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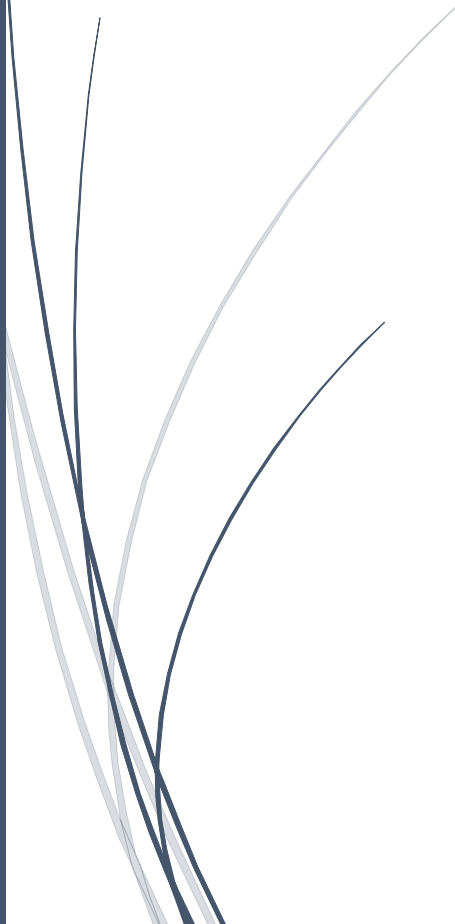
The Ban on Women's Sports in Afghanistan after the Taliban Takeover

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how the takeover by the Taliban in Afghanistan, in August 2021, and the related ban on women's sports, has affected women and girls who participate in sports. Moreover, it seeks to understand why it is problematic for the Taliban that women and girls do so. For the purpose of doing this, the case of female athletes in Afghanistan is analyzed by combining video data about the topic of women and sports in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover - including interviews or statements from female athletes, the Taliban, or other relevant persons – with theoretical perspectives. The main theories used are Martha C. Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach, as well as Jo Rowlands' (1997), Naila Kabeer's (1999), and Srilatha Batliwala's (1994) empowerment theories. This theoretical framework contributes to understand the ways in which the ban on women's sports is related to the ability of women and girls to do and be as they want, and, additionally, how the empowerment of female athletes can work to challenge gendered power relations. Based on the findings, the thesis concludes that the female athletes are in an uncertain situation, forcing them to hide or flee. Relatedly, the ban on sports for women and girls, and its consequences, has negatively affected their capabilities, and contributed to them being disempowered. In addition, sports participation by women and girls is found to be problematic for the Taliban due to its conservative interpretation of Islam, intertwined with the adherence to traditional gender norms and patriarchal power relations. Thereby, making the Taliban consider both sports participation by women and girls, and the related improved capabilities and empowerment, a threat to its oppression of women as well as patriarchal ideology, which therefore might be able to challenge its power. This is further exacerbated by the social activism conducted by female athletes, which can contribute to spread the improved capabilities and empowerment to other women and girls.

List of Abbreviations

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

U.S. – United States

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1. Introduction

August 15th, 2021, became a historic day for Afghanistan with the Taliban gaining control over the capital, Kabul, as the last part of the country's larger urban areas, after a period where they had continuously been taking over more and more of the country. This led to a collapse of the government and President Ashraf Ghani on the run. The takeover by the Taliban occurred following the gradual U.S. and international troop withdrawal with the aim of having left Afghanistan completely by September 2021, after 20 years of presence in the country, and caused a situation where a lot of people fled, or tried to flee (Center for Preventive Action, 2022). Consequently, Afghanistan is currently facing a severe humanitarian crisis, and the human rights of the population are threatened. However, while the Taliban takeover has an impact on the whole population, especially the freedom and rights of women and girls have been affected, and the improvements gained in this area during the past 20 years have to a large degree been overturned. Among other things, this involves restrictions related to freedom of movement, dress codes, employment, and education (Human Rights Watch, 2022, pp. 17-22).

In addition, another aspect of this, is the participation in sports by women and girls. For instance, it has been described how female soccer players from the national team, and their families, have been forced to flee Afghanistan due to their safety, since they fear for the repercussions they might face, because the Taliban does not condone women and girls who exercise sports. Rather, they want to follow a strict interpretation of Sharia law, and therefore believe this should be banned (Lynch, 2022). Besides soccer, there are also several similar accounts about how this threat from the Taliban, related to sports participation, and forcing players to either hide or flee, regards other types of sports like, for instance, cricket (Pearson, 2021), boxing (Graham-Harrison & Makoi, 2022), and volleyball (Wright, 2021). Further, when asked directly about whether it will be allowed for women to participate in sports, and more specifically cricket, a Taliban spokesperson answered that he did not believe this would be the case, and said that "it is not necessary that women should play cricket (...) Islam and Islamic Emirate [of Afghanistan] do not allow women to play cricket or play kinds of sports in which they get exposed" (Ahmadullah Wasiq in SBS News, 2021, 1:41-2:31).

It is possible to ask why exactly the aspect of sports is important, and thereby also relevant to focus on. Here, some different arguments are firstly that sports, besides the beneficial social aspects, also have a number of personal benefits. For instance, in terms of improved health, both physically and psychologically, positive effects on academic and career achievements, and increased self-esteem as

well as empowering women and girls (Schultz, 2018, pp. 2-4). Moreover, in UNESCO's *International Charter of Physical Education and Sport*, it is written that:

one of the essential conditions for the effective exercise of human rights is that everyone should be free to develop and preserve his or her physical, intellectual and moral powers, and that access to physical education and sport should consequently be assured and guaranteed for all human beings. (UNESCO, 1978, p. 1)

In this way, the quote above underlines how the practice of sports can be considered a human right, and thereby something which everyone should be entitled to have the possibility to exercise. This argument, combined with the benefits described, thereby works to emphasize the importance of sports.

It can be difficult to understand how precisely sports, which seems like an innocent practice, can be treated as something which is wrong, and not allowed, for women to participate in, and that if they do so, this can have severe consequences for them. While, as has been described, the Taliban says that the reason women and girls cannot participate in sports is because they want to follow Sharia law, and relatedly does not want women to get exposed, it is possible to question whether there are other aspects related to this, and possible factors which make women's participation in sports a critical matter to the Taliban.

1.1 Research Question

In order to look more into the above-mentioned queries, the following research question has been posed:

In what ways has the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan affected women and girls who participate in sports – and why is it problematic for the Taliban that they do so?

To answer this question, the first part of the thesis will give a short introduction into the Afghan context, and the country's recent history, with a focus on Taliban and the freedom and rights of women and girls. This is provided in order to get a better understanding of the dynamics in the country and the role of the Taliban. Secondly, a literature review is presented centered around the broader topic Muslim women and sports, before narrowing down to a focus on women and sports in Afghanistan. This should be helpful in getting knowledge about the already existing research on the topic, and findings here which could be relevant. Afterwards, the methodology chapter follows,

where the methodological choices and considerations are described. Moreover, the theoretical framework is outlined, in which the focus is on the theories of empowerment and Martha C. Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach. Thereafter, the following section provides the analysis and discussion, bringing together the collected video data with the different elements from the previous sections in order to move towards an answer to the research question. Finally, a conclusion is presented, which sums up the main findings and arguments of the thesis.

2. Background: The Afghan Context

In this section, a brief introduction to the context of Afghanistan is provided. Here, the focus is especially on the Taliban, and women's rights and freedom. The section will begin with a short description of some information about Afghanistan. Afterwards, it will look at the last time the Taliban was ruling the country, and how this affected the lives of women. Further, it will continue to give an overview over the time between when they ruled the first time and their current rule. Finally, it will consider the recent takeover by the Taliban, and how this has affected women's freedom and rights.

2.1 Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a country located in the Southern Asia with approximately 38.3 million inhabitants of which around 4.5 million live in the capital Kabul. In terms of religion, it is dominated by a Muslim majority consisting of 99.7 % whereof the main part is Sunni Muslims (CIA, 2022). Moreover, the country is characterized by a long history with changes in power and a fragmented society, where the state has historically played a minor role in especially the rural areas (Barth, 2010). Relatedly, there are a lot of different ethnic groups in the country of which the Pashtuns are the largest group (CIA, 2022). It is also this ethnic group which dominates the Taliban (Thomas, 2021, p. 1).

2.2 The Taliban's First Rule (1996-2001)

The Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, after they had been in the country since their invasion ten years before in 1979 (Barth, 2010, pp. 45-47). Following this, the situation in the country was chaotic and the Taliban was created, and on the rise, which lead to them having taken control over most of the country, including Kabul, by 1996 (Barth, 2010, pp. 54-58). The Taliban had its roots

in the mujahideen group who fought the Soviet Union. A large part of its founding members came from Islamic religious schools in Pakistan. Consequently, the Taliban is following a strict interpretation of Islam and Sharia law, which they believe should be implemented in the areas they control. However, their ideologies are also affected by conservative Pashtun traditions (Thomas, 2021, p. 1).

Before Taliban gained power, in 1996, women were in a remarkably better position than after. For instance, they were not forced to wear a burqa, but were instead allowed to dress as they pleased. Boys and girls could attend schools together, and it was possible for women to work in a lot of different types of jobs, thereby also making them able to provide for themselves (Sarooha & Singh, 2020, pp. 365-367). As is described in the following, this soon changed. The Taliban rule from 1996-2001 was a critical time for women's rights and freedom (Sarooha & Singh, 2020). The treatment of women and girls was based on Taliban's very strict and traditional interpretation of Islam and Sharia law. One of the characteristics of this period was the fact that women were banished from public life, and were restricted to stay in their homes, unless they had a male relative with them. Furthermore, they could not leave the house without wearing a burqa covering both body and face, or speak to men not belonging to their family. They had no economic or political rights, and they were not allowed to go to school or work (Sarooha & Singh, 2020 pp. 365-367). Looking at this, it is not surprising that women and girls were not permitted to participate in sports either (Rahman & Lifang, 2020, p. 4). While it has been described how the stadium in Kabul were occasionally used for public executions (Kramer, 2002). If the women did not obey the rules set by the Taliban, they risked being punished severely for their "moral crimes" by, e.g., prison sentences, public beatings, or getting killed. To make sure that the rules relating to moral behavior in accordance with Islamic laws were followed, a Ministry for Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue was established (Sarooha & Singh, 2020, pp. 365-366). This strict and radical line followed by the Taliban, and their severe punishments, were something which the main part of the population, including some of the more conservative people, was opposed to (Barth, 2010, p. 67).

2.3 Between the Taliban's First Rule and Its Recent Takeover (2001-2021)

The 9/11 terror attack in the U.S. by al-Qaeda had severe consequences for the future of Afghanistan. Even though it is not assumed that the Taliban was directly involved in the attack, Afghanistan was hosting both al-Qaeda and their leader Osama bin Laden. Therefore, the situation ended with the U.S. and NATO entering the country and removing Taliban from power as part of the

“Global War on Terrorism” (Barth, 2010, pp. 68-70). In the following years, the U.S. exercised great power and control in Afghanistan in terms of deciding the future of the country, and relatedly played a major role in getting their preferred leader, Hamid Karzai, to become president (Barth, 2010, pp. 70-72).

After Taliban lost power, things began to change for women in Afghanistan, where new democratic initiatives were implemented. This included the creation of the Afghan Constitution in 2004, which emphasized equal rights, and hence granted certain rights to women that they did not have before. For instance, they were ensured political participation, and a gender quota was introduced in the parliament (Sarooha & Singh, 2020, p. 369). Moreover, women also gained the right to work, and further, the developments of the period were also beneficial for the possibility of girls to attend school, which was no longer prohibited like it had been under Taliban rule. Instead, both boys and girls were granted educational rights. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that there were still problems related to this due to traditional social norms and poverty, in combination with threats from the Taliban, preventing some girls from using this right (Sarooha & Singh, 2020, pp. 370-372). Besides this, it was possible for women and girls to participate in sports, which, for instance, was practiced at schools as well as on professional levels (Ayub, 2010). However, while there were improvements for women and girls, these were mainly affecting women in urban areas, while rural areas of Afghanistan were still marked by extreme gender inequality and a lack of women’s rights in practice. This can be seen in relation to the fact that the Taliban still existed, and especially were able to exercise their power in these areas, where the weak government did not prevent this (Sarooha & Singh, 2020, p. 373).

2.4 The Taliban Takeover (2021-->)

The presence of the Taliban in Afghanistan gradually increased and culminated with the takeover of Kabul on August 15th, 2021, as the last one of larger urban areas in the country. This entailed a collapse of the government, and the flight of President Ashraf Ghani. The takeover happened following a peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban in February 2020, where it was agreed that the U.S. should withdraw their troops from the country. This was agreed to be done in exchange for a promise from the Taliban to negotiate with the government of Afghanistan, as well as not allowing any terrorist groups to operate in their controlled areas. The U.S. began their troop withdrawal with the aim of having left the country completely by September 2021. However, as it is clear from the above-written, the negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government did

not lead to a peaceful agreement, but instead increased combats and violence, and the following takeover (Center for Preventive Action, 2022). In the wake of this, the Taliban has created a government consisting of loyal members of the Taliban, whereof most are Pashtuns and only men are included, despite claims of creating an “inclusive government” (Thomas, 2022, pp. 2-3).

