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2006 Qatar Asian Games: A 'Modernization' Project from Above?

Mahfoud Amara

This paper focuses on the 15th Asian Games, which will be staged in Doha. Qatar is the first Arab Middle Eastern country to host the Asian Games, which will be the biggest ever organized, with 45 countries and 40 sports represented. The paper examines the political discourse around the games, and more specifically explores how state leaders, politicians, sports personalities and journalists are discussing the significance and impact of the staging of the Asian Games on the region in general and on Qatari society in particular. Discussing the importance that sport as a phenomenon is assuming in this region assists in highlighting some of the major issues that these societies are facing today. Sport in its multiple forms is becoming a tool for leaders in the Gulf to reposition their countries on the world map.

Introduction

There is a growing interest in the West in the impact of sporting events on the local and international economy and polity [1]. Study programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels are taught, international conferences are being organized and research institutions are being established specifically to study the economic and political impacts of sporting mega-events. Despite the huge media attention that international sports events can attract, it needs to be noted that debates on the positive benefits of staging sport events such as the Olympic Games, world championships, national championships and cup finals are still assumptions at the theoretical level. One can argue that the staging of sporting events of local, national or international dimensions can have negative repercussions on a national economy, with long-term environmental effects, if the conception and organization of such events is not based on careful strategic planning [2]. Starting from the bidding process, the building of sports facilities and day-to-day management of the events to the facilities'

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maintenance after the events, the project of staging an international sport event in any country of the world is becoming so huge that it requires the host country to mobilize its societal, financial and political institutions. An example of a truly global event, in terms of number of participants, spectatorship and media coverage, is the last Olympic Games in Athens. The staging of those games would not have been possible without the support of, firstly, major segments of Greek society, which saw in the Olympic Games an occasion to celebrate the golden age of Greek civilization and to reposition Greece in the restricted club of developed countries; secondly, the financial and political backing of the European Union; and thirdly the military cooperation of NATO, which mobilized its surveillance systems for the protection of athletes and Olympic sites from the 'threat of international terrorism'.

Thus the issues which we would like to highlight in relation to this paper's topic are as follows: for whose benefit are mega sporting events such as the 15th Asian Games being held? [3] Is the staging of mega sporting events directed towards societal development (e.g. encouraging sport for all, enhancing the well-being of citizens, tackling the increasing problem of obesity among youth in the Arabian Peninsula)? Or is it just another outward appearance of what Malek Bennabi describes as *le choseisme* – in other words, is it a project for development based on the accumulation of materials and products rather than the construction of ideas? [4]

In terms of structure, the first section of this paper explores the history of nation-state formation in the Arab region, which includes the Maghrib – North Africa – and the Mashraq – the Middle East – with a particular focus on the concept of nation-state building in the Gulf countries. This includes the link between the debate on the crisis of modernity in the Arab region, i.e. the end of Nasserism, Ba'athism and the pan-Arab unity project, with the contemporary geopolitical contexts of the Gulf region in general, and Qatar in particular. The second section investigates the ties between sport and state ideology in the Arab world, and its contemporary utilization in the Gulf region, with particular reference to the transformation of Qatar into a new destination for international sport migrants and a new centre for international sporting events. The final section focuses on the discourse around the 2006 Asian Games in the Qatari media.

The Complexity of Questioning Modern Sports in the Arabo-Islamic context, in 'Late Modernity'

This paper is a contribution to the ongoing questioning of the sociological study of sport in non-Western, Arabo-Islamic contexts. It seeks to take into account the Arabo-Islamic ways of being, doing and knowing and to 'de-orientalize' Western discourse about Islam and Muslims. In doing so it promotes both a de-westernization of modern sport history and a de-occidentalization of Muslim discourse about the West (including modern sport) [5].

There is a need today for new tools of analysis and methodological frameworks to be applied in order to break free from the thoughts of globalist Western 'visions' about

the rest of the world, including the Muslim domain, and the localist-provincial, including Muslim, 'essentialist' critics of the West. We make a distinction here between globalization and globalism where the former is used in the sense of global and local cultural exchanges and the latter to refer to the claim for 'the end of history'. We differentiate, also, between the local application and interpretation of modernity in the sense of intellectual and scientific striving for the progress of humanity, and localism which reduces the resistance to global trends to mere anti-Western polemics. Similarly, there is a need today in the Arab world to deconstruct and demystify the over-politicized and ideological discourses [6] about all domains of society: sport, literature, cinema, music, religion, education, history and so on, or what Aron [7] portrayed as the over-politicization of the social order which confounds administration and government, state and society. This politicization of the societal domain has occurred as a reaction, or in opposition, to colonial history and the phenomenon of the over-secularization of Western societies.

Thus, for the purposes of this study, we cannot understand the significance of the modernization concept (and in this case the issue of modernization through sport) independently from the histories and discourses of modernity in Arabo-Islamic contexts. In other words, it cannot be done outside the remit of the 'late modernity' debate or the crisis of modernity in the West [8], on the one hand, and the failure of nationalist projects of development – development without democracy – in Arabo-Islamic countries, on the other.

In what is supposed to be an era of globalization, where the narrowing in geographical distances and cultural differences is tantamount to 'the end of geography' is a feature, I as an Algerian and hence member of the Arab world, ironically came in contact with other Arab nationals for the first time during postgraduate studies in the UK. And it became clear that one of the important lessons I learned from corresponding with other Arab academics, and more importantly from debating with them about various issues affecting our own societies, was that we were not so different after all. We all had common aspirations such as democracy, progress and justice [9].

It should be stated, however, that before I met other Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula, I was 'contaminated' by the reductionism of Western Orientalist literature and Pan-Arabist secular discourses, which describe the Gulf countries as a grouping of oil-rich monarchies, sultanates and tribal states. A system of governance in which the chief of state is the *cheikh*, the real state rulers are royal families and whereby populations are made up of *Bedouins* who happen to be rich.

One cannot hide from the fact that there are real crises of governance, culture and identity going on in the Arab world, but we have to recognize also that the paternalism and intellectual reductionism of certain (self-proclaimed) experts of the Middle East and the 'Muslim domain' who have a tendency to underestimate the peoples of the region, have prevented them from observing the dynamics taking place in the Muslim and Arab worlds. Therefore, my endeavour in writing this paper is not to judge the 'democratic relevance' or the peripheral nature of the nation-state system in the Gulf countries. Nonetheless, it should be said that in order to advance in our reforms as

Arabs we should not be trapped between Western Orientalist approaches, on the one hand, and Pan-Arab, romanticized and populist approaches, speaking of Arab glory, on the other; we should not therefore reject any challenge and constructive criticism [10] just because it is said to be coming from the West or presented as against the 'interest' of Arab unity. I believe as a social scientist or as a Muslim *tout court* in the universal concept of justice and citizenship. That is, the state's primary role is to serve its citizens and therefore every decision that is made by policy makers has to be made in the interests of every citizen or non-citizen living in the professed national space. These should occur in respect of universal human rights and aspirations to peace and justice. Alongside this, I believe that the capability, creativity and the will for change of Arab societies are still alive despite being undermined by the extended history of various regimes with oppressive policies and discourses of victimization [11]. In other words, I believe in the importance of 'agency [12]' – the capacity of human beings to act, speak, convince and mobilize one another to establish their own democratic systems of governance. This is not to say that none of these reforms are likely to happen without some instances of turmoil.

