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The negative implications of Russia's doping scandal on the country's international image*

Abstract. In December 2014, Russia was accused of developing a state-organized doping system in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The scandal resulted in many Russian athletes being banned from competing in the Olympics in Rio in 2016 and the IOC's suspension of the Russian National Olympic Committee prior to the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang. The research presented in this article aims to answer the research question of whether the doping scandal actually affected the international image of Russia. The research was conducted with the use of frame analysis of public discourse. The hypothesis to be tested states that the Russian doping scandal contributed to the intensification of a negative external image of this state.

Keywords: Russia, doping, sports diplomacy, nation branding, image of a country.

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Introduction

Sports are believed to play various political roles, both in states' internal policies and in international relations. Most importantly, they can help shape a country's external image through the hosting of sports events, development of a high level of elite sport, sports development aid, etc. Such branding sports diplomacy is regarded as a sub-category of public diplomacy. As the understanding of the importance of sports is growing among political decision-makers, an increasing number of states have begun to utilize sports to shape their national brand. Of course, sport is only one of many means of shaping a nation's brand; a state's prestige and reputation or soft power can be influenced by attractive culture, touristic attractions, development aid, strong commercial brands, and many other things. Currently, a growing interest in hosting sports mega-events among developing countries can be observed (Schausteck de Almeida *et al.*, 2014); as can attempts to develop elite sports programs in order to achieve their political, diplomatic, and – above all – branding objectives. Still, branding sports diplomacy can be regarded as a double-edged sword, and in some cases, it may fail to bring benefits to a state's image. If executed incorrectly, branding through sports may lead to losses in a nation's prestige.

The international image of Russia can be assessed as negative for various reasons. Under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, Russia was criticized internationally in reference to its reported intervention during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2006 or the conflict with Georgia in 2008 (Averginos, 2009); as well as the more recent reported engagement in the conflict with Ukraine and the war in Syria. Despite Kremlin attempts to develop Russia's soft power in order to foster Russian foreign policy goals, protect its interests (Simons, 2014), and project the country's image as "good" rather than "strong", Russia has not been successful in this area (Volcic, Andrejevic, 2011: 599). One of the main goals here is to attract weaker states to orbit around a strong Russia (Simons, 2014) – much like during the Soviet Union, but with less stress on ideology. However, at the same time, Russia's controversial foreign engagements make it extremely difficult for this state to strengthen its international position or create a more positive image with the use of soft power. It is thought-provoking why Russia finds it difficult to strengthen its international image when other nation-states are often guilty of much the same controversial foreign invention. What is more, many factors that influence the Russian international image remain beyond the Kremlin's control. The reasons for this could be manifold; for example, American culture is perceived as one of the most influential cultures in the world. It can export its values and opinions via Hollywood and reputable international media platforms, such as CNN. According to Joseph Nye's concept, the media influence not only what they broadcast, but also the tone or content of certain information

(Nye, 2011). Therefore, it can be assumed that the image of Russia presented in American media or films, which is mostly negative, also influences the external perception of Russia. The USA, Western Europe, and especially the former Soviet satellite states have little respect for Russia based on historical issues or simply because contemporary Russia does not follow the American concept of a unilateral international environment.

The research presented in the article refers to yet another means of deteriorating the international perception of Russia and creating the villainous 'other' than just through strong criticism of Russia in foreign media, which is the attention paid to the doping scandal in Russian sport. As a matter of fact, the doping scandal has been an important topic in the world of sports since it was revealed in 2014, particularly with respect to the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 when the question of whether Russia should be banned from the Games was vividly debated in international sports' governing bodies. Accordingly, an attempt to verify the hypothesis that the Russian doping scandal contributed to the creation of a negative external image of Russia will be made.

Theoretical background

The research presented in the article is related to Joseph Nye's concept of soft power. J.S. Nye (2004) claimed that a state can sometimes realize its objectives because other countries will want to follow its example. Soft power resources include migrations, tourism, culture, the presence of a country in the media, technology, science, education, development aid, regime, and foreign policy, etc. Sport has also been named as one of the soft power resources (Ociepka, 2013; http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en, accessed 15.05.2018) and has been included in attempts to rank states' soft power (McClory, 2012) or their nation brand (Anholt, 2009). A nation brand is defined as "the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with a culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its targeted audiences" (Dinnie, 2008: 15). It is also described as "country image", which Alexander Buhman (2016) defined as the sum of beliefs, attitudes, and impressions that a person or group of persons have of a country. One of the proposed methods for understanding nation branding is equating it with concepts concerning certain states, encompassing both knowledge and the emotional sphere (Ham, 2011). Nation branding involves, therefore, a process of shaping or enhancing the nation brand and, what is even more significant, enhancing the competitiveness of a state. According to W. Olins (2005), such competition is currently visible within three dimensions: brand export, direct foreign investments, and tourism. Eytan Gilboa (2008) indicates that branding is about linking a state to its characteristic features: making it exceptional and remarkable and enabling

