

SPORTSWASHING AND THE GLOBAL CHANGING DYNAMICS IN INTERNATIONAL IMAGE MAKING

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the origin of sportswashing with special focus on the forms and impact associated with it. It equally looked at the ways sportswashing is impacting civic space as a result of the changing dynamics. Data were collected and analysed from both governmental and non-governmental sources. Information from journals, book chapters and online newspapers were consulted during the course of this research work. The key findings of this paper reveals the unprecedented pace sportswashing has taken since the dawn of a new millennium and the potentials of it spreading. Therefore, both authors have recommended as a matter of urgency, the need for sporting bodies to take pragmatic steps such as incorporating human rights and climate change and environmental policies to their framework for accepting a country, corporate entities and individuals as a host, sponsors, partners and funders of any sports events.

Key words: Sports. Sportswashing. Human Rights. Climate Change. Environmental Policies.

RESUMO

Sportswashing e a dinâmica global em mudança na criação de imagem internacional

Este artigo examinou a origem do sportswashing, com foco especial nas formas e no impacto a ele associados. Analisou também as maneiras como o sportswashing está impactando o espaço cívico como resultado da dinâmica em mudança. Dados foram coletados e analisados de fontes governamentais e não governamentais. Informações de periódicos, capítulos de livros e jornais online foram consultadas durante o curso desta pesquisa. As principais conclusões deste artigo revelam o ritmo sem precedentes que o sportswashing assumiu desde o início de um novo milênio e o potencial de sua disseminação. Portanto, ambos os autores recomendaram, com urgência, a necessidade de as entidades esportivas adotarem medidas pragmáticas, como a incorporação de direitos humanos, mudanças climáticas e políticas ambientais em suas estruturas para aceitar um país, entidades corporativas e indivíduos como anfitriões, patrocinadores, parceiros e financiadores de quaisquer eventos esportivos.

Palavras-chave: Esporte. Sportswashing. Direitos Humanos. Mudanças Climáticas. Políticas Ambientais.

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INTRODUCTION

The role that sports can play in a country's nation-building process cannot be over-emphasised.

As an essential part of human capital development, sport is a useful driver of national development (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024b), contributing immensely to a nation economy and international prestige (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024a).

In 2021, it was reported that the English Premier League contributed about 7.6b pounds to the United Kingdom economy (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024b) even though one-third of the games for the 2019/2020 season were played behind closed doors as a result of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Guardian (2023) reported that the economic contribution of sports to the Saudi economy grew from 0.4% to 1.5% (MacInnes 2023).

By 2030, Saudi government aims to double sports contribution to the economy to 6%. Sports and its attendant development have led to economic growths through the creation of jobs, sponsorship deals, tourism, mega sports event hosting, partnership, and entertainment among others. With the rapid spread of globalization - global spread of wealth, technology, ideas and labour (Gupta 2024), since the dawn of a new millennium, sport offers countries especially countries of the global south an opportunity to diversify their economy and influence decisions through shaping the preferences of others through appeal and attraction (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024b) which is also known as soft power.

However, in recent years, there is an ongoing war in the world of sport. This war has been referred to in most mainstream media as 'sportswashing' - using sports to conceal a nation, individual and corporate entities human rights, climate and environmental abuses.

Thus, sport transformation in most countries in recent years has been used to advance public opinion (both internal and external) and human posture of a country. In this study, we maintain that sportswashing is simply the transformation of the image of a country through sports. Sportswashing since 2018 has gained currency. In 2018, 2021 and 2023, sportswashing had about 51, 559, and

6,000 mentions respectively (Merritt 2024; Morgenbesser, Filo 2024).

As a portmanteau of sports and whitewash, sportswashing as a term was coined in 2015 to describe "Azerbaijan's use of the European Games to divert international attention away from concerns over human rights in the country" (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024a p.508).

However, it is pertinent to note that although sportswashing gained traction in 2018 thanks to the activities of Human Rights Watch, it is germane to state that its origin can be traced to the mid 1930s (Gupta 2024; Merritt 2024; Morgenbesser, Filo 2024; Ronay 2019).

Sportswashing as we shall be seeing is a phenomenon growing in Asia especially among as reported by mainstream media, it is pertinent to note that sportswashing is equally visible in Europe, Africa and South America.