The above-mentioned peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban has been criticized for not including any serious pledges about securing women’s freedom and rights (Sarooha & Singh, 2020, p. 375). Relatedly, it is not very surprising that the Taliban takeover has had severe consequences for especially women and girls. A gender alert by UN Women (2021) is reporting about how women’s freedom and rights have been worsened in several areas. This has happened in spite of previous statements by the Taliban, where they promise to protect women’s rights in accordance with Islamic law (UN Women, 2021). The areas include girls’ education, women’s employment which, for instance, has led to job losses, and freedom of movement, where there have become restrictions on women’s ability to move around freely by, e.g., demanding a male relative to accompany them, and where clothing regulations have been imposed (UN Women, 2021). Additionally, there is healthcare, which were not optimal before, but is even worse after the Taliban takeover. Further, it is seen how the already high level of violence against women and girls have further increased, while there is less help to seek, and there are problems with humanitarian response related to women both in terms of staff and beneficiaries. Moreover, the representation of women in media has been restricted, while some female journalists have fled the country in fear, and there have been a negative impact on women’s civil society (UN Women, 2021). Also, women’s participation in public and political life has been affected negatively, for instance, with the establishment of the all-male government, as well as a closing down of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, and instead having brought back the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice with the aim to make sure that Sharia law is followed (UN Women, 2021). A report by Human Rights Watch shows similar trends regarding a deterioration of women’s rights (Human Rights Watch, 2022, pp. 20-22). In addition, women and girls are not allowed to play sports (Beaumont, 2021). This will be further elaborated in the analytical section.

While the Taliban has made statements in some areas regarding women and girls, there are still a lot of uncertainties about its policies, and therefore what is allowed, and what is not. The confusion from this is exacerbated by the fact that there are variations in different provinces regarding this, and has led to self-censorship by women, girls and their families in fear of doing something that is not allowed (UN Women, 2021). An example, showing Taliban’s inconsistencies in their leadership, is that

of the case of girls not being allowed to attend secondary schools. Here, firstly they were not allowed to do so, then Taliban said that schools would be reopened for girls in late March, but then at the same day as the schools should reopen, they decided that secondary schools for girls should not be reopened anyway (Barr, 2022). Moreover, a recent development is that in May 2022, the Taliban declared that women and girls should be covered from head to toe with only their eyes allowed to be seen when being in public, for instance, by wearing a burqa, and that they are expected to not leave their houses as far as it is possible. Furthermore, an additional aspect of this is that if the women and girls do not abide by the rules, then it is their male guardians who will face punishments (Hadid, 2022).

Based on the above-written, it is possible to see that the Taliban takeover has had a negative effect on the freedom and rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, and that the current situation has several similarities with their first rule in 1996-2001. However, as described, the women and girls experienced some improvements in the time between the Taliban's first rule and their recent takeover, which means that they have enjoyed more freedom in this period. Hence, the restrictions imposed by the Taliban government are a huge setback, and have been met with resistance and protests from women who do not want to see their freedom and rights be taken away (Kermani, 2022; Nader 2022; Zucchini & Akbary 2022).

3. Literature Review

This section gives an overview over relevant existing research on firstly the broader topic "Muslim Women and Sports", and afterwards on the narrower topic "Women and Sports in Afghanistan". The broader aspect is found to be important in order to shed light on the challenges related to Muslim women's sports participation in general, especially since the research on the sports participation of women and girls in Afghanistan is found to be very limited. However, this is done while still acknowledging that Muslim women are not a homogenous group, and that the context also matters. The relevance of a focus on Muslim women is related to the fact that 99.7 % of the Afghan population are Muslims (CIA, 2022), as described previously. Some of the articles that were not found to be relevant, which belongs to the overall topic of "Muslim Women and Sports", include articles about the integration of Muslim women in different societies through the use of sports, and cases that were found to be relevant mainly for the specific context they were written about, since these do not shed light on the situation in Afghanistan, which is the focus of this thesis.

3.1 Muslim Women and Sports

In the book *Women's Sports: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Jamie Schultz (2018) touches briefly upon aspects related to Muslim women and sports. Firstly, in relation to dress codes in certain branches of sports, and how clothing is often more revealing for women, which is problematic for Muslim women who follow religious dress codes. In addition, there is also the aspect that some sports organizations do not allow head coverings such as hijabs. However, it should be mentioned that there have been improvements in some sports disciplines in regard to this in the later years (Schultz, 2018, pp. 46-48). Moreover, in relation to the Olympic Games, it is written how Muslim countries have a low female participation rate (Schultz, 2018, p. 100), and when it comes to media representation, that it has been argued that this often involves comments on Muslim women's clothes or a homogenization of the group (Schultz, 2018, p. 118). Finally, in relation to the question of whether there are countries in which it is illegal to participate in sports as a woman, it is described that even though these kinds of laws are becoming less and less, then especially Muslim ideologies and Sharia law play a major role in preventing women from participating in sports. It is also mentioned that one of the places where it previously has been illegal was in Afghanistan, when the Taliban ruled from 1996-2001. And that even after the Taliban were no longer in power, it was still dangerous for women to participate in sports, and that it is not unusual for them to receive death threats or being harassed (Schultz, 2018, p. 171).

The text *Islam, women and sport* by Haifaa Jawad, Yousra Al-Sinani and Tansin Benn (2011) emphasizes that Islam is not interpreted in the same way by everyone, since this is related to the specific contexts in which it has evolved. This means that there are also different views on women who participate in sports, as well as different preferences by Muslim women, or restrictions imposed on them, when it comes to questions about wearing the hijab and gender-segregation when exercising sports. For instance, some prefer to wear hijab, and in certain interpretations of Islam this is a demand, while others do not wear this. Therefore, it can be important for some Muslim women's opportunity to participate in sports events whether there are dress codes, which do not allow them to be covered. Additionally, in relation to gender-segregation, it is also different what is allowed or preferred in terms of participating in sports in places where both genders are present. Both aspects of wearing the hijab and gender-segregation are related to the concept of modesty in Islam (Jawad, Al-Sinani & Benn, 2011). Moreover, it is mentioned that Islam does not forbid sports for neither men nor women, on the contrary, keeping one's body healthy is endorsed. Therefore, arguments that women should not participate in sports have more to do with how cultures, patriarchal relations and dogmatic readings have affected the interpretations of Islam, and led it away from the "authentic

Islam”, which stresses that men and women have equal value. These more strict interpretations of Islam have been met by Islamic feminists who precisely advocate for equal rights and opportunities in accordance with authentic Islam (Jawad, Al-Sinani & Benn, 2011).

In a similar vein, Kristin Walseth and Kari Fasting (2003) are investigating what role Islam, and the different interpretations of it, plays for the participation of Muslim women in physical activity and sports in an Egyptian context. It is found that Islam has a positive view on both men and women’s participation, and that this is supported by both the Quran and several hadiths¹. This is especially due to the fact that sports have a recreational effect, are good for one’s body and health, and prepare people for war in terms of improving their physical condition (Walseth & Fasting, 2003). Furthermore, it is found that the way one interprets Islam has an impact on sports participation, and the barriers related to it. For instance, the women who had a more fundamentalistic interpretation of Islam described factors like the lack of gender segregation in relation to sports as a barrier. Additionally, using a veil was also mentioned, since it can be difficult to exercise sports when wearing this, and therefore the women need gender segregated places to be able to exercise sports without it. Lastly, they described how women can be creating temptation (*fitna*) if they move in certain ways, which can be seen as exciting, and therefore should not be done in front of men (Walseth & Fasting, 2003). As Walseth and Fasting (2003) write “Most of the barriers the informants referred to seemed to be directly or indirectly related to Islam’s view of women and their sexuality” (Walseth & Fasting, 2003, p. 57). On the other hand, the women with a less fundamentalistic interpretation of Islam found barriers to be more about how men have power over women, e.g., to decide whether she is allowed to exercise sports (Walseth & Fasting, 2003).

3.2 Women and Sports in Afghanistan

While the section above about Muslim women and sports is broader, and there is more research to be found, this section dives into the more specific topic of women and sports in Afghanistan, where the amount of research is more limited. Relatedly, the first couple of texts are including more countries than Afghanistan, but also involves Afghanistan, while the last two texts are specifically about Afghanistan.

¹ The Quran is Islam’s holy book which is based on the prophet Muhammad’s revelations. These are believed to be exact reproductions of an eternal book in paradise consisting of God’s words. Hadiths, on the other hand, are descriptions of the prophet Muhammad’s actions and his life, which is exemplary for Muslims. Both the Quran and hadiths are pivotal for Sharia, and how Muslims (should) act in their daily lives (Rian & Eidhamar, 1999, pp. 147-151).

In the article *Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities: Empowering South Asian Women through Sport and Physical Activities*, Samantha Nanayakkara (2012) writes that not a lot of women from South Asia² are participating in sports, and therefore investigates factors which have an impact on the reasons for this both historically - focusing on the impact of women's involvement in political movements, education reforms, and government policies - and currently. She finds that the factors involve barriers which are cultural (e.g., dress codes, the importance of virginity before marriage, hindrance of female autonomy and discrimination against women), economic (poverty and limited resources making sports less of a priority), political (e.g. armed conflicts, people emigrating/"muscle drain", and parents fearing for the safety of their children), and social (e.g., women's responsibilities after marriage, male domination in sports leadership, and lack of media representation). Further, there is the aspect of infrastructure, and how it often is more difficult for women in rural areas to access sports activities than urban women (Nanayakkara, 2012). Even though there are similarities in the South Asian countries, there are also some differences. Aspects mentioned which are specific to Afghanistan include problems with the Taliban, which have created insecurity, as well as how during the Taliban's first rule they were banning women from participating in sports, and how the time after this rule had a positive impact on the ability of women to participate in sports. In addition, there is the role of religion and how Islam affects how women can behave in public (Nanayakkara, 2012). Further, she argues that participating in sports can improve the socioeconomic status of women, and writes that "Cultural and gendered patterns of sport participation reflect underlying inequalities in access to community opportunities and infrastructure. Therefore, participation of women in sport is significant for socio, cultural and economic empowerment in any country" (Nanayakkara, 2012, p. 1887). According to Nanayakkara (2012), it is therefore important to create initiatives to get more women in South Asia involved in sports, not only as participants but also as leaders, coaches, etc. These initiatives should, e.g., include the possibility of childcare, educational programs for women, and that the governments take responsibility to improve the status and representation of women.³ In the end, while the article states that it is a low number of South Asian women who participate in sports, it also mentions that there has been an increase compared to previously (Nanayakkara, 2012).

Another text which deals with rising numbers of female athletes is *Sparring with patriarchy: the rise of female boxers in the Global South* by Paige Schneider (2021). In this article, Schneider (2021) looks

² The countries included here as part of South Asia are: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives (Nanayakkara, 2012).

³ However, these initiatives do not seem to make much sense in Afghanistan at the given moment.

at how there has been an increase of female athletes in several countries of the Global South, including data and information from Afghanistan. Schneider (2021) focuses on boxing since, as she describes “it is a highly gendered sport, strongly associated with masculinity, and it continues to be a popular sport in a large number of countries in the Global South” (Schneider, 2021, pp. 889-890). Therefore, by being a woman who boxes, especially in a patriarchal country, one is challenging the social expectations, as well as the gender norms, in terms of what is masculine and feminine, and the idea that sports are only for men to participate in, not least the kind of sports associated with violence and physical strength. This could be met with resistance, since it can be perceived as a threat to the male superiority. Furthermore, it is argued that the rise of female boxers could possibly have an impact on gender inequality, and norms more generally, in countries in the Global South, including Afghanistan (Schneider, 2021).

In the text *The Boxers of Kabul: Women, Boxing and Islam*, Hillary Kipnis and Jayne Caudwell (2015) deal with the topic of Muslim female boxers who are situated in Kabul, Afghanistan. The text can be divided into two parts, where the first part considers the Afghan context. It describes how this is affected by being a war-torn country, where the majority of the population are Muslims, and that the state is conservative patriarchal as well as Islamic and based on Sharia law, which impacts the gender relations in the country, and thereby the opportunities for women to box (Kipnis & Caudwell, 2015). In terms of gender relations that work as barriers, there are especially three aspects which need to be highlighted when looking at this. The first of these are the role of the community and family in regulating the behavior of women. When looking at boxing, this is, for instance, seen in the way that it is necessary to get approval from one’s parents, which not a lot of young women and girls get. Additionally, when getting married it is often the case that the husbands do not allow the women to box anymore. Secondly, there is the aspect of honor and shame (Izzat), and how it is important for women to preserve the honor of not only herself but also the family. One way to bring shame to the family is by doing things that are not seen as conventional, such as boxing, which further involves the possibility that the women will engage with the opposite sex, which is also associated with shame. Finally, the third aspect is about how there is a distinction between the private and public sphere in relation to gender roles, where women primarily belong to the private sphere, and thereby not the boxing arena. This is also interrelated with the two other aspects in terms of how women should behave in the public sphere in a way that is in accordance with the norms of the society, and thereby do not bring shame to the family. Besides shame, they can also be a target of death threats and harassment, especially the more famous and well-known boxers and their families (Kipnis & Caudwell, 2015). Furthermore, other aspects which work as barriers for women to participate in

boxing, which are briefly mentioned, include lack of financial support and places to box, poverty, and the insecurity and violence in the country which makes it dangerous to travel around and thereby join the training. The second part of the text is concerned with the Western media representation of female boxers in Afghanistan (Kipnis & Caudwell, 2015).