it to be distinguished from other states. Nation branding as a process of shaping a state's image and its international perceptions is complex. According to Katarzyna Pisarska (2016), this process begins at home in order for it to be most effective. This means that a nation must first shape its perception of itself, and then export it to foreign nations. However, it should be noted that a nation's perceptions of itself can be often contradictory or not fully compatible with the official branding content proposed by the government. Nevertheless, the main focus of this article is put on the aspects of the international perceptions of national brands. Therefore, the definitions proposed by Ham, referring to the concept encompassing both knowledge and emotions, seem to be of significant interest in the case of the doping scandal and how it influenced Russia's international image.

In order to shape their soft power, states also employ methods of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy can be understood as the communication of an international actor's policies to citizens of foreign countries through the engagement of foreign ministers, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations (Pamment, 2013); whilst nation branding, on the other hand, is often defined as a marketing strategy that targets external markets to establish and communicate a specific image of national identity (Varga, 2013). Sport can be employed both in public diplomacy and nation-branding strategies, even though those two terms overlap or are actually the same concepts according to some scholars (Szondi, 2008). As far as sport is considered, the utilization of sport for the sake of both bolstering a nation brand and fostering foreign policy goals is referred to as sports diplomacy. It should be noted, however, that using sport to shape a state's image or international position is not always effective.

There are various methods that allow states to use sports to shape their international image. Hosting sports events, so-called mega-events in particular, is believed to be one of the most important tools. These events are often perceived as ideal channels for nations, regions, and cities to "share their identities, their merits and 'brands' with the rest of the world" (Pigman, Rofe, 2014: 1096). The reason for this is that they attract the attention of billions of people and are therefore a "perfect platform for showcasing the hosting nation" (Grix, Houlihan, 2014: 578). For example, China is believed to have desired to use its position as the host of the Beijing Olympics to show the world its economic power; the merits of its political system; that it poses no danger to the world (Gries *et al.*, 2010); and its technological achievements and organizational capacities (Panagiotopoulou, 2012). The 2012 Olympic Games in London were meant to create a platform for communicating key information about modern, twenty-first century Britain (Rofe, 2014; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmfaff/581/581.pdf>, accessed 30.08.2018). Of course, this does not mean that the viewing public will completely absorb and accept what the host nation presents. Rather, it implies the host nation's ability to reach a number of people with its message. Its effectiveness in shaping others' opinions depends on many factors, including

the message itself. Apart from that, in some situations even simply participating in international sports events may have a positive effect on a nation's brand in the case of small or unrecognised countries. This is why countries that are not recognized by the international society, such as Kosovo, tend to attach great value to the possibility of competing in international sport (Brentin, Tregoures, 2016). This was also the case with the German Democratic Republic, which throughout the 1950s and 1960s strived to be accepted to compete independently in the Olympic Games. In order to enhance their image, states may also provide sports development aid; establish various types of exchanges in the field of sports, for example, through a coach exchange; or simply benefit from grassroots initiatives deriving from its high-level sports – for example, English football club Manchester United plays exhibition matches abroad during the off-season, simultaneously promoting Great Britain (Rofe, 2014).

Another method for shaping a state's international image, that is especially important in the context of this research, is the achievement of success in sports. High performance in elite sport may bring certain benefits to a state both internally and externally. Generally, this is about gaining prestige. In some cases, the political objectives of superiority in sports may also include winning support for political leaders and the legitimization of a political system. Externally, sporting victories are meant to show a country's virtues to the world. According to Barrie Houlihan (2006), sport is an international stage on which states can project their identity. In this way, success in sports events may provide a "benign and uncritical backdrop for the parade of national achievements" (216). Using sport in such a way was given great importance in the Cold War era, when communist and capitalist states justified their athletic victories as evidence of their political superiority, with the America-Soviet athletic competitions being the most important example. The two Cold War geopolitical blocks competed in the Olympic Games medal tables and in individual prestigious competitions, such as the ice hockey semi-final between the USA and the Soviet Union during the Olympic Games in Lake Placid in 1980. The Olympic medal table, although not approved by the IOC, appeared to be the main arena of this surrogate war following the Soviet debut at the Helsinki Games in 1952.

The mechanism of using sports victories to shape the image of a country is fairly simple: in general, it is about gaining media exposure, although victories may also have a symbolic meaning that is consumed domestically. However, this is not the subject of the research. A winning athlete or team is present in the media worldwide. As they represent their homeland, it also benefits from a public relations mechanism called publicity. At the same time, such sports victories have many other meanings. For example, in the case of the Cold War rivalry between the USA and USSR, a sports victory was about proving ideological superiority (Thomas, 2012). International sports may, therefore, be regarded as an arena for gaining soft power (Reiche, 2016), although of course, the behaviour of the athletes may also play a role here.

