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The Olympic Truce: Symbolic Gesture or Effective Tool in Preventing and Ending International Conflicts?

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The Olympic Truce: Symbolic Gesture or Effective Tool in Preventing and Ending International Conflicts?

Abstract

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Document Type

Undergraduate Honors Thesis

Degree Name

B.A. in International Studies

First Advisor

Timothy D. Sisk

Keywords

Truce, Olympics, Sport, Peacebuilding, UN

Subject Categories

International and Area Studies | International Relations | Other International and Area Studies | Peace and Conflict Studies | Political Science | Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration | Social and Behavioral Sciences | Sports Studies

Publication Statement

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The Olympic Truce: Symbolic Gesture or Effective Tool in Preventing and Ending International Conflicts?

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25 September 2023

Word Count: 18,194

Advisor: Timothy Sisk

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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Abstract..... | 3 |
| Introduction and Background..... | 4 |
| Literature Review..... | 15 |
| Research Design: Data Sources and Data Collection..... | 19 |
| Conflict Data..... | 22 |
| Case Studies..... | 24 |
| Yugoslav Wars..... | 25 |
| India and Pakistan..... | 33 |
| Cyprus..... | 41 |
| Russia..... | 45 |
| Discussion..... | 54 |
| Limitations..... | 57 |
| Conclusion..... | 58 |
| Bibliography..... | 63 |

Abstract

A modern model for peace is the “Olympic Truce,” a United Nations General Assembly resolution that calls for the pausing and prevention of new conflicts from one week before the Olympic Games through one week after the Paralympic Games. Olympic Truce scholars have focused on identifying cases that demonstrate effective implementation of the Olympic Truce and have come up with mixed results. Some argue that the symbolic nature of the Truce allows it to create moments of peace in conflicts, while others argue that it is nothing more than a gesture of goodwill that has not actually been used for peace.

This study will aim to bridge the gap by determining if there are any cases of conflict in which the Olympic Truce has made a difference for peace. My research question is: Has the Olympic Truce ever been successfully implemented to prevent the onset of new conflict or in creating a ceasefire during an ongoing conflict?

I use conflict data to determine the prevalence of conflict during Olympic Truce periods and four case studies to analyze attempts to use the Olympic Truce and some of the challenges faced. It is found that across the four cases (Yugoslav Wars, India-Pakistan, Cyprus, and Russia) the Olympic Truce has not been effectively used to prevent or end the conflict because of the overwhelming motivations of religion, ethnicity, and territory present in wars, and the non-binding nature of the Olympic Truce as a UN General Assembly recommendation.

Introduction and Background

On February 12, 1994, the cry of “Please stop killing. Drop your guns, please” (“Lillehammer 1994 - Opening Ceremony” 1994) rang out across the Lyngåsbakkene Ski Jumping Arena in Lillehammer, Norway. It was an appeal for peace made by the president of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch in reference to the ongoing war in Yugoslavia and the siege of Sarajevo, which had hosted the Winter Olympics 10 years prior. Samaranch called on all sides in Yugoslavia to put down their guns, in order to end the internal conflict that defined the 1990s in the region. With the attention of the world on the Winter Olympics, efforts to appeal for peace around the globe were made, in hopes of bringing a time of harmony to the world.

The efforts to pacify ongoing conflicts and prevent new ones have stretched through the ages. With each new age, groups of scholars and leaders try new methods to create a more peaceful world, even as conflicts and wars have persisted. Whether the fighting is between members of the same nation or foes across the globe from each other, attempts to find peaceful resolutions remain at the forefront of conflict scenarios. One such model for peace is called the Olympic Truce. This modern agreement has been passed as a United Nations General Assembly resolution before every edition of the Olympics since the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. It is a collaborative attempt by the International Olympic Committee, the United Nations, and member states to achieve a period of peace during each edition of the Olympic Games. Today, the Truce calls for the pausing of ongoing and new conflicts during the period of one week before the opening ceremony of the Olympics and one week after the closing ceremony of the Paralympic Games, which usually start a few weeks after the Olympics. The

central premise of the Olympic Truce is that if the world can stop fighting for the short period of time that an Olympic Games is held, then perhaps a long-term peace solution can be built as those participating in conflict sit down and have peace talks that lead to a more long-term solution for ongoing or potential conflicts.

The roots of the modern Olympic Truce trace back to 776 BCE and the ancient Olympic Games of Greece. At the start of each edition of the ancient Olympics between 776 BCE and 393 CE, the city-states of Greece agreed to a suspension of hostilities in order to allow the safe passage of citizens and athletes to Olympia. This meant that in the period leading up to the Games through the end of the Olympics, ongoing conflicts were paused and no new conflicts began. (Syrgios 2009). Ancient Greek legend states that Iphitos, King of Elis, consulted the Oracle of Delphi to solve the ongoing conflict he was experiencing with Sparta and Pisa. The advice he received was to establish a peaceful sporting competition. This idea would grow into the Olympic Games in 776 BC (Swaddling 2008). Prior to their first edition, Iphitos signed a truce with fellow monarchs Cleisthenes of Pisa and Lycurgus of Sparta to allow the safe passage of the athletes to each edition of the Games. News of the Olympic Truce was announced by three heralds sent by Iphitos to every Greek state bearing olive wreaths and a message about the date and location of the festival (Swaddling 2008). The Olympic Truce stipulated that conflicts would be halted for one month before and after the Olympics in order to allow safe travel to and from the Olympics, including through war zones (Syrgios 2009). Thus, the concept of the Olympic Truce, known in ancient Greece as *ekecheiria*, generated peacetime from one month before the Games through one month after the Olympics, allowing for a peaceful and successful event.

For over one thousand years, the ancient Olympic Games were successful, as athletes from all over Greece were able to achieve safe passage to Olympia for the event (Syrgios 2009).

While the ancient Olympic Truce did little to bring an end to all conflict outside of Truce periods, its success in allowing the Games to happen showed that peace could be achieved for a common purpose even for a brief period. The goal of a successful and peaceful Olympics was enough to bring together the warring city-states of ancient Greece, even if it was for a brief moment each time. Eventually, the ancient Olympics started to fade and by 393 CE they had been banned by the Roman emperor as it was considered a pagan festival. As the ancient Olympics went to the history books, so did the concept of the Olympic Truce.

The Olympics and the Olympic Truce would remain dormant for over 1,500 years until they were rediscovered by Dr. Pierre de Coubertin, a French historian in the latter part of the 19th century. Having discovered the nature of the ancient game, de Coubertin, realized his dream of creating a modern Olympic Games in 1896 when the first edition was put on in Athens, Greece. Having been inspired by the movement of sport and the triumph of the human spirit, de Coubertin was able to successfully re-introduce the Games to the world with the first modern edition in their ancient home. At the time, the Olympic Truce spirit existed, but it was far from being included as an actual resolution or document.

Rather, the spirit of the Games as a peaceful platform proved to be the strongest indicator of what was to come. With this being said, it appears that de Coubertin himself believed that sports could be used as a social peacemaker that serves as an alternative to war. In a work released shortly after the games de Coubertin wrote “Sports have brought forth all the qualities which are useful for war: recklessness, cheerfulness, habituation to the unexpected, exact knowledge of how to do the requested efforts” (Verchère 2018). In this de Coubertin relates the experiences of sport with those of war. Events such as the modern pentathlon, archery, and

fencing all imitate some violent form of war. However, these potentially violent activities have been reframed as part of sports and the Olympic Games.

Rather than committing violence against each other, humans can participate in the Olympics with the same weapons, but on a playing field rather than a battlefield littered with guns, explosives, and dead soldiers. Over the next 100 years, the idea of sport providing an alternative to war persisted. It was this mentality that inspired the implementation of a modern Olympic Truce nearly 100 years after de Coubertin first founded the modern Olympic Games in 1896.

For the next 98 years, the Olympics were presented in much the same way. They brought together athletes from around the world for a competition for sporting glory, but also a symbol of unity. While there was competition on the field, it was fair and just in nature, not violent. Along with the athletes, people from around the world flocked to the games in support of their country, while also participating in peaceful cultural exchanges with people from other countries. The Olympics had become a place where the world could meet peacefully and share ideas, culture, and commonalities. As time went on, the Olympic Games continued to expand. In 1924, the first Winter Olympics Games took place in Chamonix, France, doubling the number of Olympic events.

Despite their peaceful nature, the Games have not always been secluded from outside events. The 1916, 1940, and 1944 Games were all cancelled because of World Wars I and II. The sheer scale of these wars was too much as organizing an event with such international reach as the Olympics proved impossible during wartime. In 1972, 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team at the Munich Games were taken hostage before subsequently being killed by members of Black September, part of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The motive for the initial

hostage-taking was to demand the release of 234 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. In this case, the peaceful nature of the Games had been interrupted by violence within the Olympic Village itself. The 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow were boycotted by 65 countries including the United States, while the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles were boycotted by the Soviet Union as a result of the Cold War. Thus, it is clear that while the Olympics serves as a place for diplomacy, neutrality, and peaceful competition, they are not always free from interference by politics and outside events.

As the IOC was initially inspired by the ancient Greek Olympic Games, the concept of *ekecheiria* was known and peace was a common theme of early Olympic Games. It was not until the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki, Finland that an organizing committee officially referenced *ekecheiria* and the idea of an Olympic Truce in its official report as a way to promote goodwill (Masumoto 2012). However, the Olympic Truce in its current form as a UN resolution did not come until 1992. The IOC put pressure on the UN in order to allow athletes from Yugoslavia, which was experiencing internal conflicts, to compete at the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics. Through this effort, in November 1993, the UN urged all member states to observe an Olympic Truce during the upcoming Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, and all subsequent Olympics in an effort of peacebuilding (Masumoto 2012).

Diplomatic efforts by the IOC and UN member states led to the official document adopting the Olympic Truce was presented on January 19, 1994 as an appeal by the President of the General Assembly. The resolution asked for a truce period from February 5, 1994 through March 6, 1994, lasting from one week before the opening ceremony to one week after the closing ceremony. The resolution called for a pause in current hostilities so that “the world can at least hope for some respite, however temporary, from the killing and destruction which accompany

conflict” (“Solemn Appeal Made by the President of the General Assembly on 19 January 1994 in Connection with the Observance of the Olympic Truce” 1994). Thus, the official UN resolution period of the Olympic Truce was born.

Born out of a tumultuous period, the UN General Assembly agreement for the Olympic Truce has become a mainstay in the lead up to each new edition of the Olympics. In the month prior to the Olympics, the host country of that year’s Olympics will present a proposal to the General Assembly asking members for support in passing the Olympic Truce recommendation. The document that is ultimately presented to the General Assembly and released is a solemn appeal by the President of the General Assembly for the observance of the Olympic Truce. Initially, the UN General Assembly recommended the Olympic Truce was resolved to be in force from one week before the opening ceremony through one week following the closing ceremony. This held true for every edition of the Olympics from 1994 through 2010. However, every resolution since the 2012 London Summer Olympics has expanded to one week before the opening ceremony of the Olympics through one week after the closing ceremony of the Paralympic Games. This essentially doubles the period of time that each Olympic Truce recommends for the pausing and ending of conflicts.

