereotypes and prejudices. (Keech & Houlihan, 1999).

Third, sport is no longer niche or backwater institution beneath governments, as they traditionally thought of it, 'a trivial diversion from any serious human purpose, pursued by "muddied oafs on flannelled fools" in Kipling's famous phrase (Allison, 1993) but when working in tandem with diplomacy, they form a powerful foreign policy tool. Sport diplomacy responds proactively to the common argument of

governments that diplomacy is irrelevant, old-fashioned, 'dead' (Ramsy, 2014) 'fossilized' (Modelska, 1972), and in a general state of deliquescence.

Forth, the compatibility of the two institutions. Butterfield wrote that 'diplomacy may entail some sort of actual war, sometimes the nicest thing one can say about it is that it's better than getting the guns fired' (Jackson & Haigh, 2008), the same can be said about sporting encounters. Sport will sublimate tension in the stadium by carrying out the metaphorical war. Sport, like diplomacy, is 'war, minus shooting' in Orwell's famous remark. Diplomacy reflects the business of peace and is a tangible expression within an anarchic climate of international society, civility, and order. Sport is likewise a friendly form of international exchange, with no visible conflict (Murray & Pigman, 2014a). Sport diplomacy allows governments considerable flexibility in testing the strengths or weaknesses of a diplomatic relationship beyond official policy positions. Sport diplomacy exchanges are a soft method of exploring a possible policy change. They create alternate channels for dialogue between so-called estranged peoples and nations, and can be employed as a tool to punish, express disdain, or provoke another nation.

b. *Sport as Diplomacy*

This form of diplomacy is less transparent and more elusive. Unlike sporting competition primarily carried as an instrument of diplomacy, the vast majority of international sport is undertaken for no diplomatic purpose at all. International sporting competition, like more traditional government diplomacy, mediates conflict between governments, nations, and other actors. Just like other forms of diplomacy, international competition happens in known times and places (Murray & Pigman, 2014a).

As such, the effect of international sport-for-its-own-sake on continuous diplomatic relations between governments, nations, and other actors can be divided into two main categories, that justify studying in its broadest sense as an important element of contemporary diplomacy. Firstly, international sport as practiced constantly and in a variety of ways has direct effects on diplomatic relations between governments, nations, and peoples. Secondly, the practice of international sport requires a whole category of multi-actor, specialized diplomacy which is necessary to facilitate international sporting competition.

a. Effects of international sport on diplomacy

1. Suspend, delay, or dissolve government conflicts.

The Olympic Truce has always been ideal, from ancient till the modern Olympiad, the main purpose of the Olympic Truce was suspending warfare or violence during the Olympic competition period (International Olympic Truce Centre, 2012). But historical implementation was far from complete.

2. Competitors represent their nations and their peoples.

The public gets the idea that international collaboration is feasible and positive when they watch the event either in person or through the media, seeing the nations of the world gathering, represented by their athletes, forming a community that is a specific microcosm of the world at large, just as the diplomatic corps of each capital city is a symbolic microcosm of the global community with common values, alongside each member's determination to serve their state as best as possible (Neumann & Leira, 2008), Although not appointed to do so by their governments, gather in one location to participate in an organized, safe and non-violent competition (Murray & Pigman, 2014a).

3. Increase national tensions and worsen troubled relations.

Preparations for international sporting events include diplomatic coordination between teams, sport bodies, and governments to ensure competitions are safe for athletes, fans, and service providers all around the venue. But unfortunately, they attract forces that want to achieve their own political goals by undermining prospects for foreign comities, like terrorists. But according to Murray & Pigman (2014) practically, international sport increases international comity and more often eliminates conflict than it worsens troubled relations.

4. Results have an impact on the diplomacy between the states of the competitors.

There is a considerable difference in how the outcomes of international sporting competition are perceived and how people in competing countries and elsewhere may perceive them as a proxy for diplomatic ties between competitors, depending on the scoring systems (Murray & Pigman, 2014a). Most international tournaments, such as the World Cups of most major sports, are designed to ensure full participation by the greatest number of nations, to minimize the negative

diplomatic implications of a winner-take-all format.

The various ways of advancing and winning in international competitions show that, apart from the Westphalian fiction of sovereign diplomatic equality, nation-states greatly differ in size, wealth, ability, and talent. Throughout international sporting events, the global public forms opinions and creates expectations of countries, at least partially, according to the success of their athletes and national sides.

The ability to compete at all, total numbers of medals, total numbers of gold medals, and the largest number of sports in which a country 'medals' are some of many methods of measuring achievement that facilitate recognition despite the differences between the countries and competitors (Murray & Pigman, 2014)

Sports in which results have to be judged by a jury of judges for technical merit and often even more controversial, for artistic impression raise complications that may challenge the subjectivity of judges, a reason why these judges usually come from different countries to avoid national biases, for their professionalism hand in hand with their country's competitors' fair play affect the trust of the public, in a public

diplomacy perspective.

b. The specialized diplomacy of international sport

This specialized type of diplomacy created by international sport is perhaps even more important than the effect of international sport on diplomatic relations. That is when, to effectively hold an international sporting competition, a whole range of multi-acting diplomatic activity and coordination based on negotiating the terms and then executing the event must have already taken place (Manzenreiter, 2008).

International sport events need an institutional structure that includes rules, norms, and, most importantly, some kind of administrative body or agency for managing international sport interaction. All international sporting bodies will be involved in diplomatic representation and negotiation with states, regional and national sporting organizations, major multinational business corporations, global media companies, and global civil society organizations (Cornelissen, 2011; Schulz-Herzenberg, 2010). Also communicate regularly with the general public to increase its exposure, promote the sport, and demonstrate its credibility and fairness (FIFA,

2012).

Senior managers of sporting bodies are often treated as visiting heads of state or its ambassadors, according to Manzenreiter (2008), senior officials of the IOC and FIFA are given 'semi-official ambassadorial status' in the global diplomatic community. So, they must become skilled and effective diplomats. For this level of respect, these bodies have a dual-task: organize themselves and govern themselves (Murray & Pigman, 2014a).

Decisions on whom to recognize and not recognize are often diplomatic issues and controversial topics themselves (Constantinou, 1996).

2.2.3 Mechanisms of Sport Diplomacy

The examples below show how contemporary diplomatic actors and arenas can play important roles in diplomatic conduct. Although international sporting events can improve relations both bilaterally and multilaterally (Chehabi, 2001), sport can also worsen the relationship between nations. Therefore, the examples will show some of the positive and ineffective multilateral diplomatic activities through sporting events.

a. *Image-Building*

Sporting events can be used to create a legacy for the host country, enhancing its global image. Organizing a successful sporting event is a great opportunity to highlight the state's strong institutional and organizational grounds, and allows visitors and spectators to see the host nation's cultural and geographic beauty, and so a country can improve its image abroad. One of the world's oldest sporting events is the Tour de France, an annual sport cycling race that played an important role in France's worldwide image-building process by highlighting the beautiful French landscapes, and historic towns and castles to the world every year (Esherick et al., 2017).

Likewise, mega-sport events such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup have often been used to demonstrate the development of a nation. Tokyo (1964 Summer Olympics), Mexico City (1968 Summer Olympics and 1970 FIFA World Cup), Seoul (1988 Summer Olympics), Barcelona (1992 Summer Olympics), Beijing (2008 Summer Olympics), and South Africa (2010 FIFA World Cup) all tried to appear as a modern, "Westernized" destinations with universally accepted values to display their host city or country (Esherick et al., 2017).

Also, other countries tried to appear as a nation to be reckoned with through some events that were seen as ways to show their hard power. In 1934, Mussolini used the FIFA World Cup to show Italy's superiority, a strategy repeated two years later by Hitler at the 1936 Summer Olympics. Since then, nations such as the United Kingdom (1948 Summer Olympics), Argentina (1978 FIFA World Cup), China (2008 Summer Olympics), United States (Summer Olympics 1984, Winter Olympics of 1980 and 2002), and Russia (Summer Olympics of 1980 and Winter Olympics of 2014) have all used these events to show their power to the rest of the world (Esherick et al., 2017).

In this Issue, Rhamey & Early (2013) illustrates that image-building need not come through hosting a sporting event. By doing well in an international event, nations can enhance their international prestige. As the decision by North and South Korea to march under the same flag during the opening ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

Yet, the parts of a population that may embarrass the government may be omitted or overlooked in the attempt to portray an efficient, modern, and attractive image. Protests in Brazil against spending priorities in preparation for the 2014 football World Cup and the 2016

Olympic Games were good examples of how image-building efforts back-fired (Nygård & Gates, 2013).

Another negative side of image-building is that the global media may point out negative aspects of the nation and around the event, regardless of the success. In the Sochi (2014 Winter Olympics) media have highlighted the poor human rights of the LGBT community in Russia and the environmental disaster that Sochi could bring to the region (Esherick et al., 2017).

b. *Building a platform for dialogue.*

Sporting events, as we know them, strengthen relations between nations and people, and provide a venue for peaceful cultural exchange, which can serve as the basis for further normalization of political relations, a wide channel for the re-establishment of formal relations between the USA and USSR has been reopened after Moscow's first Goodwill Games in 1986 (Nygård & Gates, 2013).

But, instead of being a platform for dialogue, sporting events can be used to showcase hatred. In the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games, for raising their fists in a Black Power salute during the playing of the

US national anthem Carlos and Smith were stripped of their medals (Toohey, 2008).

Sporting events can cause violence more than just escalating tension. 1970 FIFA World Cup was used as a pretext for war between Honduras and El Salvador. Land reform and immigration stand as the basis for the conflict, but the extensive riots that took place during two matches between the countries as part of the qualifying rounds increase tensions and worsen relations (Chehabi, 2001) and did not serve as a platform for dialogue.

c. *Creating a platform for new legislation and agreements.*

Sport through mega-sport events can play a role in or creating a platform for new legislation or trade agreements. The most influential guarantee related to diplomacy is the visa requirement that FIFA and the IOC impose on their hosts. And so, the host nation is not allowed to withhold a visa from anyone who is associated with the event, preventing hosts from excluding particular nations from their events (i.e., China and Taiwan, United States and Iran, etc.) (Esherick et al., 2017; Jackson, 2013). Although, Korea and Japan fought openly about the name of the

tournament, the mascot, and the location of the important matches, two years after they co-hosted the 2002 FIFA World Cup, the Korean Overseas Information system reported that the event had initiated an increased political dialogue between the two countries as a direct consequence of joint-hosting the event (Esherick et al., 2017).

Sport mega-events also contribute to a sharp increase in trade agreements between the host and the rest of the world. Rose & Spiegel (2011) argued that hosting a mega-event would signal to the rest of the world that the nation is "open for business.". Reports have shown that export and import increased in nations that have hosted the Games.

d. *Providing legitimacy*

International events can be used as a platform to fight symbolically for the political independence of one country. International sport federations often give territories with an ambition to become independent nation-states and the possibility to compete under a flag that might not represent the present sovereign nation (Esherick et al., 2017; Murray, 2018). For example, in the years following the Second World War, Israel strongly employed sport in its search for international

recognition of its country. Likewise, Taiwan has been fighting for its political independence from China. As a result of political negotiations and the IOC's decision in 1980, the athletic teams of Taiwan are now allowed to compete under the Chinese Taipei flag, which is separate from the Chinese flag (Galily et al., 2009).

Sport can also shed light upon the occupation of one nation by another. As an example of the water polo game at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics between Hungary and the USSR. Winning, Hungary gained the sympathy of millions of sport fans after the bloody events of the revolution earlier that year when The Hungarians rebelled against the oppression of the Soviet Union (Esherick et al., 2017).

e. *Trust-building*

Through trust-building, sport can build peace, which is secured via the interaction of individuals from different nations or communities. One of the events Norway Cup is the proudest of happened in 1995 when a team from Israel and a team from Palestine played each other in a sporting event for the first time. The promotion of personal interaction from which to build understanding and friendships is the fundamental

idea behind running these tournaments (Guthrie-Shimizu, 2013).

But some negative consequences to such events may happen unintentionally. Every year, the Norway Cup trains children from poor African countries for two weeks of luxury by their standards. Returning unceremoniously to their lives in abject poverty the youth can breed resentment and disillusionment when they return to their home countries (Hasselgård, 2012).

