

**What Went Wrong with Sports Diplomacy?
The Case of Mexico**

By

CANTU REYNA URQUIDI, Tabatha Melissa

THESIS

Submitted to

KDI School of Public Policy and Management

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

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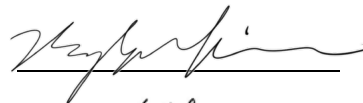
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MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

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Approval as of August, 2021

Acknowledgement

Behind this effort, there are many beloved and sacrifices.

Pain, sweat, starve and dreams.

Sport does not build character. It reveals it.

I coursed this master done thesis in the middle of a global pandemic, with all the odds
against it.

This is for my ancestors, coaches, professors, and friends.

This is for those who never surrender,

And with the permission of God.

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Abstract.

Sports diplomacy enhances a nation's positive image through soft power. However, this research suggests an alternative outcome for sports diplomacy in which a country's international sports relations leave a non-favourable impression. This research analyses Mexico's international sports governance and its effects on sports diplomacy, intending to identify the factors that end with a negative national brand image. To do so, it reconstructs the central components of sports diplomacy, highlights the role of athletes as actors and the impact of social media platforms for national promotion, and analyzes multiple studies-cases about Mexican international sports governance occurring over 2019-2020. Based on those studies-cases, a panel of experts through a SWOT matrix analyzes Mexico's national projection through sports. Then, opportunities and threats found are reviewed through the PESTEL analysis tool. By doing so, this research contributes to the sports diplomacy field and serves sports and nation-branding practitioners.

1. Introduction

Sports diplomacy enhances a nation's positive image through soft power. However, this research suggests an alternative outcome for sports diplomacy in which international sports relations left a non-favourable image. To that end, it reconstructs the central components of sports diplomacy, highlights the role of athletes as actors and the impact of social media platforms for national promotion, and analyses controversies of Mexico's governance on international sports in 2019-2020. Hence, this research analyses Mexico's international sports governance and its effects on sports diplomacy. Based on those studies-cases, the national projection is analyzed by a panel of experts through a SWOT matrix. Then, PESTEL analysis is used to assess those opportunities and threats. By doing so, this research contributes to the sports diplomacy field and serves sports and nation-branding practitioners.

This research claim that sports diplomacy leaves a negative national image may seem contradictory, especially when Sports embody by excellence the values of respect and discipline and diplomacy imply the art of management skills. Nonetheless, the theory in this field highlights that diplomats vary in nature, so their actions and discourse may deviate from the State's interests.

The 'international-sport-as-diplomacy' model (Murray and Geoffrey, 2013) suggests that diplomatic representation and communication serve as an unofficial venue of contact among influential non-governmental actors beyond boundaries. Public officers in the international sports field and athletes' actions catch the attention of international audiences, and the message is transmitted may have a positive or negative effect. Athletes, coaches and sports organizations are non-official diplomats, so the statements expressed by these actors do not necessarily serve the nation's image.

Given that sportspeople and sports institutions are non-official diplomats, free individual willingness -far from the State interest- is an element that allows conferring contradictory outcomes in the instrumentalization of sports in foreign policy. Hence, this paper throws light on what sports practitioners say about diplomacy through sport. Such a study for Mexico is timely and necessary for several reasons. From 2019-2020, Mexican sports have registered the incoming controversies that took international dimensions:

- The Mexican Swimming Federation scandals in 2019
- The adoption of Uzbek nationality by the Mexican fencer Natalia Botello in 2019
- The aggravations after the elimination of federal funds for high-performance sports in 2020

Today, the dynamics of sports and politics have changed after the COVID19, so research on global sports governance is relevant for the adaptation and quick response to the post-pandemic era.

This dissertation is structured in seven sections. Chapter one introduces the focus, purpose, and direction of the research. Chapter two confers to relevant theory for sports diplomacy analysis. Chapter three confers to a set of three study cases in which Mexico's national image left a negative projection into international audiences. Chapter five, methodology, introduces the SWOT and PESTEL analysis. Chapter five presents the results of the methodology after consulting the expert panel. Chapter six discusses the expert's results. Finally, chapter seven exposes the upshot and possible directions for further research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. About sports-diplomacy

To set the discussion on sports diplomacy in this paper, three important conceptions of the term 'diplomacy' (Bull,1977) must be distinguished:

(i) Diplomacy as “the conduct of relations between states and other entities withstanding in world politics by official agents and by peaceful means” (p.156). This is the broadest sense of the term and is what is meant by it here.

(ii) Diplomacy as the relations conducted by professional diplomats. Here, Sir Harold Nicolson’s definition can be used: “Diplomacy is the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist.” (1934, p.156).

(iii) Diplomacy as the conduct of relations between states that is carried out in a discreet or subtle manner.

In international relations, this practice is a powerful alternative in a negotiation that offers a conflict resolution without resorting to the use of force (Velazquez, Gonzalez & Garcia, 2018, p.46). Thus, it is a very useful tool for negotiation, policy, sports, and other activities that involve a human being. And so on, sports-diplomacy is a vast untapped diplomatic tool that can reduce differences and promote dialogue, sustainability, development, and dialogue (Murray, 2011, p.2).

