

**Authoritarian Regimes:  
International-Prestige Seeking through Olympic Success**

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**Abstract**

While international prestige is a key component of international politics, not all states seek it to the same extent as others. Non-military regimes, especially party-based and personalist regimes, I argue, are more likely than democracies and military regimes to invest in international prestige in order to strengthen their support at home because these regimes' leaders have long time horizons that incentivize the use of international prestige to garner domestic political support in the absence of the elections-based legitimacy of democracies and the coercive capacity of military regimes. By shifting the focus from the dynamics between states to the dynamics within states, and by testing this relationship statistically using a novel measure of international prestige-seeking – Olympic success, this article adds a new dimension to extant knowledge on international status. The results of the analysis are consistent with this argument and explain a greater amount of the variation in the behaviors of states than the dynamics between states alone can explain.

Although academics may debate the value of international prestige in world politics, there is a wide consensus among these same academics and policy-makers that states worry about their international prestige, actively try to deflect threats to their existing prestige, and invest highly in cultivating further prestige. To elevate their prestige, states are reputed to engage in a range of activities, including hosting international peace talks, developing space programs and high-technology weapons, investing in international sports, and even initiating international war. Prestige politics, as Hans J. Morgenthau once noted, “is as intrinsic an element of the relations between nations as the desire for prestige is of the relations between individuals” (Morgenthau 1948, 77-8). Still, however, some states invest more in cultivating international prestige than others.

International relations scholars suggest that the key to understanding why lies in the dynamics between states, and in states’ desires, expectations, and uncertainties regarding their international status (Wohlforth 2009; Larson and Shevchenko 2014; Volgy et al. 2014; Renshon 2016, 2017). In brief, these scholars argue that states are more likely, to try to increase their international status when they are dissatisfied with their current status and are uncertain as to how much status they have relative to other states. While the dynamics between states are important drivers of the international prestige-seeking behaviors of states, the dynamics within states, and the structure of regimes in particular, are important as well, and can explain a significant amount of the variation in the behaviors of states than the dynamics between states alone can explain.

Non-military regimes in general, and party-based and personalist regimes in particular, I argue, are more likely than military regimes and democracies to seek international prestige in order to strengthen their support at home because the leaders of non-military regimes do not rely on coercion as much as the leaders of military regimes in order to remain in power, and have longer time horizons than democracies, which make international prestige

a useful strategy to co-opt others for support. Party-based and personalist regimes have an additional incentive over monarchies to invest in international prestige in order to build domestic support because international prestige feeds into the ways in which these regimes tends to legitimize their rule.

In order to test this argument, I analyze statistically the relationship between regime type and athletic achievement in the forty-six Olympic Games that occurred between 1908 and 2014. Success in international sports is an important example of the international prestige-seeking behaviors of states because it outwardly projects a positive image of states as rich, healthy, and talented. The Olympics are the most well-known, widely watched, and inclusive international sporting competition in the world. Success in international sports also has important implications for other types of prestige-seeking behaviors that states may pursue, and is capable of distinguishing among competing explanations for behaviors that are theorized to be driven by international status because it does not enhance the material capabilities of states.

In shifting the level of analysis to the domestic level, and in testing the relationship between regime type and the international prestige-seeking behaviors of states using a novel measure of Olympic success, this study adds a new dimension to the extant literature on international status. By linking regime type to international prestige and stressing the importance of legitimacy, this study also adds to a growing literature explaining variation in the international and domestic behaviors of different types of authoritarian regimes (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Geddes, Wright and Frantz 2014). This study further contributes to the literature on international sports, which provides a rich history of the relationship between sports and politics, but it does not test statistically the relationship between types of authoritarian regimes and athletic success (Guttmann 1992; Hill 1996; Bairner and Molnar 2010).

## International Prestige: What We Already Know About It?

International prestige, I define, as the state or condition of high international status.<sup>1</sup> International status refers to the “collective beliefs about a given state’s ranking on valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, socio-political organization, diplomatic clout)” (Larson, Paul and Wohlforth 2014; Dafoe, Renshon and Huth 2014, 7). Status is collective because no one state can confer status on another state, and because the relative ranking of a state is generally agreed upon by other states in the international system. It is subjective because status is based on perceptions, and relative because all states cannot enjoy high status at one time. Thus, international prestige put simply refers to a state’s possession of valued attributes.

Markers or indicators of status take two distinct forms. The first pertains to the material – political, economic, and security – capabilities of states, such as economic growth and high-technology weapons. These markers enhance the hard power of states – that is, the ability of states to change the behavior of other states through either military or economic coercion (Nye 1991). The second relates to the non-material attributes of states, including success in international sports events, the development of space programs, and the construction of world class museums. These attributes enhance the soft power of states – that is, the ability of states to change the behavior of other states by attracting the latter to their culture, values, and policies (Nye 1991).

In general, achieving international prestige through the acquisition of these markers is a long-term process. Many markers of prestige, including both material and non-material markers of prestige, take a long time for states to acquire and achieving prestige can require

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<sup>1</sup>This definition is consistent with the Larson, Paul and Wohlforth (2014, 16) definition of prestige. They define prestige as “public recognition of admired achievements or qualities” and note that prestige is “acquired by being superior on an evaluative dimension...” (16); Dafoe, Renshon and Huth (2014) similarly define prestige as “a belief that one has a reputation for a positive trait” (372).

the acquisition of more than a single marker. Not only can it take a long time for states to acquire certain markers, but it can also take a long time for other states to recognize, appreciate, and update their evaluations of countries based on them. International status is further believed to be difficult to change because states interpret events that do not conform to their expectations as either aberrations or in ways that fit their existing views (Deutsch and Merritt 1965; Anderson, Lepper and Ross 1980).

States are believed to seek international status through the acquisition of these markers for intrinsic (or psychological) reasons and instrumental (or material) reasons.<sup>2</sup> The former claims that states engage in status-seeking behaviors because status enhances states' and their leaders' self-esteem (Tajfel 1981; Larson and Shevchenko 2010). The latter argues that states engage in status-seeking behaviors because states use international status to signal competence (Plourde 2008); to legitimize their international authority (Pouliot 2014); to provide access to power and resources (Plourde 2008); and to persuade other states to support their foreign policy goals (Nye 1991; Deng 2008; Larson, Paul and Wohlforth 2014).