In the text *'The right way for me to do things for me': Experiences of some Afghan women in entering and practicing karate*, Sara N. Amin (2019) investigates the experiences of Afghan women, from the ethnic group Hazara, practicing karate in a context of opposing norms. But also, a context where there has been an increase in women's sports after the Taliban rule (1996-2001). Her findings are centered around four different aspects. The first of these is about how women, who have been refugees in other countries during the Taliban rule (1996-2001), brought new perspectives on gender norms with them when returning to Afghanistan, which were more positive towards women's involvement in sports and, e.g., also karate. But also, how most of the women in Afghanistan, who are public figures of female sports participation, are Hazara, which is known to have a more progressive view on the rights and freedom of women and girls, and hence to a larger degree allow these to take part in things which challenge the usual gender norms (Amin, 2019). Moreover, the second aspect is about how karate for these women had an empowering effect, in the sense that they gained personal strength, confidence, and improved understanding of their own skills and potential. While additionally, the participation in karate contributes to improved gender consciousness, and awareness of the possibility to challenge gender boundaries (Amin, 2019). The third aspect is about the lack of time and space as a barrier to Afghan women's participation in karate. Here, space refers to the fact that in general there are not a lot of places to exercise sports in Afghanistan, and especially not for women. Moreover, there is the lack of time, due to other duties, which is further exacerbated by the fact that practicing sports is not very valued as a way of using one's time. Further, these aspects are additionally worsened by the social sanctions women might risk facing from religious authorities, the public, or their own families (Amin, 2019). The last aspect in the text is about the possibility of female karate practitioners to challenge how Afghan women are seen as being oppressed or weak by the international or local community respectively. For instance, in the local context, this contributed to other people seeing them as being stronger and able to protect and take care of themselves, improving their autonomy and, relatedly, mobility, e.g., giving women the possibility to move around unaccompanied. In addition, there are also accounts of how the local media have been covering girls' and women's sports, and how the view on women's and girls' participation in sports has become more positive with the increased exposure, even though

there is still some way to go, and some female athletes who do not wish to have their international sports successes made public (Amin, 2019).

Overall, these different texts provide insights into the challenges and barriers for women's participation in sports in Afghanistan. It is clear to see that there are some reoccurring aspects in the described research. This especially includes the role of Islam and Sharia law, gender norms and societal expectations, women's sexuality, and patriarchal relations – all of which are intertwined. It should be emphasized that while some of the texts are mentioning a rise in female athletes in Afghanistan, this was documented before the takeover by the Taliban after which the situation has drastically changed. Relatedly, none of the existing research on women's sports is up-to-date with the current situation in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, and is therefore not covering the aspect of how the female athletes have been affected by this. Consequently, this is an aspect which this thesis investigates. Moreover, in relation to this, the thesis further questions why it is problematic for the Taliban government that women and girls are participating in sports.

4. Methodology

In this section, the different methodological choices and considerations will be described. Firstly, the focus is on the collection of data in terms of a description of the type of data, how the data collection has been conducted, as well as the selection criteria. Afterwards, the process of data analysis is presented. Here, it is described how theories of empowerment and Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach will be used. Moreover, the different ethical considerations, which have been a part of the writing of this thesis, will be covered. Lastly, the focus is on the limitations faced during the process of writing the thesis.

4.1 Data Collection

For the purpose of answering the research question, the case of female athletes in Afghanistan, after the Taliban takeover in August 2021, has been investigated. In order to do this, some empirical data have been collected. This data consists of qualitative data in the form of 55 videos, about the topic of women's sports in Afghanistan, of which 32 were used as the basis for the following analysis. These videos were chosen as the source of data, since they are able to provide information about the recent situation in Afghanistan, and its consequences for the women who participate in sports. The

women and girls appearing in the videos are primarily professional athletes competing for national teams, or youth national teams, hence being more public figures. It seems logical that these are also the ones getting the media attention. Moreover, it can be said that it is probably also the public women who for good reasons fear the Taliban and their repercussions the most, since they were exactly public faces of sports participation, and therefore known by the Taliban. However, as previously described, it is important to mention that the situation, where it is not allowed to play sports for women and girls, is impacting all female athletes in the country.

The videos have been found by video searching on Google as well as Youtube. The main search phrases used has been “Taliban women sport” and “women sports Afghanistan”, both in English and translated to Danish (“Taliban kvinder sport” and “kvinder sport Afghanistan”). However, to expand the search “sport” has also been replaced with the six different branches of sports; football (soccer), cricket, boxing, taekwondo, basketball, and volleyball. The choice of these exact branches of sports is due to the fact that these were the types of sports mentioned in other videos, or in the existing literature about women and sports in Afghanistan. Therefore, they were believed to be some of the more popular sports branches in Afghanistan, and hence of relevance in the searching process. Moreover, two other factors were important for the initial selection process, which, firstly, were the language in the videos, which had to be either English or Danish. Secondly, it was the publication time, which had to be from August 2021, or after, since this was the time of the Taliban takeover. The search for videos were continued until reaching a point of saturation, where it seemed that no new information was to be provided from continuing the searching process.

To get an overview over the videos, a table was made (see appendix 1). This table includes the publisher and date, the title of the videos, their length, and links to the videos. Further, an important part of the table is whether to keep the individual video or not, and why. As mentioned above, 32 of all in all 55 videos collected were chosen for the analysis. An important selection criterion for the final videos chosen, was whether they included any interviews or comments from either female athletes, coaches, or other persons related to the sports teams, who were able to provide knowledge about how women and girls who participate in sports have experienced, and been affected by, the Taliban takeover, and whether they describe any aspects related to the sports participation, which could be seen as problematic by the Taliban. In addition, videos with interviews or comments from the Taliban regarding women’s sports have also been included to get an understanding of their view on sports participation by women and girls, and the reasons for why they have banned it. Additionally, another table was also made with notes about the videos, including résumés and

selected quotes which were transcribed from the videos, to be helpful both in the selection process of the videos, and to get a better overview of the content of the videos. This was useful for the process of analyzing them.

4.2 Data Analysis

In order to analyze the collected data from the videos, a thematic analysis was conducted. The purpose of this is to find central themes in the data, related to the research question, through several readings of the transcripts (Bryman, 2012, pp. 578-580). The relevant aspects found through this process are then described in order to provide information and the context for analysis, and then combined with the chosen theories, namely Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach and empowerment theories, as well as concepts and aspects from the literature review. Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach should be useful to understand how the act of banning sports participation for women and girls by the Taliban has an impact on their freedom to do as they want and live the life of their own choice. But also, how having capabilities or not is related to being either empowered or disempowered. Additionally, the empowerment theories were chosen, since they are able to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which the empowerment of female athletes might be able to challenge the existing patriarchal power relations in Afghanistan, and hence explain why the Taliban does not want women and girls to participate in sports. Furthermore, the concept of social activism is also an important part of the analysis, introduced in the third and final section of this, based on it being described in the collected data. However, it is not included as part of the theoretical framework, where the main focus is on capabilities and empowerment. Instead, social activism is not brought into the thesis until the analytical section, since it can be argued that the aspects of enhanced capabilities and empowerment lead to social activism, and this is therefore seen in relation to, and as an outcome of, these processes.

Based on the above-written, it is possible to say that the research follows a primarily inductive approach, in the sense that it begins with observations related to the collected video data, and make more general assumptions based on this. As Alan Bryman (2012) writes "the process of induction involves drawing generalizable inferences out of observations" (Bryman, 2012, p. 26). It is further described that the inductive approach should have the development of theory as its outcome, but that this is often not the actual outcome, which instead is empirical generalizations (Bryman, 2012, pp. 26-27). Relatedly, in this thesis the inductive process consists of beginning with the empirical

findings, and then trying to understand and explain these in combination with the theories described, hence not having the aim of developing any new theory.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

In relation to research ethics, David Silverman (2017) writes that “At every stage of the research process, from study design to data gathering to data analysis and writing your report, you need to be aware of ethical issues” (Silverman, 2017, p. 85). In connection to this, some different ethical considerations have also been an important part of working with, and writing, this thesis.

One thing worth considering here is my own position as a researcher. Here it is important to be aware that being a non-religious, Western white woman from Denmark, and located in this country, thereby being non-Muslim and non-Afghan, can have an impact on the way things are perceived, dealt with, and presented. As has been written “The reflexive character of qualitative research means that individual researchers inevitably inject something of themselves into the research process and, hence, into the outcomes” (Blaikie & Priest, 2019, p. 213). Therefore, it is important to have these factors in mind, and be conscious of the aspect of bias. Relatedly, the importance of not stigmatizing or presenting a negative or wrongful picture of Islam has been considered. This includes distinguishing between Islam’s views and the Taliban’s, as well as making sure that it is emphasized that the acts and opinions of the Taliban do not correlate with neither the Muslim population in general, nor all the people in Afghanistan.

4.4 Limitations

During the process of writing this thesis, some limitations have been met. The first one of these is related to language. While this has been mentioned shortly in relation to data collection and the videos used, this is also something which has been a limitation more generally, e.g., also in terms of the access to research literature, and information regarding Afghanistan and the Taliban. For instance, some sources have been encountered in Pashto, Dari and other languages, which possibly could have been useful, however, the author of this thesis is limited to the use of the languages English and Danish.

Furthermore, another limitation is the size of this project, especially in terms of the period of time available for both researching and writing. Therefore, this is also something which has been

considered in the delimitation of the topic, where the focus has been on finding a topic that was adequately narrowed down, in order to be able to cover it in a proper way. Relatedly, the use of empowerment theories has some limitations in the sense that these do not cover the power structures related to the state, the different institutions working to maintain these, or Afghanistan as a patriarchal state. However, as described, some delimitations had to be made. Hence, while this is something that could be interesting to investigate further, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (2002) theory of social contract is mentioned briefly in the analysis, a political science perspective will not be dealt with further, since the focus instead is on the aspect of women and sports, and how this relates to empowerment as well as capabilities.

Additionally, the fact that the research has been conducted completely from Denmark also serves as a limitation, since this means that there has not been any direct contact with Afghan people, who could have been relevant to talk to. However, this has been managed by using the best possible alternative solution with videos involving interviews or statements that could be used as data as a replacement. There are, however, some disadvantages related to this. For instance, it is important to be aware that these can possibly be framed in a certain way. Moreover, not being able to guide the direction of what is being said, or ask specific questions found to be important, is a limitation compared to when conducting interviews. Furthermore, in relation to the videos used, some of these either have English subtitles or use an English voiceover. Here, it has been necessary to trust that these videos have been translated correctly.

Moreover, since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, and its repercussions, is a relatively recent event, and in some ways still ongoing, this means that there is not a lot of research done on the topic, and limited data available. The main sources of information about the current and recent events therefore are newspaper articles, newscasts, and a few reports.

5. Theoretical Framework

In this section, the main theoretical perspectives will be described. These firstly include Jo Rowlands' (1997), Naila Kabeer's (1999), and Srilatha Batliwala's (1994) theories of empowerment. Additionally, a short paragraph is included about the relationship between empowerment and sports. Afterwards, Martha C. Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach is presented.

5.1 Empowerment

5.1.1 Jo Rowlands

Empowerment is a concept used in a variety of different contexts (Rowlands, 1997, p. 9), and it is written that “‘Empowerment’ terminology makes it possible to analyse power, inequality, and oppression” (Rowlands, 1995, p. 101), which is an important feature for the purpose of this thesis. However, the concept can be understood in different ways and is not always clearly defined. This lack of clarity is to some degree related to the fact that the root-concept power also has different definitions and uses (Rowlands, 1997, p. 9). Based on this, Rowlands (1997) states that it is important to consider the different forms of power, when trying to comprehend the meaning of empowerment. These forms encompass “power over”, “power to”, “power with”, and “power from within”. Here “power over” refers to a form of power which is dominating and controlling. This is described as the conventional definition of power. When exercised, this form of power might be met with either people resisting it, manipulation, or people complying to it. “Power to” is described as being productive or generative in a way that “creates new possibilities and actions without domination” (Rowlands, 1997, p. 13). Further, “power with” is referring to how acting collectively can be beneficial, since this has more strength, and therefore is more impactful. Finally, “power from within” is about the inner of a person, one’s spiritual strength, where it is fundamental to possess self-respect and self-acceptance (Rowlands, 1997, p. 13).

