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INTRODUCTION



## Studying international sports organisations during the Cold War

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They were amongst my greatest problems, the political ones. At the time of the Cold War, I had huge problems with politics.<sup>1</sup>

With these words, Hans Bangert, the general secretary of the UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) from 1960 to 1989, highlights the impact the Cold War had on European football management, particularly on the UEFA, at the beginning of his mandate in 1960. Still largely unknown, these dynamics are thus extremely important both for the history of sport and, to a greater extent, for the history of international relations. Indeed, if the existence of 'Sport in the Cold War' has been validated by numerous studies,<sup>2</sup> there is still a lot of ground to cover.<sup>3</sup> For instance, the influence that the East–West conflict had on international sports organisations (such as the International Olympic Committee, IOC), the UEFA or the FIG (International Gymnastics Federation) remains a widely unexplored subject, unlike some symbolic moments of tension or peace (such as the Olympic Games of 1980 and 1984, the 'Ping-Pong Diplomacy' in the 1970s, or the 'Summit Series' of 1972). This is a surprising observation for two reasons.

First, since they achieved pioneering works in the 1970s and 1980s, historians have had an interest in international organisations that has never ceased growing and has even experienced an important increase following the research led by Akira Irye on the concept of a 'global community'.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, we now know that international organisations are major agents of international relations who actively participate in 'global diplomacy'.<sup>5</sup> This analysis is particularly accurate for international sports organisations that widely developed their administrations and their prerogatives in the second half of the twentieth century. Nowadays, in most cases, the number of member states in these organisations is often as important as the

number of members in the main UN institutions (the World Health Organisation, WHO) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), or the ITU (International Telecommunications Union), so that sports competitions such as the Olympic Games or the Football World Cup have become, if we believe Maurice Roche's words, 'planetary events'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, researchers who study the question of sports diplomacy regularly point out that these organisations play a non-negotiable part in international relations,<sup>7</sup> although such researchers still only use, with caution, the abundant documentation the organisations keep. Moreover, these researchers barely ever seek to highlight in detail the effects of diplomatic transformations and the impact these transformations have on these organisations. Finally, it is rare for the organisations' structures (in particular the use of cards, tables or organisation charts) to be explained and studied, or even questioned, or for the image they want to give themselves on the international stage to be analysed.

Second, the field of international organisations studies has known important theoretical and empirical reworking these past few years. This field was particularly fertile ground to test the transnational approach,<sup>8</sup> especially including studies on the notion of networks<sup>9</sup> or the circulation of ideas.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the method used to study international organisations has been widely discussed and nowadays these organisations are analysed as platforms of exchange or confrontation between states,<sup>11</sup> or as motors particularly active in the creation of 'the international'.<sup>12</sup> Finally, authors have also been taking an interest in the existing links between different organisations that claim a 'relational approach' to international organisations studies.<sup>13</sup> Some of these studies directly participated in the renewal of opinion on the Cold War,<sup>14</sup> and showed in particular that the two blocs were indeed separated, but not completely disconnected from one another,<sup>15</sup> and probably much less so than the governments had officially made it appear. As previously indicated, sports historians have so far largely stayed out of these different developments, as they do not often take actual part in the various existing networks pertaining to this theme<sup>16</sup> and barely contribute to the publications on the subject. Here, and despite several researchers' undeniable interest in a transnational approach,<sup>17</sup> national traditions remain very significant and the 'national' continues to tackle the interest of many more researchers. Thus, in many countries, works on international sports history still settle for juxtaposing national cases, without really searching to define international exchanges or understand the vectors of these connections.

Admittedly, the IOC has already been the object of numerous studies and publications, but we still need to emphasise that the majority of researchers who take interest in the IOC often address the organisation indirectly, and prefer to focus on themes related to the competitions the institution organises: the Olympic Games. Consequently, the studies that we could consider

'institutional' are actually lacking; moreover, this statement is even more amplified when it comes to the topic of the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> Concerning other organisations, the assertion is even more evident as there exist only a few monographs, in which the Cold War is often treated laterally.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, following a few recent attempts,<sup>20</sup> it is a whole part of sports history on an international level that we now need to explore in order to create concrete bonds with researchers interested in other fields (culture, science or even technology) – an approach that would allow the establishment of possible comparisons – and thus really understand the place of sport on the international scale. Taking into account these considerations, this special issue aims to focus on the influence of Cold War on several international sports organisations.