This paper is poised out to analyze the current crisis in sport - sportswashing. It further sheds lights on the various forms in which sportswashing can occur and the impact it can have on sport.

This paper is a desk study, as the research was performed through an extensive review of academic and policy literature, these included reports of national, regional and international organizations and other relevant sports that have enjoyed published literature.

The paper argues that the war on sport - sportswashing, is a phenomenon that is associated not only amongst the Asian Tigers but it has its origin in Europe. This crisis is gradually spreading to Africa.

Although, sport transformation and development has shifted the monopoly of sport that was held by Western nations to global south countries, it is of importance to note that sportswashing might grow into a malaise that might not be curable in the future if not tackled head-on.

History and origin

Sportswashing has no general accepted definition. However, for the sake of this paper, sportswashing can be defined as the act of concealing attention by individuals, governments and corporate bodies from human rights, climate and environmental abuses through massive investments in sporting activities.

These investments can take different forms such as sponsorship; hosting mega sports events; partnership; funding; setting up new facilities, sports infrastructure and domestic leagues; and engaging well-known international sports persons in ambassadorial roles among others (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024a; Merritt 2024).

Sportswashing is equally referred to as reputation laundering. Scholars has argued that sportswashing is a Public Relation (PR) tactics and another form of greenwashing used by companies and now countries appear environmentally and humanly (human rights) friendly without doing the hard work of reducing their environmental impact and poor human rights records (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024a; Morgenbesser, Filo 2024; Purcell 2023; Zidan 2022).

Although, sportswashing as a term came into being in 2015 and gained currency in 2018 thanks to the campaign of Human Rights Watch in criticizing Russia's poor human rights records and using hosting sporting events to conceal the latter (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024a), its origin can be traced to the mid-1930s (Gupta 2024; Merritt 2024; Morgenbesser, Filo 2024; Ronay 2019).

Though, as reported by western mainstream media, sportswashing has been a growing phenomenon in Asia. It is germane to state that, sportswashing is equally present in Europe, Africa and South America. At the international level, state governments have directed attention away from poor human rights records and corruption scandals through sportswashing (Wilson 2022).

Sportswashing has been used to cover up vices, crimes, abuses and scandals at the individual and corporate levels. Thus, we shall be examining the origin of sportswashing since the 1930s. For the sake of this paper, we shall be breaking down the origin of sportswashing to the 1900s, 2000-2015, and since 2018. Sportswashing in the 1900s

Sportswashing has been used by authoritarian rulers to conceal their bad image at home. In 1934, the Italian authoritarian ruler, Benito Mussolini, hosted the second World Cup (Ronay 2019, Frommer 2022).

The regime known for its fascist system of government, was a menace to it people especially those that opposed him. The 1934 FIFA world Cup staged in Italy, created the

opportunity to sale himself to the world (Ronay 2019).

The 1936 Summer Olympics and Winter Olympics held in Germany under the Nazi party, was a means of painting the regime to appear appealing to external spectators. While in the 40's to mid-80's, there was a sportswashing strategy - tours to South Africa and vice versa - by the white apartheid South African government.

Irrespective of the growing pressures on the South African government to end it tyrannical rule and hand-over power to the black majority, the government of the day, leveraged sports to draw attention away from Apartheid policies and win international favor.

During these periods, the South African government in partnership with the Rugby Union organized different tours between South Africa Rugby team and other Rugby countries (Delaney 2020).

South Africa Rugby team toured France, New Zealand, South America while Australia, Scotland, France, Wales, Argentina, England, Italy and Ireland all toured South Africa. Equally important to note is that apartheid South Africa hosted mega sports events such as South African Motorcycle Grand Prix, the 1974 Davis Cup, the 1972 Federation Cup, and the 1973 light heavyweight boxing match between Pierre and Bob Foster.

Authoritarian and tyrannical rulers for the years under review have leveraged sports as a means of mitigating international outcry against their regime. In 1978, Ferdinand Marcos Sr, known for ruling Philippine with iron first, hosted the 1978 FIBA World Championship (Ramirez 2014), to present his regime as a good one irrespective of both internal and external backlash due to his draconian laws. In furtherance to this, in 1975, the fight between Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali, was staged in Philippines also known as "Thriller in Manila". It was reported that Muhammad Ali collected about \$4m from the dictator ruler (Harwood 2019) to fight in the country.

