

PROJECT REPORT

Project name (as stated on LIFE website): Sports in International Politics

Group name/number: Group 4

Supervisor(s): Benjamin Klasche, Terry McDonald

Participants: GUNNAR-LAUR SINDI, SOFIA KLICH, KARMEN PIIRSOO, YELYZAVETA OTRADOVNA, ANNA HELENA LIIV, KRYSYIAN LAPKA

1. Description

The ELU project Sports in International Politics explores the links between major sports events and how they have shaped international relations. There have been many sports events throughout world history that have had major effects in not only how sports has developed, but also how nations have developed, especially during international competitions.

The role of sports in international relations has not been researched too extensively, which is the main goal of this project. The final product is an educational and informative Youtube video that explains the history of the event and its effect on international relations. The videos have been released as a series, which will potentially be continued in subsequent semesters.

Group 4: has chosen to analyze the merger of LIV Golf and the PGA Tour. The Saudi Arabian LIV Golf was established in 2021 as a counterpart to the American golfing tour PGA. LIV Golf lured some of the world's most reputable golfing names to their fold, offering incredible salaries and prize money. The PGA Tour reacted by restricting those golfers to participate in their competitions, because PGA still hosts the main tournaments in the golfing world. These actions and the fact that LIV Golf is a franchise backed by Saudi money, resulted in lawsuits and intense exchanges in media. However, nobody anticipated that the two rivals would announce a merger in June 2023, which would combine the two tours assets. This is part of a larger topic of the Saudi Arabian regime's recent activity in the sporting world and how they are using sports as a soft power tool to improve their reputation worldwide.

2. Importance

Sports are a major part of culture, both internationally and nationally. With an ever-globalizing world, sports and the large media industry connected to it have already pointed out several human rights issues, *sports-washing* and the importance of equal treatment and competition, just to name a few. But sports goes back a long time in history and a

lot of the historical effects have largely survived in folklore and common knowledge, but have not been studied further.

Interdisciplinarity is an important part of the project. Each group member was able to contribute in a manner that was relevant to their study discipline, which made it easier for different perspectives on the same issue to come together.

Different groups have used different sources for the basis of their research.

Here are some examples:

Group 4:

The importance of this project lies in highlighting how using sports can influence a nation's reputation and international standing. The main problem of the work was the question of how LIV Golf shows the intricacies of Saudi Arabia's investments in sports in order to increase its influence on the international arena. The role of our group was to combine relevant knowledge and competences from different fields and apply them in practice to create a single product (video) that could have been used for further research as well as educational purposes.

The Saudi government plans to establish itself as a sports and leisure destination by hosting major golf tournaments and attracting top players. The collaboration between LIV Golf and the Saudi government offers a significant chance for sportswashing. Saudi Arabia intends to present itself as a modern and forward-looking country by investing significantly in the golf tour and enticing top players with generous financial rewards. The flashy and "royal" nature of professional golf tournaments divert attention from the political repression and human rights abuses happening in the country.

The main resource of information for this project is secondary sources on the Internet. We used different articles, videos, interviews with athletes and the news and documents related to the the Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 project. We do not limit ourselves to one type of resource, as we aim to show the situation from different angles and areas by exploring cause and effect relationships. Before starting our project, we carefully reviewed the content of previous works and made relevant conclusions about what might be interesting and understandable to the general public.

Here are some of the sources we have used for our research:

1. A timeline of Saudi's Arabia's unprecedented sports investments. 28.02.2024.
https://www.espn.com/golf/story/_/id/38162723/saudi-arabia-sports-takeover-line-30-years-making
2. Aramco. Global Energy Partner. <https://corp.formula1.com/partners/aramco/>
3. Jules Boykoff. Toward a Theory of Sportswashing: Mega-Events, Soft Power, and Political Conflict. – *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 2022, 39, 342-351.
4. Cristiano Ronaldo 'happy' in Saudi Arabia, wants other players to join him.