Nevertheless, studies showed that sport does not build trust, but tends to only reflect the larger political environment, at least at the elite level. Their findings force us to consider the limitations of sport as a trust-building mechanism (Caruso & Di Domizio, 2013), and that it can become nationalistic and jingoistic, creating tension between countries rather than understanding (Nygård & Gates, 2013).

f. *Reconciliation, integration, and anti-racism*

Nygård & Gates (2013) explain that sport is used to create unity and build peace through reconciliation, integration, and anti-racism within a nation. In South Africa, rugby was seen as a symbol of apartheid, strongly associated with the white ruling class. Back then, Mandela's

intent in hosting the Rugby World Cup was primarily to promote South African unity and integration.

In fact, barring of participation in sporting events can be used to encourage anti-racism. The suspension of South Africa by FIFA in 1963 was re-instated after the end of Apartheid and in 2010 hosted the World Cup (Ndlovu, 2013).

Not only that the connecting effect of sport events can serve diplomatic purposes, but also individual athletes, can be used to educate people about countries and also promote mutual understanding of different cultures (Esherick et al., 2017).

Watching a sporting event bridges linguistic, cultural, and political differences between nations (Grix & Lee, 2013), and in the case of Cuba and the U.S., it pointed to the common interest of two presidents and their nations, in 2016 when the U.S. president, during his trip to Cuba, not only diplomatically reconnected the two countries but also took a significant step towards bridging the ideological and political gaps between the two countries by watching a baseball game, reminding the Cubans of a shared passion for the game (Esherick et al., 2017).

g. *State-controlled propaganda*

Hosting nations take great pride in beautifying their countries to project a positive image; state-controlled propaganda highlighting political ideologies of the country (Don, 2010), its domestic politics, its beautiful serenity and resources, and with the development of technology, billions of people can watch these sporting events on television or using various devices. This can benefit the host in ways such as attracting foreign students and foreign-directed investments and encouraging tourism, as the example of the 1936 Nazi Olympics illustrates, but such events are misleading the foreign publics about the intentions of a certain popular regime (Esherick et al., 2017).

Also, sporting events, inform people of the negatives, because states are rarely able to control all the media exposure around the event (Giffard & Rivenburgh, 2000). Specific problems such as the domestic dispute with Tibet in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics, the economic inequality in South Africa, and the water pollution and home evictions in Brazil were examples of when protest groups understood the power of such events to communicate their message to the media. As a result, nations need to understand that these events spotlight a nation in ways

that can be both negative and positive and to think conscientiously about how to present themselves via international media (Esherick et al., 2017).

h. *Sport ambassadors*

An advantage of sporting events and individual athletes over official politicians is that talks and negotiators can be perceived as less regulated, and freer, and more spontaneous. Including individuals as ambassadors who are not otherwise associated with their governments and can talk through their sporting accomplishments can also bring a fresh start to a relationship between countries that may have been strained by conflicts and mistrust beforehand (Esherick et al., 2017). Some people are instantly distrustful of politicians. But athletes are generally well-liked and admired, and can offer people cultural empathy. They endow a nation with a friendly and positive face, and therefore, to shape domestic and foreign policies, many retired athletes such as Pele, George Weah, and Manny Pacquiao all have become politicians, using their celebrity for new relations (Cox, 2007).

Professional athletes can bridge cultural differences because they gain recognition worldwide. Athletes like Yao Ming (China), Vlade

Divac (Yugoslavia / Serbia), George Weah (Liberia), and Kathy Freeman (Aboriginal people of Australia) have put a face on a country or an ethnic group that people know little about, thus offering knowledge and understanding to those outside their community (Esherick et al., 2017).

Yet, sport teams and athletes may not have the diplomatic experience and patience required for a true sport ambassador to carry out both the planning and the aftermath of international events, for athletes may play a negative role in addressing cultural differences and historical tensions, negatively affecting the two nations ' bilateral relationship (Thon, 2008), As such, an instructive example of both the power of elite athletes and also the complexity of having a non-diplomat play a diplomatic role. In the case of the invitation of Dennis Rodman (former NBA player) by North Korea's leader Kim Jong-Un as a huge fan of NBA basketball and Dennis Rodman, while the two countries had no official diplomatic relationship (Esherick et al., 2017).

Sport ambassadors needn't be famous athletes. SportUnited, for example, is a program sending American athletes to international cultural exchange missions and bringing foreign athletes to the U.S. for clinics and exhibition games (Esherick et al., 2017).

Actually, our sport's exchanges are the most popular exchanges we do. And when I go to other countries around the world and we talk about what kind of exchanges that people are looking for, very often a leader will say, how about a sports exchange? (Clinton, 2011)

Chapter 3. Research Methods

3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

It is essential to select a research approach to the overall analysis, as it serves as a tool to respond appropriately to the research question. (Hogan et al., 2009) advised that researchers must correctly apply their minds before deciding which method to use. Therefore, a qualitative research method was deemed the most suitable for data collection and analysis, after consideration of the appropriate approach.

Qualitative research is described as a “multifaceted approach that investigates culture, society, and behavior through an analysis and synthesis of people’s words and actions” (Hogan et al., 2009). Horgan et al advance their point by arguing that qualitative research gives a researcher the right to make sense or to understand the group under study's behavior, values and emotions. Because of its flexibility, it allows the research to be carried out in its natural setting and offers the researcher an opportunity to gather and analyze data based on the "participant views and the way they make sense of the world" (Hartley & Muhiit, 2003). According to Hogan et al. (2009), the interaction of the

researcher is also considered part of the conduct of knowledge-building through interpreting and synthesizing the words and actions of people. (Horgan et al., 2009). According to Horgan et al. (2009), the researcher's interaction is also considered part of the "knowledge creation process"

Qualitative research was chosen as the most appropriate approach, using in-depth interviews to gather data. Elite (selective) interviews have been described by Marshall et al. (1995) as the type of interview that focuses on a particular interviewee. High-ranked participants in positions at Arab National Olympic committees were purposefully selected for interviews. Creswell (2002), describes purposeful sampling as the intentional selection of participants who have relevant information about the research topic.

3.2 Participant Selection

Participants of this study were selected using the purposeful homogeneous sampling technique. Purposeful sampling is described by Gilchrist et al., (1999) as the selection of a highly rich group of participants who have information that is rich amongst a small group of people that can be representative of the population. Due to the research's

purpose, the research examined 1-2 high-ranked participants in positions at Arab National Olympic Committees of the last five countries that hosted the Pan-Arab Games. A total of nine participants took part in the research.

To protect participants' identities, information that can help to identify contributors was removed, for example, name, job title, age, gender, and length of service.

Table 3. Participants details

Participant	Country	Position
Participant 1	Jordan	
Participant 2	Jordan	
Participant 3	Lebanon	
Participant 4	Lebanon	High ranked positions in Arab NOCs of the last five countries that hosted the Pan-Arab Games.
Participant 5	Egypt	
Participant 6	Egypt	
Participant 7	Qatar	
Participant 8	Qatar	
Participant 9	Algeria	

3.3 In-Depth Interviews

According to Rubin & Rubin (1995), qualitative interviews are relevant when the researcher is seeking comprehensive knowledge about a phenomenon. Participants in this study were interviewed via video calls

using ZOOM; a cloud-based video communications app, with open-ended questions. A video-call interview was chosen due to the geographic gap between the interviewer and the participants, as well as the time differences. Creswell (2002) advocates the use of telephone interviews as it closes the distance between participants and researchers over a geographically scattered area.

This interview method is also beneficial because the participants would feel comfortable talking about their experiences and clearly express their opinions on the subject at hand, unlike when they are in concentrated groups or through a questionnaire. Johnson (2002) also points out that it is important to use a form of an in-depth interview because it can expose deeper meanings that might not be possible if surveys are used.

An interview guide was developed from the research questions as well as the literature reviewed. The interview questions cover the main research objectives. (See Appendix 1)

3.4 Data Collection

This study will use interviews to collect data by interviewing. An introductory email for the study, which detailed the research purpose, interview, and question, will be sent via email to the participants which will also be a consent letter provided the participant will be willing to take part in the study.

The informed consent part of the email ensured the participants about the use of pseudonyms to protect their identity as well as conform to publishing standards. Participants' responses to the email would be a sign of agreement to be part of the study. Neuman & Kreuger (2003) notes that when the participants receive an informed consent statement, they get to know their rights as well as what they are about to be involved in, so it increases their consciousness. On the day of the interview with the participants, the letter will be revised again to remind them of their rights before the interview. It will also be agreed that recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be kept safe by the researcher for a duration not exceeding two years. After the participant accepts all of this and agrees, the researcher will begin the interview.

3.5 Data Analysis

A manual descriptive statistic was used to analyze the sociodemographic information of participants. Next, to analyze the feedback of the questions, the researcher adopted the thematic analysis approach to examine the data obtained from the interviews, and Atlas.ti software was used to analyze the generated theme.

The goal of thematic analysis is to find out themes/patterns in the data which is important and/or interesting and use these themes to address the research or an issue. Braun & Clarke (2006) stated that thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research methods. And provided a six-step guide that is very crucial for conducting this type of research. The step is outlined in table 2:

Table 4. Guideline for thematic analysis

Steps	Details
Step 1. Familiarization of data	The process of transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Step 2. Generating initial coding	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Step 3. Identifying themes	Organizing codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

Step 4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis
Step 5. Defining themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
Step 6. Finalizing with write-up	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed to provide data that is well structured. The researcher read through each transcription to better understand the content and built a list of general themes to create groups in a thematic sheet which was developed by the researcher and checked by her advisor.

The coding of themes and sub-themes was achieved by reading the transcripts and recognizing them. An excellent thematic coding method, according to Boyatzis (1998), can capture the qualitative complexity of the data being examined and can be included in the analysis and discussion of the study. If the researcher would need any video calls or free mobile chatting services.

3.6 Strategies for Validating Findings

According to Creswell (2009), one advantage of qualitative research is its high validity. Creswell defines validity as the way researchers test the accuracy of the findings by using several techniques to improve the capacity of the researcher to determine the accuracy of the findings. Creswell listed eight strategies to evaluate the truthfulness of the given information, of which research, triangulation, and member check will be conducted.

a. Triangulation

Patton (1999), explains triangulation as validity checking using data from three separate sources. Glesne & Peshkin (1992), further, note that the triangulation process requires substantiating facts from various sources to give sense to a viewpoint or theme.

b. Member Check

This is the most important data validation technique. The opinions of the participants on the accuracy of the interview data interpretations are implored (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants act as judges for the researchers' interpretations and can suggest changes.

Chapter 4. Findings

The main purpose of this study was to clarify the ways sport diplomacy is used by Arab countries through sporting events, and explains the influence of the Pan-Arab Games on the diplomatic relation between these countries through examining the diplomatic challenges for the games and the future opportunities of the proposed Pan-Arab Games in Iraq, to better diplomatic relationships between these countries. Therefore, this chapter discusses the findings of the study in response to research questions:

RQ1. What are sport diplomacy mechanisms used by Arab countries through sporting events?

RQ2. What are the diplomatic challenges for the Pan-Arab Games?

RQ3. How would the next proposed Pan-Arab Games in Iraq influence future opportunities to better relations between Arab countries?

This chapter has four sub-divisions which are, (a) the themes and sub-themes, and (b) the findings of the research.

4.1 Theme Identification

In analyzing interviews, a thematic analysis technique was employed. The results produced Six main themes as shown in table 5 combined with research questions., that were further coded into sub-themes, hence creating descriptions for easier analysis as proposed by Creswell (2002).

Table 5. Themes and sub-themes

Research question	Theme	Sub-theme
Sport diplomacy mechanisms used by Arab countries through sporting events	Promoting Arab Unity	Developing a diplomatic discourse channel Fostering peace
	Individual state concerns	Development of Sports Creating new or changing perceptions
Diplomatic challenges for the Pan-Arab Games	The credibility of The Games	
	Political Differences	A platform for protest and expressing disapproval The political instability of the region
Iraq Pan-Arab Games' influence on future opportunities to better relations between Arab countries	The next Games: a tool to improve Iraq's status	Reinventing Iraq's image The national development of Iraq
	The next Games: a platform for reconciliation and cohesion between Arab countries	

Creswell (2002), argues that his proposed six-step data analysis method for qualitative research can create themes about the phenomenon as it is systematic and can deduce the data collected into meaningful information. As the case in examining the inter-Arab relations from a sport diplomacy perspective.