Looking at empowerment based on these different forms of power, it is possible to say that in relation to “power over”, empowerment becomes a way of getting people involved in decision-making processes in ways they have not been previously. The focus here is especially on the more formal aspects related to political decisions and structures, and the ability to hold positions of power, as well as having the possibility to take part in decisions of an economic character, which is related to having a certain income oneself. In relation to “power to” and “power with”, empowerment occurs in the way that people are figuring out what they actually want, and how they can achieve this in collaboration with other people who want the same, and in this way have a better chance at doing so by holding more influence together to impact decision-making procedures (Rowlands, 1997, pp. 11-14). Furthermore, Rowlands (1997) writes that:

From a feminist perspective, interpreting ‘power over’ entails understanding the dynamics of oppression and internalised oppression. Empowerment is thus more than participation in decision-making; *it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions.* The feminist

understanding of empowerment includes 'power to' and 'power from within'. It involves giving scope to the full range of human abilities and potential. (Rowlands, 1997, p. 14)

Thereby, empowerment in this way is broader than if merely using the "power over" form of power as the basis of understanding the concept (Rowlands, 1997, p. 14). In addition, Rowlands (1997) argues that there are three different dimensions in which empowerment is operating which are "personal", "relational", and "collective". The personal dimension of empowerment is about how one as an individual becomes more confident and gains self-worth, and relatedly also manages to break free from a state of internalized oppression. The relational dimension encompasses becoming able to have a say in the relationships in which one engages, and affect how these should work. Lastly, the collective dimension is when a group of people are working conjointly towards realizing an objective or getting their voices heard on a larger scale, which is a more effective way of working than if they had each tried to do this on their own (Rowlands, 1997, p. 15). While not providing a concrete definition of empowerment herself, Rowlands (1997) is quoting Ellen McWhirter's definition writing that:

The **process** by which people, organisations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community. (McWhirther as quoted in Rowlands, 1997, p. 15)

Hence, it is underlined that empowerment is a process, which includes a realization of how power is affecting one's life and becoming able to challenge this, while doing so in a way that is not negatively affecting someone else and their rights, but instead contributing to other people's empowerment as well. Furthermore, Rowlands (1997) also writes that it has been argued that empowerment should be employed in instances where oppression takes place, due to its aim of removing inequalities and the appertaining consequences of this which are not just (Rowlands, 1997, pp. 15-16).

5.1.2 Naila Kabeer

Kabeer (1999) writes about power that it can be understood as "the *ability to make choices*" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 436), and hence that if one is disempowered this means that one does not have the opportunity to make choices (Kabeer, 1999, p. 436). Consequently, Kabeer (1999) defines

empowerment as the move away from being disempowered, namely as “the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). By using this definition, she emphasizes that to be empowered, one must have been in a position of being disempowered beforehand, which means that people can be powerful in the way that they have the possibility to make a wide range of different choices, but this does not necessarily mean that they are considered to be empowered, if they have always had this possibility (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). In relation to this, she argues that it is important to look more into the notion of choice, here she stresses that having alternatives to choose between are crucial, meaning that to actually have a choice, one needs to have different options in a way where one could have chosen another one of these. Furthermore, Kabeer (1999) states that some choices are more relevant than others when related to power. Here, she distinguishes between choices which she describes as “those strategic life choices which are critical for people to live the lives they want (such as choice of livelihood, whether and who to marry, whether to have children, etc.)” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437), and terms these first-order choices. While, moreover, there are second-order choices which are “less consequential choices, which may be important for quality of one’s life but do not constitute its defining parameters” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). According to Kabeer (1999), it is the first-order, or strategic, life choices which are important for people to make changes in their life, and thereby also for empowerment (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437).

Additionally, she argues that there are three interrelated dimensions which are crucial in order to be able to make choices. These are firstly, resources (pre-conditions) referring to both material as well as social and human resources, whereto the access is impacted by norms and rules in a society in relation to who has the authority to make decisions about how these resources are distributed, which, e.g., both regards family, community, and state level (Kabeer, 1999, pp. 437-438). Secondly, there is agency (process), described as “the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438). This agency is related to the “power within”, and further it can both be in relation to individuals or groups, and it can be in terms of decision-making but, e.g., also resistance, manipulation, consideration, negotiation etc. (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438). Moreover, agency can be a positive thing, concerning power, when it is in the form of “power to”. However, on the other side, it can be a negative thing when it is seen in relation to “power over”. In addition, it should be mentioned though that “power can also operate in the absence of any explicit agency. The norms and rules governing social behaviour tend to ensure that certain outcomes are reproduced without any apparent exercise of agency” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438). Hence, as the quote describes, power can also work through norms in the society, and does therefore not necessarily require, e.g., a specific

person or group to act in order for it to be exercised. Thirdly, the last one of these dimensions is achievements (outcomes), covering what people are actually able to achieve and whether they are able to achieve what they want (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438).

5.1.3 Srilatha Batliwala

Batliwala (1994) also argues for the importance of considering empowerment in relation to power. She writes that “The process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the sources of power, may be termed *empowerment*” (Batliwala, 1994, p. 130). Here, it is important to mention that power is defined as “control over material assets, intellectual resources, and ideology” (Batliwala, 1994, p. 129). While empowerment is thus about the redistribution of power, women’s empowerment is concerned with confronting and changing patriarchal ideology and the structural inequalities in the society, which are related to gender, as well as the institutions which works to maintain this. These institutions are many and ranges from, e.g., family, school and religion to the media and the government. It is emphasized by Batliwala (1994), how it is crucial that there is not only focus on one structure, e.g., as is sometimes seen with an economic focus, but that all the structures of relevance are targeted, since it cannot be assumed that this improvement is transferred to other areas, or necessarily leads to an improvement in the position of women (Batliwala, 1994, p. 130). While men in some cases are in favor of the empowerment of women, especially in cases where this empowerment can benefit themselves, then there are also instances where the empowerment of women can lead to resistance by men. For instance, this might be the case when they perceive their own power to be threatened, e.g., when patriarchal relations are challenged by contestations regarding the superior position of men and their privileges and rights (Batliwala, 1994, pp. 130-131). However, as Batliwala (1994) argues “The process of women’s empowerment must challenge patriarchal relations, and thus inevitably leads to change in men’s traditional control over women” (Batliwala, 1994, p. 131). Based on this, it is therefore difficult to imagine a situation of women’s empowerment that will not be met with resistance by (some) men. Furthermore, regarding the process of empowerment, Batliwala (1994) writes that “In order to challenge their subordination, *women must first recognize the ideology that legitimizes male domination and understand how it perpetuates their oppression*” (Batliwala, 1994, p. 131). This can of course be difficult to do if one has internalized this ideology - which can be related to, e.g., religion, or other cultural or social aspects - throughout life, and might not have been allowed to ask questions about it. Therefore, according to Batliwala (1994), empowerment must be initiated from the outside in order to be able to question the current way things are working and challenge these

(Batliwala, 1994, pp. 131-132), as she also writes “Women must be convinced of their innate right to equality, dignity, and justice” (Batliwala, 1994, p. 132). In addition, she also emphasizes the importance of having a larger group of women to be a part of this empowerment process in order for it to work properly and be able to lead to change, since the existing power structures can more easily exclude or ignore a smaller number of individual women. Therefore, it is crucial that women organize and work together if they want to challenge their inferior position, and even transform society (Batliwala, 1994, p. 132). Relatedly, Batliwala (1994) writes that “Armed with a new consciousness and growing collective strength, women begin to assert their right to control resources (including their own bodies) and to participate equally in decisions within the family, community, and village” (Batliwala, 1994, p. 132). A final point worth mentioning is that the governing regime can work as an obstacle to the empowerment of women, as Batliwala (1994) notes “Theocratic, military, or other kinds of authoritarian states, based on ideologies of dominance and gender subordination, simply will not allow radical women’s empowerment movements to survive” (Batliwala, 1994, p. 137).

While emphasizing different aspects in relation to empowerment, the texts by Rowlands (1997), Kabeer (1999), and Batliwala (1994) also have some overlapping elements worth highlighting. These involves that empowerment is a process where people are gaining the power and ability to have more control and make choices related to their own lives, and in this way pose a challenge to existing oppressive power structures. This further includes that this process entails becoming aware of the ways in which they are oppressed in order to be able to change it. Additionally, another aspect, which is emphasized by Rowlands (1997) and Batliwala (1994), is that for empowerment to be more effective and contribute to change, it is important to have a larger group of people who is acting in collaboration.

5.1.4 Empowerment and Sports

Furthermore, empowerment can also be considered in relation to sport. For instance, Allison Huggins and Shirley Randell (2007) argue that the participation in sports by women and girls has a positive impact on both gender equality and the empowerment of women. This empowerment is gained through the development of skills related to leadership and teamwork in addition to improved confidence (Huggins & Randell, 2007, p. 11). As Huggins and Randell (2007) write “With self-confidence, leadership and teamwork skills, girls are better equipped to challenge societal norms which continue to oppress women and relegate them to being second-class citizens” (Huggins & Randell, 2007, p. 13). Sports can thereby play an important part in contributing to both challenging

the usual view that there is a gender division where men are stronger and superior, and where there are certain gender norms one should abide by, and relatedly also contribute to social change (Huggins & Randell, 2007). In line with this, also writing about the empowerment of women through sports, Nancy Theberge (1987) argues that while women have historically been oppressed through sports, which has been used to reproduce their inferiority, then there are also possibilities related to sports in terms of its capability to empower women, and relatedly to affect the power relations in a way which is beneficial to women (Theberge, 1987). Further, she mentions how a lack of social contact between women can be a challenge for the empowerment of women, and that sports, especially team sports, can be useful here as a place where they can unite around a shared struggle or objective they wish to achieve (Theberge, 1987, p. 392).

5.2 Martha C. Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach

According to Nussbaum (2011), the way quality of life and development has been understood and measured by using the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) as a dominant measure is mistaken and insufficient. This is due to the focus on economic growth as well as the lack of concern with inequality (Nussbaum, 2011 p. ix). Instead, she argues against the tendency to look at development as merely economic growth, and rather believes that development should be understood in a broader sense (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 12-13). More specifically, her critique of the GDP approach is concerned with how people's quality of life is not necessarily changed to the better simply because the economy is growing, and that there are a lot of things which an economic measure does not cover. For instance, more economic wealth does not naturally mean that there is an improvement in either political liberty, or in terms of the quality and access to education, or health services (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 47). Further, another important critique is how GDP fails to consider the aspect of distribution, which means that some countries might rank highly when using this measure, but that the wealth is not distributed fairly, and therefore these countries might in fact be characterized by high inequality with a lot of people not benefitting from this wealth (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 49). In addition, this is also related to what Nussbaum (2011) writes in the following quote:

“The GDP approach fails not only to look at the life quality of the poor but also to ask a question (...) Are there groups within the population, racial, religious, ethnic, or gender groups, that are particularly marginalized and deprived.” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 49)

In this way, it is clear how there are certain important aspects which the GDP approach does not encompass, and which Nussbaum (2011) believes should be included in order to give a sufficient picture of development and the quality of people's lives. Therefore, Nussbaum (2011) argues for the importance of having an approach which focuses on a broader aspect of quality of life and development. This is especially important due to the fact that theories about how we should perceive and measure development are impacting the priorities of policies and political choices, and therefore affects people's actual lives (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 46). Hence, Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach is a theory which presents an alternative to the previous and more traditional ways of looking at development. This theory is part of the larger paradigm of Human Development and the capability/capabilities Approach in which Amartya Sen has played an influential role (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 17-18). The central focus of this overall approach are human capabilities or in other terms the questions "What are people actually able to do and to be? What real opportunities are available to them?" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. x). Nussbaum's (2011) version of a theory belonging to this paradigm stands out in its use of the concepts of human dignity, political liberalism, and threshold, in addition to providing a concrete list with ten "central capabilities". It is described as "a theory of basic social justice" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 19), and to acquire this, it focuses on how people can live "a life worthy of human dignity" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 32). Relatedly, it is stressed that the opportunity for human dignity should be equal for everyone. In order to emphasize what this "life worthy of human dignity" should entail, it is here the ten "central capabilities" are relevant (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 31-32). However, before turning to the specific list of the ten "central capabilities", a more overall perspective on the meaning of capabilities is provided in the following.

