

Governance

Football States Intrusion: When States and Sovereign Fund Redefine the Rules of the Games



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Introduction

*“Avery Brundage liked to say that revolutionaries were not bred on the playing field.”*¹ But what happens when the revolutionaries are the ones who coach the team or govern the sport itself?

It is in this context that this article will try to answer. Indeed, the sport is often associated with a welcoming space, where we can see the neutrality and the universal acceptance of everyone during each game. The problem resides in the autonomy aspect of the sports organization. In a committee mind, autonomy would be a world where sport existed without any communication with politics or with a third party. But that is not the case; autonomy goes with world interference. Indeed, the sports world has always been communicated with political power. For example, during the fifth anniversary of the USFSA (*Union des sociétés françaises de sport athlétiques*), *Pierre DE COUBERTIN*, the founder of the modern Olympic movement, invited the public authorities and governors to attend this meeting. The third-party influence also happens with the sponsorship agreement used by some institutions for funding their mission.²

However, we cannot say that the line between sports and politics has been neglected. It was and still is for the

International Olympic Committee a pillar or a *“bastion”*³ against all manipulation that can arise in this context. In a way, the actual *“bastion”* resides behind the legal foundation of autonomy. Still, in a world where the impact of globalization and commercialization of the sport is becoming increasingly visible, some questions could arise. In some cases, we can see actual third-party or State interference in the sport. This relationship benefits both parties. For one part, the organization receives funding, and on the other part, the funding parties can be attached to a *“green”* partnership.

Sometimes, the State does not play as a commercial partner but as a referee. That happens when the organization is subject to problems such as financial transparency. This problem has led some countries to act, especially in the UK with the Football Governing Bill.

In society, with access to globalization and commercialization, sometimes the line between partnership and interference is fine. So, it is particularly important to ask what place States have in the rules of the game.

¹ Avery Brundage and American Participation in the 1936 Olympic Games, p. 82, Carolyn Marvin.

² *Pierre DE COUBERTIN, ‘Vie, vision, influences et réalisations du fondateur des Jeux Olympiques modernes’,* November 2023.

³ Avery Brundage and American Participation in the 1936 Olympic Games, p. 82, Carolyn Marvin.