For reasons discussed below, we choose to employ sport, and specifically the political discourses around Qatar's 2006 Asian Games as a medium to understand some of the transformations that societies in the Gulf region are undergoing. But we cannot fully comprehend the subject matter and the significance of the games for Qatari society independently of its historic and geographical contexts. The games will be held in Qatar [13], an Islamic, Arab, Middle Eastern country and a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council. This is the first aspect of the context, given the connotations that concepts such as 'Islamic', 'Arab' and 'Middle Eastern' can have in actual global media and political discourses. The second aspect is related to the timing of the games: post-Second Gulf war, in an era characterized at the international level by the triumph of 'liberalism' and American hegemony in the world, military and cultural. And at the local level, by political turmoil resulting from the fall of the Ba'ath regime, the Iraq crisis and the rise of Kurdish and Arab Shia regional identities, the end of political stability in Saudi Arabia, the second intifada in occupied Palestine, and the crisis of the Islamic revolution in Iran.

The Nation-State Debate in the Arabian Peninsula: Between 'Modernity' and 'Authenticity' in the Global Era

Before examining the ties between sport and state ideologies in the Arab world, and their contemporary utilization in the Gulf region, we need to first define the significance and challenges of nation and state concepts in the Gulf region as well as the internal dynamics of these societies.

Nationalism has different meanings in the Gulf countries. It is a mixture of religious and tribal solidarities. The first of these expressed through an attachment to Shari'a law and the Islamic system of jurisprudence while the second is expressed through an allegiance to the chief(s) of state [14]. For instance, in Oman, religiosity is expressed

through the attachment of society to the Ibadi school of jurisprudence, while for the rest of the Gulf countries, it is the attachment to Sunna. In terms of group solidarity, we can note examples of allegiances made to *Al-Sabah* in Kuwait; *Al Saud* in Saudi Arabia; *Al-Khalifa* in Bahrain; *Al-Thani* in Qatar; and in the case of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the chief(s) of the emirates – federal or city states [15]. Furthermore, in Saudi Arabia, the sense of group solidarity and loyalty towards the royal family takes a strong symbolic religious aspect because of the royal family's claimed position as the guardians of Islam and its two holiest cites, Mecca and Medina [16].

The end of pan-Arab ideology, and with it the end of over-celebrated Arab unity, gave to the Gulf states' monarchies a new opportunity to revive their exclusive nationalist histories. Huge sums of money are spent in festivals and national day celebrations, e.g. the commemoration of Saudi greatness, Kuwaiti exceptionalism, the Omani project for development and stability, and the 'uniqueness' of the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain. Some of these festivals in their conception remind us of the Communist and particularly North Korean festivals organized for the honour of the nation's great leader.

As for the state concept, unlike other postcolonial and post-revolutionary Arab countries [17] where the link between state formation and nation-building is recognized [18], in the Arabian Peninsula the notion of statehood remains unsettled [19]. There are examples of customary discourses of state formation and national glory, such as Kuwait's recent history of liberation from Iraqi invasion, Saudi Arabia's – or *al Saud*'s family – battle for a unified Arab Peninsula, and Oman's ancient history of maritime expansion in Africa. However, state building in the Gulf countries, which is depicted in Arab Ba'athist and Nasserist propaganda as pure colonial construction [20], has been faced with serious internal and external challenges. As an example of the many internal and external challenges, we can cite the past Ba'athist and Nasserist secular ideologies, Saudi (Wahabi) hegemony, Iranian political and religious doctrines, and after the First and Second Gulf Wars, the so-called 'Islamist salafi Jihadi' peril.

In terms of state-citizen relations everything happened in the Gulf countries as if a social contract – a reciprocal agreement, socio-economic stability in exchange for political rights – was signed between the ruling families and the populations. However, claiming that the real authority, in the sense of permanent power exercised upon the *collectivité* or society, is in the hand of one person or one group, such as the royal family, is misleading. The apparent sense of social order or social unity which emerged as a result of negotiations between societal institutions, tribal and religious, and the royal families will be subject to scrutiny in the future as a direct result of political instability in the region, due essentially to endemic economic recessions which have already affected the general population's standard of living and hopes and hence their supposedly emotional ties with the state as it is represented by the royal families. This has created as a result an unparalleled political, cultural, social and economical crisis, turning the Arabian Peninsula into a fertile ground for ethnic, tribal and political conflicts. Most worrying of all, even old conflicts that had been subdued during the golden age of prosperity are emerging again.

Political and Economic Transformations of the Arabian Peninsula in the post Gulf Wars Period

Most of the Gulf countries, and to a lesser extent the UAE and Qatar, who succeeded in maintaining a relative economical stability, are fighting today for their imagined model of social order against a number of issues:

1. the devastating consequences of the Gulf wars;
2. the Iraqi crisis;
3. the question of minorities (religious minorities, Arabs with black African and Persian origins, Palestinians, *El Boudoune*) [21];
4. the religious and historical legitimacy of the ruling families;
5. regulation of migration flows (talks about the control of migration flows and the nationalizing or 'Saudization', 'Omanization', 'Kuwitization' etc. of public sectors);
6. the issue of the civil rights of the migrant population [22] (access to education, employment and housing for citizens and non-citizens, particularly for second generations of migrants whose claim to citizenship status is still denied) [23];
7. the increase in internal and external pressures for political reforms; and
8. last but not least, the problem of women's condition in society.

In order to tackle some of these problems and in an effort to diversify state revenues by developing and promoting other industries such as tourism, services and other non-hydrocarbon activities, and also to respond to the growing international political pressures for the adoption of the rules of liberal market economics, a new controlled policy of economic reforms and structural readjustments is under way. This is taking place both at the level of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) [24] and individual states. For some analysts these manoeuvres are just another strategy by the 'royal families' to maintain their control over state affairs, in order to divert popular political energies into projects that actually sustain the very basis of the regime [25]. For others it is a real sign of progress and the openness of Gulf societies to 'modernization' and a concrete sign of integration to the norms of global culture and economy. One of the apparent aspects of this (hyper) liberal policy is the multiplication of shopping malls, cultural festivals [26] and sponsored TV channels offering diverse sports and (controversial) music entertainment programmes [27]. To further our understanding of this phenomenon, we refer to the work of Akbar Ahmed on 'Postmodernism and Islam' [28]. Akbar Ahmed talks about the Westernization of Islamic architecture and the implementation of the shopping-mall style to the building of markets and mosques in Muslim societies, a style originally designed to serve the needs of Western (secular) consumer society. This is happening even in Mecca and Medina, the heart of the Islamic faith, where, commercially speaking, the over exploitation of sites surrounding the holy cities such as the extensive building of hotels offering 'nice views', has affected one of the most important virtues of the *Hadj* and *Omra*, *the* Muslim pilgrimage that is the search for 'authenticity', and *Zuhd*, namely modesty.

