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Qatar's sports strategy: A case of sports diplomacy or sportswashing?

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SOCIOLOGIA
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Resumo

Em Dezembro de 2010, o Qatar conquistou os direitos para o Campeonato do Mundo FIFA 2020. Nos anos seguintes, o Qatar ganhou uma influência significativa no desporto global. Este pequeno estado desértico tem sido o anfitrião de vários eventos desportivos internacionais durante a última década e aumentou a sua presença global através do investimento em desportos internacionais, do patrocínio de negócios desportivos, da aquisição de clubes de futebol, da aquisição de direitos de transmissão desportiva e da criação de instalações desportivas de última geração. Esta dissertação reflete como o Qatar utiliza a diplomacia desportiva para conquistar espaço globalmente e exerce o seu soft-power. A análise dos documentos chave do governo do Qatar constituem as fontes essenciais desta investigação. O envolvimento do Qatar no desporto global segue uma tendência international, em que os regimes ricos e autocráticos tornaram-se atores destacados no desporto global no anos mais recentes. Enquanto a diplomacia desportiva do Qatar tem sido muito ambiciosa, a recente atenção global sobre estes tópicos levou a um increment do escrutínio das políticas internas do Qatar. Esta situação resultou no massivo e consistente criticism no que concerne às alegações de corrupção e vários relatórios sobre os abusos laborais. Esta dissertação defende que a diplomacia desportiva do Qatar precisa de ser vista de uma perspetiva crítica. O conceito de lavagem desportiva encaixa na estratégia desportiva do Qatar que procura deliberadamente alterar a sua reputação global através da sua associação a despostos de atração global, enquanto desvia sem sucesso a atenção dos seus problemas politicos internos.

Palavras-chave: Qatar, Poder Suave, Diplomacia Desportiva, Lavagem Desportiva, Desporto Global

Abstract

In December 2010 Qatar won the rights to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In the following years Qatar have gained significant influence within global sports. The small desert state has hosted several international sporting events during the last decade and increased its global presence by investing in international sports though sponsorship deals, acquisition of football clubs, acquiring broadcasting rights and the creation of state-of-the-art sporting facilities. This thesis looks at how Qatar utilises sports diplomacy to gain attraction and soft power globally, drawing on document analyses of key Qatari governmental documents. Qatar's engagement in global sports follows an international development, where autocratic resource rich regimes have become major actors within global sports in the recent years. While Qatar's sports diplomacy has been very ambitious, the newfound global attention has led to an increased scrutiny regarding Qatar's internal policies. This have resulted in massive and consistent criticism regarding corruption allegations and several reports about labour abuses facing the migrant workers in the country. This thesis argues that Qatar's sports diplomacy needs to be looked at in a critical light. The concept of sportswashing is a fitting description of how Qatar's sports strategy deliberately seeks to alter its global reputation by being associated with the global appeal of sports while unsuccessfully divert the attention away from the internal politics in the country.

Key words: Qatar, soft power, sports diplomacy, sportswashing, global sports,

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List of Acronyms

CENTCOM- The United States Central Command

FIFA- Federation Internationale de Football Association

IAAF- International Association of Athletics Federations

ICSS- International Centre for Sports Security

IOC- International Olympic Committee

MENA- The Middle East and North Africa

PSG- Paris Saint Germain

QNV 2030- Qatar National Vision 2030

QSI- Qatar Sports Investment

QIA- Qatar Investment Authority

SSS 2011-2016- Sports Sector Strategy 2011-2016

UEFA- Union of European Football Associations

Introduction

When the former and the now disgraced FIFA president Sepp Blatter in December 2010 declared that Qatar was going to be the host for the 2022 FIFA World Cup it sent shockwaves through the entire sporting world. Until then Qatar had been a largely unknown entity in world affairs. Many concerns were raised about Qatar's suitability as a host nation. The biggest cultural event in the world, the FIFA World Cup, was going to be hosted in a microstate situated at the Arabian Peninsula, with little to none football history to its name, where the temperatures in the summer months raises well above forty degrees Celsius. However, for the Qatari government this embodied their grand strategy to become a major force in the world of global sports. In recent years Qatar's influence in global sports have increased significantly. The Qatar Sports Investment, a branch of the sovereign wealth fund of Qatar, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) acquired the French elite football club Paris Saint German in June 2011. In the same year the Qatar Foundation became the first shirt sponsor of the world renown football club FC Barcelona. In 2013 the Qatar Foundation was replaced by the Qatari national airliner Qatar Airways, as it became the Catalan clubs first ever commercial shirt sponsor. Qatar have also hosted several international sporting events in the last decade such as the Handball World Championships in 2015, the 2016 Road Cycling World Championships and the Athletics World Championship in 2019, as well as establishing multiple global sporting organisations.

Qatar's engagement in global sports follows a recent development where resource rich autocratic states, such as Russia, Azerbaijan, China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arabic Emirates, at increasing rates invests heavily in international sports as a part of their public diplomacy (Krzyzaniak, 2016). The goal is to re-brand, or alter the image of themselves as modern, liberal and western-friendly and gain attraction through their association with global sports (Lenskyj, 2020). By doing so, autocratic states seek to boost their global image by being associated with sports and divert the attention from their internal political problems (Ibid). This development is most visible through the hosting of sporting mega events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, and the investment in global sports, where football has been the preferred object of investment with multimillion sponsorship deals of both football clubs and tournaments, and the acquisition of elite European football clubs (Ronay, 2019).

This dissertation seeks to answer how Qatar utilises sports diplomacy to gain attraction and soft power globally, and if Qatar's sports diplomacy rather should be seen as the manifestation of their attempt to sportswash their global reputation. The thesis is structured along four main chapters. After the introduction, there is a literature review where first the conceptual framework of the paper is presented. Thereafter the paper looks at the academic literature regarding Qatar's sports diplomacy, and places it in a historic context. Next follows the methodological chapter where the thesis research design and method of data collection is discussed, and thereafter the result of the data collection is presented with background information on the Qatari state and how this connects with its sporting strategy. Then Qatar's sporting strategy is discussed through the lenses of the concepts of sports diplomacy and soft power. The last part of the discussion concerns the numerous corruption allegations and human rights violations that have put the country under increased global scrutiny. It discusses how this have affected Qatar's reputation in the world and how it interlinks with the concept of sportswashing. The concluding remarks argues that while Qatar's sports diplomacy have been very ambitious, it has failed to allure attraction and soft power globally because their message lacks credibility. The persistent criticism that have faced the country since they won the right to host the World Cup have put their internal policies under increased scrutiny. The intended purpose of sportswashing is to launder the reputation of a country by being associated with the global appeal of sports. However, in Qatar's case the newly found global attention have led to increased scrutiny surrounding corruption allegations and their poor treatment of migrant workers which has resulted in a loss of global attraction.

Some notable studies have been conducted within the topic of Qatar's sports diplomacy. Amara's (2005) study of the 2006 Aisan games hosted in Doha provided the first academic article on Qatar's sports diplomacy, and gave valuable insights in Qatar's motives to host sporting tournaments. Campbell (2011) and Reiche and Tinaz (2018) have researched Qatar's policy of naturalisation of foreign athletes, while Rolim Silva (2014) have looked at the establishment of the Qatar National Olympic Committee. Brannagan and Giulianotti (2014;2018) have provided insightful studies on Qatar's soft power motives through their investment in global sport with a focus on the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Dorsey (2014;18) have attributed with analyses of Qatar's public diplomacy and soft power pursuit at both the regional and international level. This dissertation seeks to extend the knowledge on Qatar's sports diplomacy by looking at Qatar's sports strategy and their involvement in the sporting world through various channels. It also offers new insights and a critical view on how autocratic regimes attempts to launder or whitewash their global reputation and cover up their

human rights record and internal polices by being associated with the shared values of global sports.

Chapter 1 Literature review

1.1 Conceptual framework

To understand why Qatar, a small desert state located on the Arabic Peninsula, with no notable sporting history, are investing billions of euros in global sports, some relevant theories needs to be looked upon. In this chapter the theories of soft power, and sports diplomacy are examined and explained, both essential to understand the Qatari eagerness to use sport as an active tool in their foreign policy strategy. Further on I will introduce the concept of sportswashing, which describes autocratic regimes strategic use of sports as way to launder their reputation by being associated with the global appeal of sports.

1.1.2 Soft power

The term soft power was first coined by the American political scientist Joseph S Nye Jr, in his nominal book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature Of American Power* from 1990. Here he seeks to explain the United States role as a sole superpower in a post-Cold War world (Nye, 1990) Nye argues that the old reliance on military strength and economic wealth is not sufficient to achieve a countries foreign policy goal. In an increasingly globalised world dominated by rapid shifts and advancements in technology and communications, new forms of power resources are necessary. Globalisation is characterised by the increasing levels of interconnections, relations and activities between the local, national and global (Steger, 2013). Because of these developments, Nye argues that countries need to adapt to the new challenges that the information age poses. Instead of merely coerce other countries to do things that they otherwise would not, either through military threats or economic sanctions, countries should seek power through attraction. This is what Nye calls soft power or co-optive power. The "ability for one country to get other countries to want what it wants" (Nye, 1990). One can affect others in three different ways, 1) threats of coercion (sticks) inducements and payments (carrots) and finally through the power of attraction (Nye, 2008).

Soft power co-opts people to want the same as you, instead of coercing them. The goal is to attain admiration, and therefore attraction for one's values, culture and policies A state exercise soft power by implementing agendas to form the behaviour of others, through the

lens of their own interests in the international arena. This can be done through for example educational performance, cultural achievements or sporting success (Nye, 2008). Nye argues that the United Sates did not win the cold war only because of superior military capabilities or economic strength, but because they won the battle of the values, minds, culture and ideology (Ibid). States soft power capabilities derives from its culture, political values and foreign policy (Nye, 2008). But these resources are only viable if their culture truly are attractive to others, where the political values are lived up to both at home and abroad, and where their foreign policy is seen as legitimate with moral authority (ibid). Above anything else, credibility is the most vital part in a country's pursuit of soft power. If a country lacks credibility, their message to the rest of the world will be nothing else than mere propaganda (ibid). However, Nye does not propose to stop using military force or economic inducements, but rather combined it with the use of soft power to achieve its foreign policy goals, in what he labels smart power. According to Nye, The United States were successful using a smart power strategy during the cold war but have been shifting towards a hard power stance since the turn of the new millennium which in turn have decreased the soft power of the United States (ibid).

Closely interlinked with the concept of soft power is that of public diplomacy. Rather than simply communicate and attract other countries governments, public diplomacy seeks to communicate and influence the public of other nations (ibid). Public diplomacy is the tool governments use to showcase their politics, values, culture and foreign policy to the rest of the world, and through this gain soft power. The rapid advancements in technology and communications in the last decades have resulted in an explosion of information, which again leads to scarcity of attention (ibid). This development has caused a "paradox of plenty" (Simon, 1998). The overexposure of information makes it difficult for people to decide which information matter. Those who can communicate valuable information effectively becomes in demand, and those who are able to split valuable information from background noise gain power. Credibility becomes a crucial asset and are an important aspect of soft power. Politics have transformed into a contest of "competitive credibility", not only between governments but also including the news media, corporations, NGOs and intergovernmental organisations (Nye, 2008).

Rather than "winning the war" it becomes more important to "winning the story" in international politics in the information age. However, states cannot win the story if their story lacks credibility. This is exemplified with the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Bush administration justified the invasion on the bases that Saddam Hussain was in the

possession of weapons of mass destruction and had close links to Al-Qaeda. Later it was found that these claims were severely exaggerated and even untrue. Although these claims may have fostered support for the invasion at home, it severely hampered the United States credibility in the rest of the world (Nye, 2008).

However, Nye does not explain in any great length who decides what attractive is in international relations. Nye mostly uses examples of American soft power in his works, and therefore soft power and attractiveness has been criticised for being to western centric, and that soft power and attractiveness merely reflects neoliberalist values and attitudes (Brooks & Woolforth, 2002). Nye does in fact note that what is deemed attractive for some countries could be unattractive for others. Nye argues that Hollywood movies and American television shows have been a major source of American soft power in the western world, but that the same movies and shows would be deemed controversial and vulgar in the Middle East due to the reliance on violence and sex. The point being that your audience matter, and states should take this in consideration (Nye, 2008). Others have criticised the concept of being hard to measure and that soft power is just an extension of hard power by different means (Mattern, 2005).

In the context of this paper, the concept of soft power is crucial to understand why Qatar is investing heavily in sports events and in sports overall as a key part of their 2030 Qatar vision. Sports can be a source of soft power, either through excellent sporting performances by a country's athletes, or through hosting successful and entertaining sporting events which captivates and inspires the audiences worldwide. By hosting sporting events, especially mega events such as the Olympics or the FIFA World Cup countries gain the world's attention. With this attention they can showcase their attractiveness through the shared cultural values of sport (Grix & Lee, 2013). This is a form of public diplomacy where a country seeks to create a favourable impression and increase understanding among foreign audiences (Sharp, 2009). By hosting sport mega events countries can show the world their unique cultural, social and political values through the context of sport (Grix & Lee, 2013). Mega sporting events such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup are truly global in scope. The FIFA world Cup in 2018 in Russia had a total of over 3,5 billion viewers over half the world's population, 1,12 billion tuned in for the final alone (Clinch, 2018). This creates a unique opportunity for countries to showcase their attractiveness for a truly global audience. It is also an opportunity for states to alter negative stereotypes and misconceptions about their country by showcasing their real cultural, social and political values (Grix & Lee, 2013).

1.1.3 Sports Diplomacy

The political use of sport by sates is an area that at large has been neglected by academics in International Relations. Most of the literature written between the relationship between sports and the international society have been done by experts in the fields of history, sociology, sports, economics and law. Levermore argues in "Sports and International Relations" that it has been a continued neglect on the impact of sports in the international arena by academics of IR (Levermore, 2003). Murray argues that the practice of sport-diplomacy has a bright future but is still a largely underexplored area of theory and practice in diplomatic studies (Murray, 2012). In an increasingly globalised world, where states compete for attention and credibility with several different actors, sports-diplomacy can be an asset in a states arsenal of foreign policy tools.

Firstly, the term diplomacy needs to be addressed. Traditional diplomacy ca be seen as "the conduct of relations between sovereign states with standing in world politics by official agents and by peaceful means" (Bull, 1977, p. 156). The practice of diplomacy is to achieve a states foreign policy ends through peaceful means, therefore diplomacy is seen as the anthesis of war (Murray, 2012). The fundament of traditional diplomacy is based on the promotion and advancements of a nations core values and interests. Diplomats have played a key role in maintaining relations and reducing friction between states in an anarchical and completive global arena (ibid). Sports on the other hand is a concept that is trickier to define. It means different things to different people. In *Sports and Politics* (1989) Lincoln Allison defined it as "an institutionalised competitive activity that involves vigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by individuals whose participation is motivated by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors" (Allison, 1989:7).

There are some important contradictions between sports and diplomacy to point out. Whereas diplomacy seeks to reduce friction and uphold relations between nations, a central element of sports is to compete and hopefully win over your opponent (Murray, 2012). A famous George Orwell quote states that "sports is like war minus the shooting". This is reflected in the sports pages of newspapers, where words such as battle, conquest, honour, war and prestige are commonly used (ibid). While some argue that sports foster notions of tribalism and nationalism, others believe that the shared norms, culture and values of international sports brings people together and creates better understanding between people from across the globe (Delay, 1999).