Sports diplomacy is an element of public diplomacy. This branch is used by the State and other actors to influence an international audience by creating a national narrative. The concept is simple: Sports, as a universal phenomenon that transcends linguistic, national, and cultural boundaries, facilitates communication among cultures (Özsarı, Fişekçioğlu, Teme & Çetın, 2018). As such, it serves a variety of diplomatic ends. However, this simple view today is reductionist. Therefore, Gérôme Champagne, French diplomat and former FIFA Deputy Secretary General, distinguishes between sports diplomacy and diplomacy through sport. The first involves the classic vision of sports encounters as an element of state reconciliation. Diplomacy through sport, for its part, consists of a real use or instrumentalization of sport in the foreign policy of a State. (Ruellan and Gassmann, 2014)

The expert in the sports diplomacy field, Stuart Murray, explains that “in the plural, modern and dynamic diplomatic environment, sports diplomacy offers people and nations a chance to showcase their best in ways other than politics, warfare and global one-upmanship” (Murray, 2013, p.15). However, sports diplomacy and diplomacy through sport are embodied in institutions that vary in scope and nature. Based on the diverse nature of sports diplomacy, this research argues against the belief that sports left a favourable outcome in diplomacy and suggests that sports diplomats think they are projecting a negative national image. To do so, it uses the classic definition of sports diplomacy and focuses on two elements: the nature of the actors and the outcome of its actions.

Sports Diplomacy belongs to the Public Diplomacy field, and this last one is normally used as a synonym for Nation Branding. Despite its equivalent use, Szondi (2008) suggests that both concepts are more interconnected rather than refer to the same concept. This author explains that "Branding targets mass audiences in the target nation – who are largely passive – while public diplomacy targets well-defined publics such as the cultural or political elites, opinion formers and leaders, those interested in foreign news or policy"

(p.13). For this research, we consider the sport's elite as the target audience. In this category, we enlist high-performance sports practitioners and coaches, sponsor brands, and sports policymakers, compounding the expert panel for our analysis.

3. Mexican sports diplomacy studies cases

3.1. Mexican swimming federation scandals after athlete abuse

Teresa Alonso Garcia, a Mexican senior national team member and two-time Pan American silver medalist, complains on her social media about emotional and verbal abuse by national team head coach Adriana Loftus. The swimmer made the following declaration on a video posted on her Instagram on February 18th:

"Over the last few years, I have suffered psychological and verbal violence, and a constant humiliation which have caused physical damages as well [...] The physical damage that was caused by depression, by stress, and by the harassment to which I was subjected led to intestinal bleeding and a very strong anemia [...] These are things that have already changed my life. All this has already been known by the Mexican swimming federation, by the president Kiril Todorov, and they have not done anything to stop all the harassment in this sport. I no longer want any other girl or any other athlete to feel like I feel today, nor do I want them to suffer what I suffered" (Alonso, 2020).

Alonso's messages, fully translated below by Inside Synchro (2020), denounce the team's psychologist, Alberto Calderon, husband of the coach Loftus. The swimmer pointed fingers against both of them, who created an atmosphere of fear and repression. After her declaration on social media, other five athletes spoke up. Madison Lopez, Ana Karen Soto, Yulieth Barreto, Samantha Flores, and Renata Romero also came forward with Loftus's same allegations. In addition, a joint video interview (El Universal, 2020) between Alonso and Soto revealed that they started self-injecting carnitine in her legs at the age of 16 to lose weight fast.

Is not the first time in which Mexico's swim is involved in international scandals. Kiril Todorov, president of the Mexican Swimming Federation [FMN] is tailed in multiple significant controversies. He currently faces numerous lawsuits and is under investigation by

the Mexican government. Still, he runs the FMN. Meanwhile, the FMN and Todorov are currently accused of concealing their selection criteria for the Tokyo Olympics (Swim Swams, 2020).

3.2. Mexican fencer Paola Pliego adopts Uzbek nationality

Traditionally, Olympic athletes serve as informal diplomats that speak up for a nation in its favour, but an exception is found when media shows heads like 'Mexican athlete, tired of corruption, changes nationality' (Forbes, 2020) or 'I would rather the Olympics than money' (Paola Pliego in ESPN, 2020).

The fencer Paola Pliego, a double Pan American Championships medalist, was banned from competing in Rio 2016 after a wrongful accusation of doping. The Mexican National Commission of Physical Culture and Sports [CONADE] said that her sample had registered 540 nanograms of an illegal substance used to treat narcolepsy. However, a second test conducted in Germany by the doctor Hans Geyer returned a negative result. After proving the negative result, the International Fencing Federation cleared Pliego to compete in October 2016. Nonetheless, the Mexican Fencing Federation president, Jorge Castro, never registered her in any competition for the past three years. (Kun, 2019)

The fencer gave a blow to the Mexican sports authorities after a civil judge of the Superior Court of Justice of Mexico City determined that the National Commission for Physical Culture and Sports [CONADE] must pay 15 million pesos for to compensate the athlete for the moral damage caused in 2016 by a false positive in modafinil (Palma, 2020). Now Pliego found in Uzbekistan a haven of peace, support and affection, and for this reason, she acquired the nationality of her new homeland.