He further notes that the data should be arranged according to the research questions to make clear meaning and understanding of the information as well as the creation of themes and subthemes.

4.2 Research Findings

4.2.1 Promoting Arab Unity

Table 6. Sub-themes of RQ1: Theme 1

Research question	Theme	Sub-theme
Sport diplomacy mechanisms used by Arab countries through sporting events	Promoting Arab Unity	Developing a diplomatic discourse channel Fostering peace

As shown in table 6, the first theme of the first research question has two sub-themes, (a) developing a diplomatic discourse channel and (b) fostering peace.

a. *Developing a diplomatic discourse channel*

One of the sport diplomacy concerns nowadays is the use of sporting events by states to boost their reputation among foreign audiences, to ease tensions in flagging diplomatic relations, or just to test the ground for a future policy change (Murray, 2013). Some participants pointed out that sports were only ice breakers to the political tension between Arab countries, or just a backdoor communication for politicians.

*“If you host the games, and the minute you bring all the Arab countries together, I think at a certain point, you can use sports to break the ice between countries. But at a certain point, I can say that sports are a tool... **It can be a tool to bring people together and to break the ice.** But at the end of the day, **sport isn't the main factor to use for diplomacy or to make the countries come back together or work better way together.** It can be a tool to break the ice, but not more.” (Participant 3)*

*“It can give an opportunity for two countries that want to communicate with each other but haven't found the opportunity to have a **backdoor for communication of the governments through their related NOCs or national federations...** but the intention of wanting to ease up those relationships has to be there in the first place before the event happens.” (Participant 1)*

Participant 7 mentioned that if any bridges were created by sports

or sporting events, those would not last long in the Arab region.

*“It created bridges, let's not forget, sport creates bridges between populations between cultures. I can't think really of examples, but **none of those bridges were long-term**... it has the power and it has the potential to create long-term harmony between people. But again, **when politicians see that this is not working in their favor, they interfere and those bridges are broken or put on fire.**” (Participant 7)*

Although their knowledge of Arab sporting event history, according to them, is not necessarily that strong for them to pinpoint a point where and if sports served diplomatic discourse in the region, Participant 1 said that sports served diplomatic discourse negatively.

“If you are saying serving discourse, then it's purely negative.” (Participant 1)

Nevertheless, Participant 8 and 5 disagreed. Participant 8 emphasized the positive role in the dialogue between countries, played by inter-Arab sporting events to maintained bridges amongst people. And according to the observation of Participant 5, the number of countries and athletes participating in inter-Arab sporting events is an indicator that things are going in a positive direction.

“Sporting Events such as the Arab Games, The Gulf Championships, the West Asian Championships, etc. helped to continue the positive dialogue between Arab people and help

to build and maintain bridges amongst people.”
(Participant 8)

“I’m not that involved, to be honest with the political atmosphere of sports. But I think because you get participants from more Arab countries so this be like an indicator that things are going well.” (Participant 5)

At the same time, Participant 4 had a different perspective and mentioned that sporting events between Arab countries can have both, positive and negative impacts on the diplomatic discourse in the region depending on the people in charge of sports and politicians.

“It plays a positive or a negative role. It differs depending on the minds of the sports and political officials. Because each has a different view of the existing disagreement.”
(Participant 4)

b. *Fostering peace*

Although there were different opinions on limitations that prevent sports in the region to build or regain the trust of other Arab nations, most participants agreed that politics is the major obstacle to that. Studies showed that sport does not build trust, but tends to only reflect the larger political environment, at least at the elite level. Their findings forces us to consider the limitations of sport as a trust-building mechanism (Caruso & Di Domizio, 2013).

“Politics. Politics always intervenes... I will not go to a country that we have not good relations with, unless I really have to go. And I don't have a choice.” (Participant 6)

“In one word; politics. Unfortunately, in the Arab world, politics plays a big role, a huge role actually not a big role. And some governments are trying to actually create the divide between both and keep politics in a separate environment from sports. But it doesn't always work, unfortunately.” (Participant 7)

“You have much more deep-rooted issues that are political or economic in nature. I do believe that sports can build relations, but they cannot mend this major mistrust that is there between countries. And it's not as simple as we played football together; so forget about 400,000 people that we killed in a war with each other, you can't build a relationship with something as simple as a football game.” (Participant 1)

“The current war, all the political issues that are going. The percent of the refugees that we have everything plays a role.” (Participant 2)

“The political tension that happens nowadays, is the reason for this. But there is no sportive reason. The political situation is making a state of falling back or a drain in the relationships between Arab countries.” (Participant 4)

“Sometimes politics is not easy to go around. Sometimes when you have suffering countries taking every decision. And each country is thinking about what's best for itself. And for its people.” (Participant 5)

“Political interference and social intolerance

can play a negative role the process of building or regaining trust among Arab countries.” (Participant 8)

Nygård & Gates (2013) explain that sport is used to create unity and build peace through reconciliation, integration, and anti-racism within a nation. Nevertheless, Participants 3 and 7 were of the opinion that sports within and between the Arab nation do not affect a reconciliation between nations.

“I don't think sports is really playing a big role when it comes to Arab events, because sports is not a priority.” (Participant 3)

“Let's face it, if I say politics, unfortunately, again, the blind following of some of the other people, to the leaders, they are very much affected by what the leaders say. And if the leaders try to embark on a negative campaign against another leader or against the country, they will follow. So, it's not only sometimes the politics itself, but the effect of politics, even on society. That's, and in the case of the Arab games that happened in Qatar, that was put, again, in the freezer for a while, because of the scope” (Participant 7)

Participants 5, 6, and 9 pointed out that it would be a possibility that inter-Arab sporting events affect reconciliation positively.

“Sports are the cement of nations. Whenever there is a conflict between countries, sport plays a positive role to unite nations, to bring back good relations.” (Participant 9)

“I think up till if you look at the history of the Pan-Arab games that took place over the course of the past period, you can clearly see that they have been connecting the Arab countries together in a positive way, not a negative one.” (Participant 5)

“It should affect all of that in a good way. We are coming together in a nice spectacular event to be all happy that there is no, there is competition, of course, but there's no real loser. Even in the sporting entities themselves, we can be friends, we are friends. It's just that the politics always intervenes, but we try as officials in sport to put this aside as much as possible. But do we have behind the scenes? some pressure? Of course.” (Participant 6)

Henry et al. (2003) explained that the use of Pan-Arab Games as a way of spreading Pan-Arab ideology means that the complexities and inconsistencies associated with promoting this vision of the world are mirrored in the difficulties associated with their staging. Sport serves in this sense as a barometer of Pan-Arab solidarity, as well as a commercial tool for it. Participants stressed the power of the games to bring Arab nations together on the field of play and contribute positively to the inter-Arab diplomatic dialogue.

*“I, personally, believe that the Arab Games is one of the greatest tools to **bring our countries together and bring Arab athletes together**, because actually, this was the idea behind the Pan-Arab games, **in a period that our countries***

*were scattered. So, the mentality of Abdel Rahman Azzam was to **bring the Arab countries together**. So, I still believe that it's a valid tool.” (participant 5)*

*“**Coming together in combined games, like the Pan-Arab games is the best way to build the pan-Arabism spirit through sports in the region.** We do have meetings together from time to time, through ANOCA, through the IOC, through stuff like this where we meet. But the best thing is through the games. We share the same values, our players get to know each other, it’s always a good ideal platform.” (Participant 6)*

*“I think that those Games play a big role in **bringing Arabs together**, and connecting Arab athletes, coaches, referees, and even politicians. For a period of 10-12 days, people come together and network, and this serves sports positively.” (Participant 9)*

*“Sporting events bring people together, maybe also bring points of view closer together. Maybe the **Arab diplomacy would positively benefit from such events.**” (Participant 4)*

*“**It fosters dialogue and friendship and builds friendships and tolerance among Arab people.**” (Participant 8)*

*“The games can play a very important role to show the whole world, it’s more than hosting Arab games, to show and to **break the stereotypes, which is “Arabs”** unfortunately.” (Participant 3)*

Nevertheless, Participant 3 expressed his concern that Arab countries need to put sports as a priority to use it in a systematic way to be used as a tool to bring nations together to sharing a sense of unity.

*“When sports is not a priority for a lot of Arab countries, **I think it's difficult for sports at the moment to unite Arabs.** But hopefully, if the rest of the Arab countries will start investing in sports like many are doing, I think then we can do this. But for the time being, I don't think sports can unite Arabs, perhaps the problem is much bigger than that.” (participant 3)*

4.2.2 Individual State Concerns

The Arab Games represented this principle of unity to a certain degree, while still displaying characteristics of individual state interests (Silva et al., 2011). Individual state interests were also repeatedly obvious in the responses of participants. Participants 7 and 4 pointed out how The Games were used by their countries to build their image and show progress and power.

“The Arab games was probably a bridge to show that Qatar can be playing a leading role in the sports world or the Arab sports world through, and that's not about showing off the culture. It's about showing people that even a small country like Qatar, with the proper resources, can actually be a leader in sport because a lot of countries think I don't have

money I can't organize sports.” (participant 7)

“Also, it shows the progress that the country has gone through as well as build stronger relationships locally and internationally.” (Participant 8)

“Of course, politically also, we want to show that we are strong, we are very strong country... We want to say we are here we are politically and economically a strong country in this region.” (Participant 4)

Participants 4 and 5 mentioned another aspect of power; the sporting one, and how their country was using these games to show off their athletes' capabilities and maintain medal domination in the tournament.

“Dominant. If you check all the games that have been played from the beginning, starting from Alexandria. The idea came from Egypt itself. Up till now, Egypt was dominant, was totally dominant. In the last Arab games that were played, we've got more than 50% of the total medals. So, we have really no competition. This dominance is important for us to continue. With that, we are saying we are here. So, we are the strongest country in sport, in the Arab world, and Africa, by far. So, we want to continue this.” (Participant 4)

“I think ... on the Arab level, the Egyptian athletes usually take the first rankings, you know. So, it's one of the good events that we like to take part in just to see our athletes.” (Participant 5)

Other participants stressed the economic aspects their countries benefited from hosting the Pan-Arab Games, especially in terms of tourism. Mega-sporting events enable host countries with long-term tourism, economic and social opportunities (EPRS, 2014).

“You improve your economy if you were able to host the games, you will have a good promotion for Jordan. You will raise the percentage of hotels occupancy, tourism area, the economy in general.” (Participant 2)

“(hosting the Games makes the country) be ready from a touristic point of view; hotels, restaurants, shops, etc.” (Participant 4)

Table 7. Sub-themes of RQ1: Theme 2

Research question	Theme	Sub-theme
Sport diplomacy mechanisms used by Arab countries through sporting events	Individual state concerns	Development of Sports Creating new or changing perceptions

Table 7 shows, the two sub-themes of the second theme of the first research question: (a) development of sport and (b) creating new or changing perceptions.

a. *Development of Sports*

Participants highlighted that the Pan-Arab Games are a suitable environment for athletes to gain experience through participation, and a way for athletes to be assessed.

“It's a good opportunity for more athletes from Egypt, to have this international 'friction' with other countries” (Participant 4)

“It is an opportunity for building the self-confidence of our athletes in the sports that we are successful in ... It is a good place for assessment of younger athletes, and upcoming athletes. We will not test those athletes at the level of the Asian Games. But we will do we will test them at the level of the Pan-Arab Games.” (Participant 1)

On another hand, participants explained how the preparations of the games benefited coaches and other human capital. Participant 6 and 4 mentioned that the games help spot good coaches that could be recruit:

“Give the chance for our coaches; most of the other countries use a lot of Egyptian coaches. Usually because we are in the sports longer than them or at the international level.” (Participant 6)

“We benefited from those meeting, there were countries to which we sent a coach to train, also we have received trainers that trained and polished our coaches and athletes.” (Participant 4)

And added that networking in such event leads to exchanging knowledge of coaches, athletes, and management.

“We can have coaches exchange, we can have athletes exchange, we can have management that we could benefit from and they could benefit from us. We look forward to having

training camps, contact with coaches signing MOUs with them.” (participant 4)

The regimes and political figures of the Arab world have taken interest in sport at different stages (Amara, 2014). Of course, the reasons and scale of the intervention of a state may depend on the nature of the political system (Amara, 2012). Participants 1, 7, and 4 focused on how leaders of the state or government are also heading sport organizations in their countries and internationally, and the effect of state leaders attending sport events.