As noted, globalisation is the mass label describing the key developments in the global society in the decades after the Cold War (Steger, 2013). The rapid advancements information

and communication technology has resulted in a shift in international affairs, where actors such as NGOs, intergovernmental organisations, multinational corporations and the mass media plays and increasingly influential role (Nye, 2008). These new realties offer new ways to conduct diplomacy, most notably there has been a re-emergence in the use of public diplomacy (Murray, 2012). The conditions of the post-modern era of international affairs have been ideal for the use of public diplomacy because of its adaptability. Public diplomacy utilises a much larger cast of players both inside the government but also outside it. Everyone from celebrities, athletes, researchers, scientists, teachers, travellers and students can be public diplomats, alongside the more traditional diplomatic apparatus (Potter, 2003). The push towards public diplomacy have created new avenues to conduct diplomacy and new hybrid forms of it have developed. One of these hybrids is sport-diplomacy. Murray (2012) defines sport-diplomacy as "the use of sports people and events to engage, inform and create a favourable image amongst foreign publics and organisations to shape their perceptions in a way that is more conducive to achieving a government's foreign policy goal" (Murray, 2012:581). Therefore, sport-diplomacy is one of many ways for a state to achieve their foreign policy ends.

Murray (2012) argues that there are seven main reasons for states to conduct sport-diplomacy. Sport-diplomacy offers a new and innovative ways for states to reach the public both at home and abroad. Traditional diplomacy has been criticised for being old fashioned, elitist and out of touch with the rest of the public. Sport-diplomacy offers original and proactive ways to engage the public and demonstrates that government's diplomacy is no longer out of date and out of touch. The second reason is the ever-increasing popularity of sports across the globe. Sporting institutions and athletes are increasing both in appeal, magnitude and power. States wants to utilise the universal appeal of sporting demi-gods such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Lebron James, invest in world renowned football clubs such as Manchester City and Paris St. German because sports has a truly global appeal, no one are against sport, and there appears to be somewhat of a moral myopia when it comes to it (Redeker, 2008). The soft power appeal of sports can bring estrange people, states and nations together. In the information age, sport, culture and diplomacy have become viable foreign policy tools, and is a far more effective method to attain the public's attention than just rely on hard power and high politics.

Sporting mega-events such as The Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup attract billions of viewers from all around the world. The hosting of this events are prestige projects and give countries the opportunity to showcase their cultural, social and political values and

create favourable impressions amongst foreign publics. It can also be used to alter negative stereotypes about a country. The FIFA World Cup in 2006 in Germany and the Beijing Olympics in 2008 are examples of hugely successful Mega-Events where the hosting-nations had a clear soft power strategy. Germany where successful using the World Cup as a public diplomacy tool to alter the negative stereotypic image of Germany abroad, by showcasing their country as a friendly and welcoming country. The state ran several successful campaigns during the World Cup with the aim to create positive images of Germany both domestically and internationally, which generated national pride and increased truism which still have positive effects today (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). Similarly, China was able to showcase their country as a rising, modern economic, and sporting powerhouse by hosting a well organised and spectacular Olympic Games, which showed the unique Chinese culture and values through the shared values of the Olympic Games (Qingmin, 2013).

Sport represents honourable values which appeal to diplomats and governments, which have similarities to the noble practices of diplomacy where values such as truth, accuracy, patience, loyalty and good temper all are important. Therefore, sports can be used as a medium to create relationships across ethnic and cultural divides and foster a common understanding and respect through the shared values of sports (Murray, 2012). An athlete is no longer just a sportsperson he is also a diplomat, representing the nation on the sports field. The public demands more social and political awareness from their famous athletes. Like the traditional diplomat the athlete represents their country as an honour of national duty, where both want to win for their state.

Sports have been used by estranged states for the normalisation of diplomatic relations. Notable examples are the 1971 Ping-Pong Diplomacy where US and Chinese table tennis players met, which paved the way for the meeting between the Peoples Republic of China and the US when President Richard Nixon visited Beijing in February 1972, ending 23 years of diplomatic breakdown (Qingmin, 2013). A more recent example is the cricket-diplomacy between Pakistan and India. After decades of suspicion, bad relations, nuclear brinkmanship and near war, the Pakistani prime minister Yousaf Raza Gilani accepted the invitation from the Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh to watch the cricket World cup semi-final between the two countries together, trying to create a feel good atmosphere between the two countries through sports (Murray, 2012).

1.1.4 Sportswashing

Another key concept to investigate in this paper is sportswashing. This phenomenon refers to when authoritarian regimes attempts to improve or cover over their tarnished global reputation through sports (Lenskyj, 2020). This relativity new term has been used by human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights watch, and newspapers such as The Guardian, to explain how authoritarian states tries to launder or whitewash their global reputation and cover up their abysmal human rights record through the glamour of sports (Amnesty International, 2020). Several authoritarian states have hosted major global sporting events in the last decades. China hosted the Olympic summer games in Beijing in 2008 and are going to host the winter games in 2022. Russia hosted the Olympic winter games in Sochi in 2014, and the 2018 FIFA World Cup, and Qatar are going the be the host nation of the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Brannagan & Grix, 2016).

Hosting mega sporting events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World cup provides authoritarian states the opportunity to showcase their state-of-the-art venues where global sport stars are competing on the highest level (Grix, & Lee, 2013). Thereby boosting their image globally by being associated with sports instead of their internal problems nationally (Lenskyj, 2020). The supposedly "unpolitical" character of the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup makes them particularly attractive for undemocratic regimes where there a little or no political debate (Jiménez-Martínez & Skey 2018). Their opportunity to host these events are improved by the fact that democratic countries are sceptical of using taxpaying money on these lavish events, where they could be used in other sectors in the society. After years of reports of misconduct, lack of transparency and corruption, the reputation of the International Olympic Committee and FIFA is on a downward spiral, and this adds to the democratic societies hesitation to host these event, which costs the society billions of dollars (Jennings, 2011; Gibson, 2014).

While hosting mega sporting events can be a soft power strategy to enhance global reputation, attract inward investment and promote the tourist sector, it can also work as a tool to repress and close down critical views of the government (Jefferson Lenskyj, 2020). This strategy is, however not without risk. An unintended consequence of sportswashing is the increased scrutiny of the country's internal politics that derives with the newly found global attention (ibid). Examples of this are the lack of LGBT and political rights in Russia before the FIFA World Cup in 2018, and several controversies surrounding the Qatari 2022 World Cup, including corruption, human rights and labour rights (Jiménez-Martínez & Skey ,2018). These controversies tend to be newsworthy before the events take place, but when the competition starts it suddenly disappears in the wake of sporting excellence, and what

happens on the field takes centre stage. This shows the power of mega sports events, and how they can set the news agenda on its own (ibid).

Authoritarian states do not only host sporting events as a part of their sportswashing strategy, they also invest billions of dollars in global sports, either through sponsorship deals or through direct ownership. This is most clearly seen in the world of football. The beautiful game has proven to be ideal for repressive regimes who wish to alter their image in a positive manner through sports (Krzyzaniak, 2016). It is by far the most popular sport in the world and reaches a truly global audience. By being associated with famous world renown football clubs these states seek to alter their image by using the glamour of the game to cover up for their human rights abuses at home (The Guardian, 2018). Under the ownership off the United Arabic Emirates, Manchester City have been transformed from relegation strugglers to Premier League champions. Qatari owned Paris St. Germain have bought global superstars such as Kylian Mbappé and Neymar and are contenders for the Champions League crown every season. By investing millions of dollars in their respective teams, these states have created two global brands with fans all around the world under their direct ownership. In this way they deliberately use sport's status as the great shared global spectacle as a way to launder their image (Ronay, 2019).

1.2 History of sports diplomacy

The relation between sports and international politics has its roots from the ancient Olympiad where athletes from the Greek city states competed for honour and glory. The term "truce" originating from the Greek *ekecheiria,* where traveling fans and athletes where granted protection during the Olympiad (Golden, 2011). Elis, the Greek Polis that hosted the ancient Olympiad banned Sparta's participation from the games in 424 BC, due to the Peloponnesian War, where Elis was allied with Sparta's great rival Athens (ibid). In more modern times sports have been used as a public diplomacy strategy. The Berlin Olympic Games of 1936 was used by Hitler's Nazi regime to showcase the strength of the third Reich and boost their image abroad (Senn, 1999). Similarly, the fascist Italy under Benito Mussolini used the 1934 FIFA World Cup, to promote their policies and create patriotism through their national team, who ended up winning the whole tournament (Gordon & London, 2006). The Olympic games in Munich in 1972 was overshadowed by the massacre of 11 athletes from the Israeli Olympic team by the Palestinian terrorist group Black September (Senn, 1999). The 1980 Olympics in Moscow was boycotted by western nations because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Cold War tension. Four years later the Eastern Block led by the Soviet Union retaliated with

their own boycott of the Olympic Games in Los Angeles (ibid). The history of sports are interlinked with that of politics, even though some argue that sports and politics should not mix such as the former IOC president Avery Brundage, who stated that "Sport like music and the other fine arts, transcends politics, we are concerned with sports, not politics and business". (IOC 1968). While others, such as the former president of FIFA Joseph Blatter embraced the huge potential of sports in transcendence with politics and the larger society:

> FIFA is no longer merely an institution that runs our sport. It has now taken on a social, cultural, political and sporting dimension in the struggle to educate children and defeat poverty. At the same time, it has also become a powerful economic phenomenon. Football can move mountains (FIFA, 2009).

In the last decades there has been a shift from hard power politics in sports towards soft power. The competition to host sports mega-events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games have become fierce, as its poses great opportunities for countries to conduct public diplomacy and project and gain soft power trough showing their attractiveness by hosting a successful event for billions of viewers (Grix & Lee: 2013). An interesting development in reason years have been that the host nations of sports mega-events have been held mainly by developing countries such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the World Cup in South Africa in 2010, Brazil who hosted both the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympics in Rio in 2016 (Grix & Brannagan, 2016). Another recent trend in global sports is the prevalence of authoritarian states and their increased level of engagement in global sports. Sporting mega events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup have in recent years been hosted by China, with the Olympic Games in 2008 Beijing and the forthcoming Olympic winter Games in 2022 in the same host city and Russia who hosted the Olympic Games in 2014 in Sochi and the FIFA World Cup in 2018. There has also been an increased level of investment into global sports by several autocratic states such as Russia, Azerbaijan, the United Arabi Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and finally Qatar, who is hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022.

1.3 Qatar's engagement with global sports

Qatar differ greatly from the other countries who have staged mega sporting events in the past. The former sates are large developing countries, while Qatar is a microstate on the Arabic gulf with a population of 2,6 million, where most of them are expatriates (CIA World Factbook, 2020) This is an interesting development both in international sports but also in international relations, where countries invest heavily in sports to use its global appeal and

popularity as a tool in their public diplomacy arsenal. Although there have been conducted some studies on Qatar's pursuit of international sports events and their investment in sports as a policy tool, it is still a largely neglected theme in international politics. This thesis can contribute to the already existing literature and expand the knowledge on how and why autocratic states in the 21st century utilises sports as viable source of diplomacy and what effects it has for their global reputation.

Although the academic literature on Qatar's engagement with global sports are few and far between, there are some honourable exceptions. Rolim Silva (2014) have explored the establishment of the Qatar National Olympic Committee. Sports is here seen as an important tool for Qatar's nation building process in the early years of the independence, where it contributed to the facilitation of a national identity. The hosting of international sporting events, investment in infrastructure, sport facilities and elite sports were used to win international acknowledgement and was an integral part of the Qatari governments approach to increase the country's global profile.

Amara's (2005) case study of the 2006 Asian games offers the first academic paper on Qatar's strategy to become a major sports hub for hosting international sports events. It is primarily based on a document analysis surrounding the political debate on Qatar's motives for hosting the 2006 Asian games in its capital Doha. Firstly, it explores the geopolitical situation in the Gulf region, where the process of nation state building in Qatar and their neighbouring countries are investigated. Thereafter it looks at the "Sportification" of the Arabian Peninsula and lastly there is the case study of the 2006 Asian games hosted in Doha. Amara argues that the Qatari society needs to be seen through a social contract between the state and citizens where the state offers socioeconomic stability in exchange for political rights. Because of Qatar's enormous petroleum and gas resources, and the small size of the population, they have managed to maintain economic growth and stability and therefore also political and social order. Although Qatar can live of their resource rents in the foreseeable future, they have taken steps to diversify the very fossil dependent economy. This is where Qatar's heavy investment into sports comes into the picture. Qatar's motives for hosting the 2006 Asian games can be seen in this vein. According to Amara Qatar's investment in sports are linked to their ongoing modernization process. Qatar believes that the hosting of international sports events can stimulate the tourist sector and increase foreign direct investment to the country as well as attract high skilled workers. It is also an opportunity for Qatar to brand themselves as an open and liberal country, thus trying to bust the old orientalist stereotypes of Arabs as being "backwards, lazy and irresponsible" (Amara, 2005).

Campbell (2011), Reiche and Tinaz (2018) have investigated Qatar's policy of naturalisation, where athletes born in foreign countries become naturalised Qatari citizens while competing for Qatar at international sporting events. This is seen in the context of globalisation, where sport have become a truly global phenomenon, where winning medals at international tournaments can be associated by increased international prestige. As an example of this two of Qatar's five medals at the Olympic Games have been won by athletes not born in Qatar who have become naturalised citizens. The policy of naturalisation of athletes is widespread, and many do not have any prior connections to Qatar before becoming a citizen. Citizenship in Qatar have a nationalistic outlook where it is understood by blood, therefore the naturalisation of athlete migrants contradicts citizens criteria. Although these athletes have become Qatari nationals through the process of naturalisation, they do not enjoy the same rights as Qatari born citizens, and many are only granted temporary passports.

Ginesta and Eugenio (2014) examined Qatar's country branding strategy through the use of sports. They believe that sports and above all football have been a key sector for the Qatari governments efforts to promote the images of the country globally. There is a thorough qualitative examination of Qatar's sports branding strategy, which mainly derives around Qatar's relationship with FC Barcelona through the sponsorship by the Qatar Foundation. By being associated with a truly global football club such as FC Barcelona, Qatar gains international attention and seeks to increase their standing in the international sphere.

Paul Brannagan and Richard Giulianotti (2014;2018) have looked at Qatar's engagement with global sports and the 2022 FIFA world cup through the lens of globalization and Joseph Nye's concept of soft power. They also introduce their own concepts of "glocal consciousness and "soft disempowerment". The first refers to how nation-sates imagine themselves vis-à-vis the processes of globalization. The latter refers to situation where countries experience a loss of attraction, by alienate, offend or upset other states which leads to "soft disempowerement". Their research was based on a thematic analysis with both in-depth interviews with leading sports officials in Qatar, analysis of key documents, as well as international media articles surrounding Qatar involvement with international sports. The researchers found three main themes: 1) Exhibiting Qatar's supremacy as a micro-state. 2) Projecting notions of peace, security and integrity and finally 3) confronting the Qatari national health crisis. They argue that all these themes can be seen in connection with "glocal consciousness" and the pursuit of soft power. They found that Qatar's sees the hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup as an opportunity to showcase their country as an innovative, high technological, modern and friendly state. In this way they can show the western world that they greatly differ from their

neighbours in the Middle-East who are often linked to conflict, war and terrorism. As Amara (2005) also noted, the hosting of international sports events gives Qatar the chance to debunk the orientalist stereotype of the Arabic people. Although the authors argue that the FIFA World Cup 2022 can be a source of attraction and increased soft power, it could also lead to a loss of attraction, so called "soft disempoweremnt".

Danyel Reiche (2015) has looked closer into Qatar's motives for investing in sporting success as a domestic and foreign policy tool. The methodology consists of a thematic analysis of academic literature, newspapers and magazine, as well as 15 semi-structured interviews with Qatari stakeholders. Reiche argues that Qatar's domestic motives for investing in the sports sector first and foremost are their need to diversify the fossil dependent economy and develop a healthier society. It is believed that the staging of successful international sports event can stimulate the tourism sector and help attract foreign direct investment and high skilled workers. The hosting of sporting events is also a driver for the development of the country’s infrastructure. On the foreign policy side, Reiche states that the investment in sporting success is a part of Qatar's defence and security strategy. By becoming a recognized hub for international sporting events and investing in International sports, Qatar can gain global recognition and build stronger relations with other nations.