The other aspect of this liberalization is perceptible in media and cultural spaces. Benefiting from the opportunities offered by global satellite and digital technologies and the large selective migration flows of Arab – Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian, Algerian and Moroccan – journalists and media technicians into the region, Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi are becoming the centres for the Arab music and movie industry, challenging hence the long established lead and dominance of Cairo and Beirut over the production of Arabic culture in music, cinema and literature. The Gulf countries own today a vast media empire and control much of the premier Arabic-language satellite programmes [29].

Huge investments are made today in the staging and sponsorship of international conferences, trade and art exhibitions. The aim is to market the new 'open' and 'liberal' Arabian Peninsula as the must-go-to destination for tourists and businessmen. The fruit of these intense marketing and public relations strategies start to be visible: who has not heard about Dubai [30], Doha or Abu Dhabi in the last five years?

In addition to liberal economic reforms, the Gulf countries are engaged today in a project of 'controlled' political reforms [31]. Garesh and Vidal prefer to talk about a 'negotiated' transition through national dialogue and assertion of legislative authority. Municipal elections have been organized for the first time in Oman and Saudi Arabia. In Bahrain, in an effort to return to parliamentary life, a new national charter backed by a referendum in 2000 set a clause on national reconciliation, mainly between Sunni and Shia. The most important change to date has taken place in Kuwait where parliamentary elections in 1992, 1996 and then 1999 were organized and saw the advance of the 'Islamic political' wing with its different factions, and the participation of opposition parties in the government for the first time. The aims of these political reforms are (a) to counter the increase in popularity of political Islam in the Arab world and particularly its all inclusive Islamic project and perception of good governance, which undermines the political and religious legitimacy of royal families; (b) to respond to international pressures from governments and non-governmental organizations who are asking for the protection of political and civil rights in exchange for better economic cooperation; (c) to negotiate a place in the so-called American project of a greater ('liberal') Middle East.

The issue that we will address in the second part of this study concerns the impact of political, social and cultural transformation, i.e. the strategy of openness towards 'liberalism' by Gulf countries, on the meanings, functions and practices of modern sport. For this purpose, debate on the importance of hosting mega sport events, such as the 15th Asian Games, for Qatari society will be used as a case study.

Sportification of the Arabian Peninsula

The diffusion of modern sport in the Arab world happened primarily as a result of the various forms of colonial and foreign presence. This is not to say that there was not a culture of physical activity in the Arab world prior to colonialism or foreign presence in the region. Arab traditions of horse, camel and sailing-boat racing, chess, polo, fishing,

diving and hunting are just some that serve as testimony of the richness of the physical culture of the Arab people. Nonetheless, modern sport in its Western rationalized and competitive format has been assimilated and used for different purposes during the colonial and postcolonial eras. After being employed during the colonial period in the reinforcement of social stratification, or the bourgeoisification of the society (for instance in pre-Nasser Egypt and in the Lebanon), and in the struggle against colonialism (in the case of Algeria in the past and Palestine today), sport became in the postcolonial period a tool par excellence for party-state regimes in their projects of mobilizing populations around nation-state building and integration into the international bi-polar world system. As for today, in the alleged era of globalization or 'the end of history', sport has become part of the general strategy of transformation from socialism or controlled liberalism to the market economy, and thus openness towards the 'liberal' world.

Large investments are being poured into Gulf countries in the staging and sponsorship of the world's leading sports events and the building of sporting infrastructures. Investment in sport goes beyond the national space to include sponsorship of major regional events such as the Pan Arab Games [32] and other 'globalized' sports events [33], Dubai Duty Free [34] sponsorship of the WTA Tour and Fly Emirates, official partner of the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany. The aim is to open the Arabian Peninsula to the world of business and finance and to establish the global reputation of a leading destination for international sporting events. As for governments' aspirations in terms of sport development strategies, the endeavour is to promote sport among young populations in the Gulf and increase the level of performance of national athletic elites in international competitions. This is evident in the following mission statement of the Qatar National Olympic Committee:

> The Qatar National Olympic Committee is willing to provide the best possible circumstances for the competitors representing the State of Qatar in international events. The main goal is that all the participating sportsmen and women shall perform in the highest level possible achieving their personal best results, national records in sports and events in which they compete. . . . The multi-sport games, especially the Olympic Games, are the perfect scenes where these individuals are able to show to the international sports community and the Olympic Movement their strength and skills as well as development in the field of sport founded in Qatar [35].

Alongside the strategy of development, more efforts are put into maintaining, under the patronage of royal families, a tradition of 'authentic' sport culture – for example, camel racing [36] and falconry, which symbolize royal families' affection for the 'authentic' Arab identity.

There are many examples which illustrate our arguments about the increase in the level of investments and royal families' interests in the Gulf for the global sports market. The following are examples of the increasing number of international sporting events that are being held in the region:

1. The Bahrain International Circuit (cost $150 million) hosting a round in the Formula One Grand Prix;

2. The Dubai World Cup of horse racing. Dubai Duty Free is the title sponsor of a $2m race in the seven-race Dubai World Cup, the world's richest horse race meeting [37];
3. Golf's Dubai Desert Classic;
4. The Emirate Dubai Rugby Sevens;
5. The Dubai leg of the UIM Class 1 World Offshore Powerboat Championship;
6. The Doha leg of the World Powerboat Championship;
7. Dubai's staging of SOCCEREX exhibition, the biggest exhibition of the world's football industry.

Accordingly, the Arab media space is witnessing a significant rise in the number of sports channels, e.g. Art Sport, Al-Jazeera Sport, AbuDahabi Sport, DubaiSport, Saudi Sport, battling for the broadcasting of regional, international and foreign sporting events – particularly Spanish, Italian, French and North African football leagues – as well as the sponsorship of regional football competitions, e.g. ART sponsorship and exclusive coverage of the Arab Football Champions League.

Another interesting area which needs more research is the important migration flows of international athletes [38] and coaches into the region. To give an idea of the importance of the phenomenon, 'in the Qatari Q-League first division, none of the managers is even a Middle Eastern national, let alone Qatari' [39]. This leads us to discuss in the following section the Qatari model through the 15th Asian Games of Qatar 2006.

Qatar, a Model of State Monarchy?