She assured that in Mexico, she only received the contempt and discredited of sports leaders and institutions. *'Regardless of my efforts and results, I was a victim of corruption, sports leaders and their interests,'* the fencer said in a letter posted on her social networks (Forbes, 2020). The same article on Forbes explains that Jorge Castro, through the presidency of the Mexican Fencing Federation, became the thorniest obstacle that an athlete ever wants to encounter in Paola Pliego life, because he became a wall of barbed wire so that he could not compete, for an alleged sports foul. The Mexican Olympic Committee [COM], chaired by Carlos Padilla Becerra, was indifferent to the various arguments that the athlete exhibited to

allow her to compete. The same happened with the CONADE and even the Sports Appeal and Arbitration Commission [CAAD], which decided to give Jorge Castro all the support to continue as the worst obstacle for the athlete.

A public apology is missing: 'I have never received an apology, I have always wanted them to accept what they did to me, not to pretend that nothing happened, as they have done from the beginning. I also would like to have CONADE do an investigation to find out exactly what happened and apologize. That is what I looked for most of all'. (Pliego in Carrera, 2020).

3.3. Sports funds suspension after Covid-19

As coronavirus has become a global problem, Mexican Sports faces meaningful reductions of public funds. Empty stadiums, closed gyms and an economy in recession reduce sports development and its international promotion. One of its most remarkable consequences is the public budget reduction in national sports. This government decision raised noise in both national and international audiences: newspapers from the United States, United Kingdom, and India covered notes related to how the Soccer Liga MX confirmed the promotion-relegation suspension for the next five years because of financial constraints (Pisani, 2020).

As the sports situation worsened due to Covid-19, on 2020 October 1st, the Mexican government formally announced the disappearance of FODEPAR (Trust for the Development of High-Performance Sports). This particular event has caused controversy since FODEPAR funds are just one of the 109 public trust's that have been abolished due to Covid-19 costs. About it, The Guardian reveals that scientists, human rights defenders and artists have warned that the funding restructures threaten the future of critical activities for human and economic development (Agren, 2020). But why is this so controversial for the audience? In the words of the expert in the sports industry, Juan Manuel Rotter (2020): 'Nobody in a negotiation or decision-making throws them to lose, normally in that process someone wins and the ideal would be that nobody loses, but in the situation that FODEPAR is living, apparently everyone they lose' (Rotter, 2020).

The Trust has been an administrative figure that has allowed the necessary resources to develop the highly competitive sport to flow effectively, immediately and according to the

critical needs of the athletes. Among the expenses established in its operating rules are scholarships, hiring of coaches and professionals in science applied to sport, camps, sports equipment and preparation competitions. FODEPAR was a trust without an organic structure, so the responsibility of operation rests with the officials of the Directorate of Quality for Sport in CONADE. Therefore, they will be the same ones that will have to operate the support resources, only now without an agile instrument and all supported by the regular programs that the sport's governing body already has, but with the need to modify its operating rules.

The programs work based on agreements with "Government Collaborating Agents" such as Federations, Sports Institutes and the Olympic Committee, among others, approved to receive said resources. Only today, they are the "intermediaries" that this government wants to eliminate because they are identified as those responsible for corruption. Given the above, the government's decision is criticized because it will be the same Directorate of Quality for Sport where the resources are operated in the future, which has already been observed by cases of corruption in the past and the present administration, so the figure is changed, but not necessarily the problem. The FODEPAR works without intermediaries, preventing the money from being withheld or delivered by third parties. However, in several journalistic investigations, alleged triangulations have been denounced to divert money from this fund by CONADE. Especially from this administration led by the brunette and former sprinter Ana Gabriela Guevara (Alavez, 2020).

4. Methodology

This chapter focuses on analyzing variables and developing strategies concerning Mexican international sports relations. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) matrix, and the Importance and PESTEL matrix, is employed to build data through an expert workshop. The expert panel was composed of 10 participants with a background in high-performance sports, sports marketing and management, foreign and public policy. The SWOT matrix allows approximating the possible significant variables that influence the object of study, while the PESTEL matrix helps to identify the strategic variables of the context.

4.1. SWOT matrix

Before starting the brainstorming for the matrix, this brief introduction of each SWOT elements was given to the experts:

- Strengths are the human, material, and natural resources that the study object must adapt and take advantage of the advantages offered by the environment and face possible threats with greater possibilities of success.
- Weaknesses are the limitations or lack of skills, knowledge, information, technology, and financial resources that the object of study suffers. That prevents the use of opportunities that are considered advantageous in the environment and do not allow it to defend itself against threats.
- Opportunities are understood to be those socioeconomic, political, or cultural situations or factors beyond the control of social actors and feasible to be used favourably if certain conditions or strengths in the object of study.
- Threats are the external factors that could harm and/or limit the development of the object of study.

Once the components of the SWOT matrix have been explained, a frame of reference was shown to initiate a structured brainstorming and route ideas through each element of the matrix. Then, the experts formulated and justified its proposals.