In a similar vein, Osman Antwi-Boateng (2013) includes sports as one of several ways that Qatar is pursuing soft power in the international system. Successfully hosting major sporting events and winning international sports tournaments can increase a country's international image and prestige. This makes the host country or the successful sporting nation attractive to other countries, which again leads to increased soft power. This explains Qatar's aggressive pursuit of the hosting rights of international sporting events. Boateng states that the Qatar winning bid to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022 already has increased its image and reputation in the world, particularly among Muslims, and if it is successful it can become a source of pride for the entire Middle Eastern region. Qatar's investment in international football mainly through sponsorship deals with major European football clubs and the acquisition of Paris Saint-Germain, is a part of their strategic plan to increase its global presence and influence through the use of sports. However, Qatar's lack of democratic reform and their poor humanitarian and labour records presents the gulf states with severe reputational problems. If they do not address these issues, the increased international scrutiny by hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022 could undermine their image and impact their soft power capabilities negativity.

Finally, James Dorsey, a senior fellow at the at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, have followed Qatar's engagement with global sports and the FIFA World Cup 2022 closely through a series of articles in his blog named *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer*. He has also published two scientific articles which focuses on the controversies surrounding Qatar, their soft power goals and their sports strategy. Qatar's controversial migrant labour system, and their failure to reform it has resulted in widespread criticism from both the international media and human rights groups. Qatar is accused of allowing funding to flow to jihadist organisations and supporting militant Islamist organisations in the Middle East, and there are also several accusations of bribery and corruption in Qatar's bidding process to host the FIFA World Cup 2022. Instead of enhancing its global reputation as a modern, forward-looking good citizen in global affairs, Qatar is under persistent reputational attack as being a modern slave state that treat their foreign workers as serfs. If Qatar is too bee deemed credible in the eyes of the global community, they have to take more action and talk less, while they develop an effective communication strategy to counter both legitimate criticism and arbitrary attacks that seek to undermine their legitimacy (Dorsey, 2014:2018).

Chapter 2 Methodology

In this paper a qualitative research design has been utilised. A qualitative research design can be construed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012). The qualitative method seeks to understand the social world through an examination of the interpretation of the world by its participants (ibid). A case study of Qatar's sports diplomacy has been conducted by analysing key governmental documents which refers to their sports strategy. According to Gerring (2004) a case study is defined as "intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units" (Gerring, 2004:1) One of the main strengths of a case study is the level of depth it offers. While a cross-unit study can be satisfied by explaining the occurrence of an event, the case study can offer an in-depth analysis that explains why, when and how the event happened (ibid). The criteria of the selection of data, have been that they offer accounts or highlights areas where Qatar uses sports people and events to engage, inform and create a favourable image amongst foreign publics and organisations to shape their perceptions in a way that is more conducive to achieving Qatar's foreign policy goal

The Qatari governmental documents that have been analysed includes the Qatar 2030 vision, the first Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016, the Qatar Second National Development Strategy, the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Sustainable Stadiums report and the Sports Sector Strategy 2011-2016. This body of literature is supplemented with reviews of FIFA reports, articles and information from sporting entities within the sporting community in Qatar such as the Qatar Football Federation, the Aspire Academy and the International Centre for Sport Security. Further on a collection and analysis of media articles from international media actors which refers to Qatar's sports diplomacy have been collected, as well as academic literature concerning the topic. Interviews of global footballers who have connections to Qatar, have been collected from articles by the news media and have been reviewed and analysed. This section includes 10 interviews where the criteria of selection was that these footballers have connections to Qatar, have a global reputation and have represented their country at the international level.

According to Bowen (2009) a document analysis is the systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, which is examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge. It is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies, where it is necessary to produce rich description of a single phenomenon, event, organisation or program (Stake, 1995). The data which have been collected from a wide range of actors, from both the Qatari state, articles form the international news media, virtual documents from Qatari sports entities web sites, and prior academic research have been used in a thematic content analyses which highlights in what ways Qatar are conducting sports diplomacy. By utilising a case study with the use of documents as a method of data collection, it is possible to gain an in-depth knowledge of Qatar's sporting diplomacy and extend the understanding of how sports are used as a part of a country's arsenal of foreign policy tools.

By following J. Scott's (1990) criteria for quality of documents, I regard the documents which have been used in the analysis of being authentic, where the information is genuine and there is no evidence of the sources having a false origin. I deem the documents of being credible where the data have been collected from reliable sources. The documents have a high level of representativeness and the meaning of the content is clear and comprehensible. However, it is still important to be aware of the biases that the different documents present. For example, one can expect that the Qatari state documents will have a certain degree of bias because it is unlikely that it will highlight controversies surrounding their sporting diplomacy, such as corruption allegations and labour rights. Therefore, it is important to take a cautious approach in attempting to treat them as deceptions of reality (Bryman, 2012).

The analysis starts with an overview of the state of Qatar, which puts sports diplomacy in a wider context of Qatar's domestic politics and economic situation. Further on the main points of the Qatari state document Qatar 2030 vision are outlined and it is explained how this connects with Qatar's sporting strategy. Thereafter follows a section of Qatar's sporting strategy and how the country are conducting sports diplomacy as a means to attain soft power in the international system. This is highlighted by four pillars which is at the centre stage of Qatar's sports diplomacy.

Chapter 3 Analysis

3.1 The Qatar 2030 Vision and sports strategy

Qatar is located on the Arabic peninsula of the Persian Gulf. It has been ruled by the Al Thani family since the mid-1800s and is an absolute monarchy. The current Emir of Qatar is Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. His reign began in 2013, when his father Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani stepped down from office and wielded power over to his fourth son (CIA, 2020). The Arabic state gained full independence from Great Britain in 1971, it has since then transformed itself from a poor desert country where the pearl diving industry was at the heart of their economy, to one of the richest in the world (Fromherz, 2012). The economic growth has been fuelled by enormous reserves of oil and gas that was discovered in the 1960s. It is the 3rd biggest producer of natural gas and supplies around 30 percent of the worldwide gas demand (Zahraa, 2017). Its oil reserve is estimated at 25,244,000,000 barrels, which makes them the 13th largest globally, and they are the 14th largest producer of oil overall (worldometers, 2016).

Qatar is a small country with a total area of only 11,586 square kilometres. It has a population of 2,6 million where about 88 percent of the inhabitants are migrant workers (CIA World Factbook, 2020). The revenues from their fossil fuel reserves have transformed Qatar to one of the wealthiest countries in the world. According to numbers from the World bank Qatar has the highest levels of annual GDP per capita in the world at US$ 128,378 (World Bank, 2017). Because of their enormous wealth and the small size of their population, Qatar have developed the most extensive welfare state in the Middle East with free medical care, education and low-cost housing, for Qatari citizens (Dargin, 2007). The Emir of Qatar is the head of state, and holds all legislative and executive power, and ultimately controls the judiciary as well (Freedom House, 2020). Political parties are forbidden, and the only elections are for an advisory municipal council. Although the citizens of Qatar are the

wealthiest in the world, the vast majority of the population are non-citizens who have no political rights, few civil liberties and few economic opportunities (ibid).

As noted above, Qatar are one of the wealthiest countries in the world. They have one of the highest GDP per capita and have virtually no unemployment amongst its citizens. While Qatar have experienced enormous economic growth and prosperity in the last decades, they are severely dependent on their revenues from fossil fuel. In 2011 the oil and gas industry accounted for 60.1% of GDP (Oxford Business Group, 2019) Even though their deposits of both oil and especially natural gas are large enough for Qatar to maintain todays level of public spending in generations to come, the Qatari government have seen the need to diversify its economy to become less dependent on fossil fuels. By diversifying the economy Qatar will become less vulnerable of fluctuations in the energy market, as well as gaining revenue from new sectors. In a response to this matter the General Secretariat for Development Planning in Qatar launched the Qatar 2030 vision in 2008 (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). The Qatar 2030 vision (QNV2030) is Qatar's long-term strategic plan to diversify its economy and transform Qatar into an advance country within 2030:

> The National Vision aims at transforming Qatar into an advanced country by 2030, capable of sustaining its own development and providing for a high standard of living for all of its people for generations to come (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008:2).

By using their revenues from their oil and gas assets Qatar seeks to invest in improved infrastructure, efficient public services, the creation of a skilled and productive workforce and the support for entrepreneurship and innovation capabilities in the private sector (ibid). The QNV2030 is based on five main challenges in society that Qatar seeks to improve within 2030. 1) Modernisation and preservation of traditions. 2) The needs of this generation and the needs of future generations. 3) Managed growth and uncontrolled expansion. 4) The size and the quality of the expatriate labour force and the selected path of development. 5) Economic growth, social development and environmental management (ibid). Qatar recognize that it must modernize their society and diversify their economy to be able to maintain a high standard of living for future generations. This should not come at the expense of their cultural traditions or the standard of living of the current generation. By investing in infrastructure, public services and advanced technology Qatar seeks to continue their economic growth, increase the standard of living while becoming more environmentally friendly along the way.

One sector that is paramount in Qatar's quest to become an advance society by 2030 is their sports sector. To achieve the objectives and operationalise the goals of QNV2030, and to

provide a coherent basis of planning, Qatar launched their first National Development Strategy in 2011 (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011). The Sports Sector Strategy 2011-2016 (SSS 2011-2016) is included as one of 14 key sectors that is integrated to the QNV2030.

According to the Sports Sector Strategy, Qatar sees sports as an important tool achieve their goals both domestically and internationally. Domestically sports bring people together and creates stronger cohesion. A more active population where more people partakes in sporting activities creates a healthier society both physically and mentally and are beneficial for the society at a whole with reduced healthcare costs and increased labour productivity: (

> At the community level, sport helps build social and family cohesion by bringing people together in a friendly and active way. At the individual level, participation in sport raises people's confidence and skills and improves physical health and mental well-being. These personal benefits contribute towards broader national outcomes, including improving national health, reducing healthcare costs and increasing labour productivity. The provision of quality sports facilities and services, including outdoor recreation facilities, also makes Qatar an attractive place to work, live and visit (Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011:6).

At the international level, Qatar sees sports as a source of national pride an increased prestige by Qatari athletes winning sporting competitions and hosting international events, which can raise Qatar's status both regionally and globally. They also see sport as a means to conduct diplomacy, improve and forge relations globally, attract tourists, investment and trade (ibid).

It is evident that Qatar sees sports, not only as a source of national pride and cultural identity builder, but also as a diplomatic instrument to forge new relations with countries worldwide and increase their reputation and status in the world. Hosting sporting events, with hundreds of millions of viewers worldwide gives Qatar a unique possibility to showcase their country to the global audience and alter stereotypes of the country and the region, and ultimately gain soft power in the international system. By this way, Qatar is strategically utilising sports as an important part of their public diplomacy apparatus, where they create favourable impressions amongst foreign publics through the shared values of sports (Murray, 2012).

> Qatar is committed to increasing sports participation and active lifestyle practices among its population to improve health outcomes, and is using sports to forge friendships and improve relations between nations worldwide. It is also strategizing to

> become a global sports hub with an array of first class sports facilities and a host of regional and international sporting events (Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011:6).

The Sport sector strategy points out six main priorities within the sports sector which includes: 1) Sport and Leisure Facilities, 2) Promotion and publicity, 3) Sports education and awareness, 4) Athlete pathway development, 5) Sports management, 6) Hosting International events (ibid). The sports and leisure facilities area seek to build new sporting venues as well as improve existing facilities with improved and increased access and usage for the population. The promotion and publicity are a key area for Qatar which focuses on marketing and sponsorship in the world of global sports, as well as marketing Qatar as tourism hub for sports, and to highlight careers in sports administration. Through sports and education awareness Qatar wants to improve the general health of their population, increase participant levels of women and special needs athletes, strengthen sports education and culture in school. The athlete pathway development area seeks to establish new national leagues for sports, develop indigenous talent and help them reach elite level and improve options for retired athletes. The sports management sector seeks to develop human recourses, achieve financial accountability and give management support to clubs, committees and federations. The hosting of international events includes staging international sporting events both in multi-sports tournaments and single-sports events, support bid committees, and event management strategies (ibid).

3.2. Pillars of sports diplomacy

This thesis highlights four crucial elements of Qatar's sports diplomacy: Firstly, it concerns the hosing of international sporting events and the creation of state-of-the-art sporting facilities. Secondly, the investment in global sports and the acquiring of global sporting broadcasting rights. Thirdly it concerns Qatari success at the elite sporting level. The last pillar of Qatar's sporting diplomacy can be seen in Qatar's close connections with several world-famous footballers who either have played in the Qatari football league or have served as an ambassador for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The following section takes a closer look at these four pillars of Qatar's sports diplomacy.

3.2.1. Hosting sporting events and state-of-the-art sporting facilities

When the former President of FIFA, Sepp Blatter, announced that Qatar had won the bid to host the 2022FIFA World Cup back in 2010, it came as a big surprise for the entire sporting world (Jackson, 2010). Not only was it going to be the first World cup staged in the Middle

East, it was also by far the smallest nation to ever host the tournament both by size and population, and with little notable football history and culture. Although this may have come as a surprise for the rest of the world, for Qatar this was a major step in their strategic plan to become an advance country within 2030. As stated in the SSS 2011-2016 the "hosting of the FIFA 2022 World Cup will accelerate the development of the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030, which aim at transforming Qatar into an advanced country by 2030" (Olympic Committee, 2011:4). Qatar have had a long-term strategy to become a globally recognised hub for international sporting events, and the awarding of the 2022 FIFA World Cup s (Amara, 2005; Olympic Committee, 2011).

Their first major Asian sporting event which were held in Qatar was the Asian Football Cup in 1988, which is a continental tournament staged every four years (Qatar Football Association, 2020). Later, Qatar hosted the FIFA U-20 World Cup in 1995 and several Asian championships during the mid-2000s, including Handball and Basketball championships. The 2006 Asian Games were a landmark tournament for Qatar, where they could showcase their unique culture and stadiums for the entire Asian continent and alter people's image of Qatar and the Gulf region (Amara, 2005). In more recent years Qatar have hosted several major global sporting events such as the Handball World Championships in 2015, the UCI Road Cycling World Championships in 2016 and the World Athletics Championships in 2019. Qatar hosted the FIFA Club World Cup for their first time in 2019 and are scheduled to host it again in 2020. Qatar is the host for several annual international sporting events such as the ATP tennis tournament in Doha, the Qatar master golf tournament, the IAAF Diamond League and the FIM Moto Racing World Championships. According to Qatar's Government Communications Office, Qatar have hosted over 450 international tournaments since 1993 (Qatar Government Communications Office, 2020). In total Qatar hosted 58 international sporting events in 2019 alone (the Peninsula, 2019).

The 2022 FIFA World Cup will be the most prestigious event that has been hosted by Qatar. It has already been described as Qatar's biggest achievement ever inn football and as a great achievement for the sports sector (Qatar Football Association, 2020; Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2018). The hosting of the FIFA World Cup 2022 has drastically accelerated Qatar's modernisation project. According to Qatar's finance minister, Ali Shareef Al-Emadi over €200 billion will be spent in total on infrastructure, including a brand new metro system in Doha, roads, a new airport, hospitals, hotels and seven new state-of-the-art stadiums which will be used during the World Cup in 2022 (EPSN, 2017).

Acording to Aljazeera, Qatar is going to spend and estimated $7billion on stadiums for the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Aljazeera, 2018). Qatar have been committed to create stadiums and surrounding infrastructure that are environmentally friendly and sustainable for future use, to avoid the occurrence of world cup stadiums becoming white elephants after 2022 (Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, 2020). Because the FIFA World Cup demands increased capacity compared to the Qatari local needs, many of the stadiums have a modular design where as many as 170 thousand seats will be removed from several venues after the tournament. These seats are planned to be donated to countries that lack sporting infrastructure, where it can be used to build sporting facilities. The Ras Abu Aboud Stadium is made primarily of shipping containers and will be the first ever World Cup venue to by fully disassembled after the tournament. New energy-efficient cooling technology and removable roofs means that the stadiums will be in use for the whole year. After the World Cup some of the stadiums will be repurposed into community facilities such as hospitals, schools and hotels. By doing this Qatar wants to show the rest of the world how sporting mega events such as the FIFA World Cup can be more environmentally friendly and have positive outcomes for both their own society and other countries in the world (Ibid).