- <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/06/02/football/cristiano-ronaldo-saudi-arabia-transfer-window-spt-intl/index.html>
5. Leon Davis, Daniel Plumley, Rob Wilson. For the love of 'sportswashing'; LIV Golf and Saudi Arabia's push for legitimacy in elite sport. – *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 2023, 1-19.
 6. Kevin Draper. The Alliance of LIV Golf and the PGA Tour: Here's What to Know. 17.07.2023.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/07/sports/golf/pga-liv-golf-merger.html>
 7. Joey D'Urso. Saudi Arabia's takeover of world sport: Football, golf, boxing and now tennis. 02.02.2024.
<https://theathletic.com/5237849/2024/02/02/saudi-arabia-sport-investments/>
 8. Kyle Fruh, Alfred Archer, Jake Wojtowicz. Sportswashing: Complicity and Corruption. – *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 2023, 17(1), 101-118.
 9. Giulio M. Gallarotti. Soft Power: What it is, Why it's Important, and the Conditions Under Which it Can Be Effectively Used. – *Journal of Political Power*, 2011, 4(1), 25-47.
 10. Joseph S. Nye. *Soft power: the means to success in world politics*. New York, Public Affairs 2004.

3. Activities & Stakeholders

This project was divided into several key stages: research, video making and video promotion. The first was the writing of an academic paper, which served as a basis for creating further content. This also included collecting and analysing thematic literature, selecting an appropriate theory of international relations and its justification. The next stage was the creation of the video and uploading to the Internet. The script was written according to journalistic standards: complex information in a simple and understandable language. The final stage is going to be the promotion of the video using available marketing strategies to reach the widest possible audience. The end result of the project was the creation of high-quality, accessible and interesting content that will be popular among YouTube users (compared to similar projects).

This project has no commercial purpose and receives no external funding. Our main target audience and partners are students and teachers of Tallinn University. This work, due to its focus, may be of particular interest to golfers, both to hobbyists and professionals. Also, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tallinn University can contribute from the results of our project. As the video will be published on YouTube, that can be useful for anyone interested in international relations, European politics, sports and Ukrainian or Polish issues and history in particular.

5. Sustainability

The ownerships of this video are transferred to the supervisors of this project and owners of the channel, yet Team 4 of Spring 2024 was the creator. The video will be uploaded in the coming days and will be available for

the public to gain knowledge about the merger of LIV gold and the PGA tour, and of the efforts by the Saudi government to use sports as a soft power tool to gain international influence and reputation.

6. Results and annexes

Based on the research of the topic, we created the video and wrote a research paper. The video will be uploaded to YouTube on the 16th of May and will be available for the public. All the reports, presentations, paper and video have been shared with our supervisors and got credit for it.

7. Project Action Plan.

Tasks	Deadline	Student(s) responsible
Choice of the primary topic	22.02.2024	Group
Choice of the backup topic	22.02.2024	Group
Confirmation of the primary topic	26.02.2024	Group
Confirmation of the action plan and dividing the tasks among the members	28.02.2024	Group
Research of Saudi sportswashing	28.02.2024 - 13.03.2024	Group
Research of LIV Golf and PGA	28.02.2024 - 13.03.2024	Karmen, Lissa
Research of the IR theory (Soft power)	28.02.2024 - 13.03.2024	Anna, Gunnar
Adjustments based on feedback from the supervisors	07.03.2024	Group
Registration for the mid-term session	15.03.2024	Karmen
Fill out the mid-term report	21.03.2024	Group
Send the mid-term report to supervisors	21.03.2024	Karmen
Create a presentation for the mid-term report	21.03.2024	Lissa, Sonya