Four main questions govern our work. First, what influence did the Cold War have on international sports organisations? Second, how did their leaders negotiate this situation? Also, what was the impact of these organisations on the Cold War itself? And thus, were they able to establish exchanges that contrast with international relations?

This 'Fifty years War',<sup>21</sup> to use French historian George-Henri Soutou's expression, has known a number of phases in which moments of tensions superseded periods of respite. Thus, after the beginning of the conflict, probably around 1946–1947 (although historians do not always agree on this temporality<sup>22</sup>) a first period of peace – called the 'Thaw' – can be identified after Stalin's death in 1953. Then a new 'heated period' started at the beginning of the 1960s with the construction of the Berlin Wall and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Globally, an East–West détente occurred in the 1970s, followed by another period of tension at the beginning of the 1980s, before the epilogue, which eventually led to the fall of the Soviet Union. The period is thus very intricate, especially as the viewpoint offered here still relates too much to USA–USSR relations, and also because, in the wake of global studies on the Cold War, we need to consider geographical interplays more. As a matter of fact, postcolonial wars in several African and Asian countries in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, or the Chilean coup of 11 September 1973, show that these 'heated periods' do not break out everywhere at the same time, and remind us in particular that this war was not as cold as its name would lead us to believe. To study this period, especially with an international focus, is therefore problematic, which is why we have chosen to address only one part of the period here. The authors of this issue will thus begin their studies at the end of the Second World War, when the conflict started, and end them at the beginning of the 1970s, when the two great powers agreed to cooperate on nuclear weapons. We choose to follow a division close to the USA–USSR relations because of the influence those two States had on most of the organisations studied here. However, it is clear that other studies will have to be led in the future in order to establish a 'Sport in the Cold War' chronology.

This special issue consists of five articles. The first one is by Nicola Sbeti and broaches the as yet hardly investigated case of Trieste, a territory divided between Italy and Yugoslavia after the Second World War that some authorities wanted to see recognised on the international stage. After taking into consideration the status of sport in international relations during those post-war years, the author examines how the IOC (International Olympic Committee), FIFA (*Fédération Internationale de Football Association*) and the UCI (*Union Cycliste Internationale*) faced this delicate question.

In the second article, Heather Dichter addresses two events that created conflict within FIS (the International Ski Federation) in this first part of the Cold War: the arrival of East Germany at the beginning of the 1940s, and the non-participation of this country in the Alpine World Ski Championships in Chamonix in 1962. The author insists on certain States' use of sport to fight against the other bloc. In that sense, the FIS is here perceived as a battleground for the two blocs, and Dichter's contribution highlights that, despite apolitical discourses from the main sports leaders, in time of high tension on the international stage, the Cold War easily infiltrated the sports organisations' arenas and tended to get the upper hand.

The third article is the fruit of Claire Nicolas, Georgia Cervin, Sylvain Dufraisse, Anaïs Bohon and Grégory Quin's collaboration. They seek to reveal through their analyses the first elements of governance of a still widely unknown institution (the FIG – *Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique*), whose protagonists, successful gymnasts and various competitions were largely affected by the Cold War. This contribution also aims to offer a 'modern' approach of institutional history, insisting on different aspects related to the structure and the governance of the organisation and on the manner through which its leaders have tried to neutralise the impact of the Cold War.

Along the same lines, but exploring another facet of these organisations, Jürgen Mittag and Philippe Vonnard address the case of UEFA. By analysing the organisation's official publications (the *Bulletin officiel* and the secretary's report), in particular the vocabulary used, the subjects covered and the photographs published, the two authors highlight the way UEFA, an organisation involving countries coming from both blocs, wishes to appear as a pan-European organisation. This contribution allows for a reflexion on the motivations of the Union's main leaders and calls for future research to investigate the leaders' incentives to engage in sport on an international level.