Additionally, the resolution documents have historically included information on the ancient origins of the Truce while calling for a halt to current conflicts and a prevention of new conflicts during the dates listed as Olympic Truce period. This background information tends to be general and is kept fairly consistent across events. However, with each edition of the Truce, there may be additional notes on the state of the world included. For example, the Truce resolution for the 2002 Salt Lake City Summer Olympics referenced the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (“Solemn Appeal Made by the President of the General Assembly on 25

January 2002 in Connection with the Observance of the Olympic Truce” 2002). These UN resolutions on the Olympic Truce have been some of the most supported by the General Assembly. For example, before the 2022 Beijing Olympics 173 out of 193 member states voted in favor of the resolution, and prior to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (delayed to 2021), 186 members states voted in favor of the resolution (“Olympic Truce Resolutions” 2022). With this level of support, optimism exists that the Truce can play a role in creating a more peaceful world.

Although the Olympic Truce resolutions are often accepted by near consensus, there are also reasons why states may not sign the document. These motivations are often political, as countries may take issue with the host countries. Because of this, the Olympic Truce resolution prior to the 2012 Summer Olympics in London is the only one to have been signed by all 193 members of the UN (Prenn 2022). In 2022, prior to the Beijing Winter Olympics, 18 more countries joined in on not signing the Truce. These included Australia, India, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Japan because they did not want to co-sponsor a resolution presented by China in protest of its human rights records. Turkey also did not sign the resolution because of China’s human rights violations against its Muslim-minority Uighur population (Galloway 2021). In many cases, it is political motivations and disagreements that lead countries to not sign onto the Olympic Truce, especially if they do not agree with the policies of the host country.

In keeping with the times, the Olympic Truce recognizes that its goal of achieving a long-lasting peace from a brief period continues to be sought after. The Olympic Games cycles continue to pass and so too do the UN resolutions for peace of each event. While the message of promoting global peace continues to be a current discussion, there are questions about the effectiveness of the Olympic Truce in preventing conflict. Stretching from 1994 to 2022, there

have been hundreds of instances of conflict, most of them being civil wars. However, this does also include several instances of multi-national conflict that the Olympic Truce seeks to target first and foremost. Many of these conflicts not only continue during a single Olympic Truce period, but they also stretch across multiple Olympic Truces, with some conflicts spanning over the entire existence of the UN General Assembly-backed Olympic Truce since 1994.

With these challenges in mind, it is important to recognize the difficulty in negotiating any sort of ceasefire or conflict prevention as they relate to the Olympic Truce. As recommendations passed by the UN General Assembly are not enforceable binding agreements, it is difficult to make countries, even those who vote in favor of them, follow them.

A prime example of this came in the lead up to the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, United States. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, U.S. armed forces committed to an invasion of Afghanistan to oust the Taliban government which was said to be harboring al-Qaeda on October 7, 2001 (Wildman and Bennis 2010). During the final months of 2001, and early months of 2002, the United States and United Kingdom bombed several strategic locations across Afghanistan to begin the conflict. Meanwhile, the United States was preparing to host the 2002 Winter Olympics in February. As part of this process, the United States sponsored a resolution in the UN General Assembly to adopt the Olympic Truce for the Winter Olympics. In addition to the traditional calls for peace during the Olympics, the resolution referenced the 9/11 attacks stating “the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 pose a grave challenge to humanity, the ideal of the United Nations and the spirit of the Olympic Games” (“Solemn Appeal Made by the President of the General Assembly on 25 January 2002 in Connection with the Observance of the Olympic Truce” 2002).

When it came time for the 2002 Winter Olympics to officially begin, the host country, the United States, was involved in a full-scale bombing campaign and invasion of Afghanistan, despite being the very country to appeal for peace across the globe under the Olympic Truce. This manifested in an unusually nationalistic opening ceremony in which a flag from Ground Zero of the attacks at the World Trade Center in New York City was carried in by 14 American athletes dressed in paramilitary style and flown during the US national anthem (Tomlinson 2005). Additionally, US President George W. Bush broke from tradition when declaring the games open. Rather than simply stating that the Games were open as had been standard in the past, Bush announced “ On behalf of a proud, determined, and grateful nation, I declare open the Games of Salt Lake City, celebrating the Olympic Winter Games” (“President Bush Opens 2002 Olympic Games” 2002). In this statement, Bush shared a political message in support of his own country to cap off what had already been a non-traditional Opening Ceremony full of national pride. As the US broke tradition at the Opening Ceremony in 2002, it also violated the very Olympic Truce it sponsored by continuing its bombing exercises and invasion plans in Afghanistan during the Truce period.

In 2022, Russian forces invaded Ukraine just hours after the closing ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics. This action brought a strong rebuke from the IOC and its president, Thomas Bach, who called Russia’s actions a clear violation of the Olympic Truce (Nair 2022). While the invasion of Ukraine and subsequent war captured the attention of the world, there were several conflicts also ongoing in 2022. Including both multi-national and civil conflicts, there were 56 instances of conflict during the Olympic year of 2022 around the world (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program” 2023). While Russia’s violation of the Truce by escalating conflict just as the Olympics closed gained much of the attention, violations of the Truce through

the continuation of conflict happened throughout the globe. Even though 173 of 193 UN member states signed the Olympic Truce agreement for the 2022 Games, conflicts still persisted around the world, including those that included members who had signed the agreement.

Another example of a country voting in favor of the Truce, but then disregarding it came during the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece. With the war in Afghanistan continuing alongside conflict in Iraq, United States Secretary of State Colin Powell claimed that the Olympic Truce could not be upheld because the U.S. needed to root out extremism in all of its forms with immediate action. In an interview, he said “Unfortunately the world does not stop entirely for the Olympics, and in this case the violence is being perpetrated by outlaws and former regime elements and terrorists who respect no truce, who respect nothing except force... they have to be dealt with” (Masumoto 2012). This came just months after the U.S. had voted in favor of the UN’s Olympic Truce recommendation prior to the Games in Athens. Despite this, national priorities took precedent, with Powell’s quote showing a clear rebuke of the Olympic Truce. The peaceful desires of the Olympic Truce were no match for the desires and motivations of the United States to continue its war in Iraq. Even as Olympic Truce resolutions are accepted almost unanimously by the UN General Assembly during each Olympic period, conflicts have persisted. The non-binding nature of the Olympic Truce and other UN General Assembly recommendations make it difficult to enforce such agreements, even when they are accepted by near consensus. This raises the question: Has the Olympic Truce ever been successfully implemented to prevent the onset of new conflict or in creating a ceasefire during an ongoing conflict?

The purpose of this research is to determine whether the Olympic Truce has ever actually been implemented as part of a peace settlement that prevented or ended an ongoing conflict or

led to a ceasefire. Through quantitative analysis on the overall prevalence of conflict during years when editions of the Olympics have taken place between 1994 and 2021, along with case study research on conflicts surround Olympic Truce periods, conclusions will be drawn regarding the effectiveness of the Olympic Truce in creating moments of peace or preventing the onset of conflict. The focus of the case studies will be on several multi-national conflicts although the data collection overall includes conflict data from both civil and multi-national conflicts. For the purposes of this research, the definition of a conflict is “a state-based armed conflict is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year” (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program” 2023). This means that either two countries must be engaged in conflict, or two parties within the same state, with the government being one of the sides engaged in the war. The motivations for war may differ, but this definition provides a baseline on which to identify and compare conflicts. Based on the difficulty in implementing other non-binding agreements, this study’s hypothesis is that the Olympic Truce has not been used effectively to prevent or end a conflict during an Olympic period since 1994 due to its non-binding nature and the overpowering pursuits of those involved in the conflicts.

Literature Review

The existing literature regarding the effectiveness of the Olympic Truce tends to not be optimistic about the prospects of the Truce resolution in preventing conflict and generating peace. While it calls for warring parties to come to ceasefires and for countries to not commit new military actions during the period of the Olympic Games, the effectiveness of the Truce in accomplishing this goal is disputed. The dominant school of thought suggests the Truce is more symbolic in nature and does not actually have the action items or capabilities to generate any sort of real peace agreements. The secondary school of thought suggests that the symbolic nature of the Truce has created a forum for peace the countries can use to generate long-lasting peace resolutions. The dominant school finds faults in the longevity and actual enforcement of the Olympic Truce. Meanwhile, the argument for effective implementation revolves around the fact that the Truce provides a forum for peaceful conversation between warring parties.

The school that argues for the effectiveness of the Olympic Truce centers around the symbolic presence of the Truce in creating a forum for discussions about peace. Arguments have been made that the Olympic Truce leads to peace talks that are symbolic in nature, but that represent successes in the implementation of the Truce. Park, Koo, and Kim (2021) see the Truce as the main factor in creating peace talks between North Korea and South Korea during the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. Prior to the 2018 Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea's proposal for the Olympic Truce was agreed to unanimously in the UN General Assembly. From this agreement, talks between the governments of North Korea and South Korea were held. Most of the discussion was focused on the Olympics although nuclear peace talks were mentioned. Ultimately, these talks resulted in the two nations walking into the Opening Ceremony under a unified Korean flag and participating in the women's ice hockey event with a unified team.

Ultimately, these talks were only temporary and nuclear tests from North Korea continued after the Games. While these Olympics are heralded as a moment of peace, the tensions between North Korea and South Korea remains (Park, Koo, and Kim 2021). Other analyses focus on the symbolic nature of the Truce through the UN Millenium Goals in creating a conversation point and cross-cultural connections, as well as building community programs at the local level for countries to follow through the UN. The idea is to build peaceful relationships at early ages through sport to create long-lasting peace. These programs have allowed hundreds of kids in South Africa with the opportunity to learn the life lesson of respect through sport (Saha 2014, Steinbach 2016, and Keim 2009). Other proponents argue that the Olympic Truce can be used to allow sports to be a sanctions mechanism to create pressure on countries by banning them from international sporting events. This was the case in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine which saw Russia banned from FIFA World Cup qualifying and many of its athletes in other sports being asked to compete under a neutral flag (Lindholm 2022). While these researchers approach the Olympic Truce from different angles, their general consensus is that the presence of the Olympic Truce gives countries an opportunity to form connections and begin discussions about long-term peace that can prove to be effective when sides are willing to meet with each other.

The other school argues that the Olympic Truce has not been effectively implemented in conflict situations because of the political aspirations of large states and the difficulty in passing binding Olympic Truce resolutions through the UN Security Council. The Security Council, with five permanent members who have ultimate veto power, has difficulty passing many proposed resolutions, making it difficult to implement effective sanctions or a binding Olympic Truce that can be enforced (Vines 2012 and Havenstein and Joshi 2020). Other proponents of this

viewpoint argue that large states generally do not follow the Olympic Truce. Evidence points to the 2004 Olympics in Athens and subsequent Olympics where an Olympic Truce was recommended by the General Assembly. The United States was preparing to invade Iraq and Secretary of State Colin Powell explicitly stated that the Olympic Truce was a nice sentiment, but that it would not prevent military action in Iraq. Although the United States had voted in favor of the agreement earlier in the year, it did not follow through with the agreement to foster peace during the Olympic period (Masumoto 2012).