“In Arab countries, in particular, people heading national federations or national sports organizations are usually very close to the government or part of the government, in the first place. Brother of the king, brother of the prince, son of the Prime Minister, etc., are people who have traditionally been in leadership positions. So technically speaking, these people can be trusted to have a backdoor discussion, to ease up relationship, but the intention of wanting to ease up those relationships has to be there in the first place before the event happens.” (Participant 1)

“The head of state His Highness the Amir is an IOC member and has been an IOC member for over 10, 15 years. So, he has a sporting mentality. And he learned through the years that may be sport and politics mixed together in a big way. But he tries as much as he can to actually separate the sporting mission from the political mission.” (Participant 7)

“For sure the President of the Republic attended the opening ceremony and gave an impression of the country of Lebanon and the attention he gave to the event.” (Participant 4)

Nevertheless, participant 7 was concerned that the separation of sports from politics challenging for Arab countries as many of the sport leaders come from the political environment.

“Not mixing politics and sports is very, very hard and challenging, since we know that a lot of the sports leaders in the Arab world are actually coming from the political environment, if I may say, or very closely attached to their political environment.” (Participant 7)

The second focus was on athletes and how they can positively represent their countries and when they can be considered ambassadors. Participant 9 explained that athletes can be more influential than politicians when representing their country.

“When an athlete travels to participate, he is considered an ambassador of it. A political ambassador might not give the image that an athlete can give. Athletes have a reputation and fame that when seen by the youth, they feel represented by them.” (Participant 9)

Murray (2018) explains that ambassadors in their respective sports are recognized as influential athletes because they possess perfect diplomatic qualities: talent, endurance, elegance, virtue, modesty,

discipline, transparency, civility, bravery in times of hardship, and so on. Participant 7 and 8 points out the attention put on the role of elite athletes as ambassadors representing their country through their hard work and dedication but also their morals and fair play:

“Sport puts a lot of attention, a lot of pressure on athletes, especially athletes who are considered to be elite, who want to achieve something who don't train just for the fun of it... And sometimes that actually takes away a lot from the character. But if they are always reminded that yes, when you go, you want to win a medal. You want to win a tournament, but you're still representing a country, you're representing a culture, you're representing a society. Keep that in mind.” (Participant 7)

“They can be great ambassadors through highlighting their hard work and dedication, aiming for excellence (as human beings and as sportspeople), showing respect for self and others, applying good behavior and positive approach as well as adopting fair play on and off the field of play.” (Participant 8)

Participants 6 and 2 do not think it's necessary to be the best athlete to represent the country in different events so they have criteria to choose representative ones. Murray (2018) said that many studies say that international sportspeople do not make good diplomats; their success in their sport does not imply success in diplomacy. Those can sometimes harm the image of the country.

“Choose the right athletes when it comes to events, not competitions, in competitions, the best athlete in performance is the one who's going to compete. But when it comes to ambassadors in conferences, in Speaking with media and all of that, we have a system here where we choose educated people to represent us so that other countries will not make fun of us, so that we show that our country is a big country. But we as in any other country, have players who qualify for the Olympic Games, we have players who have a master's degree and Ph.D., and we have other players who cannot read and write in other sports. So, when we try to choose, for example, our flagbearer, he will be interviewed a lot, he's our image. We try to choose someone who is representative, who will give a good image of our country.” (Participant 6)

“Before sending them, you have to know who to choose, because especially in Jordan you have a lot of elite athletes and world champions that are not well educated, they don't know how to speak, they only have one language.” (Participant 2)

To prevent and overcome that participants 1, 8, and 7 put the burden on and appreciate the athlete entourage, and the influence it plays in the development of their character; the people around athletes, how they support them, and what kind of incentive they give them to become good ambassadors.

“I put a lot on the back of administrators, so the Olympic Committee and the National

federations. And then I put a lot on the back of coaches and administrators at those Federation's, who should have been the best guides for those athletes from the beginning. You cannot just fix somebody right before they go to a tournament...This is something that you need to build within the culture of your sport. It just needs to be communicated again and again to them through different ways because being a professional athlete or being a representative athlete of a country is Something that needs to be prepared for it's not something that pops up overnight.” (Participant 1)

“This is mainly due to the effort that has been put by their coaches, federations and the Qatar Olympic Committee to cultivate them as human beings not only elite sportspeople who seek good results.” (Participant 8)

“In the Arab world, we're lucky that still, the effect of the family on the person is still big. So, they can let's say if mother or father calls an athlete and tells him, look, you've done something yesterday, or you've said something yesterday, this doesn't do good for our family or our country, the athlete will listen... So, it's in a way still in the Arab countries. Also, the effect of society on them can help them to play bigger as well, not only them but as we said, the society, the family, the immediate family, the immediate circle of friends may still have a big effect on the athlete.” (Participant 7)

Participants 6 and 1 highlighted how the educational programs, whether for athletes or their entourage, prepare them to be sport ambassadors.

“We try to educate our athletes.” (Participant 6)

“We have what is called the Olympic values education program, which is a program that is done for coaches, which is also done for school teachers, sport school teachers, which is done for university students at multiple universities in Jordan, this is led by the Jordan Olympic Committee education department. There are at Olympic preparation center athletes’ seminars that happen on these subjects.” (Participant 1)

Although Participant 3 similarly agreed but mentioned how the bad governance of their country is an obstacle that prevents those programs from happening.

*“So, athletes really play an important role to reflect the country. And its values and the country by itself. So, they have a big role to play. But we need to educate our athletes first. And to tell them that they are a good image, and they are the image. But here comes the part when we say **we don't have good governance and sports is still for volunteers in our countries**. So, we don't have criteria. So, we don't have the right person in the right place. It doesn't mean that he doesn't care about educating athletes, but **he doesn't know that he should educate athletes**, because sports because on a different level. So even **the entourage has a big role to play with the athletes** and why we are participating. So, we should **advocate our office** that they are the important role to show to reflect the image of our countries.” (Participant 3)*

b. *Creating new or changing perceptions*

Ham (2002) argued that branding “implies a shift in political paradigms from the modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence.” With sporting events participants want to show and highlight different aspects of the country; the regime, the relationship of government with the sporting sector, and the safety of the country.

*“Let's be honest, every country, why would they host an event, for the federation or a club, we host events to be able to make benefit; technical benefits for our teams and to make money, but for countries hosting major events is totally different. It's not about making money, it's about showing that this regime is good, everything is stable in this country, and that we are going in the right direction, this is the main image that is tried to be implemented for the foreign eyes.”
(Participant 6)*

Egypt went through the Arab spring, and two revolutions in three years; 2011 and 2013, so about how they used sporting events to show their approval of the regime, Participant 6 adds,

“The one in 2013 some Western countries were trying to show Egypt as a military coup. And we as Egyptians, it was obvious to us it was nothing as a military coup. Yes, we asked the military to intervene, but it was our choice and we all went to the streets to overthrow our former government. So, it was important that the sport

and the media, when we get a foreign competition here to show that we have no issue. And we are all in support of the situation. So, yes, we use sport competitions for the biggest picture. But in our opinions, all for the best, or for the good of the country.” (Participant 6)

But also, with the many conflicts with governments in the region, and despite the debate whether or not governments should interfere in sports, participants think that hosting an inter-Arab sporting event can give an example of an inter-dependent, supporting the relationship between the two. Participant 1, said:

*“First thing is, usually there is no government interference. So, when you have no government interference, it shows independence in the decision-making process by the sports organizations involved ... There is also a lot of government support, which is easing, passport control, support in medical services, having security provided by the government has other supporting services like Amman municipality, Ministry of youth supporting with facilities. So, this is very clear for anybody that comes; **they see what type of relationship is there between government and the general public and government and sports; a relationship of collaboration, not one of anything other than that; not opposing**” (Participant 1)*

Participant 4 was of the same view, talking about previous inter-Arab sporting events when he said:

“So that showcased the importance of the

government helping in the organization of any sporting event or meet. So, there was - thank God - cooperation and investment in the sporting community, because, as you know, the sporting community is a developing one, more than others in Arab countries. So, it gave a very nice image of Lebanon, the Lebanese sporting policy in that time, and social and political situation.” (Participant 4)

On another level Participant 5, highlighted that sporting events have been used to change the perception of a country.

“All since 2011, and with the political uprising that took place, the image on the international front was that Egypt is not peaceful enough. It's not safe to go to Egypt. So, one of the main factors that we try to really advocate is that now Egypt is peaceful. And this is really concrete in many of the events we've carried out since 2011.” (Participant 5)

Sport competitions; in particular mega sport events have been used to highlight the progress by a developed nation that will shift the very old-fashioned perceptions of the nation to other publics (Esherick et al., 2017). Participant 7 reflected that saying that those events were showcasing how their country developed.

“Showcasing the way, the country was advancing and showcasing the cultural image of the country ... all those were shown during the sport because Qatar has, apart from sport, Qatar has only petrol and gas, petrol and gas do not really expose the country a lot, because

the people who are exposed to petrol and gas, in term of numbers are very limited. But sports expose the country in a big way on the world stage” (Participant 7)

Most participants shared that when hosting a sporting event, the whole country works to show a good image of it, explaining that internal political issues were not the main reason why they couldn't host events:

“We were supposed to host the next Arab games but got postponed once, twice and went to Iraq, but it got postponed for security reasons, only, not because of internal political issues. And financial more than security reason.” (Participant 3)

“Despite all that you are hearing from the political differences and disagreements in Lebanon, if there would be a sportive event, you'll find everyone coming together to show the world who is Lebanon. It makes you wonder that the Lebanese disagree on many things and agree on small things.” (Participant 4)

*“The good thing about a society like Qatar is that **everybody is behind anything that portrays a good image of the country**. People may have problems, as I said, nothing is perfect, no country is perfect. But they try to hide those problems, or they try to put them on the shelf until the event is finished. And this is, in a way, this is a general Arab mentality in a way. And again, there may be exceptions. But in general, the pride of the other person does not allow him or her to expose, if I can say the bad laundry, in front of foreigners, the foreigners could be Arabs, or could be non-Arabs.” (Participant 7)*

There are exceptions as Nygård & Gates (2013) said that the negative side of image-building is that it is possible to ignore or overlook segments of a community that may embarrass the state to present an effective, contemporary, and attractive portrait. To this Participant 6 explained:

“In our situation in Egypt, we were trying to show that it was not a military coup and all that. The Muslim brothers who were in power for one year were trying to use this event to show that no, we have issues. So, you might find 10, 15 people who are trying to ride in front of the camera in front of this venue to say no, here, look, we are protesting, or to be coming to the event with the spectators to make problems to say, no, we are not going in the right direction. This happens all over the world. But in the end for us, there were no big issues. It was always minorities. They could not succeed in their plan in our sporting events.” (Participant 6)

Other obstacles to a positive image building that the participants talked about were the media. And that the portrayed image in the media may be a negative one, that would challenge organizing committees to attract participants to a certain event. Especially the foreign media that cannot be controlled.

“Media could be more of a negative than a positive.” (Participant 1)

“The media in Egypt is playing a very

positive role. But the media outside, in general, has been playing a very bad role in showing that we have issues, not treating women correctly and Islamophobia, and just rubbish. Terrorism attacks. All of this is exaggerated by the media. Probably it happens in the West much more than our countries. But unfortunately, we do not control the media outside. So, it's always shown as if it's an issue. And this is, this is this is a fact. When people come to our countries, they go back with a very different image and say, what are we hearing? They come afraid they go back and saying, our media was saying rubbish.” (Participant 6)

“So, the biggest risk could be the massive negative media that you could get from your competition. Of course, through some well-known names in the media world, and people these days, they have access, when you have access, the word just travels very easily.” (Participant 7)

Hosting nations take pride in beautifying their countries to project a positive image; state-controlled propaganda highlighting political ideologies of the country (Don, 2010), its domestic politics, its beautiful serenity, and resources (Esherick et al., 2017). Participants 3 and 7 discussed how inter-Arab sporting events communicate to the world the Arab unity, the power of Arabs when they unite, and a civil perspective of their nations.