With an area of 11,400 square kilometres and a population of 610,000 (of whom 75 per cent are foreigners), Qatar is the second smallest oil-rich [40] country in the region, after Bahrain. The political life of the country, independent since 1971, was shaped by internal struggles within the ruling families in the 1970s and territorial conflicts with neighbouring countries (Bahrain and Saudi Arabia). However, one of the most important changes came after Crown Prince Hamad Ibn Khalifa took the opportunity of a trip abroad by his father, Emir Khalifa Bin Hamed, to seize power in 1995. Political observers and experts agree that the start of the Cheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa era announces a beginning of the political process of modernization and democratization. The first municipal elections were organized in 1999. A constitution agreed upon in 2003 by a referendum permits the formation in 2005 of a consultative council with 45 members, of which two-thirds will be elected and the other third designated by the Emir. It also permits freedom of expression, association, and the promotion of voting and civil rights for women [41]. However, it is worth mentioning that despite the good will of the Qatari government, migrants, representing two-thirds of the population, have few social rights and little prospect for integration and thus benefit little from this liberalization. This concern is shared by all Gulf countries, and the revival of local-nationalist distinctiveness in the region may be a further obstacle to the full integration

of this large segment of the population. Surprisingly, the only domain where concepts of national identity in the sense of *jus sanguineum,* cultural purity or blood association to the tribal family, is not problematic is in sport, where the naturalization of foreign athletes has taken on an important dimension. We will give further examples about the phenomenon of naturalization in sport below.

One cannot talk about Qatar today without referring to Al-Jazeera, one of the most controversial and challenging news channels in the Arab region. Regarding this point, both Sardar and Akbar emphasize in their work the power of media and image in the postmodern era. Because of 'its capacity to subvert reality, to simplify issues dangerously and influence events' [42], the media – the central feature of a dominant global civilization – are being transformed into a potential source of disruption to traditional life. Sardar points out that a serious effort has to be made to replace the global, meaningless, violent and perverted free market and profit-making TV and cinema programmes by *indigenous* cultural products and the making of local television programmes.

Thus the Arab news channel Al-Jazeera, which is based in Qatar, could be seen as an example of what Sardar refers to as a 'non-Western' cultural resistance to the hegemony of CNN and Fox News-like news stations: 'Cultural autonomy cannot be gained without human and financial commitment. It requires a *volte face* from the passive acceptance of the notion that "things change", to actively changing things [43].'

Qatar, in associating its name with Al-Jazeera – which literarily means 'the island' in Arabic – has therefore succeeded in promoting its image in the world as a dynamic country that is open to change. This will for progress and openness towards the international community is summarized in this paragraph taken from a Qatari information web page:

> Virtually unheard of a few decades ago, the State of Qatar has soared onto the world map, gaining international recognition for its accomplishments in numerous spheres of life. Its citizens embrace the future with unwavering optimism and immense potential. Hospitable and kind, Qataris make visitors to their country extremely welcome, often with a warm greeting and smile. Qatar is a very family-oriented society and a very safe place to visit, live and work. Standards of living are high as the infrastructure continues to push forward, rapidly gaining international attention. Tourism is very high on government agenda as new attractions spring up almost daily [44].

According to P. Boniface in an article for *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Qatar is becoming a new social model for the region. This has been possible thanks to its important wealth relative to its very small demography (attributed to an increase in oil prices and an increase of almost 30 per cent in the country's oil production) [45]. Qatar is considered to be one of the most dynamic economies in the region.

Having gained a favourable reputation over the years, Qatar is promoting itself as a popular venue for international events. This policy of marketing for better international visibility took an important turn with the organization of the World Trade Organization summit in 2001 and, in the same vein, the organization of

the West Asian Games series in 2005 and the 15th Asian Games in 2006. It should be noted, however, that Qatar's response to globalization trends, especially of Western culture, is not always that of assimilation and passive acceptance. Perhaps a two-pronged response is evident. Firstly, by hosting Al-Jazeera, Qatar is involving itself in the global media forum. However, at the same Qatar is hosting conferences such the first conference of World Peaceful Mobilization (*Mukawama*) against Foreign Invasions, held in February 2005, which reasserts an alignment with local Arabo-Muslim causes.

Qatar's Project of Modernization Through Sport

Sport might be seen as the vehicle par excellence for the promotion of the new Qatar under the leadership of Cheikh Hamad Khalifa. Continental and world championships are being organized. For example, the Qatar Open Tennis Tournament; the Qatar Open Golf Masters; the Qatar Rally, the Qatar Desert Horse Endurance Marathon; Oryx Quest 2005, the world's first non-stop multi-hull sailing race around the globe; the International Grand Prix of Doha Qatar Cycling Tour; and the Qatar International Athletics Championship.

It is true that, just by looking at the wide range of sports facilities [46] and business opportunities, Qatar can be seen today as a lucrative destination for international federations and professional athletes in search of new markets. Themes such as high tech and vastness, the architectural symbol of the new Qatari project for modernity, are represented in the government-funded project of Aspire, the Academy for Sports Excellence in Doha. It covers 290 square metres and includes 20 classrooms, eight full-size soccer pitches, an Olympic-size swimming pool, a 200-metre athletic track, a diving pool, gymnastic hall, multi-sports hall, table tennis arena and squash courts [47]. The academy aspires to 'develop the most talented student athletes in the region, with the aim of making them world-class sport stars' [48].

The search for 'national prestige' which a victory in a regional or international competition can procure has been taken a step further with the naturalization of African and eastern European athletes [49]. One can question the real objectives the of the Qatari sport development strategy when one sees the amount of money spent in attracting foreign athletes to compete for Qatar. The naturalization of the world athletics championship gold medallist Saif Said Shaheen (the former Kenyan Stephen Cherono) is an eloquent example of this search for glory at all costs. He has been awarded a salary for life of $1,000 per month (in addition to non-claimed bonuses) [50] for agreeing to run for Qatar. Eight athletes in the national Qatari weightlifting team who participated in the Sydney Olympic Games were former Bulgarian nationals. All had changed their nationalities as a result of a deal under which Qatar had paid Bulgaria $1 million [51].

However, the sport that is benefiting the most from the influx of money is of course football, a very popular sport among royal families in the Gulf. About 40 million euros [52] have been injected into the development of Qatari football and foreign coaches

and world football stars such as Batistuta, Leboeuf, Effenberg, and Gauardiola have been signed. Each of those players is getting between 100,000 and 200,000 euros a month [53] Table 1 gives an indication of the phenomenon of world-class stars playing in the Qatari Football league.

Based on the above discussion it can be argued that the staging of an important international sports event such as the 15th Asian Games of Doha 2006 is a natural step in the Qatari government's strategy, under the leadership of Cheikh Hamad Khalifa, of modernization through sport. The significant investment allocated to fund the games, a $2.8 billion budget, can be seen at the level of the royal family's ambition for gaining international recognition as a model of state monarchy in the region [54].

The 15th Asian Games, Doha 2006

Doha's successful bid for the 15th Asian Games make Qatar the first Arab country to stage such an important sports event. The Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee (DAGOC), which was set up by the Qatar National Olympic Committee, will be responsible for coordinating and undertaking the organization of the games under the auspices of the Olympic Council of Asian (OCA), the official owner of the games.