By contrast, Florys Castan-Vicente deals with the case of an organisation that did not transcend the Cold War. The author broaches the case of a little known entity: the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW). Castan-Vicente explains the reasons behind this organisation's creation and its first developments. Moreover, she shows that its first leaders were indeed motivated by the idea of

creating international exchanges, but their anticommunism, without a doubt, prevented countries from the Eastern bloc from joining the organisation. In this sense, this entity highlights how cultural, scientific but also sports organisations were used as weapons by each bloc.

These contributions have the advantage of presenting different situations and thus seriously prepare the ground for the topic of the Cold War's influence on international organisations. Indeed, various *grounds* are dealt with in this issue, since the objects of study are international and European sports federations (Sbetti, Dichter, Quin et al., Mittag and Vonnard) and a parastatal organisation (Castan-Vicente). In addition, the contributors also develop several approaches here, whether it be the manner the Cold War-related cases are negotiated within one (Dichter) or several federations (Sbetti); the development of an organisation's governance despite a disadvantageous context (Quin et al.); the organisation's care to offer an image that aims to transcend this particular context (Mittag and Vonnard); or else the impossibility, or unwillingness, to overcome this context until the political setting allows it (Castan-Vicente).

Thus, these various studies continue to show the complexity of the sports field on the international stage, sometimes as a tool of soft power,<sup>23</sup> sometimes as a means for collaboration between States.<sup>24</sup> In addition, these studies confirm that these States are not the only ones to invest in this field, as international organisations are also increasingly present and definitely have their say, thus creating sometimes unprecedented exchanges between politically divided countries. Among the lessons in this special issue, we must also highlight the empirical research that the contributors carried out, as it emphasises the importance that this type of research must be carried out in the institutions' archives, whether or not these archives are kept by the federations themselves, and that private foundations can help shed a light on the functioning of these institutions.

In this sense, these studies allow going deeper into the idea that Barbara Keys expressed of an international sports community.<sup>25</sup> If we are convinced of this community's existence, we now need to carry out finer analyses and question its possible unity, which will then allow us to really understand its significance on the international stage, and especially during such a time as the Cold War. In addition, it will also be necessary in the future to establish detailed biographies of these various organisations' leaders (elites and subordinates), as this will allow for a better understanding of the reasons behind commitment of the leaders, and also help us understand how their vision of the connections between sports and politics permeates their organisation. From this viewpoint, the question of sports apoliticism<sup>26</sup> in particular will have to be the main concern.

Consequently, we hope that this project will help research into the institutional history of sports organisations be (finally) at the heart of sports

historians' preoccupations and that we will hereafter be able to highlight even more the important part played by sport on the international stage since the interwar period.