Table 3.1 shows a list of international sporting events hosted by Qatar. The column to the left side shows major sporting events hosted by Qatar both in the past and in the future, with the event to the left and the year of the event to the right-hand side. Table 3.2 shows a list of annual sporting event hosted in Qatar. The left side shows the name of the tournament while the right side shows the year of introduction. This is by no means a complete list of all international tournaments hosted by Qatar, but it is a comprehensive list of the most prestigious and biggest events that have taken place or going to take place in the country. It is also a good indication of Qatar's development into a global sports hub for international tournaments. Table 3.3 shows a list of the eight stadiums that will be used during the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Table 3. 1 List of international sporting events in Qatar

Event (Future events are highlighted)	Year
Asian Football Cup	1988
FIFA U-20 World Cup	1995
Asian Handball Championships	2004
Asian Basketball Championships	2004
World Weightlifting Championships	2005
Asian Games	2006
ISF World Gymnasiade	2009
IAAF World Indoor Championships	2010
Asian Football Cup	2011
FINA/ARENA Swimming World Cup	2012-2017
FINA Short Course World Championships	2014
IHF Handball World Championships	2015
IPC Athletics World Championships	2015
World Amateur Boxing Championships	2016
UCI Road Cycling World Championships	2016
FIG Artistic World Gymnastics Championships	2018
IAAF World Championships	2019
FIFA Club World Cup	2019/2020
FIFA World Cup	2022
FINA World Championships	2023
FINA Masters	2024

Source: Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011; Elsborg, 2018.

Table 3.2 List of annual sporting events in Qatar

Event	Since
ATP Tennis Tournament Doha	1993
Qatar Masters Golf Tournament	1998
FIM Moto Racing World Championships	2004
FEI Equestrian Global Champion Tour	2008
WTA Tour Tennis Championships	2001
IAAF Diamond League	2010
UCI World Tour, Tour of Qatar	2002-2016

Source: Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011; Elsborg, 2018.

Table 3.3 List of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Stadiums

Stadium name, city	Capacity	Opened
Lusail Stadium, Lusail	80,000	2021
Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor	60,000	2020
Khalifa International Stadium, Doha	40,000	1976 (Renovated 2017)
Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan	40,000	2020
Al Thumama Stadium, Al Thumama	40,000	2020
Al Janoub Stadium, Al-Wakrah	40, 000	2019
Al Rayyan Stadium, Al Rayyan	40,000	2003 (Renovated 2020)
Ras Abu Aboud Stadium, Doha	40,000	2021

Source: Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, 2020.

3.2.2 Investing in global sports and broadcasting rights

Another key aspect of Qatar's sports strategy is their focus on sponsorships and marketing in global sports (Olympic Committee, 2011). Through both sponsorships of elite sporting tournaments and sport clubs and the direct investment in global sporting clubs, Qatar utilises sports as a way to forge positive images of their country globally and brand their selves as a modern, friendly and credible nation by being associated with global sports (Olympic Committee, 2011; Ginesta & San Eugenio, 2014).

One key actor in Qatar's investments in global sports are the Qatar Sports Investment (QSI). The QSI is a branch of Qatar's sovereign wealth found, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) (Zawya, 2019). The QIA was established in 2005 by the Qatari state as a step to diversify the economy by investing their surpluses of oil and natural gas in both national and international companies and other assets such as real estate (Qatar Investment Authority, 2020). It is ranked as the 11th largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, with assets over $335 billion (Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, 2020). In May 2011 QSI bought 70 per cent of

the shares in the French Ligue 1 club Paris St-Germain (PSG) for an undisclosed fee, believed to be worth somewhere between €30 million and €40 million (Connolly, 2011). Later in 2012 QSI bought the remaining 30 per cent of the shares for an estimated €30 million thus completing the takeover of the Parisian club (Emmet, 2012). The chairman of the QSI, Nasser Al-Khelaifi, was then appointed as president of PSG. Under QSI's reign PSG have dominated the top tier French national football league, Ligue 1, by winning the league 7 out of 9 times since 2012. Prior to the Qatari takeover PSG had only won 2 league titles in their history, the last being in 1994 (World Football, 2020).

With the financial backing of the Qatari state PSG have purchased several global superstars including Zlatan Ibrahimović, Edinson Cavani and David Beckham to name a few. In 2017 they broke the transfer record for a footballer with the purchase of the Brazilian megastar Neymar Da Silva Santos Junior for an astonishing €222 million fee (Laurens, 2017). The same year PSG loaned French wonderkid Kyllian Mbappé with the option to buy him in 2018 which they opted for with a transfer fee around €145 million plus €35 million in add-ons, which made him the second most expensive footballer ever only behind his teammate Neymar (Romano & Christenson, 2017). According to numbers from the German based football transfer data site transfermarkt, PSG have purchased players for over €1.17 billion since QSI became the owners back in 2011 (Transfermatk, 2011). While PSG have been dominating French football, they are yet to win the UEFA Champions League, but are among the favourites every season. PSG have had huge sponsorship deals with several Qatari sponsors, most notable is the deal with the Qatar Tourism Authority, which have paid the football club a reported €120 million annually since 2012 (Conn, 2018).

The Qatar Foundation became FC Barcelona's first ever paid-for shirt sponsor in 2011, when the Qatari non-profit organisation signed a record-breaking deal with the Catalan super club worth €150 million over a five-year period (The Guardian, 2010). Two years later Qatar Airways, the Qatari state-owned national airlines became FC Barcelona's first ever commercial kit sponsor in a deal worth €96 million over a three-year period (Martin, 2016). Qatar Airways is another key actor in Qatar's engagement in global sports. They were the main kit sponsor of FC Barcelona from 2013 until 2017 and are currently the primary shirt sponsor of the Italian Serie A Club AS Roma and for the Argentinian club Boca Juniors, as well as shirt sponsors for the Belgium second division side KAS Eupen. Qatar Airlines is the main sponsor for of the Philippines Football League, and a FIFA partner, and the official sponsor of both the 2019 and 2020 Football Club World Cup and the 2022 FIFA World Cup

(Qatar Airlines, 2020). They are also the official airline partner of PSG, German giants Bayern München and the Australian rules football club the Sydney Swans (McCullagh, 2019).

The Doha based Aspire Academy's footballs dreams program is an extraordinary talent-spotting programme that asses over 400,000 young footballers every year in developing countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America since its establishment in 2007. Eleven of those countries are on the African continent, three are in Central and South America while two are in Asia. Each year 18 to 20 of those players gain an educational scholarship, where they live in the Aspire academies in Doha or Senegal, where all expenses are covered by the Aspire Academy. According to the Aspire academy the football dreams program is an "unique humanitarian project whose goal is to empower the youth of the world by identifying, nurturing and providing life skills and an education to football talent scouted throughout the globe" (Aspire Academy, 2020). The Aspire Academy is also involved in the "Football Combating Malaria" project, which runs in cooperation with the Lionel Messi Foundation, which works to prevent the spread of Malaria on the African continent (ibid). In 2012 the Aspire Academy bought the Belgian second division side KAS Eupen (sponsored by Qatar Airlines) to give first team experience to the graduates at the academies in Doha and Senegal. According to the Aspire Academy, over 40 of the scholarship recipients have their national team from U-17 level to senior national teams. Although some have criticised the football dreams program as being a tool for Qatar to discover talents from third world countries who later on can represent Qatar as naturalised citizens, the Aspire Academy claims that none of the graduates from the football dreams program have represented Qatar at any level (Aspire Academy, 2020; Abbot, 2019). The facilities of the Aspire academy are of an impressive quality and world renown football clubs such as Manchester United, Liverpool FC, Bayern München and Everton FC have utilised it for warm weather training during the winter (Aspire Academy, 2020; Conn, 2013).

The Qatari government have also provided funds to create and help set up non-governmental organisation who works with sport integrity (The Peninsula, 2019). Sport Integrity have become one of the main topics in political and sporting agendas all around the World (Moriocni 2018; Interpol & IOC 2015; Moriconi & De Cima 2020; Council of Europe 2014): due to the massive global online sport-betting market, organized crime syndicates have infiltrate sport to fix matches and launder money (Moriconi & Almeida 2019). The phenomenon is often presented as the main threat for sport sustainability (Moriconi 2020). In this framework, Qatar has become one of the most active countries funding integrity initiatives.

Doha is the base of the international non-profit organisation International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS), which was established in 2010, a few months after Qatar won the rights to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup (International Centre for Sport Security, 2020). The Centre for Sport Security's mission is to safeguard the values of sport by working to ensure good governance, integrity, safety and security (ibid). The Qatari government and the ICSS led the efforts to create the Sport Integrity Global Alliance (SIGA) which is the first independent and self-financed international organisation dedicated to sports integrity. SIGA includes more than 100 members of international organisations, sports federations, major sponsors of global sports and civil society organisations, where the aim is to achieve greater transparency, fight against corruption in sport, and work towards sport integrity in global sports (Sports Integrity Global Alliance, 2020).

Qatar has also become a major actor in the world of sports television rights, with the entry of the beIN sports media channel in 2012, originally launched as a part of the Al-Jazeera media network as Al-Jazeera sports. In 2014 it was renamed beIN sports after its acquisition of beIN media group. Under the chairman Nasser Al-Khelaifi, who is also president of PSG, and the head of the QSI (Qatar Sports Investment), beIN sports have acquired the broadcast rights for several top tier European leagues in several countries. In the MENA region alone (Middle East and North Africa) beIN sports holds the broadcasting rights for the FIFA World Cup, UEFA Champions League, Europa League, English Premier League, Spanish La Liga, Italian Serie A, France Ligue 1, German Bundesliga and several other football leagues and cups (beIN Media Group, 2020). This domination of the sporting broadcasting rights in the MENA region has led to several disputes with neighbouring Saudi-Arabia, who accuses them of having a monopolistic position. Because of this Saudi-Arabia have blocked the beIN sports channels in the country since 2017, and permanently cancelled the licence on 14th July 2020. Qatar have accused Saudi-Arabia for stealing their intellectual property by actively supporting and promoting beoutQ, a pirate tv-operation that distribute content belonging to beIN sports. In a recent ruling in June 2020, the WTO ruled in favour of Qatar, stating that Saudi-Arabia have violated international intellectual property rules by shielding beoutQ from legal action (Farge & Blenkinsop, 2020).

beIN Sports have also made their marks in France where they have the broadcasting rights in France for several major football cups and leagues including the French Ligue 1, French Ligue 2, the Spanish La Liga, Italian Serie A, German Bundesliga and the English FA Cup, and the FIFA World Cup 2018 (beIN Media Group, 2020). While in the US and Canada beIN

sports have the broadcasting rights for major football tournaments such as Spanish La Liga, Italian Serie A and French Ligue 1 (ibid).

Table 3.4 shows a list of Paris St-Germain's ten most expensive transfers in the club history. All of them have been made since the QSI purchased the club in 2011, and includes the record signing of Neymar, and other global football stars such as Kyllian Mbappe, Edinson Cavani and Thiago Silva. The combined transfer fee for these ten players are above €757million, and this does not take wages and sign-on-fees into account, where for example Neymar are reported to have a weekly salary of €1million in his contract that runs through June 2022 (Ziegler, 2018). However, this table is an attempt to illustrate Qatar's willingness to invest in global sport exemplified through QSI's ownership of PSG and the large sums they have invested in player transfers in the last decade. The source which have been used for the collection of data is the German based football data site transfermarkt**.** Table 3.5 shows a list of Qatar's engagement in global sports through various sponsor agreements with global football clubs. The column to the left show which Qatari organisation have signed a sponsorship agreement with a football club, the middle column shows which football club the organisation have signed a deal with and the length of the contract, while the last column shows the estimated value of the deal.

Table 3.4 List of the ten most expensive PSG transfers since QSI takeover

Player (year of transfer)	Transfer Fee (in €)
1. Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior (2017)	€222.00m
2. Kylian Mbappé Lottin (2018)	€180.00m
3. Edinson Roberto Cavani Gómez (2013)	€64.50m
4. Ángel Fabián Di María (2015)	€63.00m
5. Mauro Emanuel Icardi (2020)	€50.00m
6. David Luiz Moreira Marinho (2014)	€49.50m
7. Thiago Emiliano da Silva (2012)	€42.00m
8. Javier Matías Pastore (2011)	€42.00m
9. Lucas Rodrigues Moura da Silva (2012)	€40.00m
10. Leandro Daniel Paredes (2018)	€40.00m

Source: Transfermarkt. 2020

Table 3.5 List of Qatar's sponsorship agreements with global football clubs

Organisation	Football Club, length of sponsorship deal	Estimated value (in €)
Qatar Foundation	FC Barcelona, 2011-2013	€150.00m over 5 years
Qatar Airways	FC Barcelona, 2013-2017	€96.00m over 3 years
Qatar Tourism Authority	Paris Saint Germain, 2012-	€120.00m per year
Qatar Airways	AS Roma, 2018-2021	€40.00m over 3 years
Qatar Airways	Club Atletico Boca Juniors, 2018-2023	€5.00m per year
Qatar Airways	FC Bayern München, 2018-2023	€10.00m per year

Source: Qatar Airways, 2020; McCullagh, 2019; The Guardian, 2010; Martin, 2016

3.2.3 Sporting success and naturalisation of athletes

According to the SSS 11-16, one of the key challenges for Qatar's sports sector is to improve the performance of Qatari athletes at the regional an international level. Not only can it be a source of national pride an increased prestige by winning international tournaments, it can

also inspire the rest of the population to live a healthier lifestyle and motivate Qatari people to participate in sporting activities (Qatar Olympic committee, 2011).

The Qatar Olympic committee was founded 14th of March 1979, and the Gulf state participated in their first Olympics in the summer games in Los Angeles I 1984, sending 17 athletes. While the Qatar Football Association was established in 1960 and became a FIFA member in 1972 (Qatar Olympic committee, 2011). At the Olympic level Qatar have had relatively modest success. Qatar won its first medal at the Barcelona games in 1992 when the Somali born Mohamed Ahmed Suleiman took bronze at the 1500meters. At the Sydney games in 2000 the Bulgarian born Qatari naturalized citizen Said Saif Asaad, formerly Angel Popov, won bronze in weightlifting. In 2012 in London Qatar added two bronze medals to their collection through Nasser Al-Attiyah in men's skeet and Mutaz Essa Barshim in the men's high jump (Olympic, 2020). Qatar did not send any female athletes to the Olympics until 2012, being one of the last countries to do so including Saudi-Arabia (Mackay, 2010). In the Asian games Qatar have been considerably more successful. They participated in their first Asian Games in 1978 hosted in Bangkok and have since then won a total of 120 medals, including 43 gold medals, 31 silver medals, and 46 bronze medals. This makes them the most successful of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries at the Asian Games (Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011). The Qatari national football team won their first ever title with the victory in the Asian cup in 2019 and have risen from 112th in 2010 to 55th place in 2020 on the FIFA ranking (FIFA, 2020).

Qatar have pulled a lot of recourses into their sports talent development programs. The Aspire Academy for Sports Excellence is at the forefront of Qatar's sports talent identification and development. The academy, founded in 2004, have state-of-the art facilities, leading expertise in sports science, as well as highly qualified international scouts and coaches who seeks to develop elite Qatari Athletes. The Aspire Academy's vision is to be recognized as the world's leading sports academy in the development of youth athletes by 2020 (Aspire Academy, 2020). The total cost of the multi-sport facility, the Aspire Zone where the Aspire Academy is located, where $1.3 billion (Gillis, Oliver & Briggs, 2007). The Aspire Academy have a policy of systematic policy of talent identification, where there is a mass screening of Qatari male and female 6th grade students where the aim is to identify individuals with sporting talent who will be granted with an Aspire Academy scholarship (Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011).