“It's a platform to show that at a certain point we can be united as Arabs. And that when we

are united together, we can be more powerful and we can do something much better on an international level. So, in this way, we can show that if we are united then we can be, as we say in Arabic 'the hard number', like Europe or any other countries." (Participant 3)

'In some stage in the late 90s early 2000s, if you mentioned the word Arab, everybody outside of the Arab world, straight away Arab equals terrorist. I am sure the Asian games, did play a small role in, not only showing the cultural image of Qatar, but also the cultural image of the Arab countries." (Participant 7)

Participants 6, 3, and 9 pointed out that successful sporting events benefit their countries' tourism, thus the economy.

"First of all, for it to succeed from a sporting perspective, because when it succeeds there will be a touristic achievement, an economic achievement, a social achievement, so the world gets to know Lebanon, its people, its sites, its geography, the goodness of its people, recognized by all the Arab countries. Some people stayed longer when Lebanon hosted the Pan-Arab Games because they loved the people and the sites." (Participant 4)

"This was benefiting the tourism and the economy for sure. We definitely were able to show people that Lebanon is a country with different cultures. It's a country where we can really enjoy as much as you enjoy in Europe, for example. So, hosting games and bringing people to the country can show the real image of the country." (Participant 3)

“When hosting an inter-Arab sport event, we aim to portray a good image of the country, trying to attract more tourists to know the country, the culture and the way people live.”
(Participant 9)

Participants 4 and 6 highlighted ways their countries use sport events to promote tourism, whether through promotional material to be distributed or visits to touristic sites.

“I was going to the ministry of tourism to take with me brochures about Lebanon. In every competition, there would be a space for every country’s delegation, where I’d go and put some of those brochures, so all the countries would know who Lebanon is.” (Participant 4)

“We take promotional materials with us. So, we have a connection with the tourism ministry, they provide us with booklets and stuff that we can use and we distribute it outside, mainly to promote our tourism industry and our facilities here and to tell people, please come to Egypt... When hosting the event in the country, we try to let the people make some touristic visits to the pyramids to the museum, all this to show our country more. So, people can come again, as visitors or even say good words about Egypt, outside to promote more people to be able to come later on.” (Participant 6)

Arabs brag about an important aspect of their culture; generosity and hospitality, an aspect also highlighted by some of the participants, that they want to show while hosting or participating in sporting events.

“We want to display generosity, we want to display an ability to organize and being

organized, and show hospitality. We show generosity and hospitality in the way we treat Arab athletes and Arab coaches while we are guests in another country. So, it's by interacting; we have gifts exchanges, we have sit-downs, they come to our headquarters, we go to their headquarters. This is actually customary; we do that.” (Participant 1)

“We welcome everyone we don't have discrimination. In contrast, we are as we say in Arabic ‘Ahlan wa Sahlan’; very welcoming... We don't have issues, politically, we don't have issues with any other any Arab countries. We promote peace, so for me, Jordan is the peaceful country to have the games in.” (Participant 2)

“I think hospitality it's one of the main things that we try to do because it's innate in most of the Arab nations having this good sense of hospitality.” (Participant 5)

While before the Arab Spring, fans had no involvement in the Political climate. After 2011, they have been political entities, rather than sport entities, and this has intensified people's differences, inconsistencies, and identity arguments (Megheirkouni, 2017). Participant 6, mentioned a way in which they tried to control groups that were preventing the country from showing a good image of itself; namely, security checking on every spectator that registers to attend events.

“Now we have a restricted formula that we are working with; “Tazkarti”, Tazkarti in Arabic is

“my ticket” in English. This is a new platform that we use for spectators, they have to go and register online, there is a security check done on every single person. So, we are sure that whoever is given a ticket is not coming for any political reasons; is just really coming for this sporting event. So, we have stricter measures in place now. So that the event goes smoother. And that no bad image of our country can be shown in any way or another.” (Participant 6)

Participant 1, talked about ways they control national media coverage of events, by creating an in-house communication unit that outsources to any media outlet that they want.

“If your national media tries to overshadow that with native messaging...You have to control that... And that's when media becomes a factor. When you don't have your own strategic communication unit. For the event, mainly for the event. And for you to have what you need; you need to have pre-established your relationships in media way before your event. So, this goes back to NOC Media Relations... we found out at the JOC is that you could build your own media coverage. And you give it out to any media outlets that you want to give out to, for example, Arab media outlets, you could build all your content and share that content internationally.” (Participant 1)

But Participant 7 doesn't think the media can be controlled but can control what you show them with an event.

“I don't think anybody can control that. What you can do is you can focus on your strengths.

Focus on your goods, nothing, no city, no person, and no-bid, or no strategy is perfect, there's always going to be problems, there's always going to be risks. You work on your good points, you work on your strength, and you try to deal with whatever bad media and the kind of negative impact that could have in the best possible way. But if you work on your strengths, and the good sides of your event, that should in a way overshadow all the negative media that you get.” (Participant 7)

4.2.3 The credibility of the Games

As clear in table 8, the first theme under the second research question has no sub-themes.

Table 8. Theme1 of RQ2

Research question	Theme
Diplomatic challenges for the Pan-Arab Games	The credibility of The Games

One important challenge for the next games was that NOCs have not received official information about them. To the question of they knew about the proposed Pan-Arab Games in Iraq, participants answers were as follows:

“Let me check, I don't know.” (Participant 2)

“I think I saw it in the news, but I haven't seen any official document.” (Participant 5).

“I'm not sure. Because again, if it comes it comes to the senior management of QOC, but usually something like this. It doesn't stay under wraps for long. Usually, something like this would probably be communicated in one way or another to all Olympic Committees of the Arab world.” (Participant 7)

“It's more into governments. this thing when it comes to pan Arab games, the hosting, it's more into governments.” (Participant 3)

“The meeting was in the Arab League, at the level of Arab ministers of youth and sports. We were not there.” (Participant 4)

“Till now we have not received anything. I think they are still preparing.” (Participant 9)

Iraqi Minister for Youth and Sports Ahmed Riad said on his official Twitter page (2019) following meetings with Iraqi and Lebanese sport ministers, Beirut decided to withdraw their right at the behest of Baghdad an agreement has been made for Iraq to host the 13th edition of the Arab Games in 2021 (@AhmedObeidii, 2019). A decision that was later agreed by the Executive Office of the Council of Arab Youth and Sports Ministers (Kurdistan 24, 2019). In 2020, in a video-call meeting, the Council of Arab Ministers for Youth and Sports acknowledged that Baghdad and Beirut will host the 14th and 15th editions of the Arab Games respectively, postponing the two sessions at one time, depending on the

health conditions prevailing in the world (Al Jadeed TV, 2020). Those decisions were not communicated to NOCs.

Because the 13th Pan-Arab Games was due to be held in 2015. Beirut had originally been awarded the event but they withdrew because of the crisis in the Middle East. The event was then awarded to Morocco, and then Egypt was suggested as holding it. The event did not happen as expected, and there has been no notice of a rescheduled event until 2019, the trustworthiness of the games was a point participants 1 and 3 were concerned about.

*“Every year, they have a country that jumps up and says, I'll host it, and then they delay it. It's just an ongoing issue. It's not something new. That's why it's not taken seriously anymore.”
(Participant 1)*

*“Well, it's been a long time we didn't take part in the Pan-Arab Games, so we just forgot about them...But I can tell you when we say the Pan-Arab Games, we say like that's okay, let's talk about the Asian Games. Unfortunately, **we're not taking it into consideration because we know that we will not participate or no one will host the Pan-Arab Games. Unfortunately, we don't feel like we belong to this. We don't feel that this will give us the identity because you don't see sustainability. You don't see the development. You don't see that we really care about hosting this. We are not looking for the problems, why we are not able to host, or why***

we are not still hosting the games. We're just trying to move it from one country to another.”
(Participant 3)

4.2.4 Political Differences

Table 9. Sub-themes of RQ2: Theme 1

Research question	Theme	Sub-theme
Diplomatic challenges for the Pan-Arab Games	Political Differences	A platform for protest and expressing disapproval The political instability of the region

As shown in table 9, the second theme of the second research question has two sub-themes, (a) a platform for protest and expressing disapproval, and (b) political instability of the region.

a. *A platform for protest and expressing disapproval*

Answering a question about how would their countries' disapproval of a certain Arab government influence their participation in sporting events, participants 8, 6, and 2 argued that it would not be an issue to prevent athletes from competing.

“We are very clear; we respect all the international laws. international law says that if there is a qualification competition, you cannot as a host country denied any country from participating no matter what politic, even if you have a war against this country, you're

not allowed to deny them.” (Participant 6)

Participants 8 and 2 emphasized the separation of politics and sports, as sports should not be a platform to showcase political statements.

“It will have no influence at all. Any host should abide by the Olympic Values and separate between sport and politics.” (Participant 8)

“I think we separate sports and politics in Jordan. It will not be an issue even if our government doesn't approve or whatever but we will not because even when playing against an Israeli athlete, we will ask the athletes to fight. Yes, so we separate these two issues.” (Participant 2)

Participants 7 and 8 shared an example where political turbulences between the three neighboring countries of and with Qatar didn't affect their sport participation.

*“If I'm not mistaken, just before or a couple of years before, that was a problem between Qatar and the three countries, and they actually recalled that ambassadors. So that was a sign of a potential problem. However, **sports defeated this kind of problematic, let's say, diplomatic problem, the diplomatic atmosphere that happened between the countries.** And still, athletes were competing against each other and in a very, let's say, sporting manner.” (Participant 7)*

“For example, even after the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain forced a blockade on Qatar, we hosted sporting teams from all three

neighboring countries, and we sent sporting teams to participate in competitions in these countries as well. There is no bigger example than Qatar winning the AFC Cup in 2019 in the UAE, playing against Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and showing the highest levels of fair play and respect. Also, we recently hosted football teams from Saudi Arabia and Bahrain that participated in the AFC League West.”
(Participant 8)

Nevertheless, other participants expressed the negative influence of governments and their relations with other countries on sport participation.

“If I am talking from a sports perspective, we do not have a problem to compete with any Arab country. But politically, and if the government takes the decision that a delegation shouldn’t participate, we cannot stand against the government. No country can do that. The ball is in the political, in the governments’ field. We can only give our opinion, that we are going to have a sporting meet, but if there was a political decision, we cannot stand against it.”
(Participant 4)

“We do not have any law that can prevent us from, for example, we don't have good relations now with Qatar and with Turkey. So, if there is a competition in Turkey or Qatar, if it's not a real qualification for the Olympics, or the World Championship will not participate. And they do the same thing. If it's an important competition, that is controlling the ranking, they will come, but I will not go to a country that we have not good relations with unless I

really have to go. And I don't have a choice.”
(Participant 6)

b. *The political instability of the region*

The Arab world faced throughout time many political turbulences. The Syrian mission withdrawn from the games during the 2011 Pan-Arab Games because it was held in Doha, Qatar. The explanation was that, through financial funding for opposition and Islamic groups and Al-Jazeera Arabic Live (media), Doha played an important role in promoting conflict in Syria (Megheirkouni, 2017). In an interview with IRIS (2020) Dr. Mahfoud Amara mentioned that Syria did not participate in the tournament as a protest of its' suspension from the Arab League in that year. Libya. In the view of Participant 7, this played a challenge to the last Pan-Arab Games and explained how national Olympic committees cannot take decisions against their governments.

*“The war in Syria had started. I think a few months before, it was not long before the Arab games. And unfortunately, at this stage, you know, quite well, this conspiracy theory was really at its peak, and everybody was blaming everybody else. And **the government in Syria had a position that Qatar had a big role to play in the war there. So, they decided, even though we tried a lot, from myself, at my little level, to the leaders at their higher level, everybody tried a bit to play a role in trying to convince the Syrian Olympic Committee, and indirectly the***

*senior government that sport does not have to interfere with politics. And if it's possible for politics not to interfere with sport, and that people come and compete in a very friendly environment that sport should provide. We thought we succeeded, but then **at the last minute, I think only a week before the start, the whole withdrawal happened or a few days before**, was not a long time before. We were always hoping that they would join. Again, **the Olympic Committee does not make a decision if their country wants against their countries.**"*
(Participant 7)

Participant 8 agreed that Qatar faced mainly political difficulties with Syria's withdrawal in 2011, but also, they highlighted cultural challenges faced by countries from outside the Gulf region.

"Mostly political difficulties, related to conflicts in the region (Syria withdrew from the Arab Games weeks before the Opening Ceremony for purely political reasons). Minor cultural challenges were also faced especially with countries from outside of the Gulf region."
(Participant 8)

Nevertheless, participants 1 and 6 stated that the political tension between countries was put aside when their countries hosted the games.