## Notes

1. Interview with Hans Bangerter, September 2012, Böllingen.
2. Specifically on Sport in the Cold War, see: Steven Wagg and David Andrews, eds., *East Plays West: Sport and Cold War* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007); Maximilian Graf, Agnes Meisinger and Wolfgang Weber, 'Sport im Kalten Krieg', *Zeitgeschichte* 4 (2015). Also, see the following current projects: Robert Edelman, Christian Ostermann and Christopher Young, 'The Global History of Sport in the Cold War' whose publication we await impatiently, and Philippe Vonnard, Nicola Sbeti and Grégory Quin, eds., *Beyond Boycotts. Sport during Cold War in Europe* (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, in press).
3. For a recent inventory of literature about sport and the Cold War, we suggest: Philippe Vonnard, Nicola Sbeti and Grégory Quin, 'Why and How Study Sport in the Cold War', in *Beyond Boycotts*, eds. Sbeti Vonnard and Quin.
4. Akira Iriye, *Global Community. The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California, 2002). For a historical synthesis but also a more theoretical development, see also: Marie-Claude Smouts and Guillaume Devin, *Les organisations internationales* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2011).
5. See in particular: Laurence Badel and Stanislas Jeannesson, 'Introduction. Une histoire globale de la diplomatie?', *Monde(s)* 5, no. 1 (2014): 6–26; Alison Holmes and Simon Rofe, *Global Diplomacy. Theories, Types and Models* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2016).
6. Maurice Roche, *Mega-events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000).
7. Barbara Keys, *Globalizing Sport. National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (London: Harvard University Press, 2006); Robert Frank, 'Internationalisation du sport et diplomatie sportive', in *Pour l'histoire des relations internationales*, ed. Robert Frank (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 387–405; Heather Dichter and Andrew John, eds., *Diplomatic Games. Sport Statecraft and International Relations since 1945* (Lexington Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2014); 'Diplomacy and Sport', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 27, no. 2 (2016): special issue coordinated by Simon Rofe and Heather Dichter.
8. For reflections on this point, see: Glenda Sluga, 'Editorial – the Transnational History of International Institutions', *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 2 (2011): 219–22; Sandrine Kott, 'Les organisations internationales, terrains d'étude de la globalisation. Jalons pour une approche socio-historique', *Critique internationale* 52, no. 3 (2011): 9–16.
9. Yann Decorzant, 'La Société des Nations et l'apparition d'un nouveau réseau d'expertise économique et financière (1914–1923)', *Critique internationale* 52, no. 3 (2011): 35–50; Marlene Herren, eds., *Networking the International System. Global Histories of International Organization* (Cham: Springer, 2014).
10. Patricia Clavin and Kiran Klaus Patel, 'The Role of International Organization in Europeanization: the Case of the League of Nations and the European



- Economic Community’, in *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century: Historical Approaches*, eds. Martin Conway and Kiran Patel K. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 110–31; Daniel LAQUA, ‘Internationalisme ou affirmation de la nation? La coopération intellectuelle transnationale dans l’entre-deux-guerres’, *Critique internationale* 52, no. 3 (2011): 51–67.
11. Chloé Maurel, ‘L’Unesco: une plate-forme pour les circulations transnationales de savoirs et d’idées (1945–1980)’, *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société* 15 (2011), printed online.
  12. Sandrine Kott, ‘Dynamique de l’internationalisation: l’Allemagne et l’Organisation internationale du travail (1919–1940)’, *Critique internationale* 52, no. 3 (2011): 69–84; Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy. The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
  13. Pierre-Yves Saunier, ‘La secrétaire générale, l’ambassadeur et le docteur. Un conte en trois épisodes pour les historiens du “monde des causes” à l’époque contemporaine, 1800–2000’, *Monde(s)* 1, no. 1 (2012): 29–46; Kiran Klaus Patel, ‘Provincialising European Union: Co-operation and Integration in Europe in a Historical Perspective’, *Contemporary European History* 22, no. 4 (2013): 6549–673; Lorenzo Mechi, Guia Migani and Francesco Pettrini, eds., *Networks of Global Governance. International Organisations and European Integration in a Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).
  14. For words on this historiographical renewal, see the introduction of: Sari Autoio-Sarasmö and Katalin Miklóssy, eds., *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (London: Routledge, 2011).
  15. Tobias Hochscherf, Christopher Laucht and Andrew Plowman, eds., *Divided, but not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War* (New York: Berghahn Book, 2011). Numerous studies revisit the history of the Cold War now, and in this sense, several international organisations have already been dealt with from this angle. See particular contributions in: Antoine Fleury and Lubor Jilek, eds., *Une Europe malgré tout, 1945–1990* (Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2008) and Ilya Gaiduk, *Divided Together. The United States and the Soviet Union in the United Nations, 1945–1965* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013).
  16. For instance, only one or two researchers interested in sport history have subscribed to the H-Ion network created by Sandrine Kott and Davide Rodogno, even though this network gathers over 400 people who work around the topic of international organisations.
  17. For an overview of studies in sport sciences using a global or transnational approach, see: Matthew Taylor, ‘Editorial – Sport, Transnationalism, and Global History’, *Journal of Global History*, no. 8 (2013): 199–208; Souvik Naha, ‘“Over the Border and the Gates“? Global and Transnational Sport’, *Sport in Society*, published online.
  18. Patrick Clastres, ‘Paix par le sport et guerre froide: le neutralisme pro-occidental du Comité international olympique’, in *Culture et Guerre froide*, eds. Jean-François Sirinelli and Georges-Henri Soutou (Paris: PUPS, 2008), 121–37; Barbara Keys, ‘The International Olympic Committee and Global Culture during the Cold War’, in *Les relations culturelles internationales au XXe siècle. De la diplomatie culturelle à l’acculturation*, eds. A. Dulphy, et al. (Bruxelles: P.I.E Peter Lang, 2010), 291–98; Gabriel Bernasconi, ‘De l’Universalisme au transnational: le Comité international olympique, acteur atypique des