Table 1 Qatar as a New Destination for the World's Football Stars

Player	Club
Fabrice	Qatar SC
Mario Basler	Al Rayyan
Gabriel Batistuta	Al Arabi
Ali Bernabia	Al Rayyan
Abdulhaqq	Al-Shamal
Rock Buskpa	Al-Wakra
Titi Camara	Al-Siliyya
Claudio Canigga	Qatar SC
David Cesarini	Al-Siliyya
Kaba Diawara	Al-lttihad
Stefan Effenberg	Al Arabi
Razzaq Farhan	Al-Shamal
Josep Guardiola	Al Ahli
Fernando Hierro	Al Rayyan
Jose n/a	Al Ahly
Frank Leboeuf	Al Sadd
Pius N'Diefi	Al lttihad
Pascal Nouma	Al Khor
Soumah Osman	Al Wakra
Osvaldo	Al Khor
Rachid Rouki	Al Khor
Radhi shneishel	Qatar Sc

Source: Sport Business Group

The chairman is HH Cheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, who is also president of National Olympic Committee and member of the International Olympic Committee. To maximize the chances for the success of the games, and to learn from other experiences (such as the Sydney Olympic Games), DAGOC has hired GHD Global as lead consultant of 'a team of expert organizations' [55] to assist with the games' strategic planning and implementation.

DAGOC also works in close partnership [56] with other state departments, namely the Building Engineering Department (BED) within the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture and the Sport Facilities and Installations Department (SFID), which oversees the building of new sports facilities and the refurbishment of existing facilities to bring them up to first-class standards. Examples of new facilities are the athletic village and Hamad Medical Centre – a village to house 12,000 athletes and officials located in the centre of Doha. After the games, the village is planned to become part of the Ministry of Public Health building and the city's central medical complex including a new 1,000-bed hospital, facilities for children, orthopaedics, physical medicine, a dialysis centre and a nursing home. Other facilities include Al Itehad Sport Club Stadium, with a seating capacity of 25,000; Al Rayyan Sport Club Stadium, with a seating capacity of 25,000; and Hamad Shooting and Archery Range, with a seating capacity of 500 [57]. But the most important venue during the games will be the Qatar Sport Complex [58], a new US$200-million development project located at the outskirt of Doha city centre [59]. More figures and facts about the Asian Games in Doha are illustrated in Table 2.

Our aim in the following section is to understand through an analysis of media content (DAGOC press releases and online newspapers) the rationale of the royal family and policy-makers in Qatar for the staging of the Asian Games.

Table 2 More Facts and Figures about the 2006 Asian Games

The Asian Games Doha 2006 is the second largest multi-national sporting event in the world.
Over US$2.8 billion has been invested to make the Asian Games Doha 2006 the sporting event of the twenty-first century.
40 competitive sports and 411 events.
10,000 athletes and team officials from 45 countries in Asia.
The first Asian Games to feature chess and triathlon sports.
Targeted number of volunteers: 15,000.
Up to 3,000 press representatives, 1,000 rights-holding broadcasters and 1,500 host broadcaster staff will work to cover Asian Games Doha 2006.
During the 15th Asian Games Doha 2006, athletics, gymnastics and swimming will be covered by HDTV. At least 47 countries are expected to take coverage with an estimated TV audience of 1.5 billion viewers.
Around 38 permanent and temporary sports venues.
814 flats for athletes, 48 flats for chefs de mission and 48 national Olympic committee offices.
2005 is the year of completion for the Asian Games Village.

(Source: DAGOC web page)

Discourses Around the Staging of the 2006 Asian Games in Doha

In examining the statements of Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani [60], chairman of the board of the Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee, one can argue that Qatar's hosting of the Asian Games reinforces two main ideas:

1. Qatar's ties to the Arab tradition of hospitality and generosity: 'It is as much part of our cultures and heritage as our reputation for heartfelt generosity, hospitality – qualities that are ingrained in the people of Qatar.' It needs to be noted here the absence of any reference to Islam as a value or structure in Qatari society;
2. Worldwide recognition of Qatar as a new centre for top-quality regional and international sport: 'The numerous high level championships across a range of sport demonstrates the city's and its people's passion and skill for hosting top quality events that attract top athletes from around the world.'

The Asian Games are also described as being an occasion to celebrate Qatar's culture and environment as well as sense of belonging to the Asian continent, the largest in the world. This underlies the idea that the people and rulers of Qatar do not want to be remembered as the smallest country in the Asian continent but more in relation to its people's sense of responsibility, abilities and hard work, i.e. the ability of Qatar, the smallest country in Asia, to host the games of the largest continent in the world, and the second largest event internationally:

> We are proud to be part of the largest continent – Asia. Although we may be one of the smallest countries in Asia, we have great dreams and ambitions for our country. This is why our sense of responsibility for hosting the 15th Asian Games in Doha in 2006 is so strong . . . the Doha 2006 Asian Games mean so much more. It is about our sense of belonging and our position in the world and it is our community, our culture and our environment of which we are very proud [61].

The Asian Games becomes an occasion to show to the world the creativity of the Qatari nation and its contribution to the history of sport in Asia. It is also to break free from the old 'Orientalist' stereotypes about the Arab people, described in the Western imagination as irrational, lazy and lacking a sense of responsibility and punctuality:

> Asia has unanimously granted us the honour of hosting its continental games in Doha in 2006 and rightly expects a lot from us. We are fully aware of our responsibilities and we are working hard to shoulder this great honour. You can expect from us pleasant surprises that will make the face of our large continent shine in front of the whole world [62].

The other narrative frequently found in different press documents is that of exclusivity and uniqueness, summarized in statement by Ahmed Abdulla Al-Kulafi, deputy director general of corporate support at DAGOC: 'All our community members are waiting for the great moment, a moment that will make a difference to the future of our country. Our promise to our people is to conduct a unique global

sports event, which will make them feel proud and successful [63].' The other discourse on uniqueness includes the following:

- Exclusivity in relation to geography: discourse about the ideal location of Qatar as an easy destination to reach, evident in the coverage by Doha News Agencies of the visit to Qatar of Hussain Al Mussallam, director general of the Olympic Council of Asia – 'speaking after a follow-up team which ended in Doha on the same day, Al-Mussalam said because of the ideal geographic location of Qatar, the OCA was expecting more attendance at the games'.
- Exclusivity in the sense of a model state for neighbouring countries: 'A successful Asian Games will open the doors for neighbouring countries to bid for more multi-discipline events [64].'
- Exclusivity in terms of gigantism of the games, palpable in the important number of events and participants in the games: 'The 15th Asian Games Doha 2006 will be the world's second biggest multi-sport event following the addition of several sports, including rugby and baseball, which brings the total to 40. The 15th Asian Games will be the first held in the Middle East, the first to include so many sports, the first to feature 411 events, the first to involve up to 10,000 athletes representing, for the first time, 45 countries [65].'
- Exclusivity in relation to media coverage, technology and scale of broadcasting hours: 'For the viewers of the games, Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee will provide over 3,000 hours of television coverage from the broadcaster, beamed to 47 countries with an estimated audience of 1.5 billion viewers. ... Up to 3,000 press representatives, 1,000 rights holding broadcasters and 1,500 broadcaster staff will work to cover the Asian Games.'
- Exclusivity in relation to the scale of money invested: 'Over $2.8 billion has been invested to make the Asian Games Doha 2006 the sporting event of the twenty-first century.'