For example, national governments may leverage individual sporting successes into narratives about national prestige, but the athlete in question may exhibit behaviour that trumps any such attempts. This utilization of sports is described by some scholars as sportive nationalism, defined as governments using elite athletes for the purpose of enhancing their national prestige (Koller, 2008). However, the whole situation is much more complex. Contemporary sport is heavily globalized, and the migration of transnational athletes is a typical example of contemporary developments in the world of sport (Maguire, Tuck, 2005). As a result, some athletes who are not able to qualify for their national teams seek this possibility elsewhere, although they may have other motivations as well. When seeking sports victories, most states fast-track citizenship for foreign-born athletes or hire foreign coaches whose reputation and training techniques suggest potential medal winners.

Sports victories are believed to be one of the facets of a state's international presence. For example, points in the FIFA world ranking and medals won at the Summer Olympic Games are included in the Elcano Global Presence Report (http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en, accessed 15.05.2018). As a result, countries that desire to enhance how important international community members perceive them often take steps to maximize the performance of their athletes. The most common way of doing this is to create an elite sport system. Within such efforts, states create strategies for identifying and developing talented athletes. All of these endeavours require substantial assets. This includes the finances to support full-time athletes, sport science provision, full-time high-quality coaches and specialist training facilities, specialist administrative units, post-career support, a supportive domestic competition structure, and a whole list of less tangible resources and processes (Houlihan, Zheng, 2013).

The soft disempowerment proposed by Paul Michael Brannagan and Richard Giulianotti (2015) is a key concept that is useful in explaining how a state's international image can suffer eventual losses resulting from an attempt to enhance its image through sports. The concept refers to the risks of upsetting, offending, or alienating others, leading to a loss of attractiveness and influence. P.M. Brannagan and R. Giulianotti refer to the reputational risks of hosting sports mega-events. If the hosts are unprepared for the global attention and scrutiny, they may receive negative publicity and as a result "lose more than they can gain in terms of destination image" (706). They used this concept to assess nation branding through hosting sports events, as in the example of Qatar hosting the football World Cup in 2022. However, the authors believe that it is equally useful to consider other means of boosting a state's image through sports. As has been noted, Russia attempted to enhance its image through several elite sports initiatives: hosting mega-events, winning important international team and individual competitions, and medal success at the winter and summer Olympics. It used various methods to reach this goal, including those that were morally positive, neutral or negative.

Russian sports policy and the doping scandal

Russian branding endeavours strongly refer to sports. Considerable efforts were made to secure and organize sports events on Russian soil. The Russian prime minister at the time, Vladimir Putin, was personally engaged in applying for the 2014 Winter Olympics and 2018 FIFA World Cup, and it was said that securing them was his double victory (Hoberman, 2011). The Winter Olympic Games in Sochi are believed to have been the most expensive in history. The Russian Ministry of Regional Development estimated it to have cost around 42 billion US dollars (Karnaukh, 2014), while according to other calculations it could have cost 51 billion US dollars. However, it is very difficult to calculate the expenditures precisely as the sums had been artificially inflated by the private sector; which would later give them an advantage in applying for, for instance, preferential tariffs (Gibson, 2014). As a result, Russia has been the host of high-profile sports events such as the aforementioned FIFA World Cup in 2018, the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, the University Games in Kazan, and the track and field World Championships in Moscow. Since 2014, Sochi has also been a venue for the annual F1 Grand Prix (<https://www.formula1.com/en/championship/races/2017/Russia.html>, accessed 10.08.2018). These successful bids can be seen as a soft power example of a strong Russia, in reaction to American and European leaders' new approaches to Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which were not compatible with Russian elites' ambitions for the country to be a great power (Trenin, 2007, 2011).

Sports victories are meant to be another branding tool, and they appear to have become a significant goal of Russian decision-makers, as in Soviet times. It is claimed that Russian leaders believe that, generally speaking, sports victories enhance Russia's foreign interests and sports investments boost Russian soft power (Rukavishnikov, 2011). In 2010, Dmitry Medvedev, then-President of Russia, said in the context of the upcoming Sochi Olympics that "developing sport is one of our top national priorities" and that there was a correlation between prestige and success in sports arenas (Pettersson, 2014). This situation resulted in the state's strong engagement in developing its sports performance. This has been particularly visible since the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century when sports victories became an important objective of Russian leaders. This was the time when various tools were employed to boost the country's sporting victories. Considerable sums were invested in elite sport, although this was not purely through public funding. It should be noted that Russian sport is co-financed by the public and private sectors – primarily by oligarch money. For example, before the Games in Beijing, Russia's oligarchs established the Russian Olympic Fund, which donated prizes to Olympic medal winners (Argent, 2012). When

Sochi was awarded the right to host the Olympics, Russia's engagement in elite sport intensified, as could be seen through greater investments in elite sport and institutional changes (Andreff *et al.*, 2011; Smolianov, 2013). In order to be at the top of the medal table in Sochi, methods such as naturalizing athletes and hiring foreign coaches were also used (Connor 2014; Gronskaya, Makarychev, 2014). In addition, Olympic medalists from Russia received some of the highest bonuses for their successes (Argent, 2012). All these factors support the assumption that Russia had not only a critical interest in elite sport success in the market economy but also the nostalgia for a return to the success demonstrated by the state amateurs of the Soviet era.