Other researchers point to Russia's invasions of Georgia during the Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and Ukraine in 2022, as examples that the Truce is not strong in the nature of violating the Truce and using the Olympics as a political distraction (King 2008 and Nair 2022). In these instances, both Russia and the United States had voted in favor of the Olympic Truce prior to dismissing the agreement and committing clear violations of the Olympic Truce. Based on these factors, this school generally holds that large countries engaged in war do not follow the Olympic Truce because there are no consequences for this course of action. Outcry for not following the Truce is not enough to dissuade powerful states from their courses of action.

Another argument is that the Olympic Truce can create a temporary peace but is not an effective tool in long-term peacebuilding because countries will return to war after the Olympic period ceasefires. Thus, the goal of temporary peace may be met, but the long-term dream of peaceful settlements is often not met (Burlison 2012). As the Olympic Truce has simply been presented as a UN General Assembly recommendation cannot be enforced, even when there is unanimous support for it. The school that argues that the Olympic Truce has not been effectively implemented, has a general consensus that the Truce struggles to be effective because of the

inability of the Security Council to pass resolutions and because large states do not respect the Truce, making it difficult to use it as a tool for long-lasting peace.

One of the major gaps in the current research is pointing to an example of the Olympic Truce actually being implemented to pause, prevent, or end conflicts whether they are new or ongoing. While Park, Koo, and Kim (2021) point out the example of a unified Korean team at the 2018 Winter Olympics, they also question how effective this was in creating long-term change. It is puzzling because Olympic Truce recommendations to the UN General Assembly are generally accepted unanimously if not with the support of a large majority of the member states. However, both the Summer Olympics and Winter Olympics have experienced several conflicts during their Truce periods since 1994, furthering the research gap. The number of Truce violations makes it difficult for researchers to pinpoint an example where the Olympic Truce has been successfully implemented. Multi-national conflicts involving major powers, along with civil conflicts between warring factions in the same country have persisted across Olympic Truce periods. While some proponents argue that the Truce's symbolic nature has led to some peace talks, others argue that the political and territorial aspirations of various nation states have often taken priority over the Olympic Truce agreement.

Research Design: Data Sources and Data Collection

Measuring the Prevalence of Conflict During Olympic Years:

- I used conflict data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program at Uppsala University, Sweden. This data set allowed me to find instances of conflict across the globe, both civil and multi-national conflicts, that could be totaled up to determine just how common conflicts during Olympic Truce periods are.
- In total, there were 375 instances of conflict during the Olympic years since 1994, the vast majority of these were civil conflicts. However, several of them also represented international conflicts between two or more countries.
- This quantitative data served as an indicator of the prevalence of conflict, but also allowed me to determine cases of conflict to serve as case studies for qualitative analysis.
- As the primary purpose of this research is to determine whether the Olympic Truce has ever been successfully implemented during a multi-national conflict, the four cases selected represented various types of multi-national conflicts.

Case Selection and Studies

- Four cases that showed implementation of the Olympic Truce over time and the responses to it were ultimately selected.
- Case 1: Wars in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s because they represented recent on-going conflicts where attempts to implement the Olympic Truce had been made.
- Case 2: India-Pakistan conflict over the Kashmir region following the Partition of 1947. This case was representative of a long-term, ongoing conflict that had existed for more

than four decades prior to the first UN General Assembly recommendation for the Olympic Truce in 1994.

- Case 3: Dispute over Cyprus between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots that had been ongoing since the 1970s. This case was selected because of its connection to the 2004 Olympics as the UN made attempts to bring peace to the island using the Olympic Truce.
- Case 4: Russia and its several invasions that have taken place during Olympic Truce periods since 2008. The Russian case study represents several instances of Olympic Truce violations as Russia has committed to conflict and escalated violence while the Olympics are ongoing.
- All of these cases serve the purpose of showing the response to the Olympic Truce across conflict types and whether an impact on the nature of the conflict can be seen.
- Within each case I researched how the conflict started, attempts at peace that were made, the nature of the conflict, and ultimately how the conflict ended if it is not currently ongoing.
- Most of the research that I conducted involved reviewing journal articles written during or just after the wars discussed. I also analyzed UN General Assembly recommendations for the Olympic Truce at the time of conflict to determine the messaging around the conflict.
- This was the main data collection method as first-hand observation of these historical conflicts and the events surrounding them was not possible.
- The purpose was to determine instances where the Olympic Truce was successful and moments where it was not as successful in its purpose of ending or preventing conflict.

- The four cases that represent a variety of conflicts provided insight into the motivations, desires, and identities that shaped the wars of the time.
- The case allowed me to look into the nature of the Olympic Truce and perhaps some of the challenges it faces during the onset of a new conflict, while also drawing conclusions on whether the Olympic Truce has been used effectively.

Data

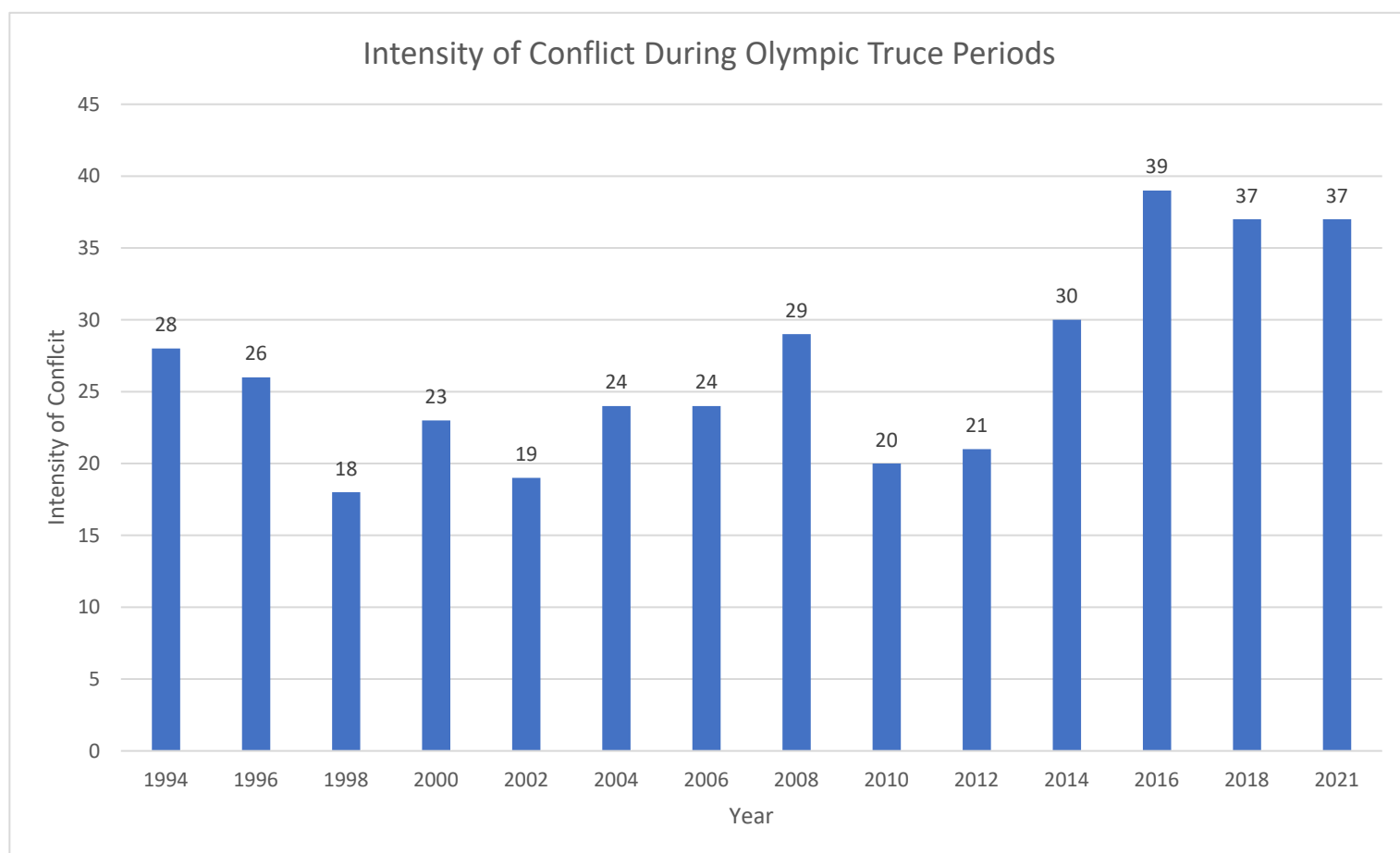


Figure 1. Procured by Vincent Pandey using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program at Uppsala University, Sweden.

This graph represents the intensity of conflict during the Olympic Truce period for each Olympic year since 1994 when the UN General Assembly Resolution on the Olympic Truce was first introduced. The data presented is split between the Winter Olympic Games (1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2018) and the Summer Olympic Games (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2021). The intensity of conflict in each year represented on the graph shows the total number of conflicts, both civil and multi-national, that occurred during the Olympic Truce period. The data appears to show a relative consistency in the intensity of conflict each Olympic year regardless of whether the games are a winter or summer edition. While some years have

lower numbers of conflict, the last three Olympic Truce periods with data have all had nearly 40 instances of ongoing conflict. Ultimately, this data shows that conflicts have persisted during every Olympic Truce period since 1994. Whether it is a new conflict that begins during the Olympic Truce period or the continuation of a current conflict, Olympic Truce periods have not been met with the break from conflict that their UN resolutions request. Instead, the Olympic Truce has been overlooked by those engaged in conflict.

Based on this, it is important to recognize and analyze certain cases that represent different moments throughout the history of the Olympic Truce. While the quantitative data provides an overview of the prevalence of conflict during Olympic years, case studies are important for providing a detailed view into the implementation of the Olympic Truce and some of the difficulties it may face. The cases are to be representative of ongoing conflicts when the Olympic Truce period began as well as conflicts that started during the Olympic Truce period as represented by the universe of cases.

Case Studies:

Following the quantitative data showing the prevalence of conflict since 1994, especially during Olympic Truce periods, it is clear that conflicts have historically persisted during Olympic Truce periods. Based on this, it is important to focus on a few different cases that speak to how conflicts have perceived Olympic Truce periods. The following cases were selected because they represent multi-national conflicts that either began or were ongoing when an Olympic Truce period came into effect. They provide insight into the conflict experiences and showcase the many barriers that the UN and international community as a whole face when attempting to implement the Olympic Truce.

The first case study involves the Yugoslav Wars which lasted between 1991 and 2001 and involved Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and interventions from NATO forces. This conflict saw mass killing and tortures across the region and was the subject of a call for peace from the IOC during the opening ceremony of the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway in association with the Olympic Truce. The second case is the ongoing border dispute in the Kashmir region between Pakistan and India. These border skirmishes and accompanying full-scale wars have been ongoing since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. This case represents a long-term conflict between two countries that has stretched since close to the end of World War II. The third case uses the example of Cyprus and attempts to bring peace to the island in the lead up to the 2004 Athens Games to show how attempts to implement the Truce and build long-term peace agreements from it can face difficulty. Finally, the fourth case involves three separate military actions by the Russian Federation that have led to wars in 2008, 2014, and 2022. The Russian cases represents violations of the Truce that are the onset of new conflict during the Olympic Truce period of several Olympic Games.