Even though the desire for international status is constant and universal, all states do not engage in status-seeking behaviors to the same extent as others. With few exceptions, the extant literature suggests that international dynamics determine these behaviors. Accordingly, states are argued to be more likely to engage in status-seeking behaviors when their status does not match their capabilities and behaviors (East 1972; Wallace 1971; Wohlforth 2009; Volgy et al. 2014); when their status falls below their expectations (Renshon 2016, 2017); when states are uncertain regarding how much status they have vis-à-vis other states (Wohlforth 2009); and when a state faces a threat to or a decline in their status (Larson and Shevchenko 2014).

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<sup>2</sup>Pouliot (2014) suggests a third motivation. Pouliot argues that states seek it “primarily a form of ‘illusio’ that is, a disposition acquired through playing a game, which leads players to come to value its rules and stakes as the natural order of things” (197).

Breaking with this broader trend, Jonathan Renshon (2017) looks at the individual level and the dispositional characteristics of leaders in order to explain the variation in states' quest for international prestige. Renshon argues, and find results consistent with his argument, that individuals who believe in the importance and legitimacy of status hierarchies and possess a strong desire to be dominant, are more concerned about status and more likely to double down on decisions when their status is threatened. Powerful individuals, he further finds, are less likely to double down when their status is threatened because these individuals are possibly less sensitive to losses. Renshon's analysis, though, is still principally about interstate dynamics as individuals are assumed in his analysis to take on the characteristics of states.

To explain variation in why some states invest more than others in acquiring international prestige, it is also important to look at the dynamics within states and the structure of states in particular. Differences in the structure of states determine the extent to which states rely on co-optation and legitimation as opposed to coercion for stability and are likely to use international prestige for legitimation and co-optation. In this context, states do not use international prestige to enhance their self-esteem or to improve their international capabilities, but as a strategic tool for domestic stability. However, the psychological and material value of international prestige explains why prestige is an effective tool in this regard.

### **International Prestige-seeking Regimes**

Regimes rely on three distinct strategies in order to remain in power – coercion, co-optation, and legitimation (Gerschewski 2013). Coercion refers to the use or threat to use force against a population, while co-optation refers to the act of persuading others to support a regime. Legitimation, which is arguably a form of co-optation, denotes the process by which

states justify their right to rule. Both co-option and legitimacy reduce the need for states to use coercion for stability. They deter popular insurrections from emerging against regimes, as well as challenges arising from among a regime's political, economic, and military elites, by encouraging people's active consent, compliance with regime rules, passive obedience, or mere tolerance of the regime. Psychological studies find that people are generally more willing to tolerate a government, even if they do not like their lives under it, as long as they consider it legitimate (Tajfel 1978; Jost and Major 2001).

Regime structure significantly affects the extent to which national leaders rely on each of these strategies in order to remain in power and the incentives states have to use international prestige as a form of legitimation and co-option. Democracies rely on legitimation and co-option for stability rather than coercion but do not have an incentive to invest in international prestige for either purpose. Leaders of democratic regimes do not have an incentive to invest in international prestige in order to strengthen their legitimacy because they derive their legitimacy from open and competitive elections, and because international prestige in no way reflects on or enhances this form of legitimacy.

Democracies do not have an incentive to invest in prestige for co-option either because international status takes a long time to acquire and is slow to change, while democratic leaders have relatively short time horizons because they are regularly subject to competitive elections. By time horizon, I mean the length of time that leaders can expect to remain in power. Democratic leaders can only expect to stay in office for the duration of the term that they are elected, which generally ranges across countries between four to six years. Democrats are also subject to term limits more often than autocrats. Approximately, 88 percent of the heads of states of democracies had term limits between 1946 and 2010 while only 67 percent of the heads of states in non-democracies had them.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Figures calculated by the author using "hosterml" ("What restrictions are in place regarding the number of terms the Head of State may serve?" from the *Comparative Constitutions Project* (Elkins, Ginsburg and



Since democrats are regularly subject to competitive elections and term limits, were democrats to invest in international prestige, they would be unlikely to be in power when their investment pays off. Although the parties that these leaders represent could be in power when it does, and although these parties could claim that the prestige that their country currently enjoys is a result of the past actions of their parties' leaders, democratic leaders are more likely to invest in policies that directly impact their own re-election potential rather than those that affect the future gains of their party. The extent to which democrats have an incentive to focus on policies that pay off in the short- versus long-term may depend on the type of executive and electoral system in a democracy and the effect on these systems on whether elections are more individual or party-focused (Sartori 1994; Carey and Shugart 1995), but should still be greater regardless in democracies than in authoritarian regimes.

Military regimes do not have an incentive to invest in cultivating international prestige either, but for different reasons. Military regimes are regimes in which the military as an institution dominates decision-making (Geddes, Frantz and Wright 2014).<sup>4</sup> These regimes do not have an incentive to invest in cultivating international prestige in order to build support at home because they rely primarily on coercion in order to remain in power, and because their coercive power drives their legitimation and co-optation strategies (Fordham and Walker 2005; Bove and Brauner 2016). Military regimes rely primarily on coercion in order to remain in power because they have a comparative advantage in the use of force (Bratton and de Walle 1994; Davenport 2007; Debs 2016; Svolik 2013).

Their comparative advantage in this regard also leads military regimes to legitimize their

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Melton N.d.), and the *Global Political Regimes* (GPR) dataset detailed in the analysis section of this article).  
<sup>4</sup>Military regimes have also been defined as regimes in terms of whether the national leader is a past or current member of the military (Debs 2016; Gandhi 2008). This definition does not capture the main characteristic that distinguish military regimes from other regimes in terms of the military's control over political decision-making. Democratic countries, as well as other type of authoritarian regimes, may have leaders that were retired military leaders. The military may exert little or no influence on political decision-making in these regimes and these regimes do not necessarily have a comparative advantage in the use of force or rely on coercion more than other types of regimes, like military regimes.

rule and to co-opt others based primarily on their ability to protect their countries from external and internal threats (Linz and Stepan 1996). Military regimes may link their ability to protect their countries from external and internal threats to other forms of performance legitimacy, such as economic growth, claiming, for example, that the order and security that only they can provide is necessary for economic growth, but these claims to legitimacy are still rooted in these regimes' coercive power. Military regimes are not less likely to invest in international prestige because they are more isolationist than other regimes. The existing research on this subject suggests military regimes are not generally more isolationist than other regimes, signing international treaties as often as democracies (Chyzh 2014) and initiating international wars significantly more often than non-military regimes (Reiter and Stam 2003; Weeks 2012).