In December 2014 German television ARD broadcasted a documentary about doping in Russian sports. The investigation of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) conducted by Richard McLaren resulted in two reports being published, the first one in July 2016 and the second in December 2016. The reports generated turmoil and the condemnation of Russia, as well as criticism and doubts concerning the authenticity of these revelations. According to the first report, Russia had most likely developed a state-dictated failsafe system described as Disappearing Positive Methodology (Duval, 2017). The report suggested that with this system, state authorities protected athletes who tested positive for using forbidden substances. The system was claimed to have begun in a Moscow laboratory in 2011 with the knowledge of the Deputy Minister of Sport, Yuri Nagornykh, who decided which athletes should be protected. The laboratory would report that a protected athlete's sample was negative and falsified the screen result in the Laboratory Information Management System. However, according to the report, Russian authorities developed a more sophisticated method of sample swapping with the help of the FSB security agency during the Olympics in Sochi. A urine bank was supposedly established in order to store frozen: "clean" urine, and the samples were swapped through a "mouse hole" in the Sochi Laboratory.

After the Sochi Olympics, Russia was supposed to have returned to Disappearing Positive Methodology (McLaren, 2016a). The second report was released in December 2016 and also referred to the Olympic Games in London in 2012, the IAAF World Championships in Moscow in 2013, and the University Games in Kazan in 2013. The report confirmed the charges from the first report by claiming, for instance, that "corrective actions announced by the Russian Federation following the issuance of the 1st Report implicitly confirm the contents of the 1st Report". Such corrective actions included, for example, suspending and subsequently discharging from office Yuri Nagornykh, the Deputy Minister of Sport; Natalia Zhelanova, the anti-doping advisor to the Minister of Sport; and Irina Rodionova, the Deputy Director of the Center of Sports Preparation of National Teams of Russia. Moreover, it was reported that the FSB had developed a method of opening and closing sample bottles in order to swap not only sample A,

but also sample B. It was claimed that sample swapping was conducted after the Olympics in Sochi as well, and that over 1,000 Russian athletes in summer and winter sports were involved. The second report, however, did not mention the word “state” in its findings; the authors used expressions like “institutional conspiracy” and “systematic and centralised cover-up and manipulation”, and referred to the athletes’ cooperation with the officials from the Ministry of Sport or the FSB (McLaren, 2016b). Both reports implied that there was a state-sponsored and state-organized doping system in Russia, although the second report appeared to be more cautious with making accusations against the whole Russian state. This was probably because the first report’s findings about the state-dictated doping system in Russia was a “surprise” outcome of McLaren’s investigation, whereas establishing the involvement of the Russian state would have required a methodology designed accordingly.

McLaren’s reports drew vast criticism from Russian sport, even though they did respond to some controversies and criticism. Critics claimed, for instance, that the first report relied primarily on the testimony of Dr Grigory Rodchenkov, that the investigation team did not hear Russian authorities’ counter-arguments, or that it was inconsistent on a number of issues (Sterling, 2016). The second report, on the other hand, was criticized, for example, for not providing enough evidence to support its findings, such as the engagement of Russian institutions and officials (Sterling, 2017). There were also claims that McLaren was previously engaged in a WADA commission that exposed doping in Russian athletics and therefore was somehow associated with the issue (Katz, 2016). One of the experts cited by the Russian News Agency TASS also questioned some of the findings and claimed that doping was not only a problem in Russia, but also in other countries (<http://tass.com/sport/889531>, accessed 30.08.2018). Other doubts might refer to the acceptance of as many as 1,000 athletes who were involved in the doping system or the report’s claims concerning the FSB’s engagement in the operation – and the question might arise as to whether the Russian security service was so incompetent that it was caught in sporting espionage. What is more, in 2017, WADA cleared the first 95 out of 96 Russian athletes implicated in the report due to a lack of evidence (Ruiz, 2017). There were, therefore, a number of flaws in the conclusions of WADA’s investigation. Russian speakers’ arguments that performance-enhancing drug use is evident in high-performance sport, in general, are valid. Nonetheless, it has, along with the ARD’s documentary, brought about a vivid discussion and criticism of Russian sport. The authors are less interested in whether or not the use of drugs is athlete-driven or a state-sponsored system. The intent is to ascertain whether the doping scandal had contributed to the deterioration of the generally negative image of the country, particularly in the West.