Yugoslav Wars

Context

The Yugoslav Wars were a series of conflicts that took place between 1991 and 2001. They were characterized by ethnic and nationalist tensions, territorial disputes, and the breakup of the Yugoslav state. As Yugoslavia began to fall apart, its member republics began declaring independence which had ripple effects as wars broke out along ethnic lines. Several former republics including Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1991. The first major flashpoint of conflict came following Croatia's independence. This action was strongly opposed by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and Serbian nationalist groups. Upon Croatia's independence, ethnic Serbs living in the new territory declared their independence from the Croats, leading to the outbreak of violent skirmishes between the two groups. As the majority of the officers in the JNA were Serbs, the remnants of the army immediately threw their support behind the Croatian Serbs in their efforts for independence (Cigar 1997). With the presence of the JNA, the conflict quickly escalated into a full-scale war that was characterized by ethnic cleansings, mass killings, and the displacement of large numbers of people.

Nature of the Conflict

The JNA became increasingly ethnically homogenous as Croats, Albanians, and Macedonians left the army. This led to the JNA and other Serbian nationalist groups launching attacks on cities, often without regard for citizens in the cities (Cigar 1997). One such incident was the Battle of Vukovar, in which the Croatian National Guard and local volunteers attempted to defend the city against the well-equipped JNA and Serbian paramilitary groups. The city was considered strategically important as it was located near Serbia. Thus, the JNA and other Serbia

forces bombarded the city in a siege that left local infrastructure including homes and hospitals destroyed. The Croatian defenders of Vukovar put up a strong resistance and held out for 87 days between August and November 1991. This resistance served as a symbol of the resolve and desperation of the Croatian people as they refused to back down in their pursuit of independence. However, the constant attacks from the JNA proved to be too much as the city was overrun on November 18, 1991 (Žanić, Kufirin, and Živić 2016). With this, the Croatian forces that were protecting the city either surrendered or retreated. In the aftermath of the battle, a large number of Croats were killed or forcibly expelled from their homes. This period served as a symbol for the atrocities of the Yugoslav Wars as there were widespread reports of ethnic cleansing, torture, and mass killings of Croatian civilians who had been living in the city.

As time went on, the war spread to other parts of former Yugoslavia as more states declared their independence. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place between 1992 and 1995 and was one of the most devastating conflicts of the Yugoslav Wars. It was marked by ethnic and religious divisions, territorial disputes, and widespread atrocities against civilians. The conflict initially broke out after Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1992. The majority of the population in the territory at the time of independence were Bosniaks and Muslims. Bosnian Serbs opposed the independence movement, and with the support of the JNA and other Serbian paramilitary groups, they sought to unite the territory with Serbia. The Bosnian Croats supported the independence decision and sided with the Bosniaks.

This side of the conflict was marked by two major events, which shaped the course of the war and the international response. The first was the siege of Sarajevo, which saw Bosnian Serb forces, under the command of General Ratko Mladić, encircle the city and subject it to a campaign of shelling, sniper fire, and blockades. This caused the isolation of the city from the

outside world as the Bosnian Serb forces bombarded the city daily, often times targeting residential locations, public spaces, and humanitarian convoys. These constant attacks led to a constant struggle for survival from the Bosniaks living in Sarajevo (Lowe 2015). As the siege continued, the intentional targeting of civilians became a hallmark. Citizens going about their daily lives faced sniper fire, leading to numerous deaths and injuries.

In response to this, many citizens chose to travel around the city by tunnels as this was the only way to protect themselves from sniper fire while still getting food, water, and medicine. It was this adaptive lifestyle that helped the people of the city survive, despite being surrounded by enemy forces (Pilav 2020). In 1995 and 1996, international efforts to combat the siege through diplomatic pressure and peacekeeping missions increased, although they had limited success because of a very limited mandate. The siege itself continued until December 14, 1995, when the Dayton Agreement was signed, bringing an end to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Slaon 1996). Ultimately, the siege lasted four years, resulting in thousands of deaths many of them civilians, and leaving the city in ruins from the daily shelling.

The second flashpoint of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the Srebrenica Massacre. The town of Srebrenica, in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina had previously been declared as a UN “safe area” in 1993 and was placed under the protection of a Dutch peacekeeping force. Throughout the war, it had become the main refuge for Bosniaks escaping from the war in other parts of the country. While they were backed by the UN, the Dutch forces were low in numbers and ill-equipped (Ryngaert and Schrijver 2015). In July 1995, General Ratko Mladić and his Bosnian Serb forces launched an assault on the town and were able to quickly overrun the Dutch forces. Following their capture of the town, the Bosnian Serb forces began systematically separating the Bosniak men and boys from the women, children, and the

elderly. Over the course of several days, the men and boys were systematically executed in mass killings. It is estimated that this ethnic cleansing claimed the lives of more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys. The majority of those killed were executed in mass shootings while others were killed through torture and beatings (Ryngaert and Schrijver 2015). In the aftermath of the massacre, the UN was criticized as its peacekeeping forces had done little to prevent the massacre, instead proving to be more symbolic than actually practical. It also caused the further dispersion of Bosniak civilians as they looked to find safe places outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both the siege of Sarajevo and the Srebrenica Massacre represent the difficulties facing the international community in implementing meaningful change during a period of war, regardless of previous mandates or attempts at peace.

Another conflict during this period was in Kosovo, an autonomous region in Serbia. The ethnic composition of the region is primarily Albanian, with a Serb minority. Along with this ethnic split, there was also a religious split as the majority of Albanians were Muslim, while the Serb minority were Orthodox Christians. During the breakup of Yugoslavia and the rest of the Yugoslav Wars, this region was not isolated from the conflict as Milosevic began implementing repressive policies against the Albanian population in Kosovo. Eventually, Milosevic fully revoked Kosovo's autonomous status within Serbia in 1989. This led to widespread protests and resistance from the Albanian population. The Serbian government, under the guidance of Milosevic took a heavy-handed approach, using military and police forces to suppress the unrest and maintain control over the region. This led to an increase in violence and human rights violations. In response to the violent Serbian campaign, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a group seeking independence for Kosovo, emerged (Özerdem 2003). This came as the group believed that the only way independence could be achieved for Kosovo was through force.

The KLA mostly used guerilla tactics against the Serbian security forces, leading the Yugoslav government to label them a terrorist organization. This led to an escalation of the conflict as Yugoslav forces were mobilized to crush the rebellion. As the war continued, the KLA continued to rely on controlling rural territories in Kosovo. (Özerdem 2003). The war would stretch over the Olympic Truce period of 1994 and continued to intensify in 1998. At this point, Yugoslav forces mostly consisting of Serbs conducted a series of offensives against KLA-held territory. This led to a large-scale humanitarian crisis as over 2,000 people were killed and more than 400,000 Kosovars were displaced as they fled from the violence before 1999 (Özerdem 2003). This escalation was condemned by the international community and pressures from the outside to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. However, the war persisted, and the international community struggled to make a breakthrough in ending the conflict. Ultimately, in March 1999 NATO responded militarily by strategically bombing Yugoslav targets in order to halt the ethnic cleansing and conflict in Kosovo.

The bombing campaign was controversial as it resulted in significant infrastructure damage and casualties. Protests against the bombing campaigns in NATO countries became common, but they still continued for 78 days. As the pressure increased, Milosevic eventually agreed to withdraw Yugoslav forces from Kosovo in order to allow the safe passage of a peacekeeping mission to maintain security and help refugees return to their homes. The war officially ended with the Kumanovo Agreement in June 1999, which established a ceasefire and outlined terms for the full withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo (Cohn 2002). At the conclusion of the war Kosovo was placed under United Nations administration. Ensuing investigations found that the Serbian tools of ethnic cleansing such as widespread rape and torture led to the displacement of over 800,000 Kosovars during the war. While many returned to

Kosovo at the conclusion of the war, the scars left behind are still felt (Özerdem 2003). In 2008, it unilaterally declared independence from Serbia. However, the topic of Kosovo independence remains a contentious issue with several countries recognizing its claim, while several others, including Serbia have refused to.

All of the wars in Yugoslavia during the 1990s overlapped with the first UN recognized Olympic Truce period during the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. The continuation of war throughout the entire decade showed the difficulty in implementing any sort of agreement during the Yugoslav Wars. By the time the 1994 Winter Olympics came around, war had been raging in the region for nearly three years and was reaching its peak level of violence. Several previous attempts by the UN to introduce a ceasefire had proven unsuccessful between 1992 and 1994. With the start of the Olympics around the corner, the IOC worked with the UN to introduce the first official Olympic Truce recommendation from the General Assembly.

The call for the Olympic Truce was released by the United Nations on January 19, 1994 and called on “those engaged in armed struggles to uphold [the Truce] and suspend hostilities in keeping with its observance” between February 5, 1994 and March 6, 1994. (“Solemn Appeal Made by the President of the General Assembly on 19 January 1994 in Connection with the Observance of the Olympic Truce” 1994). At the opening ceremony in Lillehammer, IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch held a moment of silence for the people of Sarajevo, a city that had hosted the Winter Olympics 10 years prior. Immediately following the moment of silence, in reference to the Olympic Truce and Olympic Spirit, Samaranch appealed to those fighting by saying “Please stop killing. Drop your guns, please” (“Lillehammer 1994 - Opening

Ceremony” 1994). Despite the clear appeals from both the UN and IOC for the Olympic Truce to be followed during the Yugoslav Wars, no action followed.

The wars in Yugoslavia continued for multiple years after the initial call for peace under the Olympic Truce at the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer. In fact, even during the Olympic year of 1994, an estimated 7,312 people were killed in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program” 2023). Perhaps the most well-known atrocity from the Yugoslav Wars, the Srebrenica Massacre, also occurred after the Olympics in Lillehammer. Although the agreement was adopted by the UN General Assembly, it did little to create a ceasefire or stop the war. Those in the conflict did not respond with any actions to the Olympic Truce. As this was the first edition of the Olympics to be accompanied by an Olympic Truce recommendation from the UN General Assembly, the challenges facing the agreement were apparent from the start.

Analysis

There were several difficulties in implementing a successful Olympic Truce or any other peace agreement. The first was the many dimensions of the conflict as there were several different groups fighting with each other. While the majority-Serb JNA was fighting in several places, the other combatants varied along ethnic and national lines. For example, fighting during the Yugoslav Wars involved the Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, and Albanians. Each of these groups had their own desires for the outcome of the war, which for most of them was their own independent country. This national fervor, mixed with a multi-front war, made it difficult for any sort of peace agreement to be implemented. Additionally, the peace recommendation for the Olympic Truce was made in the United Nations by member states. The key point with this is that while member states may have agreed to it, much of the fighting in the former Yugoslav

republics was between militias and unofficial groups who existed outside of the established order.