Although Qatar have had some success developing elite athletes through the Aspire Academy, including the double world champion in high jump and bronze and silver winner at

the Olympics, Mutaz Essa Barshim, some of their success on the elite international level has to do with their policy of naturalisation. The policy of naturalisation has been a common practice in Qatari sports for several decades (Cambpell, 2010). Because of Qatar's small population their talent pool of athletes is naturally of a modest size. To achieve greater sporting success and gain international prestige Qatar have conducted a policy of naturalisation of foreign athletes where they change their nationality to Qatari and often receives a Qatari or Arabic name of origin in the process (Campbell, 2010; Reich & Tinaz, 2018). For example, Qatar's first medallist in the Olympics, Mohamed Ahmed Suleiman was born in Somalia, while their second medallist, heavyweight lifter Angel Popov was given the name Said Saif Asaad when he became a Qatari naturalised citizen prior to the Olympic games in Sydney in 2000. He later went on to win gold both in the Asian games in 2002 and in the World Championships in 2003 representing Qatar (ibid). Another well-known example is the world record holder in 3000 metre steeplechase Saif Saaeed Shaheen, formerly Stephen Cherono born in Kenya. He made headlines when he declared that he had become a Qatari citizen in 2003, in exchange for a reported $1million in addition to $1000 per month for life (Longman, 2003).

The subject of naturalisation of athletes are controversial and Qatar have been criticised by both media and countries such as Kenya, that claims that Qatar are effectively "buying" foreign athletes to compete under the Qatari colours in exchange for money, which creates unfair conditions for developing countries and goes against the "values" of sports (Kelner, 2017). As a response to the trend of the naturalisation of athletes, the IOC in 2000 introduced a three-year waiting period before and athlete can represent a new country. In a similar vein FIFA forbid the employment of players in national teams who had not been living in the territory of the football association for two consecutive years, despite them receiving a passport in the host country (Poli, 2007). While FIFA rules prohibit players to represent different countries after they have played an official match for a given country, other sports federations have much more lenient rules. As an example, in the Qatari handball squad that won silver at the 2015 World's Men Handball Championship staged in Qatar, only two of the sixteen man-squad was born in Qatar. Most of the squad consisted of European, Egyptian and Tunisian players who had been naturalised as Qatari citizens prior to the tournament. According to Handball World, the Serbian goalkeeper Danijel Šarić, got an estimated €500,000 to switch his citizenship to Qatari, while reports claims that the sixteen players in the 2015 world cup squad shared €3million for every victory at the tournament (Handball World, 2013; Nygård, 2015).

Table 3.6 shows a list of Qatar's medals at the Olympic level, where all of them have been won during the summer Olympiad. Winning medals at the Olympic Games, which is the most watched, globalised and prestigious tournament along with the FIFA World Cup, can boost a countries international image and reputation and can contribute to a countries soft power (Antwi-Boateng, 2013). Although winning medals at the Olympic Games is an important part of Qatar's sport sector strategy, they have a somewhat modest medals count, with five medals in total, where one of them are silver, and the last four all bronze. All of these have been won by men, where two of them was won by athletes who have become naturalised Qatari citizens prior to the Olympic Games. Three of the medals where won in athletics, including the silver taken by Mutaz Essa Barshim in the men's high jump. Said Saif Assad took bronze in weightlifting, while Nasser Al-Attiyah took bronze in shooting. The data is collected from the Olympic Games official web page.

Table 3.6 list of Qatar's medals at the Olympic Games

Olympic Game, Athlete	**Gold**	**Silver**	**Bronze**
2016 Rio De Janeiro, Mutaz Essa Barshim	0	1	0
2012 London, Nasser Al-Attiyah & Mutaz Essa Barshim	0	0	2
2000 Sydney, Said Saif Asaad	0	0	1
1992 Barcelona, Mohammed Suleiman	0	0	1

Source: Olympic Games (2020).

3.2.4 Global football stars in Qatar

Since the early 2000's the Qatari football league have attracted several high-profile footballers to the Qatari football league. More than €40 million where injected into the league during the start of the 21st century, which attracted international football stars such as Gabriel

Batistuta, Josep Guardiola, Stefan Effenberger, Claudio Caniggia and Frank De Boer albeit in the twilight of their careers. Each of these players received between €100 and €200 thousand a month in salaries (Amara, 2005).

The influx of world class international players to the Qatari football league have continued in recent year with the introduction of players such as FC Barcelona and Spain legend Xavi Hernandez, the former Dutch internationals Wesley Sneijder and Nigel De Jong, the former Spanish international Santi Cazorla and the Cameroonian football legend Samuel Eto'o. Xavi Hernandez have played in the Qatari side Al Sadd since 2015, and is currently the manager of the club, where he earns a reported yearly salary of €10 million (ESPN, 2015). Xavi Hernandez also serves as an official ambassador for the Qatari Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, responsible for organising the 2022 World Cup, along other famous international football stars such as World Cup winning Brazilian Marcos Evangelista de Morais, better known as Cafu, Cameroonian legend Samuel Eto'o and the former Australian international Tim Cahill (FIFA, 2020). The French footballing legend Zinedine Zidane, regarded as one of the best to ever play the game, where an official ambassador for Qatar's successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup back in 2010, where he allegedly received $15 million dollar to support Qatar (Arab Business, 2010). Other international football stars who were ambassadors for the Qatari 2022 World Cup bid included the likes of Pep Guardiola, Ronald and Frank De Boer, Gabriel Batistuta and the Cameroonian footballing legend Roger Milla (Ibid; Long, 2010).

For Qatar who do not have a tradition of a strong footballing culture, it has been important to attach themselves to these global football stars who both have praised the Qatari culture and supported their ability to host a successful 2022 FIFA World Cup. By doing so, Qatar is conducting sports diplomacy by attaching themselves to these football stars who have a global appeal amongst the world's footballing fans. The following section includes interviews with 10 former international footballers, who either have played in Qatar, or have had an ambassadorial role for the nation, where they speak in favourable turns of the Qatari culture and Qatar's ability to host a successful World Cup, and thereby are conducting sporting diplomacy on Qatar's behalf.

In an interview with the French news agency *AFP*, retold by the Qatari newspaper *The Peninsula* on 28. July 2020, Xavi Hernandez the Spanish football legend and current manager of Qatari football side Al Sadd, made several positive comments about Qatar and defended the upcoming 2022 World Cup. He stated that:

> It will be an historic Cup, without a doubt. People are going to be surprised at what the country is like. In general, there are a lot of prejudices and a lot of unfounded criticism. Qatar has everything: a small, hospitable and generous country (The Peninsula, 2020).

In an exclusive interview with the Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy on 5. March 2018, the former Dutch international footballer Wesley Sneijder who had a one-year stint at the Qatari side Al-Gharafa, praised Qatar and stated that:

> From the moment I arrived here I was really impressed. I'd already been told all the stories from the people that I know who have lived here or still play here – like Ronald de Boer or Anouar Diba. They told me a lot about Qatar, but since day one I have been impressed. The organisation is amazing, the pitches are some of the best in the world, everything is great." He continued by adding that it was time that the world cup was going to be hosted in the Middle-East: "Qatar will be an amazing place, as I could see in the video [at the Legacy Pavilion]. I never thought about Qatar being really central. So many countries can watch it. I think it's time to do it here. (Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, 2018).

In an interview with beIN sports on 27. July 2020 Josep Guardiola, one of the most influential men in football, and the current Manchester City manager, and former player of Qatari side Al Ahli, said he looked forward to the 2022 World Cup while speaking about his time in the country:

> I have had incredible memories at Al Ahli and with people there in Qatar. I spent two nice years and I have good memories with this country. I am looking forward to seeing it (Qatar) in the FIFA World Cup, how well they are going to organize it (Albawaba, 2020).

The all-time leading goal scorer for Argentina, Gabriel Batistuta spent the two-last year of his career playing for the Qatari side Al-Arabi. He was also an official ambassador for the Qatar 2022 World Cup bid, in an interview with the magazine *World Soccer* on 12. March 2010 he talked about his experience in Qatar and why he believed that the country should host the World Cup:

> My two years living there were a wonderful experience for me and my family. I stopped playing because I had problems with my ankles, but the time I spent there was always in the back of my mind. It was a pleasure to be contacted by Qatar because it meant I must have left a positive impression there. A World Cup in Qatar would be a very different tournament. We tend to think of World Cup Finals in famous footballing cities like Buenos Aires or Rome. FIFA's motto is football for everyone. We've never had a World Cup in the middle east. In recent years, the Arab world has opened up. We have a chance for FIFA to give the Arab world this opportunity (World Soccer, 2010).

In an exclusive interview with the Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy on 19. January 2015, former Dutch international and current manager of the Dutch national team Frank de Boer, talked about the 2022 World Cup in Qatar:

> I think it's fantastic that everything is nearby. You don't need to travel with the plane. It would be fantastic. The only worry is the heat. Even at the end of August it's still hot, and it's not in the favour of quality football. I hope they organize it during this time of year (January), then I'm sure they'll host a fantastic World Cup. But even in the summer they will find something to make it great (Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, 2015).

Ronald de Boer, Frank de Boer's twin brother also had an impressive career representing the Dutch national team 63 times, while also finishing his professional career in the Qatari football club Al-Shamal. In an interview with *Goal* on 16. December 2018 he talked about the upcoming World Cup in Qatar:

> I don't see any problem with the weather. Right now outside it is 18-25 degrees (Celsius), which is perfect for playing football. So I am not worried about it. The most beautiful thing is it is so compact. You can see three games in one day. The most important thing is that you can feel that there is a World Cup going on. In Russia, they did a great job but it is so spread out that you don't really feel that a World Cup is going on. A World Cup should be for the fans. What I experienced in South Africa, in Johannesburg where so many teams were together. The fans together celebrating the World Cup. We are going to experience this even more (Goal, 2018).

The Brazilian football legend and two times world cup winner Cafu, serves as an official ambassador for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In an interview with the Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy on 7. October 2019 he spoke about what he expected of the World cup in Qatar and how it is going to be a unique tournament:

> The world can expect a fantastic tournament! I have never seen such preparation like what is being done for 2022. I've been fortunate enough to visit Qatar on a number of occasions now and the progress and speed of change is like something I have never seen before. The stadiums, transportation and infrastructure that's being built is fantastic. I'm sure it will make for a memorable experience in 2022 for all those who attend. Every World Cup is different in its own way, but I strongly believe Qatar's will be the most unique tournament we've ever seen – everything is so different from previous editions of the World Cup, it will make for something very special. Of that I have no doubt (Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, 2019).

Four-time African footballer of the year and Cameroonian legend, Samuel Eto'o serves as an official ambassador for the 2022 FIFA world Cup. In an interview with the Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy he talked about the Qatari culture and the forthcoming FIFA world cup:

> When fans arrive in Qatar for the World Cup they will find themselves in a very beautiful country, rich with traditions and culture, and a totally unique setting for the tournament. I can say from first-hand experience the temperature at the time of year the tournament is scheduled for will be perfect for watching football, for playing football and also for relaxing by the beach! So fans will be able to enjoy many things away from the stadiums also, and spend their holidays in a very beautiful country (Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, 2019).

Samuel Eto'o also spoke highly about the values of the Qatari culture, comparing it to that of African nations:

> For African fans, it is true, it will be great. For many it will be one flight and for most not too many hours travelling. When they arrive in Doha I am confident they will be happy to find themselves in a country that has more or less the same climate as ours at certain times of the year. Secondly, they will be in a country that has values like us Africans – a warm sense of hospitality and keenness to welcome others, wherever they are from in the world. It will be an international gathering with many people I'm sure attending their first ever World Cup. This is also something that cannot be overlooked, it will be very special for many thousands of people who previously have not had the chance to attend (Ibid).

Tim Cahill a former footballer who represented the Australian national team at four FIFA world cup's serves as an ambassador for the Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy. In an interview with FIFA, he spoke about his relationship to Qatar and the 2022 FIFA World Cup:

> I think joining the SC (Supreme Committee) family was a natural progression for me. I've been travelling to Qatar since 2008, so have developed a close relationship [with the country] over the years, so to be part of it, and to share the story of Qatar 2022 is pretty special. It's the biggest tournament ever to come to the Middle East. To hold this tournament and to share it with the world – and to be in a place where it's never been done before – that's what football does. Football is giving back to this region, but at the same time sharing its culture, values and lifestyle (FIFA, 2020).

Zinedine Zidane, who is regarded to as one of the greatest footballers of all time was an ambassador for the 2022 Qatar World Cup bid. After Qatar won the rights to host the

competition in 2010, Zidane had an exclusive interview with FIFA where he talked about the successful bid, and how he looked forward to the first World Cup in the Middle East:

> I'm proud to have been part of this bid, which I've supported all the way through. I'm proud to have made my contribution to a new country getting the World Cup. Qatar and the entire Middle East as a whole deserves this event and that makes me happy. It's a victory for the Arab world. Qatar has received support from the Arab world as a whole and I think that's been an important factor. Now they've got a little bit of time to get down to work and do what they have to do, which is to harness sport and football to achieve some big things. They've got ten years to put a team together and stage a wonderful World Cup (FIFA, 2010)

There can be found three central themes in these interviews. Firstly, it concerns Qatar's ability to host a successful world cup. All the players have a clear positive outlook for the upcoming 2022 FIFA world cup, where they have been impressed by the top modern stadiums and training facilities and believe that the compactness of the country will create a unique World Cup experience. The second common theme of the interviews has to do with the Qatari culture, and the misconception that they feel many westerners have toward the country. Several of the players who have lived and played in Qatar speaks about an open and friendly country where the population have a great sense of hospitality towards foreigners. They also speak about how impressed and surprised they are of the modern state of the country, with top facilities, impressive infrastructure and a wide range of leisure activities, such as museums, impressive restaurants and sunny beaches. The third theme occurring from the interviews is that it is time for the World Cup to finally be staged in a middle eastern country. In this way Qatar is able to show the world that the middle east has a lot to offer, and that it is a source of pride for the entire Arab world, where Qatar can show their unique friendly and hospital culture.

Chapter 4 Discussion

The following section puts the Qatari sports strategy in a wider context of the theories of soft power and sports diplomacy, and shows the ways in which the Qatari government uses sports as tool in their diplomatic toolbox, where the aim is to create favourable impressions amongst foreign publics through the shared values of sports. Thereafter comes a discussion about the many controversies surrounding Qatar's sporting diplomacy. Several corruption allegations around the 2022 world cup is looked at, as well as numerous reports about the violations of human and labour rights in Qatar amongst foreign workers. This is discussed in the setting of

Qatar's sports strategy and whether Qatar's sports diplomacy is rather the manifestation of Qatar's attempt of sportswashing their global reputation.

4.1 Soft power and sports diplomacy

Qatar's investment and engagement in global sport is an important part of their foreign policy, where the pursuit of soft power is vital. As stated earlier, soft power is the ability to co-opt people to want the same as you through attractiveness (Nye, 2008). Qatar's investment in sports must be viewed in a wider foreign policy context. Because of the small size of the population and country, Qatar is keenly aware that they lack the hard power capabilities to defend the country from outside threat on their own. Therefore, Qatar has made considerable efforts to create strong diplomatic relations with the US. Their military alliance with the US and the hosting of the largest American military base in the Middle East, CENTCOM, gives them military security against any immediate regional threat and preserves power and authority of the Al-Thani dynasty (Antwi-Boateng, 2013). The Qatari/US alliance is also a source of soft power in the region and worldwide because they are seemed as a stable and peaceful country with the approval of the sole super-power of the world. This enables Qatar to act as a mediator between the US and other countries and groups in the region (ibid).