Capabilities are described as "the answers to the question, "What is this person able to do and to be?" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 20). When talking about capabilities, Nussbaum (2011) uses the concept "combined capabilities", which covers the capabilities a person has in terms of freedom to do what one prefers, and having the opportunity to do so. More specifically, this both includes "internal capabilities", for instance, intelligence, skills, personality traits, physical condition and health, and other personal characteristics which are not something you are born with, but which can be improved or developed through life by, e.g., social support, education, and health improving facilities. In addition, besides these "internal capabilities", "combined capabilities" also include how capabilities are influenced by the environment in which one is situated which is affected by social, political, and economic circumstances. Both aspects are important, which, for instance, can be seen by using the example of free speech. Here it does not help that a person has been educated to be able to talk about politics, if it is not allowed to do so freely in the society (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 20-

22). Moreover, there is the concept of “basic capabilities” which is defined as “the innate faculties of the person that make later development and training possible” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 24). In other words, these are the capabilities people are born with and which provide the basis for developing “internal capabilities” and hence also “combined capabilities” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 24). Besides capabilities, there is the concept of functionings. This is defined as “beings and doings that are the outgrowths or realization of capabilities” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 25). Said with other words, functionings are the ends of capabilities, how things actually function. However, this does not mean that functionings are more important than capabilities. On the contrary, it is exactly the importance of the capabilities which is stressed by Nussbaum (2011), and other proponents of the capabilities approach, since they are related to the freedom people have to do as they want, and this freedom is crucial. For instance, instead of believing that the political goal is to secure that people are healthy, the political goal should be to secure the capability of people to be able to live a healthy life, if that is what they wish to do, thereby providing them with the freedom of choice to decide for themselves (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 25-26). In relation to this, Nussbaum (2011) writes that “The preference for capabilities is connected to the issue of respect for a plurality of different religious and secular views of life, and this to the idea of political liberalism” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 26). Hence, her argument is that the capabilities approach does not interfere with the way people choose to live their life, but instead works to support this.

5.2.1 The Ten Central Capabilities

As mentioned above, Nussbaum (2011) argues for the importance of ten “central capabilities” that must be provided and protected by the government and public policy, to a certain degree as a minimum, also termed “threshold level”, in order for people to live “a life worthy of human dignity” (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 32-33). These are described in the following.

The first one of these is **life**. This involves the capability to live a life where one can enjoy this life in its full length, meaning that one will not have it shortened in terms of being a victim of premature death or face barriers, or other things, which affect the life in a way that does not make it worth to live under those circumstances (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 33).

The second one is **bodily health**, meaning the possibility one has to be healthy, which, e.g., includes both the aspects of sufficient food and proper shelter, as well as reproductive health (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 33).

Thirdly, there is **bodily integrity**, which covers that one can move around as one likes with no restrictions, and in a way where it should be safe to exercise this freedom of movement without being the target of any form of violence, while neither facing violence at home. Another aspect of bodily integrity also includes that people can decide themselves what they want when it comes to questions related to reproduction, and that they have the possibility to be satisfied sexually according to their own preferences (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 33).

The fourth central capability, according to Nussbaum (2011), is **senses, imagination, and thought**. This includes how one can use and develop these three things in terms of having the possibility to be educated. Moreover, it entails that there should be freedom of thought and expression in different areas such as religion, politics, as well as artistically, and that people can decide themselves what kind of, e.g., literary, theatrical, religious or other forms of events or works they want to create or take part in, and thereby use their imagination in relation to. Further, it also involves the general opportunity to “have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 33).

The fifth one is termed **emotions**, which is about that one should have the ability to experience emotions such as love, desire, appreciation, grief and anger, and to develop bonds with other persons as well as things. This also includes the possibility to be able to feel and develop these emotions without being restricted by, for instance, anxiety, stress or other forms of worrying (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 33-34).

The sixth central capability is **practical reason**. Here, it is stressed that one should have the possibility to create their own idea of what is good, as well as “to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 34). Included here is that everyone should be allowed to follow and practice the religion or ethical beliefs of their own choice, and that every religion should be treated equally (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 34).

Seventhly, there is **affiliation**, which is divided into two parts. The first of these is concerned with the capability to have personal relations with other persons, e.g., in the form of caring for them and to put oneself in their shoes. This is related to the presence and preservation of certain institutions which play a role in securing this notion of affiliation, as well as “protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 34). The second part is about the ability to be in a situation where one does not face humiliation, where self-respect is possible, and that one is treated with dignity in a way that emphasizes that every person is equally worthy. Here, it is crucial that it is

ensured that there is not existing any discrimination “on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 34).

As the eighth central capability, Nussbaum (2011) has chosen **other species**. This involves the importance of living in a harmonious way with nature, including both plants and animals, where it is treated properly and its well-being is taken into consideration (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 34).

The ninth one, **play**, emphasizes having the opportunity, as Nussbaum (2011) describes, “to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 34).

Lastly, the tenth central capability is **control over one’s environment**. This one is also divided into two parts; political and material. The political part involves political freedom in the sense that one should be allowed to participate in politics and have the possibility to have an influence in aspects that concerns oneself. Relatedly, this also includes having freedom of association as well as speech. The material part covers that everyone should have the equal opportunity and right to own property, which includes property in the form of physical objects as well as land. Further, the material part also encompasses that people should not risk being the target of searches and confiscations without any proper and justified reason for these. In addition, it also mentions that everyone should both have the ability to search for a job, and in relation to this, have good relationships with colleagues, as well as the possibility for practical reasoning, when having one (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 34).

It is clear to see that there are some overlapping aspects in relation to Nussbaum’s (2011) capabilities approach and empowerment. For instance, in the sense that an important part of empowerment is that people gain the ability to make choices related to their lives, which exactly is emphasized in the capabilities approach in the way that there is a focus on what people are “able to do and to be”, and that people should have the freedom to decide what they want to do with their lives.

6. Analysis and Discussion

This section seeks to provide an answer to the research question: *In what ways has the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan affected women and girls who participate in sports – and why is it problematic for the Taliban that they do so?*

In order to do this, the section is divided into three parts; “The Immediate Effects of the Taliban Takeover on Female Athletes”, “What the Taliban Says about Women’s Sports”, and “Female

Athletes, Social Activism, and Empowerment". Here, the findings from the collected video data will be presented. Furthermore, these findings will be analyzed and discussed in combination with, primarily, the theories of empowerment and Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach, as well as with relevant concepts and perspectives, including some from the literature review, social activism and Rousseau's (2002) social contract theory.

6.1 The Immediate Effects of the Taliban Takeover on Female Athletes

As it has been shortly described, after the Taliban takeover, the situation for female athletes in Afghanistan has been very uncertain and even dangerous. An aspect that is reoccurring in the statements from the women and girls is how they feel like they have lost the achievements they have made, since the last time the Taliban ruled, and how they in the period between Taliban's first rule and their recent takeover worked hard to, e.g., be allowed to play sports and enjoy more freedom. Now there is a fear that this was all in vain (see list of videos). As boxer Seema Rezai says, "I won't go 20 years back in time" (Rezai in The New York Times, 2021, 5:41-5:44). In the collected data, there are several different accounts of how the Taliban takeover has affected women and girls, ranging from hiding in their houses, or elsewhere, to fleeing the country (see list of videos). For instance, handball player Homaira Barakzai says that:

I haven't left my home from the day the Taliban came to power. They have a very bad record from 20 years ago, and we don't dare to go out. I'm afraid that if they find out I'm an athlete, I might face bad consequences. (Barakzai in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2021, 2:21-2:36)

Here, it is stressed that there is a certain danger related to being a female athlete under the Taliban's rule, and in line with the quote above, Zakia Khudadadi, a paralympic taekwondo athlete, tells that:

I am currently imprisoned inside the house. I cannot even go outside around this house with confidence and with security to go out to buy just a few things for myself, to train, to check on how anyone else is, or for anyone to check that I am not left out of the competition [Paralympic Games]. (Khudadadi in Reuters, 2021a, 0:10-0:30)

Both of these quotes clearly show the fear that exists among sportswomen and girls in relation to the Taliban, and, as is emphasized in the first quote, especially with the knowledge about brutalities from their last rule. In addition, there have been accounts of members of the Taliban going around to people's houses to look for certain people, who have been involved in activities they do not approve

of, besides, e.g., government jobs and social activism, this also includes women and girls participating in sports. It has even been described how they in some cases have followed female athletes on their way home, and entered their houses to investigate them, and that they have burned down houses and killed people, who do not follow their allowed behavior (see list of videos). Moreover, even though it has previously been described, in the literature review, how there also have been certain challenges for Muslim women, and more specifically Afghan women, concerning participation in sports before the Taliban takeover, and, as is mentioned by Schultz (2018) as well as Kipnis and Caudwell (2015), that this also at that time could be related to threats and harassments, it is clear that these women consider the situation with Taliban in power to have made things a lot worse, since they are hiding after the Taliban gained power but did not do so before.

Furthermore, as shortly mentioned above, several women and girls, as well as some of their family members, have also fled the country due to the feared repercussions relating to their sports participation. According to the collected video data, this includes the national women's soccer team and two of the female youth teams in soccer as well, a wheelchair basketball team player, martial arts athletes, including, a boxer, Muay Thai fighter and some taekwondo athletes, and possibly more who have not been as exposed in the media (see list of videos). Due to the fact that some of the videos were filmed very shortly after the Taliban takeover, and some time therefore have passed since most of the videos were filmed, it should be mentioned that some of the girls and women who were hiding at first might have fled the country later on. However, there are also accounts of some sportswomen and girls who have not been able to flee, e.g., due to lack of visas⁴ (see list of videos).

However, while it is described how a lot of female athletes in Afghanistan are either hiding or fleeing, it should be mentioned that there are also some still in the country who have chosen to defy the Taliban and practice their sport in secret. For instance, this is the case with a group of female taekwondo fighters, as the trainer Yasamin Azizi describes in the following quote:

It has been two or three months since the previous government collapsed and we train secretly in different gyms. As you all know, girls are not allowed to resume their activities or training, but I still do my best to serve my society and especially those girls who are addicted to exercise. (Azizi in Reuters, 2021b, 0:21-0:43)

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the number of athletes has fallen drastically, and where there used to be between 60-70 taekwondo fighters, there is now only around 10 showing up for practice

⁴ While this aspect could be interesting to look more into, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to do so.

per day (Reuters, 2021b). This shows that there is a certain fear related to defying the Taliban, and that a lot of women and girls are not willing to do so to exercise sports.

6.1.1 Analytical Comments

Based on these different aspects, it is possible to see how the Taliban takeover has had consequences for both female athlete's freedom of movement, as well as their freedom to do as they want more generally. Looking at these aspects in relation to Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach presented previously, it is therefore possible to say that there are some of these ten central capabilities which are not present⁵. These firstly include "bodily integrity", which exactly emphasizes the possibility to move around freely as one likes, and in a way where this is safe. From what is written above, it is clear to see that the female athletes have faced severe restrictions concerning this capability after the Taliban takeover, since they do not have the option to move around freely. In relation to the capability "control over one's environment", there are two different aspects of relevance. Firstly, there is the aspect of freedom of association which is lacking, since these women are not allowed to meet up in their sports clubs. Further, as described, there have been instances where the Taliban have entered the houses of female athletes and looked around with no proper reason, which is against the capability of being free from unjustified searches. In addition, regarding "emotions" it can be argued that the female athletes do not have the possibility to feel and develop emotions without being restricted by, e.g., anxiety, stress or other forms of worrying, since they are in a situation where they exactly are anxious, stressed, and worried after the Taliban takeover. With regard to "affiliation", which encompasses the capability to have personal relations with other persons, it can be said that sports can be a way of creating relations with other persons, and therefore when practicing sports is not allowed for women and girls, this is a way of restricting this capability. However, even if it is not possible to participate in sports, there are of course other ways of creating personal relations, but this on the other hand can be complicated if one's freedom of movement is restricted. This is especially the case after the recent announcement from the Taliban that they are expecting women to stay home, as described previously. Additionally, the "affiliation" capability also includes the aspect that one should be treated with dignity, which it can be argued that these women and girls are not, and that there should be no discrimination on the basis of several different factors including sex, which there clearly is. "Senses, imagination, and

⁵ While several of these capabilities could be relevant to look more into and comment on in the case of Afghanistan, the focus here is on the capabilities and their aspects which relate specifically to the ban on women's sports.

thought” involves the aspect described as the opportunity to “have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 33). Here, it can be said that by restricting women’s and girls’ opportunity to participate in sports, and inflicting pain upon them of a nonbeneficial character, in both a psychological and possibly also a physical way if they are discovered, this opportunity is not fulfilled. Moreover, there is the capability termed “play”, where it seems self-evident that the restrictions on women’s opportunities to participate in sports is a barrier to having this capability. The capability of “bodily health” is also to some extent affected, since the exercise of sports is an important part of staying healthy. It can further be argued that there are also problems in relation to the “life” capability, in the sense that women and girls are fearing for their lives and might risk getting killed if they continue to exercise sports under Taliban rule, or because they have already done so. Also concerning this capability, there is the part about the ability to avoid having a life that is not worth living, which of course is a very subjective thing to decide under which circumstances this is the case, but it could be possible to argue that a life where one needs to hide in a house all the time without the possibility to go out, neither do what one loves, and being constantly worried, is not worth living. This is supported by the fact that it is emphasized in the collected video data that participating in sports means a lot to these female athletes (see list of videos), and as an anonymous player from the national soccer team says “Football [soccer] is my life, you know, there’s something in my heart” (Anonymous soccer player in Al Jazeera English, 2021, 2:31-2:35).