Analysis unit: Mexico's International Sports Governance

Internal level of analysis: National.

External level of analysis: Other countries (Qatar- United States - France)

The following was the given instruction: '*Based on the previous study-cases and your experience, analyze Mexico's international sports governance*'. For the expert's results, please consult the appendix of this research.

4.2. PESTEL

PESTEL analysis breakdown in the following areas (EAE Business School, 2020) :

- Political and Economics. This section includes elements such as the policies developed in the country, the poverty levels of the environment, the inequality

indices, economic development, the access to resources of its inhabitants, and how all this affects institutional activity.

- Social. Culture, religion, education levels, attitude towards health, shared beliefs, imaginaries, social welfare programs, social classes, and gender roles. In some cases, they are complementary to economic factors.
- Technological. Internet penetration, access to basic infrastructure, the level of coverage of certain services. These factors largely determine the scope of an institution or program and its possibilities of integration into the environment.
- Legal. Laws and legislation on factors that may influence. For example, regarding consumer habits, social roles, freedoms or State intervention, among others.
- Environmental. The elements with a direct or indirect relationship in the surroundings and the environment.

5. Results

5.1. SWOT analysis

<p>Strengths (internal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skilled Human capital ● Specialization in the global sports market ● Sports infrastructure in public and private centres ● Positive demographic pyramid 	<p>Weaknesses (internal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of a true policy to detect and support talents ● Small funds and Fund-deviation ● Corruption in sports institutions ● The lack of an economic-social structure that advocates excessive competition ● Nepotism ● Influence-peddling ● Conflict-interests ● Little media attention to sports other than football, little government support ● Weak private-public coordination in favour of athletes.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poor technical and professional preparation of coaches, nutritionists, psychologists and multifunctional teams. ● Corruption
<p>Opportunities (external)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sports administration can reply a fair and ambitious sports policy models for developing countries (like Cuba) ● The Foreign Ministry can reply policies on national branding through sports (like Spain) ● Hosting sports mega-events ● Private Financing, sport as a company. ● Funding options: the development of the athlete as a brand and the support of brands interested in investing in athletes as ambassadors/representatives of their brand. ● Sponsorships ● The Mexican Foreign Ministry is taking more interest and pushing the issue of sports diplomacy and to show what has been done in the past world club where a Mexican delegation accompanied the Tigres soccer team during its participation in Qatar. Definitely taking the sport from the diplomatic branch will position us in more favourable scenarios for the Mexican sport. 	<p>Threats (external)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cancelation of events ● Corruption ● Lack of media interest in broadcasting sporting events other than football. ● Little interest from sponsorships to developing athletes. ● Universities without the interest of supporting the sport ● Growth in childhood obesity ● Little interest of parents in the integral development of childhood ● Permanence. Unlike developing countries, a Mexican athlete cannot focus 100% on his sports performance. The Mexican athlete has to fulfil his studies and job in order to be able to afford to compete, this translates into poor performance and fewer opportunities in elite sport. It is impossible to deny that in the elite of the sport, the Mexican athlete

	<p>is at a disadvantage. In the same way, an important factor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Little participation of the community with the sport. ● Little support (from the public, the media, private sector, and the government) to other sports than soccer
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5.2. PESTEL analysis

5.2.1. political and economics.

On January 23th of 2021, the Sports Practice and Physical Exercise Module [MOPRADEF] reported to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI] the general panorama on the prevalence and characteristics associated with the physical-sport practice of the population in Mexico aged 18 and over, of 32 urban areas with 100,000 and more inhabitants in the country, to contribute to the design of public policies aimed at promoting sport and physical activity.

The report shows that 38.9% of the population aged 18 years and over declared to be physically active in Mexico. It is the lowest value observed since 2013, when the lifting of this Module began, although the decrease is not statistically significant, mainly compared to recent years. Physical exercise practice has decreased because of the health emergency due to COVID19. The lockdown that has been experienced in the country since the first months of 2020, has promoted the athletic population to remain in isolation respecting the social distancing measures added to the entry restrictions to parks with sports spaces and public and private sports centres. (MOPRADEF, 2021)

The expert panel opinion highlights growth in childhood obesity, retention in sports, and little community participation with the sport as threats for the sport's governance. About childhood obesity and retention in sports practice, MOPRAFED (2021) informs that 61.1% of the population aged 18 and over declared to be physically inactive. Of this group, 71.7% ever

performed physical-sports practice, while 28.3% have never performed physical exercise. By sex, 43.8% of men declared that they do sports or physical exercise in their free time, while for women, the proportion is 34.4 percentage points. The level of education is directly related to participation in physical activity. Of the population aged 18 and over who have not completed their primary education, 25.7% are active; among those with at least a higher education degree, the proportion reaches 51.5%.

According to Noticieros Televisa (2019), the Mexican Federation of Futbol used to receive 34.8 MXN millions from the government because of the presence of the "Mexico" brand in the activities of the national team. The budget for the "Mexico" brand ran by the Tourism Promotion Council of Mexico (CPTM), which also gave funds for international sports events like the F1 and NFL as a strategy of tourism promotion. Nonetheless, the 'austerity policy' from the current Federal government by president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador disappeared the CPTM and the FODEPAR sports funds in 2019.