However, non-military regimes have an incentive to invest in international prestige for domestic stability. Non-military regimes include party regimes, personalist regimes monarchies and theocracies. The leaders of these regimes have an incentive to invest in international prestige because they rely less on coercion than military regimes in order to remain power, and more on co-optation and legitimation, but lack the election-based legitimacy of democracies (Debs 2016; Svolik 2013; Bove and Brauner 2016). The leaders of non-military regimes rely less on coercion than the leaders of military regimes because they do not have a comparative advantage in the use of force like military regimes. Leaders of non-military regimes also have an incentive to use international prestige to co-opt others because they have long time horizons given the fact that they are not subject to open and competitive elections like the leaders of democratic regimes and are subject less often to term limits.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Authoritarian regimes differ in terms of the longevity of regimes and their leaders tenure in office. National leaders incentives to invest in international prestige does not depend, I argue, on the average longevity of the leaders or regimes, but on their time horizons, which I argue are determined by the presence of institutionalized constraints on the leaders tenure in office, because the former are not known and expected by the national leader whereas the latter is. Average longevity is also endogenous to international prestige – that is, leadership tenure and regime longevity may be greater where leaders invest more in international

While the leaders of all types of non-military regimes have an incentive to invest in international prestige in order to co-opt others, they do not all have an incentive to invest in international prestige in order to legitimize their rule. Monarchies (and theocracies, of which there are very few in the world) do not have an incentive to invest in international prestige for legitimacy because their leaders' right to rule is based on inheritance and divine right, and because international prestige in no way reflects on either of these bases of legitimacy. Qatar has invested a lot in cultivating international prestige in the last two decades and has framed its investment in terms of Qatar's capacity for progress and modernization, not in terms of the House of Thani's right to rule.

Both party and personalist regimes have an incentive to invest in international prestige for legitimacy, though, because international prestige reflects positively on the ways their leaders justify their rule. Party regimes, which are authoritarian regimes in which parties control access to the government, based their legitimacy primarily on their performance. Unlike military regimes, party regimes do not tout their performance primarily in the terms of their coercive strength, but they also extol it in terms of their political, social, and economic policies. International prestige reflects positively on the performance of party regimes on these issues and can demonstrate the validity of political ideologies that party regimes use to legitimate their rule, because international prestige is an indication of the power, respect, and influence that regimes enjoy in the international community and their ability to provide for their citizens in turn. International prestige fed into the fascist ideology of Nazi Germany and the socialist ideologies of communist countries in the past in this way (Riordan 1999; Howell 1975; Lee and Bairner 2009), and feeds into the nationalist ideology of communist China in this way today (Dossi 2017).

Personalist regimes, in contrast, based their legitimacy on the individual attributes of  

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prestige.

personalist leaders – their intelligence, charisma, skills, and so forth, and what their leaders are able to achieve for their countries as a result of them (Chehabi and Linz 1998; Ezrow and Frantz 2011). Personalist regimes, which are sometimes known as sultanistic or neopatrimonial regimes, are authoritarian regimes in which the political, bureaucratic, and security institutions are weak and lack autonomous bases of support (Geddes 2003).<sup>6</sup> Personalist leaders have an incentive to use international prestige to justify their right to rule because the international prestige of these states reflects highly on the attributes of their leaders who are responsible for obtaining it. Nursultan Nazarbayev has used Kazakhstan’s growing international prestige in this way, portraying the country’s prestige as a function of his progressive and modern thinking (Burkhanov and Sharipova 2015). Nazarbayev has even used it to justify his being installed “leader of the nation” in 2010. This position allows Nazarbayev to dictate Kazakhstan’s policy after his retirement, among other things.

In sum, I expect non-military regimes to invest more in international prestige than military regimes and democracies because leaders of non-military regimes rely less on coercion than leaders of military regimes in order to remain in power, and because they have longer time horizons than democracies, making investing in international prestige valuable for co-opting others. Neither military regimes nor democracies have obviously less incentive than the other to invest in international prestige. Party and personalist regimes have an additional incentive than monarchies to invest in international prestige because international prestige is not only a useful means of co-opting others, but also reflects highly on the way these regimes legitimate their rule. To the extent that the existence of an additional incentive to seek international prestige results in more prestige-seeking overall, party and personalist can

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<sup>6</sup>Personalist regimes are similar to sultanistic regimes (Chehabi and Linz 1998; Linz and Stepan 1996, 51-4) and neopatrimonial regimes (Bratton and de Walle 1994), but the latter regimes include within them behaviors that are associated with and explained by the institutional weakness of regimes, but that are not intrinsic features of them, such as the absence or perversion of legal-rational norms, cults of personalities, dynasticism, and an excessive reliance on patronage.

be expected to invest more in international prestige-seeking behaviors than monarchies.

### **Why International Sports? Why the Olympics?**

Analyzing the international status-seeking behaviors of states in terms of Olympic success offers a number of advantages. International sports is a valid measure of the international prestige-seeking behaviors of states (Rhamey and Early 2013; Bezerra et al. 2015). Success in international sports can raise a state's status because it projects a positive image of a state abroad to a large audience. Athletic success is widely seen as a sign that states are rich and that their citizens are talented and successful (Ball 1972; Grimes, Kelly and Rubin 1974; Levine 1974; Bernard and Busse 2004; Johnson and Ali 2004).

The Olympics Games offer states ample opportunity to increase their international prestige, whether states are concerned with augmenting their prestige vis-à-vis their local communities or the world at-large. Olympics Games are the most widely watched international sporting events in the world. A few million people across globe watch the Olympics on television every four years and many more follow the Games through other forms of media. The Olympics are also not cost prohibitive unlike some other markers of international prestige, such as nuclear weapons, and open, therefore, to a large number of states.

The question of the connection between authoritarian regimes and Olympic success is of popular interest. The international media commonly calls attention to the lengths that authoritarian regimes go to winning the Games and attributes them to these regime's authoritarianism. These measures include putting intense pressure on athletes to win, forcing athletes to endure extreme training at young ages, and encouraging cheating in order to gain a competitive edge. They also include lauding Olympic winners as national heroes, and condemning, publicly humiliating, and punishing with financial ruin, imprisonment, and torture those who do not bring home medals, or medals of the right color.

Olympic success is used here as a measure of the international status-seeking behaviors of states, not as a measure of international status or prestige. Success in international sports is not a direct measure of international status because status can only be conferred on states by other states, although Olympic success has been statistically associated with increased status (Rhamey and Early 2013; Bezerra et al. 2015). Since the goal of this study is to analyze when states seek to increase their international status, not whether they achieve it, the use of Olympic success is appropriate. Olympic success is an imperfect measure of status-seeking because it is possible for states to invest heavily in international sports but not succeed in them. However, investment in sports is shown in case studies to be correlated with improved performance (Houlihan and Green 2008), and there is little reason to believe that a commensurate investment in sport in one type of regime is less likely to pay off than in another.