Within the Middle East Qatar sees themselves as a neutral actor with good relations with several states and groups. Because of these good relations, Qatar is often an intermediary in disputes and conflicts in the region, thus trying to increase their political standing and soft power in the Middle East. This is exemplified by them being a hub for dialog and peacebuilding between the Taliban and Karzai government and between the Americans and Taliban (ibid). The Qatari news channel Aljazeera is an important tool in their public diplomacy. The channel has a respectable reputation both regionally and globally and are seemed as the voice of the people. Aljazeera often highlights the conflicts that Qatar arbitrates. This gives them increased influence especially in the Middle East, where Aljazeera gives both a credible and a different perceptive than the western media outlets. Therefore, Aljazeera works as an effective public diplomacy tool for the Qatari government, where it seeks to communicate and influence the public of other nations and thereby increase Qatar's attractiveness and soft power (Nye, 2008). Through Aljazeera Qatar can control the narrative, gain credibility and "win the story", as Nye notes it becomes more important to "winning the story" than "winning the war" in the information age (ibid). Qatar have also hosted several significant international conferences in its capital Doha, such as the WTO Doha rounds in 2001 and the 2012 United Nations Climate Change Conference (WTO, 2001; UNFCCC,

2012). This gives them an international presence at the world stage as an actor that works for multilateral agreements amongst nations, thus enhancing their soft power image in the world.

As discussed in the analytic part of thesis, sports and especially football are at the centre of Qatar's pursuit of soft power in the international system. Qatar seeks to showcase their country as a modern, liberal and highly technological country that differs from the more conflict-burden areas in the MENA region (Amara, 2006). The staging of several international tournaments in Qatar is a strategic method to brand the country as a first-class hub for international sporting tournaments and gain international recognition through hosting successful events in state-of-the-art venues (Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011). Thus, hosting sporting events is an effective way for Qatar to make a mark on the world stage which enables them to create and forge new relations with other countries. In this way Qatar is using sports to bust old "orientalist" views of Arabs as being "backwards, lazy and irresponsible" and instead present them with an alternative of a modern welcoming country who acts as a good citizen in a troubled region (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008; Dorsey 2014).

Qatar's hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup have given them an incredible opportunity to increase their status in the world, and conduct diplomacy through sports, where they can forge new relations with nations especially in the western world and create favourable impressions amongst foreign publics. The FIFA World Cup is along with the Olympic Games the biggest cultural event in the world. Across all platforms a total of 3.572 billion viewers, more than half of the global population aged four and over, watched the FIFA World Cup in Russia in 2018. The final between France and Croatia was followed by 1.12 billion people across the globe (FIFA, 2018). Thus, the FIFA World Cup is a truly global phenomenon and an excellent example of the increasing levels of interconnections, relations and activities between the local and the global which is the main characteristics of globalisation (Steger, 2013). Hosting a successful World Cup, will enhance Qatar's reputation and attractiveness, both in the Middle East and in the rest of the world.

The World Cup can also be a source of pride for the Muslim world, much like the World Cup in South-Africa brought a sense of pride for the whole African continent. In this way they can increase their status in the Middle East region. Hosting sports-mega events such as the World Cup can both gain attraction of tourists, increase international prestige and alter their image among foreign publics and governments (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). Germany used the World Cup in 2006 as public diplomacy, to change the worlds assumption of them as a hostile nation, to a friendly and hospitably country, while China was able to showcase their country

as a rising, modern economic, and sporting powerhouse by hosting a well organised and spectacular Olympic Games, (Ibid). This fits neatly into Qatar's foreign policy strategy of alluring soft power in the international system. By hosting the World Cup, Qatar wants to showcase their economic, political and cultural power. If successful, it can bolster their reputation as a stable and modern country in a region which are perceived as backwards by many westerners.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup also presents Qatar with the chance to show their state- of-the- art facilities and stadiums for a global audience. Qatar have been committed to create stadiums and surrounding infrastructure that are environmentally friendly and sustainable for future use. Four out of the eight world cup stadiums will have a modular design, were seats will be removed from the venues after the World Cup, and donated to countries that lack sporting infrastructure, where it can be used to build sporting facilities (Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, 2020). The Ras Abu Aboud Stadium is made primarily of shipping containers and will be the first ever World Cup venue to by fully disassembled after the tournament, and other stadiums will be repurposed into community facilities such as hospitals, schools and hotels. The stadiums have been built with recycled and reused part whenever possible, and a vast range of energy and water efficient solutions, such as solar energy and water reused from air conditioning, have been implemented (Ibid). By having modular stadium models Qatar ensures that they want face problems of having World Cup stadiums becoming "white elephants", which have been a recurring problem in past World Cups (Manfred, 2015). This enables Qatar to show their global commitment to sustainable and environmentally friendly practices, while showcasing their impressive highly technological state-of-the-art sustainable stadiums, while inspiring publics around the world with their commitment to sustainability (Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, 2020). This again shows how Qatar is utilising sport diplomacy to forge relations with other countries, by donating parts of their stadiums to countries who lack sporting facilities, and by focusing on having a sustainable World Cup they seek to gain global admiration and attraction.

Qatar's investment in global sports is also highly connected to their image branding and soft power policy. Ginesta and Eugenio (2014) showed that Qatar's former sponsorship of FC Barcelona was a part of the country's branding strategy. By being associated with a world-renowned club like FC Barcelona, Qatar gains international attention and seeks to increase their international status. In a similar vein Qatar's acquisition of PSG is an important piece of their sports diplomacy and soft power strategy. Just by being in Paris, PSG offers the Qatari

government significant branding opportunities and soft power enlargement. Paris is a truly iconic city, which is famous for its culture, arts and architecture. Therefore, it is deemed attractive for many people in the world and is therefore a source of global recognition and soft power. By being associated with Paris and its culture, Qatar seeks to increase its presence and influence in the world. While Paris have been a famous metropole for centuries, PSG was until the QSI takeover an underachieving club. With large investments bankrolled from the Qatari state, PSG has become the dominating force in French football, while being a contender for the Champions League every season. According to Delloite PSG's total revenue has increased from €100.8 million in the 2008/2009 season to €541.7 million in the 2017-2018 season, which is largely a result of the investment from the QSI (Deloitte Sports Business Group, 2010;2019).

PSG has purchased several global footballing superstars under QSI's ownership, including the world transfer record signing of Brazilian star Neymar for €222 million, and the French World Cup winner Kyllian Mbappe for €180 million. These players are extraordinary popular, Neymar has 131million followers on Instagram alone, and is considered as one of the best footballers in the world. By having footballing megastars such as Neymar and Mbappe playing with the PSG shirt, Qatar is conducting sports diplomacy where the association with these players can bring a wider global appeal to the state and make them more attractive, thus increasing their soft power (Murray, 2012). Qatar has recognised footballs immense global appeal as a tool to increase their status and prestige in the world. While PSG has been transformed to one of the leading European clubs under QSI's ownership, Qatar Airways have signed sponsorship deals with several world-renowned football clubs in the same timeframe, such as AS Roma, Bayern München and Boca Juniors.

The Champions League final between Bayern München and PSG played in Lisbon on the 23. August 2020 illustrates Qatar's influence in the top of European football. PSG is owned by the Qatari government, and Bayern München has a sponsorship deal with the Qatari government owned Qatar Airways. The Champion League final is one of the most watched annual tv events, with over 300 million viewers globally (Ashby, 2014). Although PSG ended up losing the game, Qatar gained the world's attention by having close links to both finalists. Qatar have also become a major actor within sports broadcasting rights with the introduction of beIN sports in 2011. The broadcasting company have acquired rights for several top tier European leagues in several countries. In the MENA region alone (Middle East and North Africa) beIN sports has the broadcast rights for the FIFA World Cup, UEFA Champions League, Europa League, English Premier League, Spanish La Liga, Italian Serie A, France

Ligue 1, German Bundesliga and several other football leagues and cups (beIN Media Group, 2020). beIN Sports have also acquired the broadcasting rights for several major leagues and tournaments in both France and in North America. Meanwhile the Qatari national, Nasser Al-Khelaifi has become one of the most powerful men in the world of football, by being both the president of PSG, chairman of beIN sports and a member of UEFA's executive committee (Pearson, 2019). Qatar's influence and presence at the top level of European football is therefore of an immense magnitude, both on and off the pitch.

Since 1993 Qatar have hosted over 450 international tournaments, 58 of those in 2019 (Qatar Government Communications Office, 2020; the Peninsula, 2019). These include regional tournaments such as the 2006 Asian games, but also big international events such as the UCI Road Cycling World Championships in 2016, the World Athletics Championship in 2019 and of course the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Thus, Qatar have successfully become a truly major hub for international sporting events with state-of-the-art venues and training facilities. Staging international sporting tournaments can increase a country's global prestige by hosting successful tournaments showing of their state-of-the art sporting facilities and attract inward investment from increased tourism, trade and foreign direct investment (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). The Qatari government therefore sees the staging of international tournaments not only as a source of alluring soft power and prestige globally, but also as a step in their process of economic diversification (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008; Qatar Olympic Committee, 2008).

While Qatar have had a modest success at the Olympic level with five medals, they are the most successful GCC country at the regional level with 120 medals at the Asian games Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011). While the Qatari national football team won their first ever title with the Asian Cup of 2019. For a country with 2,6 million where about 88 percent of the inhabitants are migrant workers, Qatar is punching well above its weight. Some of this success can be explained by their policy of naturalisation of foreign athletes which is a common practice in Qatar (Campbell, 2010; Reiche & Tinaz, 2018). An exemplification of this is Qatar's national handball team who won silver at the 2015 World's Men Handball Championship staged in Qatar, where only two of the sixteen man-squad was born in Qatar. Most of the squad consisted of European, Egyptian and Tunisian players who had been naturalised as Qatari citizens prior to the tournament (Handball World, 2013; Nygård, 2015). The policy of naturalisation is controversial, and critics have labelled it as unfair and against the true values of sports (Kelner, 2017). Qatar have also developed elite athletes through their Aspire academy, where double world champion in high jump and bronze and silver winner at

the Olympics Mutaz Essa Barshim is the most successful graduate (Aspire Academy, 2020). Having successful Qatari athletes at the elite sporting level can result in increased national pride and prestige which can raise Qatar's status both regionally and globally, therefore this have been an important part of their sporting strategy (Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011).

The Aspire Academy is another source of soft power appeal in Qatar. It has state-of-the art facilities, leading expertise in sports science, as well as highly qualified international scouts and coaches. Its impressive facilities have attracted several world renown football clubs such as Liverpool FC, Everton FC, Manchester United and FC Bayern München who have utilised the facilities for warm weather training during the winter break (Aspire Academy, 2020; Conn, 2013). The Aspire Academy's Football dreams project is another part of Qatar's use of sports diplomacy to gain global recognition as a force of good in some of the poorer regions of the world. Here 18 to 20 young players from developing countries in Africa, Central and South America and Asia gains an educational scholarship where they live in the Aspire academies in Doha or Senegal, where all expenses are covered by the Aspire academy. According to the Aspire academy the football dreams program is an "unique humanitarian project whose goal is to empower the youth of the world by identifying, nurturing and providing life skills and an education to football talent scouted throughout the globe" (Aspire Academy, 2020). Similarly, the Aspire Academy's joint project with the Lionel Messi Foundation called "Football Combating Malaria" is a way for Qatar to embed themselves as a good actor in the international system, while forging new relations with the recipient countries through sports. Here Qatar seeks to show their political and cultural values as a well-endowed country who takes international responsibility by helping the less fortunate of the world, and consensually hopes to be seen as attractive amongst the publics of other nations, and in the processes gaining soft power.

In a similar push to show that Qatar embraces the pure values of sports and its integrity, the Qatari government have provided funds to set up the global non-profit organisation International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) which has its headquarters in Doha. The ICSS mission is to combat corruption in sports, increase the levels of transparency, ensure high security standards at sporting events and work towards greater sporting integrity. It works with several international actors such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and Sorbonne University in Paris (International Centre for Sport Security, 2020). This aligns to Qatar's sports diplomacy, where the government wants to show that Qatar is a force of good in international sports as well as in politics, by establishing global institutions such as the ICSS. By doing so Qatar want to gain attraction not only as a destination for sporting events

or being associated with global football clubs, but also as a defender of the moral values of sports and its integrity.

Qatar's use of sporting diplomacy can clearly be seen in their attachment to several international football players. These players have a wide global appeal, with a much bigger international presence than any of their own athletes. Because Qatar lacks the footballing heritage and culture that many other countries possess, it has been important for them to become associated with these players to present the Qatari culture, and their sporting aspirations to the rest of the world. One cannot underestimate the impact that some of the greatest footballers had for Qatar's chances to host the first FIFA World Cup in the middle east. As Sid Lowe, an esteemed football journalist, noted of Zinedine Zidane's entry as an ambassador for the Qatari World Cup bid gave them an "emotional appeal" which they before had lacked (Lowe, 2010).

Zinedine Zidane, the son of Algerian immigrants, united the French society by leading his nation to World Cup glory at home soil in the summer of 1998, now said to the FIFA's technical team that: "It is time to bring the World Cup to the Middle East. Football belongs to everyone. It is time to give it to Qatar" (Ibid). Zinedine Zidane is regarded as one of the best and most iconic footballers of all time. Therefore, he brings with him a truly global appeal and immense popularity among footballing fans. This is an example of how Qatar uses global athletes, to serve the country not only as ambassadors but also as sports diplomats who uses their global appeal to create a favourable image amongst foreign publics and organisations to shape their perceptions in a way that is more conducive to Qatar's foreign policy goals (Murray, 2012). Thus, this shows how states in a globalised world can use innovative ways to reach the public both at home and abroad, and how sports diplomacy offers original and proactive ways to engage with the public.

Xavi Hernandez, by many regarded as the best midfielder of his generation, also bring with him a truly global presence. By both playing, managing and living in the country for several years, he feels that many westerners have misconceptions about Qatar and that the country receives a lot of unfounded criticism. He believes people will see an open, friendly and modern country when football fans gather in Qatar for the 2022 World Cup. This aligns perfectly with Qatar's sporting strategy, that want to use the World Cup to showcase the country as an open friendly, modern country while busting oriental stereotypes of Arabs as being "backwards, lazy and irresponsible" (Amara, 2005; Olympic Committee, 2011). Others such as the Brazilian footballing legend Cafu, highlights Qatar's impressive infrastructure, state-of-the-art stadiums and the cultural leisure activities that is available in the country. Both

Pep Guardiola and Gabirel Batistuta praises the Qatari culture and looks back at their time playing in Qatar with fondness, while looking forward to what they describe as a unique World Cup.

Here, Qatar have made use of the ever-increasing popularity of sports across the globe. These footballing stars boosts a big influence and appeal in the world, and Qatar utilises their universal appeal as sporting ambassadors to brand the country as both modern, highly technological, friendly and an open country which can increase their attractiveness amongst foreign publics. All these footballers have had hugely successful careers both at the club and international level and are therefore sources of immense popularity and stature. Although football have a truly worldwide appeal being the most popular sport in the world, Qatar have made efforts to have footballing ambassadors from different regions of the world, such as Samuel Eto'o from Cameroon, Tim Cahill from Australia and Cafu from Brazil, thus potentially giving them an increased level of attraction in various regions of the world. Most of the players are European and all of them have played club football in European leagues. Therefore they present a big influence and level of attractiveness in the western world, which is a region Qatar in particular wants to create stronger relations with, where they want to attract western tourists, increase trade and amass increased levels of foreign direct investment from (Olympic committee, 2011).