After McLaren’s first report was published, the World Anti-Doping Agency recommended collective sanctions against Russia during the Olympic Games

in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 and beyond. WADA has also suspended Russia's anti-doping agency RUSADA and insisted that RUSADA, the Russian National Olympic Committee, and its sports ministry publicly accept the outcomes of McLaren's investigation (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/2017/09/13/wada-clears-95-russian-doping-cases-still-pursuing-others/105583622/>, accessed 12.12.2017). Concerning the Rio Olympics, the International Olympic Committee decided that International Federations (IFs) should decide upon the eventual disqualification of particular athletes. Apart from that, any Russian athlete who had ever been found guilty of doping could not compete in the Games, whereas those who had qualified had to undergo additional tests (<https://www.olympic.org/news/decision-of-the-ioc-executive-board-concerning-the-participation-of-russian-athletes-in-the-olympic-games-rio-2016>, accessed 1.07.2018). One of the reasons for rejecting WADA's call for a ban of the whole Russian team from the Olympics in Rio was because the report provided no direct evidence that members of the Russian Olympic Committee were involved in the conspiracy (Ingle, 2016). The IOC has also established an Inquiry Commission chaired by Samuel Schmid and a Disciplinary Commission chaired by Denis Oswald in order to investigate the problem (<https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-session-given-update-on-anti-doping-efforts>, accessed 16.09.2017), which also suggests a more cautious approach to McLaren's investigation. The conclusions of the Schmid Report confirmed "the systemic manipulation of the anti-doping rules and system in Russia". As a result, the IOC Executive Board suspended the Russian Olympic Committee but invited individual Russian athletes to participate in Winter Olympics in PyeongChang under the name "Olympic Athletes from Russia" (<https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-suspends-russian-noc-and-creates-a-path-for-clean-individual-athletes-to-compete-in-pyeongchang-2018-under-the-olympic-flag>, accessed 5.12.2017). If IFs are considered, the track and field IAAF was particularly severe, suspending the All-Russia Athletic Federation (<https://www.iaaf.org/news/press-release/iaaf-araf-suspended>, accessed 20.08.2018) as early as November 2015. In the end, the only Russian track and field athlete to compete in Rio was Darya Klishina, who resided in Florida (Masters, 2016). In addition, Russian weightlifters were banned from the Rio Olympics (<http://www.bbc.com/sport/olympics/36881326>, accessed 20.05.2018).

The most direct conclusions from the McLaren reports were that Russia developed a state-organized doping system in order to enhance the results of Russian athletes in international competition. Regardless of whether a state-dictated doping system was developed in Russia or not, it may be assumed that the Russian government was interested in using the Winter Olympics as yet another tool of winning international prestige and enhancing the Russian nation brand. This was to be achieved not only by hosting the Olympics, but also through good sports performance. However, after the doping scandal was revealed, many people began to see Russia in a negative context of "cheaters" instead of positive

“winners”. Such opinions came to light after the two previously mentioned reports were revealed, and it can be assumed that such negative perceptions of Russia in the field of international sports competition were still palpable. Although the analysed period of the article encompasses chosen timescales, with the last being after the Rio Olympic Games in 2016, it was possible to observe the negative impact of the doping scandal during the latest Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang: Russian curler Aleksandr Krushelnitskii was excluded from the Olympic Village after testing positive on a drug test, and this was widely commented on in the international media (<https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/olympics/winter-olympics/winter-olympics-2018-russia-curling-meldonium-pyeongchang-a8216456.html>, accessed 20.02.2018). Interestingly, one week earlier a Japanese athlete was sent home (Ingle, 2018) with almost no media coverage. Such interest could be the result of generally negative opinions about Russia in the world as well as the result of the country being under scrutiny following the previous doping scandal.

Method

The determination of how the attitudes towards Russia in the US and Poland changed as a result of the doping scandal has been based on the assessment of attitudes towards the country presented in selected foreign press releases. The meaning of phenomena is believed to be socially constructed through language, while discourse is the result of a social practice that establishes relations among the concepts and their meanings (Rasmussen, 2009). In this context, it can be stated that news is constructed by a personally involved individual journalist playing the role of an engaged narrator, meaning objectivity is sometimes hard to reach (Grunwald, 2017) if it is possible at all. According to these assumptions, the news published in the foreign media reflects and/or shapes the general external or international perception of an object. For the sake of this study, it can be used to observe changing attitudes towards states.

The introduction of secondary statistical data concerning the attitudes towards Russia in the US and Poland has been employed as a starting point for the investigation. This was followed by the main part of the research, within which the frame analysis of public discourse was conducted. The core idea of this method is to combine qualitative text analysis with a quantitative analysis of information from articles in print media (Keller, 2013). This combination enabled the observation of interesting patterns within changes in the perceptions of Russia in the USA and Poland, as the authors decided to analyse changes within international – not domestic – perceptions of this state with regard to the doping scandal. This was done by including a considerable number of texts and

examining them from the perspective of their core meaning, in this case, based on the occurrence of particular phrases (Keller, 2013).