Despite this, the state military actor, the JNA, was not bound to the agreement because it was a simple recommendation made by the UN, without formal sanctions or consequences attached to it. This all means that the incentives for the warring parties to end their fighting were low because their overriding interests either for independence or continued territorial control were much stronger than the non-binding nature of the Olympic Truce. Those involved in the conflict either did not believe that the Olympic Truce applied to them, or their own motivations were much stronger than any desire to follow the Truce.

In this case, the Olympic Truce and the call for peace at the opening ceremony of the Games in Lillehammer served more as a symbolic presence than an actual hard agreement that could bring about peace. It was up to those fighting whether they wanted to follow it. The nature of the Truce is such that it requires a commitment from those engaged in conflict to follow it. In the case of the Yugoslav wars, none of the sides involved in the conflict had the desire to lay down their weapons and follow the Olympic Truce. There were several fronts of the conflict mostly between the Catholic Croats, Orthodox Christian Serbs, and Muslim Bosniaks. Thus, with each group desiring their own territory and independence, the ethnic and religious divisions proved to be strong. A non-binding agreement asking for peace, such as the Olympic Truce, could not prevail over the strong desires and hostilities that were represented during the Yugoslav Wars.

Additionally, the track record of the UN during the Yugoslav Wars was poor as the mandates for peacekeeping were ineffective in protecting citizens. This was seen especially in the case of Srebrenica, where the peacekeepers were quickly overrun by Serbian forces. The UN

continued to struggle in implementing an effective Olympic Truce. To go along with the ineffectiveness of the UN initially, the ethnic and religious undertones of the Yugoslav Wars proved to be stronger than any sort of agreement such as the Olympic Truce.

Findings

As the forces in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo were fighting for their independence, their desires to continue their fight were strong. Likewise, Serbia wanted to maintain their dominance in the region and were equally strong in their desire to continue the wars. The deep-rooted ethnic and religious nature of the conflict, paired with the fight for territory and independence made it difficult for any sort of agreement to be made. They were fighting fiercely for the safety and status of their personal identities. So, when the Olympic Truce was first introduced for the Lillehammer Olympics in 1994, a non-binding agreement that could not be enforced stood little chance of being followed by conflict members who were highly entangled with the continuation of conflict. In the case of the Yugoslav Wars, the Olympic Truce was not effective in pausing or ending the conflict because the conflict was rooted in historical ethnic and religious differences that led to strong, unwavering positions on all sides of the conflict. The agreement was simply ignored by all sides and the war pressed on, even as the international community continued to try to bring an end through the conflict with the Olympic Truce and other foreign policy maneuvers.

India and Pakistan

Context

The roots of this conflict go back to 1947 when the United Kingdom, who were the rulers of much of South Asia, including modern-day Pakistan and India, relinquished the territory

through a partition that created the modern countries of Pakistan and India. Under the provisions of the partition created by British civil servant Sir Cyril Radcliffe, areas with a majority Muslim population, mostly in the northwest and northeast of the Indian Subcontinent ruled by the United Kingdom became Pakistan while areas that held a Hindu majority became India. The map with these provisions was drawn in just over six weeks after representatives from the Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities met with British representatives determined that independence and a partition were necessary. The resulting decisions led millions of Muslims to flee to the northwest, while Hindus and Sikhs fled to modern India. This meant that identity of the newly created Pakistan was strongly Muslim, while the identity of India was strongly (Hashem 2010). Both sets of people feared what their newfound status as a “minority” would mean for their safety in the future (Sreenivas 2017). The initial rush of refugees from either side of the new border set the stage for future violence that would be seen in the region for the coming decades. While Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs had lived together in relative harmony for over 300 years, these new political and geographic divisions created conflicts that persists into the 21st century.

Nature of Conflict

Numerous attempts at peace have taken place over time. An early attempt came in 1972 with the Shimla Agreement. It followed the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 which arose from tensions between West Pakistan and East Pakistan, two territories under the same government but with vastly different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. West Pakistan was predominantly Punjabi-speaking while East Pakistan was predominantly Bengali-speaking. The government of West Pakistan began cracking down on the Bengali population, committing human rights abuses and causing millions of refugees to flee to India. As an armed resistant arose East Pakistan, India began to support the Bengali rebels. In response, Pakistan launched pre-emptive strikes on

December 3, 1971, leading to India to fully operationalize its forces. In the eastern region, Indian forces pushed back Pakistani forces and reclaimed Bengali villages and towns. In the west, the Indian forces faced strong resistance from the Pakistanis and were unable to make much ground. This level of fighting continued for nearly two weeks until December 16. On this date, the Pakistani forces in East Pakistan surrendered to the Indian army, marking the end of the war. It also established the country of Bangladesh in the area formerly known as West Pakistan (Hashem 2010). Although this settlement was reached, it did not represent the end of conflict between India and Pakistan or attempts at creating peace settlements between the two countries.

Conflict over Jammu and Kashmir persisted for the latter part of the 20th century. Most of the fighting was represented by occasional border skirmishes in the Kashmir region between military forces from either side. This sort of sporadic conflict represents the pressing issues between the two nations as difficulties in ending these moments of violence have proven difficult. With this said, various attempts have been made (Sisk 2009). Another example of an attempt at peace came in 1999 with the Lahore Declaration. This agreement was an attempt to promote peace, enhance trade, and normalize relations between the two nations, after both had conducted separate nuclear tests in 1998, raising the alarm level for the world (Sisk 2009). It was signed by Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Signed and ratified by both countries in February, the agreement was considered a landmark document in the relations between India and Pakistan. It gave hope to those involved that relations could be normalized, and some sort of peace achieved. However, within months the peace agreement had broken down. Despite the world celebrating the Lahore Declaration as a move toward a long-term peace in the region, the advancement of Pakistani troops into the Kargil district of Jammu and Kashmir undermined the progress that had been made. The efforts

of the peace agreement were broken within months as the Kargil attack deepened mistrust between the two countries and derailed the peace process.

Following the failure of the Lahore Declaration, another attempt at peace was made at the Agra Summit in 2001. It involved a high-level meeting between Vajpayee and new Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. The aim of the summit was to come to a peaceful resolution on a variety of issues, with much attention being paid to the Kashmir dispute. Both India and Pakistan were facing pressure from the international community to come to some sort of agreement that could lead to a long-lasting peace. The idea of splitting Kashmir into three zones was even proposed, with sections going to Pakistan, India, and a third state under the guidance of the UN (Dixit 2001). Ultimately, India and Pakistan stood firm in their demands for their own complete control of Kashmir, leading to a deadlock at the summit. Vajpayee and Musharraf both held different motivations for the peace talks, which led to the resulting stalemate. Vajpayee wanted to portray India as a rational actor in the entire situation in hopes of gaining international support.

Rather than making territorial demands, he called for the ending of cross-border terrorism in the Kashmir region. Musharraf sat on the other side of the debate and demanded that the political and jurisdictional status of Jammu and Kashmir was changed to Pakistani control. He wanted a resolution made on Pakistani terms alone, one that would benefit his country (Dixit 2001). In this case, the political desires of the two governments stood in the way of a peace agreement. Neither wanted to concede their position as they believed that any movement would hurt their status in the region. Even international pressure to come to an agreement did not yield a result as the political motivations proved to be much stronger.

Initiatives since 2004 have mostly revolved around short-lived talks that break down due to a violent attack or other disagreement. For example, between 2004 and 2008, the governments

of India and Pakistan met for a series of talks called the Composite Dialogue. It was another set of talks that focused on a variety of topics (Gul 2008). Once again, the issue of Kashmir's status was at the forefront, but conversations on trade and citizen relations also took place. India made several proposals during the early rounds of the talks, including aviation links, rail links, bus and ferry systems, coast guard collaborations to protect fishermen from each country, and an increase in the number of staff at each respective embassy. These proposals were accepted by Pakistan, and both sides later agreed to increasing trade relations in Kashmir. They agreed to continue agreements on the issue, although both very much held onto the belief that the territory belonged to them (Gul 2008).

The talks made some progress in the areas of citizen relations and trade, but the topic of the conflict in Kashmir persisted, just as it has for the previous 60 years. They were also interrupted by the July 11, 2006 attack by Kashmiri separatists in Mumbai in which seven bombs detonated simultaneously, killing 209 and wounding 700. In the aftermaths of the attack, India suspended peace talks with Pakistan until 2007 (Sisk 2009). Throughout this period, there were some conversations on normalizing relations and bringing peace to Kashmir, the main issue of conflict was not addressed as both sides remained firm in their beliefs, repeating the same pattern that had marked previous rounds of peace talks between the two countries.

Ultimately, this set of talks broke down following the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks in which 11 Pakistani-based militants committed synchronized attacks at locations around Mumbai between November 26, 2008, and November 28, 2008. The gunmen killed 174 people, while injuring another 300 (Ghosh 2009). In the aftermath of the attacks, India accused Pakistan of not taking adequate action against the perpetrators. This led to escalated violence as just day after the attack, the Indian Parliament voted to send airstrikes to terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan.

These strikes escalated the situation between Pakistan and India as the government of Pakistan denied any knowledge of the attacks and spoke out against the strike (Ghosh 2009). While it is unlikely that the Pakistani government had a direct hand in the attacks, the response from the Indian government led to a breakdown in peace talks.

More recent efforts for peace between India and Pakistan have mostly involved international encouragement for peace. This has mostly manifested as the United Nations calling for and encouraging dialogue between the two governments to resolve this dispute in Kashmir. As has been the case for the previous 80 years, neither side has been willing to make concessions and come to a compromise about the region. Instead, they have stayed firm in their desires to have complete control of the region. International pressure continues to fail in creating peace because India and Pakistan both prioritize their desires over non-binding, bilateral as well as international agreements. As the situation is seen as a zero-sum game, the incentives to follow international pressure are low from both countries, leading to the continuation of hostilities. The conflict's deep-rooted nature and the differing perspectives on the key issue of Kashmir continue to impede progress toward a lasting peace agreement.

Analysis

The India-Pakistan case reveals that even in a long-term conflict in which several attempts at peace have been made, the Olympic Truce has also not been effective in creating a peace agreement. In fact, the previous peace agreements also did not look to mention the Olympic Truce as a potential reason for peace. The conflict between the two South Asian countries persists into the 21st century and through all fifteen official Olympic Truce periods. The main ongoing challenge with the conflict is its deep-rooted nature in terms of politics and religion, differing perspectives on the governance of disputed territories, and the presence of

armed resistance and militias continue to impede progress toward a lasting peace agreement (Sisk 2009). With this said, the eyes of the world have been on this conflict for several years and its nature shows the difficulty in creating even a short-term peace to build into a long-term agreement. Included within the failed attempts to bring about peace in the region is the Olympic Truce. The presence of the Olympic Truce has made no progress in terms of slowing or ending the conflict between India and Pakistan. In fact, on average, about 400 deaths occur near the disputed territories of Jammu and Kashmir during Olympic years since 1994 (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program” 2023). The conflict remains hot nearly every single day with either direct confrontations or smaller attacks taking place. Many of these deaths occur from direct military confrontations between the two, but also include insurgencies on either side of the border.