4.2 Criticism and sportswashing

Since Qatar won the rights to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup in 2010, the country has faced widespread and consistent criticism from both the international news media and human rights groups. The first line of criticism was concerning Qatar's suitability to host the FIFA World Cup. Qatar won the bid to host the World Cup competing with the United States, Australia and a joint bid from Japan and South Korea (Jackson, 2010). These countries would already have the necessary infrastructure and stadiums in place to host the World Cup, while Qatar have had to build seven brand new stadium, a metro system and an entire new city named Lusail, at the total cost of around €200 billion (Buret, 2019). Qatar is by far the smallest country by both size and population to ever host the World Cup, the total population is 2,6 million but only some 300 thousand are Qatari citizens, the rest are foreign workers (CIA, 2020). While Qatar have the financial muscles to build new stadiums and infrastructure, they cannot change their climate. Traditionally the FIFA World Cup has been played in the summer months of June and July. The summers in Qatar are blistering hot, with temperatures rising above 50 degrees Celsius. It is clearly a huge health hazard for players and supporters

alike to be outside especially partaking in physical activity in such temperatures. The Qatar 2022 Supreme Committee on the other hand claimed that they were ready to host the world cup during the summer. They argued that they would utilize an air conditioning technology that would cool down the temperature inside the stadiums, thus the players would have no problems with the heat (Gibson, 2015). In 2015 it was decided by FIFA's executive committee that the FIFA World Cup 2022 would be played in November till December, with the final on 18th of December (Borden, 2015).

This decision led to a new wave of criticism. Firstly, the other bidders claimed that Qatar won the rights on fouls premises because they bid to host the tournament in the summer. Secondly a winter World Cup collides with the schedule of the mighty European top leagues such as the Premier League, La Liga, Serie A and Bundesliga and coincides with the prestigious UEFA Champions League. This means that the league seasons must start earlier or end later or both, and this will again have knock-on-effects on the schedules for the forthcoming seasons (Ibid). The European Clubs' Association demanded financial compensation because of the disruption, but this was denied by FIFA on the basis that UEFA, the European governing football body already had accepted the new dates of the FIFA World Cup in 2022. The Spanish football league, La Liga, decided to take legal action against FIFA in 2015, claiming that they will lose €65 million in revenue because of the winter world cup. Fox who had the broadcasting rights for the World Cup in the US threatened FIFA with legal action because the World Cup in 2022 will collide with the American football season and therefore a loss of market shares. FIFA compensated Fox by giving them the television rights for the 2026 FIFA World Cup as sole bidders, for an undervalued price to avoid a lawsuit (The Guardian, 2015).

While Qatar's climate and suitability as a host of the FIFA World Cup has been questioned and criticised from the outset, another theme occurred: How was Qatar at all able to beat off the strong competition and win the rights to host the FIFA World Cup? Reports of misconduct, bribes and corruption soon came to the surface. Several reports from sources within FIFA, have stated that numerous members of the FIFA executive committee were bribed by the Qatari delegation to ensure that they would win the bid to host the World Cup (Laughland, 2017). Qatar has denied all accusations of wrongdoing; however, the evidence from the testimony of several former FIFA executive members points to corruption and that the votes for Qatar indeed was bought (Ibid). On 15. December 2012 Mohammed Bin Hammam, a Qatari who was the president of Asian Football Confederation from 2002-2011, was banned from all football activities for life, following the FIFA Ethics Committee

investigation, finding him guilty of "repeated violations" of the code on conflicts of interest. This come as a response to allegations based on millions of leaked emails and other documents where Bin Hammam paid $5m to African football officials, former FIFA vice-president Jack Warner and former Oceania FIFA member Reynald Temarii, to gain their votes for the Qatari bid (The Guardian, 2014).

FIFA have been accused of having a culture of corruption for several decades (Jennings, 2011). The final blow for the reputation of the world footballs governing body came in May 2015, when Swizz police accompanied by FBI agents raided a Zurich hotel where senior members of FIFA was gathered for a FIFA congress (Gibson & Gayle, 2015). In what had been a three years long investigation, the US department of justice charged fourteen FIFA officials on the grounds of corruption. Nine of these where members of FIFA's executive committee, who decides the dates, locations and format of world football tournaments. Simultaneously Swizz federal prosecutors opened criminal proceedings in connection with the award of the 2018 FIFA World Cup to Russia and the 2022 tournament to Qatar (ibid).

Alejandro Burzaco, the former head of the Argentine sports marketing company Torneos y Competencias one of more than 40 officials, business executives and entities on charge in the case, testified in a New York courtroom that several senior Latin American soccer officials had been paid tens of millions of dollars in bribes for the vote in favour of the Qatari World Cup (Dunbar & Harris, 2017). This included the former South American soccer confederation CONMEBOL President Juan Angel Napout and past heads of the Brazilian and Peruvian soccer federations, Juan Maria Marin and Manuel Burga (ibid).

In April 2020 the United States department of Justice said for the first time that representatives working for the Qatari World Cup bid had in fact bribed FIFA officials to secure the hosting rights for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The U.S. prosecutors explicitly relived details about money paid to five members of FIFA's executive committee prior to the 2010 vote to choose Russia and Qatar as hosts. The indictment accused media rights handlers and a company from Uruguay of wire fraud and money laundering among other allegations. More than half of the FIFA officials involved in the votes for 2018 and 2022 World Cups including the former FIFA president Sepp Blatter, have been accused of wrongdoing, though not necessarily criminally charged. (Panja & Draper, 2020). As a response to these allegations Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, the organisers of the 2022 World Cup, stated to Al Jazeera that:

> Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy strongly denies the allegations contained within the court papers made public in the US on 6 April 2020. They are part of a

> long-standing case, the subject of which is not the 2018/2022 FIFA World Cup bidding process. Despite years of false claims, evidence has never been produced to demonstrate that Qatar won the rights to host the FIFA World Cup 2022 unethically or by means that contravened FIFA's strict bidding rules. The SC maintains that it strictly adhered to all rules and regulations for the 2018/2022 FIFA World Cup bidding process and any claim to the contrary is baseless and will be fiercely contested. (Al Jazeera, 2020).

In 2016 French prosecutors opened a case related to possible corruption in business deals related to the Qatari hosting rights. As exposed by French football magazine *France Football*, the French president at the time, Nicolas Sarkozy held a secret meeting at the Elysee Palace on the 23rd of November, 10 days before the controversial decision to award the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. Present at the meeting was the Qatari crown-prince and current Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and the then president of UEFA and member of the FIFA executive committee Michel Platini, and a representative of PSG. In a three-way deal Platini would vote for the Qatari bid at the FIFA congress, while Qatar would buy PSG and create a new tv-sports channel in France that would compete with Canal plus. Ten days later Platini voted for Qatar, while the Qatar Sports Investment bought PSG for an estimated €60-70million in 2011, while the Qatari based sports channel beIN sports currently holds the broadcasting rights for French football alongside Canal plus (Lichfield, 2013). Michel Platini was banned from football for four years in 2015, for ethics violations including receiving a two-million Swiss francs (€1.8 million) payment from Blatter the then FIFA president, who was suspended for six year. In 2019 Platini was detained by France's Office of the Financial Crimes Prosecutor in relation to the awarding of the 2022 World cup to Qatar, but was released without charge (Picheta & Wojazer, 2019).

FIFA's own investigation of the bidding process surrounding the 2018 and 2022 World Cups did not find any evidence of voter fraud. It was conducted by the US prosecutor Michael Garcia, who resigned in 2014 after FIFA only published a summary of the report, which Garcia felt mispresented it. It was finally released at full length in 2017, but did not contain any explosive revelations (Conn, 2017).

Another central person in Qatar's sports strategy have also been under scrutiny regarding corrupt practises. In 2017 Swiss prosecutors opened criminal proceedings against Nasser al-Khelaifi, the Qatari national who are both the president of PSG, the head of Qatar Sports Investment, the chairman of beIN sports and a member of UEFA's executive committee. The proceedings surround allegations which claims that Al-Khelaifi had bribed disgraced former FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke to make sure that beIN sports was awarded the

broadcasting rights for the 2026 and 2030 World Cups. The trial started on 14th September and is scheduled to until 25th September. According to the prosecutors Al-Khelaifi and Valcke had a meeting on 24th October 2013 at the French headquarters of beIN, where Al-Khelaifi allegedly promised to buy Valcke a villa in Sardinia for €5million, for his exclusive use (Arab News, 2020).

In an unrelated case, Nasser al-Khelaifi was charged with corruption in 2019 by French prosecutors in connection with the bidding process for the 2019 world athletics championships which was hosted in Doha. The prosecutors are looking at two payments of €3 million in 2011 by Oryx Qatar Sports Investment, a company jointly owned by Al-Khelaifi and his brother Khalid, to a sports marketing firm run by Papa Massata Diack. Diack's father, Lamine Diack was the president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) from 1999 to 2015 and a member of the International Olympic Committee. In return of the payments, it is alleged that Lamine Diack used his influence at the IAAF to gain votes for Doha and change the date of the championship to September/October to avoid the blistering heat of the Qatari summer. Yousef Al-Obaidly, a Qatari beIN executive, PSG board member and close affiliate of Al-Khelaifi have also been charged in the case. Both Nasser al-Khelaifi and Yousef Al-Obaidly have denied any wrongdoing (Arab News, 2019).

The controversies and the many allegations about corruption, kickbacks and misconduct surrounding the awarding of the 2022 World Cup have been disastrous for Qatar's international reputation. It has both infuriated the mighty European football leagues, sponsors, as well as Qatar's rivals to host the World Cup. It has given them a reputation amongst the global public of being corrupt. This does hardly give them any kind of soft power, rather they seem unattractive and less credible by the rest of the world. Corrupt practices have been a systemic part of FIFA for decades, and it has been impossible to win the bid to host the World Cup without curry favouring and right out bribing FIFA officials (Jennings, 2011). For example, the World Cup 2006 in Germany have been under investigation for corruption, while there is numerous allegations of foul play and bribes regarding the World Cup 2010 in South Africa. FIFA themselves have confirmed that FIFA officials did receive bribes in return for their votes in the awarding for both tournaments (Nicks, 2015: Ziegler, 2016). Consequently, the controversies surrounding the awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar needs to be seen in a wider aspect of sports integrity and the need for drastic institutional reform at footballs governing body. The massive media attention brought by the corruption at FIFA in the wake of the successful Qatari bid can therefore prove to be a catalysator for change at FIFA. While Qatar could argue that they just played by FIFA's rules, the

controversies has undoubtably caused them reputational damage and a loss of attraction and soft power.

On top of all the controversies surrounding the World Cup in 2022, Qatar is also in an ongoing diplomatic dispute with fellow GCC countries Saudi-Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain as well as Egypt. The countries cut diplomatic ties with Qatar in 2017 and imposed trade and transportation sanctions on the country, accusing them of supporting terrorist groups (Dorsey, 2018). This ongoing dispute has also had repercussions on Qatar's sporting affiliations. As a direct result of the diplomatic crisis Saudi-Arabia blocked the Qatari based beIN sports channels in the country in 2017, and permanently cancelled the licence on 14th July 2020, while actively supporting and promoting beoutQ, a pirate tv-operation that distribute content belonging to beIN sports (Farge & Blenkinsop, 2020).

The Saudi-Arabic sovereign wealth fund's attempt to acquire the English Premier League Club Newcastle in the summer of 2020 was blocked by the Premier League because of Saudi-Arabia's blockage of beIN sports who have the broadcasting rights in the MENA region, as well as them actively promoting beoutQ who illegally screens the Premier League (Panja, 2020). In the summer of 2017 Qatar bought the footballing superstar Neymar for a transfer record fee of €222million, as well as Kyllian Mbappe for €145million plus €35million in add-ons. Not only did this add to the power of PSGs brand which promotes Qatar internationally, it could also be seen as a part of the diplomatic dispute where Qatar shows its gulf detractors that they are unaffected by the boycott, by displaying economic muscle by acquiring these global superstars. This illustrates the interconnections between international politics and sports, and how diplomatic disputes transcends onto the football pitch.

PSGs outlandish transfer spending since the Qatari takeover have come under heavy criticism by several actors in international football. The acquisition of Neymar and Mbappe have had its effect on the footballing transfer market where the prices for players have skyrocketed. PSG have been accused of breaching UEFA's financial fair play (FFP) rules, which prohibits European clubs to spend more than they receive in revenue, and clubs can only go with a maximum loss of €30 million over a three-year period. The combined transfer fees of Neymar and Mbappe in the summer of 2017 was around €367 million plus €35 million in potential add-ons, adding signing on fees and agent fees the number nudges closer to €400million, while their total revenue in the 2015-2016 season was €424million. Essentially this means that PSG nearly spent an entire year's revenue on two players alone, this is without accounting for a huge wage bill, bonuses and other expenses (The Economic Times, 2017). The Parisian club had already been in trouble with the financial fair play regulations, and

agreed to a settlement in 2014, where they agreed to significantly reduce their transfer spending in the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 seasons, and could only register 21 players in UEFA tournaments in the three forthcoming seasons. (UEFA Club Financial Control Body, 2014).

A new UEFA investigation was opened in September 2017 after mounting pressure from some of Europe's top clubs. In June 2018 the Parisians where cleared of breaking FFP rules, but UEFA announced it was reopening the case a few months later. This was later denied by the Court of Arbitration for sport who insisted that the original ruling should stand following an appeal from the French club (Panja, 2019). PSG's solution to bypass the FFP rules have been to sign sponsorship deals and associations with enterprises linked to the Qatari state. The agreement with Qatar's Tourism Authority, worth €120million annually, have in particular been faced with criticism of being far above commercial fair value. This have seen PSG been accused of economic doping, where the Qatari state give funds to the club through overvalued sponsorship deals with Qatari associated enterprises such as the Qatar Tourism Authority, Qatar Airways and the Qatar National Bank (Conn, 2018).

Most disastrous for Qatar' international reputation and their pursuit of soft power have been the increased scrutiny concerning the human rights situation in the country. Since the awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar, the country has been heavily criticised by both international news media and human rights organisations for their lack of political and human rights. The focus has been centred around the situation for the foreign workers in the country and the Kafala labour system. According to Amnesty International the The Kafala system is a sponsorship-based employment in the Gulf region which legally binds foreign workers to their employees restricting all workers ability to change jobs and still preventing many from leaving the country without their employers' permission (Amnesty International, 2018). Migrant workers represent 95 percent of the Qatari labour force, and 88 percent of the total population (Ibid). Since Qatar was awarded the 2022 FIFA World Cup in 2010 the population has grown from 1.6 million in 2010 to 2.6 million in 2018, mainly driven by the construction boom in the country. People from some of the poorest countries in the world such as Nepal and Bangladesh have travelled to Qatar to take advantage of the economic opportunities, which often are not present in their home country. However, many of these workers have fell victim of Qatar's exploitative labour system (ibid). The labour abuses and exploitation of foreign workers have been documented by several reports and investigations which have explored grave issues of unpaid workers, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery.

A series of reports from the English newspaper *The Guardian* reviled that 44 Nepalese workers, died between 4 June and 8 August in 2013, many of these where young men who died of sudden hearth attacks. The investigation found evidence that suggest that thousands of Nepalese workers who make up the largest labour group in Qatar, endure exploitation and abuse that amount to modern day slavery (Pattinson, 2013). The investigation reviled evidence of forced labour on a huge World Cup infrastructure project, where Nepalese workers had gone months without payment and had their salaries retained to stop them running away. Workers on construction sites have had their passports routinely confiscated by their employee, in effect reducing them to illegal aliens which is a criminal offense in Qatar. Others said that they had been denied access to free drinking water in the blistering desert heat (ibid).

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) released a report on the condition for migrant workers in Qatar in 2014, where numerous human and workers right abuses where discovered (The International Trade Union Confederation, 2014). The report describes a total lack of fundamental rights and freedoms where migrant workers under the Kafala system are enslaved by their employers, who are in full control of their visas, wages, terms of employment and living conditions. The ITUC visited several thousand workers at ten labour camps outside Doha. Here, eight to twelve workers lived together in small and dirty quarters, with one shared kitchen and bathroom, often without access to fresh water. One worker said they were "treated like animals, living like horses in a stable". The ITUC report estimates that over four thousand migrant workers could die before a ball is kicked in the 2022 World Cup. This estimate was drawn upon by statistics collected by the Indian and Nepalese embassies in Qatar, which account for 50 percent of the migrant workforce. 191 Nepalese workers died working in Qatar in 2013, compared with 169 in 2012. 218 Indian nationals died in 2013, 237 in 2012 and 23 died in 2011. Diplomatic sources have told the ITUC that the Qatari government had harassed embassy officials to keep quiet about the death toll in order to keep the flow of labour coming (ibid). Therefore, it is difficult to find reliable sources and statistics from the Qatari government that documents the death and the reason of death amongst the migrant workers in Qatar.

Reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have documented large scale labour abuses in the constructor sector, including forced labour at the Khalifa Stadium in Doha, where in many cases workers have gone without pay for several months (Amnesty International, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2020). The poor conditions for migrant workers in Qatar have come under increased scrutiny since the country was awarded with the 2022

World Cup in 2010. Qatar have been put under severe pressure from both the international news media, human rights organisations and the UN, to reform and ultimately abolish the Kafala system. As a response to the criticism and the numerous reports of labour abuse, Qatar have taken crucial steps to reform its labour system. In 2017 Qatari authorities signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO) that mapped out a pathway to reform the abusive Kafala system. In 2020 parts of the Kafala system was abolished, including restrictions on migrant workers changing jobs without their employer's permission and the introduction of a monthly minimum wage of 1,000 Qatari riyal, plus basic living allowances for some workers (Amnesty International, 2020). While these laws signal a willingness from the Qatari government to create better conditions for the foreign workers in the country, they have little substance if they are not actually implemented. Too often in the past have promises of labour reform been followed up with little or no action regarding bettering the conditions for migrant workers. Critics still believe that the reforms does not go long enough to ensure that the labour and human rights of the workers are protected and there are still reports of widespread labour and human rights abuses among the migrant workers in Qatar in 2020 (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Amnesty International 2020).

A newly published report from Human Rights Watch titled *How Can We Work Without Wages?* have documented that labour abuses are still a common feature in the lives of the migrant workers in Qatar (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Human Rights Watch spoke with 93 migrant workers working for 60 different employers and companies between January 2019 and May 2020. All of them had, at some level, faced a form of wage abuse by their employers such as unpaid overtime, arbitrary deductions, delayed wages, withholding of wages, unpaid wages, or inaccurate wage (ibid). The covid-19 pandemic has amplified and increased the frequency of the labour abuses, and migrant workers still faces many of the same labour abuses as they did before the new labour reforms where put in place. An article from the Guardian in May 2020 highlights the severe difficulties that migrant workers have faced during the covid-19 pandemic. A new governmental directive has allowed companies who have stopped operating due to the restrictions to put workers on unpaid leave or terminate their contracts. These companies are still responsible for food and accommodations, but workers testimonies suggest that in some cases these is not followed up. This has left some migrant workers with no housing, no money and with next to no food (Pattinson & Sedhai, 2020).

For Qatar these revelations have been disastrous for their public image in the world and their soft power aspirations. Instead of being regarded as an open, friendly and modern

country in a turbulent region of the word, Qatar's domestic policies have come under increased scrutiny by the international news media and human rights organisation. This has painted a picture of an extraordinary wealthy authoritarian state, who bought the world cup through bribes and corrupt practices, who are building the nation upon the shoulders of migrant workers from some of the poorest countries in the world, with a labour system that is described by many organisations as modern slavery.

Qatar's very ambitious pursuit of alluring soft power globally through the use of sports have had more negative consequences, than positive outcomes. Nye claims that states soft power capabilities derive from its culture, political values and foreign policy. However, these recourses are only reliable if their culture, political values and foreign policy truly are attractive to others (Nye, 2008). Credibility is the single most important factor in a country's pursuit of soft power. If a country lacks credibility their message to the rest of the world will be nothing else than pure propaganda (Ibid). This is the problem facing Qatar's sporting diplomacy and their pursuit of soft power. The widespread and persistent criticism that Qatar have faced after they won the rights to host the World cup, have left them with a loss of attraction globally. Qatar have not been able to effectively response to the massive allegations of corruption and labour abuses that have met them since 2010. Qatar's message to the global community have collided with the political realities in the country. While one could argue that Qatar has a much larger global presence today than in 2010, it has come at big reputational cost.

Qatar's sporting strategy is aimed at creating favourable impressions amongst foreign publics through the shared values of sports, where sports is strategically utilised as a channel of public diplomacy (Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011). Through staging several major sporting events in Qatar and investing in global sports the Qatari government wants to use sports truly worldwide appeal to alter their reputation and image in the world, and gain reputation as a successful sporting nation where their culture are deemed as attractive amongst foreign publics. However, this strategy is not without its critics. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and several actors in the international news media have in the recent years labelled this strategy as "sportswashing" (Amnesty International 2020; Ronay,2019).

Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, professor emeritus at the University of Toronto and the author of *The Olympic Games: A Critical Approach,* compares sportswashing to corporate greenwashing where companies incorporate superficial environmentally sustainable development principles in order to boost their reputations (Lenskyj, 2020). Sportswashing refers to situations where authoritarian states attempts to launder or whitewash their global

reputation and cover up their poor human rights record through the glamour of sports. By staging sporting mega-events, sponsoring and investing in football clubs, countries seek to create a façade of being liberal, modern and western friendly. This is a strategy to divert the attention away from human right abuses and lack of political rights at home (Jiménez-Martínez & Skey 2018). However, an unintended consequence of sportswashing is the increased scrutiny of the country's internal politics that derives with the newly found global attention. The prime example of this is the case of Qatar.

Their internal policies have come under heavy scrutiny since they were declared as the host of the 2022 FIFA World in December 2010. The news media and the public have become increasingly aware of Qatar's lack of political rights, where the ruling Al-Thani family with the current emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani wields absolute power with no free elections or opposition parties (Freedom House, 2020). The corruption scandals surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup bid and the various reports on the massive labour abuses facing the migrant population in the country have led to widespread criticism and loss of reputation globally. This have had its effect in Qatar's engagement in global football.

Bayern München's sponsorship agreement with Qatar Airways in 2018 was met with strong protests from their own fans, who believe that Qatar's human rights issues and the controversies surrounding the World Cup bid collides with the morale values of the club (Smith, 2018). Similarly, FC Barcelona faced criticism because of their sponsorship deals with Qatar, which saw them playing with the Qatar Foundation and Qatar Airways as shirt sponsor from 2011 to 2017. Many felt that their business deals with Qatar was hypocritical for a club with the famous slogan of "mes que un club"-more than a club, who played without a shirt sponsor for more than a century (Schaerlaeckens, 2015). The club president, Joseph Bartomeu noted that the social and political situation in Qatar merits a reassessment of the club's partnership with the Gulf state's national airline, which ended in 2017 partly because of Qatar's poor global image after years of heavy criticism (Ibid).

Many of the international footballers who have served as ambassadors for the 2022 FIFA World Cup have been met with heavy criticism in their home country. Xavi Hernandez have been criticised in Spain for his defence of the Qatari society on multiple occasions. The Spanish waterpolo star, Víctor Gutiérrez accused Xavi of defending an "an absolutist country where homosexuality, for example, is punishable by prison" (Dario AS, 2019). Pep Guardiola who have been a strong advocate for an independent Catalonia, have been accused for hypocrisy in his connections with Qatar. In 2010 he stated that the country was a friendly an open country, while sooner in 2017 accusing Spain of being an authoritarian state (ABC

España, 2017). Similarly, the former Australian footballer, Tim Cahill received a host of criticism from the Australian media after he was formally presented as an official ambassador for the 2022 Qatar World Cup, which by *The Sydney Morning Herald* was described as a "inglorious own goal" (Lutton, 2020). This is a sore point for Australia who lost the bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup to Qatar, after spending $46 million in government money on it (Ibid).

The credibility of the Qatari state funded International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) have come under severe doubt after a Football Leaks investigation, based on inside documents from the organization itself, found several highly questionable incidences surrounding the ICSS. According to the French investigative online journal *Mediapart*, the ICSS contracted two former Interpol officers, now working for the ICSS, to spy on Qatari rival Kuwaiti sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, who is the current president of the Olympic Council of Asia and the Asian Handball as well as a member of the IOC. The two former Interpol officers, Fred Lord and Javier Mena, hacked the sheik's computer containing thousands of emails and documents, while he was attending IOC's yearly conference in Lausanne Switzerland in April 2015 (Rouget, Martiniere & Robert Schmidt, 2018). Further on the investigational team found evidence that the ICSS detected a possible fixed match between the Qatari national team and North Korea on November 6. 2014, while the investigators correctly passed the warning to senior management nothing was done about it (Ibid). The ICSS hired a former Interpol executive, who while still with Interpol he spoke to FBI and Department of Justice officials on their investigation into FIFA executives. He alerted ICSS to the important knowledge that there would be more arrests of high-ranking FIFA people. Finally, the Football Leaks documents showed that ICSS staff privately wrote that the Qatari-funded center for youth football, The Aspire Academy, may be engaged in 'human trafficking'. However, in public nothing was said (Ibid).

This is a clear case of sportswashing where the Qatari government provides 70 percent of the funds for a non-profit NGO based in Doha, who supposedly works for the integrity of global sports. While the ICSS claims to completely independent of the Qatari government the Football Leaks document reported by *Mediapart* suggests otherwise. The ICSS is also a partner of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, the organisers of the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Long, 2011). The ICSS mission is to fight corruption in global sports, while they themselves works with and overseas the integrity of the 2022 FIFA World Cup which name is tainted by corruption allegations and lack of transparency. It appears that the ICSS is little other than a PR tool for the Qatari government to launder its reputation, where they

supposedly are concerned about the integrity of sports, while the reality offers a completely different picture. Thus, its true aim is to divert attention away from human rights and corruption issues connected to Qatar, and work as a façade for sports integrity.

Conclusion

On the 21. November 2022 the Qatari national football team will play their first ever FIFA World Cup match at the state-of-the-art 60 thousand-seater Al Bayt Stadium in Al Kohr, Qatar. This will mark the starting point of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and the end of twelve years of preparations and massive infrastructure projects at the staggering cost of some €200 billion (EPSN, 2017). For Qatar this is highly connected to the Qatar 2030 vision where the overarching aim for the Qatari society is to become an advanced country within 2030 (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). Sports have played a major factor in this strategy. By viewing Qatar's sports strategy through the lenses of three core concepts, soft power, sports diplomacy and sportswashing, this thesis has look at how Qatar utilises sports diplomacy to create favourable images of the country among foreign publics and gain global attraction and soft power. This thesis has also highlighted how this newfound global attention has led to an increased scrutiny regarding Qatar's internal policies. This has been highlighted by a cluster of corruption allegations surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup bid, and the situation for the migrant workers in the country, which has been described as modern slavery (Amnesty International, 2018). This thesis therefore argues that Qatar's sports diplomacy needs to be looked at in a critical light. The concept of sportswashing is a fitting description of how Qatar's sports strategy deliberately seeks to launder or whitewash its global reputation and cover up their abysmal human rights record by being associated with sports, and its global appeal.

By drawing on key documents from the Qatari government, and secondary sources such as news articles, journals and virtual documents from Qatari sports entities web sites, it is evident that Qatar sees their sports strategy as an important instrument to forge new relations with countries worldwide and increase their reputation and status in the world (Olympic Committee. 2011). Their sports strategy is also a vital part of their 2030 vison which aims at Qatar becoming an advanced country within 2030 (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008)

Qatar's sports diplomacy can be seen in an array of various channels. Firstly, Qatar hosts international sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup, as a strategic method to brand the

country as a first-class hub for international sporting tournaments and gain international recognition through hosting successful events in state-of-the-art venues (Qatar Olympic Committee, 2011). Further on Qatar conducts sports diplomacy by investing heavily in global sports. This is highly connected to their image branding and soft power policy, as global football clubs present them with significant branding opportunities (Ginesta & Eugenio, 2014). By being associated with world-renowned clubs like FC Barcelona and Paris St. Germain Qatar gains international attention and seeks to increase their international status, and attraction among foregn publics. The introduction of beIN sports in 2011 have seen Qatar become a major actor within sports broadcasting rights. beIN sports have acquired the rights for numerous top tier European leagues in several countries. This again widens Qatar's influence within global sports. The Aspire Academy is another source of soft power appeal in Qatar. It has state-of-the art facilities, leading expertise in sports science, as well as highly qualified international scouts and coaches. This have attracted several world renown football clubs such as Liverpool FC, Everton FC, Manchester United and FC Bayern München (Aspire Academy, 2020; Conn, 2013). This again aligns with Qatar's sport diplomacy by showcasing its state-of-the-art facilities and thereby being viewed as an attractive place for international football clubs to go to in training camps. Further on this fit with Qatar's vision of being a hospitable, modern and highly technological state. The Aspire Academy's Football dreams project is another part of Qatar's use of sports diplomacy to gain global recognition as a force of good in some of the poorer regions of the world. Similarly, the Qatari government funded NGO the International Centre for Sports Security expresses Qatar's sports diplomacy, where the government wants to show that Qatar is a force of good in international sports as well as in politics, by fighting corruption and protecting the integrity of global sports. Lastly Qatar conducts sports diplomacy through their connections with global football players such as Zinedine Zidane, Xavi Hernandez and Gabriel Batistuta, all of whom have had an ambassadorial role for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Here Qatar have made use of the ever-increasing popularity of sports across the globe. By utilising these players universal appeal as sporting ambassadors, where they speak highly of the Qatari culture, Qatar seeks to project themselves as friendly and modern while gaining influence and attractiveness among foreign publics.

While Qatar's sports diplomacy has been very ambitious, the newfound global attention the country has gained since it won the rights to host the FIFA World Cup in 2010 have led to an increased scrutiny towards Qatar's internal policies. The allegations of corruption surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup bid have led to massive negative media coverage. It

cumulated in the 2015 FIFA scandal, where several high-ranking FIFA official where charged for corruption and ultimately led to the end of Sepp Blatter's seventeen-year long reign as FIFA president. Most disastrous for Qatar's global reputation have been the increased scrutiny concerning the human rights situation in the country. Several reports from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and investigative journalism from The Guardian, have focused on the repressive Kafala system, where the situation for migrant workers have been described as modern slavery. These reports have exposed massive human and labour rights violations and have led to immense and consistent criticism from both the global news media and human rights organisations. This have led to a loss of global attraction and soft power. Joseph Nye noted that credibility is the single most important factor in a country's pursuit of soft power. If a country lacks credibility their message to the rest of the world will be nothing else than pure propaganda (Nye, 2008). For Qatar their sports diplomacy has missed this crucial asset of credibility, and therefore they have failed to gain attraction and soft power among foreign publics.

While this thesis has relied on documents as the source of data collection, the addition of interviews with people within the Qatari sports sector would have given it an additional depth and strengthen the overall impression. Another limitation of this paper is that the concept of soft power in itself is hard to measure, and therefore it can be difficult to quantify how Qatar is perceived amongst the publics of the world. Although the source material of this paper suggests that Qatar have experienced a loss off attraction globally, it have not conducted any research on how people perceives Qatar and its sports diplomacy. This would have been an interesting addition to the thesis. I still believe that this paper brings new insights to a theme that is severely under researched within the realm of political science and international relations: How autocratic regimes in the recent years have gained an significant amount of influence within global sports, and how they use it to gain attraction and prestige while diverting the attention away from their internal politics. While Qatar's case has proven to lead to increased scrutiny regarding the human rights situation in the country, there are examples of successful sportswashing strategies. Further research should conduct more case studies of countries and compare their sports diplomacy. It would for example be interesting to compare Abu Dhabi's strategy which includes the ownership of several international football clubs, including Manchester City, with that of Qatar. Where Qatar have faced massive global criticism for their human rights records, Abu Dhabi on the other hand, who deploys a similar Kafala labour system, have avoided the same kind of international attention.

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