Write the research paper with academic sources	25.03.2024	Anna, Lissa, Krystian
Create marketing strategy	25.03.2024	Sonya
Mid-term presentation	25.03.2024	Gunnar
Analyze feedback	25-31.03.2024	Group
Pre-production of video (pitching ideas, script)	01-07.04.2024	Anna, Karmen, Gunnar
Video post-production	08-25.04.2024	Karmen
Analyzing video, feedback from the group	26.04.2024	Group
Editing final draft of the video	03.05.2024	Karmen
Promotion of the video (social media, youtube)	04-16.05.2024	Group
Submit the Self-reflection task	04.05.2024	Group
Finish portfolio of the work	04.05.2024	Gunnar
Registration for the presentation day	07.05.2024	Karmen
Final presentation	14.05.2024 2-4pm	Gunnar, Karmen
Video premiere in Youtube	16.05.2024	

8. Media coverage

The video will be uploaded on the 16th of May. The video will be shared by team members, between their friends and other people they know. Also, it will be posted and shared through various social media platforms: Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, Reddit etc. in order to get more views and attract a larger audience.

9. Learning experience

Gunnar-Laur Sindi:

Contribution: I contributed to the international theory part of the project, I helped with creating the script for the video, I was responsible for presenting our project in the mid-term and also for presenting our project on the final day of presentations. Also I'm responsible for the common portfolio. Of course I helped with other things as well but these are the main things.

Experience: I think I gained some experience and further knowledge in teamwork and how to organize people and activities. I definitely learned a lot about the topic of LIV golf and the PGA tour and the merger of the two. I think the hardest part was actually coming up with an easy to understand but yet informative script, thankfully I didn't do it alone and I hope it turned out fine but the finished product isn't out yet.

Sofia Klich:

Contribution: My main contribution was to help the group with various tasks, also think about the marketing strategy for the final video and prepare a mid-term presentation.

Experience: If I talk about experience, I can definitely say that this project gave me the opportunity to learn a lot of new things. I really enjoyed participating in this project since I was very interested in learning more about our topic as well as interacting with people from different programs.

Karmen Piirsoo:

Contribution: The main thing I was responsible for was the video project and also will be presenting at the final day together with Gunnar.

Experience: I learned a lot about video editing and new tools to use in future projects. Also, although I was already interested in the LIV and PGA subject, I learned a lot of new information about the background of it, in terms of the sportswashing.

Yelyzaveta Otradovna:

Contribution: I was responsible for the analytical part of the paper - using the information provided in previous chapters, I have written a "Discussion" part together with the introduction and conclusion. I have also taken part in creating a mid-term presentation.

Experience: I have gained knowledge in different areas - sportswashing, golf, and international relations theories. I have also seen how the high level of work organization and good communication impact the process and results of the project.

Anna Helena Liiv:

Contribution: I was supporting the team as much as I could in different ways (presenting at our bi-weekly meetings occasionally, taking notes at the meetings, participating in our group meetings etc), but I would say my main task was to contribute to the research paper. We decided to split the paper into three parts based on topics, and I was responsible for one of them. I researched my topic, read the academic literature and wrote my section of the paper. I also supported with the final edits and formatting the paper. Because I was involved with the research paper, I also supported with writing the script for the video, since I have researched the topic.

Experience: In general, the experience was positive. The topic was completely new for me, so I was motivated to research it and it was an interesting process. We were all very busy this semester and two team members were graduating (I was one of them), so the communication sometimes fell off, but we still managed to fulfill all the necessary tasks, write a 10-page research paper and produce a video. The supervisors were also very helpful and always cheerful during the meetings.

Krystian Lapka:

Contribution: I was tasked with researching the theoretical framework of soft power and sportswashing, my output can be seen in the research paper that was produced as the informational staple for the video. Read through plenty of articles on the topics mentioned and boil them down into what can be seen in the paper. After the video publication I will make sure to promote the video to my best extent.

Experience: I enjoyed trying out researching into a branch that while being different from international law, remains within the sphere of international interactions and mechanisms involved within it. I got to learn about the soft power of states and that there are actual organizations producing annual reports on it. This experience highlighted the intertwined nature of different branches of SOGOLAS.