The sample of texts is based on a selection of press articles from chosen influential and frequently read newspapers in Poland and the United States of America. The two countries were selected for the study in order to avoid potential distortions caused by the events of bilateral relations, and based on the geographical factor – Poland as a state in close vicinity to Russia and United States as a distant state. The selection of such a sample may raise concerns over the plausibility of the research since both countries present a rather negative political stance against Russia, which was particularly visible after the events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, which at the same time fell into the period of the research. The political stance of the governments of the US and Poland are also reflected in the general attitudes towards Russia among the societies of both countries. The attitudes of Poles towards Russia and Russians are generally negative, partially owing to the history of Polish-Russian relations. Americans' general perception of Russia is negative as well, however not as strongly as in Poland (<http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/09/russias-global-image-negative-amid-crisis-in-ukraine/>, accessed 4.04.2018). It was therefore assumed that the perceptions of Russia would be rather negative from the beginning, as terms related to the considerably bad international reputation and perceptions of Russia had already been noted. What is more, Western societies such as Polish and American were expected to be more prone to adjust their perception of Russia as a result of the doping scandal, because of the reasons that have been pointed out earlier, such as the Cold War history. The research was, however, designed to observe the tendencies in the changing attitudes towards Russia in conjunction with the doping scandal through the example of particular countries, not to measure its global image.

The newspapers from both countries to be investigated were selected on the basis of their outreach. According to the Institute of Media Monitoring in Poland, one of the most influential newspapers in Poland between 2014 and 2016 was *Gazeta Wyborcza* (http://www.imm.com.pl/badania_mediow/najbardziej_opiniotworcze_media_2015, accessed 20.09.2017). In the case of the United States, *The New York Times* was chosen as one of the most frequently read newspapers. It is, however, necessary to mention that both newspapers can be perceived as having relatively negative views of Russia. The explanation for this can be the assumption that newspapers are to some extent reflections of social attitudes and, conversely, can influence what people think (Gries *et al.*, 2010).

The authors decided not to limit the analysed articles with regard to their main topic. Taking into consideration the fact that the opinions, attitudes, and reputations of countries are shaped and influenced not by one single indicator, e.g., culture, sport, products, political values, or the influence of famous people, but rather are a sum of many different aspects, all of the articles found were

included with only one restriction, which is described below. Considering only articles concerning sport would be a major simplification of the comprehensive character of a state's external image. What is more, only a limited number of articles dedicated to sport in Russia were found in the acquired timescales, making it impossible to make any reliable observations with regards to the changing attitudes towards this country. The press releases were selected by searching for the phrase "Russia(n)" in *The New York Times* and "Rosja" in *Gazeta Wyborcza* in the digital databases of the respective newspapers available online. The collected articles were screened, and the articles that only mentioned Russia without direct reference to contemporary Russia or its people, e.g., a ballerina's memories from a performance in Russia or historical memories, were excluded from the analysis and further evaluation. This was the only exclusion in the selection of texts for the analysis. The texts were then labelled and grouped as positive, neutral, or negative. The labelling and grouping process was based on an assessment of the press releases concerning the occurrence of expressions that were emotional or judgmental. The texts were then coded as having a positive or negative overtone. The expressions perceived as negative concerned phrases such as "annexation of Crimea", "aggressive policy", "expansive", etc. An example of an article labelled as negative can be represented by the following citation:

One of Europe's most senior human rights officials, the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner, Nils Muiznieks, has criticized as "ridiculous" a new Russian law on road safety that prohibits transgender people from obtaining a driver's license (<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/10/world/europe/nils-muiznieks-criticizes-russian-law-ban-transgender-driving.html>, accessed 9.01.2015).

Press releases that contained no such expressions and were purely informational were coded as neutral. The following citation represents an article labelled as neutral:

Russian delegates on a meeting with Venezuela, Mexico and Saudi Arabia in Vienna did not manage to convince Rijad to support the production limits. Moscow also made a shift. On Monday "Kommiersant" reported that Russia offered to reduce the oil production by 0.3 million barrels of oil a day.

[originally]: rosyjska delegacja na spotkaniu w Wiedniu z Wenezuelą, Meksykiem i Arabią Saudyjską nie przekonała Rijadu do wsparcia ograniczeń wydobycia. Moskwa też wykonała woltę. W poniedziałek dziennik "Kommiersant" napisał, że Rosja zaoferowała zmniejszenie produkcji ropy o 0,3 mln baryłek dziennie] (https://wyborcza.pl/1,155287,17040348,OPEC_nie_podbil_cen_ropy__Szejkwie_pognebili_Putina.html accessed 27.11.2014).