Equally, in 1974, the fight between George Foreman and Muhammad Ali, known as "The Rumble in the Jungle", was held in Kinshasa, the capital of Democratic Republic of the Congo, under the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko. It was alleged that the latter spent about \$100m hosting the fight, dubbed the most famous bout of all time (Harwood 2019).

Dictatorial regimes and government in Venezuela, Cuba, Sri Lanka, Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Brazil, Malaysia, Indonesia, Soviet Union, China, Scotland, and Russia among others have leveraged sports as an instrument of concealing human rights abuses and poor climate and environmental policies.

However, it is pertinent to note that, from our working definition, it is not only governments that make use of sports to direct attention away from poor human rights records and corrupt scandals but also individuals and corporate organisations. Saudia, the Saudi Arabia flag carrier, known for its negative environmental impact has sponsored Williams Grand Prix Engineering, a Formula One team,

from 1977 to 1988 while in the mid 1980's, Silvio Berlusconi, an Italian, acquired majority of the shares in AC Milan (Bouzidi 2021), a Serie A club through his Fininvest holding.

Through his acquisition and thanks to the team success in the 1990s, Berlusconi, was able to win the hearts of the fans. Berlusconi was very much involved in Italy government yet he was known for his involvement in false accounting cases, sex scandals, corruption, bribery of public personnel, abuse of office and other controversies, yet the purchase of AC Milan and winning the heart of the latter's fan base was strategic in improving public opinion towards him which he capitalised on for political purposes.

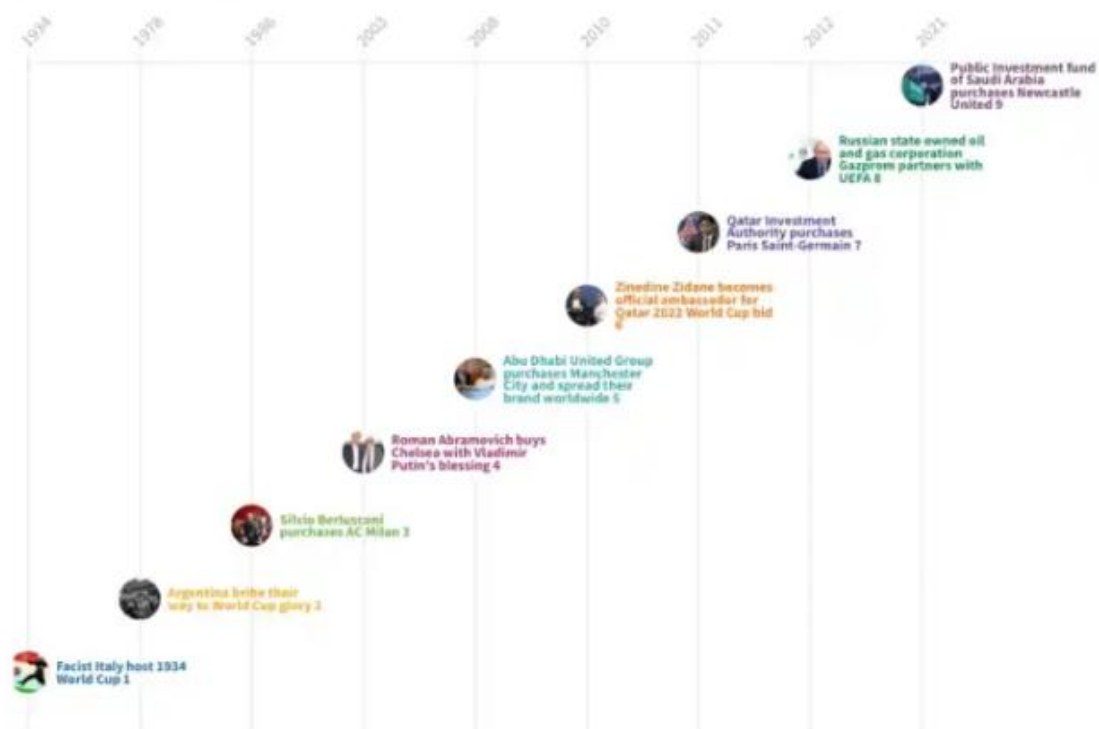


Figure 1 - Origin of Sportswashing.