"I think in 99, we had quite positive relationships with everybody. I'm sure they had an issue with keeping some countries away from others, but I was not privy to that information." (Participant 1)

"We never had any problems in 2007, we had

perfect relations on the country... Maybe if you hold something now, we might have some issues. But in the past, we never had issues.”
(Participant 6)

About hosting the Games in the present, participants had quite a strong opinion that the situation would be different; relations between countries is more challenging for the games to be held.

“We are mostly united but some countries still have problems and revolutions and civil war, like Syria, like Libya. We’re still struggling to come out of this issue. Other countries are blaming each other; they went behind some political acts. So, I am sure this in the upcoming events will not look good. And will put tensions between teams playing against each other.”
(Participant 6).

“Conflicts! If there is a conflict between two countries. This is the hard part. When we say I cannot invite that country because another will be upset. This is the only main reason that affects; the diplomatic dispute affects the hosting of games.” (Participant 4)

“It’s very tough to host it, you need a country that has good relations with all the countries that are coming in. So, with all Arab countries, plus it needs to have the capability to host plus it needs to be in a state of peace internally, not in a state of internal conflict” (Participant 1)

Also, participant 7 pointed out his concern that the possible political interference may be a challenge for the next games and

expressed the importance of overcoming this.

“The political interference, if they can try to manage this -they will never stop it- but if they can manage it, that would be a big thing, that would be a big platform for success... In Arab countries, we have the ability to actually excel in this. We have the ability to shoot ourselves in the foot, depending on how much politics wanted to happen. And how much the politics are willing to stay on the sideline, especially for something like this.” (Participant 7)

Participant 6 highlighted his concern about the destroyed image of Iraq that the media portrays, or the positive image of Iraqi sport that the media fails to show, as a challenge for the next games.

“It has been a totally destroyed image for us. Do they have athletes? Are they training? are they up to the level? I don't see this in any single sport now in Iraq, maybe only just football, sometimes they are having good performances. But other than this, I cannot recall any sport... the infrastructure we assumed from what we have seen the media that has been great destruction in Iraq, have they rebuilt their country to have they built their facilities? Yes or no? I have no idea.” (Participant 6)

In this regard Roberts (2019) noted that for developing states, staging a sporting mega-event is a significantly powerful tool; nevertheless, continuous media attention may highlight a state's negative aspects.

As if the countries overcame challenges, participants shared their experiences and views. Participant 7 explained that overcoming a political challenge needs the goodwill of both countries.

“Qatari teams played against Syrian teams in Asian championships that took place outside of Qatar, there was no problem. I think the door was always open. Some decided to come some decided not to come. But I can't say in general that yes, the whole situation was overcome, because it takes two to tango, as they say, maybe Qatar would have overcome this and Qatar had no problem in the first place.”
(Participant 7)

Participant 3 didn't think that any old conflicts that happen around the games may come back in the next games.

“It's back in the days, it was because of political problems. Now, maybe they have a united agenda. It's all about agendas. You know, it's all about politics, fights, and conflicts. So, it's not related. It's a case by case, you know... So, I doubt and I think there is no even a small possibility for Iraqi people not allowing (Lebanese athletes to participate), because when we had the explosion on the fourth of August, Iraqi was one of the first countries that tried to help Lebanon with something and a lot of support and money.” (Participant 3)

Participants 1, 2, and 7 emphasized the role of their country's government in facilitating events to overcome internal and external political problems.

“The government was quite generous for those games (Amman, 1999).” (Participant 1)

“Ministry of youth plays a role now; our relationship with the ministry of youth is stronger.” (Participant 2)

“You can still organize something based at the level that you can provide. And with the proper support from the government and from your social environment, you can achieve.” (Participant 7)

4.2.5 The next Games: a tool to improve Iraq’s status

Table 10. Sub-themes of RQ3: Theme 1

Research question	Theme	Sub-theme
Iraq Pan-Arab Games’ influence on future opportunities to better relations between Arab countries	The next Games: a tool to improve Iraq’s status	Reinventing Iraq’s image The national development of Iraq

As shown in table 10, for the first theme of research question number three there are two sub-themes, (a) reinventing Iraq’s image, and (b) the national development of Iraq

a. *Reinventing Iraq’s image*

Bull (2012) argued that the most obvious use of sport in diplomacy is when it is co-opted to spread a diplomatic message and amplify it. In particular, sport and major events are important platforms

where governments can project images and messages to large foreign audiences. Also, Murray (2018) noted that re-invention is the most common message delivered through large sporting events. Murray & Pigman (2014b) explained that mega-events are a “relatively cheap means of improving’ their ‘image, credibility, stature, economic competitiveness and (they hope) ability to exercise agency on the international stage”. This is what most participants described as the importance for Iraq to host the next Pan-Arab Games.

“I would assume they want the games to start to change this image and say, Look, we had big games, lots of athletes, lots of countries here, and nothing went wrong. Everyone was safe in going, playing, and everyone was safe coming back. So, I think that this image of “we are stable again, we are safe, again” is the most important thing for Iraq at this time.” (Participant 6)

“Mainly to show that they are capable of hosting them, that they are at a national peace level, which will change the general perspective of many of the Arab countries on and the state of Iraq today. Plus, to show the capability of the organization nationally. So, it's more of a show-off of its facilities, it mainly will boost their tourism sector, it should boost their sports tourism sector.” (Participant 1)

“For the situation, Iraq is going through, I think it would be a platform for Iraq to reflect the true image itself.” (Participant 4)

“It's good for them to bring people again to Iraq, because, with all that happened with the war and stuff, I think it's good to bring people again to Iraq, to help the Iraqi people enjoy a good life.” (Participant 3)

“I believe, it will have a good play, a huge role, hosting this mega event in Iraq to promote what really Iraqi people are or how the Iraq cities are and to prove somehow, I don't know how, if it's a safe country. And we can post this event and we can send to the whole world that Iraq hosted the Arab games.” (Participant 2)

b. *The national development of Iraq*

Participants 5, 7, and 8 emphasized how would a Pan-Arab Game hosted by Iraq affect the internal political situation of the country towards a more unified one behind a common purpose through supporting a sporting event.

“From the political scene in Iraq, I think they have this multi-faction around the country, it's not that unified. So, I think that an Arab games, bringing Iraqi people all around together, and if the people, the decision-makers, related to this Arab games in Iraq are smart enough to make sure that they include all the different factions in Iraq, in this pan Arab games, I think it would be a good step towards unifying the country” (Participant 5)

“It's more important for the Iraqi population before the Arab world, the Arab wide, let's say, interest... What an event like the Arab games does... it brings people together behind one

goal, and that goal, because it's not related to politics, hopefully, the political thinking and the political positions of the different factions within the Iraqi society will be put on the side for one common national goal.” (Participant 7)

“It helps to create unity among the people of Iraq and a common purpose through supporting an event that aims to portray a positive and peaceful image as well as showing the best that the country has to offer.” (Participant 8)

4.2.6 The next Games: a platform for reconciliation and cohesion between Arab countries

As shown in table 11, there are no sub-themes for the second theme of the third research question.

Table 11. Theme 2 of RQ3

Research question	Theme
Iraq Pan-Arab Games’ influence on future opportunities to better relations between Arab countries	The next Games: a platform for reconciliation and cohesion between Arab countries

Interestingly, participants 4 and 6 recalled Iraq as a sporting power in the past.

“Iraq was distinguished in organizing and hosting.” (Participant 4)

“Iraq had one of the best infrastructures. We used to play in fencing competitions there, they used to be at the highest level, Iraq was a strong

competitor... Iraq was one of the biggest and strongest countries in the Arab world. politically, economically and in sports. That was really a powerhouse.” (participant 6)

“Iraq has the capability and power to organize and host a tournament like this. Let’s not forget that Iraq is a big country, despite the problems it faced in the past years. But I think in a few years Iraq will be as it was before.” (Participant 9)

All participants expressed their countries' support for Iraq to host the next Pan-Arab Games.

“We should all back Iraq to try to have good games... So, we will all work together in accepting this and trying to have successful games. So, I would probably thank Iraq for taking the initiative of hosting such games, and we will try to help them as much as possible... I would assume that all the Arab countries will try to help Iraq restore its’ image again and prove to the world that it's safe again... We hope we can help them bring the games, with no problem whatsoever. But we in our countries will have to work with our athletes and our coaches and our federations to try to encourage them to participate.” (Participant 6)

“Jordan would support any Arab country hosting the games. We just want to see the games happen.” (Participant 1)

“If they will host the games, we will be present” (Participant 9)

“The support also of the Arab NOCs and the Federation's within the Arab world, play a big

role. But if they can see unity within the country (Iraq) behind this project, I think a lot of them will be able to give the support as needed...Let's hope we can give some of our knowledge and some of our support to whoever decides, even if, I hope that Iraq can continue, but even if they decided not to continue, whoever decides to go ahead and do it, we will ensure Qatar will give them all the support that they need. Hopefully, Iraq will continue because it can be a good thing for the country.” (Participant 7)

Due to its universal, non-offensive character, sport is effective in transmitting messages of peace and reconciliation (Giulianotti, 2011). It is difficult to skip the diplomatic virtues of sport to mediate estrangement in the Truce, which intends to ‘use sport to establish contacts between communities in conflict; and offer humanitarian support in countries at war; and more generally: to create a window of opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation’ (IOC, 2017).

“Sport is always a platform for reconciliation, local as well as regional as well as international. It's always. Now, how much is sport allowed to play that role? Depends on a few factors... So, if sport is given the opportunity to play that role, it can provide an excellent platform for the concentration.” (Participant 7)

“Any sporting event, like the Arab Games, has the opportunity to be a solid platform for reconciliation. This is especially applicable if the sporting spirit and Olympic values are

applied and respected by all parties involved.”
(Participant 8)

Although, sports were an arena of ultra-nationalist, popular chauvinism, and Arab states' political conflicts (Henry et al., 2003). Participants 5, 2, and 3 point out that the next Pan-Arab Games could unify Arabs by bringing them together.

*“I think what we need is a moment. With what's going on all across the Arab countries. **I personally think that if we have a Pan-Arab Games, this could be the first solution towards solving whatever political problems going on in the front.** But this is my personal take on it.”*
(Participant 5)

*“If it really happened in Iraq... that's what will send the message out. Really, it will show that we can do it. It will show, in addition, to be a successful event, that all the nations to be able to attend. Yes, **it would show to the world that, yes, we have some kind of harmony, maybe, I don't know, between Arab countries...** With Arabs especially it may just improve and build on and look for future cooperation between them.”* *(Participant 2)*

“I think this is why sports can be a tool. So, I think hosting the Arab games and bringing all the Arab countries together can be also a tool to unite Arabs again, and to send a certain message that when we are united, we can do much better.” *(Participant 3)*

It is obvious, looking at the history of the Arab Games, that Arab political relations are directly involved, not just in the timeline of the Games, but in the organisation as a whole (Silva et al., 2011). For the Iraq Games to reflect the concept of cohesion of pan-Arabism to overcome individual state interests, participants 4 and 6 emphasized the importance of separating sports and politics, although it is very challenging for the region.

“If it wants to organize an Arab Games, it needs to put sports as a priority; a sportive goal that doesn’t deal with politics. It deals with all participants in the same spirit and the same sports policy followed.” (Participant 4)

“We try as the people in charge of sport to put politics aside as much as possible, we’re not totally capable of doing it 100%. But we try our best to promote the Olympic values and Olympic Charter and that sports should be really away from politics and from any kind of racism, gender inequality, and all of that. Which we really try to promote and get this mentality into our sports players, coaches, everything, but it’s hard to be able to achieve it 100%. It’s very difficult.” (Participant 6)

Coincidentally, participants 1 and 6 suggested having an Arab Summit in the same city simultaneously with the Pan-Arab Games in an attempt to combine sport and politics constructively.

*“Maybe, maybe one of the good ideas would be to have an Arab summit at the same time.”
(Participant 6)*

“They can make an Arab Summit on the side of the sporting event itself, the sport kind of chills out the people coming to the conference or the Arab summit. So, it would be more of a, let's balance it out. We have an event going on. We have a lot of our nationals in the country. For a major juxtapose events where everybody is over there, dealing with each other. We see our national athletes playing against their national athletes. And then reference that day in day out during the Arab summit that's happening in the same city. Because there are much deep-rooted issues than simple sensitivities... I would say a concurrent event next to that event in the same city might be the key for that.” (Participant 1)

Participants 4 and 6 point out that for the next Pan-Arab Games to happen maybe also with an Arab summit on the side, governmental and sporting officials from different countries should work together, for this one goal.