5.2.2. Social.

In Mexico, the sportingly active population is minor, and the lack of interest in sport is evident. The civil association *Atletas de Mexico* points out that the above is noticeable when the Paralympic Games for thousands of Mexicans have gone unnoticed and their promotion has not been sought, and even worse, the spaces are closed, and the opportunities disappear for the athletes. In the same way, the media and public focus their attention on only one sport, trimming possibilities to other disciplines. According to ESPN, soccer is the professional sport with more diffusion in Mexico, ruled by the Mexican Futbol Association and affiliated to FIFA. Box took second place, followed by baseball, basketball, wrestling, American football, car race, bullfight, and tennis (ESPN, 2017). However, despite not having the support that the soccer discipline has, Mexico has won 68 medals at the Olympics in boxing, diving, swimming, fencing, walking, horse riding, track and field, taekwondo, cycling and track and field. (Capital Digital, 2017)

People's attitude towards sport. The shared values of the Mexican culture considers sport as an activity without a future, without a scope, that is too much and that becomes a

setback. (Irwin, 2016). This is caused by the media, which prefer to support soccer and celebrity athletes.

The private initiative does not propose solutions to the sports problem in Mexico, nor does it promote sports culture or physical activation among its workforce. Thus, the media and private initiative have transformed physical and sports culture into expensive recreational activities that are not available to everyone.

5.2.3. Technological.

At present, the needs of the National System of Physical Culture and Sports [SINADE] are unknown because, in the last two administrations, there has been little participation of its members in the formulation of policies and strategies for the development of sport and physical activity in the country, since different decisions and actions have prevailed, and even contrary to the interests of SINADE.

In addition to the above, the powers of the members defined in the regulations on the matter are not respected or fulfilled, given it is necessary to reiterate their attributions and functions, as well as to develop an integrated network with the members of SINADE to promote and strengthen physical culture and sports.

The National Registry of Physical Culture and Sports [RENADE] concentrates a wealth of information constituted by a data bank, in a computer system that today is anachronistic for the advances of the technological tools of information and communication, for which it has not fulfilled its primary purpose of function as an instrument to propose strategies in decision-making aimed at coordinating, fostering, supporting, promoting, disseminating and developing physical culture and sports.

5.2.4. Environmental.

Sports environment is, by definition, "the conditions and circumstances in which sportspersons perform or indulge in sports activities. Sportspersons, including the people related to sports, such as coaches, physical education teachers, and other officials, must know and pay proper attention to the sports environment. It means that all the factors or conditions that encourage and promote sports constitute a sports environment" (Doubtnut, n.d.).

Environmental conditions affect most outdoor sports activities, particularly endurance sports

(Pezzoli, Cristofori, Moncalero, Giacometto, & Boscolo, 2013). Still, no major sport is exempt from the impact of climate change.

The World Economic Forum reported that as the planet heats up, outdoor sports players and even some fans are hospitalized because of heatstroke and exhaustion (Lin, 2019). "Extreme heat is a major health hazard as it disrupts the body's thermoregulation. Heat stress can initially cause muscle cramps, profuse sweat, thirst, and fatigue. As athletes perform in these conditions, they could feel chills and have nervous system problems that impair coordination and decision making." (Climate Reality Project, 2020)

Although its ability to promote health and entertain people, sports can degrade the environment. Recent evidence on environmental sustainability in sports has found that sports practitioners have the most influencing factor in promoting greener behaviour, especially from nature-based activities. The same research also found sports mega-events are harmful to the environment, strongly recommending adopting ecological management practices for sports tourism (Mascarenhas, Pereira, Rosado & Martins, 2021). The most significant impact of sports on the environment is air pollution, mostly from transportation and tailgating. Thus, the maintenance of facilities such as stadiums and training centres have a footprint as well (Gosalvez, 2020).

5.2.5. Legal.

The right to sports has been regulated by soft law instruments, such as the Revised International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, a document adopted by the member states of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] that declares the practice of physical education, physical activity and sport as a fundamental right for all. Although it is a non-binding instrument, it seeks to have a persuasive force by pretending that public and private subjects adhere to it and disseminate its principles. The creation of the human right to sport in this document aims to pass from the political intention to its implementation and become a reality for all human beings. (Flores, 2019)

Through its various modalities such as entertainment, spectacle, high performance, popular or professional, the scope of sport as an educational instrument and its universally

recognized value as a protector of physical and mental health have transformed material culture and sport into a reality in the international arena creating a whole new legal concept. Likewise, it points out that the practice of physical and sports activities is a right linked to other fundamental rights but that it has not been granted its individuality as such since it has been seen as a means for the achievement of other rights. Therefore, physical culture and sports regulation must be reformulated, considering them as an important part of social and economic policy. It should seek their constitutional recognition, establishing in the public powers their encouragement, promotion, protection, and guarantee that the practice of sport and access to physical culture given in the best conditions and that the human values of freedom, equality and solidarity are favoured.