Uniqueness in relation to Qatar's response to globalization trends, which mixes authentic culture with modernity, is highlighted in the declaration by Cheikh Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, secretary-general of the Qatar National Olympic Committee that 'the uniqueness of the games being held in our country, where the old heritage mixes beautifully with the new developments, will result in an event that has a totally unique blend'.

The other emerging theme is internationalism. The Asian Games are seen as an opportunity for Qatar to reiterate its adhesion to the universal values of democracy, solidarity and human rights [66]. Gender equality, not only in relation to the increasing participation of women in the games, as both athletes and volunteers, but also their inclusion in managerial positions, comes at the top of DAGOC's mission statement [67]. This is under the patronage of the royal family, represented by HH Cheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al Misnad, consort of HH the Emir of the state of Qatar, president of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs [68].

In an interview, Mr Abdulla Al-Qahtani, director-general of DAGOC, states that 'an event as large as the Asian Games would require the participation of all members of the Qatari community without any gender discriminations, since everybody's ultimate goal is to serve their country [69]. In another context it was stated that DAGOC views 'female athletes as an integral ingredient in the Asian Games and hopes it will begin a legacy towards evolving women's sports in Asia' [70].

One other emphasized value under internationalism is international solidarity:

1. The solidarity of Qatar with victims of the tsunami expressed in the speech made by Al-Qahtani, director-general of DAGOC, at the launch of Asian Games 2006 mascot on 1 January 2005 [71].
2. Qatar's respect for cultural differences and Qatar as a meeting point between East and West, apparent in the affirmation by Khalid Hellaly, head of the volunteers department at DAGOC: 'In less than a week of the opening of the Qatar Summer Wonders 2004 [72], we have seen over 3,000 people register for the Doha 2006 games from different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, and this reflects the core message of the games – developing inter-cultural knowledge and friendship within Asia [73]. Regarding this second point, the director-general of DAGOC states that 'the Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee's key objective is to bring together all nationalities in a cultural melting pot. . . . We have witnessed the origin of the games torch that reflects the meeting between East and West; the torch that will travel, for the first time ever, to the 45 participating countries in 100 days [74].
3. Qatar's ability to achieve a balance between human rights and national security issues: 'Although Qatar is one of the safest countries on the planet, security for the Doha Asian Games will be planned and executed to the highest standards, without infringing on people's freedom. The State of Qatar has gained vast experience and a great reputation for providing security to major international, continental and regional events held in the country and this knowledge shall be carried forth towards ensuring Doha 2006 is a secure and safe environment [75].'

The organization committee has emphasized on different occasions the expected impact of the games on Qatari society. The first impact sought is the development of the tourism industry, and secondly for Qatar to be a centre for regional and international sports events. According to Cheikh Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani,

> hosting the games is an opportunity for Qatar to be under the spotlight in both international and regional media. The Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee is working closely with local government departments to present Qatar to the world as one of the most exciting destinations; by highlighting cultural, tourism, beach resorts, shopping, business and sporting events [76].

The other impact is of course political:

1. Externally, for establishing Qatar as a leading country, and thus not a periphery of Saudi Arabia: 'The leading role that Qatar is achieving by staging extra-large events

will make the whole region proud, and demonstrate the country's capabilities to welcome visitors' [77];

2. Internally, for national mobilization around the games, and hence around the modernization project of Qatari society set out by the Emir Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani. This is illustrated in the statement by Mr Al-Qahtani that 'the vision of DAGOC was derived from the wise direction of His Highness the Emir, Cheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani and His Highness the Heir Apparent, Cheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, adding DAGOC's willingness to unify efforts and coordinate with other governmental and non-governmental organizations to enhance Qatar's achievements in the global arena' [78].

A further expected benefit is economic, not only for Qatar but for the whole region. This is evidently demonstrated in Al-Qahtani's declaration that

> this is a great achievement for Doha, placing Qatar on the international sports map. With the numerous development projects now linked with Qatar, from the Pearl of the Gulf to Al Sadd Club and the Sports City, the world can see that Qatar is now a major player in the GCC. Qatar's economic growth has outshone previous projections and the Government is extremely impressed with the evolving environment that is assisting this economic growth.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to discuss the impact that international and regional economical and political changes are having in the Gulf societies in general and Qatari society in particular.

Discussing the importance that sport as a phenomenon is assuming in this region assists in highlighting some of the major issues that these societies are facing today. Sport, in its multiple forms, is becoming a tool for leaders in the Gulf to reposition their countries on the world map. This contemporary utilization of modern sport can be explained in relation to modernization debates (i.e. about modernity, late modernity, local modernity, postmodernity) as a way for Gulf countries, in this case Qatar, to build a new identity as an emerging model of a (liberal) monarchy-state that has succeeded in finding the right balance between on the one hand Western 'efficiency', symbolized in the efficient management of mega-sport events; and on the other hand the 'authenticity' of Arab culture. It should be noted here that this re-appropriation of Western culture can take the form of 'cultural autonomy' through the incorporating of difference, apparent in the financing and hosting of Al-Jazeera, symbol of the Arab alternative to global media, while Arab culture is, expressed on different occasions by the Doha Asian Games Organization Committee (DAGOC) representatives and will be given visibility in the sports and tourism authorities' strategy of maintaining a tradition of 'authentic' (Arab) sporting culture.

Finally, the questions to be asked, and for which further investigation is needed, are as follows: for how long will the results of the marketing strategy or increased world

media interest for the region be sustained? And, more importantly, for how long will its justifications, e.g. attracting tourists and foreign investments, last?

Taking into account the small population of Qatar, the first concern or test for 'efficiency' that the Qatari government and National Olympic Committee will face is the full use and maintenance of sports infrastructures in the post-Asian Games period.

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Notes

[1] See M. Roche, *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000); H. Preuss, *Economics of the Olympic Games: Hosting the Games 1972–2000* (Petersham: Walla Walla Press, 2000).

[2] For instance, there are talks in International Olympic Committee circles about the need for a 'Sustainable Olympic Games'.

[3] The same question can be asked in relation to Egypt's and Morocco's bids for the 2012 FIFA Football World Cup.

[4] I agree here with Malek Bennabi's thesis about the crisis of thinking in the Muslim world today, that the main reason behind the failure of the contemporary Muslim countries' project for development is located in the absence of ideas rather than the means (human and land). Bennabi highlights the importance of ideas (dialectic of authenticity and efficiency and the question of *comment penser*, or how to think) in the re-making of Arab and Muslim citizens, to better serve the civilizing process of the Muslim world today. See M. Bennabi, *Le problème des idées dans le Monde Musulman* (Algiers: Bay'yinate, 1990).