Source: Bouzidi 2021.

2000-2015

Since the dawn of a new millennium, sportswashing has been on the rise.

This period witnessed a shift to Asia especially among Arab countries. From 2002 to 2016, there was the cycling tours of Qatar, Dubai and China, which was sponsored by their irrespective governments with the intention of

putting the country on display for an international audience (Rogers 2023).

These tours were carried out to conceal attention away from human rights records. In furtherance to this, in 2003, Robert Mugabe, the erstwhile leader of Zimbabwe, hosted the Cricket World Cup (Williamson 2007), this event which was to project a positive image of the country could not produce the needed success. In 2002, in trying to improve his souring

international image, Muammar Gaddafi, the erstwhile de facto ruler of the oil rich Libya ensured that the Italian Supercoppa between Juventus and Parma was played at Tripoli (Billebault 2020). China, is another major player in the sportswashing world. Example of this is found in the 2004 China Open and the China PGA Tour held since 2014 (Graham 2022).

Corporate entities and organisations, during this period have been enmeshed in sportswashing. Azerbaijan tourism authority has been a major sponsor of Atletico Madrid, a top-flight club in Spain (Gibson 2014).

This deal worth around 12m Euros include shirt sponsorship and Atletico Madrid squad and coaching crew traveling to Azerbaijan for tourism etc. In 2014, Brunei's flag carrier, known as Royal Brunei Airlines, entered into a sponsorship deal with Australian Football League, although this deal was called-off that same year (Farrel 2014).

Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA), a Venezuela state-owned oil and natural gas company sponsored Formula One drivers (Walker 2015) and Citgo - a subsidiary of PDVSA - engaged in the sponsoring of Racing Stars (Fryer 2013).

In 2003, China Central Television (CCTV), a Chinese state-owned broadcasting network sponsored Jordan Grand Prix Formula One team.

Since 2018

Since 2018, sportswashing has taken an unprecedented turn. There has been a huge investment in various forms of sportswashing. A major feature of countries that are involved in sportswashing became the very rich countries that secured the building of infrastructures to host sporting events. In a build up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup held in Qatar - the smallest country to ever host a World Cup - the latter spent more than \$220b in erecting miles of highways, a metro system, new airport, hotels and stadiums among others (Goldbaum 2022).

These are transformative developments of legendary character. Since 2021, the Saudi government has spent more than \$6.3bn in sports deals (Michaelson 2023).

These investments have won the country numerous hosting rights such as Women's Tennis Association (WTA) season-ending tournament from 2024 to 2026 (Cansler

2024), 2034 Asian Games (Francavilla 2024) and more recently the 2034 FIFA Men World Cup (McVeigh 2024). Since 2018, there has been a rush in sportswashing activities especially by countries, corporate entities and individuals.

Russia state-owned corporate organisations such as Gazprom, USM Holdings Limited and Aeroflot among others has sponsored major sporting events in Europe. While since 2018, Ramzan Kadyrov, the Chechen dictator, has sponsored numerous Chechnya fighters (Zidan 2018).

Daniel Kinahan, an alleged boss of drugs and weapon cartel, is a promoter of boxing, where he has helped organise many World Championships bouts and has on numerous occasions offered advice to combat athletes (Dawson 2021). This he has adopted as a vehicle to remedy his image.

Forms of sportswashing

Sportswashing can take numerous forms such as hosting mega sports events; setting up new facilities, sports infrastructure and domestic league; buying and investment in teams and leagues internationally; engaging well-known international sports persons in ambassadorial roles; partnership; and funding; among others (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024a; Merritt 2024).

Firstly, hosting mega sports events. Hosting mega sports events is a major form of sportswashing used by government and corporate entities to win both domestic and international appeal. Since 2018, Qatar has hosted a lot of eye-catching sporting events. It has hosted the FIG Artistic Gymnastics Championships, IAAF World Championships, FIFA Club World Cup, FIFA Men World Cup, FINA World Championships, and FINA Masters (Soyland 2020).