“It's the diplomatic cleverness of the two countries; the use of the sporting event for a diplomatic or a political event. Also, the slyness of the negotiator.” (participant 4)

“The foreign affairs ministry has to really work with other foreign affairs ministries in other countries to lay down the platform that the good conditions for this to be able to happen... And the presidents and secretaries of the Olympic Committees and they can come together and try

to use this as a platform to becoming united again.” (Participant 6)

Combining the mega sport event with other areas such as the educational and cultural aspects, tolerance, friendship and respect as well as social interrelation, in the point of view of participant 8 the games would reflect the concept of cohesion of pan-Arabism to overcome individual state interest can be reflected

“If the opportunities presented by the Arab Games in areas other than the sport itself (areas such as the educational and cultural aspects, tolerance, friendship and respect as well as social interrelation) are utilized, then the concept of cohesion of pan-Arabism to overcome individual state interest can be clearly reflected.” (Participant 8)

Participant 5 emphasized that the next Pan-Arab Games can be brought back to its’ origins pointing out the pan-Arabist spirit and unity with a well-thought legacy program.

“I think they will need to create a legacy program around the games to reinforce this pan-Arab spirit and bring the games back to their roots because the games initiated because of this sense of wanting to bring the Arab countries altogether. We need to go back to the initial idea behind these games. This would be an added factor to the edition of the games and not just a sporting competition.” (Participant 5)

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Like many aspects in Arab history, public diplomacy in general and sport diplomacy specifically has tended to remain isolated from broader trends in recent history and the social sciences and specifically from the uprising study of sport diplomacy.

I say recent history because sport diplomacy is a relatively new concept as the genesis of the interrelationships between international sport and diplomacy came from the establishment in 2011 of the Diplomacy and International Sport research group by directors Stuart Murray (Bond University), G. Allen Pigman (University of Pretoria) and J. Simon Rofe (SOAS, University of London), which independently discovered that there was a major gap in the literature that connected diplomatic studies with international sport (A. Pigman & Rofe, 2014).

Likewise, most writing on sport diplomacy has drawn sparingly on examples within Arab countries. Nevertheless, recent writers such as Mahfoud Amara have researched sports, society, and politics in the Arab world and the role which the Pan-Arab Games played in relation to the pan-Arabism philosophy and politics.

Also, the year 2020 revealed the uprising interest of some of the Arab countries especially Qatar and Saudi Arabia in discussing sport diplomacy in the region, besides its importance, it is a tool they are using to impress, attract, and put their countries on the international sport map, as they are bidding for future major international events like the 2030 Asian Games.

Thus, as there is a lack of efforts to analyze inter-Arab sport and its role in diplomacy, this thesis aims to clarify the ways sport diplomacy is used by Arab countries through sporting events, and explains the influence of the Pan-Arab Games on the diplomatic relation between these countries through examining the diplomatic challenges for the games and the future opportunities of the proposed next Pan-Arab Games in Iraq, to better diplomatic relationships between these countries.

To do so, I have interviewed nine participants in high-ranked positions of Arab NOCs of the last five countries that hosted the Pan-Arab Games, via video calls with open-ended questions.

This chapter presents an analysis of received research results in more detail and divided into three sections. The first part of the chapter

demonstrates the answer to three research questions of the study and discusses findings with the support of relevant literature. Furthermore, in this chapter, I will present a conclusion of the research. Lastly, based on findings and discussion, I will report limitations and propose recommendations for future research.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Sport Diplomacy Mechanisms Used by Arab Countries Through Sporting Events

The findings showed a clear contradiction between using inter-Arab sporting events to promote pan-Arab ideology (Arab unity); and individual state interests. For Arab countries, the most used sport diplomacy mechanisms are for individual state interests, whereas other mechanisms have the potential to regain trust and create a state of peace between conflicting countries in the region.

Some mechanisms were considered as effective potential use of sporting events, namely: building a platform for dialogue, trust-building, and fostering reconciliation.

Findings have shown that inter-Arab sporting events are

considered to be used only as ice breakers to the political tension between Arab countries, or just a backdoor communication for politicians. One of the sport diplomacy concerns nowadays is the use of sporting events by states to boost their reputation among foreign audiences, to ease tensions in flagging diplomatic relations, or just to test the ground for a future policy change (Murray, 2013). Additionally, according to interviews, there are different perspectives in regards to the effect of sporting events in the region on the diplomatic discourse; sporting events between Arab countries can have both, positive and negative impacts on the diplomatic discourse, depending on the people in charge of sports and politicians.

Although there were different opinions on limitations that prevent sports in the region to build or regain the trust of other Arab nations, most participants agreed that politics is the major obstacle to that. Studies showed that sport does not build trust, but tends to only reflect the larger political environment, at least at the elite level. Their findings force us to consider the limitations of sport as a trust-building mechanism (Caruso & Di Domizio, 2013), as the findings of this study agree.

Nygård & Gates (2013) explained that sport is used to create unity and build peace through reconciliation, integration, and anti-racism

within a nation. Nevertheless, according to the findings, sport within and between the Arab nation did not affect a reconciliation between nations. However, some participants pointed out that it would be a possibility that inter-Arab sporting events affect reconciliation positively.

Mechanisms such as image-building, state-controlled propaganda, providing legitimacy, and sport ambassadors are widely and actively used by Arab countries for their individual interests.

Ham (2002) argued that branding “implies a shift in political paradigms from the modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence.” Findings of this study have shown that with sporting events Arab countries want to show and highlight different aspects of the state; the regime, the relationship of government with the sporting sector, and change perceptions for and of the country. Sport competitions; in particular mega sport events have been used to highlight the progress by a developed nation that would shift the very old-fashioned perceptions of the nation to other publics (Esherick et al., 2017). Findings showed the interest of Arab states to showcase how the country developed and portray it in sporting events.

The research participant highlighted an interesting aspect of the Arab culture, that is a national interest to unite to deliver a good image of the country with a well-hosted sporting event, despite the possible internal clashes between different groups. There are exceptions as Nygård & Gates (2013) explained that the negative side of image-building is that it is possible to ignore or overlook segments of a community that may embarrass the state to present an effective, contemporary, and attractive portrait, to which few participants related with examples.

The negative image of Arabs or the stability of a country drawn by the media, especially the foreign media that cannot be controlled, is another obstacle, according to the findings, to hosting sport events and attract participants.

At the same time, countries and organizing committees try to focus and highlight the strengths, and positive aspects of a country creating state-controlled propaganda. In beautifying their countries to project a positive image, hosting nations take pride; state-controlled propaganda highlighting political ideologies of the country (Don, 2010), its domestic politics, its beautiful serenity, and resources (Esherick et al.,

2017). Findings showed how inter-Arab sporting events communicate to the world the Arab unity, the power of Arabs when they unite, and a civilized perspective of their nations.

Promoting tourism is one of the top reasons for countries to have a successful sporting event as it benefits their countries' economy and exposure. As a diplomatic instrument governments using international sports come under the framework of place branding and its concomitant promotion of investment, trade, and tourism (G. A. Pigman, 2014). Generosity and hospitality are pillars in the Arab culture, an aspect also highlighted in the findings.

Interviews pointed out that countries put the effort in controlling what might reflect a negative image to foreign publics; security checking the fans in stadiums, eliminating protests in events, and creating an in-house communication unit that outsources to any media outlet that they want, are some of those examples.

Throughout history, some Arab countries have used inter-Arab sporting events, in particular, the Pan-Arab Games to show disapproval of a certain Arab government or a certain decision or action taken against

it, by boycotting the tournament. Findings have shown that governments may interfere in the decisions of NOCs and affect participation if there would be an existing political conflict with the hosting or a participating country.

However, interviews showed the willingness of research participants to keep politics and sports separated, so relations between states would not affect participation in sporting competitions.

Findings from this study have identified the influence and power of political or state leaders, heading national and international sport organizations. Regimes and political figures of the Arab world took interest in sport at different stages (Amara, 2014). The reasons and scale of the intervention of a state depended on the nature of the political system (Amara, 2012).

Also, findings highlighted the role of athletes in positively representing their countries and when they can be considered ambassadors, as they can be more influential than politicians. Murray (2018) explains that ambassadors in their respective sports are recognized as influential athletes because they possess perfect diplomatic

qualities: talent, endurance, elegance, virtue, modesty, discipline, transparency, civility, bravery in times of hardship,

Interestingly contradicting findings of whether elite athletes would be suitable to be put in positions to represent their countries only based on their performance. Murray (2018) said that many studies say that international sportspeople do not make good diplomats; their success in their sport does not imply success in diplomacy. Those can sometimes harm the image of the country.

5.1.2 Diplomatic Challenges for The Pan-Arab Games

It is important to differentiate between challenges for the games to be hosted such as economic, social, and administrative, and challenges to the diplomacy of the event.

For a tournament that was decided to go to Iraq in August 2019 and was supposed to be held in 2021 (@AhmedObeidii, 2019; Kurdistan 24, 2019), was - at the time of this research - still not officially communicated to Arab National Olympic Committees. A reason for participants to doubt the seriousness of Iraq to host the games and the interest of Arab countries in the games to happen at all.

Also, when Lebanon and then Morocco withdrew from hosting the 2015 Pan-Arab Games, and the other Arab countries did not show any willingness to host this tournament, the direct effect of the Arab Spring on Arab sport was evident. This, according to Megheirkouni (2017) may have been attributed to three reasons: (1) except for the Arab Gulf countries, the weakening of the Arab economies; (2) the unstable nature of the Arab countries; (3) declining interest in Pan-Arab Games compared with other events, which reflects the absence of consensus on political issues, a state that created a perception of unseriousness towards these Games.

The state of Iraq is challenging in terms of hosting a mega Arab sport event, due to the unstable political situation, the exhausted economy, and nowadays the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Alwan, 2020). Participants of this research expressed their concern about Iraq's ability to host the next games as the image portrayed in the media of the country is one of great destruction.

The interviews allowed to understand that the political tensions as a result of the political differences between Arab countries are the most challenging part when it comes to using the Pan-Arab Games as a

diplomatic tool. Boycotting the games and returning to them has become a pattern in the tournament in correlation with the political situation. This was also clear in history and documented in the literature (Henry et al., 2003; Rolim et al., 2012; Ryan, 2000; Stanton, 2014a). This was an easy decision by states as the games are non-Olympic affiliated, boycotting the tournament carried no consequences.

Due to the international nature of the Pan-Arab Games, foreign relations between Arab countries are inevitable. Significant political messages can be conveyed during such events and boycotts and protests are some of the ways to express disapproval of other governments or decisions. According to Don (2010), a positive approach to prevent world conflicts is the use of sport as a form of global engagement. Nevertheless, via sports and sporting events, a significant message can be addressed as a means of forced diplomacy.

In literature, the examples that are usually used to associate politics with sport have become clichés. As Rofe (2016) describes, these examples as, *nee* caricatures, used as a "short-hand" that does not understand the specifics of each episode, while also assuming that these episodes do not share a misrepresentation of the "political" experience

of sport. Taylor (1986) briefly wrote, “sport and politics cannot be mutually isolated”.

The findings have shown that the significance of the Games varies between Arab unity, individual state interests, and sportive importance, according to the answers of the research participants.

For Henry et al. (2003), the place and the need for pan-Arabism in the global political, economic and cultural order was one of the challenges for the games that needed a critical review. Nine years after the last held Pan-Arab Games, participants of this research see the need for those games to come back to reinforce Arab unity within the Arab athletes and their entourage, which can influence and ease the suffering inter-Arab relations. After all, this was one of the main aims of the establishment of the tournament. In 1947, Arab League’s first Secretary-General, Abdul Rahman Azzam, said:

There is no doubt that gathering the Arab youth every year is the best way for acquaintance, harmony, and invitation to the spiritual unity in accordance with the second article of the Arab League charter.

The Arab Games from 1953, according to Rolim et al. (2012) reflected this idea of unity to a certain degree, while they showed

characteristics of individual state interests. For Henry et al. (2003) one of the challenges for the games was the fragmentation and regionalization of Pan-Arab ideology, due to subnational political and economic interests.