Perhaps the failure of the Olympic Truce and other peace attempts when it comes to India and Pakistan is that they are not effective enough at generating incentives for peace in the minds of those involved in the conflict. Numerous attempts at peace between the two countries have been made, but they have struggled to create lasting, long-term peace. Even when agreements have been put in place, they have fallen apart due to new aggressions from one of the sides. The dispute over the arbitrary borders drawn by the British in 1947 has been contested by the Hindu-majority India and the Muslim-majority Pakistan. Thus, this conflict has persisted over time because of the deep-rooted religious, political, and territorial disputes that have existed since the partition of 1947. The historical, political, and territorial disputes are a much stronger force than attempts for peace. When both sides see the situation as a zero-sum game, they are unwilling to make concessions and come to an agreement. Here in lies a major barrier to effective implementation of the Olympic Truce. Countries prioritize what they see as their own well-being

over the good-will gestures that the Olympic Truce presents. In the case of India and Pakistan, several attempts at peace have taken place over the last 80 years, but there has been little movement on them. Both countries refuse to back down from their positions and believe that to do so would be a failure, as they view the conflict as a zero-sum game. With this mentality, rooted in a highly complex historical, political, and territorial dispute, there is very low incentive to follow a symbolic agreement such as the Olympic Truce. This makes it difficult to implement the Olympic Truce without any firm backing behind it.

Findings

The Olympic Truce is also a general statement to the world asking for peace and the cessation of conflicts. It is not a focused peace agreement that specifically discusses conflicts at hand. In the case of India and Pakistan, talks and agreements specifically focused on their own conflict between the two governments have fallen apart. This makes it all the more difficult for the Olympic Truce, which does not focus on specific situations such as India and Pakistan, or any other countries for that matter, to actually make an impact on localized disputes between two countries. For the Truce to be successful in this case, India and Pakistan must be willing to have key conversations, address core issues, and most importantly come to a compromise for peace. To this point, both sides have shown an unwillingness to compromise, leading to a consistent failure from the Olympic Truce and other attempts at peace.

Cyprus

Context

In the lead up to the 2004 Summer Olympics, another crucial moment for the Olympic Truce took place. These games held a special significance and connection to the ancient games as they were hosted in Athens, the capital city of Greece. As with previous games, Greece appealed to the United Nations General Assembly to pass a resolution in support of the Olympic Truce. This once again passed nearly unanimously, establishing an official Truce period around the games in Athens. However, in the lead up to the Games a dispute over the island nation of Cyprus between Greece and Turkey came to the forefront of the Olympic discussion creating a discussion on the effectiveness of the Olympic Truce period in helping generate long-lasting peace agreements that persist well beyond the allotted Truce period.

Nature of Conflict

Historically, the island has been under division since 1974 when a Greek-inspired coup toppled the sitting government to gain control. Just days after the Greek-supported forces took control, Turkey invaded the island, which was a historically part of the Ottoman Empire. During the ensuing fighting, Turkey gained military control of the northern third of the island. This area was subsequently declared as an independent state, Northern Cyprus, although this claim has only ever been recognized by Turkey. On the other hand, the southern two-thirds of the island officially became the Republic of Cyprus that was administered by the Greeks is an internationally recognized state with EU membership (Kenyon 2021). The dispute continues with the Turkish Cypriots fighting for international recognition while the Greek Cypriots remain adamantly opposed to this. On the ground, the country is very much divided between the two factions with the movement of people and goods between the two sectors being restricted.

In the lead up to the 2004 Olympics this dispute became a flashpoint as international parties called for peace talks or some resolution to be made under the auspice of the Olympic Truce. Specifically, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented what became known as the “Annan Plan,” a set of political discussions that would lead to a referendum with hopes of creating the United Cyprus Republic. It came as Cyprus was being admitted as a new member to European Union in early 2004, just months prior to the Athens Games. With the games being held in their ancient home of Greece and the presence of the newly opened International Olympic Truce Centre in Athens, there was some optimism that progress could be made on the issue in the spirit of peace and the Olympic Truce. However, progress on the Annan plan was slow moving and did not produce the results that the involved parties had been hoping for.

The most essential provision of the Annan Plan was to hold a referendum in the southern part of the island controlled by the Greek Cypriots and the northern part of the island controlled by the Turkish Cypriots (“The Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem” 2004). This was an initial attempt to gain support from both sides for the unification of the island. Other provisions in the document called for equal representation of Greeks and Turks in the Senate and courts, making the split of officials from each faction 50-50. The 2004 plan would also allow the Turkish military to permanently station troops on the island, while any Turkish settlers on the north end of the island who had previously been unable to obtain citizenship would be granted citizenship under the agreement. Finally, the Annan plan involved keeping the legal and economic systems of the newly proposed country separate. (“The Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem” 2004). Under the proposed Annan plan the two factions would be untied on the international stage under the same flag, while the Turkish-controlled north would have

jurisdiction over its present territory while the Greek Cypriots would have jurisdiction over the rest of the island. The two factions would be unified under the same flag on the world stage but would maintain the autonomy to make decisions in their own areas.

Despite the backdrop of the Olympic Truce and the involvement of Greece, the implementation of the plan failed at its first step, the referendum. In the first two months of 2004, the Turkish Cypriots had gained firm support for their government from Turkish officials in Ankara. Meanwhile, Greek Cypriots were supported by the Greek government who were also gearing up to host the Olympics. Leaders from the two factions of Cyprus sat down with Annan on March 31, 2004 to discuss the full plan and look for some agreement. However, Greek-Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos largely rejected the plan, although the two parties agreed to hold separate, but simultaneous referendums on April 21, 2004. The results of the referendums told an important story of the opinions of the island.

In the Turkish Cypriot community, 65 percent of voted in favor of the plan, whereas 76 percent of the Greek Cypriot community rejected the plan (Savvides 2021). This resulted in the failure of the Annan plan. The Greek Cypriots rejected the plan because they felt it gave too much government representation to the Turkish Cypriots who made up only 18 percent of the population. With the island nearly 72 percent Greek Cypriots, they wanted to have a majority representation in the Senate and courts. However, the representation would have been 50-50 in the proposed Senate. Additionally, there was a lack of support for the agreement from the Greek government which resulted in the Greek Cypriots questioning the motivations of the plan, ultimately leading to a large majority of them voting against the unification referendum (Savvides 2021). Thus, the Annan plan in Cyprus failed and the division between the two factions and the territories they held persisted.

Analysis

Even with the symbolic presence of the Olympic Truce and a special emphasis on the Games being hosted in their ancient home of Greece, the Annan plan to demilitarize Cyprus and bring its two factions together in harmony fell short. This was mostly due to resistance from the Greek government and the Greek Cypriots. A conflict that had been ongoing since 1974 showed signs of possibly being resolved, but the rejection of the Annan plan through referendum showed the difficulty in creating a long-lasting peace out of a short-term period like the Olympic Truce period. The Olympic Truce period did not result in support for the peace plan from the Greek government, nor did it result in the support of the Annan plan from the Greek Cypriots.

Today, the island country is still divided between the two factions with restricted movement of goods and people to either side. It is still a contentious issue that the UN has looked to solve, but efforts have continued to break down just as they did in 2004. This perhaps shows that while the Olympic Truce period may allow for peace talks, it is difficult to truly create a long-lasting agreement from any discussions that may take place. The policies of the Greek government and the opinions of the Greek Cypriots proved to be strong in preventing the implementation of the Annan plan even with efforts to introduce the Olympic Truce while the Olympic Games were being held in their ancient home of Greece.

Findings

The county of Cyprus has seen disputes between the Turkish Cypriots in the northern part of the island and the Greek Cypriots who control the rest of the island. This dispute has seen little movement as the visions for political systems have not been able to match up between the two sides. Thus, the ethnic and political divisions in Cyprus have continued the conflict in the

country, with both sides being unwilling to make any concessions. So, even when attempts to use the Olympic Truce and the appeal of the Olympics in their ancient home of Greece in 2004 to end the militarization of Cyprus were made, the involved parties did not wish to follow through. Greece, the host of the Athens games, ended the Annan Plan because it did not see giving up political dominance of the island as being in its favor. Thus, the political motivations, along with historical claims to territory on the island provided to be a stronger motivation even when Greece itself had been the country to propose the Olympic Truce recommendation to the UN General Assembly as the host of the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens.

Russia

Context

In the last fifteen years, the government of the Russian Federation has started two conflicts specifically within the Olympic Truce period. In 2008, Russian forces invaded Georgia during the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics on August 8, 2008. In the lead-up to this invasion, Russia had expressed support for separatist movements in the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, enclaves that had called for Russian rule. On the night of the opening ceremony, with the eyes of the world and its political leaders placed firmly on the festivities in Beijing, Russian tanks and troops crossed into Georgian territory, intent on occupying and annexing South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Some have argued that Georgian forces started the war with a military show of force in South Ossetia on August 7. Regardless, the full-scale violence of the invasion from Russia had been building up for months and historians tend to conclude that Russia was the main instigator (King 2008). The ensuing violence has been labeled the Five-Day War as it lasted until August 12, 2008, and resulted in the deaths of hundreds while displacing thousands of citizens in the north of Georgia. However, this even was

not Russia's only violation of an Olympic Truce in the 21st century, with later violations coming in 2014 and 2022.

Nature of Conflict

Russia's violence against Georgia represents a clear violation of the Olympic Truce as the onset of conflict came unambiguously within the period on the day of the opening ceremony. However, this is also an interesting case because it started and ended within the same Truce period. While this may suggest that the Olympic Truce period played a role in ending the conflict, there is no evidence that points to this. Rather, diplomatic pressure from the European Union outside of the Truce generated the ceasefire. Facing the possibility of sanctions, Russian forces stopped their advances. However, the war itself can be viewed more as a show of force than anything else. Russian troops were able to roll through Georgian towns in hours and took Georgian military capabilities with them, including American Humvees that had been donated (King 2008). Thus, Russia had completed a show of force in five days that decimated Georgian military capabilities, leaving it powerless in future conflicts against Russia if they were to ever arise.

The war between Russia and Georgia may have ended in five days in 2008, but it is not the only instance of Russian forces violating the Olympic Truce. On February 20, 2014, Russian forces began the annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula on the border of the Black Sea. By February 27, 2014, Russian troops, who arrived on naval vessels and aircraft, had overrun the Ukrainian military positions on the peninsula and raised the Russian flag over the Crimean Peninsula. This entire military operation took place during the 2014 Winter Olympics, in which Russia itself was the hosting in its city of Sochi. Despite being the country who had called for the observation of the Olympic Truce in the UN General Assembly, as is customary for host nations,

Russia had violated the Truce and annexed an important piece of Ukrainian territory. As the subsequent Paralympics ended and the Olympic Truce period expired on March 23, Russia had expelled the majority of Ukrainian troops from Crimea and the Ukrainian parliament announced what it called Russia's temporary occupation of the territory. In this case, the Olympic Truce did not prevent the onset of conflict in Ukraine and no real repercussions were levelled against Russia for its actions.