- relations internationales', *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, 31, no. 1 (2010), 151–9.
19. As an exception, see: Anne Roger and Thierry Terret, *European Athletics. Une histoire continentale de l'athlétisme* (Stuttgart: Neuer Sportverlag, 2012); Cécile Ottogali-Mazzacavallo, Thierry Terret and Gérard Six, *L'histoire de l'escrime: 1913-2013, un siècle de Fédération internationale d'escrime* (Biarritz: Atlantica, 2013).
  20. See: Jürgen Mittag, 'Negotiating the Cold War? Perspectives in Memory Research on the UEFA, the Early European Football Competitions and the European Nations Cups', in *European Football and Collective Memory*, eds. Wolfram Pyta and Nils Havemann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 40–63; also, a few contributions in: Fabien Archambault, Loïc Artiaga and Gérard Bosc, eds., *Le continent basket. L'Europe et le basket-ball au XXIe siècle* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2015); ainsi que la partie 2 du livre Vonnard, Sbeti, Quin, *Beyond Boycotts*.
  21. George-Henri Soutou, *La guerre de cinquante ans: le conflit Est-Ouest 1943-1990* (Paris: Fayard, 2001).
  22. For a recent historiographical debate, see: Federico Romero, 'Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads', *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014): 685–703.
  23. Developed by Joseph Nye, this concept has been widely used and notably in the sports field. For recent reflections, see: Kevin Freeman, 'Sport as Swaggering: Utilizing Sport as Soft Power', *Sport in Society* 15, no. 9 (2012): 1260–74; Simon Rofe, 'It is a Squad Game: Manchester United as a Diplomatic non-state Actor in International Affairs', *Sport in Society* 17, no. 9 (2014): 1136–54.
  24. For theoretical reflections on these different positions, see: Aaron Beacom, 'Sport in International Relations: a Case for Cross-disciplinary Investigation', *Sport in History* 20, no. 2 (2000): 1–23; Stuart Murray, 'The Two Halves of Sports-Diplomacy', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23, no. 3 (2012): 575–92. For concrete examples of this complexity during the Cold War, see in particular: Christoph Bertling and Evelyne Mertin, eds., *Freunde oder Feinde? Sportberichterstattung in Ost und West während des Kalten Krieg* (Gütersloh: Medienfabrik, 2013); Dichter and John, *Diplomatic Games*.
  25. Keys, *Globalizing Games*.
  26. Contrary to other fields (for instance humanitarian non-governmental organisations), this concept was hardly ever questioned by international sports organisations. However, the apolitical rhetoric is a permanent feature in the leaders' discourse, and in our opinion, it is not at all anodyne. On the contrary, it could seem like a defence mechanism (like others, such as self-financing) that would limit the impact of politics within international organisations and thus guarantee their monopolisation of the topic of sport and its development. For further reflections on sports apoliticism, see: Jacques Defrance, 'La politique de l'apolitisme. Sur l'autonomisation du champ sportif', *Politix* 50, no. 13 (2000): 13–27; Manuel Schotté, 'La structuration du football professionnel européen. Les fondements sociaux de la "spécificité sportive"', *Revue française de Socio-Economie* 13, no. 1 (2014): 85–106.

## Disclosure statement

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