Olympic success is also likely to be representative of other types of non-material based prestige-seeking behaviors that influence the soft power of regimes, such as building world renown museums and mega-tall sky scrappers or hosting treaty negotiations. It is not representative of material markers of prestige, such as military strength and economic development. However, my argument regarding regime types and legitimacy is not specific to certain types of status-seeking behaviors. Moreover, Olympic success has also been shown to provide cumulative and complementary effects on status in relation to other markers, including material ones, such as foreign aid (Bezerra et al. 2015). Using a non-material marker of international prestige, like the Olympics has an additional advantage.

Olympics success allows me to distinguish among competing explanations for behaviors theorized to be driven by international status. Studies of the prestige-enhancing behaviors of states that affect states' political, economic, and security capabilities, such as the acquisition of nuclear weapons or war, have difficulty separating out the prestige-seeking motivations of

states from the material ones. States, for example, may pursue nuclear weapons to enhance their international status, but they may also do so in order to defend themselves against security threats (Sagan 1996/1997). However, since Olympic success does not enhance the material capabilities of states in any way, it can distinguish among them.

## Analysis

To evaluate the effect of regime type of international prestige, I conduct a statistical analysis of the forty-six summer and winter Olympic Games that occurred between the 1908 London Games and the 2014 Sochi Games.<sup>7</sup> In this analysis, I conduct two sets of models – the first predicts participation in the Olympics and the second predicts Olympic success. I analyzed participation in the Olympics because states must be invited to participate in the Olympics Games by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and historically, not all states are equally likely to be invited to participate. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a pronounced tendency for the IOC to invite more democratic states over more authoritarian ones, as well as more economically prosperous, larger and Western countries, to form national olympic committees and participate in the Games. This tendency has dissipated over time. More than a majority of all independent states in the world have participated in the Olympics since WWII, and 90-98% of all independent states have participated in the Olympics since the end of the Cold War.

## Data and Measures

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<sup>7</sup>The analysis does not include the first modern Olympics in Athens in 1896 or the two subsequent Games because athletics competed in these Games on an individual rather than state basis. Only independent states are included in the analysis. These states, including microstates, are identified based on Gleditsch and Ward (1999) for the 1816-2012 period and my own extension of these data for 2014. States can grant citizenship to athletes from other countries to win more medals, but this state-switching strategy has little impact on medal counts. Only a small percentage of athletes do not compete for the state in which they were born. Not all switch for strategic purposes and only a small percentage of foreign-born athletes win medals. See: Walker Connor, “How Many Sochi Athletes are Competing for a Country that is Not Their Birth Nation?” *Pew Research Center*, 19 February 2014.

The data and measures used in each of these analyses are as follows.

### *Democracy*

I measure regime type using the *Global Political Regimes* (GPR) 1945-2010 dataset (Geddes, Wright and Frantz 2014).<sup>8</sup> The GPR identifies five main types of regimes: democracies, military regimes, party regimes, personalist regimes, and monarchies.<sup>9</sup> Military regimes, party regimes, personalist regimes, and monarchies are all considered authoritarian regimes. Theocracies are not defined as a separate authoritarian regime type.<sup>10</sup> Authoritarian regimes are defined as regimes in which opposition parties have been banned or subjected to serious harassment or institutional disadvantage, or where the ruling party has never lost control of the executive and has controlled at least two-thirds of all legislative seats since 1985 (Geddes 2003, 71).

Party regimes, personalist regimes, and monarchies are all non-military regimes. Military regimes are defined in the dataset as regimes in which a group of officers decides who rules and exercises influence on policy. The GPR dataset's definition of military regimes is consistent with my concept of military regimes, what distinguishes these regimes from other types of regimes, and what makes them likely to seek international prestige. I do not expect regimes in which only a single current or former military leader, but not the military as an institution, dominates decision-making to have the same disincentives to seek international prestige for the purposes of co-optation and legitimation as those that do. Party regimes, in the GPR dataset, are defined as regimes in which the party dominates access to political office and control over policy, while personalistic regimes are defined as regimes in which access to and

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<sup>8</sup>I do not use the infrastructural-despotic power classification of regimes used in Lai and Slater (2006) because the extent to which decision-making is collective within party and military regimes is not theoretically relevant.

<sup>9</sup>The GPR dataset also identifies four other types of regimes: foreign-occupied, independent, provisional, and warlord, which are not very common in the analysis period and, therefore, are coded as missing.

<sup>10</sup>Post-revolutionary Iran, which is often referred to as a theocracy, is coded as a party regime (1980-2010).



the benefits from political office depend on the discretion of an individual leader. Lastly, monarchies are defined as regimes in which national leaders inherit their authority.

Each of these regimes, I represent in the analysis with a single lagged indicator variable, coded 1 if a country's regime was of a certain type in the previous year, and 0 otherwise. For the analysis, I also group all non-military regimes together in a separate lagged indicator variable, coded 1 if a country had a party regime, personalist regime, or monarchy in the previous year, and 0 otherwise. Hybrid regimes, exhibiting elements of more than one regime type, are coded according to the regime for which they exhibit the greatest number of features, as suggested by the dataset's authors.<sup>11</sup>

Since communism, an ideology of one-party regimes, has been associated with Olympic success, I also measure it with a single lagged indicator, coded 1 if a regime has a communist system of government in the previous year and 0 otherwise (Ball 1972; Bernard and Busse 2004; Johnson and Ali 2004). Communism emphasizes mass physical culture, but until the late 1920s, sport was only valued for military training and health (Bairner, Kelly and Lee 2016). I measure whether a state is communist or not based on the party affiliation of the national leader. The national leaders for each state are based on Archigos 4.0 (1875-2014) (Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza 2009) and the party affiliation for these leaders is based on the CHISOLS dataset (Mattes, Leeds and Matsumura 2016). A communist party is defined as a party that espouses the complete public ownership of land and the means of production and a society without class divisions or government.<sup>12</sup> I identified the political ideology of each leader's party based on a range of sources including, the *Comparative Manifesto Project* and the *World Encyclopedia of Political Systems and Parties*, as well as country-specific resources.

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<sup>11</sup>Therefore, party-military, party-personalistic, party-personalistic-military, and oligarchic regimes are coded as party regimes, while indirect military and military-personalistic regimes are coded as military regimes.