Individual state interests, indeed, were repeatedly more obvious in the responses of participants than ways the Games have benefited the Arab world as a whole. In general, according to Amara (2016), the reason for advanced capitalist states to host such events consisted of one or more of the following: urban regeneration; the feel-good effect that large-scale events would generate; the economic benefits of hosting, especially the rise in tourism; the tradition of participation among the masses that elite sport is meant to bring with it, and international prestige.

For the research participants, a mega sport event like the Pan-Arab Games was used to economically benefit the state as the tourism sector is refreshed, build the image of the host country and show its' power on and off the field. This use of sporting events to showcase the power of a country has become a long-standing tradition (Esherick et al., 2017). Rolim et al. (2012) highlighted that the medal table of the Pan-Arab Games was a reflection of the Arab hierarchy; a clear undermining

of the pan-Arab ideal.

Although this is not backed by literature; from the results, it was apparent that Pan-Arab Games are a suitable environment for athletes to gain experience through participation in an Olympics-like sport event. As this tournament was not contributing to any sport ranking for it is categorized as ethnical regional Games, with which the IOC categorically avoided any association (Rolim et al., 2012), countries used to send their younger athletes to be assessed for international participation.

5.1.3 The proposed Iraq Pan-Arab Games influencing future opportunities to better relations between Arab countries

Findings have shown that Iraq would benefit from hosting the next Pan-Arab Games, and participants think it is a very brave step, the country could use to rebuild or improve its' international image, portraying a positive and peaceful image as well as showing the best that the country has to offer. Any chance to foster the positive image of a nation internationally must be taken in today's complex and fast-paced, technology-driven environment, and policymakers are supposed to be

well served with the knowledge of how to use sport to meet their purposes (Esherick et al., 2017).

Moreover, the proposed games are expected to help create unity among the people of Iraq, getting the different conflicting factions of the Iraqi society to work for a common purpose through supporting the organization of such mega sport events that can benefit the whole country. Therefore, participants of the study have expressed their countries' support for Iraq to host the next Pan-Arab Games. Sport has a sublime diplomatic power, more than any other international institution, to resolve conflict, to solve division and estrangement, and to foster stability, prosperity, and comity (Murray, 2018).

The other use of the proposed tournament in Iraq is creating a platform for reconciliation between Arab countries, as sport is effective in transmitting messages of peace and reconciliation, due to its' non-offensive, universal character (Giulianotti, 2011), In addition to the diplomatic virtue that can mediate estrangement in the Truce, which intends to 'use sport to establish contacts between conflicting nations, and in general, it can create a window of opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation' (IOC, 2017).

Although, sport in Arab states was an arena of ultra-nationalism, popular chauvinism, and political conflicts (Henry et al., 2003). Based on the interviews the next Pan-Arab Games could have the power to bringing conflicting Arab countries together to portray a sense of unity. As for ways to using the games for their original purpose; hold and spread a pan-Arabist spirit and unity to overcome individual state interest, answers were contradicting between separating sports and politics and combing the sporting event with an Arab summit in the same city.

Murray & Pigman (2014a) distinguished between “sport-as-diplomacy,” which entails the negotiations that take place in surrounding sporting occasions, and the “international diplomacy of sport” where governments utilize sport as a means to pursue policy and national interests (Rofe, 2016).

Finding also included that a legacy of the mega Arab sport event combined with other areas such as the educational and cultural aspects, tolerance, friendship and respect as well as social interrelation, would reinforce the pan-Arab spirit and, and bring the games back to their roots. For countries looking to boost their reputation abroad, one of the most widely used motives for organizing a major sporting event is the

development of a legacy (Esherick et al., 2017).

5.2 Limitations and Future Implications

Based on findings as well as suggestions from participants I provide some future implications with the hope that it will be a step forward to improve the current situation of inter-Arab sport relations:

Interviews with representatives from the proposed next host of the games; Iraq, was not possible, as the NOC of Iraq was going through re-elections of their general assembly in the period of this research. The outcomes of the elections of the Executive Office on November 14th, 2020 were not acknowledged by the IOC and the OCA on November 21, 2020, through a notice sent by the International Olympic Committee to the Iraqi Olympic Committee. The letter stated that the presence of a number of violations in the electoral process led to the decision to cancel the elections and stop the activities of the elected executive office (AlEshraqTV, 2020).

Arab National Olympic Committees lack communication between them. Some attributed this to, but not only, the language of international communication (English / French), or to the continental

affiliation (OCA / ANOCA). It is highly recommended that the Union of Arab National Olympic Committees increases communication, engagement and network between Arab NOCs, to share within themselves their managerial experiences and know-how.

Since this specific research was focused on sport diplomacy of the Pan-Arab Games, a suggestion for future research would emphasize on the influence of the social-political paradigm shift of the pan-Arabism ideology, on sports and sport diplomacy.

A media content analysis (Arab and foreign press analysis) can be done on the topic, to explore the landscape of the social surrounding of the diplomacy of Arab sport. As it might be more feasible and a researcher can get more information.

5.3 Conclusion

Although there is an increased interest in research associated with diplomacy and international sport relations, there is a clear need for researchers to explore and improve the field of sport diplomacy in Arab countries, and regional and national sport organizations to develop sport diplomacy strategies for a systematic approach of using sports as a

diplomatic tool.

However, the research clarified that Arab countries have used sporting events as a tool for image-building, as state-controlled propaganda, providing legitimacy and sport ambassadors. Whereas, other mechanisms are potentially seen as ways to ease the diplomatic tensions between Arab countries, namely, building a platform for dialogue, trust-building, and fostering reconciliation.

For Arab countries, the most used sport diplomacy mechanisms are for individual state interests, whereas other mechanisms are more lively used to regain trust and create a state of peace between conflicting countries in the region.

Finally, all participants are supporting the brave decision of Iraq to host the next Pan-Arab Games in a challenging time, economically and politically, and are looking forward to having a tournament that will rebuild bridges and foster reconciliation to bring back a sense of the pan-Arab philosophy overcoming individual state interests.

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Appendix 1

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

Thank you for your cooperation

To whom it may concern,

Firstly, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Maria Barakat.

Currently, I am enrolled in the Global Sport Management Masters' Program at Seoul National University in Seoul, South Korea, and I am in the process of writing my Master's Thesis entitled: Examination of Inter-Arab Relations from Sport Diplomacy Perspective – Diplomatic Challenges and Opportunities of the Pan-Arab Games, to which I invite you to participate.

This thesis aims to clarify the ways sport diplomacy is used by Arab countries through sporting events, and explains the influence of the pan-Arab Games on the diplomatic relation between these countries through examining the diplomatic challenges for the games and the future opportunities of the proposed Pan-Arab Games in Iraq, to better diplomatic relationships between these countries.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You may decline altogether, or simply choose not to answer questions you don't wish to. There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. There will be no costs for participating, nor will you benefit from it. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Data from this research will be kept under lock and key and reported only as a collective combined total. No one other than the researcher will know your individual answers to the interview questions. Recorded material will be destroyed one month after the interview.

Due to the research's purpose, participants of this study were selected using the purposeful homogeneous sampling technique, and so

I am interviewing 1-2 high ranked participants in positions at Arab National Olympic committees of countries that hosted the Pan-Arab Games.

If you agree to participate in this research, please reply to the e-mail address: *****@***.com, whether you are willing to participate or not and I will arrange a Zoom meeting to conduct the interview, according to your time schedule.

Sincerely,

Maria Barakat

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

RQ1. What are sport diplomacy mechanisms used by Arab countries through sporting events?

- Have you been involved in hosting an event? What roles have you played in hosting an event?
- What do you promote with a sporting event? And why?

Image-Building

- Do you try to control factors that can affect what you try to promote?

Building A Platform for Dialogue

- How did sporting events involving Arab countries serve diplomatic discourse between countries? (*positive? Negative?*)
Who initiated?

Creating A Platform for New Legislations and Agreements.

- Did you have to implement or change legislations to be able to host an event? When? Why?

Providing Legitimacy

- If your country doesn't approve of a certain Arab government, Will that influence your participation in a sporting event? How?

Trust-Building

- Do you think that through sports you can build or regain the trust of other nations?
- What are the limitations?

Reconciliation, integration, and anti-racism

- What are the most important things to focus on in Arab sporting events?
- How would those affect or serve different ideologies?

State-Controlled Propaganda

- How were sporting events used to highlight the ideology of the country?
- Does the NOC care to use sporting events to highlight difficulties (problems) the country is facing? Do you think other groups would?

Sport Ambassadors

- Do you think your athletes can be ambassadors representing your country? How?
- Do they have what it takes? Why?

RQ. What are the diplomatic challenges for the pan-Arab Games?

- What is the importance/significance of the pan-Arab Games to your country?
- From your perspective, what is the importance/significance of hosting the pan-Arab Games for Iraq? Does that conflict with (country) interests? Why?
- What difficulties did (country) face during hosting/participating the pan-Arab Games in regards to relations between countries? (financial/ cultural / political)
- Did (country) overcome those difficulties?
 - No: Why?
 - Yes: How? When (before/ during/ after the games?)

RQ3. How would the next proposed Pan-Arab Games in Iraq influence future opportunities to better relations between Arab countries?

- What is your perception of Iraq hosting the pan-Arab Games?
 - Despite the many incidents that Iraq was involved in.
- Do (country) support Iraq in hosting the next games?
- Would the 2022 pan-Arab Games be a platform for reconciliation?
 - Yes: What is needed to be done or taken into consideration? (how?)
 - No: Why?
- What would it take for the Iraq Games to reflect the concept of cohesion of pan-Arabism to overcome individual state interest?

국문 초록

스포츠 외교적 관점에서 본 아랍국가간 관계 고찰: Pan-Arab 경기 대회외의 외교적 난항과 기회

마리아

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체육교육과 글로벌스포츠매니지먼트

아랍 역사의 다양한 측면을 보았을 때 공공 외교를 포함한 스포츠 외교는 최근 사회과학의 분야에서의 연구 진행이 고립되어 있거나 활발히 이루어지고 있지 않는 경향을 보이고 있다. 따라서 본 논문은 스포츠 이벤트를 통해 아랍 국가들이 스포츠 외교 방법을 살펴보고 Pan-Arab Games의 외교적 위기 및 기회를 검토하여 아랍 국가 간의 외교 관계에 미치는 영향을 설명하는 것을 목적으로 하고 있다. 또한 이라크에서 앞으로 열리는 Pan-Arab Games의 외교적 관계와 방향에 대한 논의를 하고자 한다. Purposeful sampling을 통해 심층면담에 참여할 연구참여대상을 선정하였으며 자료를 수집을 했다. Pan-Arab Games를 주최 한

마지막 5개 국가의 아랍 국가 올림픽위원회 직위의 고위 위원을 연구참가자 선정했다.

Pan-Arab 이데올로기 (아랍 통일)를 촉진하기 위해 아랍 간 스포츠 이벤트는 이용하는 관계의 모순적인 모습이 나타났다. 가장 많이 사용되는 스포츠 외교 메커니즘은 각 국가의 이익을 추구하는 반면 신뢰를 회복하고 지역 내 분쟁 그리고 국가간에 평화 상태를 만들 수 있는 잠재력을 가지고 있다는 참여대상자들의 의견도 있었다. 스포츠 이벤트 개최를 제안한 국가의 신뢰 부족, 시위 또는 불매 운동에 반영된 지역의 갈등과 불안정을 야기하는 정치적 차이는 이벤트를 개최하는 과정에 겪게 될 수 있는 어려움으로 인식하는 것으로 나타났다.

본 연구에 따르면 Pan-Arab Games의 경우, 각 지역의 특색에 알맞은 마케팅 방향을 통해 국가가 경제적으로 활성화되고 개선에 도움이 될 것으로 예상되는 조직적 개최를 목표로 삼고다. 또한 이라크의 이미지를 안전하고 발전된 스포츠 강국으로 재창조할 수 있는 기회와 가능성에 대해 논의를 했으며 이벤트를 통해 국가의 유산을 유지하고 화해와 결속의 장으로 발전할 수

있는 측면도 제시되었다.

주요어: 스포츠 외교, Pan-Arab 경기 대회, Pan-Arabism, 아랍 세계,
아랍 스포츠

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