Countries such as Greece, Albania, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Portugal, Spain, Brazil, Cuba, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, Bolivia, Venezuela and Guatemala, stipulate in their Magna Carta the right to sports or State obligation to promote it. Putting the right to sports in the Constitution has allowed these countries to establish a State policy in sports matters with legally solid bases, being able to implement a better sports culture within them as well as developing a legal framework that safeguards the rights of athletes and establishes, without any doubt, the role and responsibility of the various national and international sports organizations in the matter.

The recognition of sports law that, in the international arena, guides a physical culture and sports have provoked and attracted the attention of different sectors of society who have undoubtedly seen in it an excellent means for the development of various social activities and economics. According to the Mexican Senate, the country has been tried to justify, erroneously, that the right to sport is implicit in Article 3 of the Constitution since in its second paragraph it establishes 'the education that the State imparts will tend to harmoniously develop all the faculties of being human..', the right to sport is also being considered. (Gaceta Parlamentaria, 2009)

The same source informs that the constitutional foundation tried to grant the first specific ordinance when the Legislative Power created the Law of Stimulus and Promotion of Sports. This body was later indicated as unconstitutional for not having the Congress of the Union power to legislate on this matter since it was concluded that the refereed article 3 of

the Constitution corresponds to the pedagogical foundation of physical education, a concept very different from that of sport.

This controversy persisted until the moment when the Permanent Constituent Assembly found it necessary to add fraction XXIX-J to article 73 of our Basic Law, expressly granting the Congress of the Union the power to legislate on sports, establishing the bases general concurrence between the Federation, the Federal District, the states and municipalities, and the participation of the social and private sectors. The foregoing shows that the right to sport is not based on Article 3 of the Constitution because otherwise, adding fraction XXIX-J to Article 73 of the Constitution is not understood since the Congress of the Union already had the power to legislate in matters of education. Similarly, it would be wrong to argue that its foundation is currently found in Article 4 of the Constitution, since the Federal Legislature also has powers to legislate on health matters.

The right to sport does not currently have any basis in articles 3 and 4 of the Constitution, nor is it recognized with section XXIX-J of article 73 of the Constitution, since it is evident that it was a reform of the organic part of the Constitution, providing to a public power of the State, in this case to the Federal Legislature, the power to legislate to establish general bases of coordination in this matter.

6. Discussion

The roots of poor sports diplomatic outcomes and its possible solutions

Between childhood and adulthood, there is a loss of human capital in sports practice. More than half of the Mexican adult population is physically inactive, and 71.7% from this group have ever practised physical sports, while the rest never performed physical exercise (MOPRADEF, 2021). This 71.7% also represents a sports-practice dropout that translates into an inactive adult population. These situations support experts' concerns on athletic development and retention in sports as issues impacting national branding.

To create successful athletes that can contribute to the national image, the country must have an active sportive population that can become a sports workforce and trainers

specialized in elite sports, infrastructure, and incentive / financial support programs to promote high-performance athletic careers. As a response, the 2021-2014 CONADE Institutional Program on its Objective number 4 seeks to encourage the practice of sport systematically and inclusively from the initiation to the sporting competition of the population, mainly in girls, boys, adolescents and young people, as a tool to contribute to development sports of the country (CONADE, 2021). Still, there is no detailed action plan or budget plan to finance it.

The use of social media has increased during the pandemic by 72% (Wold, 2020). This consumption trend can be used in favour of sports diplomacy by working on three aspects: to create an acculturation process for sport support, enhance private funding and sponsorship for athletes, and promote Mexican sports governance transparency. The actual culture of undervaluation of sport is motivated by the media, which triggers many problems in the country. This lack of support avoids creating Mexican role models in sports for the new generations that divert attention from characters that are harmful to society (Irwin, 2016). Thus, the community is not involved in the practice of any sport and/or in the contribution of human or material resources to improve sports activities and promote the sport's growth. Also, society does not give importance to the sport because it does not generate stable economic earnings or becomes a livelihood. Society perceives sport as a hobby rather than a professional activity. Many children in Mexico prefer to dream of being 'El Chapo' Guzman, the narco trafficker, rather than María Espinoza, the taekwondo champion. The population also presents criticism based on prejudices and gender stereotypes instead of providing constructive opinions. These unconsciously and consciously affects athletes and their efforts. For example, Alexa Moreno, an Olympic gymnast strongly criticized for her overweight (Resendiz, 2019).

As the experts comment in their analysis, soccer gets the majority of the media attention and public and private funds. The media coverage of soccer above any other sport is a waste of the profitability of different disciplines in a country like Mexico with a hobby for sports such as Box, Water Polo, Basketball or broadcasting high-level sports championships in conventional or Paralympic sports.

The private initiative does not invest in sports on many occasions due to the lack of transparency in resources in the Federations, Sports Institutes, CONADE, COM, etc. Instead,

they prefer to directly support athletes or private sports clubs. Internal corruption in its many forms is a resource drain for the Mexican sports administration. However, this remote support is an opportunity for the athletes that are still performing as unofficial diplomats.