Russia's most recent violation of the Olympic Truce occurred on February 24, 2022 Russian forces launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This aggressive action came just four days after the closing ceremony of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics on February 20. This came firmly in the Olympic Truce period for the Beijing Olympics, a resolution that was also signed by the Russian delegation to the UN. In the days following the start of the invasion, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach spoke out against the military action, asking for peace in the model set by the athletes during the Olympics (Nair 2022). This appeal for peace was ignored and Russia's invasion continued. In the first days of the war, over 1,000 civilians were killed in cities across Ukraine while millions were displaced. The number of military deaths during the period was estimated between 7,000 and 15,000 although the true count from both sides is unknown (Crawford 2022). The war has captured the attention of the global with billions of dollars in aid being poured into Ukraine.

In the early days of the war, major national corporations ceased their operations in Russia while Russian athletes were banned from competing in international sporting events around the world, including the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Lindholm 2022). As of February 2023, one year into the war, it is estimated that 8,173 civilians have been killed, 18 million displaced, and 270,000 combatant deaths. The actual figures are likely higher as counting in an active warzone can prove

to be difficult (Throssell et al. 2023). The active conflict is predicted to continue for several months or even years as Ukraine has pledged to gain back all territory that Russia has occupied.'

In the case of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, it appears that the Olympic Truce was not effective in preventing the conflict. Instead, Russia launched a full-scale invasion that has led to an already year-long war and claimed the lives of nearly 300,000 people. This direct military action and the starting of conflict is a direct violation of the Olympic Truce showing that in this case, and the case of Russia's war in Georgia, the Truce was an afterthought that proved to be ineffective in preventing conflict. In fact, during the 2022 Olympics there was a belief from both the United States and China that Russia would once again launch an invasion during the Olympics as it had been building up troops on the Ukraine border for several months. There were even reports that China had asked Russia to delay its invasion until after the closing of the Beijing Olympics, although both sides denied this (Wong and Barnes 2022). While Russia waited a few days after the closing of the Olympics, it still violated the Olympic Truce period. This sparked outrage from the International Olympic Committee. Hours into the invasion the International Olympic Committee released a statement that it "strongly condemns the breach of the Olympic Truce by the Russian government" (Nair 2022). This statement was not met with any response and the invasion continued through the rest of 2022. The ensuing war has captured the attention of the world with many Western countries imposing sanctions on Russia and western corporations pulling their operations from Russia.

From a sporting perspective, Russia and Belarus (who had provided military support to Russia) were banned from the 2022 Winter Paralympics, immediately following the start of the invasion. Additionally, Russia was banned by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) from FIFA World Cup qualifying matches, and individual Russian athletes were either

banned or forced to compete under a neutral flag in various sports (Lindholm 2022). While the international sporting reaction to Russia's violation of the Olympic Truce and subsequent invasion has been strongly enforced bans, Russia has not been dissuaded from its actions. As of March 2023, over 8,000 Ukrainian citizens have been killed with 12.8 million people being displaced from their homes. Estimates of the number of military casualties from the conflict are around 223,000 Russian soldiers and around 133,000 Ukrainian soldiers. This amounts to nearly 540,000 casualties on both sides (Throssell et al. 2023) and (Chemaly 2023). The war has continued to persist despite the calls from the IOC that Russia violated the Olympic Truce, showing the difficulty in enforcing the Truce during the onset of new conflicts.

Analysis

It is interesting to note Russia's timing with these three escalations in conflict. While it had ongoing civil conflict with Chechnya was much of the 1990s and early 2000s, its recent instances of multi-national war have either started or been escalated specifically during the Olympic Truce period. In 2008, Russian troops invaded Georgia during the Opening Ceremony of the Olympics, in 2014, an Olympics that Russia hosted, its troops annexed the Crimean Peninsula during the Games, and in 2022 just days after the Olympic closed, Russia launched a full-scale invasion. Now, Europe is experiencing its first conventional ground war between two countries since World War II. The timing of these invasions suggest that Russia makes a conscious decision to violate the Olympic Truce, but also uses the Olympic Games as a distraction for its military movements. It specifically invaded Georgia during the opening ceremony in 2008. In 2014, it invaded the Crimean Peninsula using forces from its Southern Military District which had already been activated because of the hosting of the games in Sochi, which was located on the Black Sea. The proximity of this force to Crimea, just over 400 miles

across the Black Sea, along with it being deployment ready for the Olympic Games allowed it to launch a rapid assault and blitz the peninsula in less than a week (Kofman et al. 2017). While the troop movement was presented to the world as a mechanism to ensure the safety of the Olympic Games, the very forces that were meant to maintain the safety of the athletes and spectators in Sochi were used to launch an invasion in Crimea during the Olympics.

Whether Russia purposely continues to start invasions during the Olympic Truce period as a strategic decision is unclear. However, Russia's conflict escalations during three separate Olympic Truce periods seem to show that it holds no respect for the Olympic Truce. There have been no consequences directly for violating the Olympic Truce, as sanctions have materialized later in the process of the invasions. Russia does not see the Olympic Truce as a strong enough factor to dissuade it from continuing with invasion plans or escalating conflict. Even with the presence of heavy sanctions that have cut Russia off from the international community, its invasion of Ukraine has persisted for over 18 months. Thus, Russia has shown that sanctions will not dissuade them, meaning that the incentives for a major aggressor such as Russia to follow the Olympic Truce are limited as there are no enforced punishments or consequences from the international community for breaking a UN General Assembly-supported Olympic Truce. With a lack of consequences for violating the Olympic Truce, Russia has continued to do so. These actions seem to be a blatant disregard of the Olympic Truce as Russia's last three major invasions have all taken place during an Olympic Truce period. This seems to show that Russia not only disregards the Olympic Truce, but also does not see it as a threat when planning new military operations.

Based on the timing, Russia may also look to use the Olympic Games as a distraction. Its 2008 invasion of Georgia began during the Opening Ceremony of the Summer Olympics in

Beijing. In 2014, the very military forces it claimed were security forces for the Winter Olympics it was hosting in Sochi were later used to invade the Crimean Peninsula. The Russian government had shown the world the forces prior to the invasion, but they were held under the guise of security forces for the Olympics that they were hosting. In the period immediately prior to the 2022 Beijing Olympics, several Russia analysts, including retired U.S. General Phillip Breedlove, Chair of the Frontier Europe Initiative, and Robert McConnell, founder of the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation, pointed to Russia's pattern of invasions during the Olympics as a potential for increased risk of an invasion during the Beijing Olympics ("The Olympics and Russian Invasion" 2022). This belief sprouted both from Russia's past behavior and the fact that Russia began amassing troops near its border near Ukraine in the months before the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. Ultimately, Russia waited until after the end of the Olympics, possibly at the request of China, to launch its full-scale invasion.

All three of these invasion periods were marked by the start of a new conflict by Russia, and all three were clear violations of the Olympic Truce. While they represent a clear disregard for the Olympic Truce, they may also represent Russia taking advantage of the world's distraction with the Olympic Games to launch new military operations. Whether the timing of Russia's invasions during Olympic Truce periods is a deliberate strategic decision remains to be seen, but it is clear that Russia has consistently disregarded the Olympic Truce since 2008. As the Olympic Truce is non-binding and violations are met with little backlash, Russia has continued to press on with its ongoing military actions and plans, regardless of whether the UN General Assembly-backed Olympic Truce is in effect.

Findings

In the case of Russia there have been several violations of the Olympic Truce in recent years that have actually been the onset of new conflicts. There have been three cases in which Russia started an invasion of one of its neighbors during an Olympic Truce period. In 2008, Russia invaded the neighboring country of Georgia during the Opening Ceremony of the Summer Olympics in Beijing. Although the conflict lasted a short period of time, it still represented an onset of a new conflict during an Olympic Truce period. In 2014, Russia used its military forces that had been brought into the city of Sochi, where it was hosting the 2014 Winter Olympics, for security to purposes to later cross the Black Sea and invade Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. Within weeks, Russia had annexed the peninsula and planted its flag to signify its control of the region. Finally, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine days after the closing ceremony of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. After it had built up its forces at the border for months, the invasion of Russia's largest neighbor began in February 2022 and has persisted into the latter half of 2023. Once again, both the 2014 and 2022 cases represent the onset of new conflict by Russia just days after the closing of the Olympic Games, showing clear violations of the Olympic Truce.

Russia's violations of the Olympic Truce show that it is not an effective tool in preventing the onset of conflict as Russia has repeatedly violated the Truce. In fact, it seems that in Russia's case the Olympics have been used for the opposite purpose. Instead of viewing the Olympic period as a time of peace, Russia has used the Games as a distraction to launch military invasions of its neighbors. While sanctions have followed, there has rarely been a tangible consequence for violating the Truce. This speaks to difficulty facing the Olympic Truce across various types of conflict. While it is presented as a UN General Assembly recommendation, there is no binding agreement or enforceable punishment that makes it dangerous or unacceptable for a

country to violate the Truce. Therefore, countries such as Russia act at their own discretion during Olympic Truce periods, often blatantly disregarding the Truce. Ultimately, without a truly binding agreement that can be enforced with military action the Olympic Truce appears to be a well-meaning statement or symbolic gesture that struggles overall in preventing or ending conflict as seen by Russia's repeated violations of the Olympic Truce period in the 21st century.

Discussion

Between the quantitative data showing the prevalence of conflict and the case studies presented, the difficulties in implementing the Olympic Truce. The quantitative data represents 375 conflicts, both multi-national and civil, that have taken place in Olympic years since 1994 when the Truce was first recommended by the UN General Assembly. From these 375 conflicts, the four case studies represent a variety of conflicts all of which show some level of difficulty in implementing the Olympic Truce. The multi-faceted conflict of the Yugoslav Wars, the long-term conflict between India and Pakistan, a specific attempt to use the Olympic Truce to bring about peace in Cyprus, and Russia's multiple invasions during Olympic Truce periods demonstrated several difficulties in successfully implementing the Olympic Truce.

Across the board, the UN recommendation Olympic Truce that has been presented by the General Assembly before the start of every Olympic Games since 1994 is not a binding agreement that countries have to follow. This means that countries are welcome to voice their support for their agreement in the General Assembly while continuing their current wars and invasion plans. A country can voice their support or vote in favor of the Olympic Truce, but there is nothing that truly holds them to the agreement. The non-binding nature of the UN recommended Olympic Truce seems to relegate it to more of a symbolic gesture than an actual hard agreement that can be enforced and truly make states fall in line with it. This can make it difficult to convince countries to follow as their reasons for conflict prove to be much stronger.

The deep-rooted and complex nature of the four conflict case studies made it difficult to implement an Olympic Truce across many editions of the Olympics. The desires and visions of the combatants are overwhelmingly strong, and they seem to hold precedence over the non-binding Olympic Truce agreements that the UN puts out before each Olympics. Even when

attempts are made between the countries at war to find peace, the talks have fallen apart. The nature of the Olympic Truce as a general, non-binding agreement calling for the cessation of hostilities is difficult to implement because of the overwhelming desires of the combatants and the lack of punishment for not following the agreement. The UN cannot punish any country for violations of the Olympic Truce with any formal actions. This makes it difficult for countries to follow the Olympic Truce, especially when they cannot even follow an agreement, they made themselves during a time of war. While other actors in the international community may implement sanctions or cut diplomatic ties in relation to ongoing wars, the power of the UN and the International Olympic Committee in preventing, pausing, and ending wars is incredibly limited. The UN General Assembly needs countries to be willing to follow the Olympic Truce for it to be successful, but as long as countries have other, stronger motivations they will continue to lack a willingness to follow the guidelines of the Olympic Truce. This makes it difficult for the Truce to have any sort of impact on the state of conflict between the two countries.