[5] For more discussion on issues about globalization and localization in non-Western contexts or within Muslim communities in the West, see M. Amara and I. Henry, 'Between Globalisation and Local Modernity: The Diffusion and Modernization of Football in Algeria', *Soccer and Society*, 5, 1 (2004); M. Arkoun, 'Clarifier le passé pour construire le future', *Confluences Méditerranée*, 16 (Hiver 1995–6), 2001, online at http://confluences.ifrance.com.); A. Akbar and H. Donnan (eds), *Islam, Globalisation and Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994); Z. Sardar. *Postmodernism and Other, The New Imperialism of Western Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1998).

[6] Some commentators argue that in relation to the Muslim domain since the fall of Baghdad in the East, and the fall of Granada in the West (the two pillars of Islamic civilization) a culture of 'resistance' had been privileged over the culture of 'reason' and 'reflection', creating a general sense of self-censorship within the society, and hence preventing any culture of critical reasoning and constructive dialogue to flourish.

[7] R. Aron, *Les désillusions du progrès. Essai sur la dialectique de la modernité* (Paris: Callmann-Levy, 1969).

[8] The idea that the future will be shaped by the appliance of modern (Western) science, the contrivance of Western medicine, the machines of Western technology and the economic institutions of capitalism (for more in-depth debate about the crisis of the West, see

S. Inayatullah and G. Boxwell (eds), *Islam, Postmodernism and Other Futures: A Ziauddin Sardar Reader* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

[9] The only difference we have is in our conceptions of statehood, good governance and how democracy should be put into practice. While the issue debated among North Africans tends to focus more on participatory democracy and freedom of expression (expressing political opinion in a political party, a trade union, or students' association), the debate among academics from the Arabian peninsula by contrast tends to focus on the questions of socio-economic stability and cultural authenticity.

[10] Any position to the regime, even if coming from the inside, was seen as threat to Arab unity and sign of disloyalty to the Arab revolution and struggle against colonial and imperial forces. This feeling became stronger after the military defeat of the Arab armies against Israel.

[11] Referring to colonialism and neo-colonialism (and today's recolonization of Arab land, i.e Iraq) as being the first cause of poverty and underdevelopment in the Arabo-Muslim world.

[12] G. Nonneman, State of the Art. Rentiers and Autocrats, Monarchs and Democrats, State and Society: The Middle East Between Globalization, Human 'Agency' and Europe', *International Affairs*, 77, 1 (2001), 141–62.

[13] Designated by the World Economic Forum 2005 report as the leading economy in the Arab world.

[14] Most of the time to the detriment of other minority groups – Shia minorities in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, or the Sunni minority in Oman.

[15] The federation of the United Arab Emirates comprises seven members: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras-Al-Kheima, Umm al-Qaywain, Ajman and Fuirjairah.

[16] The same is true in Jordan and Morocco, where the legitimacy of the king's rule is associated with royal families' purity – *al Ashraf* – or claim to be descendants of the prophet Mohamed (Peace be upon Him).

[17] Countries that were constructed as a result of popular anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles, party-state populist mobilization and ideological indoctrination or through civil wars (the cases of Yemen between South and North or in Lebanon between different religious and nationalist fractions).

[18] Even by Islamic parties that preach a universal Islamic sense of belonging, the division of the Umma into states is accepted as a force of fact.

[19] Iraq (under the rule of the Ba'ath regime) claims of Kuwait and the series of disputes over Kuwaiti islands; Iran's claim over Bahrain and the UAE islands; the frontier disputes between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, between Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE and between Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. See A. Garesh and D.Vidal, *The New A-Z of the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

[20] Former protectorates of Britain, with the exception of Saudi Arabia and Northern Yemen.

[21] *El Boudoune* literally means 'without', classified as without a status, or second-class citizens.

[22] Kuwait was severely criticized after the First Gulf War for its treatment of Palestinians and Yemeni minorities. They paid for their government's position during the war.

[23] We must not fail to differentiate here between the integration of economic migrants and the naturalization of Palestinian refugees, which is another political issue.

[24] Established officially in May 1981, the GCC's role is to coordinate the industrial policies of its members by preparing them for the post-oil period (Garesh and Vidal, *The New A–Z of the Middle East*, p.22). There is a project to extend membership to Iraq and Yemen.

[25] M. Karava, 'No-democratic States and Political Liberalisation in the Middle East: A Structural Analysis', *Third World Quarterly*, 19, 1 (1998), 63–85.

[26] We can cite Hala February in Kuwait, the Salala Festival in the Sultanate of Oman, the Dubai shopping festival, Dubeiland.

[27] The liberalization of the music industry is taking a radical turn in the Gulf countries. This is apparent in the normalization of video clips portraying Eastern European and Arab belly dancers in provocative dress, which for some is a sign of counter-reaction or rebellion against the traditional conformism of religious institutions.

[28] A. Akbar, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[29] P. Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.164.

[30] Dubai is becoming an example of what Mandaville defines as 'global city' – 'the mergence of spaces that are particularly rich in transnational significance'. See Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics*, p.18.

[31] Another important reform is taking place in the educational system. The aim is to tackle the culture of violence in society and to counter the influence of 'Islamist' political and intellectual activism in the society, seen as a threat to the social order in the region.

[32] Despite their low participation, Gulf countries have been the major sponsor of the games. For more information about the history of the Pan-Arab Games, see Ian Henry, Mahfoud Amara and Mansour Al-Tauqi, 'Sport, Arab Nationalism and the Pan-Arab Games', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38, 3 (2003).

[33] 'Emirates, an airline that did not even exist two decades ago, is now the fastest-growing international airline in the world. ... Airline sponsorship of football teams is a risky investment, especially when relegation looms. Headlines like "West Brom for the drop" or "Sunderland going down" do not sit comfortably in proximity to an airline's name. Even so, over four seasons Emirates is ploughing about a Boeing's worth of cash into Chelsea FC; if you are one of those lucky enough to get a window seat, you can often see the Stamford Bridge ground on the approach to Heathrow' (http://travel.independent.co.uk/ [12 July 2003]).

[34] 'Whenever and wherever we can, we reinforce the message that Dubai Duty Free is one of the top airport retail operations in the world, and sports sponsorship is an extremely effective way of spreading that message,; says Colm McLoughlin, managing director of Dubai Duty Free. Note that Dubai Duty Free is owned by the Al Maktoum family. See C. Barnes and C. Britcher, *The Middle East: Opportunities in the Business of Sport* (London: Sport Business Group Limited, 2004).

[35] *The Vision for the Future*, Qatar Olympic Committee Web page, online at http://www.qatar-olympics.org/topics, accessed February 2005.

[36] There has been a debate about the measures to be adopted to ban the bringing (mainly from Asia), hiring and training of children in camel racing. Children will be substituted by remote control robots, developed by a Swiss company.

[37] K. Roberts. 'Full of Middle Eastern Promise: The Changing Role of the Middle East as a Centre for International Sport', *Sport Business International*, 98 (2005), 49–50.