About possible solutions for funding and sponsorship, Sports Pro insights ranked the world's 50 most marketed brands in 2020. According to its data, *Nike*, *Fly Emirates*, and *Adidas* represent 49% of the total sponsorship value generated by all brands in sports (Impey, 2020). Since the novel coronavirus changed how sports are consumed, several major telecommunications companies also figure in this list. They include *AT&T*, *T-Mobile*, and *Vodafone*. In regards to soccer and motorsport, *Heineken* and *Kia Motors* have increased their digital presence in Mexico. Also, the following companies in Mexico are known for their sponsorship for sports events: *Under Armour Mexico*, *Puma*, *Santander*, *BBVA Bancomer*, *Red Bull*, *Heineken*, *Coca-Cola*, *New Balance*, *GoPro*, *Corona*, *Tecate*, *Telcel*. In a smaller scope, some local and regional brands have collaboration schemes that can also support individual athletes with a strong and remarkable personal brand on social media (known as influencers): *Smart Fit*, *Innova Sport*, *World's Gym*, *Charlie Shoes*, *Amstel Ultra*, *Kärcher*, to mention some examples.

About the technological factors on Mexico's sports governance, CONADE's computer system is unrelated to the other internal areas that administer information, even though by regulations it should be in the RENADE collection, which shows that CONADE's own lines of action are disjointed, and this tool is not used for decision making. Derived from the above, it is necessary to establish periodic updating processes to the RENADE system, under permanent reengineering, for the computer system to be consolidated as a valuable tool for everyone, which will generate greater participation and use of the application. Sports infrastructure is a fundamental part of developing and promoting sports and physical activity programs in their various modalities, be they recreational, school, health promotion, and high-level competitions. Hence, the importance of knowing and thoroughly analyzing the needs of SINADE members using a methodology that allows them to be met in consideration of territorial diversity and its social environment.

It should be noted that previous administrations have created sports infrastructure, considering municipal or state needs, but without thinking about a comprehensive development model based on the powers that CONADE has, so it is necessary to have a

national inventory of sports infrastructure that allows make better decisions for the benefit of those who have the least. This information should enrich the different lines of action of CONADE, in favour of physical culture and sport.

From the private initiative side, some Mexican startups use technology to support the sport. As we mentioned before, sports funds have been cut off. Since 2019, Mexican high-performance athletes monthly receive a remuneration of USD 100, when it used to be USD 300 (Garza, 2019). In response to the government's budgetary constraints, private initiatives like *Journey Sports* or *Donadora* use their digital platforms as crowdfunding landing pages where people can support their athletes.

Extreme weather and air quality have an impact on sports practice and events. At the same time, the sports industry has an environmental footprint, so sports governance must implement ecological practices in its policies and management. The post-pandemic world is living a moment of re-construction. The sports governance must take this moment to do it right. Mexico's sports administration must be more aware of the use of sports for development, and it must think about environmental sustainability. If the policies on marks are addressed to support communities, they also must address climate change.

Finally, the right to the sport has been recognized in various political constitutions in Latin America. However, both in constitutional texts and in legal systems, the right to sport has not been sufficiently developed. It has been the subject more of rhetorical glosses than a technical-legal construction. Indeed, the norms with which this right is usually made positive, in general, are references to public values, principles and clauses, without specific specifics. Therefore, the right to physical culture and the practice of sport in the Mexican Constitution entails the need for its implementation and protection to have a certain degree of certainty regarding the required standards.

7. Conclusion

This research has discussed the opinion of national and international sports managers, public servants, athletes, sports-industry leaders, national sports federations, media, human rights activists, and sports fanatics. The data was collected in three study cases; the experts panel opinion in SWOT matrix and the PESTEL analysis. It was found that there are several concerns about the current sports administration and its diplomatic outcomes.

This research claims that sports diplomacy leaves a negative national image. Evidence outlines that in the case of Mexico, the instrumentalization of sports in the foreign policy by the current administration has raised more critics and calls for attention from national and international actors.

Mexico is a country that has not managed to surpass its Olympic medal table since 1968, which ranks first in the world in childhood obesity and with high crime rates. These three issues encompass the main problems of national sport and reveal why Mexico is not a country with great constant sporting achievements. In general, the brand "Mexico" is being negatively affected by Mexico's sports governance. Corruption, budgetary limitations, and the lack of a clear policy on sports diplomacy nor even a constitutional framework for sports are the most remarkable weaknesses for the country's sports governance. These structural issues are rooted in institutional problematics that, combined with socio-economic factors on the national physical-sports practice, translates into potential losses for the national branding. Sports diplomacy needs diplomats to carry the diplomatic action and a policy to guide them.

Sports governance is a preamble for sports diplomacy. Physical exercise creates the conditions for athletic development that translates into international sports participation and performance, facilitating the nation's projection on a specific global audience.