Thereby, it is possible to see that a lot of the capabilities are affected negatively by the Taliban’s ban on sports for women and girls, and hence, following Nussbaum (2011), it can be argued that this contributes to the fact that they do not have the possibility to live a life worthy of human dignity, and relatedly that it is not a just society. As it has been mentioned, according to Nussbaum (2011), it should be the role of the government to ensure that people have these ten central capabilities. However, as it is clear to see from what is written above, the government in Afghanistan, in the form of the Taliban, is not living up to this. Rather, the Taliban is in fact contributing to, and even making worse, the situation with lacking capabilities. It is therefore possible to ask why this is, and why they are restricting women’s capabilities in relation to the ban on their participation in sports. Moreover, as was described previously, it is possible to argue that having the opportunity to participate in sports can be considered a human right. In relation to this, here it is furthermore seen how the ban on sports for women and girls, and its consequences, related to the takeover by the Taliban, have had consequences for human rights in various different aspects, and more specifically women’s rights since they are the ones being discriminated against in the area of concern. For instance, Article 3 of the human rights emphasizes that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”

(UN, 1948, art. 3), which as seen is being challenged by the Taliban. Additionally, it is possible to argue that the female athletes in this situation are disempowered, since they are in a situation where they have experienced a deterioration of their freedom and ability to make choices, and, relatedly, their possibility to challenge existing power relations. Here, it can be said that in the time period before the Taliban came to power in August 2021, with more freedom and rights for women and girls in general, but also more specifically for female athletes and their possibility to exercise sports, these women and girls were in an empowerment process, but became disempowered with the Taliban takeover. In relation to this, while Kabeer (1999) emphasizes that empowerment is about gaining the ability to make choices, and hence coming from a state of being disempowered where one did not have this opportunity, here it is possible to say that in relation to these female athletes, it is exactly the opposite that has happened. Following the words of Rowlands (1997), it is possible to say that they have lost the “power to” in terms of being able to act as they want, while also the “power with” is threatened by their need to stay inside their homes and therefore not having the possibility to meet up when practicing sports like they used to do. Since, as described, the empowerment of women will more likely challenge the existing power relations, and lead to social change, if there are several women working in collaboration, this therefore means that it becomes more difficult to do so. However, in relation to the aspect of “power from within”, it can be argued that this is not necessarily lost in the same way, since they still have this in the sense that they are aware that they are oppressed and not treated in the right way, which is because they have already tried better and to live more freely (even though not completely), and therefore want their freedom and rights back. Relatedly, when Batliwala (1994) claims that empowerment must be initiated from the outside, one could argue that the situation is different here, and that these female athletes are already aware of their right to dignity, justice, and equality, thereby not needing someone from the outside to create awareness around this.

As mentioned above, according to Nussbaum (2011), it should be the role of the government to ensure that people have the ten central capabilities, which the Taliban is not living up to. Further, as previously described, she uses the concept “combined capabilities” to emphasize how both the “internal capabilities”, as well as the environment in which one is situated, are determining factors for the capabilities people have to do or be what they want. In relation to this, Rousseau (2002) argues that rule by force is not a legitimate way to rule, and when doing so, people do not have freedom or rights (Rousseau, 2002, pp. 158-160). Instead, it is possible to look at the social contract theory he developed. Here, he argues that social order and lawful authority should be established through a social contract based on an agreement between the members of the society in relation to

how they should be governed. This entails that everyone in the society should be free, equal, and have the same rights and duties. Further, it should be the role of government to ensure and protect people's lives, freedom, rights, property, civil and political liberty as well as the "general will" of the people. Hence, by having this type of social contract it is possible to ensure justice and the freedom of the people (Rousseau, 2002, pp. 164ff). Based on this, it can be argued that in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule this type of social contract does not exist, since the government does not fulfill such obligations in terms of, e.g., protecting people's lives since, as described, several of the female athletes are fearing for precisely their lives and safety. Further, it is possible to say that the responsibility to protect people's freedom and rights is not fulfilled either. Instead, the government, in the form of the Taliban, is authoritarian (Sakhi, 2021), and works to restrict these both more generally, but also specifically in relation to women's sports. Additionally, this can be seen in relation to Kabear's (1999) argument that in order to actually have a choice and be empowered, one needs to have different options to choose from, where in Afghanistan, the Taliban government is precisely restricting these women's choices, meaning they do not have this in relation to sports as well as other aspects. Moreover, Kabear's (1999) concepts of resources, agency, and achievements can also be argued to be of relevance here, since the Taliban is negatively affecting access to resources as well as agency, which again is having a negative impact on whether the female athletes are able to achieve what they want. Relatedly, as Rousseau (2002) also states "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains" (Rousseau, 2002, p. 156), referring to how people's freedom is restricted by the society in which they live. Thereby, the above-written shows how the government in a given state plays a role in defining what is possible, and what is not, and how this in the case of Afghanistan means that there are limitations for the possibility of women and girls to both have or gain capabilities as well as becoming empowered, for instance through the use of sports.

6.2 What the Taliban Says about Women's Sports

In an interview, where he was asked directly about whether it will be allowed for women to participate in sports, and more specifically cricket, Ahmadullah Wasiq, Deputy Head of the Taliban's Cultural Commission answered the following:

No, I don't think women will be allowed to play cricket because it is not necessary that women should play cricket. Because a woman is a dignified body. In cricket, they might face a situation where their face and body will not be covered. Islam does not allow women to be seen like this. It is the media era, and there will be

photos and videos, and then all people watch it. Islam and Islamic Emirate [of Afghanistan] do not allow women to play cricket or play kinds of sports in which they get exposed. Every country and every religion have their own rules (...) Islam allows women to go out on a need basis to do the shopping etc. Sports do not consider as their need, it is obvious that they will get exposed and will not follow the dress code, and Islam does not allow that. (Wasiq in SBS News, 2021, 1:41-3:09)

There are several relevant aspects worth commenting on in the quote above. Firstly, it is interesting how he begins with saying that he “don’t think women will be allowed to play cricket” but then later in the quote says that “Islam and Islamic Emirate [of Afghanistan] do not allow women to play cricket or play kinds of sports in which they get exposed”, and provide arguments as to why this is not allowed. In general, it seems that there is a lot of uncertainties and inconsistencies in some of the statements from the Taliban. This is further shown in the following quote by Bashir Ahmad Rustamzai, the Taliban Director General of Sports and Physical Education, in an answer to whether at least some of the 400 sports that Taliban just declared were allowed for men would also be allowed for women:

In the case of girls, we are acting on the orders of our leaders. We’re obliged to abide by their command. Whenever they command us to allow them to play sport, we may allow them. If they say it must be suspended, it will remain suspended until their next command. (Rustamzai in CRUX, 2021, 1:50-2:08)

Here, it is possible to see how things and decisions can change very quickly depending on the orders of the leaders, thereby making the situation very uncertain, but also that it is said that sports at the moment is suspended for women and girls. On the other side, however, there are also some who say that there is no official ban on sports for women and girls (Ghani, 2021). However, this seems to be in contradiction both to what is written above, as well as what is experienced in practice by women and girls in Afghanistan, as described in the collected video data, and mentioned previously, e.g., how the Taliban is looking for certain people, including female athletes, and even have done house searches and killed people. In addition, it also seems to be in opposition to the more recent statement from the Taliban that women should not leave their houses, as has been described. Further, these contradictory statements seem to be similar to the inconsistencies related to the situation with the secondary schools, as mentioned previously, showing that there apparently are some problems with disagreements on certain topics inside the Taliban.

6.2.1 Analytical Comments

Returning to the quote above by Wasiq (in SBS News, 2021), another interesting aspect, which is very central, is the fact that women participating in sports will not be able to follow the required dress code, which therefore is a reason for not being allowed to do so. This is also a reoccurring aspect in several of the texts presented in the literature review regarding Muslim and, more specifically, Afghan women. In relation to this, Jawad, Al-Sinani and Benn (2011), for instance, mention that modesty is a very important concept in Islam as a reason for the importance of the strict dress code. Relatedly, Walseth and Fasting (2003) write about the temptation (fitna) women can create if they move in certain ways, which can be seen as exciting, and hence should not be done in front of men. Moreover, the aspect of honor and shame, as Kipnis and Caudwell (2015) mention, is also relevant, since the women by not following the correct dress code, creating temptation, or engaging with the opposite sex, are seen to be behaving in a shameful way. Therefore, these are central views in a more conservative interpretation of Islam like the Taliban has, and help explain why the Taliban does not want women and girls to have the capabilities to participate in sports from a religious view. However, in relation to the argument by the Taliban that women should not be allowed to play sports, because it is against Islamic values and Sharia law, which they want to follow, it is interesting to look at what Jawad, Al-Sinani and Benn (2011) as well as Walseth and Fasting (2003) are writing in their texts, as mentioned in the literature review, that it is possible to have different interpretations of Islam, and that Islam does not forbid sports for women, but instead has a positive view on this. Thereby, this can be seen as challenging the Taliban's view that women should not participate in sports according to Sharia law. Relatedly, in the text by Jawad, Al-Sinani and Benn (2011) they also argue that when claiming that women and girls should not participate in sports, this interpretation of Islam is to a greater extent related to the effects of cultures, patriarchal relations, and dogmatic readings. Further, this is related to Walseth and Fasting's (2003) argument that women with a less fundamentalistic interpretation of Islam consider a main barrier to women's sports participation to be about how men have power over women. Based on this, one could say that the ban on sports for women and girls by the Taliban is about more than religious norms. Rather, it seems that it is to a higher degree about the patriarchal ideology of parts of the Afghan society, including the Taliban, who does not want them to become empowered in the sense that they do not want them to be able to challenge patriarchal power relations. This argument is further elaborated in the following. For instance, as Schneider (2021) and Amin (2019) argue, it is possible for boxing and karate, respectively - and it can be argued sports more generally - to challenge social expectations and gender norms, in terms of what is masculine and feminine, and challenge the idea that sports, especially those parts of

it associated with violence and physical strength, is something only for men to participate in. This is especially the case in patriarchal societies, where there is the possibility that sports participation by women and girls can be met with resistance, since it can be perceived as a threat to the male superiority. In line with this, it is described how Huggins and Randell (2007) argue that sports can be used to challenge certain gender norms and the view that men are stronger and superior in relation to women. Moreover, in accordance with Theberge (1987), they mention that participation in sports by women and girls has a positive impact on the empowerment of women, and relatedly on the ability to challenge the norms of society working to oppress women. In one of the videos collected, a female Muay Thai fighter also emphasizes the physical strength related to her sport, which is not seen as appropriate for women (Bahmani in 52 Documentary, 2021). Following the argument by Rowlands (1997) about the three different dimensions in which empowerment is operating, it is possible to argue that empowerment here is operating at a personal dimension, since the participation in sports is contributing to the individual women and girls gaining more confidence and awareness around not being inferior to men.

Furthermore, regarding the aspect that the Taliban says the practice of sports is not necessary for women, and that women are allowed to go out in order to cover their needs such as in the case of shopping, but that sports is not considered a need, this can be seen in connection with the distinction between the private and public sphere in relation to gender roles. As described previously, Kipnis and Caudwell (2015) write how women in Afghanistan are by many seen as belonging to the private sphere, and therefore not the boxing arena, or, if looking at it more broadly, at other places where sports are exercised. This is further exemplified in the following quote, by national junior soccer player Narges, who says “We were playing football [soccer] in a backwarded country like Afghanistan, a country that they don’t believe in women, and they think that a woman just, women just they have to stay at home” (Narges in Sky News, 2021, 1:26-1:38). In addition, Nanayakkara (2012) also mentions how Islam affects the way in which women can behave in public, and that they are considered to have certain responsibilities related to marriage and domestic chores. As seen, this is something that is also supported by the Taliban, and which is further emphasized by the fact that women are referred to by Wasiq as “mothers, sisters and wives” (Wasiq in SBS News, 2021, 0:27-0:29). Relatedly, this could be a reason why the Taliban does not want them to become empowered and gain, e.g., certain human, social, or material resources, and agency, as Kabeer (1999) refers to, since this is not a necessary part of their role as “mothers, sisters and wives” who belong to the private sphere. Thereby, participating in sports and gaining resources and agency in relation to this, such as social networks with especially other empowered female athletes, or

developing skills or knowledge, which strengthen the women and girls and their ability to act as they want, does not fit into this role, but instead is in opposition to it. Further, it can be argued that the view on women as belonging to the private sphere probably also means that in relation to Nussbaum's (2011) ten central capabilities, the Taliban does not consider all of these necessary for women to have, rather the contrary. Here, this is, for instance, especially seen to be the case with the part of "bodily integrity" about freedom of movement, since they should not be free to go out and participate in sports, but only cover their needs. In addition, it is also seen in relation to the capability "affiliation", both concerning the aspect of creating social relations, which is difficult if they cannot go out, and the aspect of not facing discrimination. While the capability "play" is clearly not considered necessary either, as stressed in the first quote by Wasiq (in SBS News, 2021). In other words, in relation to the preferred gender roles by the Taliban, women should not have the capabilities to live the life they want. Relatedly, it is exactly possible to say that there exists discrimination on the basis of gender, in the way that there are some things women cannot do, which are allowed for men, and it can be argued that sports participation is not necessary for men either. It is precisely in cases like this that the part of empowerment about becoming aware of internalized oppression, and understand the ways in which oppression operates to influence what people can or cannot do, is relevant, since this is needed in order to be able to both question the current way things are, and change this. Hence, in relation to the last part, in the words of Kabeer (1999), to have agency, or Rowlands (1997) "power to". Furthermore, as previously described, in relation to empowerment, Batliwala (1994) mentions that there are cases where men are resisting the empowerment of women, since they perceive their own power to be threatened by this, which can be related to empowerment's aim of challenging gendered power relations and men's superior position. Consequently, it is possible to argue that both the involvement in sports by women and girls in Afghanistan, which works to challenge gender norms, and is in contradiction to the view that women and girls belong to the private sphere, as well as the related capabilities and empowerment, can pose a threat to the Taliban and its patriarchal ideology, thereby contributing to the fact that the Taliban considers sports to be a problematic activity for women and girls to participate in. As Batliwala (1994) also emphasizes, control over ideology is related to power, and therefore it can be argued that it would be bad for the Taliban to lose this control, and hence have the related power challenged.