<sup>12</sup>Terrance Ball, "Communism," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

For the analysis, I also measure the level of democracy in states across regime types in terms of a one-year lag of the polity index in order to predict participation in the Olympic Games, to provide a robustness check on the GPR measures, and to analyze the pre-1945 period. Although I expect more democratic countries to have been invited to participate in the Games more than less democratic ones, I do not expect the IOC to have discriminated among non-democracies based on regime type. The polity index measures democracy based on the openness and competitiveness of executive recruitment, the independence of executive authority, and the regulation and competitiveness of participation. The 21-point index ranges between -10 (full autocracies) and +10 (full democracies). Democracies are generally considered countries that score 5 or higher on the polity index. More than 90% of states coded as democracies in the GPR dataset score a 5 or higher.<sup>13</sup>

### *Olympic Success*

Olympic success is measured in terms of the percentage of medals states win at each Olympic Game.<sup>14</sup> I do not use the total number of medals that states win to measure Olympic success because the number of events at each Game and, thus, the potential medals that states can win, has varied significantly over time across the summer and winter games. The data on Olympic success are based on the official outcome of the athletic competitions.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Where there are significant discrepancies between the two, they largely arise around regime changes.

<sup>14</sup>Occasionally, independent states have competed jointly as “unified teams”. Two of these unified teams, representing West and East Germany (1956, 1960, and 1964) and the former Soviet Union states (1992), won medals. For the German unified team, I identified the individual affiliation of each athlete and calculated the Olympic success figures for the West and East German teams separately. Although they competed jointly, West and East German athletes trained separately and were funded by their respective countries. I did not separate out the medal totals for the Soviet unified team because athletes in this team from the former Soviet republics were trained and funded under the Soviet system with the USSR having only dissolved at the end of 1991.

<sup>15</sup>The Olympic success figures are calculated based on data scrapped from olympic.org on the current medal standings and data on drug disqualifications from the *International Society of Olympic Historians* (ISOH). They do not reflect changes in the medal standings as a result of the IOC stripping athletes of medals due to drug violations for two reasons. First, the objective of this analysis is to study international-prestige seeking, and cheating to win medals can be part of this strategy. Second, not all athletes known to have cheated have been stripped of their medals. No East German athlete has been stripped of his or her medals despite known,

Table 1 presents the average percentage of Olympic medals won by countries according to regime type between 1948 and 2010. These figures were calculated by taking the average of the percentage of medals won by a country in a given Game for each regime type.<sup>16</sup> The percentages are very low because the percentage of medals won by any one country in any Olympic Game is very small. As expected, the figure for non-military regimes is higher than for military regimes, but not for democracies, which may reflect the higher level of economic development of democracies than either of these two types of authoritarian regimes. For non-military regimes, the figures are highest for party regimes, followed by personalist regimes, and then monarchies, as expected. These patterns persist if I restrict the analysis to only states that participated in the Games.

Table 1: Percentage of Olympic Medals (average)

All Regimes			Non-Military Regimes		
democracies	military regimes	non-military regimes	monarchies	party regimes	personalist regimes
1.41	0.05	0.51	0.04	0.80	0.18

Note: These figures were calculated by taking the average of the percentage of medals won by a country in a given Game for each regime type. There are states and territories that won medals in this period for which data on regime type is not available.

### *Economic Development*

Since historically economically prosperous countries have been more likely to be invited to participate in the Olympic Games than less prosperous countries, and are more likely win medals than other states due to a greater public and private investment in sports, I also include a measure of economic development in the analysis (Ball 1972; Grimes, Kelly

systemic state-sponsored doping in East Germany. So few athletes have been stripped of their medals that excluding them does not change the results anyway. Between 1968 – the year in which mandatory drug tests were first implemented – and 2014, only 63 athletes from 28 countries have been stripped of their medals.

<sup>16</sup>The average percentage of medals won in a Game for each regime type is: 72% (democracies), 31% (party regimes), 3.78% (personal regimes), 0.91% (military regimes), and 0.38% (monarchies).

and Rubin 1974; Levine 1974; Bernard and Busse 2004; Johnson and Ali 2004). Economic development is measured in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (lag) using the *Maddison Project* (1-2010) (units=ln, 1990 International Geary-Khamis dollars) (Bolt and van Zanden 2014). I use the Maddison Project because it is the only dataset to provide GDP data on the entire span of the modern Olympic Games. The earlier data, though, are likely to be less accurate than the later data.

### *Population*

Since more populous countries have also historically been more likely to be invited to participate in the Olympic Games than less populous ones, and since the former are also more likely to win medals than the latter since they have a deeper pool of potential Olympic-caliber athletes, I also include a measure of a state's total population in the analysis (Ball 1972; Grimes, Kelly and Rubin 1974; Levine 1974; Bernard and Busse 2004; Johnson and Ali 2004). There are limits in the extent to which population is likely to be associated with Olympic success, though, because team events restrict countries to one entry and count as only one medal, and because the IOC limits the number of athletes from each country and allows every state to enter one athlete per sport regardless of quality. Some scholars also argue that only very populous states seek international prestige (Wallace 1971), although others have countered that small and middle-sized states also seek prestige, but for moral authority not influence (de Carvalho and Neumann 2015; Wohlforth et al. 2017). Population is measured in terms of the year prior to the Olympics using the *Maddison Project* (1-2010) (ln, unit=millions).

### *Climate*

In order to account for the likelihood that the percentage of medals that states win in the Olympic Games depends on the climate – with cold-weather countries more likely to

participate in and win medals at the winter Games than warm-weather countries due to the popularity of and training conditions for cold-weather sports in these countries, I also include a measure of climate in the analysis. Climate is measured in terms of the average annual temperature (celsius) the year prior to the Olympics using data scrapped from the World Bank’s *Climate Data API*. I denote the season of the Games with an indicator variable coded 1 for the winter Games and 0 for the summer Games.

#### *Host Country*

Host countries are also likely to win a higher percentage of Olympic medals than other countries because they have the home field advantage (Baumeister 1984; Schlenker et al. 1995; Beilock 2011). Athletes from host countries may be more familiar with the facilities than foreign athletes and may also benefit from the support of an enthusiastic crowd. Host cities are also able to influence to some extent which new sports are included in the Games and are likely to lobby for sports in which they have a competitive advantage. Finally, host countries are subject to less strict qualification rules, which may increase the number of athletes they have at the Games although these athletes may not be medal-caliber (Pettigrew and Reiche 2016).