The 2022 FIFA Men World Cup had the negative history of inhumane treatment of migrant workers. As per a report by The Guardian (2023), it was reported that dozens had died and others were suffered labour abuses, living in unsanitary and overcrowded accommodation, poor payment (Kelly 2022) during the construction of stadiums in build up to the 2022 FIFA Men World Cup held in Qatar.

In 2023, both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reported that

hundreds of migrant workers hired during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar are yet to get compensation and justice they deserve (Amnesty International 2023; Human Rights Watch 2023).

The Saudi government has hosted Formula One events, boxing, Spanish Super Cup finals, Supercoppa Italia, and recently, the country was chosen by FIFA to host the 2034 FIFA Men World Cup (McVeigh 2024), which will cost them heavily but will continue to transform the image of their country. Civic space in this country is low and women rights are often a mirage. Until recently, women were not allowed to drive, for the married ones they must go with a male guardian either as a husband or brother to seek certain medical treatment, in line with the protection culture of the people (Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024a).

Other authoritarian government has hosted different sports - cycling, cricket, rugby, horsing, golf and Olympics among others - to win local and international appeal and shift attentions away from issues such as human rights, shrinking civic space and climate and environmental impacts.

Secondly, setting up new facilities, sports infrastructure and domestic league. A major characteristics of countries that are involved in sportswashing is the very cost incurred in building infrastructures to host sporting events.

Democratic Republic of Congo under the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko spent about \$10m to host "The Rumble in the Jungle", a boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman. To host the 2022 FIFA Men World Cup, Qatar constructed and erected massive structures such as highways, metro system, airport, hotels and stadiums, which was reported to cost more than \$220b (Goldbaum 2022). Saudi Arabia since 2021 has spent more than \$6.3b on sporting events (Michaelson 2023).

These investments have earned the kingdom the honour to host eye-catching sporting events. In other to make the Pro Saudi League more competitive and viable, the kingdom bought four of the big teams in the domestic league (Duerden 2023).

In 2023, the domestic league clubs spent close to \$1b on transfers, making it second only to the English Premier League (D'Urso 2024). These investments have

attracted players like Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema, Sadio Mane, N'Golo Kante and Neymar Jr among others. Saudi government has argued that the kingdom seek to make the country a hotbed for sporting events and diversify her economy.

Thirdly, buying and investing in teams and leagues internationally. Another important form of sportswashing is through the instrumentality of buying and investing in teams and leagues internationally.

The Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund (PIF) in 2021 acquired Newcastle United and has invested more than 400m Euros on the club (D'Urso 2024).

PIF has invested in La Liga and Serie A which has seen Spanish Super Cup and Supercoppa Italia finals been played in Saudi. Aside football, PIF has invested in golf a staggering amount worth about \$2b. In 2023, Aramco - a Saudi state-owned oil firm - invested in cricket events which saw the former logos plastered in events run by the Cricket council.

The biggest prize in Horse racing is the Saudi Cup known as King Abdulaziz Racetrack, worth around \$20m (D'Urso 2024). The Saudi PIF's investment has been felt in the world of boxing, formula one, tennis, wrestling, mixed martial arts and eSports among others.

Equally, Qatar through it PIF in 2012 completed the full purchase of Paris Saint Germain (PSG) in a deal worth close to 70m Euros (Soyland 2020).

The new owners have spent more than 1b Euros on transfers. The Qatar government through it beIN sport media has invested substantially in sports. The beIN sport media holds a sporting rights to broadcast FIFA World Cup, UEFA champions League, Europa League, Serie A and English Premier League among others in the Middle East and North Africa (beIN Media Group 2022 in Soyland 2020).

Fourthly, engaging well-known international sports persons in ambassadorial roles and deals. In other to gain and win international appeal, sportswashing countries tends to engage the services of renowned sports personnel through ambassadorial deals. In 2021, on a three-year deal worth around \$25m, Saudi Arabia government engagement Lionel Messi, one of the greatest-ever football player, to promote tourism to Saudi Arabia on

social media (CFR 2023 in Ani, Onu, Anyanwu 2024a).

Qatar has equally traded this path. Legendary players such as Xavi Hernandez, Cafu, Samuel Eto'o and Tim Cahill served in Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, a body saddled with the responsibility to effectively organise the 2022 FIFA Men World (FIFA 2020 in Soyland 2020).