6.3 Female Athletes, Social Activism, and Empowerment

A reoccurring theme in the collected video data is how, for a lot of the female athletes, practicing sports has not only been about sports itself, but also more than that. They describe how this has been related to activism and taking a political stance, how they have used their voices and positions to be role models for other women and girls, to give them hope as well as working for their freedom and rights, and not least defy the expectations of, and views on, what women and girls can be or should do. In addition, this has been done in a context where the act of being a female athlete alone is considered a form of political resistance to the Taliban. Furthermore, several of the female athletes, who have already fled the country, talk about being the voice and fighting for the freedom and rights for the women and girls back in Afghanistan (see list of videos). Relatedly, a possible way to define social activism is as “working with other people to bring about a change in society (...) Social activism is often confrontational, against an established power, authority, or hegemony, the “status quo,” or “the way things are”” (Brenman & Sanchez, 2014, p. 6013). Here, it can exactly be said that these female athletes have been “working with other people to bring about a change in society”, and that this has been done in order to challenge status quo, and the established power structures and gender relations, in the way that they are trying to use their platform as role models to confront these and show that women and girls can be strong and independent, and are capable of doing things which the traditional gender norms do not allow them to do. Relatedly, as Khalida Popal, a former player on the Afghanistan Women’s National Soccer Team, who has played a major role in the development of the team, says:

We used football [soccer] as a means of activism to stand for our right, to stand, have a strong stand against Taliban, to say to Taliban that we are strong women of Afghanistan no matter how many, how many of our sisters you are killing, you will never shut the voices of women. (Popal in Reuters, 2021c, 0:01-0:20)

This quote is a clear illustration of the above-mentioned social activism and shows an example of how this has been described, as well as how the female athletes have been trying to be strong and resist the Taliban and their ideologies, and hence confront the gendered power structures working to oppress women. This is further emphasized in the following quote, by wheelchair basketball player Nilofar Bayat, where she says, “I did basketball and I worked for women’s rights in Afghanistan and that can be a big case to Taliban to kill me or my family” (Bayat in AFP News Agency, 2021, 0:18-0:29).

6.3.1 Analytical Comments

In relation to this, it can be argued that in order to be able to do these things, it requires that these female athletes have certain capabilities, and are empowered at least to a certain degree, where they have the possibility to have enough control over their actions, and that they are aware of their oppression, since they could not take action to change it if they were not. It is possible to say, that concerning the three dimensions in which empowerment is operating, according to Rowlands (1997), this is an example of how their empowerment in relation to the personal dimension is making the operation of empowerment on the collective dimension possible. Hence, empowerment here is operating at the collective dimension, where a group of people are working conjointly towards a common objective on a larger scale, which is described as being more effective than if they each were working towards this on their own. And therefore, that the combined empowerment of these female athletes through the use of social activism can be an important step in disrupting gender relations and the oppressed role of women and girls. Additionally, in connection to Batliwala's (1994) argument that empowerment should be initiated from the outside, it is possible to argue that while the female athletes are Afghans themselves, they can still work as "outsiders" to other people in Afghanistan with a more traditional view on, e.g., gender norms, and have an impact on disrupting these through their activism on social media, and representation in media in general. This is also seen in the text by Amin (2019), presented in the literature review, where she describes how the increased exposure of women and girls participating in sports in local media positively affects the view on them doing so. Consequently, it is possible to say that social activism, and representation in general, is a beneficial way to spread empowerment. In other words, it can be argued that the enhanced capabilities and empowerment of female athletes related to their sports participation has contributed to their possibility to conduct social activism, and moreover that the social activism further works to improve the capabilities and empowerment of other women and girls to be and do as they want.

However, Popal further says the following in relation to the new situation with the Taliban in power "today I'm calling them and telling them take down their names, remove their identities, take down their photos [from social media] for their safety. Even I'm telling them to burn down, or get rid of, your national team uniform" (Popal in Reuters, 2021c, 1:01-1:16). Hence, this shows how the situation has become worse and more dangerous for the women, and consequently also that their activism, fighting for the freedom and rights of girls and women, is being challenged. In other words, in relation to social activism, following the concepts of Rowlands (1997), they have lost their "power to" concerning the possibility to resist their oppression and the Taliban, while also their "power

with”, related to their united activism, has been restricted. Moreover, the lack of possibility to take part in social activism can be related to the political part of Nussbaum’s (2011) capability termed “control over one’s environment”, where it is stated that one should have political freedom including the freedom of association as well as free speech, which is clearly not the case here. Consequently, it is possible to say that this has had a negative impact on their empowerment process, in the sense that they have been restricted in their ability to make choices and act as they want. Relatedly, following the words of Kabeer (1999), they lack the possibility of having an actual choice, since their options to choose from are restricted.

The social activism that has been conducted by these female athletes – consisting of, and in combination with, them not adhering to the Islamic values and gender norms, as they are interpreted by the Taliban, regarding not following the dress code or the domestic role of women and girls - in the time between Taliban’s first rule and the current situation with them back in power, has probably contributed to the Taliban not looking positively upon female athletes. Consequently, this might have an impact on the fact that the Taliban does not want women and girls to participate in sports, and use their positions as role models to spread not only the improved capabilities and empowerment of women and girls to be and do as they want, which is in opposition to the Taliban’s patriarchal ideologies, but also their critique and antipathy against the Taliban, where the Taliban might fear that the social activism has a chance in being successful, and thereby bring about change in the society. As Batliwala (1994) also mentions, “Theocratic, military, or other kinds of authoritarian states, based on ideologies of dominance and gender subordination, simply will not allow radical women’s empowerment movements to survive” (Batliwala, 1994, p. 137). Here, contributing to the argument that the Taliban does not approve of women and girls participating in sports, and especially not when related to social activism, since this contributes to both their own empowerment as well as the spread of this to others, and hence threatens the Taliban’s oppression of women. It has also been argued that having the power over women is a way of symbolically having the power over the nation (Plambech, 2021), which means that women getting empowered, seeing the possibility of different gender norms, and wanting to challenge their oppressed position, through sports, or in general, might weaken Taliban’s (symbolic) power.

However, boxer Seema Rezai, in a video talking about how her life has changed since the Taliban takeover, is saying that “Sharing this information is very dangerous for me, but I have accepted this risk because we will no longer sit silently” (Rezai in The New York Times, 2021, 0:01-0:11). This quote, in combination with the example of female taekwondo athletes training in secret, show that there

are still some women and girls, even in a difficult situation with restricted capabilities and being disempowered, who are not ready to simply obey to the Taliban, or accept their oppressive regime. In addition, as previously described, this has also been seen more broadly in the Afghan society with women protesting against the Taliban. As Rousseau (2002) also writes “Let us agree then, that might does not make right, and that we are bound to obey none but lawful authorities” (Rousseau, 2002, p. 158). However, it can be difficult to confront an authoritarian government like the Taliban who, as previously mentioned, enforce their rule by using strict punishments. For instance, Muay Thai fighter Shukria Bahmani has said the following:

If we all leave Afghanistan and we don't unite, then who will build Afghanistan? God willing, we will stay here, and we will be role models for other girls. We don't want other girls to become disappointed or lose hope. I hope that all the women of Afghanistan never give up in their fight against violence and never become disappointed. One day, women here will reach their goals. (Bahmani in 52 Documentary, 2021, 12:37-13:11)

Here, it is shown how Bahmani finds it important to stand up against the injustices facing women and girls, and that her intention is to stay and be a role model and contribute to make changes in the society. However, shortly after this statement, she was forced to flee the country due to the Taliban takeover of Kabul (52 Documentary, 2021). This exactly shows the conflicting situation these women are in between wanting to stay in the country, which can contribute to the empowerment of other women and girls and create social change, and the dangers faced by doing so.

Relatedly, it can be argued that the collected videos with female athletes talking about the situation in Afghanistan, and here either directly or indirectly appealing to the international community (see list of videos), can also be seen as a form of social activism in the way that they are trying to create awareness around Taliban's injustices and hence, in accordance with the definition of social activism, “bring about a change in society” (Brenman & Sanchez, 2014, p. 6013). Therefore, while there are limitations on the social activism which the female athletes have the possibility to conduct in Afghanistan, some of them seem to find alternative opportunities outside the country, which might work to contribute to social change and increased capabilities and empowerment of the women and girls who are still in Afghanistan.

7. Conclusion

This thesis set out to answer the following research question:

In what ways has the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan affected women and girls who participate in sports – and why is it problematic for the Taliban that they do so?

In relation to the first part of the question, it is found that female athletes, besides not being allowed to participate in sports, are in an uncertain, even dangerous, situation, where they fear for the repercussions, they risk facing for having done so. This means that some of them are hiding in their houses, or elsewhere, while others have fled the country. Relatedly, it is possible to say that the ban on sports for women and girls by the Taliban, and its related consequences, has negatively impacted their capabilities to be and do as they want, while more specifically, several of Nussbaum's (2011) ten central capabilities have been restricted. Consequently, following Nussbaum (2011), it can be argued that these female athletes do not have the possibility to live a life worthy of human dignity, and therefore that it is not a just society. Additionally, the ban is also violating women's rights. Moreover, it is possible to argue that after the Taliban takeover, the deterioration of freedom, ability to make choices, and the possibility to challenge existing gendered power relations for these female athletes, mean that they have become disempowered. These aspects can be seen in relation to the fact that the government in a given country plays a role in defining what is possible and what is not. Hence, in the case of Afghanistan where the Taliban government is authoritarian and fails to protect, e.g., people's rights and freedom, but rather places restrictions on these, it is seen how this contributes to how there are limitations for the women and girls to both have or gain capabilities, as well as becoming empowered, in this case in relation to sports participation. Relatedly, the social activism conducted by the female athletes have been severely restricted. However, there are still some women and girls, despite difficulties with restricted capabilities and disempowerment, who try to do what they can to stand up against the oppressive regime of the Taliban. Moreover, this is also the case for some of the female athletes who have left Afghanistan, hence trying to initiate social change from outside the country, and contribute to the increased capabilities and empowerment of the women in Afghanistan.

In connection to the second part of the question, the participation in sports by women and girls is, according to the Taliban, seen as problematic due to religious reasons, which are related to the concept of modesty, and women being seen as dignified bodies who should not create temptation, and hence follow certain dress codes, which can be difficult when exercising sports. However, as it has been described, it is possible to have different interpretations of Islam, where the Taliban's

interpretation is more conservative and, it is argued, related to culture and patriarchal power relations. Thereby, it can be argued that the ban on sports for women and girls by the Taliban is not only about religious norms. Instead, it can to a higher degree be seen as relating to the patriarchal ideology, which exists in parts of the Afghan society, including within the Taliban. Relatedly, there is the aspect of gender norms, and women being seen as belonging to the private sphere. Here, it has been argued that the participation in sports by women and girls can work not only to challenge societal expectations and gender norms, as well as the view that men are stronger and superior in relation to women, but also contribute to improve the capabilities and empowerment of women and girls. However, this empowerment can be perceived as a threat to men, especially in patriarchal societies, who do not condone having the existing gendered power relations challenged, and hence are resisting this. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the Taliban does not allow women and girls to participate in sports, both since the participation in sports is in contradiction to their preferred gender roles, and the view that women and girls belong to the private sphere, which means that they should not have the capabilities to live the life they want or be empowered. While, additionally, women having capabilities and being empowered might be able to challenge the Taliban and its patriarchal ideology as well as power. Moreover, it is argued that these problematic aspects related to women's sports, as they are perceived by the Taliban, are further exacerbated by the social activism conducted by female athletes. This is related to the fact that this activism can contribute to create awareness around the possibilities for other women and girls to both participate in sports, and challenge the traditional gender norms related to this, but also more broadly. Relatedly, this might contribute to spread the improved capabilities and empowerment of other women and girls to be and do as they want. Consequently, the combined empowerment of female athletes through social activism can work to confront the gendered power structures working to oppress women, and spread the idea that social change is needed, which again can threaten the Taliban, and its patriarchal ideology and oppression of women. Hence, this could contribute to their negative view on female athletes, and that sports participation for women and girls is considered to be problematic.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Appendix 1: Overview over Collected Video Data