The main challenge within the research referred to observing the actual significance of the doping scandal on the attitudes, and consequently the

perception, of Russia among the analysed countries. As has been mentioned, both of the analysed countries present rather negative attitudes towards Russia, while the doping scandal, in general, coincided with international developments that generated international criticism against Russia, such as engagement in Ukraine, annexing Crimea, or Russian interference in the US elections in 2016. An attempt to minimise the potential distortions within the whole period was made through the selection of the timescales of the research. Accordingly, the sample of articles was selected from three timescales: before the disclosure of the doping scandal in Russia (November 23–29, 2014), after the information concerning the Russian doping system was revealed (January 5–11, 2015), and after the publication of the first of WADA's reports (September 5–11, 2016). This sample selection was intended to allow for the observation of the fluctuation of perceptions of Russia in Poland and the USA over time. The first timescale was intentionally set after the Crimea crisis, as this event led to a serious deterioration of the perception of Russia worldwide and was the most influential factor in terms of Russia's reputation, particularly in the Western world. Therefore, in order to avoid the distortion of the measurement, the authors decided to collect the first sample in the period when Russia's image had already worsened. The last timescale was intentionally set after the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, as the goal of the research was to measure the general perception of Russia, not only in the context of sports.

Findings

Both Poland and the United States belong to the countries with rather negative attitudes towards Russia. It is important to note how these attitudes have been changing in recent years. In 2013, 43% of respondents in the USA had unfavourable opinions of Russia, and this number went up to 54% for respondents in Poland. Only two countries stated a more positive attitude towards Russia: Greece (63% positive opinions) and South Korea (53%) (<http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/09/03/global-opinion-of-russia-mixed/>, accessed 30.08.2018). In Spring of 2015, the unfavourable views of Russia were presented by 80% of respondents in Poland and 67% in the US (<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2015/08/05/russia-putin-held-in-low-regard-around-the-world/>, accessed 5.08.2015). This marked a massive deterioration of how Russia was perceived in both countries, although this tendency had a generally global character. The subsequent period marked a slight improvement of how Russia was perceived by the societies in both countries. According to the data from the opinion polls in 2017, 63% held negative opinions in the USA, and 69% held negative opinions in Poland (<http://www>.

pewglobal.org/2017/08/16/publics-worldwide-unfavorable-toward-putin-russia/, accessed 17.08.2017).

As for the analysis of the attitudes towards Russia displayed the articles in the selected newspapers, the first timescale analysed in *The New York Times* encompassed 55 articles published November 23–29, 2014, before the announcement of the doping scandal. Within these 55 articles, four were video materials, which were excluded from the sample material. Another 31 articles did not concern Russia itself and had only negligible references to the country. Therefore, these articles were excluded from the analysis as well. Within the same timescale, 21 out of all 26 collected articles published in the Polish *Gazeta Wyborcza* were analysed. Most of them had a rather negative overtone relating mostly to the Ukrainian crisis – the annexation of Crimea and support of separatists in Eastern Ukraine.

A total of 46 articles were found in *The New York Times* in the second timescale. However, only 17 were chosen in the latter analysis for the reasons listed above. Video materials, articles only mentioning Russia, and two articles that were missing in the online archive were excluded. In the same timescale, 10 articles from *Gazeta Wyborcza* were found, three of which did not concern Russia directly.

In the final timescale analysed, September 5–11, 2016, 63 articles were found in *The New York Times*. A total of 21 of them were excluded from the analysis, including one video, since they did not refer to Russia directly. In *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20 articles were found, and six of those were excluded from the analysis as they did not concern Russia directly.

The quantitative data obtained from the assessment of the press articles in the selected periods are presented in the tables below.

Table 1. Articles on Russia in *The New York Times*

Article	Positive	Neutral	Negative
November 23–29, 2014			
Number of articles	0	11	9
Percentage	0	55	45
January 5–11, 2015			
Number of articles	0	6	11
Percentage	0	35	65
September 5–11, 2016			
Number of articles	0	14	28
Percentage	0	33	67

Source: Authors' study based on The New York Times Article Archives.

Table 2. Articles on Russia in *Gazeta Wyborcza*

Article	Positive	Neutral	Negative
November 23–29, 2014			
Number of articles	0	9	12
Percentage	0	43	57
January 5–11, 2015			
Number of articles	0	2	5
Percentage	0	29	71
September 5–11, 2016			
Number of articles	0	4	10
Percentage	0	29	71

Source: Authors' study based on *Gazeta Wyborcza* (AGW) – Archiwum.