[38] In football we can cite the Argentine superstar Gabriel Batistuta from AS Roma. Other major names are French World Cup winner Frank Leboeuf, German Stefan Effenberg and former Real Madrid captain Fernando Hierro. In athletics, the Qatari Saif Said Shaheen (formerly the Kenyan Stephen Cherono)

[39] See Barnes and Britcher, *The Middle East: Opportunities in the Business of Sport*, p.61.

[40] Qatar is also one of the leading producers and exporters of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the world.

[41] The political promises were put into practice with the nomination of a woman minister and university rector since May 2003. See P. Boniface, 'De la chaine al-Jazira a la promotion du sport: Le Qatar se veut un modele pour le Golfe', *Le Monde Deplomatique*, June 2004, p.18.

[42] A. Akbar and H. Donnan (eds), *Islam, Globalisation and Postmodernity*, p.224.

[43] Sardar, *Postmodernism and Other*, p. 287.

[44] Qatar foundation web page, 'About Qatar' http://www.qf.edu.qa/general_info.htm/, accessed February 2005.
[45] For more information see Qatar foreign information web page, http://english.qatarinfo.net.
[46] Other sports installations and facilities include Khalifa Olympic City; Khalifa International Complex for Tennis and Squash; a sports medical centre; Doha Golf Club; Hamad International Complex for Water Sports; Al-Wajbah Centre for Girls' Sports.
[47] Roberts, 'Full of Middle Eastern Promise, 49–50.
[48] Aspire, the Academy of Sport Excellence, online at http://www.aspire.qa.
[49] Qatar wants to expand the naturalization policy of athletes to other sports. A proposition (which was rejected by the FIFA) was put forward for footballers who have not been selected by their national teams to join the Qatari national team.
[50] One million dollars when he won his new country's first gold medal has been talked about.
[51] R. Williams, 'Kenyan Turns into a Qatar Hero Cherono Wins Under Another ame and Flag, *The Guardian*, 27 August, 2003, online at http://www.guardian.co.uk/, accessed February 2005.
[52] Q League teams were given QR10m (£1.5m/US$2.7m/2.2 euros) each to spend on players by the Qatar National Olympic Association (QNOC), a total investment of QR100m. Barnes and Britcher, *The Middle East: Opportunities in the Business of Sport*.
[53] Boniface, 'De la chaine al-Jazira'.
[54] It is estimated that nearly US$50 billion will be invested on infrastructure projects over the next ten years. See Economic Commercial Section Embassy of the United States of America in Doha, State of Qatar: Country Commercial Guide, Qatar FY 2004–2005, online at http://www.usembassy.org.qa/usisdoha/wwwhcom.htm, accessed ??.
[55] Namely, The Cox Group, architects; Peddle, Thorp and Walker, architects; The Capital Group for public relations and consultancy; TAFE Global for staff training. See Report of Commercial Section of British Embassy in Doha, Doha Asian Games 2006 (March 2004).
[56] QATAR Telecom (Qtel), the biggest sponsor of the games, signed a $10 million (QR36.5m) 'double partnership agreement' with DAGOC, according to which the company will be the official telecommunications partner for the 15th Asian Games ('Qtel in Biggest Sponsorship Deal with DAGOC', *Doha Times*, 27 Dec. 2004, online at http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article/, accessed February 2005.
[57] Qatar will in 2006 have nine multi-sports clubs in the country – seven in the city of Doha and two in the adjacent cities of Al-Wakra (in the south) and Al-Khor (in the north). For more information see Qatar National Olympic Committee web page, http://www.qatarolympics.org.
[58] Hosting karatedo/taekwendo, judo/wrestling, gymnastics, athletics, aquatics, hockey, wushu and sepak takraw competitions. To see map of other facilities, see http://www.doha-2006.com.
[59] Taking into account the small population of Qatar, the first concern that the Qatari government and Olympic Committee will face is the full use and maintenance of the sports infrastructure after the Asian Games.
[60] Also a member of the International Olympic Committee and president of the Qatar National Olympic Committee.
[61] 'Qatar Will Receive Countless Benefits From Hosting the 15th Asian Games', *News Archives*, online at http://www.doha-2006.com, accessed February 2005.
[62] 'We are Looking Forward to Greeting you in Doha in 2006', online at http://www.Dohasiangames.org/English, accessed February 2005.
[63] 'The Countdown to the 15th Asian Games Doha has began', online at http://www.Dohasiangames.org/ English, accessed February 2005.
[64] DAGOC press release, online at www.doha-2006.com/en/press_centre/press/press03.htm, accessed February 2005.
[65] 'The 15th Asian Games Doha 2006 to Deliver a Series of World "Firsts"', DAGOC press release, online at www.doha-2006.com/en/press_centre/press/press03.htm, accessed February 2005.

In relation to the participating countries, Iran threatened to boycott the 2006 Asian Games if the organizers persisted in referring to the 'Arabian Gulf' instead of the 'Persian Gulf', which Tehran insists is the only name for the stretch of water (see http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/qatar/).

[66] 'Qatar Will Receive Countless Benefits from Hosting the 15th Asian Games Doha 2006', DACOG press release, online at www.doha-2006.com/en/press_centre/press/press03.htm, accessed February 2005.

[67] According to the International Olympic Committee, nine of the 202 participating NOCs did not send any female participants to the games. The list for 2004 includes British Virgin Islands, Brunei Darussalam, Liechtenstein, Netherlands Antilles, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. In order to address this issue, the Qatar Sports International Conference hosted a session with some 500 Muslim women on the topic of sports equipment, in particular 'clothing that is practical and competitive, while meeting the requirements of the Islamic faith, which demands modest dress'.(see http://www.internationalgames.net/newsqatar.htm/ December 11, 2002).

[68] Under the same theme Qatar hosted the First Asian Conference on Women and Sport, 18–20 December .2003.

[69] Qahtani highlights the need for support of all the official bodies for the Doha Asian Games 2006.

[70] The Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee participated in the 2nd Asian Conference for Women and Sport.

[71] 'Heir Apparent Launches Asian Games Mascot', *Doha Times*, 1 Jan. 2005.

[72] Qatar shopping festival.

[73] 'Good Response to Call for Asian Games Volunteers', *Doha Times*, 8 July 2004, online at http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/, accessed February 2005.

[74] 'Final Countdown to Doha Games Begins as Orry Comes to Town', *Doha Times*, 1 Jan. 2005, online at http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/

[75] 'Qatar National Olympic Committee, 'The Vision for the Future', online at http://www.qatarolympics.org, accessed February 2005.

[76] 'Qatar Will Receive Countless Benefits from Hosting the 15th Asian Games', DAGOC press release, online at www.doha-2006.com/en/press_centre/press/press03.htm, accessed February 2005.

[77] 'Qatar Will Receive Countless Benefits From Hosting the 15th Asian Games', *News Archives*, online at http://www.doha-2006.com, accessed February 2005.

[78] DAGOC press release, 28 Dec. 2003, online at http://www.doha2006.com/en/press_centre/press/press03.htm, accessed February 2005.

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