Arab Business (2020) reported that \$15m was paid to Zinedine Zidane, for the latter to serve as Qatar ambassador in its bid to host the 2022 FIFA Men World Cup. Equally, Qatar engaged the services of other football stars such as Pep Guardiola, Ronald De Boer, Roger Miller and Gabriel Batistuta among others in its bid to host the 2022 FIFA Men World Cup (Arab Business 2020, Long 2010 in Soyland 2020).

Fifthly, sponsorship, partnership and funding of sporting activities both with and outside. This is a cardinal form of sportswashing. This form of sportswashing has been used by both individuals, corporate entities and countries in a bid to conceal its poor human rights records, shrinking civic space, and climate and environmental hazards.

Gazprom, a Russian state-owned oil company has sponsored Schalke 04, UEFA Champions League while its flag carrier Aeroflot was once a sponsor of Manchester United. AIA group, an insurance group based in Hong Kong, are into shirt sponsorship with Tottenham Hotspur.

The autocratic regime of Rwanda has through its ministry of tourism sponsored both Arsenal and Paris Saint Germain. Saudi PIF's sponsorship deals have cut across major sporting events attracting famous athletes to the kingdom.

Saudi PIF has provided funding and sponsorship to sports and even other underfunded sports. Saudi PIF provided around \$100m in funding to the Professional Fighters League (PSL) in 2023 (D'Urso 2024).

Play The Game has created a database that lists Saudi state-owned sponsorships in sports. As at 2024, it has recorded about 323 sponsorship deals linked to the Saudi government (D'Urso 2024).

During the 2022 FIFA Men World Cup, the kingdom Tourism Authority was a major sponsor of the tournament in Qatar. Qatar Airways and Hamad International Airport had sponsored and partnered with FC Barcelona,

AS Roma, Boca Juniors, PSG, and Bayern Munich among others.

Sportswashing and shrinking civic space

In 2023, Civicus, a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists working to strengthen citizens' action and civil society throughout the world, released its State of Civil Society Report, where it was reported that the civic space is shrinking due to erosion of democratic values not only by authoritarian governments but also by democratic ones (Civicus 2023).

Civic space has been defined as the ability of citizens to organise, participate and communicate without hindrance and in doing so are able to lay claim to their rights and influence the political and social structures around them. However, these political and social structures have been under constant attack.

Human rights crimes have been swept under the carpet by states and the much needed collective global decisions on climate change and environmental impacts tend to go ignored (Civicus 2023).

This study further reported that authoritarian regimes have further consolidated power through sports popularity (Civicus 2023).

Press freedom, free speech and freedom to express oneself is further becoming a mirage, provided the state could force you to contribute your labour towards the attainment of a defined sports transformation. Expatriate workers have been subjected to several obnoxious treatments.

Countries and companies of international repute have used sportswashing as a guise to exploit the global environment and as a result advance the negative impact of climate change on vulnerable people in other countries of the globe (Lantz 2024).

TotalEnergies, in a bid to divert attention from its bad environmental dealings, was a key sponsor of the 2023 Rugby World Cup and has recently signed a seven-year deal amounting to \$247m to be the official sponsor of Africa Cup of Nations (Lantz 2024).

Shell, another key player, in a bid to greenwash itself has invested massively in sports deals. Shell has invested \$28.3m, \$21.7m, and \$65.2m in American football, basketball and motorsports respectively (Lantz 2024).

The heavyweight oil companies have spent at least \$2.5b in sportswashing activities representing more than 40% of the \$5.6b spent by oil and gas companies in greenwashing and sportswashing endeavours (Lantz 2024).

The 2024 Paris Olympics Games has been accused by critics as providing an avenue for sportswashing by leading manufacturing giants.

Though the organisers of this prestigious quadrennial event pledged to make the tournament more responsible and sustainable, commentators alleged that Toyota used it as an avenue to market itself irrespective of its previous engagements (Lantz 2024).

The Conservation reported that in 2021, a Critical Report revealed more than 250 advertising and sponsorship deals are made between corporate polluters, and leading sports team and organisations around the world (Canniford, Hill 2022).