What can be observed is a clear decline in the perception of Russia after the doping scandal was revealed in December 2014. The percentage of articles classified as neutral towards Russia decreased, while at the same time the number of negative ones increased. No articles with a positive tone towards Russia appeared in any of the newspapers in any of the timescales. In the case of *The New York Times*, there was a 20% increase in articles with a negative attitude towards Russia after the doping scandal was revealed. In *Gazeta Wyborcza*, there was a 14% increase, but negative attitudes towards Russia appeared more frequently in this publication from the beginning. The figures remained approximate in the second and third periods in both analysed cases, meaning that the deterioration of Russia's image after the drop between the first and second measurement had a lasting character.

Discussion

According to McLaren's report, Russia developed a state-organized doping system. No matter whether it was state-dictated or of grassroots origins, the obvious goal of developing a costly and risky doping system was to boost the number of medals won by Russian athletes during the most important sports events. There are a few reasons for a state's leaders to engage their country in such operations. Both internal and external goals can be achieved through elite sport. Internally, sports victories may boost athletic participation throughout society, thus enhancing the health of the nation. They may also further legitimize the political system and win support for its political leaders. Externally, sports victories are about winning international prestige and enhancing the way a country is perceived by the world.

Russian sports achievements were supposed to serve each of these goals, along with fostering nostalgia for the past greatness of the Soviet Union that Vladimir Putin uses to strengthen his leadership in Russia.

Russian attempts to maximize its sports performance proved to be fairly successful. For example, Russia came top of the medal table during the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/sport/winter-olympics/2014/medals/countries>, accessed 1.03.2014) and was generally regarded as one of the most successful nations in the world of sports, although, as has been noted, most hosts of such events perform extraordinarily well. Sports victories furnished Russia with positive publicity, thus serving the purposes of nation branding. Disclosure of the doping scandal reversed the whole situation, and Russia was again the centre of interest, but this time in a negative light. What is more, many Russian athletes were banned from competing in the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and many other sports events. In this way, Russia was not only put in a bad light, but also lost an opportunity to gain international prestige by successfully competing in international sports as it used to do as part of its branding strategy.

The research presented in the article shows a correlation between the doping scandal in Russia and the tone of press articles about the country in the United States and Poland. Of course, a country's image is an exceptionally complex phenomenon and numerous factors affect it. Russia is, regardless of sport, a frequent object of international criticism, especially concerning its reported engagement in international conflicts and its human rights record (<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/russia>, accessed 13.08.2018). All such events deteriorate Russia's image. This was perfectly visible when the statistical data on attitudes towards Russia in both of the analysed countries between 2013 and 2017 are interpreted and compared with the results of the discourse analysis. The poll from 2013 can serve as a reference point as it illustrates the views of Russia before both the doping scandal was revealed and most critical occurrences concerning the external perception of Russia took place, such as the annexation of Crimea. The results of the frame analysis of the articles in November 2014 (after the annexation of Crimea) correspond very closely to the opinion polls from 2013, with almost identical results. The subsequent period in which the doping scandal was revealed marked a massive deterioration of the attitudes towards Russia both in Poland and in the US, both according to the opinion polls and the frame analysis. The frame analysis performed for the articles published in the selected timeframe of 2016 implied a moderate further deterioration of attitudes in the US and unchanged stance in Poland, whereas according to the opinion polls from 2017 the attitudes towards Russia improved in both societies despite further criticisms against Russia, for example in reference to its involvement in the conflict in Syria or interference in the 2016 presidential elections in the US. Obviously, attitudes towards a country or its image are shaped by numerous factors and occurrences, and the aim of the article was not to argue that developments in the area of sport have a particular meaning.

However, the results acquired through the analysis of the attitudes presented in the newspaper articles in the US and Poland, compared with the results of the opinion polls concerning the views of Russia in both countries imply that doping scandal did contribute to the deterioration of Russia's international perception, which speaks in favour of the hypothesis that the Russian doping scandal contributed to the worsening of the negative external image of Russia. In this context, it can be stated that employing ethically vague means in order to improve sports performance may have negative effects on the state's image, regardless of whether the state's authorities were responsible for these actions or not. The concept of soft disempowerment can be helpful in explaining this.

The doping scandal not only affected the international image of Russia, but it also proved to be a challenge to the integrity of sport worldwide. It led to tensions between the World Anti-Doping Agency and the International Olympic Committee, which rejected WADA's call for a ban of the whole Russian team from the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. There were also obvious tensions between WADA and Russia, which, regardless of the controversies, has been one of the most successful sporting nations in history. As a result, Russia is unwilling to accept the results of McLaren's investigation, which is one of WADA's requirements. After 95 of the Russian athletes mentioned in McLaren's report were cleared of accusations due to a lack of evidence, 16 national anti-doping organizations demanded that Russia be banned from the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang (Payne, 2017). There have also been different stances presented by different international sports federations, with the IAAF being particularly severe towards Russia. All of this has led to the assumption that the world of sport cracked after the doping scandal was revealed, and it appears to remain divided. Therefore, the implications of the scandal have more far-reaching consequences than simply affecting Russia's international brand, thus leaving space for further investigations.

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