Based on the case studies, the major difficulty of the Olympic Truce lies in the fact that it is non-binding and non-enforceable. Due to this, the consequences for violating the Olympic Truce are minimal. When it comes to war and conflicts, both sides typically have very strong feelings and desires for their own cause. This is often because they are fighting for independence or in support of their ethnicity and religion. These identities prove to be strong motivations for combatants, so much so that people are willing to die for a cause. With motivations this strong, both sides of a conflict are often willing to continue the fight, even when suffering heavy losses and pressure from the international community. Thus, outside influence from an agreement like the Olympic Truce remains minimal. The motivations of the combatants, whether it be independence, politics, identities, or territory prove to be stronger than the non-binding nature of

the Olympic Truce. So long as these strong motivations remain, combatants are likely to ignore the Olympic Truce and other potential peace agreements. This means that in the cases of conflict present since the first UN Olympic Truce recommendation in 1994, the Olympic Truce has not had a successful case in preventing a new conflict or ending an ongoing conflict.

Overall, these four case studies show that conflicts and their combatants typically disregard the Olympic Truce because there are stronger motivations at play. Combatants in the Yugoslav Wars, India and Pakistan border disputes, Cyprus territorial conflicts, and Russia's invasions all fight for strong motivations that cannot be swayed by the Olympic Truce. Essentially, countries involved in the conflict have a motivation to continue to continue fighting which stems from the fact that a pause in the conflict might affect their vital interests. This may include their opponent gaining opportunity to rearm, develop new strategies, or return the members of its fighting force to full health. The risk of the opponent gaining some sort of competitive advantage during a pause in conflict is too great of a risk for countries engaged in conflict. This makes the motivations to follow the Olympic Truce low as countries view it as an instrument that could result in a loss for their own cause.

Instead, all of these actors see the Truce as a gesture that can be disregarded without consequences. Without punishments and strong responses backing up the Olympic Truce, the motivations to follow it are very small. The countries' personal desires consistently took precedent over the sentiments of the Olympic Truce. Thus, these case studies show that countries who are engaged in conflict do not adhere to the Olympic Truce because their motivations for fighting are strong as they look for their most desirable outcome, something that cannot be achieved by following the Olympic Truce. This leads to the Olympic Truce not having an impact

on conflict scenarios, as countries choose to disregard or ignore its presence when engaged in conflict scenarios.

Limitations

A few of the major limitations within this study centered around the availability of data in regard to the Olympic Truce and conflicts in general. While there were nearly 375 data points found in the quantitative study of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, only four such conflicts were used in the case studies. While these cases were selected based on variety and perceived representativeness of the universe of cases, it is possible that there were other, stronger cases in existence that were either missed in the original study, or simply not selected as a case study. Additionally, the information presented in the case studies is only what is available through secondary sources and a small number of primary sources from the UN. While from the outside perspective it appears that the Olympic Truce was not a direct cause of peace agreements based on the documents available, it is possible that its message and ideas were presented in peace talk meetings. So, while officially the Olympic Truce has not been used to create peace from a conflict scenario, it could have been discussed behind closed doors.

Finally, the definition of conflict as “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year” (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program” 2023), could be considered narrow and therefore not include some instances of successful Olympic Truce application in the universe of cases.

Ultimately, this study was conducted based on the available data and selected case studies, and different results are possible had other cases been selected in the process.

Conclusion

Based on the data and subsequent analysis, the hypothesis “the Olympic Truce has not been used effectively to prevent or end a conflict during an Olympic period since 1994 due to its non-binding nature and the overpowering pursuits of those involved in the conflicts” is supported. The continued high prevalence of conflict during Olympic years across Olympic Truce periods shows that conflicts in general tend to disregard the Olympic Truce. Whether the combatants are neighboring countries or two parties in the same country, the motivations of those involved have led to the persistence of conflict even with the presence of the Olympic Truce. This speaks to the nature of conflict and the reasons why people wage war. In the case studies presented, the overwhelming motivations of independence, ethnic and religious freedom, and territory proved to be the strongest force behind the conflicts. The combatants were very rigid in their ways because they were fighting for a purpose. Thus, even when they support the Olympic Truce in the UN General Assembly the motivations to follow it are much lower than the motivation to continue fighting and win the war. This is seen as the most favorable outcome, and the non-binding nature of the Olympic Truce makes it difficult to truly convince countries and other warring parties to follow it.

This conclusion was supported by the four case studies presented as combatants on all sides of the conflicts continued to fight despite the presence of the Olympic Truce and other small attempts at peace. In the case of the Yugoslav Wars, peace was only made following the bombing runs of NATO in Kosovo and massacres in Bosnian and Herzegovina and Croatia. It took these drastic actions for peace talks to finally happen. In the cases of India-Pakistan, Cyprus, and Russia, attempts at peace, such as the Olympic Truce, have been symbolic in nature. These cases represent a failure in the symbolic value of the Olympic Truce as all combatants

chose to ignore, or in the case of Russia, specifically violate the Truce. While the Truce may have been effective in Ancient Greece when allowing spectators and athletes fair passage to the Games in Olympia, its application in the modern world under UN General Assembly recommendations has been full of failed attempts to prevent and end conflict. Across these cases, countries violated the Olympic Truce through active disregard or by believing there was a certain cost to their conflict effort that would happen if they were to follow the agreement.

In addition to the case studies presented there have been 375 instances of conflict recorded during Olympic years since 1994 when the first UN-backed Olympic Truce was presented (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program” 2023). This high prevalence of conflict shows that across regions, countries, and conflict types, the Olympic Truce has struggled to make progress in lowering the intensity of conflict and preventing the start of new conflicts. Regardless of their scale and duration conflicts have persisted across several Olympic Truce periods. With this in my mind, it is clear that there are major difficulties in bringing about peace during wartime. When groups of people or countries decide to go to war, it is usually a decision born from strong motivations and desires. People in war are willing to fight and die for their cause, it is something they care deeply about. Thus, the Olympic Truce and its symbolic calls for peace in respect for the ancient way the Games functioned struggles to overcome these deep motivations held by those in the conflict. This is consistent across instances of conflict. When motivations for fighting are high and wars do happen, it is difficult to come to any sort of peace agreement, especially an agreement that is very symbolic and general such as the Olympic Truce.

Opportunities for the Olympic Truce to exist as a symbolic effort such as the unsuccessful peace talks between the two Koreas in 2018 may continue, but this seems to be the furthest extent. So long as countries are not motivated to follow the Truce and their reasons for fighting

remain strong, the Olympic Truce will continue to struggle. Perhaps the only way that the Olympic Truce may become more effective is if there are direct sanctions attached to it. Throughout Russia's invasion of Ukraine, economic sanctions have damaged Russia's economy. While the war has continued, sanctions have made things more difficult. However, for the Olympic Truce to have sanctions behind it, the UN Security Council would likely need to be involved. It would be highly difficult to pass any sort of Olympic Truce resolution through the UN Security Council due to the diverse motivations that the members hold. With this said, without any formal consequences for violations, the Olympic Truce will continue to be a non-binding agreement which countries have little motivation to follow.

Looking ahead to the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France, the Olympic Truce, and conversations around it will continue to be relevant. In response to Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, official teams from both Russia and Belarus have been banned from the 2024 Olympics. However, the organizers of the Games will also allow athletes from both countries to participate under a neutral flag, as has become common with other international sporting entities (Roeloffs 2023). France, as the host country, will present a proposal for the Olympic Truce to the UN General Assembly. It is expected that the proposed Truce period for the 2024 Olympics will be from July 19, 2024 through September 15, 2024. The same call for warring parties to stop their fighting and for new conflicts to not take place will take place. However, it remains to be seen if any progress will be made on whether the Olympic Truce will actually work to create peace in 2024.

Ultimately, the Olympic Truce proves to be a symbolic gesture for peace more than anything else because it is a non-binding, and non-enforceable agreement that countries have low motivation to adhere to. There are no solid actions that can be taken when a country violates the

Olympic Truce, meaning that the consequences for violations are low. With this lack of punishment, countries locked into war with each other have a lack of motivation to follow the Olympic Truce. Another area to consider are the overwhelming motivations that countries experience when they go to war. In the case of the Yugoslav Wars, many of the countries involved in the fighting were seeking independence. Along with independence, they were fighting for their very livelihoods as groups were experiencing ethnic and religious persecution from the Serbian-led JNA. These factors, combined with political and territorial disputes proved to be extremely strong motivations. In India and Pakistan, the war over Kashmir is a political and territorial dispute, but it is also a split between Muslims and Hindus. In both of these cases, peoples' identities with a group, whether it be their ethnicity or religion, proved to be the reasons why the wars were fought. These motivations are perhaps the strongest desires people can have, and when people are fighting to maintain them, they are willing to do almost anything. This sort of overwhelming motivation makes it difficult for a message such as the Olympic Truce to make headway because it does not bring in the personal factors of those in the war.

As the motivations for war remain high, the Olympic Truce struggles in providing strong action to prevent or end conflicts. As with any other UN General Assembly recommendation, the terms are non-binding and non-enforceable. This leads to countries involved in war continuing to disregard the agreement, even when they are the sponsors of the recommendation, as in the case of Russia. When engaged in conflict, countries often view their survival and success as a zero-sum game. This makes it hard for any peace agreements to work. It is only when international pressure such as sanctions or in the case of the Yugoslav wars, military interventions, take place that countries appear to be open to peace talks. The Olympic Truce does not provide the level of pressure necessary to prevent conflict. Even as the International Olympic Committee cried out

against Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 during the Olympic Truce period, this message was not strong enough to dissuade Russia's plans to escalate conflict in the region. The desires and motivations of countries engaged in conflict have consistently proven to overpower the sentiments of the Olympic Truce.

While the Olympic Truce will continue to be presented by the UN General Assembly for every Olympic Games in the foreseeable future, its power in actually making a difference during conflicts will remain a topic of discussion. Between 1994 and 2022, there were no cases where the Olympic Truce led to a ceasefire, peace agreement, or delay of conflict. Instead, it has served as more of a symbolic presence at every Olympics since 1994. It has a symbolic message of peace that is considered to be a nice sentiment. However, the recommendations are non-enforceable and therefore struggle in really bringing about change in conflict scenarios. Based on this, it is clear that the Olympic Truce has never been successful in preventing, pausing, or ending conflict scenarios since it was first introduced in 1994. Rather, it has continued to serve as a sentiment and symbol for the goals of peace. Over the last three decades, the Olympic Truce has remained a symbol, rather than a tool for actually making an impact in conflicts. With low motivations from countries to adhere to the Olympic Truce, it appears that this will continue to be the case for upcoming Olympic years, unless there is a major sentiment from countries involved in conflicts around the Olympic Truce and other, non-binding peace agreements.

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