Been aware of their growing negative environmental impacts, state-owned and private corporate organisations in the energy and mining sector has sought to maintain control over spiraling levels of public esteem (Canniford, Hill 2022).

Companies and recruitment agencies exploited vulnerable workers through outrageous recruitment fees to secure jobs while others were paid obnoxious wages even though most of them have to work on conditions that are not favourable (Anti-Slavery International 2022).

Workers were exposed to poor weather conditions that with poor health care facilities. Summer temperatures most times reached a staggering 50°C/122°F (ITUC Special Report 2014).

In 2021, it was reported that about 6,500 expatriate workers had died in Qatar since it won its bid to host the 2022 FIFA Men World Cup (BBC 2022).

Behind all these outrageous treatments is the 'Kafala' system which outlined a lot of damaging and draconian laws on expatriate workers (Human Rights Watch 2021).

Critics and scholars has argued that Qatar has gotten away with these accusations and condemnations due to its massive investments in sports both at home and abroad.

Impacts of sportswashing

It is pertinent to note that sports transformation in most of these sportswashing countries has moved sport hegemony held by Europe and North America to other countries especially countries in the Global South.

Those countries that hitherto cannot host, sponsor and fund competitive sport events are now doing so without feeling the effect on their economy. However, as plausible as this might look, sportswashing present some unimaginable problems to the world of sport.

One of the cardinal challenge posed by sportswashing to sport is in the area of unabated human rights abuses, and climate and environmental crisis.

The continuous investment by countries, corporate entities and individuals in the world of sport might undermine the credibility of the latter to be used as an instrument of 'writing wrong right'. Winning local and international appeal might make those who ought to be at the forefront of fighting against human rights abuses, championing favourable and friendly climate change and environmental policies to be complaisant.

Sportswashing equally has the capacity to spread to other regions such as Africa - even though sport transformation and development is still lacking (Onu, Ojighoro 2023).

Sportswashing, if not tackled head-on, can be leveraged by other authoritarian governments especially those in Africa to sportswash herself. Another rhetorical question remains are Western countries, the so called bastions of democracy, not complaisant? Most of the oversea investment of sportswashing countries have been in Western countries.

Sportswashing countries investments has its presence in the UK, US, Germany, France, Portugal and Spain among others.

Therefore, there is a need for these countries to practice what they preach by upholding the highest standard of practices of human rights, sustainable climate and environmental policies that will improve civic spaces. Unfortunately, the real world of international relations is defined by national interests.

Finally, the state in the international system is expected to grow herself and her national resources to the level that the state can channel these resources to the areas that will

bring increased national fame and transform their image globally towards the path of hegemony. It is the race for international image making, which is fundamental for the growth of tourism and the national economies of states that sportswashing is advancing and undermining the hitherto stereotypes that were hitherto associated to it thereby pushing emerging states and transformative leaders into the path of sportswashing at a time the global economy of the traditional rich countries of the world are shaking and under continuous efforts towards revival. Sportswashing has equally left those with 'voice' voiceless as a result of the massive investments of sportswashing countries in public relations (PR) and media, hence newer actors are increasingly emerging in the globe and the world is in a state of continuous movement and transformation.

CONCLUSION

This article argued that sportswashing is not a thing of today, though it gained currency recently. The authors traced it origin to Europe, where it was used by authoritarian regimes to appear appalling both at home and abroad.

However, since the dawn of a new millennium, the wave and spread of sportswashing has been unprecedented. New countries have used the platform of sport development to conceal human rights abuses, poor climate and environmental policies which has shrunk civic spaces as dissenting voices are silenced.

Equally, important to note is its usage by corporate entities and individuals to appear friendly. Going further, the study examined the different forms of sportswashing - investing in sports, sponsorship, funding and partnership among others. It maintained that the impact of sportswashing on sport was positive and transformative, notwithstanding the position of critics in relation to other areas of national life.

The positivism that sportswashing has brought to the emotional peace and entertainment life of the global citizenry that are sports lovers cannot be neglected.

Moving forward, therefore, there is a need for different sporting bodies to develop a robust and a sophisticated human rights and humane practices that will equally take cognisance of climate change and environmental impacts that need to be upheld

by countries before being granted hosting rights to sport events, bearing in mind that the right for country A ends here the right of country B stands.

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