#### *Political Affinity*

Whether or not states are invited to participate in the Olympic Games is also likely to depend on the political affinity of countries with the IOC. To represent political affinity with the IOC, I measure the extent to states share certain characteristics with the host country. The host state is a good proxy of the IOC because the IOC selects the host state from among bidding states. I measure political affinity using three measures evaluating states’ geographic proximity, trade ties and military disputes with the host state.

I measure political affinity in terms of geographic proximity because states in the same

geographic region often share similar political characteristics and interests (Gleditsch and Ward 2006; Cox, Low and Robinson 2008). Geographic proximity is coded 1 if states are situated in the same region as a host state (with region defined by the UN Standard Area Codes), and 0 otherwise. I also measure political affinity in terms of trade interdependence because states with strong trade ties tend to share similar foreign policy preferences (Rogowski 1987; Peterson and Theis 2012). Data on trade ties is based on the *Trade Data Set* (v3.0) from the Correlates of War (COW) project. Trade is measured in terms of the total amount of trade flows between a state and the Olympic host state (current US millions of dollars, lag).

Political affinity should be lower, in contrast, for states that were engaged in a military dispute with the host state. I measure military conflict using the COW's *Militarized Interstate Dispute Data* (V4.0). It defines militarized interstate disputes as conflicts in which one or more states threaten, display, or use force against one or more states. MID (host) is measured in terms of whether or not there was a MID (of any level of hostility) in the year prior to the Olympics between a state and the Olympic host state. This variable is coded 1 if there was such a MID, and 0 otherwise. I also measure whether states were involved in a MID with any state the year prior to the Olympics since states engaged in MIDs may dedicate fewer public resources towards sports than other states. MID (any) is coded 1 if a state was involved in a MID with any state the year prior to the Olympics, and 0 otherwise.

#### *System Polarity*

I also include in the analysis separate indicators for unipolarity (1989-2014), bipolarity (1945-1989), and multipolarity (1908-1945) based on Tomja (2014) in the analysis, because polarity is theorized to affect the likelihood of states to engage in activities to increase their international prestige (Wohlforth 2009). Bipolarity and multipolarity are thought to be associated with more international-prestige seeking because they result in ambiguous status

hierarchies, which generate more dissatisfaction and clashes over the status quo. The time period for bipolarity, though, coincides with the Cold War period. During the Cold War, the political rivalry between the US and USSR was played out at the Olympic Games, and may have resulted in a higher investment in international sports in both countries. I do not include an indicator in the analysis for great powers because there is significant overlap between great powers and regime type. (Periods of unipolarity are defined by having one great power, bipolarity by two great powers, and multipolarity by more than two.) The one great power in the only period of unipolarity in the dataset is a democracy, the United States, and all great powers in the data are either democracies or party regimes.

### *Status Deficits*

In order to account for prestige-seeking as a result of status inconsistency or status dissatisfaction, I include a measure of status deficit in the analysis. Status inconsistency occurs when states do not have high international prestige, yet rank relatively high on economic and/or military capabilities (East 1972; Wallace 1971; Volgy and Mayhall 1995). The concept of status inconsistency is similar to the concept of status dissatisfaction, which refers to a heightened concern for status triggered by status deficits within a given status community (Renshon 2016, 2017). In the analysis, I use Renshon's measure of status deficit to account for these phenomena. This measure is equal to the difference in the rank in a country's material capabilities (measured in terms of the Composite Index of National Capabilities) and a country's status rank. The status deficit measure is standardized for each year and multiplied by -1, so that positive (negative) values on this index indicate higher (lower) status deficits. Renshon calculates this figure for status ranks based on three different comparison groups – local communities, regions, and the world, making for three different measures of status deficits that are very highly correlated with each other.

Status deficit is strongly associated with regime type. Democracies have the lowest status

deficits scores, followed by non-military regimes, and military regimes. This is important, as I argue that status-seeking should be highest for non-military regimes, and lowest for democracies and military regimes, which are at opposite ends of the status deficit spectrum. Among non-military regimes, personalist regimes have the lowest status deficit scores, followed by party regimes, and monarchies. This pattern is consistent with the pattern I expect to see among non-military regimes. The amount of missing data for the status deficit measures is also related to regime type. There is 3-4 times more missing data for democracies and non-military regimes than for military regimes. This is especially problematic for the analysis because there is already a limited number of certain types of non-military regimes, like monarchies, in the world.

## Results

In this first set of analysis, I evaluate the likelihood of states participating in the Olympic Games.<sup>17</sup> The statistical models in this analysis are estimated using multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression since countries are nested within Olympic Games and participation is measured dichotomously.<sup>18</sup> These models are presented in Table 2.

Model 1 analyzes the relationship between democracy, measured in terms of the polity index, and participation in the Games, controlling for GDP per capita, population, climate, and season. Since the analysis uses the polity index instead of the GPR dataset, this model covers the longest period of time and the greatest number of Olympic Games. According to Model 1, states with higher polity scores are significantly more likely to participate in the

<sup>17</sup>The 1908 London Games are not included in this and subsequent analysis due to the lack of MID data. The 2010 Vancouver, 2012 London and 2014 Sochi Games are dropped due to the lack of population, climate, GDP per capita, and/or MID data.

<sup>18</sup>The models do not include a lag of the dependent variable because including a lagged dependent variable on the right-hand side of the equation, can violate strict exogeneity assumptions and can result in an upward bias of the lagged dependent variable and a downward bias of the other predictors (Griliches 1967; Achen 2000; Keele and Kelly 2006).



Olympic Games than states with lower polity scores.<sup>19</sup> This is the case even if I restrict the analysis to the post-Cold War period.

Table 2: Olympic Participation, 1908-2008

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Polity Index	0.05** (0.01)			
Military		-0.44** (0.22)	-0.40 (0.22)	-0.40 (0.22)
Non-military		-0.80** (0.14)		
Personalistic			-0.15 (0.20)	-0.13 (0.20)
Party			-0.93** (0.16)	-0.86** (0.17)
Monarchy			-1.12** (0.23)	-1.11** (0.23)
Communism				-0.24 (0.24)
GDP per capita	0.87** (0.07)	0.85** (0.08)	0.91** (0.08)	0.90** (0.08)
Population	0.45** (0.04)	0.40** (0.05)	0.41** (0.05)	0.41** (0.05)
Climate	-0.14** (0.01)	-0.14** (0.01)	-0.14** (0.01)	-0.15** (0.01)
Season	-3.94** (0.52)	-4.61** (0.56)	-4.58** (0.54)	-4.57** (0.54)
Geographic Proximity	0.82** (0.18)	0.75** (0.19)	0.74** (0.20)	0.76** (0.20)
MID (host)	-2.57** (0.46)	-3.09** (0.50)	-3.17** (0.50)	-3.15** (0.51)
Trade Flows	7.98e-06 (1.02e-05)	1.45e-05 (1.21e-05)	1.62e-05 (1.27e-05)	1.65e-05 (1.26e-05)
Constant	-5.79** (0.86)	-3.97** (0.93)	-4.54** (0.95)	-4.41** (0.96)
$\hat{\sigma}_{game}$	1.54	1.43	1.38	1.38
$\hat{\sigma}_{season}$	1.12e-08	2.86e-09	2.72e-10	3.09e-10
$N_{game}$	40	31	31	31
N	3731	3357	3357	3357

Note: significant at the \*p≤0.05, \*\*p≤0.01 level.