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9. Appendix

Date	Name and charge	What do you think are the strengths of international Mexican sport? (interior level)	What do you think are the threats to international Mexican sport? (outside level)	What do you think are the weaknesses of Mexican international sport? (interior level)	What do you think are the opportunities of Mexican international sport?
9/05/2021 7:23:08	Jordan Souchet. Professor, Le Choix de l'école.	Human capital is the talents and a lot of attitude on their part	Corruption	Corrupt sports institutions and the lack of a true policy to detect and support talents	A truly ambitious and fair sports policy (like Cuba)

9/05/2021 11:26:00	Ruben Rivera Rodriguez. Political advisor, Poligram.	Human Capital with skills	Cancellation of events	Corruption and lack of funds	Headquarters of Sports Events and Private Financing
9/05/2021 11:58:48	Sergio López. Director at U-erre High School, campus Valle Alto.	Human capital	Cancellation of events	Corruption	Private financing
9/05/2021 12:38:53	Ricardo Flores. Retired athlete, Mexican National Team.	Human capital without a doubt, but with a wide deficit of attention by political authorities	Cancellation of events could be one of the threats	Corruption and an economic - social structure that advocates excessive competition	Sponsorships
13/05/2021 0:19:47	Sebastián Cilia. Retired athlete. Mexican National Team.	<p>In my experience, the strength of the Mexican athlete resides within. As athletes we are conditioned to train when we can and with what we can, however, when we reach the competition we give ourselves heart and soul to achieve the goal.</p> <p>In our country we have very talented athletes, coaches with the appropriate knowledge and officials with the necessary impetus to achieve international results, however, what stands out for the Mexican on the international stage</p>	<p>In my opinion, the greatest threat of any Mexican athlete is permanence, since unlike the power countries, a Mexican athlete cannot focus 100 on his sports performance. The Mexican athlete has to fulfill his studies and jobs In order to be able to afford to compete, this translates into poor performance and fewer opportunities in the sports elite.</p> <p>It is impossible to deny that, in the sports elite, the Mexican athlete is at a disadvantage.</p> <p>In the same way, an important factor would be the little</p>	<p>Definitely the influence peddling and the political interests of the actors involved (institutions and individuals) added to corruption and lack of funds, are the main weaknesses of Mexican sport. Unfortunately, the best athlete does not always go to an international event, but the one who has contacts or someone who has the money to pay for their participation.</p> <p>It is important to note that unfortunately we do not have solid or transparent sports institutions.</p>	<p>I believe that Mexico could and deserves to have the opportunity to host any international sporting event, previously it has been shown to have the capacity to host all the most important continental and world competitions.</p> <p>On the other hand, the Foreign Ministry is taking more interest and pushing the issue of sports diplomacy and to show what has been done in the past world club where a Mexican delegation accompanied the Tigres soccer team during its</p>

		is what we would colloquially call the eggs" with which compete. "	participation of the community with the sport. For the Mexican there is soccer and the rest, Mexican society does not usually get involved in the development of an athlete if it is not directly or indirectly related to it, unless it is clearly a soccer player.		participation in Qatar. Definitely taking the sport from the diplomatic branch, it will position us in more favorable scenarios for the Mexican sport.
17/05/2021 6:41:43	Jose M. Fraguas, USA Karate Manager. General National Team	Skill, race and courage of athletes. Human capital is the foundation with top-level athletes and coaches.	Covid-19 during the last 15 months. No high-level sporting events.	Internal struggles. Party politics and lack of funds controlled by honest entities.	Situation is changing. Private financing would be the best solution. Sport as a company.
18/05/2021 10:18:30	Nesib Inayeh. Retired athlete. Mexican National Team.	As a federation very few, as a Mexican culturally speaking they are very fierce people	The support of the federations to their athletes	Corruption for which there are no funds	Social networks as a communication channel

19/05/2021 9:21:41	Gilberto Iván Cepeda Zúñiga. Sports marketing specialist, Beyond the Game.	Specialization in some sports (diving, walking, archery), great athletes	Calendar of events, other countries that surpass us in the sports field	Little media attention to sports other than football, little government support	All, especially the development of the athlete as a brand and the support of brands interested in investing in athletes as ambassadors / representatives of their brand.
19/05/2021 10:10:43	Jesus Calderón. Public policy consultant. World Bank.	Human capital	Covid	Lack of funds	Campus
19/05/2021 11:17:38	Johann Weigend Rodríguez. Senior Protection Assistant, UNHCR.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Athletes with talents and technical abilities. * Sports infrastructure in public and private centers (CNAR, CONADE, CDOM, La Loma, Community Centers, Universities, other sports clubs and gyms). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Lack of media interest in broadcasting sporting events other than football. * Little interest from sponsorships to developing athletes. * Universities without the interest of supporting the sport * Growth in childhood obesity * Little interest of parents in the integral development of childhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Corruption * Lack of private public coordination in favor of athletes. * Lack of technical and professional preparation of coaches, nutritionists, psychologists and multifunctional teams. * Low salaries for sports childhood trainers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Public-private coordination to make public policies that solve problems of the current context in childhood (obesity, hypertension, psycho-motor skills) * Development of plans of lives and careers of athletes. * Media and networking of athletes (make a correct strategy) * Mexico in particular has a lot of natural infrastructure created to receive athletes and national teams from other countries either to compete or to train. * Development of the country brand of Mexico (as Spain did)

20/05/2021 11:33:36	Xyomara Valdivia Flor. Athlete. Mexican National Team.	Human capital with relevant technical knowledge and skills	Cancellation of events	Corruption	Private financing
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