Publisher, date	Title	Length (minutes)	Link	Keep (yes/no)	Why?
1) WION, 11/8 2021	No hope for women athletes in Afghanistan? Cricket Australia takes a stand for Afghan women News	2:20	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKpIBpMAM4g&list=WL&index=47	Yes	Interesting quote from Taliban spokesperson to shed light on their position regarding women and sport
2) WION, 9/9 2021	Afghanistan: Taliban bans women from playing cricket, other sports Latest Word English News	5:38	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9ggyrvKrvs&list=WL&index=47	Yes	Interesting quote from Taliban spokesperson to shed light on their position regarding women and sport
3) Reuters, 8/19 2021	Former Afghan women's soccer captain tells players to burn kits	2:01	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KySi3nbOpT0&list=WL&index=51	Yes	Statements from person related to soccer team, e.g., soccer and activism
4) Sky Sports News, 10/5 2021	Afghanistan Women captain Shabnam Mobarez on the team's evacuation & their future	3:06	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OefhtuUyatw&list=WL&index=71	Yes	Interview with person related to the soccer team
5) AFP News Agency, 9/24 2021	Afghan women taekwondo fighters face bleak future AFP	1:25	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhEdOGK5-0	Yes	Statements from female athletes
6) The New York Times, 8/30 2021	'I Won't Go 20 Years Back in Time': Young Afghan Women Speak Out NYT	6:45	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6ZkONEx2Kw	Yes	Voice of female athlete, first-hand experience

7) Reuters, 11/5 2021	Afghan female taekwondo athletes train in secret	2:26	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRSXRdvwZLw	Yes	Voice of female athlete + coach, interesting quote about Taliban
8) WION, 8/20 2021	Afghan karate champion fears it is game over for female athletes	4:25	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFnOirziHKA	No	Afghan female athlete - however situated in Indonesia and no mentioning of relation to, e.g., team - therefore not directly impacted by situation herself
9) Almost 8/20 2021	Afghanistan's First Woman Paralympic Athlete Can No Longer Go To Tokyo Because Of The Taliban	0:50	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgsF2exoO2A	Yes -> no	Voice of female athlete, first-hand experience, dangerous to go outside -> found original video clip instead
10) 52 Documentary (by VOA), 12/30 2021	Breaking a Taboo: A Muay Thai Fighter in Afghanistan	14:05	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkyVX99rAk	Yes	Female athlete (Filmed right before takeover, but describe in the end that she left the country when Taliban took over)
11) Aerial Baller, 8/24 2021	Here's Why Afghanistan Women's National Football Team Was EVACUATED From Kabul!	1:28	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QJfs9LocVQ&list=PLyTM_gAL77r2GtrnI5Wv5Bm8nRe714qYX&index=4	No	No direct quotes, no new information (which is not to be found in other videos)
12) HITC Sevens, 8/29 2021	What The Taliban's Takeover Means For Football In Afghanistan	19:42	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jz2kNTOvbA&t=720s	No	Great video with interesting information and perspectives about the whole situation, but no direct statements/interviews

13) SBS News, 9/8 2021	Taliban say women won't be allowed to play sport SBS News	3:20	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yGe-dMPcMI&list=PLyTM_gAL77r2Gtrnl5Wv5Bm8nRe714qYX&index=12	No	Not much about sports, and what there is has already been mentioned
14) BBC News, 11/24 2021	Rescuing the Afghanistan girls' football team – BBC News	4:37	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul86HWLBoQQ&list=PLyTM_gAL77r2Gtrnl5Wv5Bm8nRe714qYX&index=9&t=13s	Yes	First-hand experiences from soccer players who left – terrified of Taliban
15) WION, 9/15 2021	Only men allowed to play sports in Afghanistan under Taliban rule Latest World News WION	2:49	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-hPGrqtnBc&list=PLyTM_gAL77r2Gtrnl5Wv5Bm8nRe714qYX&index=16	No	Not really any new perspectives, no interviews
16) India Today, 9/10 2021	Taliban Bans Sports for Afghanistan Women NewsMo	2:35	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlqAzQrRy20&list=PLyTM_gAL77r2Gtrnl5Wv5Bm8nRe714qYX&index=14&t=5s	No	No new information
17) The Project, 9/9 2021	Taliban Bans Womens Sport in Afghanistan The Project	6:16	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XH3L0anqlgA&list=PLyTM_gAL77r2Gtrnl5Wv5Bm8nRe714qYX&index=13&t=173s	No	Short clips with statements from female athletes – but have other videos with original clips
18) CRUX, 9/10 2021	Moderate Regime Mask Off, Taliban Says Women Can't Be Ministers, Bars Women From Playing Cricket	5:21	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfFGTnUZguk&list=PLyTM_gAL77r2Gtrnl5Wv5Bm8nRe714qYX&index=10&t=7s	No	Not much about sports, and the only clip there is about this, is from another source I already have
19) AFP News Agency, 8/24 2021	Afghan women's basketball star safe in Spain AFP	0:47	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6uSu_pl-E	Yes	First-hand experience from female wheelchair basketball player
20) Reuters, 8/23 2021	Afghan basketball star fears for the	2:35	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YU0ooJrd4Ss	Yes	First-hand experience from

	country she has left				female wheelchair basketball player
21) India Today, 8/26 2021	Afghanistan Crisis Future of Women Sports Unclear, Will Taliban Allow Women To Play?	3:33	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9ulYvYWTNM	No	Already have original clip
22) BBC News Daily, 8/25	Nilofar Bayat, captain of Afghanistan's wheelchair basketball women's team, had to (flee to Spain with her husband during the Taliban takeover)	1:15	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zaKHAqglmY	Yes	First-hand experience of female athlete
23) The Star, 8/23 2021	From Kabul to Bilbao: Afghan basketball star tells her story	2:37	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPNwITx0lio	No	Clips not from original source, already have this
24) Inside Edition, 9/23 2021	Afghanistan Girls National Soccer Team Arrives in Portugal	1:19	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsPg5oiS3U&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qIUxc4Z&index=8	Yes	Coach of female youth soccer team
25) AllAbout – News, 9/26 2021	Seven Afghan female taekwondo athletes to live in Australia after escape via Pakistan	4:40	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRujJDOdBqM&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qIUxc4Z&index=7	No	No clips with comments or interviews
26) Sky News, 10/2 2021	Afghan girls' football team seek sanctuary	2:51	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqgzOlG5zmE&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qIUxc4Z&index=8	Yes	Female athletes' first-hand account
27) Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty,	Housebound in Kabul, An Afghan Female Athlete Fears Dreams	2:52	https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-women-sports-taliban/31484396.html	Yes	Female handball player's experience

9/29 2021	Have Been Cut Short				
28) Sky News, 10/10 2021	Afghan women's football team granted UK visas	2:37	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdSn43-fwxA	Yes	First-hand experience of female athlete
29) SBS News, 9/12 2021	Taliban spokesman condemns terrorism in SBS interview	4:59	https://www.sbs.com.au/news/video/extended-interview-with-taliban-spokesperson-ahmadullah-wasig/qmnym4eaa	Yes	Interview with Taliban spokesperson with statements about women's sports
30) Reuters, 8/18 2021	Afghan athlete Zakia Khudadadi pleads to go to Paralympics	0:54	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RX7-BwL0pSc	Yes	Voice of female athlete, first-hand experience, dangerous to go outside
31) NDTV Sports, 4/2 2022	"Want To Play Cricket For My Country Again": Afghanistan Women Captain-elect	10:56	https://sports.ndtv.com/cricket/videos/want-to-play-cricket-for-my-country-again-afghanistan-women-captain-elect-626730	Yes	Interview with cricket player who fled
32) India Today, 9/8 2021	Taliban Announce Ban On Sports For Women, Says It Exposes Their Body To Media Breaking News	2:52	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47nsdd18Uos	No	No new information
33) India Today, 9/17 2021	Afghanistan Crisis: Why Women Football Players Fled Taliban For Pakistan NewsMo India Today	2:04	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UmKAhmW3QY	No	Mainly clips with text, no statements from female athletes or the like
34) TRT World, 8/27 2021	Emotional plea for evacuation from Afghan women's cricket team	4:40	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPQ2eDrkKZk&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisivSxxcJYT3u_qIUxc4Z&index=2&t=16s	Yes	Interview with female cricket player

35) Bloomberg Quicktake: Now, 9/9 2021	Afghan Women to Be Banned From Sports, Taliban Spokesman Says	1:06	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCwd3qzhxSE&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=5	No	No new information, clip from SBS News
36) Guardian Football, 8/19 2021	Burn your kits and delete photos, says former Afghanistan women's captain	1:42	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lk8yfNHD3vo&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=21&t=11s	Yes	Clips from Reuters, some parts overlapping, but also parts not included in Reuters
37) ABC News (Australia), 9/10 2021	Cricket Australia makes a stand on Taliban's ban for women's sport ABC News	1:57	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFI4TTCMAng&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=21&t=1s	No	No new information of relevance
38) Al Jazeera English, 11/11 2021	Afghan women's football team play first match in Qatar since Kabul exit	2:48	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4BGaFFdIVY&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=19&t=1s	Yes	Clip with statement from soccer player
39) euronews, 10/1 2021	Together Unbreakable: Afghan sportswomen create support group	3:32	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8FKZl9fiBs&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=19	Yes	Interview with player from soccer team (herself situated in Germany), talking about the players who are fleeing Afghanistan and campaign connected to this
40) Reuters, 8/31 2021	No future for women like me, Afghan soccer player says	1:54	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJO-sYSNu5Q	Yes	New information, original clip with voice of female athlete
41) CRUX, 9/21 2021	Taliban Bans IPL Broadcast in Afghanistan, Cites Woman Dancers & Spectators To Call It 'Anti-Islam'	3:45	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oLdJwPOlOY	Yes	Useful clip with person from the Taliban

42) Hindustan Times, 9/9 2021	Taliban ban women from sports; Cricket Australia responds by threatening to scrap Afghanistan Test	3:32	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VabcOshoDHg&t=2s	No	No new information, same clips as previously
43) India Today, 8/28 2021	Ex-Afghanistan Soccer Team Captain Fears Women Safety In Taliban Rule India Today Exclusive	6:13	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzEMTNPBziA	Yes -> no	New interview clips -> part of larger interview found later
44) WION, 11/5 2021	These female Afghan athletes continue their training post Taliban rule	3:19	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0rSl-L_Xm4&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qIUxc4Z&index=10&t=2s	Yes	Statements from female athletes and coach
45) India Today, 8/28 2021	Ex-Afghanistan Women's Soccer Team Captain Khalida Popal In A Conversation With India Today	15:47	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaC0eol1ldI	Yes	Interesting interview
46) Sports Today, 4/4 2022	In exile, Afghan woman cricketer wants her country's male cricket stars to speak in support of them	9:19	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSMoWnfJ-K4&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qIUxc4Z&index=1	Yes	Inputs on more recent picture of the situation
47) South China Morning Post, 8/24 2021	Fleeing Kabul: Female Afghan wheelchair basketball captain's journey to Spain	4:17	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYpqcJ3_OMY&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qIUxc4Z&index=6	Yes	Some overlapping clips, but also some new comments
48) WION, 9/10 2021	Gravitas: ICC silent as Taliban ban women's cricket	5:00	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouT7xJp7Z_0&list=PLyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qIUxc4Z&index=19	No	No new information

49) 10 Football, 2/6 2022	Afghanistan women's football team training in Australia after Taliban takeover	2:04	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZ1b2jkLMsc&list=PlyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=9&t=13s	Yes	New interview clips to support data findings
50) DW News, 9/22 2021	Portugal grants asylum to Afghan girls football team DW News	7:52	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uky02f14VI4&list=PlyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=10	No	No new information
51) AFP News Agency, 3/30	Afghan women footballers revel in freedom to beat British MPs AFP	2:29	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucRTvsHSaqE&list=PlyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=11&t=12s	Yes	New interview clips
52) Hindustan Times, 8/24 2021	'Saw Taliban around my home': How Afghan women's basketball star escaped from Kabul	2:59	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwJMX25LWHI&list=PlyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=6&t=1s	No	Clip from AFP, already have original source
53) WION, 8/24 2021	Nilofar Bayat recalls her painful experiences in Kabul due to Taliban's attack Afghanistan News	4:57	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-2AkUAuHfE&list=PlyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=4&t=1s	Yes	New relevant clips with first-hand experience
54) Newzee, 8/22 2021	Fleeing Kabul: Afghan wheelchair basketball captain's journey to Spain	5:58	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V59JsTG4kUE&list=PlyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=6&t=89s	No	No new original clips, same as in other sources
55) India Today, 9/8 2021	Taliban Ban Sports For Women In Afghanistan Taliban New Government Afghanistan Crisis	3:30	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWyg28vuFxs&list=PlyTM_gAL77r0gisvSXxcJYT3u_qlUXc4Z&index=1&t=8s	No	No clips with first-hand experiences, only newsreader with no new information