In Model 2, I replace the polity index with the indicators for military and non-military

<sup>19</sup>In a separate model, I drop GDP per capita because the GDP per capita data is not available for the German Democratic Republic, which is known to have emphasized sporting success. In this model, the polity index remains a positive and significant predictor of participation in the Olympics.

regimes.<sup>20</sup> Democratic regimes are the omitted category in this model and all subsequent ones. As is evident from this model, only non-military regimes are significantly less likely to participate in the Olympic Games than democracies. A Wald test indicates that the null hypothesis that the coefficients for military and non-military regimes are equal cannot be rejected. Therefore, we cannot conclude from this model that military regimes are significantly more likely to participate in the Games than non-military regimes. The results are the same for the post-Cold War period.

In Model 3, I disaggregate non-military regimes. In this model, all of the coefficients for authoritarian regimes are negative, but only the coefficients for party regimes and monarchies are significant. Separate Wald tests indicate, though, that the null hypothesis that the coefficients for party regimes and monarchies are equal cannot be rejected. Therefore, it cannot be concluded from this model that the party regimes are significantly more likely to participate in the Games than monarchies.

In Model 4, I add an indicator variable for communism. Communism is insignificant in this model. The vast majority of communist regimes are party regimes, the coefficient for which remains significant in this model. In Model 4, the coefficients for party regimes and monarchies are still negative and significant, but as in the previous model, a Wald test indicates that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the coefficients for party regimes and monarchies are equal.

Overall, the models suggest that democracies are more likely to participate in the Olympic Games than non-democracies, but that there is not a significant difference among authoritarian regimes in their likelihood to participate in the Olympic Games. This may be a result of a tendency of the IOC to favor democracies over non-democracies, but not to discriminate among non-democracies in terms of regime type. The models also suggest that countries

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<sup>20</sup>The analysis period is restricted to 1948-2008 because of the GPR dataset's coverage period.

with higher GDPs per capita and larger populations are more likely to participate in the Olympic Games than their counterparts, while states with warmer climates are less likely to participate, as are all states in the winter games. States that are located in the same region as the host state are also more likely to participate in the Olympic Games, according to the models presented in Table 2, while those that were involved in military interstate disputes with the host country in the previous year are less likely to participate in the Olympics Games.

In the second set of models, I analyze the relationship between regime type and Olympic success. Prior to conducting this analysis, I used genetic matching to adjust for any biases in a country’s likelihood of participating in the Olympics based on the significant predictors in the previous analysis (Rubin 1974, 2006). These predictors or covariates are: the polity index, GDP per capita, population, climate, season, geographic proximity, and MID.<sup>21</sup> The balance in these covariates across participants and non-participants is significantly improved as a result of the matching. The results of the balance tests are provided in a supplementary appendix.<sup>22</sup> In the second set of analysis, I weighed the data according to the propensity scores generated through the matching process so that the findings are doubly robust.<sup>23</sup> The models in the second analysis are estimated using multilevel mixed-effects generalized linear regression using a Gaussian distribution and an identity link function since Olympic success is continuous and countries are nested within Olympic Games.<sup>24</sup> These models are presented

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<sup>21</sup>I used genetic matching because it uses an evolutionary search algorithm to find a set of weights for each covariate that achieves an optimal balance (Diamond and Sekhon 2013). For robustness, I also used full matching, which minimizes a weighted average of the estimated distance measure between treated and control subjects within subclasses, the results of which are reported in the supplementary appendix. I present the results of the genetic matching in the paper as the improvement in the balance is better than for the full matching, especially for the main predictor, the polity index.

<sup>22</sup>For 5 of the 8 covariates, including the polity index, the reduction in the differences in the means between participants and non-participants is 94% or above.

<sup>23</sup>This means that if the matching is not perfect but the regression model is properly specified or, alternatively, if the regression model is not properly specified but the matching is adequate, the causal estimates will be consistent.

<sup>24</sup>The results are substantively and significantly the same if I use multilevel mixed-effects linear regression

in Table 3.

Table 3: Olympic Success, 1908-2008

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Polity Index	-0.005 (0.01)			
Military Regimes		-0.07 (0.17)	-0.41* (0.20)	-0.43* (0.19)
Non-military Regimes		0.52** (0.14)		
Personalistic			0.30** (0.13)	0.27* (0.11)
Party			0.34* (0.15)	0.12 (0.10)
Monarchy			0.05 (0.07)	0.005 (0.07)
Communism				0.53* (0.25)
Status Deficit	-0.26** (0.09)	-0.22** (0.09)		
Bipolarity	0.14 (0.13)	0.20 (0.11)	0.36** (0.10)	0.33** (0.10)
Multipolarity	1.55** (0.36)			
GDP per capita	0.30** (0.09)	0.39** (0.09)	0.39** (0.07)	0.41** (0.07)
Population	0.46** (0.07)	0.53** (0.07)	0.52** (0.07)	0.51** (0.07)
Host Country	1.08** (0.39)	1.30** (0.40)		
Season	-0.15 (0.23)	-0.23 (0.22)	-0.27 (0.20)	-0.28 (0.20)
Climate	-0.13** (0.02)	-0.13** (0.02)	-0.12** (0.12)	-0.11** (0.02)
MID (any)	0.37 (0.31)	0.33 (0.14)	0.19 (0.10)	0.19 (0.10)
Constant	-3.85** (1.28)	-5.64** (1.06)	-5.57** (0.79)	-5.71** (0.79)
$\hat{\sigma}_{game}$	0.08	0.04	0.02	0.01
$\hat{\sigma}_{season}$	3.54e-34	3.16e-33	7.28e-35	3.53e-32
$N_{game}$	36	27	30	30
N	2105	1837	2286	2286

Note: significant at the \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$  level.

Model 5 analyzes the relationship between democracy, measured in terms of the polity index, and Olympic success between 1908 and 2008, controlling for GDP per capita, population, host country, climate, season, and MIDs (any).<sup>25</sup> In this model, the coefficient for models instead.

<sup>25</sup>The Antwerp 1920, Saint Moritz 1948, and London 1948 Games are dropped due to lack of matches arising

the polity index is not significant. Using the polity index instead of regime type in this model allows me to analyze the pre-1945 period and to test the effect of multipolarity compared to bipolarity and unipolarity on Olympic success. Bipolarity is positive in this model consistent with arguments that international-prestige seeking should be greater in unipolar systems than in bipolar and multipolar systems, but not significant. It is significant in subsequent models where status deficit is excluded. System polarity and status deficit are not strongly correlated, thus, the significance in subsequent models may be due to the greater number of observations in these models due to the exclusion of the status deficit variable.

Status deficit is measured in terms of local status communities in this model. If I replace this measure with the regional or the global measure of status deficit, both measures are negative, but only the global status deficit measure is significant. Also, according to Model 5, countries with higher GDPs, host nations, and more populous countries are significantly associated with a higher percentage of Olympic medals, while countries with higher annual average temperatures are significantly associated with a lower percentage of Olympic medals.<sup>26</sup> The winter Games are also associated with a significantly lower percentage of Olympic medals.

In Model 6, I replace the polity index with indicator variables for military and non-military regimes. Democratic regimes are the omitted category in this model and all subsequent ones.<sup>27</sup> The coefficient for military regimes in this model is negative and significant, while the coefficient for non-military regimes is positive and significant consistent with theoretical expectations. A Wald test indicates that the null hypothesis that the coefficients for military and non-military regimes are equal can be rejected. The control variables that

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from the genetic matching process.

<sup>26</sup>East Germany, which was highly successful at the Olympics during its existence, is dropped from the model due to the lack of GDP per capita data for it. If GDP per capita is dropped from the model, less democratic countries still do not win significantly more medals than more democratic regimes.

<sup>27</sup>The analysis period is restricted to 1948-2008 because of the GPR dataset's coverage period.

were significant in the previous model remain significant in this and all subsequent models.

In Model 7, I disaggregate non-military regimes.<sup>28</sup> The coefficient for military regimes remains negative and significant in this model. The coefficients for both party and personalist regimes are positive and significant, while the coefficient for monarchies is positive but insignificant. Post-estimation Wald tests indicate that the null hypothesis that the coefficients for party and personalist regimes are the same cannot be rejected. Party and personalist regimes may outperform democracies at the Games, even though they are not more likely to participate in them, because they selectively invest in sports that they are more likely to win. Separate Wald tests also indicate that the null hypothesis that the equality of the coefficients for military and party regimes and for military regimes and personalist regimes can be rejected.

In Model 8, I include an indicator variable for communism. In this model, the coefficient for personalistic regimes remains positive and significant. The coefficient for party regimes, while it also remains positive, is no longer significant, while the coefficient for communism is positive and significant. The significant results for communism are due primarily to the Soviet Bloc countries in the Cold War period. Outside Europe, only four communist countries – China, Cuba, Mongolia, and North Korea – have ever won any Olympic medals. None of the six communist countries that existed in Africa during the Cold War period won any medals. Even though the coefficient for party regimes is no longer significant, these results are consistent with expectations, since I argued that party regimes may use international prestige to demonstrate the virtues of a political ideology disseminated through a political party.

### *Conclusion*

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<sup>28</sup>The indicator for host nations is dropped from this model and all subsequent ones because only four authoritarian regimes (i.e., China, Mexico, Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia) hosted the Olympics in this period, and all were party regimes.

While the dynamics between states are important drivers of the international prestige-seeking behaviors of states, as the previous analysis shows, the dynamics within states, and the structure of regimes in particular, are important drivers of this behavior as well, and can explain a significant amount of the variation in the behaviors of states than the dynamics between states alone can explain. Consistent with my argument, the analysis shows that non-military regimes in general, and party and personalist regimes in particular, are significantly more successful at the Olympic Games than both democracies and non-military regimes. The analysis also suggests that military regimes are less likely than democracies to seek international prestige. While my argument does not predict that military regimes would invest in international prestige significantly less than democracies, this result is not at odds with it either.

These results have important implications for existing research on international status, especially for research where it is difficult to distinguish the effects of capabilities from international status. International relations scholars, for example, have long argued that the quest for international status is a cause of war (East 1972; Wallace 1971; Volgy and Mayhall 1995; Wohlforth 2009; Renshon 2016, 2017). However, it is difficult to demonstrate this effect because international prestige is partly a function of the material capabilities of states. The previous analysis can shed light on this issue because Olympic success does not affect the material capabilities of states. While it cannot show that states go to war with each other over international prestige, it does show that states seek international prestige less when the international system is unipolar. This result is consistent with international status arguments that assert that unipolarity is conducive to peace because it reduces ambiguities in status rank and, thus, wars over status (Wohlforth 2009), and in contrast to arguments that bipolarity is favorable to peace because capabilities are balanced (Waltz 1964).

These results also shed light on the reasons why particular types of regimes are more likely

to initiate conflicts with each other. Lai and Slater argue that military regimes initiate conflicts with other authoritarian regimes because they are weak, lacking effective party institutions to manage elite factionalism and curb mass dissent, and because they use wars to secure the loyalty of elites and bolster legitimacy (Lai and Slater 2006). Were it the case that military regimes engaged in war because they were weak, military regimes should seek international prestige to a greater degree than non-authoritarian regimes, which they do not. In fact, the results suggest the opposite. The results are consistent with arguments that both military regimes and personalist regimes are more inclined to use force than other authoritarian regimes due to the background of their leaders, which make them see force as necessary, effective, and less costly than leaders of other regimes (Weeks 2012).

But, are these results generalizable? Olympic success is a non-material marker of international prestige. There is little reason to believe that certain types of regimes by virtue of their structure would be systematically more or less likely to pursue other non-material markers of prestige, such as building world class museums, constructing mega tall skyscrapers, and hosting international conferences. Since the analysis only looks at non-material marker of prestige, one cannot rule out the possibility that military regimes pursue international prestige through material markers of prestige, which are related to military power or national security, such as nuclear weapons. However, this does not seem likely since personalist regimes, not military regimes, have been shown to be more likely to have nuclear weapons programs (Way and Weeks 2014).



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